CHAPTER 7

The Dead

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1. Introduction

In this chapter three related concepts are discussed - life after death, 'revenants', and 'poltergeists'. The women of the Gatley study group all hold conventional religious views and are churchgoers (a substantial majority are Methodists, and smaller numbers are Roman Catholics and Jews). It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that seventy percent of them believe that after death we will "meet again" those we loved in life. When the results of the survey of belief were calculated, however, it was rather more unexpected to find that significant numbers (sixty percent) believe that dead relatives can return, or/and that houses can be haunted by poltergeists (forty-one percent). The nature of those beliefs will be explored below, principally through an examination of the memorates and personal legends the women tell on these subjects.

Memorates are particularly valuable in the exploration of beliefs because they are the genre of narrative used in this context to demonstrate the speaker's understanding of the subject matter, and to explain, illustrate and justify points of view. Memorates and personal legends may also, of course, be told even in a serious context for social reasons - because storytelling is fun, because it facilitates ease and friendliness in social gatherings, because it is an outlet for artistic self-expression. Even in these stories, however, in this context cultural belief patterns lie close to the surface. Memorates, for example, transmute raw experience into narrative - a personal and private happening becomes, in a sense, public property, shaped both by and for public opinion. The language of memorates will therefore reveal cultural patterns and the experience itself will be shaped by cultural expectations. So, if raw experience is transmuted into narrative, and in so doing a report of a visual hallucination becomes a story about the returning dead, then the patterns of action

accorded to the dead in the story will not be idiosyncratic invention but those accorded to the dead in the narrator's community. Personal legend, of course, has already been transformed into a culturally acceptable product - if it had not been, it would not have continued to be transmitted.

In this and the following two chapters therefore the texts of memorates and personal legends told by the study group will be examined, as a direct and relevant way of approaching their beliefs. The emphasis will be predominantly textual, and will examine belief as text. Four points perhaps need stressing and reiterating. First, these texts were collected in the context of discussions of belief. A majority of them were given as direct responses to questions; a minority, though not so immediately question-orientated, were obviously considered both helpful and relevant in the discussion. Secondly, none of these narratives was requested: all were spontaneously volunteered. One may therefore assume that they were designed to be topic-related rather than to display the narrator's skill or familiarity with 'ghost stories' as a genre. Thirdly, they are predominantly memorates. None of them, so far as I am aware, is a traditional legend. They are therefore less affected by literary and historical supernatural stereotypes and more influenced by the concepts current in the teller's and hearer's community. Fourthly, the discourse surrounding the narratives will also be analysed so that texts may be set in context. If non-narrative and narrative accord to present a single, cohesive account of belief patterns, then together they offer strong evidence for the accuracy of that account.

Any discussion of the spirits of the dead and their possible influence on, or activity in, the world of the living must be seen in the context of the study group's ideas about life after death. During fieldwork the question used as an initial general introduction to the topic of the dead was a composite one: "Do you think that we might meet the dead

again in another world, or is it possible that they may return in this one?" Most respondents took up the latter part of the question, ignoring the first or implying an answer to it through their discussion of the second part. As a consequence there are only thirty-one direct replies on which to base a description of their views about life after death. Of the thirty-one women who answer, twenty-two express some measure of belief, four are not sure, and five express convinced disbelief. The rhetoric of both negative and affirmative answers is very consistent, revealing that these are matters quite frequently discussed among women of this age and class. The five negative answers are all couched in terms of an analogy with plant and animal life:

(a) "I have a theory that you're put on this earth for so long, and that's your span of life. It's like a flower. A flower dies, another one doesn't grow in its place: you've got to plant something else, haven't you? I don't believe in reincarnation or meeting the dead." (Paula)

(b) "No, as far as I'm concerned, once you're dead, you're dead. Look at the animals for that." (Rita)

(c) "I think our bodies die like the plants and flowers do." (Phyllis)

Others comment on the lack of evidence or the implausibility of the idea:

(d) "No! Because nobody's come back, have they? I think once you've gone, you've gone. That's _it_. That's the end of it." (Evelyn)

(e) "No, because you must go back thousands of years for things like that, mustn't you? Well, I mean if people are going to come back to me or somebody for all those years, I don't see how it can be. That's my opinion, anyhow, and I think once you're dead that's the end of you." (Gwen)

The recurring linguistic pattern in these replies is the "once you're dead, you're dead" formula and its variants.

The 'don't knows' in no case give that answer as an easy or evasive one. All the answers show that long and careful consideration has been given but no conclusion reached. Geraldine's answer below epitomises the

attitude and its customary expression:

(f) "Well, that is something I've pondered on and I don't
     know. I _think_, yes - but I don't _know_ if there's
     something. We'll have to wait and see."

Just as the "once you're dead you're dead" maxim recurs as a theme in

negative answers, so the "We'll have to wait and see" formula dominates

the 'don't knows'.

Affirmative answers, being more common, show greater variety of form,

but once again there is an underlying logic common to all, indicative of

oft-repeated argument. In this case, two formulae pattern the replies:

(g) "Faith is a great thing."

(h) "It would be very disappointing to go through life
     and not have a feeling that there is something there."

Basically, then, the affirmative answers are based on the assumption of

life's futility without the notion of an afterlife. After that, the

answers take the form of either looking for scriptural evidence or of

puzzling out the nature of a future life and the form in which we will

"meet again".

Though specific response to the first part of the initiating question

("Do you think that we might meet the dead again in another world, or is

it possible that they might return in this one?") is limited, and hence

there is little direct discussion of life after death, it is impossible

to understand answers to the second part of the question except in the

context of this belief. The attitude which informs their philosophy is:

(i) "I think they're _here_. I don't believe that there's
     a deadline, and above, that's Heaven: and below,
     that's Earth underneath it. I don't believe that -
     [G.B.: They have to be around us somewhere?] Yes!
     That's why you suddenly sense a presence, isn't it?"
     (Mary)

It is in the context of this sort of world view that women say, "the dead

never leave me" and expect to be understood at both metaphorical and

literal level. It is in this climate too that Dorothy's poignant little

statement below is made:

(j) "So many - I'm speaking about widows now - find comfort.
They say, 'My husband is walking beside me.'

'It's a very good thing to have', I say, 'what a help
it must be.'

'But,' I've said, 'I've <u>tried</u>. I've tried - I don't
say to <u>contact</u> him - but - - - to feel he's around.
But, no. No.'"

The world of the dead is a protective and genial one as the women's

faith paints it. The concept of life after death reinforces the notion of

the creation's knowability and renders it safe, and these are very important

functions of supernatural belief in the Gatley women's worldview.[1]

It is in this context that the disparity between belief in 'polter-

geists' and belief in 'revenants' has to be considered. During fieldwork

the intention was to follow up clues to belief which the women themselves

let fall rather than to initiate discussion along preplanned lines. Thus

the data reveals the two poles of belief extant in the community rather

than a complete and comprehensive pattern. At one pole, there is the

collection of malevolent phenomena for which the shorthand term 'polter-

geist' is used here: at the other, there are the benevolent and genial

phenomena called here 'revenants'. In many ways the terms 'poltergeist'

and 'revenant' might have been replaced by 'domestic' and 'personal'

spirit, for those are their essential characteristics. Poltergeists are

domestic spirits in so far as they are the sort of spirits which inhabit

houses. The women themselves refer to these as: "<u>things</u> in houses",

"spirits", "ghosts" or "poltergeists", or say that the house is "haunted",

"spirited", "wrong", "unhappy" or simply "nasty". Revenants, on the other

hand, are personal in the sense of being personal to the narrator - private

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1   See above, chapter 6, section 3.3.

and familiar visitors, dead members of the family who appear in response to crisis in the percipient's life.

Malevolent manifestations of supernatural power are significantly less likely to be believed in than benevolent ones. Forty-one percent of those who responded to the question about poltergeists were inclined to believe in them (plus a further eleven percent who believed in happy or unhappy houses); in contrast, sixty percent of those asked expressed some measure of belief in revenants. Equally significantly, the proportion of people who actually answered questions about poltergeists was quite low (only forty-seven out of eighty-seven women), and there were remarkably few narratives on this subject, indeed very little discussion in any form. Whereas the subject of revenants produced no fewer than twenty-five memorates and seven personal legends from the study group, the subject of poltergeists produced only three memorates and four personal legends. Furthermore, taking both the women of the study group and the men and women of the contrast groups together, in 120 interviews only twenty-nine people expanded their answers to this question beyond a simple "yes" or "no". This all plainly indicates that this is not a topic that people like either to think or speak about. It is unsettling and anxiety-inducing; it does not fit into their preferred view of the world as safe, and of the supernatural as an example of God's goodness to Man.

The most direct way of introducing the concepts of poltergeists and revenants as the Gatley women see them, and of showing the contrast between these types of supernatural experience, is by a comparison of the lexis of the narratives told on each subject. A simple but effective technique for calculating lexical preferences was developed by Noel Williams for his study

of fairy lore.[2] By computing the frequency with which key words co-occurred with the term 'fairy', Williams was able to show the contexts and implications of fairylore. A similar, though less complex and more impressionistic, technique was employed by William Lynwood Montell to summarise the essential characteristics of ghosts as they appeared in his corpus of stories from Kentucky.[3] This consisted of a simple list of the lexical items most often used in the stories, arranged according to time, location, and so on. Wordlists such as these help give a broad general picture of a given concept and allow quick and easy comparison of one category of supernatural belief with another.

A count of the most frequently used words overall in the present corpus of stories (that is, lexical words only, excluding grammatical words and rhetorical interjections such as "You know") shows that the most common associations of the term 'poltergeists' for the study women were: house, go, stairs, attic, door, somebody, cellar, nightmare, family and disappear, and the most common associations of the concept of revenants were: dead, feel, see, mother, father, think, say, come, live and there. It may be easily seen that poltergeists as the women understand them are very like legendary ghosts. L.C. Jones's account of haunted houses, for example, gives the following as typical: footsteps, attics, cellars, stairs, noises, moving furniture, lights, pulling off of bedclothes, breezes, bloodstains and strange feelings.[4] There is little, however, in the literature and legends of ghosts to compare directly with all aspects of the women's concept of revenants. The main preoccupation of this chapter will therefore be with describing the concept of the revenant as the

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2   Noel Williams, "The Semantics of the Word 'Fairy' in English between 1320 and 1829", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield,1983.

3   Montell, pp. 90-94.

4   Jones (1959), pp. 57-83.

Gatley women interpret it, especially their concept of revenants who witness and intervene in earthly distress.

2. Poltergeists

2.1 Apologia

It is ironic, perhaps unfortunate, to have to begin the presentation and analysis of the data with a section which differs in its approach from all the others. In section 3 of this chapter and in chapters 8 and 9 the data will be presented initially through the analysis of narrative texts told by women of the study group, and then by the comparison of those texts with the content of non-narrative discourse on the same subject. In considering poltergeists, however, this approach cannot easily be adopted. In the first instance, the members of the study group told only seven narratives on this subject, and in the second place, there was also an unusually small amount of general conversation on the topic. Even taken together, this provides a very restricted view. It seems best, therefore, in considering this topic, to depart from normal practice and to take the views and narratives of all 120 respondents together. The stereotype as revealed by both study group and contrasting groups of informants is substantially the same in any case, and there is no discernible difference in the ways the different ages and sexes interpret the phenomena. Allowing consideration of views expressed by people outside the study group therefore only paints the picture larger.

2.2   <u>The nature of poltergeist phenomena in the data</u>

The phenomena of poltergeists (or "ghosts", "things in houses",

"nasty","haunted" or "unhappy" houses) are seen as peculiar to the house

and, in a sense, it is often the house itself which is somehow to blame

for the manifestations. As the people of Gatley see it, the events and

emotions of former residents remain locked in the house in the form of

"energy" or "waves" - something which current residents can absorb if it

is pleasant or have to contend with if it is unpleasant. Malignantly

directed, this energy is thought to transform itself into a force which

can throw or displace objects, or a "spirit" which goes on echoing events

from its life (sighing, closing doors, switching lights on and off,

flushing toilets), or may   more directly interfere with the current

resident by touching her. This energy or these spirits may have to be

exorcised, or one may receive messages from them, or invoke them by means

of a ouija board. The older the house, the more likely it is to have a

history that might thus physically manifest itself. The reasoning behind

these ideas is pseudo-scientific. Agnes's justification for her belief

is typical, and perhaps the most clearly expressed:

> (a)   If it is possible you can get people who are living -
> you can get their voices in the air, that people can
> speak to you from Australia, New Zealand, as if they
> were in the same room, on the telephone. And every
> single word that's ever been spoken, I've read or heard,
> every sound that's ever been made since the world came
> into being, is still here - . Well, I think that
> your vibrations are all around you, and if there's evil
> don't you tell me that Hitler or any of the dreadful
> atrocities - . There's been heaps and heaps through
> history - burnings at the stake. You couldn't have
> terror and horror and violent physical pain and hatred
> and evil, it can't just disappear, just because the
> people have died. It's still there! And the same
> with very good people.

Thus it is, also, that houses can be good or have good "vibrations"

as well as evil ones. The spirit of a house (in both senses of the word)

may be "happy" as well as "unhappy". The following replies, for example,

were all obviously considered relevant to a discussion of poltergeists:

(b) "But the people have all been good who've been
in that house. My sister said she felt happy when-
ever she came into it. She's been so happy since
she went in there." (Vera)

(c) "If you go into a house you know what it feels like.
You feel the atmosphere when you walk in." (Mary)

(d) "Most houses I've been in have been very friendly."
(Patricia)

(e) "A happy house - Sometimes if you go into a house
you think, 'Oh! I feel happy here!' and other
houses, 'No, I'm not very keen on that house'." (Audrey)

(f) "There's one or two places that I hate and always
have. And I don't know why. I think there are places
that emanate sort of malignant, sort of nasty feelings."
(Agnes)

The examples quoted above are all taken from the conversation of

women in the study group but the most elaborate and entertaining account

is given in a pair of narratives told by one of the younger women:[5]

Fi̲r̲s̲t̲ ̲s̲t̲o̲r̲y̲

I'm in two schools of thought about that. Because - I
can go into, you know. We [laughs] I've never moved
ourselves but, oh boy! I've bought a lot of houses for
other people and we've gone around looking for houses
and bungalows for older people, flats and things, and
sometimes, I've gone into a really grotty property and
thought, 'Oh, this is lovely'. I've gone into a
b̲e̲a̲u̲t̲i̲f̲u̲l̲ new house or bungalow and said, 'Oh, I couldn't
live here'. The house - there's an atmosphere, some-
thing w̲r̲o̲n̲g̲ with it, I can't put my finger on it. But
a f̲r̲i̲e̲n̲d̲ of ours - a funny little story I don't know
whether it will interest you - but he moved from Gatley
after he got married, remarried, wanted to move out of
the area so he went to live at Macclesfield and he was
in this house for quite a while v̲e̲r̲y̲ ̲h̲a̲p̲p̲i̲l̲y̲ and
d̲e̲c̲i̲d̲e̲d̲ that one - oh, across the town - they liked was
a bit bigger and rather liked it, and they a̲c̲t̲u̲a̲l̲l̲y̲

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5   All narratives in this and the following chapters 8 and 9 have been
    modified slightly in transcription (in order to leave them as un-
    cluttered and as easy to read as possible), by the removal of long
    explanatory digressions (such omissions are marked [...] in the
    text), "um"s and "er"s, and minor hearer-responses, such as "mm",
    "yes" and "really". No other alterations have been made.

moved into this house ... [interruption] They actually
moved into the house, and they got everything straight
and Geoff sat down with a cup of coffee and a cigarette
and he says, 'I can't stay here, we're moving out', and
he hadn't even slept in the house, and his wife played
pop with him! And just wouldn't - . Now, he is a very
sensitive man - for a man, particularly sensitive - and
he renegotiated, and they bought their old house back.
But, I mean, everybody laughed at him. But there must
have been something in it because .... [laughs]

(Narrative 132: Berenice)

Second story

We had a technician at work. She had this feeling.
They moved into this house, and she said it was
about two years before they really settled into it,
and she said, 'It wasn't till we'd actually gone
right through it, re-decorated, re-furnished, re-
everything,'and made it into her house. She said
'Oh', she said, 'the first night, I was unhappy!'
'Like you', she said, 'I don't know what it was',
and she says, 'As far as I know, there'd been a
divorce, the previous couple had been divorced', and
she said it was an unhappy house, very unhappy
atmosphere.

(Narrative 133: Berenice)

Berenice's second narrative affords some clues to the rationale of

happy/unhappy houses: she says, "The previous couple had been divorced".

Other respondents mentioned "suicides and murders and things like that".

Still others see the motivating force as an "evil spirit", an intruder

into the house, as in this memorate told by one of the study group:

Ha hmmh! This makes me laugh! I was doing some
sewing - I think it was about a month ago now - and
I have an electric sewing machine and I can't thread
this sewing machine without one of Singer's things
they have to put it through. Well! During the course
of the afternoon that disappeared and also a red
flannel tab thing I keep needles in - that disappeared
too, and I've never been able to find either of them
since, and yet! They were never taken out of the
room as far as I know, and I said to myself, 'I wonder
if there's any evil spirits lurking about?' [laughs]

(Narrative 64: Joan)

This little memorate, told as ironic comedy, rests on an assumption about the sorts of things evil spirits are likely to do. The same assumption lies behind another lady's account of her terror at finding her cutting out shears and bobbins arranged in a neat pattern on the hall carpet.

In narratives and discussion typical ghost behaviour is reported in association with the idea of poltergeists. Speakers give accounts of hearing mysterious footsteps and other noises, of seeing windows or doors shut of their own accord, of strange feelings, of breezes and apparitions, as follows:

<u>footsteps</u>

> My father - this is going back a good few years - he used to do a lot of reading. (This was before television) and (I think we must have been only little) my mother was in bed, and all of a sudden he came <u>bounding</u> up the stairs! He said he'd been sat there and all of a sudden he heard footsteps coming up the cellar steps! He wasn't imagining it! And he was so scared my mother had to go down! But there was nobody there.
>
> (Narrative 134: Jenny)

<u>windows/doors shutting/opening</u>

(a) I'd - . It's just a - . This might be nothing to do with what - . I had to go upstairs and my wife was downstairs and all of a sudden she said when I came down, said, 'There's a door closed behind', you know as though, you know as though she thought it was me. I said, 'No, not me. I'd gone upstairs', and the daughter thought it was funny too. She wasn't even in reach of the door, like. You know and - . There was no way the draught would have caused it. It was quite a still night. That was the only thing I could think of. Yes, well, I thought something was there, you know, but I didn't hear anybody, just the sudden movement of the door, closing, and nobody in easy access of the door. Never forget it, you know!

(Narrative 112: Philip)

(b) I mean I go for music lessons on a Saturday morning and this little room where I do -. Years ago, years and years back, a lady was supposed to have hung herself there, and there's supposed to be a <u>spirit</u> there and door's mysteriously banged and music's flown about and this sort of thing. (Sandra)

<u>noises/strange feelings</u>

> I met one lady and she said the house was kind of
> haunted. They heard things going on and that.
> Anyway they left it in the end. But funny things
> used to happen when they lived there. (Clara)

<u>breezes</u>

> Again, do you remember Wolfgang telling us the story
> about his uncle, the pastor? ... He had an uncle who
> was a pastor, a Lutheran pastor, and Wolfgang was very
> attached to this uncle ... and the uncle had told him
> about the - . Or it was strong family knowledge.
> They moved into this equivalent to the Manse, what-
> ever they call it, and it was quite empty and not a
> very nice sort of a place altogether. It was a bit
> grim, and his uncle wasn't a bit <u>happy</u> about it. But
> anyway, they settled down, the family did, and he was
> in his study writing his sermons and suddenly all his
> books came off the shelf and flew all over the place
> and his papers - his sermons - were all fluttering
> about like leaves, and the uncle wasn't really very
> concerned. He thought there was a sudden wind, though
> there was no window open or anything, and he went out
> into the other room, passage, or what-have-you, and
> asked his wife and she said, "No, no, nothing. Why?
> What do you mean?" And it happened again and again.
> Every time he went to sit down to do any study, all
> his papers flew up all over the place. Now, I know
> to make the story <u>real</u>, I should say what it was that
> had caused this, and Wolfgang did sort of connect it
> up to something, but that I've forgotten.

> (Narrative 129: Agnes)

Apart from the mysterious wind and flying papers, many other traditional

motifs appear in this little personal legend. For example the polter-

geist strikes only the man of God and that when he is writing his sermon;

the place itself is "grim" and makes them feel "unhappy". The house is

an empty Manse. Traditional assumptions also clearly structure the

telling of the story. The manifestation does not appear immediately; it

is first given a natural explanation and then its true nature only becomes

clear when a check is made. Most significant of all, the narrator feels

that because she cannot provide a context or cause, somehow this is not a

"real" story: the German boy from whom she heard it did, however, "sort

of connect it up to something". Finally, unintentionally the narrator

provides a cryptic comment about legend definition and transmission in

her, "the uncle had told him ... or it was strong family knowledge".

apparitions

> My mother's cousin was a sister of, <u>before</u> she was
> a sister of nursing, she, they moved into a house
> because when my mother's mother died she went, her
> and her father went to live with her aunty, you see,
> and the daughter of this aunty was a - could see
> people we couldn't see, and she said, "You know,
> there's an old lady, a little old lady living in
> this house. It keeps going up and down the stairs,
> and she's quite harmless, but she's very nice, and
> she's dressed in old-fashioned clothes", and she
> found out afterwards that it was a little old lady
> died in the house. There must be something in it.
> She was always seeing things.
>
> <div align="right">(Narrative 128: Audrey)</div>

It is interesting to note here that it is only to this sort of apparition

(that is, a household apparition) that the term 'ghost' is applied by the

people of Gatley. These ghosts are very clearly differentiated from

'revenants'. For example Carrie, the oldest woman in the sample group,

responds with some alarm to the notion of poltergeistic ghosts. She says:

> It must be awful really, mustn't it, seeing people
> like that? It must be awful! It must be frightening,
> mustn't it?

Yet Carrie, in response to an earlier question, gave an account of how

her dead mother regularly returns to warn her of sickness and danger in

the family. Clearly, seeing her dead mother is not at all like "seeing

people" in a haunted house.

Altogether the smallness of the number of respondents to this question

in the sample and the paucity of discussion in general on this subject

make it difficult to present more than a general outline of the concept

of poltergeists as the Gatley people use it. Their ideas may, however, be

to some extent clarified by looking at the structure of the narratives on

the subject. Leaving aside Berenice's two stories about the 'feel' of
a house, there are eleven narratives which fall into four patterns. In
one type the narrator "sees somebody" whom she can describe quite clearly:
a man or a lady "in a shawl" or "old-fashioned clothes", which description
is found later to correspond with the description of a dead former resi-
dent of the house (Audrey's story above conforms to this pattern). In a
second type, natural noises are heard which are clearly described, and
then the narrator stresses that "nobody was there or anything", usually
concluding with a metagloss "There must be something in it" or similarly
justificatory remark (see Jenny's and Philip's stories above). A third
type describes inherently alarming, although not intrinsically unnatural
experiences, recounts how the family had to leave or how the building was
exorcised, and again ends with an evaluative gloss (see Molly's narrative
below). A fourth type is highly eliptical. It describes a cause and an
outcome without specifying any effects directly. The essential ambivalence
of the story is usually increased by referring to 'nightmares':

> Well, I've not experienced it but I've met people who
> have. Now, you see, my daughter may be more inclined
> to believe these things than me. But she had a friend
> that lived in a very, very old house and they were
> using the ouija board, and three of them were using this
> ouija board and the other friend was in bed, and she
> woke up with a terrible nightmare and said that there
> was someone bending over her. So they didn't bother
> with the ouija board again, and it was a very old, tall
> house that they lived in.
>
> (Narrative 140: Valerie)

The first three types feature natural occurrences without natural
causation: the danger is seen in terms of an unsettling of the natural
world, rather than in terms of inherently unnatural happenings. The struc-
ture of these narratives is suggestive of their psychology: it is the in-
explicable that is threatening. In narratives of the fourth kind, the
inherent threat comes to the surface: these reveal the taboo which is

placed on the deliberate seeking out of psychic experience - a pattern
which repeats itself in narratives on a variety of topics within the
scope of the supernatural.

2.3   The 'classic' poltergeist and the poltergeist as envisaged
       in Gatley

Two narratives are presented by way of finale in order to
summarise some of the major themes found in answers to questions about
poltergeists in the data. The first is chosen because it contains the
principal features which distinguish the women's concept of a haunted
house, and the second because it describes a classical poltergeist experience.
A comparison of the two is useful in delineating differences between
academic and native categories.

Molly's story

> We lived in a house that was - I thought was spirited.
> It was lady committed suicide in the house, and then
> nobody would live in it. We lived in it. We were
> desperate you know for another house. We went to
> live in it. We had all kinds of things happened.
> Otherwise I wouldn't have believed in it, because
> I do believe in spirits. I don't say ghosts. I
> don't know whether they're the same. I imagine they
> are really. [G.B. - What happened there?] Oh well,
> the toilet used to flush when nobody was in, and we'd
> hear somebody walking in the passage, and we'd go to
> the door and there'd be nobody there, you know, and
> my mother was wa- hanging washing up one day in the
> attic. You know, we'd two big attics. [G.B. - An
> old house, was it?] Yes, in Chorlton, it was. St.
> Brundrett's Road - I don't know whether you know it.
> [Yes] and she was hanging washing up one day and
> somebody came behind her and gripped her by the
> shoulders and she thought it was one of us but it
> wasn't. Well, we all believed in them. We didn't
> live long in that house. It got a bit unnerving.
> [G.B. - Do you believe in spirits then?] Well, I've
> experienced them.

(Narrative 95)

This house exhibits all the phenomena customarily associated with 'polter-
geists' in the women's thinking. A woman has committed suicide in it and

now it is deserted. It is an old house in a secluded area. Toilets flush, doorbells ring, and in the attic something grasps a lone person by the shoulders. Eventually the family must leave.

The contrast between Molly's 'poltergeist' and Jack's below could not be greater:

Jack's story

And I was brought up waiting for the Second Coming. My mother used to say to me often, "You'd better ask God to forgive you before you wake up, because you may never wake up and you'll find yourself in Hell!" And I used to go to sleep often terrified that I hadn't been really forgiven for whatever it was I'd done, and I - therefore I - . I know actually in my own mind the Last Day was a feature that I waited for with horror sometimes, and sometimes if I felt I'd been saved, I w - I could almost look forward to it, and my Grandmother would expound on it in great detail [...] and I would feel the mixture of thrill and terror depending on how well I thought I was placed in the elected. But having been brought up with that kind of thing, I'm quite sure I developed a kind of poltergeist - not an entity, there was nothing living in me - but I'm quite sure my mind was concentrated on the terrified occult. It was forced in that direction because I daren't think of the things I was really - was being led to believe because some of them were too terrible to accept.

And I remember distinctly - oh, for several weeks - and I never told my mother or anyone about it - lying awake and listening to tappings above the doorway in the bedroom, and they were positive and definite tappings. I didn't imagine them because they aroused me and terrified me and I knew that they were not of my world. I believe now that they were of my making because, well, I've come to accept that it was a very disturbed little mind within me. But these tappings used to continue for quite a while and strange lights would come through the window. Now, where I lived, the A 5 passed by and car lights would sweep across the ceiling from one side to the other. And they're nice, because you'd see them approaching, oh, half a mile away and then they'd come into full vision and rapidly cross the ceiling. Now, these lights were not of the same kind. These lights appeared through the window and were static and they used to occupy a space in the middle of the room where an illumination - . Now, I never saw anything in the way of a Being or anything of that kind, it was merely a light, and that happened several times, and was also associated with the rappings - not 'tappings'. They were harsh, hard and rappings that couldn't have been made on a wall or door. That's the point: I've only just thought of that now. They were above the door and yet were rappings on a hard surface. Now a

wall hasn't got a hard substance like that. Funny!
I hadn't thought of that till just then. I know
exactly the place they came from. I'd recurrent
dreams, and the dreams were always of the same nature
of - . Oh! I've got to mention before, so as to keep
things in the proper context. There was a space in the
corner behind my parents' bed - I slept in the same
bedroom, both my brother and I. It was a common thing
among working class people in those days when the space
was crowded, and in my parents' bedroom in which I was
sleeping there was one corner against their bed where
'Hob' lived. Now, I <u>knew</u> he was Hob. I knew him. I
met him frequently. I used to meet him in dreams and
in half-dreams. That - . My recollection of Hob is of
him sitting on a gatepost. Now, I may have seen something
like that in books but - . Not on the gatepost, on the
<u>gate</u>, and I was always terrified to go past him. Now I
woke up several nights terrified of Hob and also terrified
of these tappings I heard, and my mother used to come up
but I daren't tell her. I just daren't tell her that
kind of thing. First either it would be interpreted as
some kind of punishment, or I was in league with the
Devil, and in any case for one reason or another I
didn't tell her. I didn't tell her about Hob and where
Hob lived. I used to tell her I'd had a nightmare about
pirates.

(Narrative 111)

The content of this account is quite different from Molly's: it consists

of unnatural lights and tappings, rather than natural happenings occurring

without adequate causation as in Molly's story. Yet, even here in an

account which shows the influence of introspection and reading more than

discussion and oral culture, the picture is obscured by the introduction

of a traditional supernatural creature (surprisingly one of the oldest

and most conventional creatures - a boggart or hobgoblin). This narrative

is proof enough, were proof needed, that in the realm of the supernatural,

especially as mediated through narrative, there are no easy categories or

simple distinctions.

3. Revenants

3.1   Background

'Poltergeists' as the Gatley people understand them are very
like the 'ghost' of legend and literature, but some classes of 'revenant'
are very much less familiar types. One of the main interests of the field-
work and analysis has been in discovering this class of revenant which owes
little to what one might call 'formal traditions' but is obviously a vital
aspect of informal traditions of the supernatural among the Gatley women
and their peers. The strength of their belief in these sorts of appari-
tion, and the vitality of their discussions and narratives on the subject
show this to be a very important aspect of their group folklore. As there
is no reason to suppose that the women are untypical in any way, very
probably these beliefs flourish as vigorously among many (or most) elderly
women as among the present study group. In the concept of 'revenants' in
general, I believe, we have discovered an important present-day folklore
of the supernatural.

In brief, the concept of the revenant, as the discourse and narratives
of the Gatley women reveal it, is a belief that dead members of the family
return at times of crisis in the capacity of helpers and comforters, as
companions on the journey of the dying to another world, or as warnings
of danger and death. Belief in this sort of apparition is strongly
grounded in the women's metaphysical conception of the world as a single,
unified and protective creation of a caring God. The supernatural world
surrounds the natural and the dead are still near the living in a very
real sense, witnessing the events of the mundane world and capable of
intervention. Two statements given in response to questions about the
return of the dead neatly summarise these attitudes:

> Wasn't it St. Paul who said, 'We are surrounded
> with a great crowd of witnesses'? (Audrey)
>
> But, you know, they do say that if we pray hard
> enough for anyone ill or anything like that, the
> best will happen for them. How much more so,
> then, from someone who's transcended everything.
> (Ruth)

Here, in their interpretation of biblical quotation and religious doctrine,

lies the key to their faith in revenants. The dead are a "great crowd of

witnesses", literally witnesses, who surround the living with their care

and concern. Prayer to God is effective as a means of procuring the "best"

for one in distress, but prayer directed towards former loved ones who

"have transcended everything" is even more potent. Dead loved ones are

intermediaries between the supreme supernatural forces and humble and

helpless mortals.

3.2   Methods of analysis

The nature of the concept of revenants will be explored in de-

tail in the remaining sections of this chapter, and some attempt will be

made to assess the function(s) of this belief in the women's lives. The

picture will be drawn by means of lexical and structural analysis of the

narratives told on the subject, and by a comparison of these texts with

non-narrative statements and discussion. The corpus of narrative for

this analysis consists of twenty-five memorates and seven personal legends.

The narratives about revenants have five possible structural com-

ponents. They invariably begin with a description of scene and setting;

after that they may move on to supplying contextual information in the

form of descriptions of the percipient's state of mind or body at the time

the events happened. This is followed by either a description of (a) how

the percipient became aware of the revenant, (b) how the revenant behaved,

or both. Finally, a narrator may move on to an account of the outcome of

the visitation. Typically the narratives are preceded and followed by

boundary markers in the form of an 'abstract'[6] and 'metagloss'[7] respectively. Some or all of these elements are combined in a loose, episodic structure in which time and causation are implied rather than stated, and events are not necessarily presented in their chronological order. Section 3.4 will analyse the various structural permutations in order to discover causal and contextual patterns in the narratives and, through them, the logic of the original experience and its interpretation. Meanwhile, section 3.3 immediately below examines the lexical choices that narrators make in each structural slot when telling their stories, in order to discover the common associations of the concept of the revenant, for, though the experience itself is of course private, personal, and perhaps even idiosyncratic, any account of the experience is necessarily coloured by cultural expectations. Lexical analysis is the most direct way of revealing these cultural expectations for it is through the choice of words in which to clothe experience that they most clearly show themselves.

3.3   Lexis

The lexis was analysed in each of the structural elements of the narratives, with the exception of the abstract, as follows:

---

6   The term is Labov's. William Labov, Language in the Inner City (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 370.

7   The term is Janet Langlois's. Langlois, p. 149.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENT	LEXICAL ITEM ANALYSED
1. descriptions of scene and setting	1. nouns of place and time
2. condition of narrator	2. adjectives
3. how revenant was perceived	3. predicate (verb) and complement (headword and qualifier)
4. how revenant behaved	4. predicate (verbal group) and adjunct
5. outcome	5. predicate (verbal group)
6. metagloss	6. adjectives

In this way one can discover:

1. what the essential context of the visitation of a revenant is thought to be (from the nouns and adjectives used in elements 1 and 2);

2. what the experience of 'seeing' a revenant is thought to consist of, who the revenants are, how they look, and what they do (from the lexis of elements 3 and 4);

3. what the consequence of seeing a revenant is thought to be (from the terminology used in element 5);

4. how the narrators themselves feel about their experience (from the evaluative adjectives used in the metagloss).

This analysis also has the advantage that it can be presented in tabular form for easy reference.

The wordlists were compiled as follows. In the clauses composing structural element 1, for example, all nouns of time and place were noted down and listed, and the number of times narrators used each one were counted to give a frequency overall. This very simple process gives useful insights into the common associations of revenant belief. In table 1 below, for example, it is easy to see that revenants are thought to appear indoors much more frequently than outdoors, for words associated with outdoors (garden, lane) are used only twice in the course of thirty-two

stories. The frequency with which any given word is used in a narrative is a simple and direct guide to the frequency with which its referrent is associated with revenants in the women's worldview.

The results of the lexical analysis are presented in tabular form below.

TABLE 1: Nouns of place and time used in descriptions of scene and setting

PLACE				TIME		
INDOORS		OUTDOORS		HOUR		OCCASION
house	(15)	garden (1)		night (11)		Invariable
bedroom	(14)	lane (1)		day (8)		always (10)
room	(5)			morning (1)		whenever (1)
kitchen	(1)					everytime (1)
workplace	(1)					
						Common
						many times (1)
						several times (1)
						often (1)
						Infrequent
						sometimes (2)
						occasionally (1)
						Specific
						once (9)
						when (5)
						ago (3)
						before (2)
						after (3)

TABLE 2: Adjectives used in descriptions of percipient's state of mind/body

ASLEEP	UNTROUBLED	MENTAL DISTRESS		PHYSICAL DISTRESS	
dreaming (2)	wide awake (4)	searching	(3)	dying	(5)
		low	(2)	ill	(4)
		muddled	(2)	tired	(2)
		uncertain	(1)	delirious	(1)
		shocked	(1)	going through the crisis	(1)
		praying	(1)		
		unhappy	(1)		

TABLE 3: <u>Predicate and complement in clauses describing perception of revenant*</u>

VERB		COMPLEMENT (identity of revenant) (HEADWORD)		COMPLEMENT (description of revenant) (QUALIFIER)	
Communication		**Relative**		in white	(1)
say	(4)	parent	(20)	in uniform	(1)
talk	(1)	husband	(9)	with his arms up	(1)
ask	(1)	child	(5)	cross	(1)
		grandparent	(3)	unhappy	(1)
Perception		aunt	(1)	a grey shadow	(1)
see	(12)	**Human (unspecified)**			
touch	(4)	lady	(3)		
hear	(3)	someone	(3)		
smell	(1)	people	(2)		
		they	(2)		
Cognition		she	(1)		
feel	(16)	family	(1)		
think	(4)	something	(1)		
imagine	(3)	**Animal**			
know	(2)	cat	(1)		
experience	(1)	**Spiritual**			
Action		presence	(8)		
hold	(1)	message	(3)		
		apparition	(1)		
		spirit	(1)		
		Disembodied			
		voice	(3)		
		face	(1)		
		Inanimate			
		smoke	(1)		
		flowers	(1)		

* Note: subject is "I" or "she"

TABLE 4: <u>Predicate and adjunct in descriptions of revenant's behaviour</u>

PREDICATE (VERBAL GROUP)

VERB		EXTENSION	
<u>Exist</u>		<u>Manner</u>	
is	(15)	alive	(15)
seem to be	(7)	there	(7)
<u>Communicate</u>		<u>Position</u>	
tell	(8)	to	(8)
say	(3)	in	(8)
cough	(2)	with	(4)
listen	(1)	in front of	(4)
reassure	(1)	before	(3)
show	(1)	at	(3)
call	(1)	by	(3)
warn	(1)	beside	(2)
say	(1)	back	(2)
remind	(1)	around	(2)
speak	(1)	up	(1)
		through	(1)
<u>Approach</u>		round	(1)
come	(8)		
meet	(4)		
stand	(1)		
walk	(1)		
go	(1)		
pass	(1)		
open (door)	(1)		
<u>Act</u>			
help	(3)		
look at	(3)		
give	(1)		
bend (over)	(1)		
rub (against legs)	(1)		
tuck up	(1)		
smile	(1)		
hide	(1)		
shake	(1)		
wake	(1)		
break	(1)		

TABLE 4, cont'd.

ADJUNCT

LOCATION		MANNER	
Internal		**Explicit**	
in my ┌─brain	(1)	plainly	(5)
├─vision	(1)	strongly	(4)
├─head	(1)	distinctly	(3)
└─dream	(1)	true	(3)
		clearly	(2)
External		**Vague**	
in the ┌─bedroom	(4)	as though	(8)
├─room	(1)	sort of	(2)
└─house	(1)	like	(2)
there	(3)	somehow	(1)
near	(1)	in a way	(1)
		unconsciously	(1)

TABLE 5: Predicate in descriptions of outcome of revenant's visitation

Bad result		Good result	
died	(3)	was OK afterwards	(2)
was killed	(2)	got help	(2)
was something wrong	(1)	found	(2)
fell	(1)	did [as instructed]	(2)
had [burglars]	(1)	remembered	(1)
		was calm and quiet	(1)

TABLE 6: Adjectives used in metagloss

MORAL COMMENT			NON-MORAL COMMENT	
Unfavourable			**Strange**	
imagination	(3)		funny	(5)
superstition	(2)		extraordinary	(3)
silly	(2)		strange	(3)
			interesting	(3)
Favourable			odd	(2)
real	(5)		**Uplifting**	
true	(2)		wonderful	(1)
			lovely	(1)
			miracle	(1)
			fascinating	(1)
			comfort	(1)

The tables help to build up a preliminary picture of the women's concepts of revenants. We may see that, as far as the times and places of their coming are concerned, they are thought to appear most often in one's own home, particularly in the bedroom, and they may come as often during the day as during the night. The most common context of such a visit is the physical or mental distress of the percipient; death, illness and anxiety predominate as precipitating conditions. When a narrator tells how she perceived this visitor it is most common for her to say that she felt (the presence) or she saw (her mother). Parents are particularly common as revenants, then husbands and presences. It is seldom for a revenant to be described at all, but when a storyteller does put in a little description these are most often purely conventional (figures in white, and grey shadows). The revenants themselves are most likely to be described as being as though alive or as seeming to be there, and their

most common behaviour is to tell, come, say or help. They would seem to

be thought of as existing alongside the living rather than returning from

a distinctly separate place, as the relational prepositions to, in, with,

by, beside, (a)round show (the term back, as in 'come back' is rather in-

frequently used). The revenant is seen to be external to the narrator

more often than as existing in her brain, dreams or visions, and is

described as plainly and evidently present as often as sort of or somehow

there, though the "apparent metaphor"[8] as though is a frequent descriptive

phrase. Overall the experience is evaluated in terms of strangeness or

wonder much more often than it is considered stupid or superstitious.

3.4   Structure

        An even clearer picture of the revenant as it appears in memorate

and personal legend can be drawn by examining the typical structures of

these narratives. There are five descriptive blocks from which the women

construct their stories: that is, descriptions of:

1.   scene and setting;

2.   percipient's state of mind or body (condition);

3.   how the revenant was perceived;

4.   how the revenant behaved;

5.   the outcome of the visitation (consequence).

At its briefest and least specific a narrative may consist of the first

and either the third or fourth of these elements; a more elaborate story

will provide all five elements and also have boundary markers and perhaps

an abstract or metagloss[9] There are five types of story discernible in

---

8   David Hufford suggests that phrases using terms such as "I felt as
    if..." are intentionally ambiguous, constructed so that though they
    are meant literally by the speaker they may be interpreted metaphori-
    cally by a hearer. Hufford (1976 (a)), p. 19.

9   The structure of memorate will be more fully discussed in chapter
    10, section 3.2.

the corpus of stories about revenants, depending on which of these five

elements a narrator uses to compose her story:

A.   'Basic' narratives (using elements 1, 3 or 4);

B.   'Condition' narratives (using elements 1, 2, 3 and/or 4);

C.   'Consequence' narratives (using elements 1, 3 and/or 4, 5);

D.   'Complex' narratives (using elements 1, 2, 3 and/or 4, 5).

Each type of story reveals a stratum of supernatural belief common among

the study group. Each is distinct, but together they build up a consis-

tent and unified picture of revenant belief in the community. The following

pages will give examples of each type, examine their structure, and inter-

pret structure in terms of traditions and expectations about the return

of the dead.

3.4.1   Complex narratives

A narrative of this type gives the fullest account of a visit

from a revenant. After setting the scene, the narrator goes on to give

other contextual detail in the form of a description of the percipient's

state of mind or body. Then an account of the visitation is given, followed

by a résumé of the outcome of the events. This therefore is a symmetrical

structure in which the before and after of the central events are matched.

Agnes's story below is a good example of a complex story. After briefly

dating the events, she goes into a long preamble about her childhood and

the relationship between her brother, Billy, and her father (omitted in

the transcription for brevity's sake). The story then resumes with a

setting of the scene (element 1). Next Agnes describes the situation in

which Billy finds himself one particular morning - a situation of anxiety

and danger (element 2). Structural elements 3 and 4 are here represented

by her telling how Billy hears a voice, and by recounting the words which

are spoken. Lastly comes the outcome of the intervention (element 5) -

the successful completion of his task.

> Dad had been dead now for three or four years
> [....]
> But Billy was working at the time of the story down
> for a farmer, a local farmer, Dick Key at the Hall Farm
> at Coreley, and he used to have to go to market with
> these bigger horses than ours, but still cart horses,
> and he was going to Tenbury market one terrible - ,
> one - terrible - frosty day. It was dark morning,
> early morning, and the horse, the leading horse (he
> had two on this occasion) slipped and fell, and he - .
> Remember, Billy would then be only fifteen or sixteen
> at the most and no experience. He was stuck in a
> country lane and a horse - , and the load all up like
> this! The one horse had dragged the other horse down,
> and he didn't know what to do a bittle bit, and he
> said he - . This is the story - . You know how you
> do, "Oh! Help me! What shall I do? What shall I do?"
> and saying it out loud, and he said Dad's voice quite
> clearly came to him, and he looked round to see if Dad
> was there but he didn't see him, said, "Cut the girth
> cord, Bill. Cut the girth cord, Bill!" Now Dad only
> ever - . We always called him 'Billy', but we didn't - .
> Dad always called him 'Bill', and he cut the girth
> cord and the leading horse got up and he was able to
> go, and he got to Tenbury very shaken, very frightened,
> but his load intact.
>
> (Narrative 115: Agnes)

The principal interest of complex stories lies in their symmetrical

before-and-after structure which matches the percipient's prior condition

to his/her subsequent one. This tells the observer what are the contextual

conditions that are thought to precipitate a visitation from the dead and

what changes to that condition the revenant is seen as being able to effect.

An examination of the contents of the second and fifth structural

slots (that in which the narrator describes the prior condition of the

percipient, and that in which the consequences of the revenant's inter-

vention is described) in the story corpus is most interesting. In the ten

narratives of this type, the second slot is filled by:

1. "And she was very ill. She'd measles very badly and
   was in a bad way actually." (Narrative 119: Ella);

2. "I think it was measles she [the daughter] had, but
   she had it very badly, and she [the mother] had to go

out of the room and she was very, very worried."
(Narrative 117: Edie);

3.   "And Bill got one of his headaches and he couldn't
     see where he was going ... and I was so shocked...."
     (Narrative 6: Winifred);

4.   "I went through quite a bad time a few years ago."
     (Narrative 8: Violet);

5.   "We were living in this house where we were all
     unhappy." (Narrative 22: Kate);

6.   "And the horse, the leading horse (he had two on this
     occasion) slipped and fell [...] And he didn't know
     what to do a little bit...." (Narrative 115: Agnes);

7.   "And I couldn't find any details [...] and I had
     been puzzling and wondering," (Narrative 16: Lizzie);

8.   "So he said, 'I don't know where the damn thing is!'
     (Narrative 13: Maura);

9.   "And I couldn't find my pension book anywhere ... I
     searched and searched for it and couldn't find it
     anywhere." (Narrative 15: Audrey);

10. " ... and said, 'Your mother wants you'." (Narrative
     120: Alma).

These precipitating conditions can all be seen in terms of LACK.[10]

The first quotation shows the percipient's lack of health; the second and

third show one person's lack of health and an onlooker's lack of peace of

mind; the fourth, fifth and sixth show various types of anxiety and

dangerous lack of direction; the seventh, eighth and ninth show the narra-

tor lacking some essential object and engaged in a fruitless search for

it; the final example shows a dying mother lacking the comforting presence

of her daughter in her last moments. In each of these situations the dead

take a hand - issuing instructions, carrying messages, reminding,

strengthening or reassuring the distressed person.

_____

10. The term 'Lack' (and its opposite 'Lack Liquidated') are Dundes's.
     Alan Dundes, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folk-
     tales", in Alan Dundes (ed.), The Study of Folklore (Englewood
     Cliffs, 1965), p. 208.

It is interesting to match each of the quoted contextual elements

with the corresponding consequence in slot five. By doing so the functions
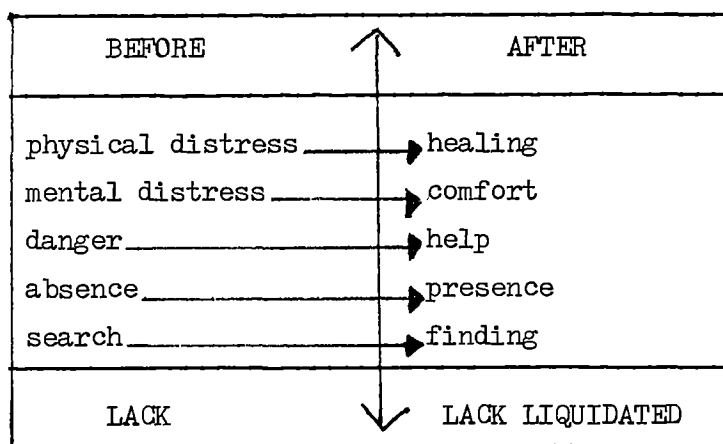
of revenants are neatly demonstrated:

1. "But from then on, funnily enough she was alright.
   She improved.";

2. "and when she came back, this child was as calm and
   quiet as ever.";

3. "and he had to have an operation on his head. He was
   in neuro-surgical for two months";

4. "I got help";

5. "We went, yes";

6. "and the leading horse got up and he was able to go,
   and he got to Tenbury very shaken, very frightened,
   but his load intact";

7. "and I was reminded that we took it, and it was so!";

8. "So I pulled the paper up and there it was!";

9. "and I lifted the tissues up and there was my pension
   book";

10. "She got up, got her dressing-gown on and she went
    downstairs. 'Oh!' he says, 'I'm glad you've come, I
    was just coming for you.' ... [GB: What happened
    then?] Oh! She died. She died a few minutes
    afterwards."

In brief, where a lack exists the intervention of the dead liquidates

that lack. The types of lack which are seen as significant conditions for

the intervention of a revenant are:

1. lack of health   (physical distress)

2. lack of peace of mind (mental distress)

3. lack of information   (danger)

4. lack of a person   (absence)

5. lack of an object   (search)

These narratives feature the dead person as approaching or intervening or

communicating by coming to the living, answering questions, providing

information, telepathically reassuring, reminding or instructing the living.

The types of lack liquidated can be diagrammatically represented as

follows:

BEFORE	AFTER
physical distress———→	healing
mental distress———→	comfort
danger———————→	help
absence————————→	presence
search—————————→	finding
LACK	LACK LIQUIDATED

In summary, the most common type of revenant in the Gatley women's

typology of the supernatural is one which makes little or no appearance

in older legends and literature. It is neither poltergeist, haunting ghost,

fetch, nor omen of death. For want of a ready-made term they may be

called 'witnesses' for this term embodies their main characteristic. They

are revenants who remain close to the living, witnessing the affairs of

mundane life, responding to crisis and being powerful for good.

Keith Thomas, in discussing society and the dead,[11] says that ghost

beliefs are more likely to be important where it is believed that in

significant areas of life the behaviour of the living should be governed

by the presumed wishes of the dead, and one where links with the dead are

deliberately preserved. Though Thomas implies that such societies are

absent in the modern Western world, subgroups of this sort do exist. Women

such as those of the study group - elderly, middleclass, church-going,

conventional women - constitute a subgroup with just these values. Again,

Robert Blauner says that nowadays when people tend to live out their

natural lifespan, there are fewer deaths among the socially and economically

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11   Thomas (1971), pp. 602-606.

powerful and this reduces the vacuum they leave behind, and therefore the
need for ghosts.[12] The social vacuum left behind by the deaths of the
husbands of women such as these, however, is considerable.[13] Many of
them have never been independent and never had to manage their own affairs
or make unassisted judgements. Their conversation is full of the diffi-
culties they have faced since they have been alone, and their stories show
time and again how they have felt themselves to be inadequate and confused.
For many of them every triumph has been put down to help from beyond, help
given by figures of power and authority, the dead husband or the lost
parent. In stories in which a lack is liquidated by the coming of a
revenant, then, several psychological, social and cultural threads are
twisted into a single pattern.

Another vital aspect of this type of revenant is that it is essentially
purposeful. Indeed an examination of other revenant types in the narra-
tive corpus invites the same general conclusion. For the Gatley women
revenants are seldom or never casual or meaningless phenomena (that is
one of their essential differences by which they may be distinguished from
poltergeists). They are, in a sense, caused by conditions in the mundane
world and their coming has consequences in it. They are part of a chain
that reaches from the supernatural to the natural sphere, and as such a
part of the natural world rather than a discordant intrusion into it.
Nothing, in fact, could be further from the conventional concept of the
ghost, and nothing could contradict more vigorously the claim that modern
ghosts are purposeless and meaningless phenomena.

---

12 Blauner, p. 382.

13 This applies, of course, to the death of Billy's father in Agnes's
    narrative too.

3.4.2   Consequence narratives

In a group of seven narratives the second element of condition is absent and the storyteller concentrates on the consequence of the visit from the dead. These narratives are very valuable in revealing another basic in supernatural traditions among the study group. In stories with the Lack → Lack Liquidated structure the revenant is, in a sense, called back to the physical world by the distress of a loved survivor. Where, however, a revenant appears without thus being called or attracted to the percipient, the implications of seeing one are more ominous than comforting.

The first two stories which serve as illustration of this type of narrative are set out in tabular form so that their typical structure can be seen:

structural element	text
1.	My husband - . During the war - . Well, it was during the first world war really. Well, at the end. He was young. He was at home. But he was away with his sister and they - .
4.	The young man his sister was engaged to, because she was a bit older than he was, he appeared before them in the bedroom as plain as anything in his uniform. He said it was just as if he was almost there,
5.	and he'd been killed just at that time in the war
	(Narrative 118: Ella)

Here Ella sets the scene (1), then moves straight on to describing how the revenant appeared to them (4), finally ending with the outcome (5) - "he'd been killed just at that time in the war".

A similar set of expectations also come with Vera's narrative:

structural element	text
1	My mother was Highland. Once or twice
3	I see her come back.
4	She comes
5	if there's anything ill going to happen in the family, anything like that, any trouble or anything.
5/1	When my brother died that was the last incident that happened in the family.[14]
4	She came.
3	I could see her, you know, quite distinctly
5	and I said, "Well, something's happened, something's going to happen", and I heard a day or two after that George had died suddenly.
	(Narrative 24: Vera)

Here Vera begins with a minimal scene setting - the brief phrase "once or twice" (1), then moves on to her own perception - "I see her come back" (3). Then she tells, again briefly, how her mother "comes" (4) when there is to be trouble (5). At that point she begins again and gives a fuller account in a slightly different order (5/1, 4, 3, 5). Once again, the outcome of perceiving a revenant is death. Alternatively the outcome of a

---

14   Vera dates the incident by its outcome, hence the 5/1 notation.

visitation may be trouble of some kind. This possibility is, of course, implicit in Vera's phrase "anything ill going to happen in the family".

In Dora's story below, constructed on a 5, 1, 4, 3, 5 pattern, the same expectation is at work:

> They had burglars in the house about two years ago, and just before this happened one of my aunts appeared to her - my aunt died four years ago - and she actually saw her, you see, but she didn't say anything. She said to me afterwards, "I'm sure she was trying to warn me·."
>
> (Narrative 110: Dora)

Death and trouble are obvious consequences of encountering a revenant; other common outcomes are sickness and accident, as in Carrie's story below (a story with a very circular construction almost entirely composed of elements 4 and 5, with the essential scene-setting reduced to a brief reference "in the night"):

> Well, it's funny. D'you know, if anyone's going to be ill in my family my mother always comes to me. I always know. My mother comes to me. You know, when our Walter used to be ill, I used to get on the phone and I'd say, "Hello, Nellie. How are you?" and she'd say, "I'm alright, but Walter's in bed", and before I had my back done, like before I fell in the cemetery, in the night my mother come to me and she says, "You can't sleep", or something like that. She's stood at the side of the bed, and I've not been well since. Isn't it strange how she comes to me every time? [GB: You can actually see her?] Yes, She's stood at the side of the bed and then it's gone.
>
> (Narrative 26: Carrie)

The first of these stories features the traditional wraith seen at the moment of death, the latter three show the revenant in the role of herald of danger. This is certainly the belief expectation in the negatively filled slots in Ella's and Adrienne's brief accounts below:

> I had two brothers killed in the war, and I woke up once, and I was wide awake, and I could see my brother disappearing into the distance, and yet I was sat on
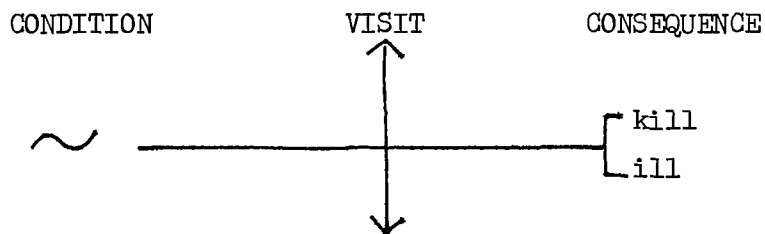
the edge of the bed awake. But there wasn't anything
happened afterwards, nothing wrong. It wasn't a
warning of anything.

<div align="right">(Narrative 19:   Ella)</div>

Again, I remember once when I'd be between fourteen
and sixteen. I can't remember how old I was, but I
know I was no more than sixteen. I heard my mother
call my name as plain as ever, and there was nobody
else there! and I thought, "Of course! That was my
mother!" and I listened but it didn't tell me any-
thing, and she was at home, you know, miles away from
me, and there was nothing wrong at home or anything.

<div align="right">(Narrative 17:   Adrienne)</div>

Diagrammatically represented the expectations underlying consequence

narratives are:

```
CONDITION              VISIT           CONSEQUENCE
                         ↑
                         |              ┌ kill
   ∿  ─────────────────┼──────────────┤
                         |              └ ill
                         ↓
```

That is, if there is no reason for the visit in terms of a LACK in the

percipient's life which might attract the intervention of a revenant, then

a visit from one is ominous.

Usually the apparition which heralds a death is of a known member

of the family. Just one small memorate features a more conventional

(indeed more 'ghostly') warning:

Well, I remember. I was only a little girl of about
fourteen and I know I was at the kitchen sink, because
we were farmers, you see, in the country, and some-
thing passed through in front of me - an apparition,
like, somebody dressed in white, - and I can see it to
this day! - and soon after that my grandmother died.

<div align="right">(Narrative 18:   Thora)</div>

Here in the second type of story told by women of the study group, revenants

are revealed in a thoroughly traditional role as omens of death and danger

(legendary themes are thus transmuted in the women's storytelling into personal experience forms). A basic assumption which structures these stories is the expectation that revenants are purposeful, not meaningless, phenomena. When no cause can be seen for their visit in the present condition of the percipient, then it is assumed that the cause must lie in his/her future condition, and the story is therefore shaped in terms of expected consequences.

3.4.3   Condition narratives

Another group of seven stories have no specified outcome but give several clues to the conditions thought to precipitate a supernatural visitation. Like 'consequence' stories, they concern death. In the first example, a story told by Lettice, the narrator begins with her perception, then sets the scene, states the condition of the percipient as "just before she died", then reframes her statement about the manner in which she perceived her dead father, and finally gives an account of why she thought the dead man had come (the complex explanation that follows this outline has been omitted here for clarity's sake but the narrative is discussed in more detail below, chapter 10, p. 453   ):

structural slot	text
3	But I saw my father
1	My father was the first to die, and he died at three o'clock in the morning. Then twelve months later mother died at three o'clock in the afternoon [....]
2	But just before she died

3	I felt that whatever there was, <u>ever</u> there was
4	Father had come to meet her.
	(Narrative 11: Lettice)

In another two narratives the dangerously sick person sees her dead parent at the most critical point of her illness, but cheats death. The connection between impending death and seeing ghosts is particularly stressed in the gloss that both these ladies provide for their narratives. Clara, asked about the possibility of a dead relative's return, replies, "Well, if I had thought that, I'd really been sure I was dying!" She then tells of her recent illness, concluding:

> And there was <u>so</u> many times during that short period
> when I used to imagine my mother was coming into the
> room, and she's been dead fifteen or sixteen years.
> (Narrative 12: Clara)

Plainly Clara now interprets the visions of her mother as "imagined" simply because she did not die after all. Similarly, Kathleen's story on the same lines concludes:

> And she said, "Mum", she said. She said, "I've <u>seen</u>
> my Dad as plain as I can see you! And he's stood at
> the bottom of the bed", as though she was going to
> die. She says, "He was ready to take me!" but she
> turned for the better, you see.
> (Narrative 4: Kathleen)

Four more stories of this 'condition' type, though contributed in answer to questions about the returning dead, do not actually feature revenants. They do, however, provide additional evidence that it is commonly thought that some sort of supernatural experience is afforded to the dying and that the occurrence of these visions, being glimpses of the next world, are signs of impending death. The first two of this type of

story are contributed by Kathleen immediately after she tells the story

quoted above. She hurries on to tell two very minimal narratives as

follows:

> Well, there's supposed to be something at the other
> side. I don't know. But, as I say, that chap - .
> I was in the hospital and he stared at that corner
> and he said, "What a beautiful - !" and his face was
> <u>transfixed</u>. So he could see something! He said,
> "What a beautiful picture!" But there was nothing
> there as far as we could see.
>
> And there's that friend of mine. She said [whispers]
> "It's the Master", of course her daughter nearly went
> mad because she <u>knew</u> she was dying then. She said,
> "Oh, no!" But, "Oh, yes! There's the Master!"
>
> > (Narratives 21 and 22: Kathleen)

Slightly longer and more coherent accounts of similar experiences are

provided by Zillah and Margot:

> Well ... I don't know ... When my husband was dying,
> he said a very funny thing. Well, not a <u>funny</u> thing,
> but it did impress me. He was - . He wasn't unconscious.
> He was sitting up in bed and he kept looking up to the
> picture rail, and although I could speak to him and he
> would answer, all at once the only thing, all he could
> keep saying is, "It's wonderful! It's wonderful!" and
> I firmly believe he could <u>see</u> something there.
>
> > (Narrative 10: Zillah)

> When my grandfather was dying, and my grandmother's name
> was Kate, and I was with him when he died, and he said - .
> He called me Kate for about a day before he died. I'm
> supposedly like my grandmother, you see, and he called
> me Kate, and he said, "I'd like this, Kate", and as he
> was dying he suddenly grasped my hand and he said, "Oh,
> smell the flowers! Smell the lilacs!" and he said,
> "Open the gate, Kate! I can't get in!" [GB: Really?
> He said that?] Yes. And it was February. There were
> no flowers out and none in his room, and he said it so
> strongly, "Smell the lilacs. Smell the lilacs!" and,
> "Open the gate, Kate. I can't get in!"
>
> > (Narrative 121: Margot)

This very old motif of the dead fetching the dying to another world, or the dying glimpsing heaven in their last moments, has perhaps its clearest narrative expression in a story told by a woman outside the study group. This narrative is so energetically told, and the impact of accounts of such experiences in the formation of belief comes over so vigorously in it, that, though it is strictly speaking outside the scope of the present chapter which considers only the stories of older women, it is worth quoting here. When Berenice was asked if she believed it possible for the dead to return she promptly replied:

> I think yes! Because of my mother-in-law's ex-
> perience. About three days before she died, she
> told me she was dying, and that her husband, my
> father-in-law, and his sister had been to see her
> and they told her that everything was perfectly
> alright, and I just - . Oh, I was flabbergasted!
> Because she was the sort of person with no imagina-
> tion whatsoever. She couldn't have dreamt it up!
> She wasn't the type.
>
> He died about ten months before her, and the sister
> died - Phoo! - fourteen, fifteen months before, his
> sister . [GB: And she thought that - ?] She really - .
> Oh, she was quite happy. She'd talked to them, you
> know. She was quite - . That's really, you know - .
> That was my own experience, because I wasn't - what -
> I'd be about twenty-eight. I hadn't really come across
> anyone so sure, and had she been a very imaginative,
> chatty sort of person, probably I wouldn't have taken
> much notice - but she was absolutely convinced. I
> mean - who am I to say that she didn't see them or
> speak to them? [GB: And she'd taken this as
> definitely a warning that she was going to-?] She
> was going to join them. Very, very - . It was eerie
> at the time, but as I've got older I've thought more
> about it. Oh, yes, there must've been something in
> it.

(Narrative 94 : Berenice)

Together the stories which feature the consequences of, or condi-
tions necessary for, the visits of revenants show them in very traditional roles. Though still far from frightening in themselves, the implication of their presence is alarming. 'Consequence' narratives show them as omens

of death: 'condition' narratives show them as fetching the dying to the

other world. Diagrammatically represented the system of expectations at

work is as follows:
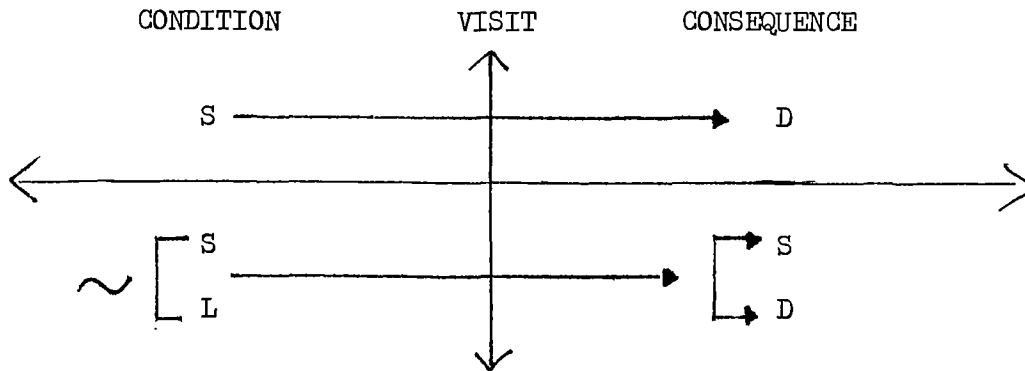
where S = sickness; L = Lack; D = death and $\sim$ represents the absence

of these conditions.

Where the percipient is very sick (as represented by the entry above

the horizontal line in the diagram) then the appearance of the revenant

is a sign that (s)he will die. Where there is no sickness or other lack

and yet still a revenant appears (as represented by the entry below the

line) then it is a sign that, given time, sickness and/or death will surely

ensue.

3.4.4   Basic narratives

The final group of eight narratives (those utilising only two

or three structural slots: that is, a scene-setting then an account of

an experience expressed in terms of the narrator's perception or the

revenant's behaviour or both) perhaps show the revenant as acting on its

own behalf, continuing the pursuits of its earthly life, or continuing at

least for a while to exist. Margot's story below is typical:

        Again, I've proof of that. My grandmother who I said
        I lived with as a child [.........................]
        I always had the habit, always, that I had a bedroom
        when I was at my grandfather's house and from time to
        time I would remove and go and live back with my

grandfather because he liked me to do that, you
see, and I always slept in the bedroom I had as
a child, and my grandmother always, always, when
I was in bed the last thing she did was always to
come into the bedroom and sort of tuck me up in bed
when I was lying there, and I felt this whenever I
went back to that house. I always felt that someone
came into the bedroom when I was in bed. Not a
frightening thing, a good thing, a comforting sort
of thing. [GB: Yes, very nice, very nice] Oh, yes,
it was! It was! There's nothing frightening about
anything like that, I don't think. [GB: It
definitely felt as though she was there?] Oh, yes!
I sort of had the sensation of the door opening, because
she always liked the bedroom doors closed, you see, and
I always had the feeling that the bedroom door was being
opened and closed, and - . Nothing frightening about
her.

Characteristically for this group of narratives, an analysis in terms of

the five structural elements common to the majority omits much. The over-

lying structure of the narrative rather is bipartite. In the first sec-

tion the narrator describes the state of things before her grandmother's

death; in the remaining sentences she describes the state of things after

the death. It is the identical nature of the pre- and post-death situations

that constitutes her proof.

In another story of this type, Audrey describes the death of a beloved

cat and the purchase of an identical replacement. While the replacement

cat sleeps indoors, the dead cat rubs itself round her legs as she is

hanging out the washing in the garden (presumably as it did in life). She

concludes, "They must have spirits". In a third, slight, story a dead

mother comes in the night to see how her daughter is, and in a fourth the

narrator sees three smoke rings in her father's bedroom after his funeral

(he, of course, had been a heavy smoker).

The bipartite structure is most interestingly employed in two versions

of a single narrative told by May. Typically for this group of stories,

the narrative has a long introduction describing the events and conditions

before the death. This section ends with an account which indicates the

ways in which things continue to be the same as before the death:

> She lived just a fortnight after that and the last
> two days she was unconscious, but after she died I
> never felt she'd really gone. Her presence seemed
> to be particularly in her bedroom, and it was about
> twelve months after until her room seemed empty to
> me, and it was very strong at times. I would go up
> and I used to wake in the night and think I heard her,
> because she slept with the door open and so did we -
> to hear her, and I was confident many times I heard
> her cough.
>
> (Narrative 2: May)

The before-and-after structure in these two stories is further strengthened

by the balanced phrases May uses, with their opposition of full and empty,

with me and gone:

> I felt she was there in some form or other, and her
> bedroom seemed to be full of her for quite a long
> time, nearly twelve months after, and then all of a
> sudden - . We went away for, well, the second holiday
> afterwards, and I came back and the room was empty.
> She was with me all that long time, and then she was
> gone. She was gone.
>
> (Narrative 1: May)

In a seventh narrative the before-and-after structure is used to

imply the operation of a revenant: the experience is so interpreted by

a medium who is consulted about it. This narrative, one of Audrey's racy

stories, concerns a game of patience and a lost playing card later found

in the dead centre of a table in an unused room. Audrey concluded:

> So of course I went to Miss Mathews, and it did
> quite frighten me - it startled me. "Oh!" she
> said. "That was Charlie playing one of his tricks
> on you!"
>
> (Narrative 84: Audrey)

Charlie, Audrey's dead husband, had of course been very fond of teasing

his wife while he was alive.

Apart from the interest of the medium's interpretation of this in-
cident, which plainly relies on matching the present happening with
Charlie's former propensity for practical jokes, this story is also a
significant comment on the women's concepts of poltergeists and revenants.
Seeing the missing card arranged so precisely on an unused table alarms
Audrey,for the displacement of objects is a feature commonly associated
with poltergeists in the women's thinking. The reclassification of the
episode as the playful trick of a revenant reassures her and enables her
to dispel her fears. This, in fact, becomes the experience which clinches
her belief in the operation of spirits of the dead in this world: it is
"the thing that made me believe in it".

Together as a group these eight narratives show the revenant in the
most idiosyncratic behaviour. Rather than being entirely passive (as so
many are when functioning as omens or fetches), or being helpful and
communicative (as witnesses are), these revenants smoke, steal playing
cards, tuck people up in bed, cough, study the sleeper or (in the case of
the animal ghost) rub themselves round the legs of someone hanging washing
on a line. The oddity of this behaviour, plus the bipartite structure of
the narratives, strongly suggests that these are accounts of hallucinatory
experiences brought on by mourning or by the overwhelming suggestions of
familiar surroundings. These accounts probably come closest to being
records of bare, uninterpreted experience and seem to be the least in-
fluenced by traditional expectations.

Such a hypothesis is supported by a memorate which describes the
appearance of a dead child in a response to a mother's overwhelming need
to see and touch him just once more. The psychology of apparitions is
very evident in this account:

My little boy was drowned in the brook at Gatley
village, did you not know? [GL: Yes, I did know]
Well, I can tell you about <u>that</u>. I can tell you
about what <u>happened</u> after with that. I prayed - .
I had - . I was very, very ill, and I lay in bed one
night and I said, "Please God, just let me see him!"
and he walked round the door, and I was fully awake.
This is perfectly true. I was fully awake, and he came
round the door, and he smiled at me, and I said, 'Were
you <u>pushed</u>, Malcolm, or were you - did you <u>fall</u> in?'"
and he didn't say a word, and then I wasn't satisfied
with that. I said, "Please God", praying to God,
"please let me <u>touch</u> him." I'd friends in Gatley
village - the butcher's shop opposite the Tatton, and
I was in bed again and he came. I said, "Please let
me touch him!" and I don't know whether I was dreaming
or not, but he came in front of me at their house
above the butcher's shop, and he stood in front of
me as he often did, and I used to stroke him under the
chin. He was a gorgeous looking little boy. He'd
blond curls. [GB: How old was he?] Eight-and-a-half,
and I just touched his <u>cheeks</u>! Like I always did!
Put my hand under his cheeks, you know, and held him
close to me and he was there and I did it! and I said
too - . What else did I ask for? My wishes were
<u>granted</u>. It was three wishes, and I can't think what
the other one was, can't think what the other - . But
it - . I thought it was absolutely wonderful! [GB:
Sort of like a miracle] It <u>was</u> a miracle. It was a
miracle to <u>me</u>. It was a <u>real</u> miracle, because it helped
a lot to me to have my wishes granted.

(Narrative 3: Laura)

This moving story perfectly illustrates the desperation of grief out of

which revenant traditions are formed.

However, even these 'basic' narratives, where story comes closest

to experience and traditional concepts least colour the structure and

language, are not without cultural shaping. In the first place, each one

is interpreted as an experience of a revenant: none of them is left as a

mere account of a strange experience. Many others show, in addition, at

least some traditional assumptions. They also reflect a traditional

expectation that those who died young or suddenly and those who had a

great interest in or love for earthly people and things can continue their

activities at least for a while after their death.

A piece of neo-narrative contributed by Vanessa admirably illustrates both the underlying experience and some of the common interpretations put on it:

> Well, I have seen my mother sometimes - occasionally.
> But whether that's occasions that she's been on my
> mind or something....
> [GB: How did you come to see your mother? Did she -]
> It was in the night. Whether I was dreaming about her
> I don't know. I saw her quite plainly. It only happened
> once to me. But whether she was on my mind or not, I
> don't know, and I can't remember whether perhaps I was
> a bit low.
> [GL: How long ago was this, Vanessa?]
> Oh, I can't say how long.
> [GL: When you were younger?]
> No, the last few years, and it just came over me
> whether it was a warning that I was going to meet her
> or something. I never said anything to anybody about it.
>
> (Vanessa)

This reluctant account attempts both rational and traditional explanations for the strange experience. First she says that her mother might have been on her mind, or perhaps she was dreaming. Next she suggests that maybe she "was a bit low", an explanation which may be interpreted either as a rationalisation or as a situation of LACK: maybe she thinks that her low spirits would make her hallucinate, or perhaps she reasons that there was cause for her mother to come to her. Later she gives an entirely traditional interpretation: "and it just came over me whether it was a warning that I was going to meet her or something". This neo-narrative therefore provides quite a comprehensive checklist for the conditions and consequences thought to accompany the seeing of the dead.

Even in the immensely private experiences of loss and bereavement, traditional expectations about the roles and behaviour of the spirits of the dead shape the way that life is mediated by culture.

3.5   <u>Non-narrative discourse about the return of the dead</u>

The return of the dead is a subject that attracts a good deal

of narrative, but non-narrative discourse on these subjects also takes

place, especially in the form of comments on narrative and various types

of experiential statement. The picture gleaned from these discussions

accords well with that drawn in the memorates and personal legends.

Revenants as omens and fetches seem to be very generally believed

in. Women say, "I do believe you can see people that's died" or, "I

only believe they might come back at your death" - formulae which echo

Clara's comment on her narrative (above, section 3.4.3): "If I thought

that, I'd have been really <u>sure</u> I was dying". That beliefs like this

circulate among the women and their families is clear from statements

such as:

> And I've heard people say that just before they die
> they seem to see - . This is probably people who have
> lived close to their mother all their lives. (Trixie)

and

> It's never happened to me so I'm probably not one of
> these receptive sort of people. Some do seem to be
> receptive, don't they? They seem as though they get
> these premonitions, they get these visitations. (Patricia)

The clearest and most numerous statements refer to the witness class of

revenant. Confirmation that this is a matter of belief in the community

is contained in experiential statements such as:

> It's a very funny thing this, but I <u>will</u> say that I've
> said to my daughter, "Your Dad's here". He only went
> last August, but I don't know why but I do know I <u>feel</u>
> it. I can tell. (Sarah)

Statements like this echo not only the content of the narratives but the

language too. For example, elsewhere Sarah adds a statement very reminis-

cent of narrative phrases used in May's and in Margot's   stories (above,

section 3.4.4):

> But I get it in the night. I feel as though he's
> come into the bedroom.

Other women express a similar experience in comparable language; "I often

see those - especially in church - come quite close" (Maura). Others,

using a dream metaphor, say:

> I do know that now and again you can have a dream.
> I dreamt of my parents but I could never get close
> to them. You can't in a dream. (Doris)

Another woman outside the main sample expressed the same idea, adding that

if you touch a dead person in a dream you yourself will die. Other state-

ments which parallel narrative are:

> "There must be someone behind me, helping me."
>
> "There is something there."
>
> "I always feel that mother and father are there."
>
> "At the back of your mind, you've thought, 'I know
> I shouldn't have done that!' and I believe somebody's
> told you not to do it ... there's protection there."
>
> "I often feel when I'm worried or bothered that
> he's near."
>
> "I think you can feel the presence ... I feel that
> my husband's listening to me."

Yet again other informants complete a half-finished sentence, plainly

knowing not only what is going to be said, but how it will be phrased.

For example, when Olive was asked about the return of the dead the following

exchange took place:

> Olive: I just don't know about that one. I wouldn't
> like to commit myself on that.
>
> GB: But so many nice, really sincere people have
> said to me that their mothers or their husbands -
>
> Olive: - have been by their side in a crisis - things
> like that.

That stories, particularly of witnesses, circulate among the women

and are used in a dialogue of belief is plain too from the many statements

that reveal ready-made counter answers to such accounts:

> I think that is rather involved in one's teaching from
> childhood and when there is distress or any other
> crisis we probably revert to what we've been taught
> and go over it again. That's how I think I'd explain
> that. (Bessie)

> I think that one might feel that one has been helped
> by thinking about them, but I - . Whether any actual
> spirit comes to help you or - I should rather doubt.
> I think it's more - sort of inside you that - . You
> get the comfort and strength from inside yourself,
> from contact with whoever it is that you're thinking
> about rather than that they come specially to help you,
> in the spirit or in any other way. (Rita)

> Well, I think you live through your parents a lot
> during your life. Personally, I think an awful lot
> of the way you were brought up and the things they
> say as regards religion and everything does stay with
> you and - - you tend to talk about it at times. (Doris)

Elsewhere the women exhibit a keenness to dissociate themselves from

spiritualism, which suggests that this charge is frequently brought against

the narrators of witness stories:

> Oh! I think you can feel the presence there sometimes.
> I have if I've been very upset about things, I feel I
> can talk and I feel my husband's listening to me. But
> that is only a spiritual thing. (Cora)

> My mind and early training - I'm R.C., you see. So, we
> believe that - yes, spirits do come back, but not in the
> way the spiritualists - . It's not spirits, souls - .
> 'Souls will rise again', yes. (Maud)

These dissociative phrases themselves often strongly attest to a belief

in the possibility of recalling the dead to this world:

> There again, I'm not very - . I don't know whether one
> can go deeper into it or not, but I think perhaps we'd
> get bogged down in spiritualism and that kind of -
> which I do not believe in. I don't think one should
> try to recall dead people. I hope nobody tries to bring
> me back when I pop off. I hope they leave me in peace!
> Now, seriously though, I don't agree with that at all. (Bessie)

The manner in which these arguments and counter arguments are con-

ducted is aptly illustrated by an addendum which Lettice tacks on to her

narrative quoted above (p. 298). She says:

> We were discussing this last year when we were away,
> and the people we got friendly with - . He was like
> my husband, "When you're dead, you're dead", you see,
> and she was like me, "We none of us know what it is -
> I mean, it's something we shan't know until we die."
> But she was like me. She felt there was something.

> And then the man who owned the hotel - there was he
> and his wife - he was a great believer in, "there was

> something - <u>what</u> he didn't know." But <u>our</u> two men,
> of course, they were great disbelievers.
>
> That is the [unintelligible] time. I've always felt
> [unintelligible] that there <u>is</u> something - <u>what</u> we
> don't know. I've always felt that <u>Father came to</u>
> <u>meet her</u>. I've always felt that!

This account shows quite plainly that narrative is used in discussions of this particular subject, for Lettice reiterates the closing lines of her narrative to summarise the arguments she used on this particular occasion. Plainly the narrative itself was used to prove that "there <u>is</u> something - <u>what</u> we don't know" when the subject was discussed in the hotel.

The analysis of narrative and non-narrative discourse about revenants therefore presents evidence that such beliefs are common topics of discussion in this study group, and that supernatural concepts are formed and transmitted orally. The final picture of revenant belief is unified and consistent.

3.6   <u>Revenants: function and nature - a summary</u>

Revenants are, almost without exception, the apparitions of loved members of the family who are drawn to this world or led to intervene in its affairs by events taking place in the lives of those who are left behind. They are purposeful and, for the most part, benevolent - certainly they are never intentionally harmful even where the consequences of seeing one are ominous. The situations which attract revenants back into the sphere of the living are crisis, sickness and death. There is always both a cause for their appearance and a consequence: they are not beyond the natural laws of cause and effect. Essentially they are understandable phenomena.

Three types of revenant may be differentiated according to the functions determined by these causes and effects. First there are 'witnesses', the family dead who, observing and being sensitive to the lives of those left behind, respond to their crises by direct intervention. The sort of

problem they solve can be seen in terms of a LACK in the survivor's life: lack of health, peace of mind and information are the most significant. In every case the dead take a hand - the sick are restored to health, tranquillity and comfort given, the problem solved by supplying the missing information.

The Gatley women also see revenants as functioning as omens of death. Here the apparition is heard or seen when there is no discernible LACK in the women's life. The reasoning is that, as revenants are never purposeless, they must have an unseen reason for coming: something unpleasant must be about to happen to which the dead are already responding or perhaps trying to warn the living of.

Thirdly the dead may come back when somebody is about to die, in order to accompany him/her to the other world: they are fetches.

Revenants as fetches and omens of death are, of course, familiar figures in folklore. It is interesting that they should appear in data concerning present-day supernatural beliefs but it is hardly surprising. The witness type of revenant, on the other hand, is something for which one is not so well prepared. It is a class of ghost that does not appear in conventional typologies and is not mentioned as a distinct type in popular or folkloristic texts on the supernatural. Yet it is obviously a distinct and important element of modern traditions. The following sections therefore concentrate on this particular class of revenant in order to: (1) try to trace historical parallels; and (2) discuss its function in the lives of the women of the study group.

4.   'Witnesses' and historical tradition

Some early impressionistic evidence that the witness type of revenant may not be an idiosyncratic modern invention but may well have a lineage in folklore history is provided by lexical analysis of ancient and modern texts. A word list compiled from the present corpus of stories of revenants shows that the twenty-five words most frequently used by narrators are, in descending order of frequency:

                    dead
                    feel
                    see
                    mother
                    father
                    think
                    say
                    come
                    (a)live
                    there
                    house
                    plainly
                    happen
                    bedroom
                    bed
                    husband
                    know
                    (a)wake(n)
                    night
                    as though
                    tell
                    presence
                    always
                    help
                    lose

This list is, in fact, surprisingly close to a list compiled from Aubrey, the most folkloristic of the early sources reviewed in this work, and indicates that some of the basic assumptions about the visits of apparitions have remained fairly constant in spite of changes in surface detail, in literary and oral styles and in cultural climate. Eleven of Aubrey's best known ghost stories[15] were examined for the most frequent

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15   Aubrey (1696), pp. 59-82. The Stories of: The ghosts of Mr. Mohun, Lady Long, Dr. Turberville's sister, Sir George Villiers; the "Givenni, Givenni" and Cirencester apparitions; the ghosts of Cousin Henry, Dr. Twiss and Farmer Good; 'TM's' Story and the narrative of the Lame Man.

collocations of the words _ghost_, _apparition_ and _spirit_. The results were
(in descending order of frequency):

                    dead
                    bed
                    say
                    saw
                    ask
                    tell
                    (a)wake(n)
                    vanish
                    friend
                    wife
                    look
                    appear
                    go
                    come
                    fancy
                    advise
                    alive
                    dream
                    nothing
                    ill
                    noise

Thus shorn of their elaborations, especially of the complex demands of the
apparitions, the essence of the old stories shows itself to be surprisingly
similar to that of the modern ones, the emphasis in both cases being on
the coming of the apparition in familiar shape, on its being there in
visible form, and on the communication with it.

A closer examination of the texts from the seventeenth to mid-
nineteenth centuries shows, as this impressionistic test would indicate,
that the lack-liquidating witness does have antecedents in older traditions.
In particular, ghosts who cure the living of physical ailments are quite
common in sixteenth and seventeenth century texts,[16] and so are ghosts who
attempt to avert disasters.[17] Similarly, the miraculous finding of lost
objects is a constant theme in legends of the marvellous[18] and it only

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16   See, for example, Glanvil (1682), pp. 208-210.

17   See, for example, the story of the ghost of Sir George Villiers.
     Aubrey (1696), pp. 64-65 and Sinclair (1685), pp. 120-122.

18   Note, for example, Chambers's section on 'Recovered Rings'. Chambers,
     pp. 105-106.

needs a shift of emphasis to attribute the find to an intuition provided

by the dead. The liquidation of psychological lack again is only a slight

change of emphasis from physical to mental health concordant with a shift

in modern medical practice. Even accounts of the liquidation of simple

lack (absence) can be found in older texts. For example, Glanvil's

Relation XII tells of the return of a dead father to engage in family

gossip with his daughter.[19] The friendly and helpful revenant who wit-

nesses mortal distress and intervenes for good does not appear to be an

idiosyncratic modern invention: in personal experience stories of the

lack-liquidating revenant, older patterns of story and belief may be seen

which have been submerged by conventional work on ghostlore, but show

traditional modes of thought in action.

Witness stories accord with historical traditions in other signifi-

cant ways too. Firstly the details of the narratives are traditional:

the spirits of the dead remain at home for a year; revenants of all types

favour bedrooms, bedsfeet, corners of rooms, gardens and lanes; they often

appear three times or, if not, the narrator gives three accounts of a

single incident.[20] Secondly, and more significantly, the whole structure

depends on traditional expectations about the coming of revenants - in

particular the expectation that ghosts should be purposeful. As the analy-

sis of the thirty-two stories shows, in the majority purpose is a necessary

element which not only shapes but interprets the experience. In the form

of condition or consequence, purpose appears in twenty-four out of thirty-

two stories. Narrators plainly think it necessary to find a reason for a

visit from the dead.

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19 Glanvil (1682), pp. 189-190.

20 Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative", in Dundes (1965),
    pp. 120-141.   Note that this patterning
    is apparent even in Laura's story (above p. 306) where she seeks to
    recall a third wish granted after her son's death.

This is a most interesting finding, for nowadays it is standard to

comment on the purposelessness of modern ghosts. Lang's comment on those

of the late nineteenth century is typical:

> The modern ghost is a purposeless creature. He
> appears no-one knows why: he has no message to
> deliver: no secret crimes to reveal, no appoint-
> ment to keep, no treasure to reveal, no commission
> to be executed, and, as an almost invariable rule,
> he doesn't speak even if you speak to him. 21

Finucane, in his section on twentieth century ghosts, finds no essential

differences between such nineteenth century apparitions and twentieth

century ones.[22] Similar thinking lies behind Robert Blauner's thesis that

there is in Western society today "no need for a vivid community of the

dead"[23] because people die leaving no left-over obligation to the living.

In recent studies only Linda May Ballard lists circumstances thought to

cause the return of the dead,[24] and hence points to (though she does not

outline) a purposive model of ghost belief. Such views seem to spring

from too great a reliance on reports of psychical researchers and too

little fieldwork into orally transmitted beliefs.[25] The present study

would lead to quite the reverse conclusion. If the pattern of belief

demonstrated in the discussion and narratives of the women of Gatley is

typical (and there is no reason why it should not be), modern revenants are

seldom or never purposeless.

Though the concept of the purposeful ghost, as we have seen,[26] has

indeed been slowly eroded since the middle-ages, it has not yet (as many

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21 Lang (1894), p. 95.

22 Finucane, p. 21.

23 Blauner, p. 382.

24 Ballard (1981).

25 It is significant, for instance, that Linda May Ballard's study is
    based on fieldwork not on library research.

26 Cf. above chapter 4, section 4.6; chapter 5, section 5.

commentators would suggest) completely disappeared. Though the number of types of purposeful ghosts has diminished and though their role has changed from the religious to the domestic sphere, nevertheless they have not been entirely replaced in the popular imagination by motiveless and passive manifestations. The present research shows that for at least one typical community, the supernatural world still is ordered and meaningful. Tradition it seems is more robust than intellectual fashion.

5. Narratives of revenants and the experience of bereavement

In trying to assess the functions of beliefs in revenants, it is useful to recall the social situation of the women interviewed in this study. All were women between sixty and ninety years old and, of these, thirty-nine were widows and sixteen were single women who had devoted their lives to caring for a parent now dead. Over a half, therefore, had lost the person whom they had held dearest. By virtue of their age, in fact, all but a handful had lost many of their closest kin, and the experience of bereavement was universal. It seems very likely that beliefs in revenants should have their basis in this experience - for them, a common and recent, as well as overwhelming one.

Bereavement, its psychology and physiology, has attracted a good deal of interest in the last twenty years, especially among psychiatrists interested in normal and pathological grief reactions. The first and still most complete analysis of the behaviour of recently bereaved people was Lindeman's 1944 study based on observed field data, and this still remains the starting point of more recent work.[27] Almost twenty years

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27   Erich Lindeman, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief",
      American Journal of Psychiatry, 101 (1944), 141-148.

elapsed before Lindeman's findings were rediscovered and taken up by others. From psychology Bowlby,[28] Parkes,[29] Marris,[30] Weiss,[31] Glick,[32] Schulz[33] and Kastenbaum[34] in particular have contributed to our knowledge of the normal processes of mourning. The sociologist Geoffrey Gorer also devoted a chapter of his Death, Grief and Mourning to the experience of loss.[35] In all this work there is substantial agreement that the bereaved person subconsciously denies the irrevocability of the loss and institutes within her/himself a process of searching for the dead person[36] which, among its other symptoms, takes the form of illusions of the presence of the dead or hallucinatory perceptions.

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28   John Bowlby, "Processes of Mourning", The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 42, parts 4-5 (1961), 317-340.

29   Colin Murray Parkes, Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life (London, 1972).

30   Peter Marris, Widows and their Families (London, 1958); Loss and Change (London, 1974).

31   Robert S. Weiss, "Attachment in Adult Life", in Colin Murray Parkes and Joan Stevenson-Hinde (eds.), The Place of Attachment in Human Behaviour (London, 1982), pp. 171-184.

32   Ira O. Glick, Robert S. Weiss and C. Murray Parkes, The First Year of Bereavement (New York/London, 1974).

33   Richard Schulz, The Psychology of Death, Dying and Bereavement (Reading, Massachusetts, 1978).

34   Robert J. Kastenbaum, Death, Society and Human Experience (St. Louis/Toronto/London, 1981).

35   Geoffrey Gorer, Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain (London, 1965).

36   See Parkes (1972), pp. 43-47; Bowlby, p. 319.

Peter Marris, for example, quotes the following as typical of the

early stages of mourning among seventy-two London widows he studied:

> ... inability to comprehend the loss, brooding over
> memories, clinging to possessions, a feeling that
> the dead man is still present - talking to him and
> of him as if he were still alive. 37

Of the seventy-two widows, thirty-six experienced a sense of the husband's

presence, and fifteen continued to behave as if he were still alive, a

process Marris calls a refusal to "surrender the dead, reviving them in

imagination".[38]

Similarly, of the eighty people interviewed by Geoffrey Gorer,

thirty-one experienced what he calls "lucid dreams" of the dead; five of

them, refusing his definition, maintained that the "dreams" were reality.[39]

A similar experience is recorded in C.S. Lewis's A Grief Observed, the

diary ending with an account of an experience of his wife's presence which

is an "incredibly unemotional intelligence and attention", "an extreme and

cheerful intimacy".[40] Similar experiences are recorded by "almost all"[41]

of the sample used by Glick et al.

In many cases the illusion of presence is strong and vivid enough to

constitute an auditory or visual hallucination of the dead person. This

phenomenon was first noted by Lindeman[42] and his findings have since been

borne out by Glick et al., Marris and Parkes. The British Medical Journal,

too, carries a survey by a Welsh GP which records an incidence of almost

fifty percent post-bereavement hallucinations (auditory and visual) among

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37   Marris quoted by Gorer (1965), p. 127.

38   Marris (1974), p. 26.

39   Gorer (1965), p. 54.

40   Lewis quoted by Marris (1974), p. 37.

41   Glick et al., p. 146.

42   Lindeman, pp. 142-143.

his sample of 293 local people, and notes that these are common during the first ten years of widowhood.[43]

The conclusion that beliefs in witnesses must either arise out of or be strongly substantiated by experiences such as these is inevitable, especially when all researchers note that the bereaved find these illusions and hallucinations "comforting" or "helpful".[44]

Robert Weiss demonstrates that adults display exactly the same attachment behaviour as Bowlby has demonstrated are common in infants and small children by:

(a) in normal conditions remaining within range of the attachment object;

(b) moving nearer in situations of threat or calling/crying to make the other move nearer; and

(c) if the other is absent, feeling threatened, protesting, and making attempts to regain him/her.[45]

These are exactly the contexts and functions of witnesses. They are actuated by situations of LACK in which often the sense of threat is expressed aloud. For example, in Agnes's story (above p. 289), an anxious boy says, "'Oh! Help me! What shall I do? What shall I do?' and saying it out loud", and in Lizzie's story (above, p. 290) she says:

> And I had been puzzling and wondering, and I did
> say to him, 'Oh! Do tell me where it is!'

Both of these can be interpreted as "crying to make the other move nearer". Similarly, the belief in witnesses can itself be seen as an attempt to "remain within range of the attachment object", as a protest, or as an attempt to regain him.

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43 W. Dewi Rees, "The Hallucinations of Widowhood", The British Medical Journal, 1971, no. 4 (October-December), 37-41.

44 See for example Kastenbaum, p. 224.

45 Weiss, pp. 172-173; John Bowlby, Attachment and Loss (London, 1969-80).

Again, Marris suggests that the meaning of our lives is structured through our attachments in the sense that ideals and relevances are shaped through and by means of these relationships. Hence in bereavement, an individual is not only deprived of a dearly loved person but of a role-relationship and a value system. Hence grief is literally the process of trying to make sense of the world, to retrieve the abstract principle that the relationship structured. He sees the stages of the healing process as: first, the illusion of presence (which enables the survivor to super-impose meaning and order); then the expression of the meanings without the illusion in the commonly heard formula, "It's what he would have wanted"; and finally the treating of the memory "more symbolically as an organizing principle, until finally these reformulations of meaning are no longer instantly referred back to him".[46] The role of the witness type of revenant is plainly of this nature, a necessary step, perhaps, in the progress to behaving "as he would have wanted". The stories in particular are perhaps an exteriorisation of organising principles, in which the advice "he would have" given is pinpointed.

If beliefs in witnesses thus arise from common experience, are patterned by the psychology of attachment and loss, are functional in the healing process of mourning, it is not hard to see why they fit well into (and appear to provide proof of) the teaching of the major churches about the immortality of souls. The sample women for the most part were church-goers, and those who were not expressed the opinion that "You don't need to go to church to be a good Christian", so a very substantial majority of them were pious in either an orthodox or folk sense. Studies have shown that adaptation to bereavement is best among those who are supported

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46   Peter Marris, "Attachment and Society", in Parkes and Hinde, p. 195.

by religious faith and social networks.[47] In this area it is possible

that piety, healing mourning, and personal experience all confirm faith

in the power of the dead to approach and intervene for the good of the

living.

In conclusion one must agree with Jung when he wrote:

> There are universal reports of these post-mortem
> phenomena ... They are based in the main on psychic
> facts which cannot be dismissed out of hand. Very
> often the fear of superstition, which strangely enough,
> is the concomitant of universal enlightenment, is
> responsible for the hasty suppression of extremely
> interesting reports which are then lost to science.[48]

6. Summary

The picture of the study-group's beliefs about the dead is, then,

remarkably consistent over both narrative and non-narrative discourse.

Two opposed poles of their supernatural belief system are revealed in the

data: at the one extreme they recognise meaningless, disruptive and

malevolent phenomena; at the other, the benevolent apparitions of dead

relatives that operate in times of crisis. Each of these basic types may

be occasional or regular visitors to the homes of the living - the former

existing in or intruding into the house and being confined to it; the

latter being personal to the percipient and coming to her in her daily

household tasks. The world of the dead as the women see it operates on

four axes:

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47 Dorothy K. Heyman and Daniel T. Gianturco, "Long-Term Adaptation
    by the Elderly to Bereavement", Journal of Gerontology, 28 (1973),
    p. 359.

48 C. G. Jung, "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits",
    Collected Works, volume 8 (London, 1964), paragraph 598, p. 316.

malevolence____→ benevolence

external perception____→internal awareness

uninvited intrusion____→invited presence

house centredness____→person centredness

The more scores on the right hand side of the diagram, the more acceptable; the more scores on the left hand side of the diagram, the more evil the manifestation. Thus the most wicked (and also least believed) type of supernatural occurrence is the poltergeist which is malevolent, externally perceived, uninvited and house-centred. The most welcome (and the most believed) is the witness which is benevolent, usually perceived by internal awareness, often invited in the sense of being spoken to or called for, and person-centred. In between these two extremes are fetches and revenants as omens of death or danger, which are neutral as regards benevolence/malevolence, usually externally perceived, uninvited, and person-centred.

These supernatural types operate on one of three levels - either on behalf of the living, or on behalf of the dead, or on their own behalf. The last class is the most dangerous, because uncontrolled and unpredictable. All poltergeist manifestations are of this type, though maybe some harmless and friendly family ghosts may also stay round their old homes for at least a while after death (as some of the 'basic' narratives seem to suggest). Those who act on behalf of the dead are the fetches and omens: those who act on behalf of the living are the witnesses. The witness shows the supernatural world to its best advantage as caring, benevolent, aware and protective. These, of course, are the largest single class of supernatural phenomenon in the women's philosophy. Belief in this sort of revenant in particular would seem to have its foundation in the experience of bereavement. Nothing perhaps is more personal, yet even here we may see the shaping power of public opinion. The illusions and

hallucinations of grieving call for interpretation, and that interpreta-
tion is given through cultural tradition, often working through narrative
expression. Tradition first provides an explanation for the experiences
and then shapes them by supplying details appropriate to the interpreta-
tion. The stories told on the subject reveal what Honko calls the
"covert beliefs"[49] of the community, and the attitudes and underlying
expectations that have shaped narrative and opinion for centuries. In this
case those underlying assumptions are the twin concepts of the purposeful-
ness of the ghost and its activeness for good in the mundane world.

So through an examination of memorate and personal legend we can
discover what aspects of tradition have remained constant and still shape
people's daily expectations and perceptions. They also can show, much
more accurately than any legend, the way those traditions are themselves
interpreted and used in a given community. In this way we are able to see
not only what tradition has made of experience, but what social context
has made of tradition.

The most dominant shaping assumption in the Gatley women's narra-
tives is the concept of <u>causality</u>. Even non-narrative chat about the
presence of the dead is structured by notions of context, agency and con-
sequence. In the narratives this structuring is even more apparent and
helps bring into focus significant aspects of the women's concept of the
supernatural. The most dominant of these is the assumption that revenants
are not casual phenomena. They are bounded by time, place and their own
logic.

Except for the half dozen stories that record only simple, uninter-
preted experience, memorates and personal legends never consist merely of
an account of the date, time and nature of the perception, such as might

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49   Honko (1964), p. 9.

be useful to a psychical researcher. Invariably the experience is fitted into a causal sequence of:

1. time, date or scene;

2. the context of the visitation, in terms of the mental or physical condition of the narrator;

3/4. either the mode whereby the narrator becomes aware of the dead person, or the dead person's manner of approach, or mode of action;

5. the consequence of the visit.

At each of these stages of the narrative the choice of phrase and detail helps show the observer/analyst what the storyteller makes of the traditional concept of the revenant.

From these stories it appears that visitations from the dead are thought to occur (1) either, as legendary stereotypes would lead one to expect, at night when one is in bed, the revenant often approaching the foot of the bed and being seen quite plainly. or making its presence otherwise felt; (2) or as a 'presence' which is often or always somewhere near both by day and by night, in which case questions and sometimes prayers can be directed to it and a response may be telepathically received or a voice heard. The first sort of encounter is an occasional one, it occurs only a few times in the narrator's life: the second sort of encounter is commonplace. Both occur principally at times of crisis, particularly in times of sickness or trouble. Parents are the most common visitors, especially mothers, and husbands are the next most frequent visitors. Other relatives - children, aunts, brothers and sisters and grandparents - are also quite common. Less material manifestations do occur (smoke, the smell of flowers, voices, disembodied faces) but these are not frequent.

Only seldom do the narrators give any description of the revenant. As the majority of such visitors are known to the percipients, presumably this is not necessary. Where a description _is_ given, it is a traditional one such as grey shadows, and figures in white. Those who return from the dead are seen as having quite substantial powers of continued existence and communication. They are commonly thought of as existing alongside the living rather than as returning from a distinctly separate place, as the relational prepositions narrators use show (_to_, _with_, _by_, _beside_, _around_ and _in_,which all imply nearness,are used five times more frequently in the stories than _back_ or _from_, which imply separation).

In contrast, then, to the more familiar ghosts of legends, the revenants most frequently seen, sensed or heard by the women of Gatley are bound by neither time nor place: their only context is that of a crisis in the lives of the living. They are also distinctly less material than the conventional ghost. They have comparatively little form or substance. The robust revenant of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with its mangled wounds, wild hair, chains and dreadful moans has given way to a thinner,shadowy ghost, so transparent, in fact, that it may slip directly into the percipient's consciousness. Instead of having to hint, gesticulate and speak in riddles to strangers, it is now so close, so personal that it often communicates by telepathy straight into the mind of the one it wishes to contact. It is apprehended by intuition and in- sight as often as perceived by sight, it feeds on and becomes manifest through the emotions of the survivor. It is deprived, therefore, of both its mystery and its terror.

Not only does the concept of revenants thus fit in with the women's religious philosophy and channel the experiences of bereavement, it also echoes the dominant social concerns of their lives. It finds its greatest acceptance among women who have given their lives to the caring role, who

are still tightly enmeshed in family networks, and who place a high value on inter-personal relationships. Belief in revenants who witness mortal distress allows the continuation of relationships of mutual caring - husband and wife, parent and child - even when one of the partners is lost. Essentially the women's stories feature an extended family of dead and living generations, maintained even through the barrier of death.

Bare, unstructured experience is thus mediated by traditional expectations into accounts of the comforting presence of the good dead who in times of crisis liquidate the lacks of the living, and thus provide evidence of heavenly protection and family unity.

CHAPTER 8

Foreknowledge

1. Introduction

It has always been one of mankind's dreams to be able to control the future, or at least to have sufficient foreknowledge of it to be able to divert the worst effects of time and chance. Such concerns have been reflected in the multiplicity of divinatory rituals, systems and beliefs. It is hardly surprising therefore to find that such ideas also flourish among women such as those studied in Gatley. In general the beliefs fall into two overall types: on the one hand there are beliefs in premonitions and omens, unsought forewarnings of the future; on the other hand there are the practices of palmreading and astrology where an amateur or a professional seeks to discern for another person what is to happen to him or her.

Obviously, visiting fortunetellers and reading horoscopes is, or has been, a very popular practice among the study group. Most women say that in their youth, especially when on holiday with friends at the seaside, they have visited a fortuneteller. Similarly, eighty percent of the women regularly read their horoscope in The Manchester Evening News or in women's magazines. Many of them also claim to be "a little bit psychic" and to be able to predict minor events in the future or to be made uneasy by forthcoming major upheavals. A minority say that they see, or have seen, signs or tokens of future disasters. Curiously enough, when it comes to trusting these forewarnings - seeing them as genuine, in fact - the women make sharp distinctions between those they see as worthless and those they think are valuable. Whereas premonitions and omens carry great weight with the majority of them, fortunetelling and astrology are seldom taken seriously. The comparative figures for convinced and partial belief over these four topics are as follows:

Table 1:   Belief in premonitions, omens, fortunetelling and
           astrology compared

Degree of belief	Premonitions	Omens	Fortune-telling	Horoscopes
convinced belief	43	25	15	2
some belief	34	30	9	25
Total	77	55	24	27

expressed as % of those responding to each question.

The table shows that the women's belief in premonitions and omens is much stronger than their faith in horoscopes and fortunetelling. Taking the total of convinced and partial belief together we see that whereas only 27% believe in horoscopes, twice as many believe in omens, and though only 24% believe in fortunetelling, more than three times as many women believe in premonitions. The clue to this disparity lies in the women's perception of omens and premonitions as unsought encounters with the future, whereas horoscopes and fortunetelling are deliberate attempts to seek it out. In fact, the figures may be even more telling. The percentages for 'omens' and 'premonitions' may be a little misleading as they stand. The women themselves do not always make distinctions between the two sorts of forewarning but, when they do, they distinguish according to the outcome of events. Thus the term 'omen' is reserved for forewarnings of serious danger, especially untoward death. 'Omens', therefore, are in a sense a subcategory of 'premonitions', and it is the higher figure of seventy-seven percent that most properly represents the incidence of belief in unsought forewarnings. There is thus a large disparity in the degree of belief accorded sought foreknowledge and unsought (77% compared with an average of 25% for fortunetelling and astrology taken together).

It is the purpose of this chapter to explore, through the analysis of discourse and narrative, the reasons for this pattern of belief in the study group. The procedure will be the same as that adopted for the discussion of revenants above: first the narrative texts will be analysed for lexis and structure in order that underlying patterns may be discovered; secondly these findings will be compared with the content of non-narrative discourse as a check of their validity; finally some attempt will be made to discuss the significance of the beliefs in showing features of the women's philosophy of life. In particular, this final section will examine the women's rhetoric of disbelief.

2.   Initial analysis of narrative texts on the subject of foreknowledge

2.1   The narrative corpus

The corpus of narrative for analysis in this section consists of thirty- six memorates and one personal legend. Twenty-four memorates and the one personal legend were contributed in answer to questions about omens and premonitions; twelve memorates were told in discussions about fortunetelling. Narrative therefore provides a very good introduction to the women's beliefs in unsought glimpses of the future and some measure of insight into their perception of the experience of having one's fortune told. The subject of horoscopes however is not touched on in narratives.

This is concordant with the pattern observed earlier[1] that narrative is most closely associated with the expression of belief: horoscopes are accorded only partial belief (2% of those asked expressed positive

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1   See above, chapter 6, sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2.

commitment) and therefore the subject is inherently unlikely to produce

much narrative. This topic therefore will be treated separately below,

as will the related one of planetary influences over character (that is,

"birth signs"). Their particular interest is that in the women's discus-

sions of these matters one can see significant aspects of their rhetoric

of disbelief - patterns which reveal some of their underlying philosophical

attitudes.[2]

As far as the narrative corpus is concerned, all thirty-seven narra-

tives will be treated initially as a single group. As the distinctions

the women make between types of foreknowledge are not always identical in

all respects with those folklorists make, it seems wisest to let the women's

own typology of foreknowledge reveal itself through analysis. In this

way one may perhaps arrive at a more subtle understanding of the psychology

and function of such beliefs.

2.2   Introduction to the structure of stories about foreknowledge

Like stories about revenants, all narratives in the corpus of

thirty-seven stories of foreknowledge follow an overall general pattern,

and there is a central core round which events are structured. These cen-

tral events may be organised either chronologically or non-sequentially,

and may be preceded and followed by other relevant descriptive or plot

material. Whatever the elaborations or structural ordering, however, all

narratives cluster round four vital elements: (1) descriptions of

occasion; accounts of (2) the foreknowledge and (4) the ensuing event;

preceded by (3) statements about the interval of time that elapsed between

(2) and (4).

---

2   See below, section 4.2.

Two typical narratives of foreknowledge are these below told by

Rose and Agnes:

But I don't believe in delving. We delved a few
years ago. You know this damn silly game that you
play with a glass - the ouija board? that business,
and all the rest of it, and every time this damn
thing - This was June was it? - and this thing kept
saying, "Rose is going - . Rose is going into hospital.
Rose is going to have an operation." Well, there was
no operation in my mind, was there the Devil! and
three weeks after that Rose was in hospital, and Rose
was having an operation. So I decided it was time we
finished with that as well! The times people have
said to me, "Tell my fortune!" No way! You won't
get me to tell fortunes. If I see it, I see it, but -

(Narrative 54: Rose)

Oh, I have premonitions. Oh, I do, definitely! Oh,
I do have premonitions. Well, no, I can't think of
any now, but quite often, quite often I have a pre-
monition of things happening and I turn round and say,
"What did I tell you?" I've quite a few instances in
my life when I've had premonitions. I've never had
very definite signs or anything. I've just had feelings.
The only time I've had when I've felt I've had a sign
of anything, it just hasn't come true.

There was one time in particular. There was one
occasion I can remember distinctly. It was when Granny
was alive. Mind you, you've got to remember that I was
very close to Granny in heaps and heaps of ways, and -
I hadn't been dreaming. I hadn't actually gone to
sleep. I was in bed, quite happy and everything, and
very, very distinctly I heard Granny call me, and it
was, it only could have been Granny in a sense, because
Granny used to call me 'Nessy', but only very occasionally.
She was the only one that had ever called me 'Nessy',
and she call - I heard her calling, "Ness, Nessy, Nessy!"
and then I heard her call me 'Agnes', and she was
frightened and she was miserable and unhappy, and I
got up - sat up in bed and really frightened, and I
was very worried. Jack woke up and I told him, and I
absolutely expected the next day, because, you know,
she often - we had been called many a time, supposed not
to be going to live. This had been going on for years,
and she'd always lived and been alright. But I never
heard anything. But it took me over a week to convince
myself. Well, I don't know, she may have been very
miserable and wanted me. But I was quite convinced at
the time that she was dying, and that I should hear that
she was dead or something dreadful had befallen her,
and it hadn't.

(Narrative 44: Agnes)

Characteristically, the narrators first make broad generalisations
and unspecific references to the topic which is to be discussed. Agnes's
beginning is typical:

> Oh, I have premonitions. Oh, I do, definitely!
> Oh, I do have premonitions... I can't think of any
> now, but quite often I have premonitions of things
> happening and I turn round and say, "What did I
> tell you?" I've quite a few instances in my life
> when I've had a premonition. I've never had
> definite <u>signs</u> or anything. I've just had feelings.

Such pre-narrative introductory material strongly suggests that:

(1) the narrator is filling in time while she tries to piece

together a specific example; or

(2) she is assessing the likely response before committing

herself to a narrative on the subject; or

(3) the introduction acts as a trailer for a narrative and

the speaker is hoping to prompt a request for a story; or

(4) all three motives are simultaneously operating.

Given the minimum encouragement, the speaker will then make an opening

for her narrative (an <u>aperture</u>).[3] Agnes, for example, goes on:

> The only time when I've felt I've had a <u>sign</u> of
> anything it hasn't come true. There was one time
> in particular....

and the story begins.

The main body of the narratives includes descriptions of scene and
setting (marked for <u>place</u>, <u>time</u> and the <u>person</u> who is given the fore-
knowledge or who is its subject). In Agnes's story this stage is realised
by:

> It was when Granny was alive. I hadn't been dreaming.
> I hadn't actually gone to sleep. I was in bed quite
> happy and everything.

---

3   The term is Longacre's. Longacre, p. 214. This terminology will
     be adopted henceforth throughout.

Here Agnes implies <u>place</u> by her reference to being in bed, marks <u>time</u> twice, first with an outer frame, "It was when Granny was alive", and then with an inner frame (her reference to being in bed but not asleep).[4] Other narrators may be both more specific and fuller in their scene setting.

The narrator then moves on to descriptions of the foreknowledge in terms of the <u>nature</u> of the warning or its <u>content</u>. In Agnes's story she opts for describing the <u>nature</u> of the experience - ("And very, very distinctly I heard Granny call me"). Other narrators may here choose to outline the <u>content</u> of the information so mysteriously received. Rose, for example, after her introduction makes an <u>aperture</u> for her narrative by "I don't believe in delving. We delved a few years ago", gives the <u>occasion</u> as a game with a glass and a lettered board, marks it precisely for <u>time</u>, "This was June, was it?" and then goes on:

> And this thing kept saying, "Rose is going - . Rose
> is going into hospital. Rose is going to have an
> operation."

The <u>content</u> of this prediction is the typical one of hospitalisation and operation.

The narrative then proceeds to its next stage of providing an account of the <u>event</u> which validates the prediction. In Agnes's story there is no outcome and therefore no validation (hence her scepticism about what she calls 'signs'). Rose's story is more typical in providing an account of both the ensuing <u>event</u> and the <u>interval</u> which elapses between prediction and outcome:

> And three weeks after that, Rose <u>was</u> in hospital
> and Rose <u>was</u> having an operation!

---

4 Cf. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, "Time in Folk Narrative", in Venetia J.
   Newall (ed.), <u>Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century: Pro-</u>
   <u>ceedings of the Centenary Conference of the Folklore Society</u>
   (Bury St. Edmunds, 1980), p. 317.

Finally it is common, almost universal, to mark the narrative as complete

by some sort of evaluative closing comment (a <u>closure</u>)[5]

> I decided it was time we finished with that as well! The
> times people have said to me, "Tell my fortune".
> No way! You won't get me to tell fortunes. If I
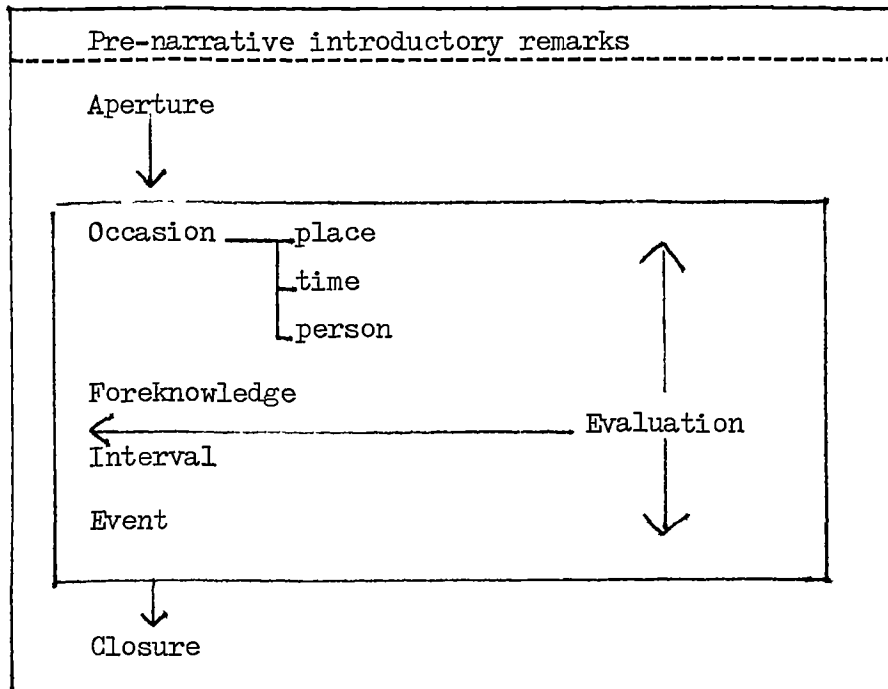> <u>see</u> it, I see it, but - .

Alternatively a narrator recapitulates the plot and attempts to interpret

the reported events. In the addendum to Agnes's story, for example, she

runs straight on from denying an outcome in terms of incident, to trying

to reconstruct the events to produce another interpretation, then to a

summary of the story as first interpreted:

> But I never heard anything. But it took me a week
> to convince myself. Well, I don't know, maybe she
> was very miserable and wanted me. But I was quite
> convinced at the time that she was dying, and that
> I should hear she was dead or something dreadful had
> befallen her, and it hadn't.

All these narratives are heavily evaluated by parenthetical comments about

the narrator's innocence of the facts, distance from the events, and so on.

For example, Rose comments, "Well, there was no operation in my mind, was

there the Devil!" and Agnes stresses that Granny's voice was heard calling

a pet name only she ever used. This <u>evaluation</u> is common throughout, but

particularly focused between the foreknowledge and the subsequent event.

Diagrammatically represented these typical structural elements are as

follows:

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5   In chapter 7 above, this closing comment was styled, after Langlois,
     a 'metagloss'. Labov's term is 'coda' (see below, chapter 10), and
     Longacre's is 'closure'. Langlois's terminology concentrates on
     the moral nature of these final comments; Labov's emphasises their
     function of bringing events up to date. Final comments may have
     both these functions (and others), therefore Longacre's more neutral
     term is preferred, and will be used to indicate this structural
     slot in the rest of this work. Cf. Langlois, p. 149; Labov and
     Waletsky, p. 39; Longacre, p. 214.

Figure 1.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Pre-narrative introductory remarks                 │
├ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┤
│     Aperture                                         │
│         │                                            │
│         ▼                                            │
│   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐   │
│   │ Occasion ─────place            ▲             │   │
│   │              ├─time            │             │   │
│   │              └─person          │             │   │
│   │                                │             │   │
│   │ Foreknowledge                  │             │   │
│   │ ◄──────────────────── Evaluation             │   │
│   │ Interval                       │             │   │
│   │                                │             │   │
│   │ Event                          ▼             │   │
│   └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘   │
│         │                                            │
│         ▼                                            │
│     Closure                                          │
│                                                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Pre-narrative remarks, apertures and closures are all very varied in the corpus, being largely contextual and stylistic matters, and depending on the demands of the story itself. The four central elements (1) occasion, (2) foreknowledge, (3) interval, and (4) event, however, merit further examination. All are present in every narrative of the corpus, even if in negative form, as in the stories in which the narrator says there was no outcome, though, of course, the elements are not necessarily arranged in chronological order as above. The similarities of overall representation and the differences of individual realisation serve to show characteristics of the corpus as a whole and to differentiate subclasses in the women's own typology. As with the corpus of revenant stories, the procedure in this chapter will be first to examine typical lexis. Initially this analysis will be brief. As the rationale of the women's typology of foreknowledge experiences unfolds, lexis and structure together will be used as a basis for more detailed description.

2.3   <u>Introduction to the lexis of stories about foreknowledge</u>

This section is a brief résumé of the main characteristics of the four principal structural elements of narratives of foreknowledge arranged in tabular form.

Table 2 lists prepositional groups in clauses which describe the scene and setting of the events to show the <u>place</u> and <u>time</u>, and the subject and complement of these clauses to show the <u>persons</u> involved.

Table 3 lists key words used in accounts of the foreknowledge itself, concentrating on (a) nouns used to describe <u>content</u>, and (b) verbs used to describe the <u>nature</u> of the forewarning.

Table 4 lists prepositions, modifiers and qualifiers in the adjunct of clauses referring to the outcome of events in order to assess how often the <u>interval</u> of time that elapses between foreknowledge and sub-sequent events in the stories is expressly given.

Table 5 lists predicate and complement of these clauses in order to see what the typical outcomes of these experiences are thought to be.

Table 2: scene and setting, receiver and subject of instances of foreknowledge

O C C A S I O N

PLACE

A. Clairvoyant's consulting rooms

to a caravan	(1)
to the spiritualist's	(1)
All Saints, Manchester	(1)
to a house in Didsbury	(1)

B. Chance place

in bed	(3)
the house	(2)
hospital	(1)
the office	(1)
the toilet	(1)
the kitchen	(1)
from my sister's	(1)
down the road	(1)
through one of the glens	(1)
in the front garden	(1)
by the door	(1)
on the doorstep	(1)

TIME*

A. Precisely dated

when (+ year/date/occasion)	(6)
June	(1)
in January 1971	(1)
in that summer of '47	(1)
three years last November	(1)
two years last Christmas	(1)
on the Monday	(1)
yesterday morning	(1)
about nine years ago	(1)

B. Imprecisely given

once	(6)
one day / time	(4)
before -	(3)
many years ago	(3)
the last time	(1)
during the war	(1)
that night	(1)
as soon as	(1)
round about lunchtime	(1)
all the time	(1)
when I was younger	(1)

P E R S O N

RECEIVER

I	(25)
she	(10)
fortuneteller	(1)
person	(1)

* Note:

where narrators have given both inner and outer time frames, only the inner frame has been noted for this table.

SUBJECT

A. Females

me	(8)
friend	(3)
mother (in law)	(3)
niece	(2)
daughter	(1)
aunty	(1)
girl	(1)

B. Males

husband	(4)
nephew	(4)
brother	(2)
policeman	(2)
chap	(1)
son	(1)

C. Other (4)

Table 3: nature and content of foreknowledge

F O R E K N O W L E D G E

NATURE ✳   CONTENT

A. Communication		A. Domestic	
say	(14)	marriage	(2)
tell	(1)	wedding bells	(1)
		children	(1)
B. Cognition		lodgers	(1)
feel	(5)		
know	(2)	B. Health and safety	
think	(1)	death	(5)
wonder	(1)	legs	(2)
couldn't get her out of my mind	(1)	operation	(2)
		hospital	(1)
C. Perception		something (going to happen to)	(1)
see	(3)		
hear	(3)	C. Finance	
smell	(1)	fortune	(1)
		money	(1)
D. Visionary			
dream	(1)	D. Miscellaneous	
		(see) somebody	(1)
		not coming	(1)
		policeman	(1)
		letter	(1)
		watch stops	(1)

✳ Note: Narrators usually give more than one description of the nature of their forewarning. Each of these has been noted in the table.

Table 4:   Prepositions, modifiers and qualifiers in adjunct to show
            interval between foreknowledge and subsequent event

I N T E R V A L *

when	(4)
after	(5)
in/on (+ specified date)	(3)
next	(3)
following	(2)
within	(2)
as soon as	(1)
last	(1)
later	(1)
since	(1)
during	(1)
not given	(13)

* Note: where narrators mark interval twice, only the first
          reference has been noted in computing this table.

Table 5:   Predicate and complement in clauses recording the outcome
            of foreknowledge experiences

A. Death

died/was dead	(11)
was killed	(2)
had got a very short time to live	(1)

B. Accident

was in hospital	(2)
[he]'s a policeman	(2)
have these funny feet and things	(1)
broke her leg	(1)
is blind	(1)
had an accident in a car	(1)
had a very serious operation	(1)

C. Courtship and marriage

got engaged	(1)
was married	(1)

D. Miscellaneous

had three lodgers	(1)
was a letter waiting for me	(1)
[the watch] had stopped	(1)
was nothing like they told me	(1)
was quite true	(1)
[the child I have] is adopted	(1)
dropped everything	(1)
not coming	(1)

no outcome	(4)

In general the tables show that stories of foreknowledge are set more often in chance places than at a fortuneteller's or spiritualist's consulting rooms, though on many occasions a narrator does not bother to specify place at all. On the other hand, time is for the most part very explicitly given and never once omitted altogether. In fourteen narratives out of thirty-seven the time is particularly carefully fixed by quoting calendar dates or by giving the precise interval since the events happened, or by recalling other memorable incidents. The person who receives a forewarning is either the narrator herself or another female (she, person, fortune-teller), and the subjects of the forewarnings are generally close family and friends (me, husband and nephew are the most commonly mentioned).

Generally the nature of the forewarning is expressed in terms of say or tell. This is so even when the women receive a sign or token: here they tend to express it as "this thing kept saying" or "something kept saying in my head". On rather fewer occasions the women express the experience of forewarning through cognitive rather than communicative processes (feel, know, think and so on), or as perception (see, hear, smell). The content of the forewarning is given in only twenty-three of the thirty-seven narratives: in the other stories the meaning of the forewarning is later deduced from the subsequent event. The predictions which are given refer most often to domestic life and health matters.

It is usual, though not invariable, to specify the _interval_

that elapses between foreknowledge and outcome. Precise dating

("When I was forty-two" or "In August '47") is preferred to less

specific references ("Within a fortnight" or "since - "). Finally,

Table 5 shows that most narrators only tell stories about predictions

that have come true or at least have had time to be proved untrue.

Whereas the content of a forewarning is not always given, the

outcome (if any) always is. There are twenty-three predictions

and thirty-three outcomes: all the unidentifiable forewarnings

result in death.

The initial analysis of stories of foreknowledge therefore

paints a picture not intrinsically different from that in narratives

about revenants. Such experiences are most often considered to be

private, intuitive communications, received in ordinary surroundings

and relating to domestic circumstances, particularly to the crises

of sickness and death.

2.4   Further analysis: Time

One of the most striking characteristics of foreknowledge

stories - that is, their essential temporality - is revealed when a

more delicate analysis of their lexis is undertaken. When the details

of the _interval_ between foreknowledge and event are juxtaposed with

details of _time_ given in the preliminary scene-setting, their

rootedness in precise, real time is clearly shown. In the majority

of narratives _time_ is paired with _interval_ to make a binary structure.

The way this works can be seen in Inez's story below:

Aperture	Well, the only personal experience that I have, not of what was in somebody else's mind, but -	
1. Occasion	One day	time
	in the office	place
	I was going past one of the girls - not a <u>young</u> girl -	person
2. Fore-knowledge	and I knew nothing about her personal life except that she was a single girl who lived with her father and mother and was very good to them, very devoted -	evaluation
	and as I passed by her	time/place
	I turned round to her	evaluation
	and said, "Beryl, somebody's going to ask you to marry him"	content
	I <u>felt</u> the -	nature
3. Interval	and the next day	time lapse
4. Event	she came in and said the man next door, a widower, had asked her to marry him, and they got engaged	marriage
Closure	and that's the only thing I know, personally.	

(Narrative 35: Inez)

Clearly the central and significant aspects of the story are those marked 1, 2, 3 and 4, beginning at "one day" and ending at "they got engaged". The symmetry with which these elements are arranged is quite marked. The central part of the story begins with <u>time</u> in the form of a reference to a remembered date, the <u>place</u> is set in the office as she "was going past" a colleague. After the evaluative sequence, <u>time</u> is recalled by the word "as" and the specific <u>place</u> of the insight reiterated ("(as) I passed by her"), the message follows ("... ask you to marry ..."), next a brief evaluation, then time is again set and the event follows ("... asked her to marry ..."). Shorn of everything but the most basic references, the story shows itself as paired sequences of dates and incidents - date in the form of <u>time</u> with incident in the form of <u>fore-knowledge</u>, then date in the form of <u>interval</u> with incident in the form of <u>event</u>.

Though not all narratives in the corpus are chronologically arranged as Inez's is,[6] time is central to both structure and interpretation. In this non-chronological story by Norma, for example, the outcome is used initially to date the experience, then when Norma returns to <u>event</u> at the close of the narrative, she again dates it, so that "Well, I always remember before my husband died" is paired with "And it was about a fort-night after that my husband died".

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6   Of 37 stories, 25 keep to a linear outline with a clear chronologi-
    cal arrangement but 12 subvert chronology by introducing the <u>fore-
    knowledge</u> with a reference to the <u>event</u> (that is by initially
    conflating slots 1 and 4). Cf. below section 3.3., and chapter 10,
    section 5).

Aperture	Well, I always remember	
Event	before my husband died	time
Occasion	I had a chest of drawers quite close to my bed	place
Fore-knowledge	and there was such a _bang_ in it. You know, funny noise, not a creaking like you get from a - . A _banging_ as though something was hit	nature
Interval	and it was about a fortnight after	time lapse
Event	that my husband died	death
Closure	and I've always associated it.	

(Narrative 43:   Norma)

The same pattern is observable in a longer story told by Violet.[7] She begins:

> My brother that was ill - that died suddenly, he'd
> lost his wife at Christmas and he died in the March,
> and he was going on a cruise [...] and on the Monday
> he was sailing, he was going for a fortnight [...]

The body of the narrative consists of a discussion between Violet and her husband about what will happen if her brother dies at sea. The brother survives the cruise but "he died, the very night he got back". Time and interval are here used to emphasise the climax of the narrative and to structure its rather rambling form.

Even in narratives which are arranged entirely non-sequentially, clustering in a cyclical manner round some central happening rather than being unfolded in chronological order, time is a central concern to the narrator and the story is structured round dates and intervals:

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7   For a full transcription see below, chapter 10,   p. 443

> Now we were only talking about it - . I have a cousin
> and he's - . When he was a baby, he used, when he was
> passing trees, when he'd be about eighteen months old,
> "Ooh! Those bushes are going to prick my eyes!" and I
> mean, he was too young to be aware of what could
> happen. Well, he went in the - . He was just eighteen
> when he went in the war and he was - . They went over
> a mine and he was blinded. Well, now then, his mother
> was living with us at the time, he'd no father and his
> mother was living with us. Before she - . Before my
> aunty opened the letter, my mother said, "It's his
> eyes! My God! It's his eyes!" and she - . I can't
> remember what it was she'd dreamt but she'd dreamt
> something about it. Now, we were only talking about
> that this weekend.

(Narrative 53: Edna)

Edna's story proceeds through a series of time references:

"when he was a baby"

"when he was passing trees"

"when he'd be about eighteen months old"

"he was just eighteen when he went in the war"

"at the time"

"before she"

"we were only talking about that this weekend".

So it is that seven temporal references govern a total of only five sentences, no statement of fact being left without at least one placement in time.

Again, when the details of time references in the first and third structural slots are examined in the corpus as a whole, it is easy to see the importance of time in the ordering of both story and experience. Table 2 above listed all the time ascriptions in the first slot (occasion). Of these, fourteen are precise references to specific dates and occasions. A similar list compiled for the third slot (interval) shows six references to calendar dates, and thirteen accurate records of the lapse of time:

Table 6: Lexical items in 3rd structural slot

INTERVAL

A. Dated accurately

in March

on the sixteenth of August

in the August of 47

the following May

when he was nineteen

when I was forty-two

B. Dated approximately

last Christmas

during the holidays

C. Dated by lapse of time

next morning

three weeks later

within a month or a fortnight

the next day

the following Tuesday

next morning

a fortnight afterwards

when I got back (2 examples)

within a month

after seven months

a couple of days after

three weeks after

eight months after

D. General

as soon as she -

when she -

since I -

It can be seen how uncommon it is to omit references to time, and
how often it is very precisely dated. In setting the scene, <u>time</u> is
never omitted and often given in quite precise terms; similarly the <u>in-
terval</u> between forewarning and outcome is mentioned in all but thirteen
cases, and most commonly with a clear, remembered date in mind. Altogether,
narrators customarily show considerable fastidiousness about temporal
relations in telling these stories.

Other significant aspects of time in these narratives are the story-
tellers' reliance on terms denoting speed for evaluating the action, and
their double framing of time references. Phrases like "rushed into hospital",
"drop everything and go", get married "just like that" or "in a rush" are
plainly used as intensifiers. They correspond in effect to another popular
expression "she turned round and said", plainly evaluating by suggesting
sudden and precipitate action.

Similarly, not satisfied with a single temporal reference to set the
scene, narrators usually give two. A narrator first marks approximate time
by phrases such as "When Granny was alive", or "When Jim died", and then
creates an inner frame to mark the beginning of narrated time with phrases
such as "and I was in bed but not asleep", or "he was sailing on the
Monday" and so on. Time, then, is both structural and evaluative in stories
of foreknowledge: the more proficient the storyteller, the more likely
she is to give details about time. Rose, for example, perhaps the live-
liest narrator of tales of foreknowledge, is consistently specific about
times, dates and intervals. This is in strong contrast to the usual prac-
tice in narratives about revenants and hauntings where time is referred to
in more generalised ways (<u>night</u>, <u>day</u>, <u>morning</u>), and the frequency of an
experience is given in vague, generic terms such as <u>once</u>, <u>when</u>, <u>ago</u>, <u>before</u>
and <u>after</u>. Even stories of the appearance of a wraith at the moment of
death do not mention time in the detailed manner of foreknowledge stories.

This brief survey of the narrators' use of time therefore suggests:

(a) that the stories are firmly rooted in temporal, rather than eternal, concerns. Their reference is to daily cares and present matters - a mundane application of the powers of intuition and the orientation to inter-personal concerns that inform the women's ideas about the return of the dead.

(b) The symmetry with which time is allied to incident strongly recalls the structure of stories of the lack liquidating dead, and suggests a similarly purposive world view. Even in experiences such as these, where the factor of chance would seem to be at its height, the women see order and purpose. The stories once more are shaped to give meaning to strange emotions and unsettling coincidences, and, in doing so, to en-shrine a total worldview.

3. The subtypes of experiences of foreknowledge

3.1 General characteristics of foreknowledge stories summarised

In general, then, all stories of foreknowledge share a number of characteristics:

(a) they order and rationalise discrepant experiences according to cultural traditions;

(b) they reflect and help maintain a view of the world (both natural and supernatural) as orderly and meaningful;

(c) they are symmetrically structured round matched sequences
of dates and events;

(d) they concern matters dear to the hearts of elderly women
whose lives have been given to the caring role - health,
family, finance and domestic arrangements;

(e) the language in which they are told reflects the narrator's
orientation towards verbal communication and intuitive
reasoning;

(f) the stories are set in the home: "The daily round, the
common task";

(g) they are heavily evaluated in terms of surprise, wonder,
speed; by declarations of innocence of subsequent events;
and by fastidious accuracy as to people, dates and places.

Though all foreknowledge stories show these characteristics in common,
nevertheless they fall into two distinct subtypes. On the one hand, as
we have seen, there are omens and premonitions to which the women accord
a considerable measure of belief, and, on the other, the predictions of
fortunetellers and astrologers which carry very little weight. These
distinctions are reflected in the content, lexis and structure of stories
told on these subjects, so an examination of these matters helps to make
plain why one type of foreknowledge is treated as reliable and the other
not.

3.2   Lexical difference between (a) stories of omens and
       premonitions, and (b) stories of fortunetelling

Briefly summarised, the differences between stories of omens and
premonitions and stories of visit to fortunetellers[8] are as follows:

---

8   N.B. There are no narratives about astrological practices.

(a)   narratives of omens and premonitions give accounts of private
and occasional insights about a wide range of friends and relatives (often
male), experiences which are remembered distinctly and accurately dated in
the accounts, told often in an introspective, naturalistic manner concen-
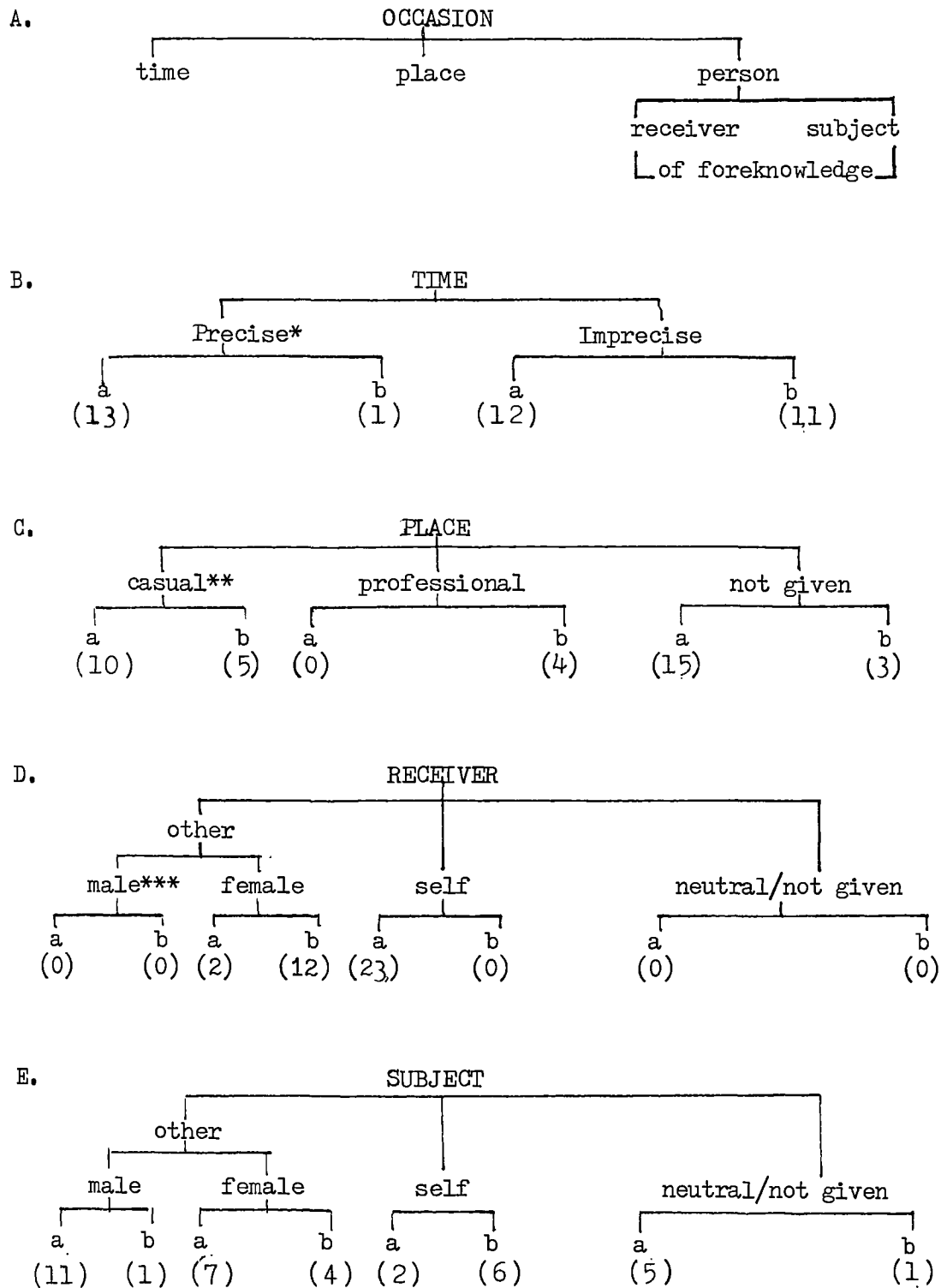trating on description as often as on the drama of events.

(b)   stories about visits to fortunetellers give accounts of visits
to professional consulting rooms.   These are on the whole set in the remote
and unspecified past, concern primarily female roles and personages, are
told in objective fashion concentrating on drama and event.

These differences may be quite plainly seen if the lexis used in
three out of the four[9] principal structural slots (that is, occasion, fore-
knowledge, event) is compared. The tables below chart these differences
in terms of the frequency with which typical lexical choices are made by
narrators. In order to make the patterns more readily discernible, only
the generic groups are indicated. For the detail consult tables 2 - 6
above. Figures in brackets in each table represent the number of
occurrences of each category or word - for example the figure (13) under
(a) in B below indicates that in stories of omens and premonitions narra-
tors use words which refer to precise dates thirteen times in all.

---

9   There is no discernible difference in the lexis used in the expression
     of interval. See Table 4 above (p. 340) and Figure 4 below (p. 358).

3.2.1

Table 7: Frequency of lexical groups in the first structural slot (occasion) in stories of (a) omens and premonitions and (b) fortunetelling
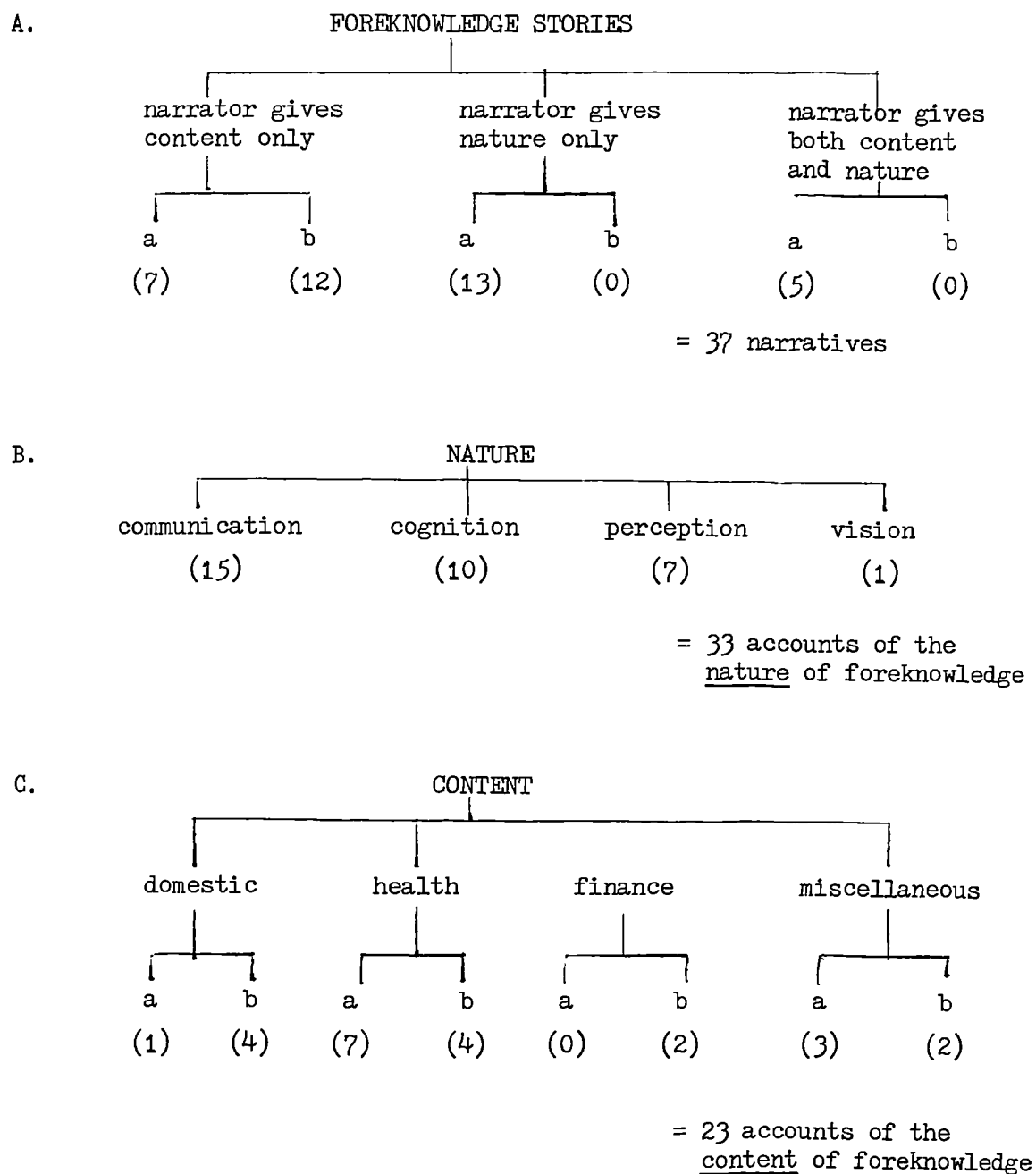
A.
```
                        OCCASION
        ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
      time                place              person
                                        ┌──────────────┐
                                     receiver        subject
                                     └─of foreknowledge─┘
```

B.
```
                        TIME
        ┌───────────────────────────┴───────────────────────────┐
     Precise*                                              Imprecise
   ┌──────────┐                                         ┌──────────────┐
   a          b                                         a              b
  (13)       (1)                                       (12)          (11)
```

C.
```
                             PLACE
     ┌─────────────────────────┼─────────────────────────┐
   casual**                professional               not given
  ┌────────┐            ┌────────────┐             ┌────────────┐
  a        b            a            b             a            b
 (10)     (5)          (0)          (4)           (15)          (3)
```

D.
```
                         RECEIVER
        ┌──────────────────────┼────────────────────────────────┐
     other                    self                       neutral/not given
  ┌───────────┐
male***    female
 ┌──┐      ┌──┐          ┌──┐                    ┌──────────────────┐
 a  b      a  b          a  b                    a                  b
(0)(0)    (2)(12)       (23)(0)                 (0)                (0)
```

E.
```
                         SUBJECT
        ┌──────────────────────┼────────────────────────────────┐
     other                    self                       neutral/not given
  ┌───────────┐
 male      female
 ┌──┐      ┌──┐          ┌──┐                    ┌──────────────────┐
 a  b      a  b          a  b                    a                  b
(11)(1)   (7)(4)        (2)(6)                  (5)                (1)
```

<u>Notes</u>

(a) = stories of omens and premonitions; (b) = stories of fortunetelling

*   "precise" = items from list A, Table 2, p. 338, above: "imprecise" =
      items from list B.

**   "casual" = items from list B, Table 3, p. 339 above:
      "professional" = items from list A.

*** for detailed relationships of these personages to the narrator see
      items in lists A and B, Table 2 above, p. 338.

Some of the differences in stories of omens and premonitions and

stories of fortunetelling shown in this table are fairly predictable, others

are less obvious. It is to be expected, of course, that the <u>receiver</u> of

omens and premonitions should be overwhelmingly the narrator herself and

that they should occur in a casual environment, whereas the fortuneteller

should be another woman often visited in her professional consulting rooms. It

is less predictable to find that the <u>subjects</u> of omens and premonitions

should be overwhelmingly other people (especially male members of the

family), whereas only one fortuneteller's prediction concerns a man or

boy (Section E, table 7, above). Interesting differences show up in the

treatment of time too: stories of premonitions and omens are rather more

likely to be dated accurately than stories about visits to fortunetellers.

Section B of Table 7 shows that whereas thirteen out of twenty-five of

the former are precisely marked for <u>time</u>, only one out of twelve of the

latter receive such precise dating. Thus the first slot (<u>occasion</u>) reveals

differences in stories of foreknowledge as follows:

<u>Figure 2</u>

FOREKNOWLEDGE

fortunetelling		omens and premonitions	lexical choice in:
professional		casual	<u>place</u>
imprecise	primarily	precise	<u>time</u>
professional		amateur	<u>person</u> ┌ receiver
narrator/females		male kin	└ subject

3.2.3

Table 8 : Frequency of lexical groups in second structural slot
(foreknowledge) in stories of (a) omens and premonitions
and (b) fortunetelling

A. FOREKNOWLEDGE STORIES

```
          narrator gives        narrator gives        narrator gives
          content only          nature only           both content
                                                       and nature

          a         b           a         b           a         b
         (7)      (12)        (13)       (0)          (5)       (0)
```

= 37 narratives

B. NATURE

```
    communication        cognition        perception        vision
        (15)               (10)              (7)              (1)
```

= 33 accounts of the
  nature of foreknowledge

C. CONTENT

```
        domestic          health          finance          miscellaneous

        a      b          a      b        a      b          a      b
       (1)    (4)        (7)    (4)      (0)    (2)         (3)    (2)
```

= 23 accounts of the
  content of foreknowledge

Table 8 points to a most interesting difference between stories of omens and premonitions on the one hand and stories of fortunetelling on the other. The latter are distanced and objective: narrators report only the _content_ of the predictions. They never reveal the grounds on which the fortuneteller's prediction is based. One might, for example, expect that a storyteller would say something like, "She said it was written in the cards that...." or "She said she could see....", but this never happens: narrators simply say, "She said, 'Oh, she'll never marry this chap she's going with.'" In contrast, narrators of stories of omens and premonitions often take a subjective attitude and are quite likely to give more than one description of the _nature_ but leave out the _content_ of their forewarning. It is interesting too that it is comparatively rare for a storyteller to give both the _content_ and the _nature_ of the forewarning. The usual practice is to say either: (a) "And my cloaked figure went past"[10] without spelling out to the hearer what significance this token has for the narrator; or (b) "She just turned round and said, 'You don't need to tell me. It's my husband ... He's died.'"[11] without telling how it was she knew so definitely that this event had occurred. It is rarer to make mention of both aspects of experiences of fore-knowledge as Alma does in the extract below:

(c) ... and she said, "Oh, you must read my cup!" and
I looked at it and I said, "Oh!" I said, "there's
nothing there." [............................]
"Look, mother, there was no future for her - none
at all!" She said, "There must have been!" I
said, "There wasn't!" and I said, "I got a queer
feeling when I picked up that cup. There wasn't
anything there!" 12

---

10 Narrative 29: Rose.

11 Narrative 132: Harriet.

12 Narrative 33: Alma.

Hence narrators appear deliberately to enhance the _objectiveness_ of accounts of fortunetelling but the _subjectiveness_ of stories of omens and premonitions, though logically both types of story could be cast in either mould.

Updated and set out in chart form the differences between the two classes of foreknowledge story are as follows:

Figure 3

FOREKNOWLEDGE

	fortunetelling	omens and premonitions	lexical choice in
Primarily	clairvoyant's consulting room	chance place	place
	imprecise	precise	time
	professional narrator/females	amateur male kin	person ⌐receiver └subject
	content	nature/content	foreknowledge

3.2.4

Table 9 : Frequency of lexical groups in the fourth structural slot (event) in stories of (a) omens and premonitions, and (b) fortunetelling

```
                              EVENT
                                |
        ┌──────────┬───────────┬──────────────┬──────────────────────┐
        │          │           │              │                      │
     no event    death    accident/       courtship/           miscellaneous
        │          │       illness         marriage                  │
      ┌─┴─┐      ┌─┴─┐      ┌─┴─┐          ┌─┴─┐            ┌─────────┴───┐
      a   b      a   b      a   b          a   b            a             b
     (2) (2)   (14) (0)    (4) (5)        (1) (1)          (4.)          (4)
```

Table 9 shows the dominance of death and sickness as outcomes of premonitions and omens. In eighteen out of twenty-five such stories the result of having a premonition or omen is death or ill-health. Professional fortunetellers' predictions, however, cover a wider range of human activity - marriages, visitors, and letters, as well as sudden accidents (but never deaths).

3.2.5   Summary

In three out of four of the central structural elements of foreknowledge stories, therefore, distinct differences may be seen. Figure 4 below sets these out for easy reference:

Figure 4

slot	fortunetelling	omens/premonitions	lexical/choice in:
		FOREKNOWLEDGE	
1.	imprecise consulting rooms professional narrator/females	precise chance place amateur males	OCCASION Time Place receiver subject

2.	nature → content
	not given → domestic*
	  health
	  finance
	  miscellaneous
		nature → content
		communication* → health*
		cognition domestic
		perception miscellaneous
		vision
			FORE-KNOWLEDGE

3.	specified/unspecified	specified/unspecified	INTERVAL
4.	accident/illness* miscellaneous no event courtship/marriage	death* accident/illness miscellaneous no event courtship/marriage	EVENT

Note: * given in descending order of frequency.

3.3   Structural difference between (a) stories of omens and
        premonitions and (b) stories of fortunetelling

It is not only in the content and lexis of the four essential

structural elements that differences between stories of omens and

premonitions and stories of fortunetelling may be detected. There are

also clear distinctions in the arrangement and ordering of these elements.

It was noted above[13] that twenty-five of the corpus of thirty-seven

stories ordered the subject-matter chronologically in a straightforward

linear outline, so that after giving the pre-narrative introductory

material then the aperture and perhaps an abstract, narrators moved

through occasion, to foreknowledge, to interval and finally event.

Twelve stories, however, are arranged non-chronologically, the narrator

first dating the foreknowledge by the subsequent event, thus removing

the element of surprise altogether from the narrative and necessitating

the abandonment of a simple sequential development. When stories of

premonitions and fortunetelling are compared for structural arrangement,

some interesting differences may be seen:

Table 10:   The order of the structural elements 1-4 in (a) stories
              of omens and premonitions, and (b) stories of fortunetelling

```
                              ORDER
                                |
            ┌───────────────────────────────────────┐
            |                                        |
      Chronological                          Non-chronological
            |                                        |
     ┌──────────────┐                       ┌──────────────┐
     a              b                       a              b
    (14)           (11)                    (11)           (1)
```
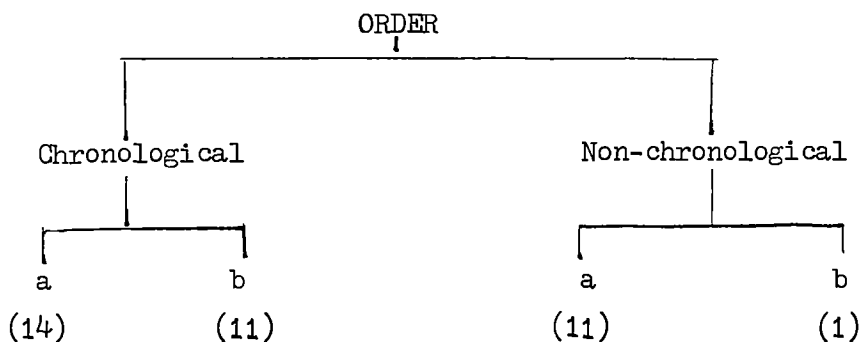
13   See above, footnote 6.

All but one of the non-chronological narratives are stories of omens and premonitions. It seems unlikely that this is mere coincidence. The more reasonable hypothesis is that this is a performative option. Chronological, linear narratives are geared to surprise and drama - the event being a climactic justification (or disproof) of the foreknowledge. Non-chronological stories sacrifice this element of drama and surprise for the sake of subjective truth, the interest of the story being centred in the experience itself. This same preference for subjectivity in stories of omens and premonitions has been seen, of course, in the second slot where narrators most commonly opt for describing the nature of the fore-warning rather than saying specifically what they were warned of.

3.4   The morality of foreknowledge

All the differences between the two story types, charted in tables 7-10 and figures 2-4, and especially those discussed immediately above, indicate that two very different kinds of story are being told. In telling one sort of narrative the women are careful to date the events as accurately as possible; they tell of insights that came unbidden and, in doing so, tend to dwell on what the experience was like; they often forego drama and surprise in order to concentrate on descriptive accuracy; and the accounts they give concern the fates (usually sickness and death) of other people, predominantly their male kin.

In telling the contrasting type of story, the women are less fastidious about dating the events (often being content to say that it happened once, or one day or before); they tell of visits to clairvoyants' consulting rooms and repeat the words of the predictions as quoted speech; they seldom attempt to describe their own feelings and reactions to the experience; they construct their story dramatically, matching the words of the

fortuneteller to the eventual outcome; the accounts they give concern

their own, or sometimes another female's, fate and refer to a wide range

of feminine preoccupations such as health, marriage and domestic life.

When the characteristics of the two types of story are listed like

this, it becomes easier to explain why it is that the women tend to believe

in omens and premonitions but disbelieve in fortunetelling. In an earlier

chapter[14] we saw how women were more likely to accept concepts that

(a) were other-person centred, (b) relied on intuition, and (c) rendered

the world 'safe'. Their stories about omens and premonitions show that

belief in these things fits all three criteria:

(a) omens and premonitions concern a person other than the

    narrator;

(b) they are unbidden intuitions about the future;

(c) the stories (and the beliefs they manifest) structure

    already occurring strange states of mind, and, by

    structuring, interpret them.

On the other hand, fortunetelling practices run contrary to these fixed

moral and philosophical preferences:

(a) when going to have one's fortune told, one deliberately

    seeks to find out something about and for oneself;

(b) the practices rely on mechanical interpretation of

    material signs;

(c) whereas the concept of premonitions explains odd states

    of mind when they occur, the practice of fortunetelling

    introduces a previously non-existent element of

    irrationality and strangeness into a woman's life.

---

14 Chapter 6, Section 3.3.

If any further proof were needed of the different status of these
beliefs in the women's philosophy, one need only look at the performative
styles in the stories told on each subject. Stories of fortunetelling
are:

(a) slightly distanced;

(b) geared to surprise and drama.

Essentially they are entertainments. Stories of omens and premonitions,
however, are:

(a) highly subjective;

(b) heavily evaluated (principally by scrupulousness as to time);

(c) geared to descriptive accuracy.

Essentially they are intellectual explorations of controversial problems.
It follows that, while beliefs about fortunetelling are considered to be
undeserving of serious discussion, beliefs in premonitions are important
enough for the narrator to have to take a stance about their truth or
falsity. The reasons why the women stand off from stories of fortune-
telling and present them as distanced and objective entertainments, whereas
stories of omens and premonitions are "fully incorporated"[15] lies in the
fact that the former type of experience runs counter to their moral and
philosophical values whereas the latter enshrines them.

It would seem, then, that instead of making distinctions - as folk-
lorists do - between 'omens' as symbols, 'premonitions' as intimations,
and fortunetelling as the divination of future events, the women of the
study group differentiate between, on the one hand, unsought intuitions
and/or visions of what is to come, and on the other, the deliberate seeking

---

15   See Georgina Smith, "Urban legend, Personal Experience Narrative and
     Oral History. Literal and Social Truth in Performance", in Bengt R.
     Jonsson (ed.), Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore (Uppsala, 1983),
     p. 169.

363.

out of knowledge. Their distinctions thus implicitly rely on a judgement about the morality of the activity involved.

This is particularly clearly revealed when six narratives at odds with the majority are considered separately. Though these six stories were contributed in answer to questions about premonitions and omens, they feature women engaged in telling fortunes for themselves or for their friends. It must be remembered that many women claim to be "a little bit psychic" and think that they have some sort of "telepathy with the future".[16] Few of them, however, deliberately exercise this ability and most express some measure of fear or reserve about their powers. As Rose puts it, "To me it's a gift, and you don't abuse it". The six stories illustrate this theme. In them, psychic women abuse their talents and are punished for their audacity. Rose's story, with which this chapter began, is typical[17]- she plays with a ouija board and she finds herself in hospital. Similar unpleasant outcomes occur in three other of the six stories. In narrative 33, Alma reads the cups for her mother's friend and next week the friend is dead; in narrative 51 Clara has her hand read for fun by a friend and within the year a favourite nephew dies a horrible death; in number 60 the amateur fortuneteller (Rose again) sees more than she bargained for - the funeral of a most promising young relative. The remaining two stories are rather less cruel, but even here the result is a domestic upheaval occasioned by the death of a distant relative. These memorates very strongly suggest the operation of a taboo. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this taboo is against the deliberate seeking out of too much knowledge for personal gain or vanity. In the women's own terminology, this is called "delving".[18]

---

16 This telling phrase is used in the <u>closure</u> of Narrative 48 told by Geraldine.

17 See above p. 332.

18 See Rose's story above p. 332.

It is tempting, too, to hypothesise that the underlying morality has much to do with women's conventional roles and personae. The stories sanction intuition, interpersonal relationships, caring and unselfishness; they condemn too much knowledge, assertiveness in the pursuit of power and information, inquisitiveness, vanity and self-seeking. Moreover, stories of premonitions and omens (sanctioned beliefs) feature intuitive women responding to male crises; those told about fortunetelling feature females and female lives.

However that may be, stories of foreknowledge clearly point to a folk taxonomy of clairvoyance - a taxonomy based on judgements about the morality of the activity involved. Broadly speaking, the Gatley women see forewarnings as being received from two distinct sources which it is taboo to confuse. On the one hand it is legitimate (though perhaps not very useful) to seek occasional guidance of a fortuneteller; on the other hand it is inevitable sometimes to receive uninvited insights or intuitions. The former is the popular and harmless practice of fortunetelling; the latter is a state common to sensitive, caring women - that of "being a little bit psychic". If, however, being psychic is exploited for personal gain or used to "delve" into forbidden matters, disaster will inevitably ensue.

3.5   Case studies

In order to make these patterns clearer and put flesh on the skeleton, typical narratives of each type will be transcribed and briefly commented on below. Differences in content and performance may best be seen by comparing narratives by a single skilled storyteller.

One informant, Rose, spent the whole of the interview conversing and narrating about foreknowledge; she is one of the many women who consider themselves to be "a little bit psychic". In the first narrative below she tells a story of fortunetelling; in the second she is caught "delving", and in the third she receives an unbidden insight into the future.

1. <u>Fortunetelling</u>

> But I've also had a friend who was very very keen
> on going to fortunetellers. It didn't matter where
> we were, she would, "Oh! Lovely!" - very thrilled,
> and I used to go with her. But I must say, the odd
> ones I've been to have been remarkably <u>true</u>,
> absolutely spot on.
>
> I mean, once we went to a caravan. This woman, I
> thought, was - Oh! According to this one, here we
> go again! But, anyway, my brother at the time had put
> his shoulder out and he'd been to the hospital. He
> was always accident-prone, and he was about thirty-
> five then, you know, and anyway - this, she told me
> about this, "Someone in your family who's got this
> <u>shoulder</u>", and then she said to me, "Do you know a
> policeman?" I said, "No!" [laughs] "Well", she said,
> "you <u>are</u> going to know one." I thought it was quite
> amusing.
>
> And when we got home from that holiday (we were
> staying at Marlborough), my next door neighbour - .
> I called over to her to say we were at home, and a
> voice answered me, "Oh, do you want Mrs. Warburton?"
> and it was this <u>fellow</u> that was there. So when
> eventually Mrs. Warburton came to see me she said,
> "That's <u>Perkins</u>. He's a policeman." I often think
> how <u>odd</u> that he should be there. Absolutely spot on,
> wasn't she?

<p style="text-align:center">(Narrative 55)</p>

This narrative begins with a typically rambling, almost defensive, intro-
duction, makes an <u>aperture</u> for the story to begin, slips again into pre-
narrative introductory material, then starts on the main story. Time is
minimally marked by "once" and later by a reference to the brother's age;
place and <u>receiver</u> are professional; the <u>subject</u> unspecified. The <u>content</u>
of the <u>foreknowledge</u> is given, realised first as a question, then as a
statement. A short evaluative aside follows, then more setting of scene,
then the <u>interval</u>. The final <u>closure</u> hints at her belief in the soundness
of the diviner's prediction.

2.   Delving

I've been able to tell fortunes by _cards_. I was able to read _cups_, reading tea-leaves, and this was when I was - oh, forty, fifty years ago. I was young, in my teens then you see, and I frightened myself to _death_, so I said, "No way!" So I left the tea-leaf business alone.

When I was married, and we'd been married about - Lord knows how long. The war interrupted so of course we never had any children until 1947. Now in that summer of '47, I used to tell all fortunes by _cards_ [GB: What's this? Tarot cards?] No, no, _playing_ cards, each card has a meaning, and all the cards together spell out a message.

Anyway, I was about six or seven months pregnant and we go down to see a relation of my aunt, no, not _my_ aunt, my _husband_'s aunt, and she was a great believer in the cards, and they have one son. Now, he was in a very good way of business. He was quite a top-notch in Rolls Royce.

And anyway, we got down there on the Saturday afternoon, and there was Aunty Ethel, Uncle Harold, who are John's aunt and uncle, myself complete with lump of course, and John, and Uncle Will met us at Crewe, at Crewe station, you see, with Rolls Royce and that naturally, and took us to his house, and we'd a terrific thunderstorm in the afternoon. So - to pass the time away, Will and his wife said, "Let's tell our fortunes, Rose", so I said, "OK, then", never thinking about anything, and they got the cards out and we started, you know, and _all_ I could tell her was that _all_ I could _see_ and _all_ I could _smell_ was flowers, and all I could see was a coffin sitting there in the hall on a bier.

Now, it was a _beautiful_ house with a great big square hall, you see. There's the lounge at the front and there's the dining room and there's a morning room, and there's this, that and the other, you see. Went to bed that night, everybody laughed - they thought, "Oh, she's just, you know. She's _pregnant_, you know." We went to bed at night, and I was crying and John said to me, "What the Hell's the matter with you?" he says. "I can't understand you." I said, "I want to go home. _All_ I can see, John - I can smell _flowers_ and all I can see is a coffin and it's on a bier in that hall." He said, "Oh, don't be so silly, Rose! Let's go - . You'll be alright. Get off to sleep!" No sleep for me!

We went home on the Sunday and Aunty Ethel said to me going home on the train, "What was the matter with you yesterday, Rose?" So I told her. So I said, "There's a coffin - . There's a funeral in that house, you know." She says, "Is there?" I says, "Yes. I don't know who it is, but it's definitely in that house."

So, anyway, I think it was - Oh, it would be July 19th -
in the August of '47, that's right, the nephew - he was
fourteen years old, their only son, their only child,
everything planned and a brilliant scholar. He came over
to see his Aunty Ethel and contracted polio, and in three
weeks he was dead. Yes. And his <u>coffin</u> stood on a bier
in the hall.

So it <u>so</u> affected me I said, *Never again will I tell a
fortune!* Frightened me to death. I said, "No!"

(Narrative 60)

After the <u>abstract</u> everything in this story is very much more plainly and

precisely marked than in the previous one. The <u>occasion</u> is marked by a

specific date ("In that summer of 47"), Rose herself is the <u>receiver</u> and

she is at her husband's relatives' home. Foreknowledge comes as a message

in the cards, or a vision as she looks at them, but she describes its

<u>nature</u> not its <u>content</u> ("All I could tell her was that all I could see

and all I could smell...."). After a digression which halts the onward

rush of events and an evaluative section in which all key elements are

repeated, first to her husband then to her aunt, Rose gives a precise

indication of the <u>interval</u> that elapses ("it would be July 19th. Now in

the August '47") before the <u>event</u> ("he came over to see his Aunty Ethel and

contracted polio and in three weeks he was dead...... his <u>coffin</u> stood on a

bier in the hall"). The alarming, cautionary nature of the whole experience

is stressed in Rose's <u>closure</u> ("So, it so affected me I said, 'Never again

will I tell a fortune!' Frightened me to death. I said, 'No!'").

3. "<u>Being psychic</u>"

Oh, I have my little visions. [GB: What do you see?]
All sorts of things.

It was - Was it three years ago last November -
that's right - or two years? - no, three years - we
were in the kitchen washing up, my husband and myself,
you see, and we have a window there, where the sink
is, and a window <u>there</u> [demonstrates], so you sort of
go round and the back door's <u>here</u>, and I said, "Oo !
Oo! Oo ! - " and it's <u>dark</u>, you know. It's November
and it's dark.

He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I've just
seen somebody <u>standing in that corner</u>!" And he
looked at me and said, "Oh God! There you go again!"
[laughs] you see, so I said, "O.K., then!"

Sixth of November it was. Comes the Tuesday, the
following Tuesday, and I've been out shopping.

I came back, turn into the top of the road. What
greets me? Three flipping police cars with their
lights going round, you know, and a car all smashed
up on the pavement, and my son's truck which was
parked outside bumped forward into the lamp - the
lamp down on top of it, and I said to my son, "What's
happened?" and he said, "Oh, you'll find out in a
moment", and a knock comes on the door and I opened
the door - Guess to what? The man in blue! A police-
man! The same geezer that I'd seen in the corner!
I'd <u>seen</u> him - the man in blue garb.

So now, so now I'm a great believer in the super-
natural. Yes, I am, and there are more things in
heaven and earth than we dream about.

(Narrative 36)

This racily told story begins with a brief <u>aperture</u>, then moves promptly

into the setting of the scene. The <u>occasion</u> is very precisely located in

<u>time</u> and <u>place</u> (the time is November 1978 and the place is a dark kitchen

where the washing up is in progress). The <u>nature</u> of the <u>foreknowledge</u> is

given as the appearance of a phantom figure in blue. The <u>interval</u> is

marked by day and date ("sixth of November it was. Comes the Tuesday, the

following Tuesday") typical both in the form of its marking and the short-

ness of the interval, and the <u>event</u> follows as the appearance of "the man

in blue". The <u>closure</u> stresses the connection between the experience and

her present state of belief.

The three stories show:

(a) the growing specificity of time references between narratives 1 and 3;

(b) the change from professional to chance <u>place</u> and amateur <u>person</u>;

(c) a slight change of emphasis in the personae of the stories. The

first, though it does not concern a female as subject, includes

references to female friends and neighbours as supporting cast. The

second concerns a male relative and the third is about her son.

These variations in the sex of the dramatis personae (only a few

male characters in stories of fortunetelling: more males than

females in stories of delving and of unsought insights), are as

expected.[19]

(d) even in the stories of a cheerful woman like Rose, a gloomier cast

to her story of delving;

(e) a move away from the trivial to the serious as she moves from

fortunetelling to other types of encounter with the future;

(f) the content of the foreknowledge being given only in the first

story.   Hence only in this is there a specific message in

the forewarning. The second two stories, however, feature a very

clear description of the nature of the foreknowledge, but it can

only be interpreted by subsequent events;

(g) the distinctly cautionary note to the story of delving, even for

the confident and outgoing Rose, accustomed as she is to her

"little visions".

We can thus see how a single narrator changes the detail and performative

pattern of her stories to suit their content. Rose's cheerful and uncom-

plicated personality and her energy as a storyteller, however, disguise

some of the other qualities of the three subtypes. Representative narra-

tives will therefore be quoted next in order to highlight the missing

characteristics.

4. Fortunetelling

> But I can always remember once her saying to me about
> my daughter. She said that she, you know, she - .
> She said, "Oh", she said, "she'll never marry that
> chap she's going with", she said, and she said that,
> "She'll meet somebody and she'll be married just
> like that". And that did happen, yes, and she was

---

19 See above, Table 8.

thirty-seven, no, thirty-eight when she got <u>married</u>.
She was in Cornwall - , and she's had two or three...
(Of course, she was engaged when she was twenty-two,
and she's had plenty of chaps and gone with them for
years) - and she meets this chap in August and she's
<u>married</u> the following May. We only met him twice!

You know, that always stuck in my mind what she'd
said, 'Oh! She'll meet somebody and she'll <u>go</u> just
like that!"

<div align="right">(Narrative 46: Norah)</div>

5. <u>Delving</u>

I'll tell you one thing. When I was younger I used
to look into teacups. Mother had a friend who was
terribly superstitious - <u>terribly</u> superstitious, and
she - . Whatever I said she took for gospel. Things
did happen that way, but a lot of it didn't.

But I know, the last time that she asked me, she
said, "Ooh! You must read my cup!" and I looked at
it and said, "Oh!" I said. "There's nothing there!"

"Ooh!" she said. "There must be."

I said, "No, there isn't" I said. "There's nothing
there at all!" And I couldn't see a - .

Well, she was very offended, very offended about this,
and I said, "No, there <u>isn't!</u>", and when I came home
Mother said, "Oh!" she said. "Why didn't you tell
her something?" I said, "Look, Mother. There was no
future for her, none at all."

She said, "There must have been." I said, "There
wasn't! I couldn't see a <u>thing</u> in that cup, and," I
said, "I got a queer feeling when I picked up that cup.
There wasn't <u>anything</u> there."

Do you know? The next week we were out and we met a
friend and she said, "Ooh! Do you know about - ?"
and she'd been taken ill. She'd had a <u>stroke</u> and she
only lasted three days. The next thing we knew, we
were going to her funeral. But now, that was the <u>last</u>
time that I ever did it.

<div align="right">(Narrative 33: Alma)</div>

6. <u>Being psychic</u>

> I wouldn't like to say that I <u>do really</u>, but yet - .
> I mean I wouldn't discount it <u>entirely</u>. Perhaps - .
> Now, we were only talking about it.... I have a
> cousin and he's - . When he was a baby, he used when
> he was passing trees, when he'd be about eighteen
> months old, "Ooh! Those bushes are going to prick
> my eyes!" and, I mean, he was too young to be aware
> of what could happen.
>
> Well, he went in the - . He was just eighteen when
> he went in the war, and he was - . They went over a
> mine and he was blinded.
>
> Well, now then, his mother was living with us at the
> time - he'd no father and she was living with us - .
> Before she opened the letter, before my aunty opened
> the letter, my mother said, "It's his eyes! My God,
> it's his eyes!" I can't remember what it was she'd
> dreamt, but she'd dreamt something about it.
>
> Now, we were only talking about that this weekend.

(Narrative 53: Edna)

The first of these additional narratives has a typical content -

success and failure in courtship. Norah's story is particularly true to

type in featuring a double prediction, a failure of the present relation-

ship but the creation of a new one. Two stories of success in marriage

also conform to the same pattern: the fortuneteller predicts a marriage

to a man she describes, the description does not fit the narrator's fiancé,

but the engagement is broken, a new alliance formed and the new fiancé is

as the fortuneteller described. Typical of fortuneteller stories, too,

no indication at all is given about what evidence the prediction is based

on, the narrator preferring to stress the form of the message and its

contents. Norah's story is like foreknowledge narratives as a whole by

its embeddedness in time. After the first minimal reference ("once"), she

is fastidious about dates: "She was thirty-seven, no, thirty-eight when

she got <u>married</u>"; "She was engaged when she was twenty-two"; "She meets

this chap in August and she's married the following May"; "we only met him

twice". She also evaluates in typical fashion by suggesting sudden and

precipitate action in the phrase, "She'll get married, just like that".

Alma's story is similarly time-conscious. Like Norah, she gives only vague dates at first ("When I was younger", "the last time"), but the interval slot contains three rather more specific time-references ("the next week", "three days", "the next thing we knew").

Five stories in all, like Alma's, feature both content and nature in the foreknowledge slot. It is typical of these that there is a concentration either on content or on nature. In Alma's story, for example, content is foregrounded by five repetitions of the fatal "There's nothing there"; nature is rather more slightly represented by "I couldn't see a thing in that cup" and "I got a queer feeling when I picked up that cup". Like all the better told narratives, Alma's is enlivened by dialogue and little naturalistic touches like the argument with her mother (also strongly evaluative in function). The closure is a clever repetition of the first dating ("the last time"), but now given a sinisterly different emphasis. It is typical of delving stories, too, that retribution follows an offence so promptly.

Time is not so conspicuous in the last additional narrative - Edna's story about her mother's psychic experience. References are to symbolic times - babyhood, eighteen months old, eighteen years old, wartime. Time also concludes the narrative in the closure that brings events up to date and suggests another layer of coincidence ("Now, we were only talking about that this weekend"). Time, however, is the structuring force in the overall shape of the story, the boy's babyhood fear of the bushes pricking his eyes coming to fateful fruition when, on the verge of manhood, he is blinded by a mine. The elements of this story are arranged non-chronologically, as is the case with half the stories of "being psychic". Initially the reference to the cousin's babyhood fears plainly pre-empts a revelation of the final outcome. That outcome is stated next: "they went over a

mine and he was blinded". The inner time frame is then set by "before

my aunty opened the letter" and the expected premonition is given in the

form of a message, "My God! It's his eyes!". Strangely enough, the cue

for this knowledge is not given as the childhood incident but as a dream.

In this way the <u>nature</u> of the foreknowledge is given at the very end, after

a threefold preparation for blindness as its outcome - a curious arrange-

ment but not unduly atypical for narratives about unsought psychic insights.

Analysis of the narrative corpus of thirty-nine stories of fore-

knowledge has shown that, once again, academic typologies may be quite

considerably at variance with folk taxonomies. In this case the women's

narratives reveal the existence of three distinct attitudes which inform

their philosophy and, revealing themselves in performative styles and

options, distinguish subtypes of the larger class. In this case, rather

than differentiating between types of foreknowledge according to its

nature or the methods used to acquire it, the women separate one sort of

experience from another according to the persons involved, the morality

of the activity, and the eventual outcome. These underlying attitudes

are similar to those which informed their belief in revenants: that is,

they give the greatest credence to beliefs which underpin their faith in

intuition and interpersonal relationships. Those experiences which can

be thought of as naturally occurring side-effects of loving and insight-

ful behaviour and states of mind are sanctioned; those which are self-

seeking, indulgent or self-glorifying are not.

Thus whereas convention forges distinctions between divinatory prac-

tices, premonitions and omens, the women's typology cuts across these

divisions and institutes a system based on the legitimacy of unsought,

as opposed to the audacity of sought, experiences of the supernatural. On

the one hand there are the practices of fortunetelling (moderately safe

but scorned) and "delving" (taboo): on the other, the state of "being

psychic" (normal, natural, inevitable, approved, and sanctioned by custom

and belief).

4. Non-narrative discourse about foreknowledge

4.1 The scope of the discussion

The study of non-narrative discourse is particularly useful in

attempting to complete the picture of beliefs in foreknowledge among the

Gatley study group. In the first place, it is only through non-narrative

that we are able to build up even the sketchiest picture of their opinions

about astrology, for narrative about this subject is almost totally lacking.

In the second place, non-narrative discourse allows the observer some

insight into how narratives of foreknowledge are used in the transmission

of belief. Thirdly, it gives a slightly better portrait of some aspects

of beliefs in omens and premonitions than the story corpus does. Fourthly,

it provides vital commentary on the reasons why some types of belief and

practice are accepted and others rejected by the women.

4.2 Astrology

The beliefs and practices of astrology (in the form both of

horoscopes and planetary influences on character) were less likely to be

believed than any other topic broached in discussions with the women.

Altogether only twenty-seven percent of them expressed any measure of

belief in horoscopes and only one person expressed unequivocal belief.

Rather more people were prepared to admit that they thought that there

might be something in the concept of planetary influences, thirty-three percent of those asked admitting some degree of belief.

Even so, the reading of horoscopes seems an almost universal pastime among the women and nearly everyone knew what sign of the zodiac she was born under. The respondents thought to have at least some measure of belief in the efficacy of horoscopes plainly frequently read them in newspapers or magazines. Ten of these women replied enthusiastically when asked if they read their horoscope, four qualifying their remarks by saying, "Sometimes it comes true, and sometimes it doesn't", six of them by saying they believed in them only if pleasant events were predicted, and four describing recent predictions they had read. Of the five respondents considered to be genuinely in doubt about the efficacy of horoscopes, two nevertheless read them regularly and two were once avid readers and convinced believers. Of the fifty-three who responded negatively to questions about horoscopes, only seven said they did not read them and only eight claimed to read them only occasionally. All other respondents said they "read them", using the universal present tense, or they "always read them", or they "read them every night", "often" or "most nights" in the evening paper. So thirty-eight women in the study group make an almost daily practice of reading something they say they are not prepared to take seriously.

It is, of course, possible that people may be so inconsistent, but it seems rather more likely that actual belief in horoscopes is much greater than these figures suggest. The answers strongly imply defensiveness and recall early responses to questions about the return of the dead (when the term 'ghost' was used and produced a false preponderance of negative results). It seems very possible that there is an underlying stratum of belief in astrology which was not tapped because questions were phrased in conventional ways and thus produced conventional replies. Perhaps a researcher

to whose work belief in astrology is central may, by careful observation,

find a terminological formula that, when used to frame questions, will

disarm respondents and encourage them to reply more frankly.

Be that as it may, it seems that regular horoscope reading is a

feature of the leisure activities of over eighty percent of the study women.

It must be assumed that the sort of evening ritual described below by

Stella is a regular feature of suburban households:

> We read them every night. He's possibly told you?
> We read it every night. I tell him what's going
> to happen, every night. We look at those - . We
> do the crossword very quickly and then do the
> horoscopes and we have a good laugh about it. We
> don't take it all that seriously.

Even a superficial questioning, as in the present work, reveals that, for

a minority of women, the ritual has at least some residual purpose, and a

small number may see it as a debased relic of a practice which, in the

hands of experts, may be a useful guide to action.

> Depends who's written it. I firmly believe it can
> be done, but it's got to be done right. (Mary)

A similar insistence on proper professionalism is echoed in other replies,

the women quoting for example the expertise of a daughter or grandchildren

as excuses for interest in the subject.

When asked about the ability to predict character (rather than good

and bad fortune) from the stars, more women were prepared to believe it

possible. The greater belief in theories about the relationship between

the disposition of the stars and character rather than events seems to be

based on their accessibility to practical demonstration for, of twenty

respondents with some measure of belief in birth signs, eighteen discussed

the character stereotype attributed to their birth sign and compared it

with their own personality (the remaining two, the most committed believers,

explained the theory and the methods of calculating astral influences).

Perhaps, too, the reduced anxiety was due to the less mysterious, more

empirical application of astrological principle, which thereby rendered

it safer and less "deep", or to the opportunity it gives for ironic comedy

and character analysis. Two neo-narratives neatly illustrate the scope

for comedy and introspection that the topic allows:

Norah (on horoscopes)

> Yes, I read it. Just like water off a duck's back,
> isn't it? Well, no. I don't believe in it really,
> because it told me to go and buy some Premium Bonds,
> and I went and bought them, and they've never won
> yet! [laughs] Yes, I remember once reading it and
> it said something about buying some Premium Bonds,
> and I went out and bought some like a lunatic.
> [laughs] And I just went and bought this five
> pounds' worth of Premium Bonds, but I never won.
> So, I don't think I'll believe in it again! [laughs]

Dorothy (on birth signs)

> Well, I don't know very much about it really. I did
> once send up - I think it was to Catrina - and
> foolishly sent some money for a horoscope. It was
> about twenty pages long and it only told me what I
> knew myself. I'm very aware of my faults and my
> shortcomings - it was rather rubbing it in! [laughs]

In summary it must be noted that:

(a) the practice of reading horoscopes is widespread even where

respondents will not admit to believing what they read;

(b) many people would appear to be willing to believe that charac-

ter (if not fate) may be to some extent influenced by the stars;

(c) it is possible that the low incidence of belief recorded in the

present study is an effect of being content to use purely conventional

terminology in phrasing questions on this topic (it was, after all, only

a filler for the main enquiry). A survey which set out to discover

respondents' own phraseology and used that phraseology in asking questions

might produce very different results. Certainly, the disparity between

the number of people admitting to reading horoscopes and those admitting
to believing them suggests that this might be a very rewarding field for
future research.

4.3   The transmission of belief through narrative and discussion

It is, of course, often difficult to assess the degree to which
any item of folklore is in oral transmission within a given community. In
the present case, however, it is reasonable to suppose that belief in
foreknowledge is actively transmitted both from generation to generation
and along the horizontal axis. First of all, the very popularity of the
concept suggests that belief in foreknowledge is a vivid part of the women's
mental furniture; secondly, their discussions are full of significant,
vague generalisations about "people", and what "they" think; thirdly there
are occasional references to recognisably traditional notions, phrased in
traditional terminology; fourthly, as in the discussion of the return of
the dead, clear developed counter-arguments exist; fifthly there is a
correspondence between narrative and non-narrative answers which suggests
a unified, ongoing dialogue of belief.

When asked about premonitions and omens the women frequently refer
to what "they", or "people", think and say. Statements like:

"You hear people say these things",

"There are people like that",

"I'm not arguing with what [experiences] other people have",

are commonplace. Again, the talk is full of examples of how these intui-
tions have been spoken of to others, and of bits of lore passed on in
families, or the experience is talked of as happening "to most people" -
all of which implies a free exchange of views and experiences on the subject.

Pieces of traditional lore surface in this chat. Twenty-seven people
spontaneously referred to second sight (sometimes called here a "sixth

sense"), and referred to it as a fact which could be used to explain other phenomena. This power is attributed in particular to the Scots, and to a lesser extent to the Irish. Even the notion of a seventh son of a seventh son as having psychic powers was mentioned without embarrassment or irony to substantiate the case for the existence of second sight. In other instances such powers were attributed to "sensitive" people, rather than put down to some special faculty of extrasensory perception.

Counter arguments which have plainly served in previous discussions freely occur in the women's answers to all questions relating to knowledge of the future. As far as fortunetelling is concerned, these take the form of arguing that any correspondence between prediction and outcome is coincidence, or that recourse to a clairvoyant is mere superstition or irrelevant because the future is "in the Maker's hands", or, most commonly, a neat and perceptive argument that the skill of a clairvoyant lies more in her ability to "react to your reactions" (Alice) than to any genuine psychic powers. This latter view is humorously summed up in Ada's comments below:

> Well, I mean, if you go and have your hand read like
> I used to do when I was young. But, I mean, if you
> think about it afterwards, they ask you questions in
> such a roundabout way, and by the time you come out,
> you think to yourself, "I've gone and told her all
> she wanted to know. She didn't read my hand: I was
> telling her what to read in my hand." Well, really,
> when you're sat in the train coming home, you think
> to yourself, "Well! She hasn't read my hand, I've
> read it to her."

When the women move on to discussions of unsought psychic experiences, the readymade counter arguments are more numerous. Apart from the obvious objections such as that such beliefs are superstitious, open to religious objections, and - being based on chance coincidences - deceptive, the women assert that such notions are "fanciful" or "sheer imagination" and use other such generalised rebuttals. In addition they employ sophisticated arguments

which counter the belief in foreknowledge in detail as well as in substance. The strange feelings and mood changes which are the chief type of premonition or omen to be mentioned in story and discourse are explained by a variety of natural causes, for example subconscious anxiety, low spirits, poor health, and atmospheric conditions. Similarly, the dreams which figure largely in narrative accounts as signs of future events are interpreted as the chance reshaping of the events of the previous day, and thus in need of no supernatural explanation and devoid of mystery. States of unease and the utterance of involuntary thoughts which prove to come true are ascribed to the natural working out of impressions and observations acquired over time. Elsewhere such beliefs are dismissed with affectionate and wry scorn as the province of an older generation, "those little ideas or thoughts that people used to have" (Geraldine).

All these aspects of discourse indicate that such beliefs in foreknowledge as have been discussed through the examination of narrative texts flourish in the community. Most significantly of all there is a close correspondence between the content of narrative and ordinary discourse on the subject. A study of non-narrative answers to questions about premonitions, omens and divination substantiates not only our view of the content of such beliefs revealed by the narratives, but also the subclasses into which such beliefs can be divided. The language and rhetoric is similar and so is the underlying psychology. In particular an analysis of non-narrative conversation about foreknowledge provides (a) information about what it is like to have a premonition or omen, and (b) additional insights into why the practices of fortunetelling and astrology are so often rejected by the Gatley study group.

4.4   Premonitions and omens in non-narrative discourse

Non-narrative answers to questions about premonitions and omens

help to build up the picture of what it is like to have an unsought glimpse

into the future. The first matter of interest is the terminology used in

these answers and explanations. Most women think of premonitions and

omens as types of mental insight, and speak of having a "feeling" that

"something was going to happen". References to being "a little bit psychic",

to a "sixth sense" or "second sight" or to being able to "see" what is

"going to happen" occur quite frequently, as does talk of someone's

"knowing" that "something was wrong". Many merely say, "I think things

that come true". Three people explain these insights as "affinity" or

"transference" between people who love each other; two ladies refer to

responding to a "hunch"; and another merely says that she had been "sure

something was going to happen". These descriptions are charted below, the

lexis used by the women listed on the left, the number of occurrences of

the word in non-narrative speech on the right.

Table 11. Terminology used in non-narrative discourse

TERM	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES
feel(ing)	14
psychic/sixth sense/second sight	11
know/knew	7
think	4
affinity/transference	3
hunch	2
sure	1
premonition	7

More material signs and warnings do occur. These include:

Table 12. Material signs of danger/death in non-narrative discourse

SIGN	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES
sound of brick hitting ⎤	3
picture falling off ⎦ wall	3
breakages in home	3
déjà vu experiences	3
dreams	8
scent of flowers	3
appearance of revenant	1

One of the oddest characteristics of narratives about foreknowledge is that narrators only sketch in the nature of the central experience, briefly saying, for example, that they "said to themselves" that "something's going to happen", or they "just knew" it, or "felt" it, or "thought" it, yet very seldom describing what it is to "feel", "know" or "think" these things. Non-narrative discourse for the most part follows this puzzling pattern. Out of a total of 182 answers to questions about omens, premonitions and fortunetelling only eight women are at all explicit about the nature of these experiences which apparently are so commonplace. It is very difficult therefore for an analyst to judge what sorts of physical or mental states are considered to be ominous. In non-narrative discourse, however, there are eight slight descriptions which help to fill this puzzling gap in the picture of foreknowledge. Two women describe what may be thought of as <u>physical</u> cues of danger, four speak of mental or emotional states, and two describe odd experiences or dreams.

Physical states

(a) I do believe in premonitions, and the feeling I get
if it's something not very pleasant is a coldness,
a chill. Suddenly, for no reason at all - I can be
so happy and everything seems all right - and then
suddenly - and it's a horrible feeling - I get a nasty
chilly feeling, really physically go quite cold and
shudder, and then, whatever it is I think about it. (Agnes)

(b) If there's anything going to happen then my tummy
gives a sort of roll and I say, "Hello! What's
going ... Something's going to happen today!" (Flora)

Mental / emotional states

(a) I think one has a very strange feeling when something
very important is going to happen, that you can't ex-
plain. Can't explain it. Almost as if one's on the
edge of a cliff and you FEEL that something terrible
is going to happen, but you can't put your finger on
it. That's how only I can describe it. (Bessie)

(b) From then on when I recognise this aspect, [psychic
sensibility] there's got to be something out of true,
and then I look more closely, remembering my mother's
situation. (Maud)

(c) You start thinking about somebody who's close, but a
long way away, and there's need to think of them.
Afterwards you find that it's been at that precise
time. (Hilda)

(d) I get such a queer feeling. (Flora)

Dreams and visions

(a) There always are cases, I think, that you'll come into
a certain situation or ... For instance, you might be
driving the car or by train and you'll come into a
city. It's a completely strange country, maybe. You've
never been before, and you'll look at a certain inter-
section and see certain people and say, "I've been here
before!" And it's something that has either come to
you in a dream, or come to you in thoughts as you go
about your daily business. (Dorothy)

(b) ... she'd be uneasy if she'd had a certain kind of
dream. (Joyce)

These slight descriptions are the closest thing to accurate accounts of

the experience of being forewarned in all the collected data.

Another matter of interest in non-narrative answers to questions

about premonitions and omens is the way they demonstrate how belief in

something as esoteric as foreknowledge is built on simple little events

of everyday life. All the women who gave the following accounts expressed

convinced or qualified belief in premonitions and gave the examples as

justifications of their views:

(a) My husband, now, if I used to have a visitor and he
was at work, and the visitor had gone by the time he
got home from work, he used to say, "We've had a
visitor, haven't we?" and I used to think it was a
little bit <u>uncanny</u>, you know, that he could.... (Margaret)

(b) My daughter and I, and I was just sat down, and I've
gone to say something to her and she says, "I was
just thinking about that!" (Winifred)

(c) I've been known to say to a friend of mine who is
very close, "Oh! That's funny! I was just about to
ring you up!" I do things like that. (Rita)

(d) But the thing is, if you haven't seen someone for a
long time and you suddenly think of them or speak of
them, the amazing thing, the next thing is that you
either hear from them, or somebody that knows them
mentions them and you say, "Well! Good gracious!
I've never seen or heard from them in years!" We were
just saying this afternoon, it does happen. (Stella)

Margaret, Winifred, Rita and Stella are not alone in exemplifying complex

concepts with simple coincidences. This strongly suggests that the belief

predates the experience (and hence discussion or narrative). It seems that

rather than belief being built from personal experiences, personal experience

is built from or at least interpreted by means of belief.

4.5   The rhetoric of disbelief

Where the women turn to discussing the reasons for disbelief,
they do so in formulaic phrases and rhetorical patterns which strongly
indicate underlying attitudes and philosophies. It is by studying the
utterances which embody their rhetoric of disbelief that the clearest
indication is given of (a) the appropriateness of the typology outlined
above (p. 364   ), and (b) the psychology of that typology.

Negative replies to questions about omens, premonitions, fortune-
telling and astrology are more than usually likely to be justified by
appeals to reason or principle. Overall there are three such replies to
questions about premonitions, nine to questions about omens, twenty-three
to questions about horoscopes, three to questions about birth signs and
sixteen to questions about fortunetelling. Out of a total of seventy-five
negative answers supported by appeals to reason or principle, therefore,
fifty-four (over two thirds) are given in answer to questions about fore-
knowledge. These answers thus form a useful base from which to study the
sort of philosophy that underpins scepticism towards supernatural and
quasi-supernatural concepts.

The most significant and frequently occurring of these principles
are precisely those that have been found to recur time and again in the
women's discourse:

(a)   the principle of the 'mechanical world' discussed initially
      in chapter 6 above;

(b)   a variety of anxiety responses expressed as being unwilling
      to believe in such things, or as not "agreeing with" them,
      or seeing them as merely "fun";

(c)   appeals to values derived from traditional female roles and
      early sexual socialisation.

These attitudes are made explicit through the women's expressions
of fear about the subject, or by their denying the efficacy of these prac-
tices, or by their asserting that it is "wrong" to "delve", that is, to
attempt to acquire more knowledge and power than is deemed proper. Out-
right rejection of the possibility of divining future events is often
accompanied by an expression of the deterministic or materialistic
philosophy. When this philosophy was outlined it was seen that these
philosophical attitudes were formulated as protective devices against the
onslaught of fate, arming the individual against chance either by denying
or ignoring it. For women like this to believe in the possibility of fore-
knowledge would be a breach in their defences against the world. The
deterministically based rejection is seen in Dora's remarks:

> I'm myself - I'm inclined towards predestination - I
> mean - You see, I'm a practising Christian and that
> makes me believe in "What is to be will be".

The more secular, materialistic view is:

(a) I just take everything as it comes. I always think,
    "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. What's
    going to come's going to come!" (Nadine)

(b) I'm sort of down to earth. I take things as they
    come. (Abigail)

(c) I believe what will be is. If anything's going to
    happen it does, even if you don't want it to. (Beatie)

(d) I think life's just what it is. It happens. (Rita)

(e) I'm more of a realist, really. I think, I really
    think that what happens, happens. (Constance)

These answers strongly indicate the basis of defensive fear that underlies
some attitudes to a deliberate encounter with the future. This fear or
anxiety is even more significant in other answers and clearly indicates the
psychological basis from which the taboo against delving is built up:

(f) No. I don't want to know. In fact, if I _knew_ -
(well, it's about fifteen months since) - that I
was going to fall flop like that and break my hip -
Well! (Meg)

(g) Because one or two of my friends have had things told
them that have come true, and I don't want to _know_.
So I don't go in for things like that. You'd _never_
get me in one of those places! (Annie)

(h) No. What's going to happen I'd rather - let it be
and let it happen, not _know_ what's going to happen.
I don't believe in fortunetelling. (Gwen)

(i) No. I'm afraid of those things. (Susan)

(j) I've often thought of it, but chickened out at the
last minute, or not been brave enough to go in and
find out what they were going to _tell_ me. (Patricia)

(k) No. I take things day by day, and I think if I went
and had my hand _read_ and she told me something _wrong_
was going to happen, it would mither me to death
until that time was _there_. (Iris)

(l) I'm a day-at-a-time person, and if it comes, it
comes. But I mean, if somebody says to me they
thought something was going to happen, I would be
so _worried_, so _ill_ - I'm better not knowing. (Gloria)

In these answers the possibility of breaching the deterministic defence

is acutely apprehended. The women cling fiercely to their ignorance,

setting up a taboo against knowledge.

Another defensive ploy which is commonly used is the insistence that

having one's fortune told or horoscopes read is merely fun:

> I can't think that reading teacups is anything more
> than a bit of fun. (Gladys)

Variations on this answer occur a further five times in answers to questions

about fortunetelling. By refusing to take predictions seriously one de-

prives the future of its power to harm.

This defensive attitude even creeps into answers framed as cautious

justifications of the practice of fortunetelling or qualified belief in

its efficacy:

> There again, it depends whether the person reading
> it is going to tell you what they see or what they
> think it is best for you to know. (Mary)

Mary seems to imply that the latter might be the best attitude for a

fortuneteller to take, again implying the danger inherent in too much

knowledge.

The "only fun" defence against the practices of fortunetelling and

astrology has its strongest expression in answers to questions about horo-

scopes. Twenty-six out of the total of eighty-one informants (about a

third) responded in this manner. Five said that they read horoscopes "for

fun", a further four said that they read them "out of habit", "automatically",

"for devilment", or "for a giggle", and seventeen said "I read it but I

don't believe it". This strategy takes the sting out of occult practices

by denying their power to harm.

Both types of answer again suggest very strongly that the women set

up a taboo against knowledge itself. Elsewhere they fearfully retreat into

reproachful ignorance. They say, "I don't believe in it" (in the sense of

not approving), "I don't go in for it", "I don't want to know about those"

and endless variations on the same theme. These attitudes would seem to

owe something to the Eden myth. If the future is in God's hands and only

God is aware of it, then obviously to attempt to obtain that knowledge for

oneself is tantamount to sacrilege. One suspects, too, that underneath

this piety there might also be a bit of superstition - as if knowledge of

the future has itself a power to harm:

> Let not thy divining heart
> Forethink me any ill
> Destiny may take thy part
> And may thy fears fulfill. [20]

---

20   John Donne, Song.

So a turning from deliberately sought knowledge of the future is consolidated by philosophical attitudes, by religious principle and by superstitious fear.

There is, however, a further aspect of this rhetoric of disbelief and the underlying attitudes it expresses that, while it calls for comment, has only been touched on in the discussions of this chapter so far: that is, the way both reflect sexual roles and status. The retreat from, or taboo against, knowledge can be seen as founded also on an insistence on traditional female values. These women (as their discourse and the structural analysis of their narratives has shown) have immense respect for conventional female roles and personae and a great measure of that diffidence which is born out of women's dependent social position. It is not too fanciful to suppose that, denied social and intellectual power and socialised into ignorance, the women should retreat from beliefs and practices that seem to offer power through knowledge. Their life experiences - especially the disorientating one of bereavement - have also helped to establish stoicism and passivity as virtues they cultivate. The "what will be will be" maxim has served well to steer them through traumas and tragedies and enable them to carry on. It is not likely that they would be willing to abandon such useful psychological armour for concepts which offer such uncertain benefits.

The sad side-product of this psychological defence and the enshrinement of conventional female values is a retreat from positive action. If one copes with fate by being passive under its onslaughts and by raising passivity to the status of principle, then action, independence and responsibility become faults. Thus it is that dependence is sanctified as a virtue, and lack of curiosity is extolled as an unwillingness to "delve" into forbidden matters. Faced then with any popular belief that purports to give control or knowledge many women prefer wilful ignorance.

It is very tempting to see this as an expression of a "victim mentality". Formulations of the stoic-passive philosophy, culminating as they do in Evelyn's maxim

> My father used to say that from the moment you are
> born to the moment you die, your life's mapped out
> for you. He says there's NOTHING you can do to
> change it

strongly recall the conclusion of Margaret Atwood's fine feminist novel, Surfacing. When the nameless heroine surfaces from her healing madness, she re-emerges with a new resolution:

> This above all, to refuse to be a victim ... I have
> to recant, give up the old belief that I am power-
> less and because of it nothing I can do will ever
> hurt anyone. A lie which was always more disastrous
> than the truth would have been ... withdrawing is no
> longer possible and the alternative is death. [21]

That the women do feel thus powerless is evidenced by their ascription of their independent successes since widowhood to figures of power and authority, the dead husband and the lost mother, expressed in a constantly recurring phrase as, "I couldn't have done it on my own. There must have been help given"; in their ascription of observations and intuitions to heaven-sent "premonitions", and in their refusal to see any attempt independently to ascertain (and therefore control?) the future as futile and/or wrong. It is easy to see these feelings as those of women who seek refuge in the role of victim - powerless and therefore absolved from both responsibility and blame.[22]

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[21] Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (London, 1979), p. 191.

[22] Some support for this view is lent by the fact that among male respondents the "What will be, will be" formulation is not used. Only one man expressed a view anything like the stoic-passive one, saying, "I take it for granted, life just goes on", which, even so, is a more positive maxim than the average woman's.

The taboo against delving and the unwillingness to believe in fortune-telling and astrology, therefore, seem to be grounded in four complementary impulses: religious principle; philosophical bias; social values; and psychological defences.

For the women of the study group, religious principle leads to the shunning of sought foreknowledge because it re-enacts the sin of Adam who wilfully set out to acquire knowledge so dangerous that only God could handle it. Similarly to seek deliberately to know the future breaches the deterministic/materialistic philosophy, the main defence which many women erect against the onslaughts of fate and chance. Thirdly, knowledge and power are considered unbecoming in a woman; and fourthly, action, which the possession of knowledge and power entails, is foreign to their own way of coping with life.

Together these impulses enshrine intuitive and unsought experiences of forewarning as feminine and valuable, but lead the women, often fiercely, to reject any deliberate attempt to catch hold of the future.

5. Summary

As with narratives about the return of the dead, therefore, stories about foreknowledge are evidently rooted in strongly held and widely transmitted beliefs, and are capable of showing up patterns in those beliefs which are not apparent to the casual observer. In particular, structural analysis of narratives about foreknowledge can reveal a folk taxonomy different at significant points from the academic ones, and this taxonomy is clearly justified by being shown to be reflected in non-narrative discourse. These correspondences - along with the fact that the beliefs are

popular, countered in argument and discussion, and contain or are justi-fied by ancient traditional lore - show that a belief in foreknowledge, in the sense of casual, unsought for glimpses of the future, is actively transmitted within the women's community.

In general, the nature of those beliefs can best be illustrated by quotation from the data as a whole. In the following, the two short extracts are from the conversation of women from the main sample, the longer extracts from men and younger women. These latter not only show that such beliefs are transmitted by groups other than elderly women, but also provide useful examples of the range of beliefs which the topic of foreknowledge covers.

First, two typical statements show on the one hand the rootedness of belief in personal experience and, on the other, disbelief's rootedness in reason and principle:

> (a) It's hard to say, isn't it, when it's never happened
>   to you? I mean, you hear people say these things
>   but, with it never happening - I don't think I'd laugh
>   it off, I think, you know, if they probably _have_. (Joan)

> (b) I'm rather inclined to cross my bridges _before_ I come
>   to them - [laughs] Yes! _before_ I come to them. So
>   I remind myself of an old Chinese proverb - now, what
>   is it? "Do not lose the present in vain perplexities
>   for the future". (Dorothy)

Outside the corpus, in the answers of men and younger women, there are three accounts of special interest because they describe precognition of a rounded and conventional kind. These are transcribed, without comment, below for their intrinsic interest. In the first, a forty year old Canadian, Marian, describes her vision of her future husband:

> (c) Yes! I think for instance the ... My husband - I
>   _knew_ it, the day he arrived in Canada. [GB: You
>   were strangers, were you?] Complete strangers!
>   Complete strangers. It happened to be what we call
>   a long weekend. He'd only arrived in Canada about

six weeks before we met, actually, and he told me
about the weekend he arrived, and I remember, and
I know exactly where I was at the _time_ when - . I
didn't see his face but I _saw_ this man walking to-
wards me carrying a suitcase.

In the second extract, Cynthia, a lady between fifty and sixty years old,

gives a good general overview of the sorts of things a 'psychic' woman is

thought to be able to predict:

(d) I've never experienced it myself, but I have a friend,
a colleague, and _she_ does and I _know_ she does. She
has _dreams_ and she'll come in and say very vividly,
and she knowswhat's happened and it does come to happen.
It may not be _soon_, and it's happened quite a lot of
times with her. She's middle forties now and I've
known her near enough for twenty years - I've known it
happen with her. Not necessarily connected - she might
dream of, say, a fire, or, you know, a national
disaster, something like that, and it _does_ come to
happen. She comes in some mornings, quite bothered,
when she's had one of these dreams very vividly. It's
always a dream. It's always in the night when she's
sleeping. Something _does_ happen afterwards. I know
she's - . As I say, there have been national disasters,
there have been personal disasters to her, there have
been personal things to friends and colleagues that
don't directly affect her, and she's come in and she's
told us that it _is_ going to happen and they're not the
kinds of things you can stop. I mean, one day she came
in and she said she'd dreamt that she and I had had a
dreadful _row_. So we _deliberately_ avoided each other
for a few days, and she said it could be weeks off, and
we never have had a deliberate row, you know, a big
row, but we do have differences of opinion, quite
strong differences of opinion. But I do know for a
fact that she's dreamt things that have come about, and
she's not Scots or any of these people that have, are
supposed to have, second sight, as far as I know. So
that can happen.

In the third excerpt Jack, whose strange experiences of poltergeists were

transcribed in the previous chapter, recalls a vivid precognitive vision

he received, as he thought in answer to prayer, at a time when his piety

was at its most intense and his need greatest in the early days of the

war:

(e) Now then to the premonition. I was sent to join my unit,
a hygiene company of RMC, at Macclesfield. I'd never
travelled much. In fact, my journeys by train were so
infrequent that I was terrified of getting on the wrong
train or getting out at the wrong station. I was the
most unconfident traveller of all. But I met several
people on the way up to Macclesfield from the same county
as me - one or two anyway, say four or five - and by the
time I'd got to Macclesfield I had already found com-
panions, not necessarily friends but companions, and it
felt much better.

But I'd prayed that I would have some assurance that
I would have Christian companionship. Now I felt absolutely
certain that God would not let me down. He'd not done so
before; when I'd put the choices squarely on God's
shoulders before, He'd not let me down, and I felt He
wouldn't on this occasion.

And I had a clear premonition of exactly what was going
to happen, and it happened in the way that I'd imagined
it. Perhaps not in every detail, because I'd not imagined
the details. But in the general picture everything went
according to the premonition that I'd been given. I
regarded it then as a vision, and on the first week, still
in civilian clothes, we were sent down to the public baths
and made to - Well! not made to [laughs] didn't need to
be made to take baths! But it was a compulsory sort of
thing, and during that time, I knew, I knew particularly
well, that a young man would come across to me and ask
me, "Are you a Christian?" And he did! I can't explain
it. It was not only a premonition but I knew exactly
what was going to happen: I knew how it was going to
happen! [GB: You knew who it was as well?] Yes. I
identified him as soon as we were together.
                                        (Narrative 141)

In these stories can be seen the range of things thought accessible to

pre-cognitive experience and visions: natural disasters, personal things,

quarrels and disagreements, companionship and faith.

In addition, from the narratives of the main study group, it is plain

that the women believe it possible to receive prior knowledge of death,

sickness, accident, family size, journeys, domestic arrangements, and

correspondence, as well as the small, trivial happenings of everyday. Pre-

cognitive experiences thus can cover all aspects of living.

How far the women are likely to accept the concept of foreknowledge

depends, to a large extent, on whether the belief accords with their sense

of fitness and propriety. Supernatural experience which is not sought out

is considered safe (because uninvited and unexploited), therefore the women overwhelmingly believe that some people are "psychic": on the other hand to deliberately seek out the supernatural is considered either futile or dangerously audacious, so fortunetelling and astrology are received with either scepticism or anxiety. It is taboo therefore for a woman to take it upon herself to "delve" - to exploit a talent, to require of Heaven that the free gift of prescience should be given to her, or to seek knowledge unbecoming to her sex and mortality.

CHAPTER 9

Miscellaneous beliefs

1. <u>UFOs and telepathy</u>

The investigation of beliefs about the dead and about foreknowledge lies at the heart of the present work as it was first planned. Out of ten questions included in the interview schedule which formed the basis of the fieldwork, eight fall into one or other of these two major categories of supernatural concepts. Questions relating to revenants, poltergeists, omens and premonitions are most central of all, of course, but a number of topics included in order to lighten the atmosphere and decrease tension (fortunetelling, horoscopes and birthsigns) also fall into the wider category of foreknowledge and are useful in throwing light on the main investigation. There are, however, two topics (UFOs and telepathy) broached during the interviews which were included in the question schedule for tactical reasons and do not so easily serve to highlight either of the main areas of interest.

The order of the questions asked of informants was adopted in order to sandwich delicate and controversial matters between topics which had much less power to embarrass or alarm. Thus the interviews began with questions about astrology and fortunetelling and ended with a deliberately superficial discussion of telepathy, flying saucers and the possibility of life on other planets. For reasons of tact it was only in the central portion of the interview that any attempt was made to penetrate the surface of conventional replies and probe more deeply into beliefs actually held by the informants, thus the answers to the first and last questions contain the highest proportion of conventional statements, superficial and un-thought-out replies, and defensive ploys. Essentially the data obtained from these questions is of a different order from that given in response to the central topics of revenants, poltergeists, omens and premonitions. Whereas the former indicate attitudes thought respectable in the community, the latter

succeed in getting below this layer of propriety and elucidating the often

submerged and unexpressed attitudes which structure belief for the individual

within her cultural tradition. It must be noted that it is rare for an in-

vestigator to be so fortunately placed as to be able to acquire this latter

type of data: very often he or she has had to be content to make use of

purely conventional replies as a data-base.[1]

The difference between the two sorts of response has already been re-

vealed in the discussions of the previous chapter which considered beliefs

in foreknowledge. Here it seemed that, whereas it had been possible to gain

reasonably full and accurate insight into beliefs about omens and premoni-

tions, only a very partial description could be made of the study group's

attitudes to astrology.[2] In the matter of telepathy and UFOs (topics which

closed the interview) the same factor is at work. Because these questions

were not the real subject of the investigation and were therefore phrased

and discussed in purely conventional terms with no attempt to penetrate the

barrier of reserve, the data to which they give rise reveal more about con-

ventional than deep-seated attitudes.

These two topics (telepathy and UFOs) show extreme contrast of response.

Whereas the women very substantially accept telepathy as fact or probability,

they overwhelmingly reject belief in flying saucers and the possibility of

life on other planets. A total of sixty-seven percent of those asked have

some measure of belief in telepathy (fifty-three percent having convinced

belief, fourteen percent having qualified belief): only ten percent are

prepared to reject the notion completely. On the other hand, only twenty-

four percent of those asked are prepared to believe in UFOs or life on other

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1   See especially work based on large-scale survey methods and/or written
     questionnaire (for example Gorer (1965)). This matter is discussed
     more fully above, chapter 6.

2   See above, chapter 8, section 4.2.

planets (and only two percent are convinced it is possible), whereas forty

percent express absolute disbelief.[3]

These extremes of belief and disbelief may probably be accounted for

in terms of the study women's dominant philosophy and morality. Telepathy

is, above all, an intuitive and interpersonal phenomenon; it enshrines human

love, care and communication; it helps to make the world seem a safer and

happier place.[4] In addition, of recent years it has received the sanction

of popular interest in newspapers, magazines and television documentaries

and has been the subject of genuine scientific investigation in the growing

number of university and polytechnic departments of parapsychology. In many

ways it could be regarded as the most received and 'respectable' of super-

natural (or quasi-supernatural) concepts. Thus even conventional replies

to superficial questions elicit a high proportion of affirmatives. Beliefs

in flying saucers and life on other planets, however, do not have this

sanction. In most popular investigations it is the illusory nature of such

experiences which is stressed, and, in addition, they are often used as the

subject matter of films and stories designed for children and young people.

Thus it is that many informants responded to this question by saying that

it was a young person's belief or by dismissive laughter. In addition,

more than any other concept, the idea of extra-terrestrial visitors violates

the women's settled intellectual disposition. Such a belief has no inter-

personal relevance, it renders the world unpredictable and alarming, and it

leaves no scope for feminine intuition.

Nor were these topics productive of much narrative. The study group

told six memorates and one personal legend on the subject of telepathy,[5] but

_____

3　See above, chapter 6, Table 1.

4　See above, chapter 6, section 3.3.

5　There is also one memorate told by a woman in the contrast group of
women 40 to 60 years old.

had no story at all to tell about UFOs: in fact, there is only one personal legend (contributed by one of the men, Jack)[6] told on this subject at all during the course of 120 interviews. This does strongly suggest that this topic excites extremely little interest in people over the age of forty. It is interesting to note, too, that answers to questions about UFOs are backed up by appeals to experience less frequently than other subjects are and that there is a very high incidence (eighty percent) of simple "yes"/ "no" answers. It is impossible, therefore, to paint even the sketchiest picture of beliefs in UFOs and life on other planets: within the study group as a whole, it seems reasonable to assume, no such belief exists.

On the other hand, the women clearly have a vigorous belief in tele-pathic powers, though unfortunately, owing to the scanty amount of narrative on the subject and the number of "yes"/"no" answers (fifty percent) it is difficult to piece together any coherent account of the nature of these concepts.

The clearest indication of what sort of experience is likely to be considered a telepathic one is given in the narratives and neo-narratives contributed in response to direct questions on the subject by the respondents as a whole. The total narrative and neo-narrative about telepathy is as follows:

Table 1: Breakdown of narratives about telepathy according to genre of narrative and age and sex of narrators

Narratives told by women of the study group

memorate	6
personal legend	1

Narratives told by other respondents

memorate	4

Neo-narratives (given by women of the study group)

3

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6   It is interesting to note that Jack's story about UFOs is a humorous domestic interlude told at second hand. It is the only one of his stories which is not serious and subjective, and the only one which illustrates disbelief rather than belief. Elsewhere his acceptance of traditional supernatural concepts is high.

The content of these fourteen accounts covers the following experiences:

1.   strange coincidences of thought, word and action between mother and daughter or husband and wife (four accounts);

2.   déjà vu experiences (three accounts);

3.   calls from or conversation with the ill or dying when physically separated (two accounts);

4.   a vision of a car accident then occurring;

5.   a mother who is sure that her son is alive though reported killed in action;

6.   knowledge of future tragedy;

7.   the finding of a photograph of an old friend the very evening the narrator sees him appear in a T.V. series she normally does not watch;

8.   an actress intuitively aware of the times when she must sit by the telephone to await an offer of work.

Belief in telepathic powers would appear to be fostered by strange coincidences and intuitions and supra-normal states of mind. It is significant that the most unusual of the experiences recounted in answer to questions about telepathy are graphically told and simply offered without any elaborate belief-superstructure. The following four memorates are typical:

1. **Narrative 72 told by Agnes**

> And the time when he was terribly, terribly ill and
> they sent for me, I knew very well that he wanted me
> and that he was ill before I had the telegram to say
> how ill he was, and there again, I heard him calling
> me. But I heard him call me distinctly - moaning,
> sort of in pain - and wanting me.

2. Narrative 107 told by Alec

Now, I do. Now, that is something that I do believe
in. I suppose one of the best I could answer that is,
in -. During the war I went to America, and I went to
a naval air station in Brunswick, Maine, and a group
of us decided to, one Sunday, to go out, and I was
describing a church to them and a particular area, and
it's something I've never been to before in my life,
and - even to this day - and it was there! Everything
was there, and one of my colleagues was absolutely amazed,
and I said, "Well, I don't know why!" and that's the
ONLY TIME in my life! I said, "I've been here before!"
But I hadn't. I knew I hadn't. I'd never been to America
before, so I knew it was just impossible and I thought,
"Well - !" When I started to reflect, I thought, "Well,
is there - ? Have I read a book or description or a
novel in which some of the buildings were described?"
I couldn't recall at all, but I must admit I was some-
what nonplussed when I got there. They said, "Well, how
did you know to get there?" and I couldn't tell them.
But I just knew. It was amazing.

3. Narrative 98 told by Sylvia

My sister died some years ago and she was desperately
ill and we'd been to see her in hospital on the Sunday,
and on the Sunday evening the specialist phoned and said
that, sort of, the crisis was over and, you know, she
was, she would be on the mend, and I could hear her -
talking to me all evening and suddenly at five to six
she just said, "I'm sorry. I can't hold on any longer",
and the phone went and she'd died at five to six. But
it was as if she was actually in the room with me and
said, "I'm sorry. I can't hold on any more."

4. Narrative 67 told by Winifred

I'll tell you my experience once. My husband dropped me
off at Barlow Moor road, he was going somewhere. He was
going into town and I was coming the other way, and I
had my back to the car and he moved off, and I saw him
in an accident you know. I saw this car coming for him
and he pulled up quickly. This was near Withington
hospital, Nell Lane, and when I got home I asked him
and he said, "Yes". [GB: You'd seen - ?] I did, yes,
although I had my back to him. He got quite a shock.

Doubtless, it is on a foundation of accounts of remarkable but inexplicable

sensory experiences such as these that the strong belief in telepathy in

this community is initially built. Once a tradition of telepathy is established, it seems that it is further consolidated by the ability of the concept to explain the occurrence of the odd coincidences which form an often disturbing aspect of human experience.

The remainder of the narratives and neo-narratives material gives accounts of these latter sorts of occurrences. They are also frequently referred to in other types of experiential discourse on the subject. The coincidences are of two types. Either the speaker has thought of a friend, long forgotten, who then phones, writes or calls during the course of that very day, or she simultaneously thinks, says or does the same thing as husband, daughter or close friend. This is described when not referred to as telepathy as "kindred association", "being in tune" or "keyed in" or as "being on the same wavelength" as another person. In narratives and neo-narratives this orientation is reflected in the importance of the word same and in references to phone calls and correspondence. A list of lexical choices in the limited corpus available bears this out:

Table 2: The ten most frequently occurring words in narratives and neo-narratives on the subject of telepathy, arranged in descending order of frequency

same
say
hear
phone
write
evening
ill
close
funny
husband

Thought and communication therefore dominate accounts of telepathic experiences or states.

Interestingly enough, accounts of these sorts of experiences are
often quite similar to stories of foreknowledge. They feature the same
wide range of family members and friends, their focus on accident and
illness is similar, and they are dominated by the dual concepts of intuition
and communication. Sometimes, indeed, it seems to be a matter of personal
choice whether a speaker refers to a given experience as telepathy or as
a premonition. The following coincidental occurrences seem remarkably
similar, but some were contributed as descriptions of telepathy, others of
premonitions:

(a) "Sometimes my daughter and I was just sat down and I've
gone to say something and she says, 'I was just thinking
of that!'" (Winifred)

(b) "Do you know, sometimes we'll talk and then he's quiet
and I'm quiet, and he says, 'Do you know - so-and-so -',
and I say, 'That's just what I was thinking!'" (Lily)

(c) "This business of thinking of people and they say, 'Ooh!
You know, I was just - !'   Or somebody _rings_ you." (Stella)

(d) "My sister is actually in New Zealand but our letters
more or less answer the same _queries_." (Zillah)

(e) "As I say, I'm inclined to mention people that we've
not seen for perhaps _years_ and something happens -
there's something in the papers." 7 (Valerie)

As it happens, examples (a) and (d) are given as instances of premonitions
and (b), (c) and (e) as instances of telepathy, but it could easily have
been the other way round.

On the whole it seems that, just as omens and premonitions are
differentiated, if at all, by the study women on the basis of the seriousness
of the outcome, so premonitions and telepathy are likewise sometimes distin-
guished by the gravity of the occasion. By and large any example of syn-
chronicity seems to be explained as telepathy on occasions when the ensuing

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7   In the "Births, Marriages and Deaths" column?

event is not particularly momentous, exciting or disturbing, and as a premonition where its effects have more important consequences.

The exception to this is, of course, the type of visionary experience reported in six out of the fourteen narratives and neo-narratives.[8] Similar accounts are given in answer to questions about omens and premonitions: the distinguishing factor here appears to be the simultaneousness or otherwise of vision and occurrence. In these narratives it seems that if the inexplicable perception occurs at the same time as the distant happening, the women tend to refer to the experience as a telepathic one; if perception precedes happening, they call it a premonition. Two factors, then, seem to be at work in the distinctions the women make between premonitions and telepathy: the gravity of the occasion, and the temporal relationship between the odd perceptual experience and the apparently connected event.

Even so, there are still accounts which defy attempts to explain the criteria of classification the women use. Agnes's narrative (Number 1 above) is almost identical in its content to her earlier story about premonitions.[9] In both cases she hears a loved and familiar voice calling to her at a time that person is, or is assumed to be, in particular distress. It is not easy to see why she calls one a premonition and gives the other as an instance of telepathy.

In general it seems that any attempt to make hard and fast distinctions between telepathic and precognitive abilities as they are seen by the study group is rather futile. It is best to regard both as facets of belief in extra-sensory perception - a belief which is vigorous and widespread, has its basis in perceptual and intuitive oddities of experience, and is

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8   See narratives 1-4 above.

9   See above, chapter 8, section 2.2, narrative 2.

likely to be attached to and expressed by means of any psychological or

parapsychological theory offered for discussion.

2. Luck, seances, and other topics

2.1   The story corpus

It is common in informally structured interviews for the re-

searcher to be told stories on topics other than those about which specific

enquiry is being made. Often a good storyteller will flit from subject to

subject following the byways of her own thought and reminiscing about a

range of topics loosely associated with the dominant subject matter. It

is difficult to get below the surface of these narratives and analyse the

basis of belief from which they spring, but nevertheless accounts such as

these serve to indicate areas of belief which might have relevance for

further research: they flesh out some aspects of supernatural concepts

already examined; they reinforce many of the conclusions reached by analysis

of the main body of material; and they are interesting in their own right.

This section therefore offers transcriptions of a selection of narratives

of this type, mainly for their intrinsic interest but, where relevant, to

show aspects which seem to be significant as commentary on the beliefs

already examined in greater detail in preceding chapters. This corpus of

miscellaneous narrative is drawn mainly from the conversation of women of

the study group, but two stories told by men deserve notice. One of them

is an account of a "hag" experience and the other is a very full and de-

tailed account of a sitting with a famous but now discredited medium,

Mrs. Duncan. The seventeen stories told by women of the study group cover

the topics of visits to mediums and seances (thirteen stories), instances

of good and bad luck (three stories), and an account of a disembodied
warning voice.

2.2   Warning voices, luck and hags

The first transcription is of Ada's story about hearing a voice
which diagnoses her illness. Its interest lies in the fact that this is
the sort of unaccountable perceptual happening that forms the basis of
reports of foreknowledge (though Ada herself makes no attempt to interpret
it and offers it as an illustration of older people's willingness to accept
the supernatural as a part of life's pattern of experiences):

5.   Narrative 88 told by Ada

Well - ah - three weeks ago - . I think I told your
father about it - . I was in the hall. It was dark -
it was teatime but it was when the nights were dark -
and I was walking down the hall, and I have, incidentally,
been treated for twenty-four years - injections every
fortnight and seventeen pills a day - because I was told
the blood couldn't go to my nerve-ends, or the muscles.
Well, as I was walking down the hall, a voice very
clearly, to me at any rate, said just two words, "Multiple
Sclerosis" - I can never pronounce that properly. Is
it /sklə 'rousis/? Anyway, I - . It was so clear, I
turned round thinking it was somebody come in, you know.

Anyway, I made an appointment to see Doctor Hudson on
the Wednesday although I'd only seen him the previous
Wednesday and I told him and I said, "Have I got that?"
So he said, "How did you find out?" So I said, "Shall
we say 'a voice'?" So he said, "I want to know the name
of the person who's told you!" So I said, "I can't.
It's just a voice." So he said, "Well, yes, you have
got multiple sclerosis, but don't forget that it started
twenty-four years ago", and he said, "you've battled with
the pain and discomfort all this time, so", he said, "you
must continue to battle with the pain and discomfort."

And, I had to see him before the weekend, and I was
telling him how cruel people are. Who needs enemies when
you've got friends who go and tell you what's going to
happen to you and all the rest of it, and not a shred
of feeling for what they say? And I saw Dr. Hudson and
told him again what they - , and he was very annoyed.
He said, "You just battle on as you've done for twenty-
four years."

Now that is quite true and it's happened to me before!
But it's never - the voice has never been as clear - as
if there was somebody stood behind.

The second transcription is Maura's story illustrating a very common superstition, its violation and the sanction which follows. The story contains several traditional motifs (luck depending on use of correct door, a broken mirror, and the occurrence of bad luck in threes) and is told in a manner very typical of memorate as represented in the present corpus.[10]

6. <u>Narrative 91 told by Maura</u>

> That's never happened to me but I am superstitious
> about things. If I go in one door I've got to go out
> the same way, you see. <u>Stupid</u>, isn't it? <u>My friend</u> -
> she's a doctor actually - and - . Only on three occa-
> sions have I not <u>gone</u>, to my knowledge anyway. But I
> went round one Christmas, just before Christmas, going
> to buy a picture in Hale, and I went in the front door
> as usual, you see, and she said, "Oh, come on out" - we
> were going to the car - " Come on out the back way." I
> said, "Ooh! It's unlucky!" Said, "Don't be <u>stupid!</u>"
> you see, so I went out the back door, and that night for
> no reason at all - . We had a beautiful oval - is it
> 'convex'? - mirror. Can't get - . I get 'convex' and
> 'concave' - , and it was in my husband's family. It was
> Grandma Bright's, and it was perfectly alright when I
> went to bed, on the wall in the lounge. For no reason
> at all, when I got up in the morning, it was in a thousand
> pieces, shattered on the settee. That was absolutely - .
> [GL: No explanation for it?] No explanation, and I tried
> and tried, and somebody said, "Well, the only thing then.
> About four o'clock in the morning there was a plane came
> over very low." But I can't believe it would have
> brought my mirror off the wall. So that's the one thing
> I didn't like. Now what was the other? I did it three
> times, and I thought, "Never again."

The third transcription is of a story with very particular interest - an account of a hag experience which follows the usual course of such happenings as studied by David Hufford[11] fairly closely. It differs from such accounts in that the hag does not ride on the victim but chases him,

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10 See below, chapters 10 and 11.

11 Hufford, (1974), (1976(a)), (1976(b)), and (1982).

and the victim, rather than being powerless to move, flees from her.
Elsewhere, however, it is typical in that the supernatural visitor is
apprehended as a threatening female who mounts to the bedroom and throws
off the bedclothes leaving the victim naked and shivering after her de-
parture. The terror of this experience is obvious from the vividness of
the account and the narrator's subsequent continual anxious interpretation
and reinterpretation of events which happened long ago in childhood:

7. Narrative 104 told by Jack

> I used to have recurrent dreams which followed much
> the same pattern. I would be wakened by someone
> throwing off the bedclothes and it would be a witch of
> some kind or other. Now, when I say a 'witch', it's
> only because I've used that term since. I think as a
> child I never associated it with a witch. It was a
> 'Being' and it was female, and I used to rush downstairs
> and it used to chase me round and round the table, and
> we'd circumnavigate the table about three times. In
> terror I'd rush upstairs again and throw myself on the
> bed and I'd listen for the Being whatever it was to come
> upstairs, and it never did, and I'd wake then and I would
> have no clothes on me. I would be absolutely cold, and,
> what's more, I was naked.... My shirt would be up round
> about underneath my arms and I would be absolutely cold
> and - tremendously cold - and terrified, and I used to
> pull the clothes back on me. Now, something had either
> pulled the clothes from me in that period of time and
> it had been a real happening. I was convinced it was a
> real happening, when I woke up. It's only since, when I
> started to, not analyse it, but try to rationalise it,
> and make it into some kind of sense that I would realise
> it was a dream. I'm not so sure now whether it was a
> dream. Whether it actually happened.

This group of stories is thus of particular interest because in them
narrators personalise and interpret traditional themes and motifs - super-
natural warnings, good and bad luck, the "terror that comes in the
night".[12]

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12   Hufford (1982).

2.3   Mediums and seances

The bulk of the miscellaneous corpus of nineteen stories, how-
ever, are more prosaic than those transcribed above, and feature fewer
traditional motifs. They concern visits to mediums and seances. Though
spiritualism is a subject which evokes anxiety and though many women reject
its tenets, yet a number of them have visited a medium at least once in
their lives and several appear to be regular visitors to mediums, if not
actual believers. The fourteen stories about such visits provide con-
siderable variation in style and content and illustrate dominant themes
in the women's philosophy. Though the women are obviously cautious about
visiting mediums and reluctant to admit that they have ever done so, the
activity seems harmless enough on the evidence of their accounts. At
seances or consultations as revealed in the stories the medium merely dis-
cusses the relationship between mother and daughter (narrative 76), makes
prosaic predictions about future events (narrative 76), pronouncements
about the sitter or the dead relative (narratives 77, 78, 83 and 85), or
diagnoses of disease (narrative 82) or says that a dead relative has a
message for the sitter (narratives 80 and 86). The accounts strongly
reflect the women's own philosophy of the supernatural, especially their
beliefs in extra-sensory perception, the healing power of the dead, tele-
pathy, and the continuing protection of dead members of the family. In
this way they form a useful commentary on the main corpus of stories about
the dead and foreknowledge.

The women's attitudes may be most clearly shown by comparing their
accounts with a report given by one of the men. Bertram was the most
highly educated person among those interviewed - a former Dean of a university
faculty and a keen student of comparative religion (as he explains in the
introduction to his long account). His narrative is remarkable for its
length and detail and its stringent objectivity:

8. Narrative 105 told by Bertram

Well, all this happened in 1934 or 1935, and at that time
I was interested in a small way in comparative religion
because I was at that time a lay preacher. I was a member
of the Swedenborgian Church, the "New Church" as it's
called, and I was a lay preacher for them and used to go
out twice or sometimes even three times on a Sunday
preaching up and down Lancashire, and I felt I ought to
know something about Methodism and Catholicism and so on
and so forth, and the various religions, and when the
opportunity came to go to a spiritualist seance I took
the opportunity. I sat with Mrs. Duncan who in her time
was a well-known medium, and she was sufficiently well-
known to merit an obituary in the Guardian when she died,
I think in the fifties - quite a time ago now. We went
to a house in Heaton Moor, a district I didn't know at
the time. I was living in Salford at the time, and I went
along with the wife of a friend of mine and a Methodist
minister and a hard-bitten motor trader from Manchester,
so it was quite a mixed quartet, and we agreed that we
would go to the seance, but after the seance we wouldn't
discuss it at all but would come back to a little recep-
tion committee that met at my friend's house in Swinton.
I think there were three or four people on the committee.
There was my friend who had arranged this seance for me,
or arranged for me to attend it, and there was another
Methodist minister and I think one or two laymen, so
this is what we did. We attended the seance and we came
back without discussing it and we all told our experiences
to this little committee, and then afterwards we talked
about it and we found that we'd all told substantially
the same kind of experience. One or two people had
noticed things that others hadn't but substantially we
had all told the same story.

Now, the man who arranged this - a man called Isaacs,
his name has just come back to me - . We went straight
up into what was an attic room in one of the large old
houses in Heaton Moor. It was almost completely bare.
There were ordinary chairs, I can't remember whether they
were ordinary stacking chairs or wooden chairs, but they
were ordinary plain chairs in a room, about a dozen or
fifteen of them. The walls were completely bare. There
was a fireplace in the room which had been wallpapered
over completely. There was a card table, an ordinary
baize-covered collapsible card table with a plain chair
by the side of it, and there were two rails going from
the floor to the ceiling, two metal tubes going from the
floor to the ceiling, supporting a curtain rail which went
back from the tubes to the wall so that you could make a
curtained alcove by running round two curtains, running
round from the wall round on a curtain runner to the centre.

Two ladies went with Mrs. Duncan to prepare the seance,
one of whom was the wife of my friend, and they saw her
stripped down to her pants completely. She put on a pair
of felt slippers and then a black gown over the top. She
also had a bandage on her leg, a very large bandage on

her leg, and in order to show that this was concealing
nothing but a wound, she removed this bandage and she
had a very, very nasty ulcer on her leg, very angry and
very nasty, and my friend said the interesting thing was
that they went out with her after the seance and again
saw her strip, and she again took off the bandage and
the interesting thing was that this ulcer was much better,
the angriness had gone out of it - perhaps an unusual
feature in these things but, but that is as near fact as
one could get to because as I say the, this friend of
mine, this lady went in with her and went in with her
afterwards and she said the whole thing looked much, much
better than it did before. It obviously looked as though
it was on the mend. That's just an aside. So Mrs. Duncan
came into the room with these two women, she sat on the
chair, and then the curtains were drawn - and then we were
spoken to by a voice identifying itself as "Albert". One
always has to smile about these 'controls', as they call
them, of the mediums because they have such homely names
to say the least of it - or exotic names if they happen to
be Red Indians or something like that. Anyway, we were
spoken to by the voice of Albert who said that Mrs. Duncan
was going into a trance and then the curtains more or less
became transparent in the sense that we were then able to
see Mrs. Duncan through the curtains. I can't remember
exactly what colour the curtains were or what the material
was they were made of, and we did go over the whole room
before the seance started to kind of satisfy ourselves
that it was bare but we did actually see Mrs. Duncan sitting
on a chair through the curtains and she was - lolling back
in the chair in so far as you can loll back in an ordinary
chair and she was snorting. Her eyes were closed, her mouth
was partly open and she was breathing very heavily, probably
what one would say 'snorting', then the curtains became
opaque again, and it's now difficult to remember all the
details but we went through a, what I understand from my
reading to be a similar kind of experience of other people
in manifestations of this kind, the er, the er control,
Albert, would say something like,"There's somebody waiting
here to speak to somebody, does anybody know anybody called
Joe? He's an elderly man and he died a couple of years ago.
He has a beard", and so on, and somebody might say, "Ah yes,
that's Uncle Joe". As I say, I forget the details but this
basically is the kind of thing that happened throughout the
seance, and then this - the appearance, the manifestation,
would sometimes, as it were, walk through the openings of
the curtains and stand in front of the, the front of the,
the - er - sitters, and I would say there were about a
dozen sitters so, I think there were three rows of us, and
I was on the front row so that even people on the third row
were only a matter of feet away from the, the apparitions.
As I say, some would come through the through the divide in
the curtains - and I remember one certainly, at the side of
the curtain, came at the side of the curtain, and one we saw
come out of the medium's mouth, the so-called 'ectoplasm'
came in a kind of stream rather like those bubbles one sees
in comics, and the bubble enlarged till it was a very kind

of rough shape about the height of a human being and then
that became rather more precise until you could see the
shape of the human being and then it disappeared. When I
say 'disappeared', some of the shapes that we saw disap-
peared quite gradually, just faded away, and some of them
made a snap disappearance.... We saw altogether and heard
some - fifteen to twenty manifestations ... and I like to
say jocularly, although I shouldn't say this, "all talking
singing and dancing", because in those days that was almost
a cliché thing because they did talk, and they did, at
least one of them sang and danced, and this was a little
girl who was apparently another of the medium's controls,
little girl called - . The name doesn't come back to me,
I can't just remember the name, although on another occa-
sion it would come like that, and - now, what happened?
Yes - she appeared and she said she'd come to sing to me,
and she came and stood right in front of me - and she was
a little girl of about five or six, seven perhaps, of a
height that you would expect a little girl to be, and -
er - she sang part of 'You are my Heart's Delight' [laughs]
and did a little dance, which, you know, seems very very
strange, although it didn't seem strange at the time ... um
... I'm just - . A bit of hearsay this - . It was four or
five years later but I went for an interview for a job, a
general interview for a teacher's job, the inspector who
interviewed me asked me if I went to church and we got on
to the business of the New Church, we got onto the business
of religion and I said how I had a little interest in
spiritualism and he said, "Oh!" It so turned out that he
had also sat with Mrs. Duncan. This little girl whose name
I'm trying to recall appeared when he was at the seance and
actually sat on his knee and sang to him and he said he had
his arm round her as he would round a child and she felt,
you know, perfectly solid as a child would. People have
often asked me what were these appearances like? What did
they actually look like? What were their clothes like?
Now, funnily enough, you'd think that you'd be able to
describe those clothes and say, "He wore a pinstriped blue
suit and a red tie", but you can't. Um, the nearest I can
come to them is to say that - er - that they were certainly
humanly physically shaped whether they were men or women,
they were certainly old, middle aged or young, but they all
seemed to be dressed in a kind of nebulous grey colour rather
than suits and dresses. In fact, when I thought about it
afterwards, quite shortly afterwards, it was very very diffi-
cult to to to remember what they actually looked like in
terms of costume and dress. Um, I suppose I should say that
the, that the sitting cost us a guinea in those days, one
pound one shilling, but when you realise that Mrs. Duncan had
come from Edinburgh. She'd had a return fare to pay from
Edinburgh. She'd accommodation overnight because she couldn't
go back to Edinburgh, that had to be paid for, a guinea was
very very cheap and people say, "Could you have been cheated?
Could this be something, some kind of trickery?" and one of
the things I say is, "Well, if this was trickery, she was
under-pricing herself", because people would have paid in those
days twenty five guineas which was a lot of money in those
days to see what I saw and I can hardly understand somebody

who was engaged in   getting money for trickery charging
a guinea when they could quite easily have charged twenty
five. With a little kind of publicity in the right
quarters, they could have charged fifty or a hundred
pounds. Thinking about it afterwards, people say, "Well,
what did you see? Did you see the spirits of the dead?"
and I say, "No, I don't think so." I've heard of mass
hypnotism. It could be mass hypnotism because we certainly
all saw similar things. Um, I don't think I saw the spirits
of the dead because my objection to spiritualism - and
this is not the only seance I've been to. I've been to one
or two other seances but not materialisation seances - my
objection to spiritualism is that somehow it seems a little
bit unsavoury. Oh yes, I didn't mention the fact that we,
we were in a room with one bulb. I should think it was a
sixty watt bulb, that was covered by just a piece of red
cellophane as you'd call it in those days, but - as in a
photographic dark room - . But you could see quite easily
all the detail in the room - . I mean I do remember the
occasion of another seance, hearing about another seance
or sitting with another medium - . Oh, a transfiguration
medium - one whose face changed, and although it didn't
when I was sitting with her, on another occasion a friend
of mine was sitting with her and a little girl had
hysterics, you know, because she saw grandmother and
dashed out shrieking, and it seemed to me that, you know,
if these were manifestations of people who had passed over
and this was really a religious experience it was not for
children. Any religious experience that was not for
children was certainly not for me, and so I can't accept
it as - er - a manifestation of people passed over as a
religious experience in that sense of the word. It may
have been mass hypnotism though I know little about it.
I say, if it were, then we all saw the same kind of thing
and the only thing I can say, is that it was some kind of
manifestation that is to me inexplicable but needs explaining.
Now, I must again say what I said to you before. That many
years afterwards, not long before her death, Mrs. Duncan and
her husband were charged in London with fraud and they were
convicted of conducting a spiritualist seance with quantities
of cheesecloth. He ran out and put cheesecloth round the
body and so on and so forth, so that in fact, she has been
associated with fraud. On the other hand, I find it very
very very difficult to imagine fraud in that proved sense
in the session at which I was present, and I've explained
it to myself by saying that it's quite possible that she
developed a reputation for her seances, that on certain
occasions she wasn't able to deliver the goods because she
wasn't in the right mood or conditions weren't right and
perhaps later on in life, she did resort to trickery in order
to, as it were, keep up her reputation and her experiences
so that's roughly.... [interruption ends narrative here]

Bertram's account differs sharply from the subjective, interpretive
accounts the women give of mediums and seances. Several of their accounts

are humorous or cautionary and illustrate the fear the narrators have of

"delving" into the supernatural:

9. Narrative 73 told by Hilda

> This is about my aunt, my mother's sister. She went
> into everything very fully, not cautious or level-
> headed like my mother. She went and had her spirit
> guides drawn for her by an artist - a medium - and one
> of them was a sadistic-looking nun and one was a Red
> Indian, and she had one of these portraits in each of
> her bedrooms, and the one in my bedroom was the sadistic-
> looking nun, and I said, "You can take that down before
> I'll sleep in there!"

10. Narrative 75 told by Inez

> And, oh, years ago when I was a young girl people used
> to pester me to be a medium. [GB: Did they?] Yes!
> [GB: Did they think you had a sixth sense?] They did!
> Don't know why, but they used to pester me. I always
> refused because of - . I had a job, what they called
> 'Sick Visitor'. In those days, if you claimed insurance
> benefit, you were visited by a 'Sick Visitor', because
> the clubs got together and you had to go and see whether
> they were really ill or whatever, and the only three
> people I had on my books who [laughs] who you might say
> were mental cases [laughs] were mediums! [laughs again]
> So I thought, "I'm keeping clear of that!"

Four of the thirteen stories of seances told by women of the study group

were similarly negative or cautionary[13] and exemplify the underlying anxiety

which deliberate encounters with the supernatural engender. A further

seven narratives are introduced with explanations, self-justifications or

disclaimers such as:

(a) "I went with a gang of girls I worked with in the office
    at the time to a spiritualist's meeting, which I don't go
    in for at all because I firmly believe that if there are
    any spirits around they should be left in peace."
    (Narrative 74)

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13 See, for example, Jane's story below (chapter 11, pp. 549-50).

(b) "We had _relatives_ who were spiritualists." (Narrative 76)

(c) "Well, talking about the one and only seance I was
ever persuaded to go to. It was just after my mother
died. I absolutely _adored_ my mother and I was just in
the _mood_ to make _any_ sort of contact." (Narrative 79)

(d) "Well, you see, _my_ mother, when she was alive, was a
great believer in spiritualism." (Narrative 81)

(e) "When I lost Miriam - I lost my daughter - I went _as we
all do_, well, like _some_, _most_ of us do go, to a
spiritualist's." (Narrative 82)

(f) "I lost a brother in the war and I went to - Gosh! I've
forgotten what you call them now - a _seance_. It was
fashionable, I think, after the war, you know." (Narrative 85)

(g) "I'm not too sure about spiritualism. You see, I went as
an _experiment_ with my daughter once." (Narrative 86)

Thus visits to mediums are excused as being a youthful group-activity or

an experiment contemplated because of family beliefs and connections, because

it is commonplace in grief to seek comfort, or because seances were a fashion

born out of war deaths. Narrators say they have been only once or were

persuaded to go, or go because their daughters request their company. No

one confesses to going because she believes in spiritualist doctrine or

ceremony. It must be incidentally noted that even the confident Bertram

begins his narrative by justifying his attendance at Mrs. Duncan's seance,

a sure indication of how far such "delving" offends the norms of propriety

within this community. Bertram's explanation, however, is not really

defensive - merely a small item of explanatory background material in a

long account. The women's justifications and disclaimers, on the other

hand, take up a proportionately longer amount of narrative time and are

considerably more energetically delivered. Only two narratives are without

such explanations or the cautionary note, and these two are not exceptions

because they are both chained on to another narrative (number 82; (e) above)

which has a complex explanatory introduction.

Stories about mediums and seances therefore indicate the level of

anxiety about deliberate encounters with the supernatural in this community.

They are often cautionary, sometimes humorous, very frequently preceded

by disclaimers or justifications of the activity, and they usually stress

that this was a single or occasional, not regular, activity. Almost in-

variably, too, they are subjective and seek to interpret or in other ways

internalise the experience. Four stories, as we have seen, function as

cautionary tales, a further five use the narrative to justify the activity

(the accuracy of the predictions is stressed, the innocence of the pro-

ceedings and so on) and, in the remainder, discussion and evaluation are

intrinsic to the story. In these latter the narrators speculate "whether

she knew the person" (narrative 76), "whether it's just a good guess"

(narrative 85), or assess the experience as "peculiar" (Narrative 83) or

"interesting" (Narrative 80). Those who speak of a single visit to a

seance imply their reluctance to engage in the activity again. As Lizzie

says:

> She was all for me going again, but I had a feeling
> that I would be better not to. (Narrative 79)

Almost invariably a narrative about a seance is turned to introspective

account, as in the following story told by Margot below:

Narrative 74

> No. I once had a most remarkable experience. [giggles]
> I went with a gang of girls I worked with in the office
> at the time, to a spiritualist meeting, which I don't go
> for at all because I firmly believe that if there are any
> spirits around, they should be left in peace. I don't
> want anybody whom I knew or perhaps loved sort of dragged
> back to, you know - . But - so, we all go in, and I go
> - my sister's with me - and she's eleven years younger
> than I am incidentally, and we're not a bit alike, I don't
> think. People say we are but I don't think so. But, so,
> we planned that we'd go in miles apart, you see. This
> was in an attempt on my part to - I didn't exactly go to

scoff but - , and there were about eight of us went and
we all sat miles apart, and the spiritualist lady walked
in, very bright and cheerful, not a bit glum or anything,
came straight up to me and said, "Why do you sit apart
from that lady over there?" which was my sister, you see,
which sort of shook me to my foundations first go off!
So when it came to me, we had to take something belonging
to someone we were interested in and I took something of
my mother's, and she looked at this and she said to me,
"I can't tell you anything or get to you in any way. You
are completely controlled by the lady to whom this belongs,
and everything you do in your life and everything you
think, she controls you utterly. I can't get to you at
all!" and she just wouldn't tell me anything at all.
I was extremely close to my mother, far more so than my
sister was. I don't mean anything wrong by that, she
was very good to my mother but - , and it sort of haunted
me for years this, that I hadn't any life of my own, you
know. [GB: an unkind thing to say, wasn't it?] Yes,
but I was told that so many times. She was - . For three
years before she died, for over three years, she was
completely bedridden, so I left work to look after her
and it was a twenty-four hour a day job. She sort of
wouldn't leave me alone, I got so that I got so distressed
about- . The doctor said to me one day, "You know"- he
was a sort of family friend this doctor - he said, "You'll
have to let your mother go". I said, "But I can't," but
he said, "No, but you will have to. You must let your
mother go. You've had so many attempts to break free of
this tie and, you know, this could go on for ten years,
and you simply must get help in the house, or get help
with your mother. She sort of ties you hand and foot."
This was not a physical tie. She wasn't a bullying and
unkind - I mean, she was kindness itself and always said,
you know, "You lead your own life, I led mine", and sort
of she never attempted to tie me in any way, but the tie
was so very strong, sort of an inside tie, and yet the odd
thing was that as a child, when you're supposed to be at
your most formative, I didn't live with my mother, I
lived with my grandparents, and they were not her parents,
they were my father's parents, you know. We had this
tremendous tie my mother and I .... [Narrative breaks
off here]

Nothing could be more different from Bertram's account. Whereas his

is an objective description concentrating on an accurate rendering of scene

and event, Margot's story first focuses on her subjective response to the

experience, then is used to explore a matter obviously much on her mind -

the relationship between an invalid mother and the unmarried daughter who

cares for her.

The contrast between the two narratives serves effectively to high-
light the women's overall tendency to personalise intellectual problems
and to make judgements about the believability of any concept according
to its emotional effect, its moral worth, and its validity in maintaining
the philosophical status quo. These inbred attitudes towards abstract
theories have to be understood if any in-depth portrait of supernatural
beliefs in this group of women is to be effectively drawn.

3. Summary

The attitudes and beliefs examined in previous chapters (6-8) are
echoed in the narratives discussed in this one. The data considered here
is a corpus of stories, some of which were told in direct response to
questions and some of which were contributed in the course of general con-
versation and therefore cover topics not specifically the concern of the
present investigation. Stories about telepathy constitute the former
group; stories about seances the majority of the latter group. All these
stories to some extent reflect themes revealed in the main corpus of narra-
tives about the dead and foreknowledge.

Principally they help confirm the portrait of the women's philosophy
painted above in chapter 6. Women who have a mystical, even semi-magical,
view of the world in which "signs and wonders" are accepted as useful and
naturally occurring phenomena are more likely than others to accept tradi-
tional concepts of the supernatural. In this semi-magical world mysterious
voices may diagnose disease, the dead never leave, and the whole system is
subject to the operation of good and bad luck. Mediumship is regarded as
quite possible though the practice is frowned on because the dead should

be left in peace and their intervention or return should not be actively sought. To deliberately seek to engage the interest of the dead on one's own behalf constitutes a dangerous "delving" into forbidden matters. Hence there is considerable reservation about visiting mediums, a reluctance to admit that such visits have been made, a tendency to scoff at oneself and others for such weakness and to turn accounts of seances into introspective and evaluative life reviews.

These stories, especially the narratives about telepathy, also substantiate the finding that there is in general among the women a high level of belief in psychic powers. These psychic powers, however, are only very vaguely defined and may be expressed by means of the concepts of omens, or premonitions, or second sight, a sixth sense or telepathy - all of which seem to be only sketchily and intermittently differentiated from one another. It is best, perhaps, to regard them all as variations of an overall, diffuse belief in extra-sensory perception. This belief, like their belief in the continued love and protection of dead members of the family, confirms their informal religious attitudes - a belief in a caring supernatural world which surrounds the mundane one; a mundane world in which the traditional female virtues of caring, intuition, self-effacement and unselfishness are paramount in interpersonal relationships.

CHAPTER 10

The nature and structure of memorates

1. Definition

Previous chapters (7-9) have considered the content of narratives told during the course of the fieldwork interviews conducted from January to May 1981. In contrast, this chapter and the succeeding one will study form rather than content. The subject of the analysis will be 111 memorates - a substantial and coherent corpus of a genre of narrative which has long awaited detailed structural and performative analysis. This corpus is built up from all the memorates told during interviews. The analysis is not confined to memorates told only by women of the main study group, for the present data show no discernible divergence in the story-telling styles of men and women nor any stylistic difference between the younger and older people.

Before beginning this detailed analysis it will be useful to recall the definitions of the terms "narrative" and "memorate" which have been used in previous chapters of this study and will continue to form the basis of the discussion of the succeeding ones. The most useful starting point in defining narrative is Livia Polyani's useful summary of the basic function of storytelling:

> The linguistic encoding of past experience in order
> to say something about, or by means of, the events
> described. [1]

In practical situations, however, this formulation is too generous and must be adapted. In the first place, a distinction must be made between a mere reference to a past experience and an account of one, and secondly a usable definition must make specific stipulations about the way pastness is encoded in this account. Thus, for the purposes of drawing together a

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1   Polyani (1979), 207

corpus of narrative - narrative which may be plainly separated on stylistic grounds from the surrounding conversational context and from borderline forms - the following definition proves reliable and useful:

> An account of a past experience which: (a) is given in order to say something about, or by means of, the events described; and (b) encodes for pastness by the use of (i) simple past tense (or simple past alternating with the historic present tense), and (ii) lexical markers of time and occasion, and either or both (iii) specific mention of dates and times of year/day. 2

Within the larger category of "narrative" one may distinguish memorates as stories:

> ... told in the first person about events that either happened to the narrator or were witnessed by him or her. 3

It may be objected that this spare definition leaves important questions about the status of the genre unresolved and fails to make distinctions between memorate and other genres, particularly personal experience stories, sufficiently clear.

In defence of this formulation it must be noted that these confusions are unfortunately inherent in the genre as originally designated by Von Sydow. This is true in particular of the overlap with personal experience stories, since a "purely personal" content and approach is cited in "Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung"[4] as characteristic of memorate. Since then further confusions have arisen because the term, popular as it is, has been used in a variety of conflicting ways[5] and there is no universally

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2   See above, chapter 6, pp. 250-251.

3   See above, chapter 6, p. 253.

4   Von Sydow, p. 74.

5   Some of these usages are charted in Dégh and Vázsonyi's paper given to the 6th Congress of the ISFNR. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi, "The Postulative Proto-Memorate", in Pentikainen and Juurikka, pp. 48-57.

accepted usage convention. It has at one time or another been considered
as (a) an alternative term for "personal experience story", (b) a subtype
of personal experience story, (c) a subtype of legend, and (d) not a cate-
gory of folk narrative at all.

In the terminological jungle which has grown round the term "memorate"
two courses of action are open: either one may cease using the term and
substitute the less difficult designation "personal experience story"; or
one may adopt a narrow and therefore relatively uncontroversial definition
such as the one above.

For several reasons this second course is the one preferred here.
The term "personal experience story" is very wide and vague, and not itself
without difficulty. Furthermore it fails to do justice to one very impor-
tant characteristic of the sort of stories which are normally classed as
"memorate" - that is, their particular synthesis of the personal and the
traditional. All the memorates in the present corpus, for example, though
recording private and personal happenings, embody communal attitudes. The
events are interpreted through traditional concepts and show traditional
beliefs at work. This is a very general characteristic of stories classed
as memorates; it is the characteristic that leads some scholars to see
memorate as a subtype of legend[6] and to study the interrelationship of
memorates and belief.[7]

So far in the present work the nature of the study has meant that it
has not been necessary to stress this aspect of memorate, for, of course,

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6   See Shirley Arora, "Memorate as Metaphor: Some Mexican Treasure
Narratives and Their Narrators", in Paul Smith (ed.), Perspectives
on Contemporary Legend 2: Proceedings of the Second International
Conference on Contemporary Legend held in Sheffield, June 1983
(Sheffield, forthcoming).

7   For example Honko (1964).

all the narratives considered here, both memorate and 'personal legend',[8]

have embodied traditional beliefs. However, it is necessary perhaps at

this point to make this aspect of the genre explicit, and to adapt the

working definition of memorate. As used in the present study a memorate

is:

> ... a type of oral narrative which gives a first
> person account of events that either happened to
> or were witnessed by the narrator. These events
> refer to or are influenced by or interpreted by
> means of traditional beliefs orally transmitted
> in the narrator's community.

The corpus of 111 memorates thus defined comprises the following:

memorates told by women of the study group	92
memorates told by younger women	10
memorates told by men	9
TOTAL	111

The analysis of this and the succeeding chapter will seek to clarify

the nature of the genre and to describe the performative techniques of

narrators engaged in the telling of this type of story. It is hoped in

this way to shed light on a neglected genre.

2. Presentation of analyses

The aim of the present chapter is to explore the typical structure

or structures of memorate in order that its similarities to and differences

from better-known genres may be noted. In this way one may be able to

achieve a better understanding of the nature and function of such narratives.

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8   For a definition of this category see above, chapter 6, section 5.2.2.

Memorate, as defined above, is seen as a subtype of personal experience

stories which shares some characteristics with legends.

A useful point of departure therefore for such an analysis would be

a model of personal experience stories which has been shown to be applicable

to legends. Such a model exists. Labov and Waletsky's "Narrative Analysis:

Oral Versions of Personal Experience"[9] is one of the best known and most

respected structural analyses of personal experience stories, and it has

been shown to be very satisfactorily adaptable to the study of legends.[10]

In order to highlight significant aspects of the nature and structure of

memorates, the following sections of this chapter will use Labov and

Waletsky's work as the basis of discussion.

Section 3 below outlines the main features of the model. Succeeding

sections examine in turn the questions of:

(a) time and sequence as essential features of narrative structure;

(b) the treatment of time and sequence in the present corpus of

memorate (Section 5);

(c) action and event in the Labovian model and in the memorate

corpus (Section 6);

(d) "reportability" as a criterion of narrative (Section 7);

and finally, by way of summary,

(e) the structure and function of memorates (Section 8).

At all times the aim will be to refine the Labovian model; to discard

those aspects of it which seem to be misleading in general or inapplicable

to this corpus of memorates in particular; to compare and contrast it with

other models (notably those of Grimes and Longacre) in order to arrive at

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9   Labov and Waletsky (1967).

10 Principally by W.F.H. Nicolaisen. See W.F.H. Nicolaisen, "The Lin-
    guistic Structure of Legends", in Paul Smith (ed.), Perspectives on
    Contemporary Legends 2: Proceedings of the Second Conference on
    Contemporary Legend held in Sheffield, June 1983 (Sheffield,
    forthcoming).

an accurate description of memorate structure as represented by the present

corpus; and to use these analyses and insights in order to understand the

nature and function of memorates as a genre.

3.   The Labovian Model

3.1   Definition

In both major papers Labov's definition of oral narrative is in

terms of temporal sequence. The earlier paper with Waletsky first gives

an informal definition:

> One method of recapitulating past experience by
> matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence
> of events which actually occurred. [11]

This is later, by means of the linked concepts of 'narrative clauses' and

'temporal juncture', stated more formally:

> ... any sequence of clauses which contains at least
> one temporal juncture is a narrative. [12]

The later paper (Labov 1972) returns to the simpler, longer formulation

and adds:

> Narrative, then, is only one way of recapitulating
> this past experience: the clauses are characteristically
> ordered in temporal sequence; if narrative clauses are
> reversed, the inferred temporal sequence of the original
> semantic interpretation is altered.... With this con-
> ception of narrative we can define a minimal narrative
> as a sequence of two clauses which are temporally
> ordered: that is, a change in their order will result

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11   Labov and Waletsky, p. 20.

12   Labov and Waletsky, p. 28.

in a change in the temporal sequence of the original
semantic interpretation. In alternative terminology,
there is temporal juncture between the two clauses,
and a minimal narrative is defined as one containing
a single temporal juncture.

The skeleton of a narrative then consists of a
series of temporally ordered clauses which we may call
narrative clauses. 13

Thus at all times the underlying assumption on which the definition is

based is that temporality and sequentiality are fundamental to narrative.

3.2   Structure

Having thus defined narrative in terms of an ordered sequence of

clauses, the referent of which is a past sequence of events situated in

real time, Labov and Waletsky set about showing how these ordered sequences

are realised in the surface structure of spoken narratives. The scheme

which they suggest is basic to informal stories as actually performed is:

1) abstract

2) orientation

3) complication

4) evaluation

5) resolution

6) coda

Of these only elements 3, 4 and 5 are seen as mandatory because only

in elements 3 and 5 does one necessarily find narrative clauses and temporal

juncture, and only through element 4 (evaluation) are these reported events

given point and narrative value.

All structural elements except evaluation are defined through the

basic notions of time and sequence. Abstract and orientation are collections

of either "free" clauses (that is, clauses the relevance of which extends

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13 Labov, pp. 360-361.

over the whole narrative; in other words, the events or conditions to which they refer were operative during the whole of the time in which the events of the complication and resolution took place), or "restricted" clauses (that is, clauses that have a temporal range more restricted than a free clause, but freer than a narrative clause; in other words, the events and/or conditions to which they refer were in operation for a part of the time in which the events of the complication and resolution took place). Complication and resolution consist of sequences of narrative clauses (that is, clauses which are "locked in position"[14] in a sequence which cannot be changed without altering the semantic interpretation). Finally, the coda is seen as a discretionary element which the narrator uses to bring the narrative back to present time.[15]

Labov says that in performance narrators tend to group together the free and restricted clauses at the start of a narrative and these form the orientation with which a story customarily begins. The complication follows, then another set of free or restricted clauses which here form an 'evaluation section'; then the narrator concludes by giving the upshot (or resolution) of the events and adding (if (s)he wants), a coda. Thus the order of the structural elements is also bound by considerations of time and sequence, the narrative being seen as a continuous string or outline.

Evaluation is seen, not in temporal terms such as these, but in terms of narrative value as all those parts of a narrative which make it tellable and hearable. As evaluation is seen as an essential element of narrative, Labov introduces a further definitional criterion - that of the 'reportability' of events, itself time-related, through the concept of uniqueness:

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14 Labov and Waletsky, p. 22.

15 Cf. Langlois, who sees this final element as a "metagloss" which comments on the narrative's contents, and Longacre, who terms it a "closure" and thus stresses its functional rather than temporal aspects. See above chapter 8, section 2.2, footnote 5.

> Most narratives cited here concern matters that are
> always reportable: the danger of death or physical
> injury. These matters occupy a high place on an un-
> spoken permanent agenda. Whenever people are speaking,
> it is relevant to say, "I just saw a man killed on the
> street". No-one will answer such a remark with "So
> what?". If on the other hand someone says, "I skidded
> on the bridge and nearly went off', someone else can
> say, "So what? That happens to me every time I cross
> it." In other words, if the event becomes common
> enough, it is no longer a violation of an expected
> rule of behaviour, and it is not reportable ...
> Evaluative devices say to us: this was terrifying,
> dangerous, weird, wild, crazy: or amusing, hilarious,
> wonderful: more generally that it was strange, uncommon,
> or unusual - that is, worth reporting. It was not plain,
> humdrum, or run-of-the-mill. [16]

Thus temporality is central to narrative in Labov and Waletsky's model. Firstly, it is the criterion by which the definition of the basic "narrative clause" is achieved. Secondly, the concept of "temporal juncture" is used to determine the existence of narrative. Thirdly, the definition and arrangement of the elements of structure is sequence-related (free clauses occurring at the beginning of a narrative constitute an orientation, but identical clauses occurring between compli- cation and resolution constitute an evaluation section; abstracts show the story which is to be told; and the coda returns the listener to the present, and so on).

There are theoretical and practical objections to the criterion of sequenced time as Labov and Waletsky develop it. In general, there are sufficient grounds for thinking that the notion is too culturally specific to be universally useful: in particular, the definitions and criteria are often unworkable and illogical. A narrative is much more than a linear string of reported events and, as an examination of the present memorate corpus reveals, very often not a sequence of events at all.

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16 Labov, pp. 370-371.

These matters will be discussed in detail in the three following sections. First of all theoretical objections to defining narrative in terms of temporal sequence will be discussed, then alternative structures found in the present corpus will be described - structures whose logic is not linear sequence at all. It appears that linear temporality is not always and necessarily the essential structure of narrative. Stories are not always sequences of events. Thirdly, the discussion turns to the question of whether narratives are invariably and predominantly sequences of events or whether in certain types of story the recounting of events may be less important and take up less narrative time than apparently peripheral matters such as the setting of the scene. It is by analysis and discussion of these aspects of narrative that some of the particular qualities of memorates are most clearly revealed.

4. Time and Sequence in the Labovian Model

Labov and Waletsky's theory of narrative relies, as we have seen, on á priori assumption which is not at any time questioned. Their early in-formal definition of narrative is in terms of time and sequence; subsequent reasoning is only an elaboration of this assumption, and the assumption itself is never brought out into the open and justified. It is not self-evident. The following discussion aims to show by the analysis of recorded oral texts that narrative is not always and necessarily an ordered string of events and that the recognition of this fact is vital to our under-standing of oral narrative in general and memorate in particular.

In the first place, introspection shows that narratives are often given not in neat linear outlines but in rambling circuitous fashion. Though this may annoy hearers and bring forth demands that the speaker

should "get to the point", it does not invalidate the story in the minds

of either teller or hearer. Secondly, linearity will not serve as a

basis for definition and analysis because it is too limited by cultural

bias. Karen Ann Watson, for instance, has pointed out with some justice

that,

> The criterion of matching temporal order may present
> a difficulty in research.... Labov is open to
> criticism that his definition is biased towards a
> Western sense of time. [17]

Labov and Waletsky's model relies in the first place on a distinction

between narrative and non-narrative clauses that is based on temporal

sequence calculated through the "displacement sets" of each clause. There

are two principal difficulties here. First, the insistence that only in-

dependent clauses may be counted as narrative clauses, and secondly the

calculation of which independent clauses are narrative clauses.

Labov and Waletsky reason that only independent clauses are relevant

to considerations of temporal sequence because subordinate clauses may be

placed anywhere in a narrative without disturbing the order of the semantic

interpretation. However, in a corpus of informal talk - narrative as well

as conversation - it is risky to use syntax as definitive of anything.

First of all, people do not talk in sentences, though a transcriber may

make sentences of their talk. Secondly, the syntax of an oral narrative

is often more a stylistic than formal feature - the way the items the

speaker intended to include in the speech act happened to come together as

the words issued from the speaker's mouth. Thirdly, the normal devices by

which one sentence is marked from another, or the relationship of one to

another is marked, are very different in written language from in speech.

A researcher constructing a transcription often thus constructs the syntax.

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17 Karen Ann Watson, "A Rhetorical and Sociolinguistic Model for the
    analysis of Narrative", American Anthropologist, 75 (1973), 252.

Many words which in speech are used as initial markers of independent clauses are markers of subordination in written language. Unless (s)he is careful, the sense of the original oral version is thus subtly changed by the transcriber's own feeling for the formal rules of syntax.

One can see what a potential for arbitrariness this exclusion of the subordinate clause has by considering the worked examples Labov gives in the 1972 version.[18] Here he gives two clauses of his narrative number three:

> 3(d) "If you didn't bring her candy to school
>   she would punch you in the mouth
>
> (e) And you had to kiss her
>   when she'd tell you."

Here he points out that, though the sets of events in each of (d) and (e) are temporally arranged, the reversal of the clause order, thanks to the subordination of one to the other, does not disturb the temporal interpretation. Whatever the order of the clauses, first you had to bring the candy, then if you failed she would hit you; first she would tell you, then you had to kiss her. Here Labov is fortunate in his example in that syntactical subordination has coincided with semantic subordination. However in oral narrative the syntactic subordination of one clause to another is often a matter of style or even accident, rather than intended to represent a semantic subordination. In these cases the syntactic arrangement could be quite different, and the same events could be expressed as two independent clauses rather than in a subordination relationship without changing the semantic interpretation. For example, in the data collected in Gatley, an answer to a question about divination is worded as follows:

> I know friends _have_ - they've said to me, "Will you
> come along?" you see, and I say, "No. I don't want
> to know!" Because one or two friends of mine have

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18 Labov (1972), p. 362.

had things told to them that have come true and I
don't want to <u>know</u>. So I don't go into things
like that. You'd never get me into one of those
places! (Annie)

This extract, so very near to the borderlines of narrative, whatever

definition is used, brings to the fore the question of the role of the

subordinate clause. Annie's actual words in the central part of the

extract are:

Because one or two friends of mine have had things
told them that have come true, and I don't want to
know.

Apart from showing how a word which in formal syntax is considered to mark

subordination (<u>because</u>) here marks the opening of an independent clause ,

this statement could easily have been phrased by Annie herself as:

... one or two friends of mine have had things told
them and they've come true, so I don't want to know.

a formulation which reverses the status of the two last clauses but does

not alter the semantic interpretation. Labov therefore is laying down as

criteria, features which sometimes adhere only to the surface of an oral

narrative. These can change from one telling to another of a single story.

Hence though Annie's actual words do not constitute a story in Labov's

terms, the formulation she might so easily have used does, yet nothing

essential is changed. It seems as if Labov might be wrong not only in

making such a fixed and definite distinction between the narrative force

of subordinate and independent clauses but also in placing such theoretical

weight upon it.

Secondly, on analysis, Labov and Waletsky's judgements about the 'dis-

placement sets' of clauses, and hence about which clauses constitute

narrative, seem equally arbitrary. Displacement sets are a way of calcu-

lating if any particular clause may be moved to another part of the

narrative without appearing to alter the temporal sequence of the original events. Clauses, the position of which may to any extent be shared, are not "narrative clauses" - "restricted clauses" may be displaced over a limited stretch of the narrative; "co-ordinate clauses" may be rearranged with each other; and "free clauses" may be placed anywhere in the story without changing the temporal sequence of the reported events. These clauses are not the essential building blocks of narrative. The essential clauses are those which cannot be displaced but must remain locked in their original position. These are the "narrative clauses"; if a speaker changes their position a hearer will get a mistaken idea about the temporal sequence of the events which are being reported. At its most basic, a narrative consists of two such "narrative clauses".

If one is to decide on the status of any given speech act - to decide whether or not it is narrative - it is obviously important that any two analysts should agree on the displacement sets of the clauses which constitute the narrative. However, such judgements are unfortunately necessarily personal and to a degree arbitrary. This can be easily shown by attempting independently to analyse a narrative in Labov's corpus and then comparing his judgement with one's own. Narrative number eight in his selection will serve as illustration,[19] but any of the others would furnish examples just as apt.

The final sequence of this narrative, after describing the 'aggravation' offered between a street boy and a soldier trying to cadge a cigarette, runs:

> I walk round the corner about twenty guys come after
> us down by the projects. And we're running, and,
> like, I couldn't run as fast as the other guys. And
> they was catching up to me. And I crossed the street,

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19 Labov and Waletsky, pp. 17-18.

>   and I tripped, man, and like when I tripped, they
>   kicked me, and they was on me and I said, "Like
>   this is it, man." I pulled a knife. But a guy I
>   know from the projects came over and gave me a hand.
>   And that - that was it, you know. That was it.

Analysing the three clauses (W,X,Y in his notation) "and they was catching up to me, and I crossed the street, and I tripped, man", Labov and Waletsky argue that X ("and I was crossing the street") can be placed before W ("and they was catching up to me") "... since we can infer that the process of catching up extended throughout the sequence".[20] Labov and Waletsky therefore give the displacement set of clause W as W X Y. However, if this clause is displaced to the full extent of this suggested range, then "catching up" becomes a consequence of the "tripping" not a pre-existing, maybe precipitating, condition. This, for me, quite alters the semantic interpretation, and suggests just how deeply personal judgements may influence decisions at this early, critical stage of narrative analysis. The basic building blocks of narrative as defined by Labov and Waletsky - that is, "narrative clauses" - unfortunately are not so distinct nor so self-evident as a casual reading of their persuasive text suggests.

Another cornerstone of the Labovian theory is the definitional criterion that in order to constitute a minimal narrative at least two narrative clauses must be arranged in such a way that a "temporal juncture"[21] should exist between them; that is, they should be locked in position as regards each other. The order in which the narrative clauses are presented should correspond to the order of the events which they report. Two such clauses in such a sequence constitute a minimal narrative and there is no narrative without such a temporally arranged sequence. If we return to the extract from the interview with Annie quoted above, one obvious difficulty with this apparently self-evident formulation is observed.

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20 Labov and Waletsky, p. 22.

21 Labov and Waletsky, p. 25.

This is simply that any reported dialogue, on Labov's criterion, con-
stitutes a narrative. Annie says:

> They've said to me, "Will you come along?" And
> I say, "No. I don't want to know!"

Each of these clauses is by Labov's definition a narrative clause because
each is locked into its position in the sequence. Between these clauses
there is a temporal juncture - first the friends must ask, then Annie must
refuse. The order cannot be changed. If Annie had said,

> I say, "I don't want to know!"
> And they've said, "Will you come along?"

the exchange between the friends is of entirely a different order and not
capable of the same semantic interpretation as the original exchange (or
original event). Thus this piece of dialogue falls under Labov and
Waletsky's criterion for a minimal narrative, "Any sequence of clauses
which contains at least one temporal juncture".[22]

The storylike structure of dialogue has already been noted by Goffman,
who says,

> ... one can anticipate that some ... reported
> utterances will have a storylike structure. [23]

Earlier he noted "the replayed character of much informal talk".[24] If one
follows Goffman's observation to its logical limit, one could find that
much or most informal chat is narrative under Labov and Waletsky's defini-
tion. Thus, such a definition, though generously wide, fails to allow the
delicacy of distinction which the student of oral narrative needs, letting
him or her down just where it is most crucial that clear judgements can

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22   Labov and Waletsky, p. 28.

23   Erving Goffman, _Frame Analysis_ (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 506.

24   Goffman, p. 504.

be made - that is, on the borderlines of narrative and its surrounding conversational context.

Dialogue is, per se, just the sort of fixed order sequence Labov and Waletsky's criteria isolate, but surely the presence of dialogue alone cannot always be definitive of narrative, and a criterion which separates out another mode of speech as well as narrative is not sufficiently fine.

Other problems arise with Labov and Waletsky's criterion of temporal sequentiality. Consider, for example, the following narrative. The narrative is arranged as far as possible according to Labov and Waletsky's proposed structural sequence of abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda.

Aperture	Again, I've proof of that.
Orientation	My grandmother who I said I lived with as a child - when she, after she died, a long time after she died, my grandfather married again and the lady he married wasn't very terribly popular, but I liked her alright, and I always had the habit, always that I always had a bedroom in my grandfather's house and from time to time I would remove and go and live back there with my grandfather, because he liked me to do that, you see, and I slept in the bed I'd had as a child, and my grandmother always, always, when I was in bed, the last thing she did was always to come into the bedroom and sort of tuck me up when I was lying there,
Complication	and I felt this whenever I went back to this house. I always felt that someone came into the bedroom when I was in bed.
Evaluation	Not a frightening thing - a good thing, a comforting sort of thing. There's nothing frightening about anything like that, I don't think.
Complication resumes	Oh yes! I always sort of had the sensation of the door opening, because she always liked the bedroom doors closed, you see. I always had the feeling that the bedroom door was being opened and closed.
Coda	Nothing frightening about her.

(Narrative 7: Margot)

This is undoubtedly a narrative, and a nicely told one, but it presents serious difficulties for the Labov and Waletsky definition. First of all, the section of this narrative which contains "narrative clauses" arranged in temporal sequence is the <u>orientation</u>. Here the clauses containing information about the grandmother's death and the grandfather's remarriage are arranged in the order in which the corresponding events occurred. Likewise the description of the grandmother's nightly habits are so arranged - first the child would go to bed, then the grandmother would come in the bedroom, then the child would be tucked up. The <u>orientation</u> section, however, is considered by Labov and Waletsky not to be an essential structural element of narrative. However, in the <u>com-</u><u>plication</u>, which is essential, the very heart of the narrative in Labov and Waletsky's model, the narrator flouts their proposed definitional criteria. First of all there is hardly any action in this section at all, secondly the two sensations Margot describes in narrative clauses are placed in the 'wrong' chronological order. First she described the sensation of being tucked up, then the sensation of the closed door being opened. Margot's narrative is not alone in exhibiting these factors. Fourteen of the total corpus of 111 memorates exhibited Labovian sequencing only in the <u>orientation</u>.

After due consideration one must conclude that temporal sequencing in the sense outlined by Labov and Waletsky is neither a necessary nor sufficient criterion for the classification of a piece of speech as narrative. Such a definition raises more problems than it solves, and fails by seeking to explain a complex phenomenon in terms of simple fixed rules about some of its parts.

Temporality in some sense or other, introspection and intuition suggest, is obviously an important aspect of stories and storytelling.

Even the simplest and barest definitions of narrative such as Polyani's[25]

refer to time. But this temporality need not always and necessarily be

expressed as a sequence. Lance W. Bennett suggests that it is usage

conventions that guide our notions of sequence:

> As long as the usage conventions are observed, the
> underlying sequential organization in a story will
> prevail. [26]

Longacre goes further and jettisons the idea of temporal succession

altogether:

> It is not necessary that we have strict chronological
> succession as such, rather what is called for is the
> presence ... of a chronological framework. [27]

Though past events, he argues, will themselves have taken place sequen-

tially, a storyteller need not report them sequentially, provided he or

she gives sufficient guidance to the listeners so that they may find their

way through the temporal maze. It is, in other words, the fixedness of

reported events in past time that is vital to the narrative experience,

not their expression through a string of clauses corresponding neatly to

the temporal linearity of the original events.

Formulations such as these have much more to offer to the analyst

of memorate than the complex and restricted model of Labov and Waletsky.

Though their theory is a useful starting place for analysis and discus-

sion, especially in that it provides a basic vocabulary for talking about

structure, it needs to be modified in the light of practical experience.

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25 "The linguistic encoding of past events in order to say something
about, or by means of, the events described" (Polyani, 207).

26   Lance W. Bennett,   "Storytelling in Criminal Trials: A
Model of Social Judgement", Quarterly Journal of Speech, 64 (1978),
10.

27 Longacre, p. 201.

In particular, the analyst must examine in some detail the ways in which
time and the sequence of events are handled by storytellers as they seek
to describe and interpret experience.

5. The treatment of time and sequence in the corpus of 111 memorates

5.1 Deviant structures?

The essential implication of Labov's definitional narrative is
that stories are strings of events proceeding in a linear fashion begin-
ning at the beginning and working through to the end. Many stories in
the corpus of memorates are of course just this sort of linear string, but
substantial numbers organise past experience within other types of chrono-
logical framework.

In the present corpus of memorates, a straightforward chronologically
ordered story is in the minority. Of 111 memorates, just less than half
(51) move directly from beginning to end and stop there. On the other
hand, nearly a fifth of the corpus (21) is arranged in a cyclical manner
in which events cluster round a centre rather than being arranged towards
a temporal end-point; and just over a third (39), though they progress in
linear fashion from beginning to end, when they reach that point, imme-
diately restart, repeating a part of the narrative or giving another bit
of the story which is connected to the main narrative but has not pre-
viously featured in it. It obviously is not enough to dismiss these stories
as deviant, inadequate or incompetently told: an alternative structural
model must be found that does justice to their particular patterns of
organisation.

5.2   "Overlays" and cyclical stories

J.E. Grimes, in his study of non-European narratives, points

out that,although linear outlines such as the Labovian model of narrative

describes are "the dominant form of information organisation in the

west"[28],non-Europeans often or usually prefer an alternative presentation

pattern. This leads him to distinguish "outlines" and "overlays" as

alternative storytelling structures. Whereas "outlines" systematically

develop a topic or story in a linear cause/effect two-dimensional string,

"overlays" create a three-dimensional structure by using accretion as well

as dependency relations. An overlay is accretion not merely repetition.

Rather than holding up the onward flow of narrative as repetition does,

overlays "back up ... to some earlier time reference and start that

stretch over again".[29] In each of these stretches of narrative-time

("planes" in his terminology), certain elements are familiar, others are

novel. The concept of an "overlay" structure, which Grimes notes as being

"present in rudimentary form in English discourse",[30] is an apt model of

the non-linear stories in the present memorate corpus.

A few examples will illustrate both Grimes's theory and the neatness

with which it describes the structural patterns of the majority of memorates

told by the people of Gatley. In narrative number 6, for example,

Winifred begins:

> But I'll give you an idea. Once we were on holiday
> in Spain to a holiday camp for five weeks, and Bill
> started, my husband started getting terrible head-
> aches and we were all swimming and he got friendly
> with some Scottish people.

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28   J.E. Grimes, "Outlines and Overlays", Language 48, No. 3 (1972), 520.

29   Grimes (1972), 520.

30   Grimes (1972), 520.

Here we are told six pieces of information - Spain, holiday camp, five

weeks, headaches, swimming, Scottish friends. Winifred then backtracks

a little:

> We all went swimming and that, and Bill got one
> of his headaches and he didn't· see where.he was
> going and they helped him in, and that night, I
> was so shocked ,   instead of asking God to help,
> which he does do, I asked my Dad, and I was very
> close to my Dad。

Some of the information contained in the second stretch - swimming, head-

aches involving vision loss, Scottish friends' help, Winifred's shock and

her request to her dead father - is old and some is new. This stretch

of narrative is therefore not merely a repetition of the first. Time

overlaps rather than repeats itself, and the narrative information accumu-

lates as significant details are added. The next section of Winifred's

story describes how in her shock at her husband's condition, she prays to

her dead father for help and the father appears. She refers to this

manifestation three times, on each occasion backing up the time reference

slightly and adding different interpretive comments so that the hearer

accumulates information and subtleties of interpretation are gradually

revealed:

> he came back but he didn't want to and he looked
> terribly unhappy. He didn't want to come back, he
> really looked weird. He was - . He didn't say anything, he
> was a bit cross, as I thought, for bringing him back,
> because he looked very unhappy.

Hence Winifred is able not only to foreground the information which for

her is most significant and impress it on her audience, but also, through

the overlaid planes, create a system of overlapping accretions which give

depth and significance to her description.

An overlay structure can be seen rather more plainly in narrative

number 16 which is told in three planes. Lizzie's story begins by telling

how shortly after her husband's death:

> I had a note to say something about the Income Tax,
> you see, and I couldn't find any details, and I
> suddenly thought, "Of course! He took it in! I
> remember!" because I remember he said, "Oh! I'd
> better put this Income Tax return in. Let's get
> in the car and go." We jumped in the car and went
> over, and I remember it so well because we went
> to this new building. I sat in the car while he
> ran up the steps and the man was just locking the
> door and he gave it to him, you see, and I remember
> absolutely, and I remember when it was and I had
> been puzzling and wondering and I did say to him,
> "Oh! Do tell me where it is!" Quite soon after
> that, you know, he - I was reminded that we took
> it in, and it was so, and I rang up my accountant -
> whoever it was and said could they give me the
> approximate date, and it was so, you see. They had
> mislaid it or something. It's extraordinary, though,
> isn't it? It's quite strange, isn't it?

In this narrative the planes gradually unfold the story, the details being added in bits and pieces as they succeed each other. The first plane tells about (a) the demand, (b) the loss of the documents, (c) Lizzie's sudden remembering, and (d) the details of the occasion when she and her husband had taken the document in. The second repeats information about the loss (b) and the sudden remembering (c), but also adds in two extra pieces of information - (b2) Lizzie's calling for help to her dead husband and (e) the outcome of events. The third plane starts by moving the story on to the next stage, (f) a conversation with the accountant, then back again to (e) the outcome, before finally (g) giving the tax inspector's explanation for the unnecessary demand. Each plane is functionally quite separate from the next. The first plane gives the bare outline of the events, the second plane makes clear the supernatural interpretation Lizzie puts on them, and the third ties up the ends by showing how the intuition (or message from the dead) solved her problem.

Thirdly, Violet's narrative, number 25, which is almost impossible to follow if one expects narratives to be organised according to an "outline" model such as the Labovian one, can be disentangled by means of the concept of overlays. The story is transcribed below as a whole, then analysed to show its structure:

> Now for instance, my brother died suddenly and he had a bungalow in North Wales and we had to get rid of it, Howard and I, in - . Now, it seems incredible that we could clear that bungalow, a big bungalow, and sell it for cash in one week, but we didn't do that on our own, you know, you couldn't! Not - . When I look back I couldn't have done it off my own steam. I had help there! You know, we both look back and we think, "Well, we never could have done it off our own steam!" It was sold for cash, you know, and all the furniture went. We cleared it in a week, you know! It's incredible really and I felt then as though I was being shown what to do, because I'm a poor one at making decisions and this is where I've always leant to my mother, and I feel that she's the one that pushes me to know what to do. (Narrative 25)

The substance of this discourse arranged chronologically is:

1. brother's death;

2. incredibly difficult task;

3. brother's bungalow has to be sold;

4. brother's bungalow is sold;

5. brother's furniture is sold;

6. Howard and Violet had help;

7. help came from dead mother;

8. dead mother always aids indecisive daughter;

9. difficult task accomplished in one week.

As told, this constantly backtracking story is in planes as follows:

Plane 1. ("Now, for instance" to "Howard and I") uses elements 1, 2 and 3.

Plane 2. ("Now it seems incredible" to "but we didn't do that on our own, you know, you couldn't") uses elements 2, 9 and 7.

<u>Plane 3.</u> ("When I look back" to "had help there!") uses elements 2 and 7.

<u>Plane 4.</u> ("We both look back and we think" to "and all the furniture went") uses elements 2, 6, 4 and 5, and finally

<u>Plane 5.</u> ("We cleared it in a week" to end) recapitulates many of the key elements, that is, 9, 2, 6, 7 and 8.

Both the meaning and the structure of this memorate thus revolve round the second element, the incredible difficulty of the task which Howard and Violet were expected to perform. Each plane contains this stable element plus additional information in a series of layered and overlaid narrative statements unconnected by strict temporal succession.

An equally circular story is told by Edna:

> Now, we were only <u>talking</u> about it - I have a cousin
> and he's - When he was a baby, he used, (when he was
> passing trees) when he'd be about eighteen months old,
> "Ooh! Those bushes are going to prick my eyes!" and,
> I mean, he was too young to be aware of what could
> happen. Well, he went in the - . He was just eighteen
> when he went in the war, and he was - . They went over
> a mine and he was blinded. Well, now then, his mother
> was living with us at that time. He'd no father and
> she was living with us. Before she opened the letter,
> before my aunty opened the letter, my mother said,
> "My God! It's his eyes! My God! It's his eyes!"
> and she - . I can't remember what it was she'd dreamt,
> but she'd dreamt something about it. Now, we were only
> talking about that this weekend. (Narrative 53)

The memorate contains two premonitions - the blinded youth's baby fear of injury to his eyes and the aunt's dream the night before the letter arrives. The first of these, however, is not explicit on the surface of the narrative and the second is unexpectedly tacked on to the end. Between the beginning and the end, the narrator first skirts round the information that the cousin is blind ("I have a cousin and he's - ."), then gives this necessary information before mentioning the aunt's premonition that he will be blinded, then tells the content of the premonition ("My God, it's his eyes") before its cause (the dream). The 'natural' linear order is

thus completely usurped. Instead, the matter of the two premonitions
is loosely and haphazardly grouped round the revelation of the youth's
blindness.

The layered, accumulative "overlay" structure is seen to best effect
in May's stories. The following account, the second of two about her
mother's death, is transcribed below in tabular form so that the struc-
ture is apparent. For these purposes the Grimes model is superimposed
on the Labovian one. The narrative planes are illustrated at work within
two of the structural elements (orientation and complication) proposed by
Labov and Waletsky (the narrative contains no resolution; the element
which Labov would term a coda follows):

orientation (1st plane)	I don't know whether it was my own imagination.I'll say this before I start - I was the only daughter and I had two brothers and my mother and I were rather close, very close, and she lived with us for seventeen years after my father died. She was nearly ninety when she died and she was only really seriously ill the last twelve months. She had a stroke which left her memory impaired but not her faculties. She couldn't remember people and places. She never remembered living in Cheadle with me before we came to Gatley, but apart from that, it was a case of when anyone came, she would say, after they'd gone, she covered up very well, and then she would say, *Tell me all about them and I would know next time", but I was telling Mr. Lawley -
(2nd plane)	After she died, she died at home, and she'd only been - she'd had a stroke as I said and she was, she didn't wander at all, and anyway, then she had a second one and she lived only a fortnight after that, the last two days she was unconscious.
complication (1st plane)	But after she died, I never felt she'd really gone. Her presence seemed to be particularly in her bedroom and it was about twelve months after until her room felt empty to me and it was very strong at times. I would go up and I used to wake up in the night and think I heard her because she slept with her door open and so did we to hear her, and I was confident I'd many a time heard her cough. Well, that would be sheer imagination, of course.

(2nd plane)	But it was the emptiness in the room and it was quite twelve months after when we returned from the second holiday after she'd died and then I realised the room was empty.
(3rd plane)	I've never expressed it before but it was there with me all the time, in whatever I was doing. She was there somehow, either sitting watching me or doing that, but suddenly the house was empty.
(4th plane)	But I couldn't express it really. It was just a feeling. We came back,and before that I'd always felt she was about somewhere, and it had gone.
coda	I suppose it does take twelve months to recover from things like that, I don't know, if you're very close to anyone.

(Narrative 2: May)

Narratives like these owe little of their effect to notions of sequentiality. Far from being outlines or strings of events progressing in natural temporal order, they cluster round some central idea in a loose, associative pattern akin to what Joanna Russ calls the "lyrical mode" in novel writing.[31]

They form a "semantic complex"[32] rather than being a sequence of clauses matched to "the sequence of events which actually occurred";[33] their logic is not sequence but accumulation, and their structural geometry not the line but the circle - we may, perhaps, refer to them as 'cyclical' narratives.

Cyclical narratives, of which there are twenty-one in the corpus, severely undermine concepts of narrative based on criteria of sequence. Such criteria can in no way either describe their structure nor account

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31   Joanna Russ, "What can a heroine do? Or Why Women can't write", in Susan Koppelman Cornillon (ed.), Images of Women in Fiction (Bowling Green, 1972), p. 12.

32   Grimes (1975), p. 42.

33   Labov and Waletsky, p. 20.

for their features. The only way a Labovian analyst can cope with such stories is by refusing them narrative status, but this option is not open. Even the most cyclical has at least one temporal juncture so would qualify as narrative under the Labovian criterion. Violet's story, the most extreme example, for instance has a temporal juncture between the brother's death and all succeeding events (though not a single one after these initial clauses). Rather let us suppose that Labov and Waletsky's insistence on linearity as the organising principle of narrative is the result of their enculturation into Western thought patterns and that narratives need not be organised in outlines but may be layered, accumulative and overlaid in the way that Grimes has suggested is typical of the structures used by non-European storytellers.

5.3   Continuative narratives

Grimes's theory also helps throw light on another very common storytelling pattern that unites characteristics of both outline and overlay. Here a narrator will tell her story through as an outline, reporting the original events in a natural chronological order, beginning at the beginning and ending at the end. When she comes to the closure which apparently signals the end of the story, however, she does not actually close. Instead, she goes on immediately either to repeat a part of it, or to reframe it by giving additional narrative material which puts the main story in a different perspective, or to discuss her own story before closing it again, so that the whole of this addendum constitutes a second plane of narrative.

For instance, Winifred's story (above, pp. 440-441) does not actually end where the transcription ends, though it would read as complete and is signalled as complete by the addition of a moral comment ("I'd never do it again"). This type of closure typically invites audience comment and

thus returns the conversational initiative to the listener. Winifred,
however, obviously feels her story is not complete for, instead of
allowing comment, she herself discusses why she would "never do it again".
Then she again closes the story ("So, that's the only experience I've had")
and again seems to be willing to surrender the initiative. Instead of
doing this she yet again starts up herself, this time adding a mini-
narrative:

> ... anyway, he had to have an operation on his head,
> and he was OK afterwards, and he was in neuro-
> surgical for two months. He had hit the side of his
> head with a box and he didn't remember doing it,
> being greengrocers, and it was inside and it bled.

Here, abruptly, the story really ends. Thus Winifred's story is given
two closures (first, "And I'd never do it again", then "So that's the
only experience I've ever had"), but neither actually signals the real
end which, unmarked, occurs later. Stories such as these continue past
their natural, signalled boundaries with another plane of narrative, and
may be termed for convenience 'continuative' narratives.[34]

Working through a few examples of these 'continuative' narratives
is instructive, as showing basic variations of storytelling styles and
the uses to which the different structures are put. The simplest sort
of continuative narrative is number 56, where Agnes, after signalling the
end-boundary by a present tense closure, straightaway adds a bit of
additional narrative in which, through Granny's anxiety, a comedy is turned
to something darker.

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34   There are 39 continuative narratives in the corpus of 111 memorates.

Aperture	There was one time, when I was a little girl I remember.
Orientation	We used to have some tinkers come round every year. They used to come down the lane every year and bring their caravan and his name was Tommy - Tommy Hodgkiss I think it was, but he was always known as Tommy the Tinker and he was quite a nice little man [.............] and they used to go down the Old Lane and Mrs. Hodgkiss was a, not a very n.... We used to call her Mrs. Tommy and she warnt a very nice old lady at all. She was always begging and cadging off everybody, and she came to the door for some water or something one day, and Granny and me were standing at the door and she started telling Granny all the marvellous fortune that was going to befall her and on me. Oh! I was going to have a marvellous future - "the young 'un"— and anyway, "Would Granny give her a bit of this?"
Complication	"No. I haven't got it." "Have you got a pair of your husband's old shoes?" "No. I haven't got any old shoes. I haven't got a husband." "Well, one of your lads then? An old pair of trousers?"
Resolution	She went through every single thing, and then, all of a sudden, she said, "Oh! Curses on you!" and she swore at us up one side and down the other, and she revoked all her blessings and they all turned to curses!
Coda (closure)	So that's the only time - only experience I've ever had. I can see her now.
Additional narrative	And Granny shut the door and said, "Be off with you! I can't be bothered with you and all that tripe!" But it did upset Granny. I remember very well. She was quite sure the old dear had put a blight on her.

(Narrative 56: Agnes)

The addendum to Agnes's narrative subtly alters the force or spirit of the narrative - it "reframes"[35] the activity.

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35 Goffman (1975).

Another common pattern is for the narrator to highlight the aspects

of the story which seem most significant to her by repeating those ele-

ments after the narrative has apparently been completed. A story told

by Zillah shows this 'repeat' pattern. The first part of the story seems

absolutely complete, progressing from a minimal aperture ("Well, I don't

know"), observing a 'real' temporal sequence and ending with a closure

in the present tense ("And I firmly believe he could see something there")

as follows:

> Well, I don't know. When my husband was dying, he
> said a funny thing - Well, not a funny thing but it
> did impress me. He wasn't unconscious, he was
> sitting up in bed, and he kept looking at the pic-
> ture rail, and, although I could speak to him and
> he would answer, all at once the only thing, all
> he could keep saying is "It's wonderful! It's
> wonderful!" And I firmly believe he could see some-
> thing there.
>
> (Narrative 10: Zillah)

Complete as this memorate seems, however, Zillah plainly has not really

finished her story, for almost without pausing for breath, she goes

straight on:

> I've never been with anyone that's been dying, not
> close before, and I thought, "Well! There must be
> something there!" But he was amazed, whatever it
> was he could see. Now, that was within hours of
> him dying. It's over twenty years and yet I remem-
> ber it quite clearly, and it's when I think of that,
> that I begin to think, "Well, will I see him again?"

This is an interesting narrative pattern because, on the one hand, unlike

Agnes's reframed narrative, Zillah's additional bit of narrative does not

continue the story with wholly new material, nor, on the other hand, like

cyclical narratives does it contain several narrative planes within a

single set of boundary markers. The second plane follows almost as a

separate narrative after the first is marked as complete. This extremely

common pattern allows the storyteller to foreground information that she finds significant and thus ensure that the listener puts the same interpretation on it as she does.

Alternatively the continuative pattern reveals the narrator in discussion with herself. Narrative number 9, told by Edie, is a good example:

Aperture	Shall I tell you why I have this belief as well which sounds really - I mean you'll think, "Did she see it or didn't she?" It's one thing that happened in my life when my father died.
Orientation	We went to the funeral and it was in town. We went to the funeral - mother lives at Redcar on the North East coast and the funeral was over and everything and we were sort of coming back and Aunty's staying with mother - you know how you do all these arrangements? and I went in to look at my father's bedroom before, before I came away I just went and had a look, both the bedrooms, I just wanted to look, you know,
Complication	and I just stood looking and I saw three whiffs of smoke, d'you know that? - You know, like a cigarette. Well, I smoke but I wasn't smoking then. I'm sure I did, you know what I mean? and my father was a very heavy smoker, you know.
Coda (closure)	It sounds crazy this.
Discussion	Now all right, I could be wrong about that. Somebody else could have looked in the bedroom and had a cigarette before I went in,
Repeat	But I honestly did! About three rings, something like that.
Closure	Isn't it odd, that?
Discussion	Now the only things that sort of satisfied myself was, "oh yes, somebody else has been upstairs and they've gone in there you see for something or had a cigarette."
Repeat	But they were there!

Here Edie twice discusses a possible interpretation of her experience,

then repeats the essential aspect of it. At other times a narrator may

discuss her own narrative then end with a simple closure instead of a

repeat, or alternatively she may reframe it. Laura's touching story of

her reunion with her dead child shows the latter pattern. The main part

of the story can be found above (p. 306), the discussion and reframe

which immediately follow are:

Discussion	I lost my husband, and your husband is terrible, but a child - You seem you don't know what it is, it's such a painful thing. The mental agony you go through is terrible, it really is. Terrible mental agony.
Reframe	I used to scream and try and crawl up the walls with my fingers and that. It was a really horrible time. His father found him, and they couldn't let the divers go in because it was over the top. You know the brook behind Gatley primary school? And I said, "Why did God do this to me? I've never done any wrong in my life!" and they said, "Well, they [sic] pick on those who can take it", you see, that's what they said, and they said, "Time is a wonderful healer", and I says, "It can't be."
Closure	But it is. It's perfectly true. Whatever your tragedy is in life. Time is a wonderful healer. Because you can't get over it, if it wasn't. Can't.

(Narrative 3: Laura)

Laura's present tense 'discussion' evaluates the experience of her child's

death. She 'reframes' then, concentrating on her terrible grief,

questioning of faith and eventual reconciliation. This changes her story

from one about a revenant (which is what the interviewer wanted to dis-

cuss) to a story about bereavement (which is what Laura wanted to discuss).

Reframes are very often thus used to seize the conversational initiative

and transform the topic of conversation.

Fourthly and lastly, two narratives may be joined together in one overall frame. The narrative told by Lettice below is typical.

1	But I saw my father. My father was the first to die and he died at three o'clock in the morning, and then, twelve months afterwards, mother died at three o'clock in the afternoon. Well, she died of cancer of the jaw, so I mean there was nothing to smile about. But just before she died, I felt that whatever there was, _ever_ there was, father had come to meet her. Because she just sat up and she gave that _smile_ - . Of course, I think they _do_ sit up before they die, but - . And she sort of held her arms out and it was just that special smile she always kept for him [GB: You think she actually saw him?] I do!
2	I do! Oh, yes! We were discussing this last year and we were away and the people we got friendly with, he was like my husband - "When you're dead, you're dead', you see, and she was like me - "We none of us know what it is. I mean, it's something we shan't know till we die." But she was like me, she felt there _was_ something, and the man who owned the hotel - there was he and his wife - he was a great believer in "There was something, _what_ we didn't know." But _our_ two men, of course, they were great disbelievers. That is the only time. I've always felt there _is_ something, _what_ we do not know, but I always felt THAT FATHER CAME TO MEET HER. I always felt that.

(Narrative 11: Lettice)

The internal relationships of these double or multiple narratives may be:

(a) the first narrative serves as introduction to the succeeding one;

(b) the second narrative (as Lettice's does above) serves as discussion of the first one;

(c) they have equal value and are linked by the common thread of the topic to be illustrated.

Essentially all these functions are carried out within a single frame.
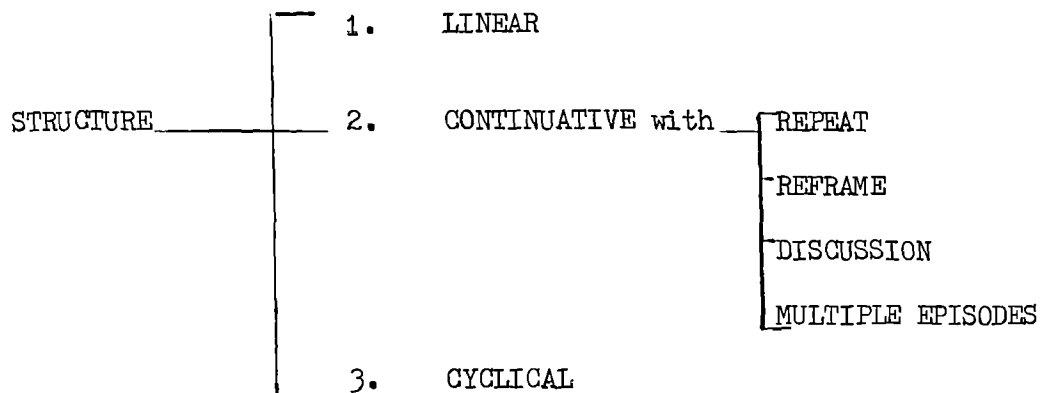
Plainly, then, the shapes and structures used in naturally occurring informal storytelling are more varied than commonsense structural models such as the Labovian one generally allow them to be. In particular, the

dictum that a story has a beginning, a middle and an end, in that order, might be reconsidered in the light of the diversity of real-life storytelling.

5.4   Organisational structures in the corpus

The structures found in the corpus of memorates, therefore, are more varied than the Labovian model would suggest. Though a useful starting place for discussions of narrative structure, it is ultimately too restrictive and needs to be expanded. The table below shows the main types of structure found in the present data:

Fig. 1: Organisational structures found in the corpus of
         111 memorates

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                          ┌─  1.   LINEAR
                          │
STRUCTURE_____┤── 2.   CONTINUATIVE with __┌─REPEAT
                          │                            ├─REFRAME
                          │                            ├─DISCUSSION
                          │                            └─MULTIPLE EPISODES
                          └── 3.   CYCLICAL
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The definitions of these terms are:

LINEAR narratives are stories which use a natural chronology in which each reported event is (a) given only once, and (b) matched to the order of the original events.

CONTINUATIVE narratives are stories which are initially arranged according to a natural chronology, but which, after seeming to end, continue with a second narrative plane which either (a) repeats key events, or (b) reframes the experience through additional narrative. Alternatively, (c) they may incorporate discussions in which the narrator evaluates and

interprets the experience before adding repeat, reframe or <u>closure</u>, or

(d) within a single frame they may contain multiple episodes.

<u>CYCLICAL narratives</u> are stories told in several planes to create an

accumulative, associative structure in which events cluster round a cen-

tral core rather than develop in systematic, chronological sequence.

Only fifty-one of the total of 111 memorates adopted the simple

linear outline proposed by the Labovian model: thirty-nine were con-

tinuative and twenty-one cyclical. Both these latter types of structure

are best understood in terms of Grimes's model of "overlay" structures.

It should be remembered that the question which Labov used to

initiate narrative ("Have you ever been in danger of death?") is an

invitation to tell a particular type of story: that is, one with exciting

action and a suspenseful plot, the function of which is to thrill or

impress the hearer. In telling this sort of story, it is necessary for

the narrator to spread the interest of a story equally throughout, every

part being given as much weight and consequence as every other and the

whole building up to a climax. However, circumstances and events do not

always have this equality of importance: a narrator will tend to tell a

story as (s)he <u>feels</u> it. Thus, if it is the way events succeed each

other that seems most relevant to her, she will probably tell it as an

outline, a causal string, in the way which Labov describes. If, on the

other hand, it is some of the <u>details</u> of the experience that are strongest

in memory, she may give greatest weight to them by telling and retelling

them in accumulating planes: her narrative will thus become cyclical.

Alternatively, though the incident may be slight, the interpretive signifi-

cance may be great. In this case the weight of the story may be at the

end, for here the storyteller will accumulate repetitions, reframings and

discussion in an attempt to clarify the meaning of the story for herself and for her audience.

It seems, then, that it is through an analysis of function that we may find an explanation of the variety of structural patterns exhibited in the present corpus. We may best approach the question of function through an examination of two vital aspects of the Labovian theory where the model once again fails to describe adequately the nature and structure of the present corpus of memorates: that is, the concept of narrative as "action description",[36] and the criterion of "reportability".

6. Action and event

6.1 Introduction

The Labovian definition of narrative states that it is:

> One method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred.

We have already seen that, in telling memorates, narrators very often do not keep to a strict temporal sequence, but may arrange events in cumulative layers, circling round central information or repeating or reframing it, so that the order of the clauses does not match the order of the original events. Memorates therefore do not necessarily record events in temporal sequence. But do they primarily record events?

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36   The term is Van Dijk's. Teun A. Van Dijk, "Action, Action - description and Narrative", New Literary History, 6 (1974-1975), 273-294. Van Dijk treats the terms "narrative" and "action-description" as synonymous.

This question is not as nonsensical as it appears at first sight. Though it is obvious that one cannot have a narrative with no events, one can have narratives in which the events are not the central interest for either teller or audience. In many cases events may be subordinated to the circumstances which cause and motivate them or to the personalities of the people who perform them or to whom they happen. In literary narrative this is quite evident. It is of course the characteristic of the classic European novel which most readily distinguishes it from genres such as thrillers and love stories. The aim, of course, is different in each case. One type of writer aims to initiate thought, the other to entertain, and it is these differing aims that give rise to the different emphases. Oral storytelling is no less capable of a variety of aims and techniques than literary narration. We should therefore not expect oral narrative to be always action-description.

Much will depend on the <u>sort of</u> narrative one is considering and what the narrator had in mind when (s)he was telling it. Many, or most, of the memorates in the present corpus appear to have been designed with purposes other than entertainment in mind, and their focus is often not so much on the events themselves as on the surrounding circumstances which help to explain them.

This section therefore sets out to examine two related questions: (a) the relative importance of events and circumstances in the memorate corpus, and (b) the clues to the function of memorate which these structures provide.

6.2   The relative importance of event and circumstance

One could, for the sake of discussion, rather crudely divide narrative into two types. In one group there would be narratives in which

the focus of attention is given to the description of actions and happenings (one might term these perhaps 'action narratives'). In the other group there would be 'circumstantial narrative': that is, narratives in which attention was focused on the contexts of those actions and happenings. One would decide which group a particular narrative fell into by first analysing it according to Labov's model of structure which differentiates between <u>orientation</u> as scene-setting,and <u>complication</u> and <u>resolution</u> as records of events. One would then count and compare the number of clauses devoted to <u>orientation</u> on the one hand, and <u>complication</u> and <u>resolution</u> on the other. This would allow one to detect whether the focus of interest in that story is on events or circumstances. Narratives in which a larger number of clauses go into the <u>orientation</u> stage would be 'circumstantial narratives', those in which the narrator uses more clauses to tell the <u>complication</u> and <u>resolution</u> would be 'action narratives'.

This rather simplistic test carried out on the memorates told by the people of Gatley produces quite startling results. Of the 111 memorates only twenty-six are 'action narratives' in this sense,whereas seventy are 'circumstantial narratives' (the remainder give equal weight to both aspects of storytelling). For the greater proportion of narrators of memorates in this study then, it is the circumstance surrounding the experience that is the focus of the story, not the experience itself. This dominance of circumstance in the minds of the narrators is even more apparent if one calculates the relative number of clauses overall given to <u>orientation</u> or to <u>complication</u> and <u>resolution</u>. Of the total 3,774 clauses of narrative in all the memorates taken together, 64% occur at the <u>orientation</u> stage. Happenings, however bizarre, are thus subordinated to the contexts in which they occur.

That <u>orientation</u> is such an essential feature of the structure of memorates should come as no surprise: such a conclusion has been pre-figured in the analysis of texts in previous chapters. In chapter 7, for

example, it was seen that although commonsense might have suggested that
the basic ingredients of a 'ghost-story' should be an account of the
perception of the narrator and the appearance of the revenant, this
pattern was never used as the basis of narrative. In every case the
narrator also provided some orienting information. Likewise, in stories
of foreknowledge (see chapter 8 pp.338-342) orientation was present in all
stories, first given as the occasion of the foreknowledge, next given as
the interval of time which elapsed between foreknowledge and subsequent
event. If the analysis is extended to cover the remaining narratives,
the same pattern may be observed. No narrative (either memorate or
personal legend) fails to begin with at least a brief <u>orientation</u>.

The events recorded in the stories of the present corpus are often
truly remarkable - mothers who return from the dead to heal and comfort,
dead husbands who still are capable of organising the family finances,
disembodied voices which diagnose disease, telepathic contacts with the
sick and dying. Yet even when the subject matter of the memorate is as
truly eventful as this, narrators always take care to set the scene and
in a large majority of cases give more attention to these descriptions
than to the record of the strange happenings themselves. This surely is
an aspect of memorate structure that calls for explanation, and that ex-
planation must just as surely lie in the purposes for which memorates are
told.

6.3   Structure and function

If the typical characteristics of the memorates which have been
discussed above in sections 3 and 5 are now listed, some approach may be
made to this question of function.

The memorates are not necessarily presented as strings of events.
Rather than having a linear outline which gives equal weight to all parts

and moves from beginning to end through a natural chronological sequence, these narratives often are told by accumulation or repetition which allows the teller to foreground and juxtapose the aspects of the experience she finds most relevant. Not only are they typically not strings of events, they are often not told as strings of events. Rather than concentrating on the experience which they have to report, most of them give primary attention to the circumstances of that experience. Put together like this, these characteristics do strongly suggest that memorates such as these have a problem-solving function.

McGuire and Lorch's study of this interactional mode[37] casts a very informative light on possible functions of memorate and similar types of story. They see the problem-solving mode as goal-oriented, the goal being the resolution of the specific problem. When people interact in this mode there is a premium on plausibility and 'truth', precision and accuracy. If we presume that a direct question on a matter of universal human concern such as the continued presence of the dead immediately puts the respondent into the role of problem solver, then any reply is likely to be carefully authenticated and precise as to detail - in other words, if it is narrative it will contain a high proportion of orientation and circumstantial detail. This is exactly the dominant pattern in the memorates.

The judgement that the high proportion of circumstantial detail may be allied to a problem-solving function is supported by another functional exploration of narrative - that of Lance W. Bennett.[38] By studying the role of storytelling in a specific situation (criminal trials), Bennett demonstrates that a common use to which narrative is put is that of arriving at a judgement. Pointing out that from our earliest childhood

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37 Michael T. McGuire and Stephen Lorch, "Natural Language Conversational Modes", Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 146 (1968), 239-248.

38 Lance W. Bennett (1978).

most people are encultured to explain their side of any dispute in story

form, Bennett goes on to argue that we are progressively encouraged to

organise story information in ways that aid interpretation. Three main

interpretive acts are customarily performed by hearers. The hearer-

interpreter:

    (a) locates the central action;

    (b) constructs inferences about the relationships among

        surrounding elements;

    (c) tests this network for internal consistency (that is:

        for 'truth').

The present corpus of memorates was elicited by questioning the

existence of the supernatural, so the central action of the story is a

priori already located. The hearer knows, and the speaker knows the

hearer knows, what the central action is to be. The first hearer-function

can therefore be discounted by a narrator: she need not give elaborate

guides to the nature of the action. The other two essential interpretive

tasks for hearers focus on circumstances, their relationships, and their

consistency. A storyteller telling a story the point of which is already

known will thus concentrate on circumstantial details, for in this con-

text these are the crucial elements. A narrator knows that it is on them

that her hearer will fasten her interpretive attention and through them

that she will assess the truth of the experience.

John Robinson,[39] drawing on Bennett's and on McGuire and Lorch's

arguments and on the work of Georges and Polyani[40] which show hearers in

interpretive exchanges with tellers during the course of storytelling,

isolates two oppositional storytelling pairs:

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39 John Robinson (1981).

40 Georges (1969) and Polyani (1979).

> In cases of <u>heuristic</u> storytelling, the speaker is
> seeking to discover the meaning of the episode,
> whereas in <u>negotiative</u> circumstances, the listener
> seeks to reformulate the speaker's view of the event.
> There is a collaborative effort in both situations,
> but the ratio of <u>co-operative</u> to <u>adversarial</u> ex-
> changes will be much higher in heuristic exchanges
> than in negotiative exchanges. [41] [my emphasis]

Stories of the uncanny, 'weird', strange or supernatural are just the

type of narrative which leaves itself open to 'negotiation' by the hearer,

but it must be supposed that the aim of the speaker is 'heuristic'. The

facts (a) that they were contributed in answer to questions of belief,

(b) that they are typically introduced or closed with phrases such as "so

that's why I have this belief", and (c) that many of them are structured

as the discussion form of 'continuative' story, all strongly suggest that

they are framed to "discover the meaning of the episode". Thus the speaker

hopes for a 'collaborative' response. Always, however, she must guard

against the hearer adopting an 'adversarial' role and seeking to reformu-

late the meaning of the story or undermine her credibility as philosopher.

In this situation large amounts of circumstantial detail serve two vital

functions. If all goes well for the narrator, they serve to authenticate

her story and support her interpretation. If the hearer turns adversarial,

however, it allows the narrator to back out without loss of face. She may

use the detail to structure the experience into a story with a different -

uncontroversial - point and claim that she was misunderstood in the first

place.

All these approaches are useful in understanding the dominant forms

of narration in the present corpus. Clearly the stories are designed as

answers to questions. It is perhaps in the nature of stories on 'delicate'

topics that they are always designed as answers to questions. Even if the

question of the existence of the supernatural is not explicitly posed, it

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[41] Robinson, pp. 71-72.

is always a 'Question' in the sense of being a controversial topic on
which individuals are expected to take a stand. That is why the stories
in popular ghost gazeteers seem so unreal. In contrast to oral stories
told in context, they do not have that underlying edge of seriousness,
that capacity for having belief excavated from them or attached to them.
Because 'real' stories of the supernatural always thus implicitly answer
a covert question, they need the _orientation_ more than they need a de-
tailed central core. Whereas the central experience is assumed to be
universal and thus in need of little description or explanation, the
circumstances are always individual. Not only therefore may there be
more intense interest in the circumstantial context, but the individual
vouches for the general - the contextual details both add human interest
and authenticate the experience.

To regard the memorates as problem-solving stories, then, accounts
for their strangest feature - the fact that, though the events and state
of mind they report are intrinsically (and often bizarrely) interesting,
the narrator spends much less time describing those events than one would
expect. Instead, (s)he gives prominence to contexts and circumstances
which are commonplace and at times even banal. This leads us on to the
third way in which memorates depart from the model proposed by Labov:
that is, the criterion of reportability.

7. Reportability

7.1   The universal and the particular

Labov suggests that there is a single over-riding contentual
criterion of narrative reportability. His strongest formulation of this

maxim is that contained in his discussion of the evaluative element in narrative:

> If the event becomes common enough, it is no longer
> a violation of an expected rule of behaviour, and
> it is not reportable.

That is, it is not fit for narrative subject-matter. Evaluative devices therefore are used by storytellers to prove that the events they are telling of are not commonplace, but:

> ... terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy: or
> amusing, hilarious, wonderful: more generally that
> it was strange uncommon or unusual - that is, worth
> reporting. 42

It is through evaluation that a narrator gets the 'point' over. The point of a narrative, it follows, is an unusual happening. This criterion is echoed by Teun Van Dijk where he says that in order to fulfil its function, a narrative must be "remarkable" and defines a remarkable event in terms of "an exception to usual states or events", which contravenes "the normality principle" by being difficult, unexpected, unusual, or a predicament.[43] Again, in his later work, he asserts that a "narratable event" is "interesting, spectacular, new".[44]

This criterion of reportability or 'remarkableness' has been critically reviewed by Robinson, pointing out in particular that stories may be told because they record _typical_ events, and citing parents' cautionary tales as an example.[45] This observation is specially relevant to the

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42 Labov,pp.370-371.

43 Van Dijk, 286-287.

44 Teun A. Van Dijk, _Macrostructures_ (Hillsdale, 1980), p. 114.

45 Robinson, 62.

consideration of memorates. If the truth of beliefs or experiences is what is at stake in the telling of a story then it is commonness, not uniqueness, that is the measure of tellability. Labov's criterion therefore neatly separates out two very different types of personal experience stories: that is, stories of individual experience and stories of human experience. The former is the 'action-story' which plainly demands that the events should not be commonplace; among the latter are memorates, which demand that the events should have universal relevance. Because memorates embody what the narrator believes to be universal experiences or beliefs, they are less likely to seek to be 'reportable' in Labov's sense of 'unique'. Instead they stress the commonplaceness of the occurrences. Hence, seventy-four out of 111 memorates in the corpus present the story as one of many possible examples of similar occurrences. Only thirty-seven storytellers say that the incident was a unique one, or try to make it appear in any way uncommon or remarkable. Similarly the memorates are usually embedded in a generalised topical discourse which serves to illustrate their theme. In discussing memorates of fore-knowledge it has already been remarked that

> Characteristically, the narrators first make broad
> generalisations and unspecific references to the
> topic which is to be discussed. 46

Observation shows that such generalised remarks often follow after the narrative as well, so that the memorate is enclosed, as it were, in an envelope of topic-related philosophical remarks which seek to show the universality of the related experience. One may see this pattern in the telling of Violet's narrative quoted above on page 443. She moves towards her story by remarking:

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46   Above, Chapter 8, p. 333.

> But I always feel the nearness of my mother -
> always. But not my father. It's always my
> mother I feel that's near - my mother. Yes,
> I've never, you know, actually could say I've
> heard a voice but I've felt that she's kind of,
> "Well, I'm here with you, you know, and I'll
> help you". Now for instance ....

When her story is finished, I ask a question and this leads to Violet's
taking up the thread of her exposition again:

> I believe my mother is still around me, I do
> really, and, I mean, I'm not being dramatic or
> anything. I've always felt this. I've always
> said to my husband that I've always felt my
> mother quite close to me, because she was a good
> mother, a good living ... and had to work hard.

This is a very common pattern. The narrative part of the answer is em-
bedded in a minimal undeveloped first person account of a universal or
common occurrence which is used to illustrate or define a particular type
of event or state of mind. This pre- and post-narrative discourse uses
the universal present tense, and employs the terms used to and always to
express frequency and thus is essentially a generalised way of speaking
of a common experience. As the story begins, however, the narrator switches
from generalised tenses to the more specific simple past, and refers to a
specific occasion relevant to the common experience. All the utterance,
both narrative and non-narrative, is functionally equivalent: it all
serves to illustrate the same common experience. The particular is there-
fore used to give point, relevance and shape to the universal. This
structure is visible in Valerie's answer to a question about premonitions:

> I wouldn't say I believe in premonitions, but I've
> got a very funny habit of speaking about a person
> that we've not seen for many years and they turn up.
> When I was at work, the man that I worked for used
> to - If I mentioned someone who we'd not heard of or
> spoke to and didn't like "Oh: For heaven's sake, don't
> mention them", [laughs] and invariably, they would

turn up! [laughs] If I got agitated I used to
smoke - I don't smoke now [yes] but I did then,
"Don't smoke, something bad'll turn up!" I don't
know how, but I have a very funny intuition. Now,
we were watching the skating on Sunday and my
husband was saying something and I said, "Doesn't
he land beautifully!" and just as I said this, he
fell over [laughs] flat on his face! Yesterday
morning my husband went to look at his watch and
I said, "It has been going fine lately. You've
not had a bit of trouble", and when he looked, it
had stopped [laughs].

Here the narrative part of the answer (from "Now, we were watching the

skating" to "when he looked at it it had stopped") is distinguishable

from the pre-narrative material by the greater specificity that is typical

of narrative, expressed on this occasion through terms of frequency. The

initiating discourse is couched in tenses which express a certain uni-

versality (the conditional, the present perfect, and the universal

present), then the language becomes rather more precise by moving first

into the past continuative, and then into the simple past for the story.

Likewise in her marking of dates, Valerie begins without time reference

in the present perfect, narrows the focus to "When I was at work" and

finally moves into narrative by finding two specific occasions, "When we

were watching the skating on Sunday" and "Yesterday morning". Valerie

first stresses the universality of the type of occurrence she is referring

to, then gives a single example of it, chosen for being recent, typical

or an extreme case - a single occasion within a class of common events.

This is the pattern of discourse typical of memorate-telling. It seems

then that the function of these memorates (unlike Labov's action-stories)

is not primarily to impress or entertain, but rather to illustrate or

explain by sharing a memory of important events which have metaphysical

significance.

7.2 Five narrative examples

A few examples may help to make the point of these observations clearer. In discussing the nature and structure of memorate in this chapter, it has been argued that at their most typical memorates are (1) non-linear stories which (2) concentrate as much or more on circumstances as events, and (3) seek to show the universality of the reported experience or the principles which it embodies, rather than presenting it as a unique event. The five narratives quoted below show these characteristics to greater or lesser extent and so are also more or less typical. By transcribing examples of typical and untypical memorates we may be able to see how they actually function in discourse.

The first two examples are untypical in that they develop the plot in a linear outline such as the Labovian model predicts, give the greater part of the total narrative time to the central events and speak of a unique occasion:

1.
> But funnily enough - This makes me laugh! I was
> doing some sewing - oh! it's about a month ago
> now, and I have an electric sewing machine and I
> can't thread this sewing machine without one of
> Singer's - those little things they have. Well!
> During the course of the afternoon that disap-
> peared, and also a red flannel tab-thing that I
> keep needles in! That disappeared too. And yet!
> They were never taken out of the room as far as
> I know. And I said to myself, "I wonder if there's
> an evil spirit floating around?"

(Narrative 64: Joan)

2.
> They came the other night with this little boy and
> he was about four (they said he was about four) and
> took this child round with them and they got as far
> as the spare room and he hadn't said very much at
> all but apparently he liked the cellar. He thought
> that was terrific - and the other rooms, and then
> they went up to the room at the top which we've
> always called the 'attic'. We no longer call it
> the attic, we call it the 'fourth bedroom'! * And

(* Cecily is selling her house)

the child came down, sat in the corner for a
minute, and he told this most _fantastic_ story
about there being a _ghost_ up there!

I said, "A ghost?" I said, "Well, that's very
odd. I've never seen a ghost and I've lived here
a _very_ long time." I said, "I've never seen one,
I'd _love_ to see one. What's he like?" you see.

So - "Oh! he's a nasty one, a nasty one." So
his father said, "Well, there's nice ghosts as
well as nasty ones."

"Oh, this is a nasty one, daddy." So I said,
"Well, what did he look like?"

"Oh, I didn't _see_ him", he said. "I _heard_ him.
He was talking to another ghost and he was nasty
too!" Nothing would persuade this child that
there wasn't one.

<div style="text-align:right">(Narrative 102: Cecily)</div>

The third story is rather more typical in that, though it seems to speak

of a unique occasion, it develops the storyline by means of overlays such

as Grimes describes and in each plane of narrative the storyteller spends

proportionally more time on dates, days and circumstances than on the

central matter of whether the doomed man had a premonition of his death.

3. 	Well, I've just lost a very close friend, well,
I'm just - It was _August_, and to me, what made me think
this, not at the moment but after he died, I always - .
It's two years last July, last _June_ when I went on
holiday on my own and that's how I come to meet this
chap. He shared the same seat with me and he was -
he lived Stockport way. But I went away with him
the year after and last year, and last Easter his
son asked me over to Reading with his Dad. He was
a very _nice_ chap, he was very much _with_ the church.
We had quite a lot in common. You see, I've been a
widow twenty-two years, but he'd only been a widower
ten years, and he used to phone me pretty often,
like - and I phoned him. I didn't see much of him
but I'd the company of a holiday with him, you see,
because I'd gone on my own that year and he shared
the same seat. That's how I come to meet him, and
he said some ... I was speaking to him on the phone,
said something on the phone, and when he was going
off he used to always say, "Well, cheerio, Kathleen",
you see, and this here time he said ... Mind you, I
knew he had a bad heart. He had angina. He said,
"Well, I'll see you sometime", and he seemed to
hesitate. But I didn't think anything of it at the

time, but he never - I never <u>seen</u> him again. I'd
been, he'd come for his holidays in the - we were
at the last week of May, and a week <u>after</u> I went
with him on an outing with the brother from church,
and he asked me back. It was about eight o'clock
and he asked me back for a cup of tea, because he
dropped us off near his house, and I never seen him
again after that, and sixteenth of August he died,
and he'd been.... He died on the Wed... on the
<u>Saturday</u>, and I didn't know till Monday - till his
son.... They knocked his son up at Reading, the
Police had, they'd phoned from there, and they'd
come over, and of course he rang to tell me, which
was a terrible <u>shock</u> to me. I'd only spoken to him
on the Thursday. But when it came back to me after
I'd got over it a bit - when he said that, "I'll see
you <u>sometime</u>" - I was wondering if he had had a
premonition then - whether he knew something was
going to happen.

<div align="right">(Narrative 30: Kathleen)</div>

The last two stories are entirely typical memorates because (1) they

refer to a common experience (the text of Carrie's story makes this

clear and Violet's story is chained on to her other story about selling

her brother's bungalow, which makes its context plain); (2) they are

told in circular fashion; and (3) they concentrate more on circumstance

than event.

4.   Well, it's funny. Do you know, if anyone's going to
be ill in my family, my mother always comes to me.
Yes. I always know, my mother comes to me. You
know, when our Walter used to be ill, I'd get on the
phone and I'd say, "Hello, Nellie, how are you?" and
she says, "I'm alright, but Walter's in bed," and
before I had my back done, like before I fell in the
cemetery, in the night my mother come to me and she
says, "You can't sleep", or something like that.
She's stood at the side of the bed, and I've not
been well since. Isn't it strange how she comes
<u>to</u> me every time? and she's stood at the side of the
bed and then it's gone.

<div align="right">(Narrative 26: Carrie)</div>

5.   It's funny you should say this, because this brother
that was ill, that died suddenly - he'd lost his
wife at the Christmas, and he died in the March, and
he was going on a cruise - the doctor told him to go
on a cruise. He'd sold his business in Italy, and
on the Monday he was sailing - he was going for a
fortnight - I said to Howard, "Suppose Jim <u>dies</u> while
he's on that cruise. What will they <u>do</u> with him?"
So he said, "Well, they'll throw him over into the
sea, you know". "Well!" I said. "They can't do
<u>that</u>!" He said, "He's going for a <u>holiday</u>!" But
he got back from the cruise, but the night he got
back from the cruise they found him dead in bed the
next morning. Now I <u>had</u> that feeling on that Monday
morning when he was going on the cruise. But he had
<u>got</u> on the cruise and come <u>back</u>, but he died the very
night he arrived back. Whether that was some sort of
premonition I wouldn't know. Of course, I never saw
him again and it was his bungalow we sold.

<div align="center">(Narrative 31: Violet)</div>

An inexperienced observer might see the first two narratives as
'better' stories, that is, more skilfully told. Certainly they transcribe
better. They are more akin to literary narrative, look better written
down, seem relevant and entertaining even when deprived of all their
non-verbal qualities. In actual telling, however, they seem slighter,
less serious than the other stories. One would have greater difficulty
in extracting from the first two narratives the belief system of the
narrators or in using them to discuss the supernatural. After such a
story, a hearer who wanted to discuss the possibility of 'evil spirits'
or 'ghosts' would have to reorientate the conversation with a phrase such
as, "But seriously, though". Significantly, such narratives are a minority
in the memorate corpus. Only eight out of the total of 111 memorates
assume this particular form. The majority of the memorates exhibit at
least two of the three typical features, and just over a third, like
stories (d) and (e) above, show all three characteristics: that is, non-
linear plot development, concentration on context and circumstance, and
the use of story to illustrate the particular within the general.

7.3   <u>Exposition and narration: form and function</u>

If we consider a well-known model of both explanatory and
narrative discourse it may be helpful here in showing the unique func-
tional character of memorate. A particularly useful model in this respect
is Longacre's, for it provides valuable guides to both form and function
in discourse, which highlight crucial characteristics of the present
corpus of memorates. This model distinguishes four primary modes whose
characteristics may be charted at both deep and surface levels; that is,
expositions, narratives, procedures and hortations. Crudely put, in
narrative mode one tells other people about things that have happened;
in expository mode one explains things to them; in procedural mode one
tells them how to do things; and in hortatory mode one tells them what
things they ought to be doing. Longacre points out that in many cases a
discourse may function in one mode at deep level and in another at surface
level, and that there are areas in which two modes may merge or be em-
bedded within each other. This is particularly true of narrative and
exposition: an obvious example is the parable, which is expository at
deep level but which is realised at surface level as narrative. One may
perhaps also see memorate as a type of discourse that has the capacity
for thus combining features of narrative and exposition.

This becomes clearer if one considers his discussion of the features
of the two modes. The table below charts these features by combining two
of Longacre's tables into one;[47] thus the features of both discourse
modes at surface and deep level may be seen in a single diagram.

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47   That is, those on p. 200 and p. 202.

FEATURES OF DISCOURSE MODES

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                        |
        ┌───────────────────────────────┐
        |                               |
    DEEP LEVEL                      SURFACE LEVEL
        |                               |
    ┌───────┐                   ┌───────────┐
    |       |                   |           |
NARRATIVE  EXPOSITORY       NARRATIVE    EXPOSITORY
```

3rd person 1st	no necessary person reference	3rd/1st person pronouns	3rd person pronouns
agent oriented	subject matter oriented	agent/experiencer as subject	equative and descriptive clauses
in accomplished time	time not focal	past tense/ historic present	various tenses
chronological linkage	logical linkage	head-head and tail-head linkage	linkage by sentence-topic and parallelism

If one compares the features exhibited by the memorates studied here, several interesting observations emerge.

1. At deep level:

(a) memorates are often subject-matter orientated, as the discussion of the 'reportability' criterion has shown; and (b) they often prefer logical to chronological linkages, as the discussion of time and sequence has shown. In two important respects therefore, at deep level, memorates have, or may have, characteristics of expository discourse. Equally well, they also have characteristics of narrative:(i) they are first person discourses; (ii) which take place in accomplished time; (iii) and which are as equally agent-oriented as geared to the exposition of a subject-matter.

2.   At surface level, too, many memorates show characteristics of the

expository mode, for example:

(a)   equative and descriptive clauses; and (b) linkage by sentence-

topic and parallelism.   These characteristics are particularly apparent

in the cyclic narratives discussed above in Section 5.   Memorates also

customarily employ a variety of tenses, as will be shown in Section 3,

Chapter 11 below.   All the other surface features are narrative ones.

Thus features of both exposition and narrative play a part in the surface

form of memorates.

3.   Memorates are for the most part embedded in a form of discourse that

is unequivocally expository - the pre-narrative introductory material and

the post-narrative remarks.   Continuative narratives, which have discus-

sion as a stage of their development, have exposition as an integral part

of their structure.   Thus, in telling memorates, narrators often con-

sciously change from one mode to another, exposition being an equal part-

ner with narration in the performance of a memorate.

If we now summarise the features which are typical of memorate (that

is: cyclical or continuative structures, concentration on scene-setting,

and the presentation of the story as a single example of a common ex-

perience), we may see that these are the type of features we might logically

expect from a discourse mode that is both narrative and exposition.   All

the distinctive features that distinguish memorates from "action stories"

such as Labov's theory examines are typical of the expository mode as

Longacre describes it.   We may therefore suppose that these features

accrue because memorates, unlike action stories, typically function at

some level or another as explanations.

Thus we arrive at the unique functional and structural character of memorate. While seeking, as narratives always do, to be entertaining and significant, they also in part or whole aim to explain or illustrate a general truth. It is in this synthesis of narrative and exposition, the particular and the general, entertainment and truth that the fundamental character of memorate as a genre lies.

8. Structure and function in memorates

By working critically through a well-known and respected model of personal experience stories, it has been possible to discover some of the main structural and functional characteristics of memorates. This section aims, by way of concluding the discussions of this chapter, to summarise these findings.

8.1 Structure

On the one hand, Labov and Waletsky's model has been found to be more applicable to a corpus of action-narratives than to a problem-solving expository genre such as memorate: on the other, it must be noted that it still gives a basic vocabulary for talking about narrative structure, and, if the prescriptive elements of the theory are omitted, a very usable descriptive model is left. Those parts of the theory that have been found to be particularly inapplicable to memorate are: (1) the concept of narrative as a linear outline in which sequences of clauses are matched to sequences of events; (2) the view of narrative as action-description; and (3) the criterion that only uncommon events are reportable as narrative. The fact that memorates fail to fit the Labovian model in these three vital ways indicates much about their function.

The descriptive part of the Labovian model isolates six basic elements of the structure of personal experience narratives which provide a very useful basis for a discussion of characteristic memorate form. These elements are:

    (1) abstract

    (2) orientation

    (3) complication

    (4) evaluation

    (5) resolution

    (6) coda

With some provisos, these terms may be kept for describing the constituent parts of memorates.

(a) The first and most important proviso is that in memorates these elements may occur more than once and in a different order than Labov suggests. Whereas Labov sees narratives as working through chronologically from abstract to coda, a teller of memorates may use these elements of structure in a fluid and idiosyncratic way which disregards chronology.

(b) Labov sees elements 3, 4 and 5 as mandatory, the others as optional. There are reasons to query this assertion in its application to narrative in general as well as memorate in particular. It has already been noted (Section 6 above) that orientation is apparently a mandatory element of the present corpus. There are reasons to think that it may also be a much more significant element in all types of personal story than Labov recognises. If, for example, his own corpus of narrative is analysed, it may be seen that only four stories neglect to include an orientation section and that these four are, without doubt, the least satisfactory narratives in the corpus. Three are children's stories of vicarious experience, the other the barest of summaries. All present special problems for Labov's

analysis. Part of the reason they fail to satisfy is their lack of rootedness in place and time. In a natural discourse a storyteller would not get away with such a narrative. (S)he would be pressed to supply the missing details with irritable questions such as, "Wait a minute! Where was this? When did this happen? Who's all this about?" Real audiences (as opposed to interviewers) demand orientation. Even action stories, though they may not exhibit such extensive settings of scene as memorates, need to be set in context and authenticated by being referred to specific times, places and people. Orientation should certainly be added to the list of mandatory elements in the structure of memorate, and perhaps its position should be reconsidered for personal experience stories in general.

Resolution also calls for re-examination as a mandatory element of narrative. Labov sees the resolution stage of narrative as the climax or dénouement of the events of the complication. There are several diffi-culties here. First of all the concept is an á priori one based on the assumption that narrative must not be open-ended but should be somehow closed off either by the action's being resolved, or by its having some end result. Like the concept of narrative as a linear outline, this assumption is a cultural one: such patterns of action are not a universal aspect of narrative, merely a Western one.

Secondly, Labov defines resolution inadequately and it is difficult in practice to separate it from the complication. Whereas orientation and complication are obviously separable by their subject matter, complication and resolution are only separable (according to Labov's criterion) by the structural intrusion of an "evaluation section" into the ongoing action. The evaluation section, however, is never independently defined and is usually loosely assumed to be any evaluation situated between complication and resolution - a neatly circular argument. Moreover, "evaluation" (that is, any flashback, appeal to the audience, ejaculation, subjectivity or

dialogue which adds "point" to the story) is in practice used by narrators at any place in the narrative and in particular it may occur several times throughout the complication. It seems therefore extremely difficult to use Labov's own criterion to isolate a resolution from the preceding complication.

Thirdly, even when Labov's definitional criterion is interpreted generously, many narratives fail to exhibit a resolution stage. If one puts aside the theoretical difficulties and decides to define as resolution any final or climactic happening separated from the rest of the action by even the most minimal evaluative phrase (such as "D'you know?" or "All of a sudden"), even so, many oral narratives will fail to exhibit the feature but will remain obstinately open-ended, untidy and unresolved. Of the present memorate corpus, for example, only eighty-one showed resolution as an element of structure even when it was so widely defined. Once again, of course, this points to significant functional differences between memorates and the corpus of action stories Labov and Waletsky analysed, but nevertheless, it also shows that resolution is, maybe, a less significant aspect of narratives in general than Labov supposed and that it should not be considered a mandatory element of structure.

The status of the three central structural elements therefore ought to be redefined. It seems more appropriate in general to regard orientation and complication, rather than complication and resolution as mandatory. Certainly, this is true for the structure of memorates as represented by the present corpus. It is suggested therefore that it is orientation, complication and evaluation that are essential to memorate structure, and that resolution is optional as other elements are.

(c) It has been found more appropriate to discard Labov's term for his sixth element - coda - and replace it with Longacre's more general functional term, closure.
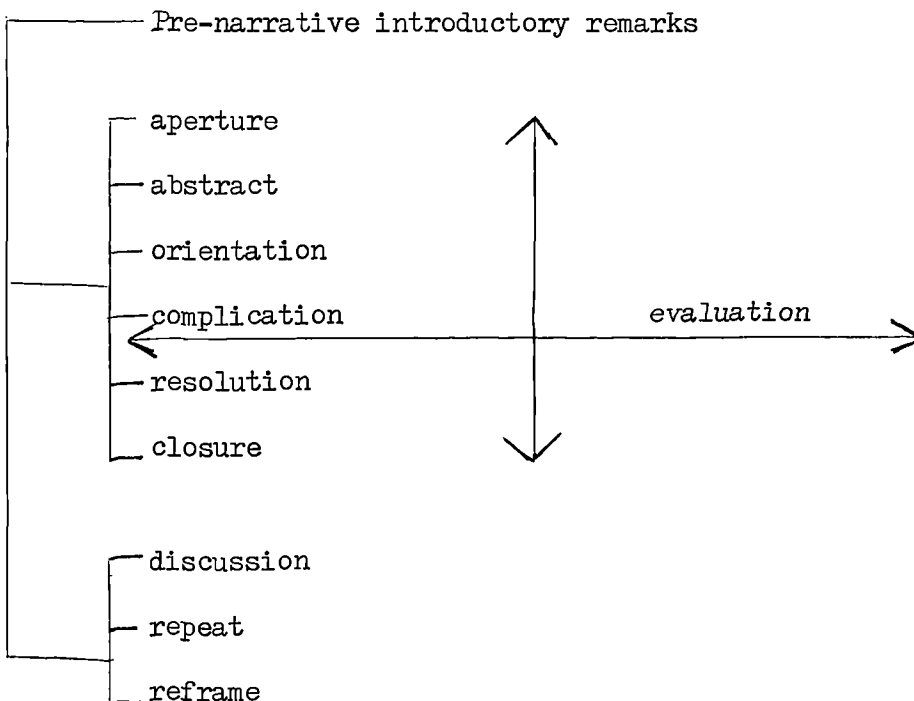
(d) The discussions of this chapter have shown that some additions also need to be made to the list of structural elements in order to cover all the features observed in the present corpus of memorates:

(i) Memorates typically grow out of or succeed generalised philosophical speculation or vague appeals to experience. These have been referred to previously in this study as "pre-narrative introductory remarks".

(ii) These remarks are customarily followed by a phrase which signals the narrator's intention to move from the general to the particular and begin narrating. Following Longacre these have been termed "apertures".

(iii) Continuative narratives customarily append a _discussion_, _repeat_ or _reframe_ to the main body of the narrative. These should be considered an integral part of the memorate.

The basic structure characteristic of memorates then is that the narrator combines a selection of the following elements into a flexible structure held together by its own internal logic:

Pre-narrative introductory remarks

- aperture
- abstract
- orientation
- complication   evaluation
- resolution
- closure

- discussion
- repeat
- reframe

Evaluation, orientation and complication are essential, though it is very uncommon for a storyteller not also to include aperture and closure, for these signal the boundaries between narrative and the surrounding conversation.

8.2   Function

Labov and Waletsky's model, which has been found to apply most readily to personal stories as action narratives, has revealed those essentials in which memorate differs from this more commonly studied type of narrative. These characteristics reflect, and reflect upon, the function of the narratives. In many ways they are essentially stories which explain or illustrate general truths, beliefs or attitudes, stories through which human problems and philosophical queries may be canvassed. Throughout the telling, the narrator seeks not only to explain the general truth but to guard it and to protect her particular definition of the experience, steering her audience to share her interpretation. The characteristic structures reveal these preoccupations. Typically memorates are embedded in explanatory discourse and other appeals to experience in which the universality of the experience is directly illustrated and they themselves show characteristics of expository discourse at both deep and surface levels. These are stories, too, which not only explain beliefs but offer the experiences on which belief is based for co-operative discussion. Their collaborative character is shown by the dominance of orienting information, by their neglect of the central experience and concentration on circumstance, by the narrator's characteristically providing beginning and end markers that refer to reasons for belief. The underlying dialogue between speaker and hearer is, "This is common in my life. Is it in yours?" "If it is common then it must be real and true, mustn't it?"

Other structural characteristics arise from the narrator's need to defend the truth of her experience. This may be one of the reasons for the abandonment of the outline structure, for cyclical and continuative structures allow the narrator to foreground not only those aspects of the experience that she finds significant but also those that she thinks will be most persuasive. These structures also keep her in control of the discourse in that she need not relinquish the conversational initiative until she is satisfied by the hearer's response that she has sufficiently explained her position.

A narrator of a memorate thus gains for herself (and to a lesser extent for her listener) some critical psychological benefits. Memorates and the telling of memorates are:

(1) a way of remembering significant experiences. In this sense, rather than being a report of a remembered experience, the story is a _way of remembering_ the experience itself - a mnemonic.

(2) Memorates examine theoretical problems by resorting to personal illustration. They are thus a way of thinking.

(3) When they are told, such narratives thus often provide evidence or propaganda for a particular point of view. They thus help form a consensus and simultaneously afford the narrator the comfort of sharing in that consensus.

(4) Through the telling of memorates and the discussions they engender, personal experience is given social shape. This sort of story-telling provides a forum for the discussion of a private experience, its interpretation and sanctioning.

Finally, a personal experience made public by being turned into a memorate is also in a sense 'sanctified' - it becomes a myth. In Abrahams' words:

> ... inverting or stylizing ... will transform the
> ordinary event into something both more and less
> real than its everyday counterpart. 48

By 'mythologising' an important personal experience, a narrator endows

it with greater value and prestige. Yet conversely (but not contra-

dictorily) the recasting of experience into narrative form simultaneously

takes the mystery out of highly charged emotional experiences. In this

it provides a spiritual release similar to that provided by myth:

> It brings down a vague but great apprehension to
> the compass of a trivial domestic reality. 49

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48 Abrahams (1977), p. 89.

49 Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology", Magic, Science Religion and other essays (Bristol, 1982), p. 137.

CHAPTER 11

Telling a Story: Pattern, Shape
    and Performative Style

1.1   Four typical memorates

Chapter Ten examined some of the basic patterns into which the narrator of a memorate of the supernatural shapes her experience, and sought to discover through these patterns some functions of the genre. This chapter examines the narratives in greater depth to try to discover the linguistic resources a storyteller calls upon when she takes the stage and performs for an audience. What is particularly interesting is that the present corpus consists of stories told by unprofessional, relatively unskilled narrators. Most other studies of narrative style[1] have been of storytellers admired in their community as skilled raconteurs. Through studies such as these folklorists have been able to discover the verbal artistry that goes into the telling of oral narrative. But these raconteurs are in their way great artists, and though they can show us what at best can be made of the linguistic resources at a community's disposal, they do not show us what is usually made of these resources. On the other hand a corpus of stories told by ordinary people, relatively unskilled as narrators, shows us the foundation blocks of narrative, the basic techniques our culture provides.

At a casual glance the memorates seem shapeless and banal enough. As the selections below demonstrate, they unfold the story in an apparently haphazard way, jumping tenses, swapping time reference back and forth, rambling on in long co-ordinate sentences, liberally sprinkled with the "I says to him, I says" sort of dialogue that is the epitome of the stand-up comedian's stereotyped view of women's talk. How far this haphazardness is apparent rather than real, it is the aim of the following analysis to discover.

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1   See Dorson (1972).

The four narratives below, which will be used to initiate discussion, are typical of the corpus as a whole. Two have been referred to before: they are narratives told by Rose, one of the most forthcoming of the informants. The other two have not been discussed earlier and were contributed by women whose conversation, on the whole, did not contain large proportions of narrative. The four stories thus represent a good cross section of narrative style.

A. When I was 17, I went to a person called Elsie Sylvia. She had an office at All Saints, Manchester - All Saints as it used to be not as it is now - and I was having a love affair with a boy who was shorter than myself and I hated it and yet I was keen on him you see and she said two things to me and I've never forgotten them.

She said, "That's just nature's way of levelling things up. If all the tall married the tall and all the short married the short, what a funny world it would be," you see. That passed on and then before I came out she said, "Watch your legs." I said, "I've got wonderful legs. Although I say it, lovely legs."

But, blow me down! It's come to pass, the leg part anyhow. [G.B. They've given you trouble since?] Well, since I had this heart attack. Yes, it's left my legs disturbed and all sorts of funny - funny feet and - . I've always remembered those two things.

But I mean gypsies coming to the door and that sort of thing I just hoo-ha them and keep them out of the way.

(Narrative 32: Dorothy)

B. [G.B. Have you ever had your fortune told?] Yes, It's not made any great impression and we once had - she's a friend of my parents actually - who used to read the cards. [G.B. Was that Tarot cards or?] No, just ordinary playing cards. It's absolutely horrible actually and it was only after it happened that it occurred to me, and she told me that something was going to happen to a male, young, dark and so on, and we just flicked it off - well, I did anyway, it was mine she was reading. Never thought another thing about it until it happened, and my sister who lived in Bristol at the time had one boy who was absolutely marvellous. Anyway, we all think our family are marvellous. He was sweet and kind and clever and he was at Clifton College and during the holidays he'd had a pain in his thigh which he said he'd pulled a muscle in swimming but I don't know whether she did anything about it while he was at

home. When he went back to school he'd either been
playing rugby or something and he'd just been absolutely
terrible, so he went to the matron who must have been
very alert and called in the doctor, who was very young,
he was at Clifton College, and pushed him off to Bristol
Hospital and he had a, I've forgotten, an osteogenic
sarcoma in his leg and within six months it had spread
right through his body. He died after seven months.

Isn't that dreadful? And that's the only thing. I'm
quite sure that in my own mind there was no connection
whatsoever, it was just coincidence. I don't believe
for one minute, and I'd completely forgotten it until
it happened.

Oh, it was terrible! I don't think any member of the
family got over it, certainly not them. I was with them
for the last couple of months. My brother-in-law was a
dentist and the surgery was in the house and you know
what it's like when there's all that going on all the
time, and I was there when he died, and it's something
I shall never forget as long as I live. It's bad enough
losing them, but to lose them in such agony and pain it
was absolutely dreadful.

So - , and I still don't connect it with the cards. It
was just a coincidence.

(Narrative 51: Clara)

C/D.   Oh, I have my little visions. [G.B. What else do you
          see?]

Oh, all sorts of things. It was - . Was it three years
last November - that's right - or two years? - no, three
years - we were in the kitchen washing up, my husband
and myself, you see, and we've a window there where the
sink is and a window there [demonstrates] so you sort
of go round and the back door's here, and I said, "Ooh!"
and it's dark you know. It's November, it's dark.

He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I've just seen
somebody standing in that corner!" and he looked at me
and   said, "Oh God! There you go again," [laughs]
you see, so I said, 'OK, then!"

Sixth November it was. Comes the Tuesday, the following
Tuesday, nothing happens, comes the Tuesday, the follow-
ing Tuesday, and I've been out shopping.

I come back, turn into the top of the road. What greets
me? Three flipping police cars with their lights going
round, you know, and a car all smashed up on the side
and my son's truck which was parked outside bumped for-
ward into the lamp, the lamp down on top of it, and I
said to John, "What's happened?" and he said, "Oh, you'll
find out in a moment", and the bell went on the door and
I opened the door - Guess to what! - The man in blue! A
policeman! The same geezer that I'd seen in the corner -!
I'd seen him - the man in blue garb.

So now - so now I'm a great believer in the super-
natural. Yes, I am, and there are more things in
heaven and earth than we dream about. 2

[G.B. What else have you seen?]

Oh, lots of things. When I was much younger than I
am now - always used to get a warning. Anything
going to happen there'd be someone standing - I'd
waken up and there'd be a figure at the bottom of my
bed.

I'll tell you another peculiar thing. Aunty Ethel when
she died, she went to stay with her son for the last
few months and we went up on the Saturday, in - this
is January '71 - and, poor thing, Harold came to collect
us from the station at Wolverhampton and took us to
Walsall and he said - . I said, "How's Aunty Ethel?"
He said, "Oh," he said, "she's not so good, Rose." He
said, "We think she's sort of gone in a coma," so I
said, "Is she?" He said, "Oh, yes." Anyway, we got
home. I went up to see her, and she was lay in bed
this way, and there's one window there, so that was
the only source of light apart from the door and she's
lying with her face turned to the light. I went up
and looked at her and she sort of wasn't saying any-
thing. She laid there so peacefully, half gazing at
the light. So whether there was any sight in the eye
or not, I don't know.

Anyway, "I can't do with this," I said. Oh, God! I'd
been the week before and done all the cleaning up and
taken the Christmas decorations and everything down
for them because they'd got no time to do anything,
and I come again to sort of tidy up for Edna and Harold,
that's son and daughter-in-law. "I know what I'll do,
I'll take Patch, that's the dog, or is it Butch? I'll
take her out for a walk. We'll go out for a walk. I'll
go upstairs and spend a penny."

So, you go up the stairs like this, you see, and there's
the landing. Now that's the bathroom and toilet, that
was Aunty Ethel's bedroom and that was Harold's bedroom,
and that was the spare bedroom.

So me, so me, I'm not having the door shut, am I? I'm
having the door open. So I'm standing up like this
doing a wee, you see [laughs] and my cloaked figure went
by. Well! I just literally froze. I said, "It's ages
and ages since I saw that!" [G.B. - a particular thing
that you regularly saw?] Yes, yeah. And I just looked,
"My God! The Angel of Death, it had to be!" So I went
down. "Come on, dog, let's go for a walk."

I was right, you know. That one never came downstairs.
John said to me at dinner time, "What's the matter?"
I said, "Don't worry, it'll keep. It'll keep." Some-
times they are very frightening, other times - no, it's
not.

(Narratives 29 and 36: Rose)

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2   Cf. Narrative 3, Chapter 8, section 3.5, above.

These stories contain all the features which those people who insist on "correct" usage most criticise in women's storytelling style.

The following paragraphs (sections 1.2 to 1.4) will examine these "faults" from the perspective of an imaginary critic, one accustomed to the literary language and impatient of what (s)he considers to be improper, idiomatic or modern usage. The rest of the chapter will then seek to put these features of the women's narrating style into perspective as performative options open to the oral storyteller, and to show how, in this context, they are correct, useful, and even poetic.

1.2

Most noticeable in transcription is the unstructured arrangement of the clauses. Dorothy's narrative, for example, after the first sentence of two clauses ordered in a conventional independent-subordinate relationship, then proceeds with nine clauses all but one of which are loosely related by parataxis or syntactic co-ordination in one long compound sentence:

1. She had an office at All Saints, Manchester -
2. All Saints as it used to be
3. Not as it is now
4. and I was having a love affair with a boy
5. who was shorter than myself
6. and I hated it
7. and yet I was keen on him, you see
8. and she said two things to me
9. and I've never forgotten them.

Clara's narrative likewise contains extremely long sentences that adhere by a loose co-ordination or are linked by what seems to be, by formal criteria, a rather strange syntax. For example, the third clause-group is:

1. It's absolutely horrible actually

2. and it was only

3. after it happened

4. that it occurred to me

5. and she told me

6. something was going to happen to a male, young, dark and so on

7. and we just flicked it off

8. well, I did anyway -

9. it was mine she was reading

The odd linkage is even more apparent in two clause groups later in the narrative:

(a) 1. He was sweet and kind and clever

2. and he was at Clifton College

3. and during the holidays he'd had a pain in his thigh

4. which he said

5. he'd pulled a muscle in swimming

6. but I don't know

7. whether she did anything about it

8. while he was at home.

(b) 1. When he went back to school

2. he'd either been playing rugby or something

3. and he'd just been absolutely terrible

4. so he went to the matron

5. who must have been very alert

6. and called in the doctor

7. who was very young

8. he was at Clifton College

9. and pushed him off to Bristol hospital

10. and he had

[11. I've forgotten] an osteogenic sarcoma in his leg

12. and within six months it had spread right through his body.

This is very unsophisticated, almost childlike, sentence construction. In these thirty-eight clauses only ten are marked for subordination, and only four are independent clauses (six are paratactic, fifteen are marked with and, one marked with but, and the remainder are unmarked). The subordination markers show mostly simple time and person relationships (after, while, when, who) and, with one exception, no more sophisticated relationships, neither cause/effect, nor reason/result, nor condition/concession. Even the simple which is misused or miscoded,

> ... and during the holidays he'd a pain in his thigh
> which he said he'd pulled a muscle in swimming.

Thus the relationship of one clause to another seems almost entirely contingent. Clauses are grouped together at will, it seems, and the construction leaves the hearer to guess the causal and other relationships between the parts.

This sort of simple juxtaposition and chaining is typical of the corpus as a whole; it is not merely the personal style of the four speakers whose stories are transcribed. Ten narratives taken at random from the corpus (the first and every tenth one) contained between them 418 clauses; of these only thirty-six are marked for subordination, whereas 119 are simply joined to the previous clause by and. These groups of clauses linked by and have on average eight clauses per sentence. The rambling multiple-clause episodic sentence, in which the relationship of parts to each other and the whole has to be constructed by the hearer, seems to be a feature common to the women's narrative style.

1.3   Tense

Whereas our critic would expect the narrator to keep to the past, or an alternation of past and present historic tenses, and to unfold the story in a logical temporal order, the women often do neither. Of the 170 verbs in the four stories above[3] ninety-nine are in either simple past or present tenses, as one would expect, but twenty-six have more complex verbs (past perfectives and progressives), and forty-five are in the present tense. Rose's second narrative, for example, begins conventionally enough in the simple past. When she starts to describe the dying woman, she slips into the past *progressive*, concludes, "So whether there <u>was</u> any sight in the eye, I <u>don't</u> know" [my emphasis], then goes into a rambling flashback, couched in the past perfective, and then to an <u>orientation</u> section in the universal present and simple past. Before returning to the story climax, Rose puts in a bit of rhetorical description in the present ·progressive. This section of the narrative is transcribed below, the simple past sentences outlined for emphasis:

Anyway, we, we got home and went up to see her

and she was lay in bed this way and there's one window there.

So that was the only source of light apart from the door

and she's lying with her face turned to the light

so whether there was any sight in the eye or not

I don't know

Anyway, "I can't do with this," I said.

Oh, God! I'd been the week before and done all the cleaning

up and taken the Christmas decorations down and everything

for them because they'd got no time to do anything

and I come again to sort of tidy up for Edna and Harold

---

3   Excluding all quoted speech which might give an artificially high
incidence of present tenses.

that's the son and daughter-in-law

"I know what I'll do. I'll take Patch, that's the dog - or is it

Butch? I'll take her out for a walk. We'll go for a walk.

I'll go upstairs and spend a penny."

So you go up the stairs like this, you see, and there's the

landing.

Now that's the bathroom and toilet

That was Aunty Ethel's bedroom and that was Harold's bedroom
and that was the spare bedroom.

So me, I'm not having the door shut, am I?

I'm having the door open. So, I'm standing up like this doing

a wee, you see,

and my cloaked figure went past.

A tense-use the critic would find even more disturbing is exhibited
at the start of Clara's narrative:

(Past)   we once had a -

(Present) she's a friend of my parents actually -

(Past)   who used to read the cards.

(Present) It's absolutely horrible actually,

(Past)   and it was only after it happened....

Clara cannot settle to fixing her narrative in the past, the friend
is a friend of the parents and the past event is horrible.

Likewise, this apparent confusion in the report of the past and
present fact is shown in narrative (C) where Rose abandons the past to
describe her home as it is:

We were in the kitchen washing up, and we've a
window there where the sink is.

In these examples the variety of tenses is accompanied by a lack of straightforwardness in the unfolding of the story, so that present, past and far past are mixed together. Our critic would feel that sheer incompetence lies at the root of such wilful disregard of narrative conventions.

1.4   Dialogue

Again, the old-fashioned critic accustomed to written narrative might well complain of the way dialogue is used in these stories. Only in (A) is it at all naturalistic. In narrative (C) it is used where a direct statement allied to a description would perhaps do better:

> I said, "Ooh!" and it's <u>dark</u> you know. It's November
> and it's dark.
>
> He said, "What's the matter?"
>
> I said, 'I've just seen somebody <u>standing in that</u>
> <u>corner!</u>" and he looked at me,
>
> and he said, "Oh, God! There you go again!" you
> see, so I said, "OK, then!"

Again, in narrative (D), Rose prefers a banal dialogue to a direct statement of fact:

> I said, "How's Aunty Ethel?"
> He said, "Oh," he said, "she's not so good, Rose."
> He said, "We think she's sort of gone into a coma."
> So I said, "Is she?"
> He said, "Oh yes."

The critic would point out the seeming pointlessness of some of this dialogue and the unsubtlety of the "I said/he said" alternation. Elsewhere (s)he might complain that private thoughts are reported unnaturalistically as spoken conversation ("I said, 'It's ages and ages since I saw that!'").

The critic might feel that the storyteller has put a bit of dialogue in because she feels that that is the convention, but, unskilful and ignorant, she has put it in at random and unconvincingly. Like the long multiple-clause sentence, this sort of dialogue and pseudo-dialogue is not merely an idiosyncrasy of the four narratives above, but is a regular feature throughout the corpus. Only twenty-five of the corpus of 111 narratives keep to a purely subjective account; in the other eighty-six dialogue is used very similarly to the way it is used by Dorothy and Rose.

Three dominant features, then, mark the telling of the memorate corpus: long sentences, the clauses juxtaposed or loosely chained by and; tense and time switching; dialogue for its own sake. Each of these would be considered a serious fault by our critic and would certainly mar a written narrative if allowed to appear in one. In the case of these memorates, however, each is essential to the way the story is told - structuring, pacing and adding rhetorical power. In their own way, these features correspond to the devices of written narrative and poetic art, and to stylistic features typical of traditional verbal art - to the displaced syntax of poetry, for example, to the formulae and repetitions of traditional narratives and ballads,   to development through scenic episodes allied to dialogue and   linking of phrase and sentence by parallelism, balancing and opposition.[4] The formulaic style of the "art" narrators is not far removed from that of these naive oral storytellers.

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4   For representative discussions of these themes, see: Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Mass./London, 1960); Okpure O. Obuke, "The Aesthetics of African Oral Narrative Performance", in Bengt R. Jonsson (ed.), ARV: Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore, 1981, vol. 37, pp. 157-164; Roger de V. Renwick, English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning (London, 1980); W. Edson Richmond, "Narrative Folk Poetry", in Richard M. Dorson (ed.), Folklore and Folklife (Chicago, 1972), pp. 85-98; Robert Scholes, Semiotics and Interpretation (New Haven/London, 1982), pp. 37-57.

This chapter aims to analyse the effect of each feature and show
how, in the context of speech, they enrich, not mar, the narrative
experience.

2. Clause and Sentence: But and And

2.1 Blocking-in narrative units

On closer analysis, the grouping of clauses together by means
of parataxis or the word and is not random as prejudice might suggest.
In narrative (A) above, for example, the and-linked sentences comprise
the orientation section and serve simultaneously to block the orientation
together and to block it off from the complication (which uses sentences
of normal length and construction). Similarly in narrative (B) the and-
linked clause groups distinguish three main sections of narrative. The
first two sets comprise an abstract; the third set (from "he was sweet
and kind and clever") form the orientation; the fourth set (from "when
he went back to school") a complication; and the fifth set (from "My
brother-in-law was a dentist") makes a reframe which continues the narra-
tive after its first end-boundary.

In Clara's narrative, too, the long sentences are not chance formula-
tions but structured ones, grouping together a set of circumstances and
events that logically adhere together. Similarly in Rose's narrative (C),
the brief orientation is blocked in by a set of and-linked clauses. The
section leading to the climax also has this structure:

> Three flipping police cars with their lights going
> round, you know, and a car all smashed up on the side,
> and my son's truck which was parked outside bumped

> forward into the lamp, the lamp down on top of it,
> and I said to John, "What's happened?" and he said,
> "Oh, you'll find out in a moment," and the bell went
> on the door and I opened the door.   [my emphasis]

Similarly, two briefer clause groups in Rose's narrative (D) are instrumental in setting the initial orientation, and in providing an orienting flashback later. This structuring by and-linked blocks of clauses is the pattern over the corpus as a whole. It is particularly evident in the shortest narratives. There, in every case (twelve narratives in all), the whole story is composed of a single sentence - a series of clauses linked together by and. The narrative is thus blocked off from surrounding chat, its internal adhesion signalled by its syntactical unity. In some narratives (as Clara's) each structural stage is marked by being blocked in multiple clause groups; in other narratives only one structural element, most characteristically the orientation or abstract, is thus marked as separate from the rest and cohering as a semantic complex. Inez's narrative, no. 35 (see above, chapter 8, p. 343), another of Clara's stories, no. 12 (see chapter 7, p. 299), and Phyllis's narrative, no. 62, also show this pattern.

On occasion this blocking-in is most artfully contrived. May's story, so often referred to already for its stylishness and capacity to move, employs this blocking-in technique particularly well. (This narrative is transcribed in full in chapter 10, pp.445-6 .) The technique is used to great effect to indicate the planes of the overlaying in the complication. The occurrence of and is underlined in this and following extracts to show the construction.

Plane 1	But after she died I never felt that she'd really gone. Her presence seemed to be particularly in her bedroom and it was about twelve months after until her room felt empty to me and it was very strong at times. I would go up and I used to wake up in the night and think I heard her because she slept with the door open and so did we to hear her and I was confident I'd many a time heard her cough.
Plane 2	But it was the emptiness in the room and it was quite twelve months after we returned from the second holiday after she'd died and then I reali ed the room was empty.

The and construction is not used elsewhere and thus serves to show the internal unity of these planes.

The blocking-in of narrative planes by sets of and-linked clauses is also apparent in narrative number 98 (see above, chapter 9, p. 401), where Sylvia says of her sister's death, first:

Plane 1	On the Sunday evening the specialist phoned and said that sort of the crisis was over and you know, she was, she would be on the mend and I could hear her talking to me all evening and suddenly at five to six she just said, "I'm sorry, Syl, I can't hold on any longer", and the phone went and she died at five to six.

Then immediately starts a second plane:

Plane 2	But it was as though she was actually in the room with me and said, "I'm sorry I can't hold on any more," and the strange thing is that whenever something un-pleasant's going to happen at home, I can always smell flowers when there's no flowers about.

2.2   Establishing and breaking the chain

Elsewhere the chaining of clauses into <u>and</u>-linked groups is effectively used at the climax of a narrative, either as the (a) establishment of a block, or (b) . breaking of the chain. For a narrator who automatically uses complex sentences suddenly to start talking in simple juxtaposed sentences breaks the familiar pattern, startles the hearer and focuses attention sharply on the discrepant units. Jack's narrative of a premonition (no. 141) does this. Jack's usual style is syntactically sophisticated, but when he speaks of the premonition, he changes to a much simpler style.

> When I placed the choices squarely on God's
> shoulders before, he'd not let me down <u>and</u> I
> felt he wouldn't on this occasion <u>and</u> I had a
> clear premonition of exactly what was going to
> happen <u>and</u> it happened in the way I had imagined
> it.

Even more markedly, Polly tells of the events which happened on the day of her husband's death. The story is presented in crisp dialogue between the husband and wife as they discuss first whether she must go to a coffee morning or can go for a walk in the park, then what they will have for lunch:

> "So," I said, "I tell you what, we'll have some
> mushrooms. Put them on at five minutes to one,"
> <u>and</u> he said, "Right you are."
> [The scene switches to the coffee morning.]
> At five to one I looked at the clock and said to
> the lady next door, "I hope he's put those mush-
> rooms on. They should be very, very nice you see,"
> <u>and</u> then I went back home <u>and</u> there he was on the
> floor, dead, <u>and</u> I never had any premonition of
> that!

These three concluding sentences are the only simple ones and the only ones linked together with the minimal <u>and</u> in the story. The effect of starkly simple clauses against a background of greater syntactic complexity

is to make them leap into focus for the hearer - forceful and memorable, the pillars that hold up the structure of the story and conduct its meaning.

Conversely where a speaker normally blocks in each narrative stage with and-linked sentences, there is often a break in this pattern at the climax. When telling of her neighbour's prowess at reading the tea-cups, for example, Norah in narrative number 46 tells of the prediction and its outcome in two broad blocks. When she wants to stress the outcome, however, she breaks this pattern.

> We only met him twice. You know that always stuck
> in my mind what she said. She said, "Oh! She'll
> meet somebody and she'll go just like that!"

Winifred's story, number 6, is structured much the same (see above, chapter 10, pp. 440-441 and p.448). Here the clauses are set out as in a list, link-words underlined, so that the structure is more apparent.

Aperture	I'll give you an idea.
Orientation Plane 1	Once we were in Spain on holiday to a camp for five weeks and Bill, my husband, started getting terrible headaches and we were all swimming and he got friendly with some Scottish people.
Orientation Plane 2	We all went swimming and that and Bill got one of his headaches and he couldn't see where he was going, so they helped him in and that night, I was so shocked, instead of asking God to help me, which he does do, I asked my dad and I was very close to my dad.
Complication	In my dream he came back but he didn't want to and he looked terribly unhappy.

	He didn't want to come back. He really looked weird. He was - . He didn't say anything. He was a bit cross with me _as_ I thought for bringing him back _because_ he looked very unhappy
Closure	_and_ I'd never do it again.

Once the narrative is set out like this, one clause listed below the other, one can see at a glance how the compound structure begins to break down where _orientation_ meets _complication_, eventually giving way to simple, disconnected sentences for the climax of the narrative. The return to normality is marked by the resumption of the longer sentence at the end of the _complication_ and the _and_ which introduces the _closure_. The long sentences then are not rambling. They hold together because they are chained by relevance: they are the events and circumstances the narrator sees as connected together by both story-logic and narrative stage. To hold the relevant information together in a single unit, the narrator calls on the cohesive power of the most familiar conjunction in the language. More sophisticated syntactical relationships are not needed on the surface of the narrative for at deep level the simple co-ordinate clauses are a semantic complex. The exact relationships of one clause of this complex to another need not be specified on the surface because the narrator may assume a certain level of interpretive understanding in her audience. Circumstances and events are common enough from one person's experience to another's to be presumed to be understandable according to well-known rules. These interpretive transformations are part of the linguistic competence a narrator assumes in her hearer.

In the mouth of a sophisticated narrator, chaining by relevance can be a sensitive tool. When the pattern of _and_-linked clause groups is broken or when it intrudes upon a more complex speaking style, its effect

is creative emphasis. Elsewhere its effect is structural. There is no need for an analyst to <u>discover</u> inherent structure in oral stories. The narrator herself oftentimes does this work as she tells the story, setting it into narrative blocks through the use of the most familiar conjunction in the language.

2.3   <u>But</u>

Alongside the familiar <u>and</u>, another common term has importance as a structuring device. Just as the conjunctive power of <u>and</u> is used to block items of information together, so the disjunctive power of <u>but</u> is used to mark off one block from another. Thus through the alternation of <u>but</u> and <u>and</u> the narrator paces her narrative and marks its structural stages. This can be seen most clearly in May's story (pp.445-6). The <u>orientation</u> is in two planes, the first the lengthier and more detailed of the two. The second plane begins, "But I was telling Mr. Lawley." This short plane of <u>orientation</u> is followed by the <u>complication</u> which begins, "But after she died...." Three further planes follow, each utilising <u>but</u> to signal the onset:

> "<u>But</u> it was the emptiness of the room"
> "I've never expressed it before, <u>but</u> ..."
> "<u>But</u> I couldn't express it really"

It is thus the alternation of <u>and</u> and <u>but</u> - conjunction and disjunction - that structures May's subtle story.

<u>But</u> is also used to reorientate a story when comment or description, the contextual detail so important in memorate, comes to an end. May's first <u>but</u> is used in this capacity. The <u>orientation</u> is so long and detailed that the narrative has to be refocused before the <u>complication</u> can begin. So May gives a brief summary of the orienting information introduced by <u>but</u>, which allows the topic then to develop smoothly. In

narrative number 11 (see chapter 10, p. 453), Lettice gets involved with

interpretive comment in mid-narrative, and then resumes the onward flow

of the story by calling on the disjunctive function of but, separating

the comments from the narrative and putting it, in effect, in parenthesis.

Narrative	I felt that whatever there was, ever there was father had come to meet her. Because she just sat up and she gave that smile -
Comment	Mind you, I think they do sit up before they die.
Narrative resumes	But - er - and she sort of held her arm out....

Likewise in narrative number 52, Florence is temporarily side-tracked by

details. Again she realigns herself sharply with but.

Narrative	Mind you, I went to a spiritualist once. I went with the lady next door, who lived next door to me, and my daughter that's died - she was about ten then -
Comment	Not when she died, when this happened, you see, and I went for a giggle really -
Narrative	But she said, I went into this room and she said, "Why is my leg hurting so horribly?"

But used in this way functions as a 'place-marker', alerting the

hearer to the presence of, or return to, a specific structural stage of

the narrative.

Storytellers employ a variety of means to draw attention to the onset

of significant stages of narrative. Many are the familiar and, then,

anyway, so, well, now then; others are structural devices: variation in

sentence length, repetitions, tense and person shift and those devices

which Labov calls "external evaluation",[5] all of which will be considered later in this chapter. Most characteristically, however, she will utilise the disjunctive power of the simple word <u>but</u>. Especially when stressed and with an ensuing pause plus a filler (<u>but - er</u>), <u>but</u> is the most common place marker of all. Where lexical markers are used to signify structural stage within the narrative (143 occasions), <u>but</u> is the most frequent, as the table below shows.

Table 1: Occurrence of lexical items as place-markers.

Lexical item		Number of occurrences
But	=	36
Well	=	22
And then	=	22
So	=	19
Anyway	=	18
Now	=	15
Oh!	=	9
Yes!	=	2

Just as <u>but</u> can separate out blocks of information or planes of narrative within the story as a whole, so it can disjoin narrative from the surrounding conversation and thus mark the place where narrative begins and ends. <u>But</u> is by far the most frequent initial term in any <u>aperture</u> (that is transitional phrase or clause used to initiate narrative). Sixty   out of 111 narratives have some place marker affixed to any initiating ploy. In this role <u>but</u> (especially <u>but - er</u>) is used more frequently than the more expected <u>well</u>, <u>now!</u>, <u>so you see</u>, <u>actually</u>, <u>oh!</u>, or the common (but unexpected) <u>because</u> or <u>and</u>.

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5   Labov, p. 371.

Table 2: Place markers at <u>aperture</u>

But	=	23
Well	=	11
Now!	=	9
And	=	8
So	=	3
You see	=	2
Because	=	2
Actually	=	1
Oh!	=	1
Total	=	60

Typical apertures showing the initiating <u>but</u> are:

(a) "But talking about animals having spirits"

(b) "But I'll give you an idea"

(c) "But I'll tell you something"

(d) "But I remember once particularly"

(e) "But I sometimes believe in threes"

Similarly, <u>but</u> is often used to initiate a <u>closure</u>, thus separating

story from comment:

(a) "But one or two things have happened to me that
      seemed odd."

(b) "But, that I do. If I hear of two, I'm waiting
      for the third."

(c) "But I can always remember that"

(d) "But, you know, mothers tell these tales and you're
      not very interested when you're young, you just laugh
      it off and it's only when you get older that you think,
      'Well, she was <u>right</u> about a lot of things'."

(e) "But I've never forgotten that. I thought I'd told
      you that."

(f) "But I should say it's very interesting."

Here again <u>but</u> is the most common initial word in the closure. Of fifty-

seven narratives that showed a <u>closure</u> with an initial place-marker, twenty-

six used <u>but</u> in this capacity.

Table 3: Place markers in closures

But	=	26
and	=	10
so	=	8
well	=	8
you see	=	3
anyway	=	1
yes!	=	1
		57

The most basic structuring tools of the oral narratives in this corpus appear to be the two most familiar words in the language - <u>but</u> and <u>and</u>. Together they shape the story; <u>and</u> creating blocks of information, <u>but</u> separating the blocks one from the other. Neither is used in its primary grammatical role, rather the narrator calls on their disjunctive/conjunctive force as agents either to isolate or to group sections of narrative.

2.4   <u>And</u>, <u>But</u> and narrative stage

Characteristically, not all the narrative will be told through in blocks of <u>and</u>-linked clauses. It is more common for the blocks of sentences to be a feature of only one stage, either to fill in the orientation in one rapid move or to group together the events and circumstances of the complication, or to distinguish the climax from the narrative as a whole. In the latter case, this will mark a change from the speaker's normal syntax. In every case the constantly recurring <u>and</u> gives a sort of breathless quality to the narrative that suggests either speed or excitement. The pace of the narrative is thus determined at base level by its syntax. To a degree this pacing is used to mark structural stages, but place markers are rather more frequently used for this purpose. The most common of these - <u>but</u>, <u>though</u>, <u>well</u>, <u>anyway</u>, <u>and then</u>, <u>so</u> - are

also often used. These are a sure indication of the narrator's own feel

for the structural elements of her story.

The way the simple devices work can be demonstrated by the analysis

of a single example. One of the first stories to be discussed in this

work was Agnes's story of her premonition of 'Granny's' death, number

44 (see Chapter 8, p 332). It is transcribed below, arranged so as

to reveal the structure, with interpretive notes. The transcription be-

gins with the <u>aperture</u> but omits pre-narrative introductory material.

Structural Slot	Clauses	Comment
<u>Aperture</u>	There was one time in particular There was one occasion I can remember distinctly.	
<u>Orientation</u>	It was when Granny was alive	Outer time frame

	Mind you
	     you've got to remember
	that I was very close to Granny
	  in heaps and heaps of ways
		Place marker
		Interpretive
		  comment

	and I hadn't been dreaming
	- I hadn't actually gone to
	  sleep
	I was in bed quite happy and
	  everything -
		Inner time frame

	and very, very distinctly I heard
	  Granny call me
	and it was, it only could have
	  been Granny
	because Granny used to call me
	  Nessy
	but only very occasionally.
		but here used
		grammatically not
		as place-marker

<u>Complication</u>	She was the only one
	  that ever called me 'Nessy'
	and she call - I heard her
	  calling "Ness, Nessy, Nessy!"
	and then I heard her call me
	  'Agnes'
	and she was frightened
	and she was miserable and
	  unhappy	

	and I got up, <u>sat</u> up in bed
	and really frightened
	and I was very worried
	Jack woke up
	and I told him
	and I absolutely expected the
	  next day -
	
	⎧ because you know she often -
	⎨ we had been called away many a
	    time, supposed not to be
	    going to live.
	This had been going on for years
	   and she'd always been alright
		Marker
		Interpretive
		comments/
		evaluation

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>But</u> I never heard anything	place marker realigns
<u>Closure</u>	<u>But</u> it took me over a week to convince myself	place marker
<u>Discuss</u>	<u>Well</u>, I don't know She may have been very miserable and wanted me	place marker

<u>Repeat</u>	But
	   I was quite convinced at the
	    time
	that she was dying
	and that I should hear she was
	   dead
	or something dreadful had befallen
	   her
	and it hadn't.
		place marker

So rather than seeing the long 'rambling' sentences, the 'misused' conjunctions and exclamatory interjections as faults in oral storytelling, we should see them as the basic linguistic resources at the disposal of a narrator in our culture/language area. The skilful storyteller can use these resources subtly and has a repertoire of other structuring techniques to add variety and increase the drama. At root, however, this limited range of syntactical and lexical markers is sufficient to accomplish the task of giving shape to reported happenings - a shape recognised by the audience and therefore capable of leading them through the

maze of time and circumstance. The alternation of <u>and</u> and <u>but</u> (or

other place markers), then, is the most fundamental and rudimentary "usage

convention" which allows the "underlying sequential organisation" to

"prevail"[6] and thus establishes a basic framework in which both story-

teller and hearer may operate.

The 'rambling' sentence is not a characteristic of bad story-

telling: it is purposeful, a structuring technique to be understood

not despised. At least one familiar prejudice has therefore to be

abandoned.

3. <u>Tense, Mood and Aspect in storytelling</u>

3.1   <u>The presentation of time: disorderly or orderly?</u>

Another characteristic our imaginary critic complained of was

the tense and time switching and apparently disorderly plot structure.

The main 'fault' in this respect was considered to be the narrator's

failure to maintain past orientation consistently. The variability of

tense-use and time-orientation was demonstrated in particular by analysing

narrative (D). In the central part of the story only nine out of thirty-

six clauses are in the simple past and only five in any form of past at

all. The majority of verbs are rendered in the future tense or the

present in perfective or progressive aspect. These complex present

tenses alternate with the simple past throughout this vital stretch of

narrative and represent a 'disorderly' switching back and forth of time

reference from present to past to far past, apparently at random.

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6   See above Chapter 10, footnote 27.

Once more, however, a careful analysis shows that a criticism such
as this is illfounded. In fact, tenses are used in strict, regularly
occurring patterns which shape narrative and allow the hearer to know
where (s)he is in the story. Far from being random, the tense use is
according to rules which may not be consciously recognised but nevertheless
are obeyed. Likewise, the unfolding of the story is not disorderly: the
changes in time-focus occur at regular places and have narrative function
and value. In the first place, the fundamental tense pattern is a
present-past-present scheme which has functional value and delineates
the boundaries of the story. In the second place other time and tense
switches occur at specific places and in specific directions (they are
*always within the main past-oriented section and always to past perfec-
tive or the present in various aspects*).

3.2   Tense, mood and aspect: the basic narrative frame

Earlier considerations of structure have shown that the memorates
of the corpus are characteristically embedded in generalised, theme-
relevant philosophical comments and remarks couched in present tenses or
using conditionals and continuatives. When preceding the narratives,these
remarks were considered to be pre-narrative introductory material. The
narrator customarily moves from this initial stage to narration by making
an aperture for her story. This consists of a reference to a single past
occasion of the type the pre-narrative has delineated.

Observation further shows that once the narrator has made this
aperture, every further essential clause will be realised in the simple
past or historic present. Though there may be many clauses in different
tense and aspect, these could be omitted without impairing the sense of
the story. The basic narrative thread is carried by clauses the verbs of

which are in the simple past or (more rarely) the historic present. The simple past clauses carry the story through orientation, complication and resolution. At closure customarily the tense pattern changes once again. The narrator reverts to the present tense and/or complex mood and aspect.

Though there are, of course, individual variations, this is the most common pattern of tense-use throughout the corpus. Customarily the simple past narrative core is embedded between a pre-narrative and a closure in present tense and/or complex mood and aspect. The narrative itself therefore reveals an alternation which can be expressed as:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Complex} \\ \text{Present} \end{array} \right. \longrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Simple} \\ \text{Past} \end{array} \right. \longrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Complex} \\ \text{Present} \end{array} \right.$$

This pattern can be observed quite clearly in Rose's stories (C) and (D) quoted above. In the first of these stories Rose begins in the universal present:

Oh! I have my little visions.

Except for a descriptive interlude in the present, the orientation and complication proceed in simple past and historic present. The story ends with a present tense closure:

So now! - So I'm a great believer in the supernatural. Yes, I am, and there are more things in Heaven and Earth than we dream about.

Exactly the same structure underlies the narrative that follows, though it is not so immediately recognisable.

[G.B. What else have you seen?]

Rose: Oh! lots of things. When I was much younger than I am now—always used to get a warning. Anything was going to happen there'd be someone standing - I'd waken up and there'd be a figure at the bottom of the bed.

This is the <u>pre-narrative</u>, the universal experience which is the context

of the specific occasion. This time, instead of expressing universality

through using the present tense, Rose selects modals and progressives.

The effect is the same - complexity and generality. The story aperture

follows, "I'll tell you another peculiar thing", and the story begins.

In the extract from this story quoted below, every independent clause

realised in a tense other than simple past or present historic has been

omitted so that it can be seen that the story line really is moved along

through clauses the verbs of which are in these tenses. The omitted

clauses are signified by square brackets:

> Aunty Ethel when she died, she went to stay with her
> son for the last few months and we went up on the
> Saturday, in - this is January '71 - and , poor thing,
> Harold came to collect us from the station at
> Wolverhampton and took us to Walsall and he said -,
> I said, "How's Aunty Ethel?" He said, "Oh," he said,
> "She's not so good, Rose." He said, "We think she's
> sort of gone in a coma," so I said, "Is she?" He
> said, "Oh, yes." Anyway , we got home. I went up
> to see her [   ] I went up and looked at her
> [   ] Anyway, "I can't do with
> this," I said [   ] "I know what I'll do.
> I'll take Patch [   ] I'll take her out for
> a walk. We'll go for a walk. I'll go upstairs and
> spend a penny." [   ] and my cloaked
> figure went by. well! I just literally froze! I
> said, "It's ages and ages since I saw that!" and I
> just looked! "My God! The Angel of Death. It had
> to be!" So I went down [   ] I was
> right you know. That one never came downstairs.
> John said to me at dinner time, "What's the matter?"
> I said, "Don't worry, it'll keep. It'll keep."

The omitted sections, which use a variety of other tenses, do not carry

essential information: they have another role to play which will be dis-

cussed in section 3.3 below. The narrative line is carried by the simple

past clauses only. Thus the core of the story is specific, particular

and past - in contrast to the generality of the discourse features in

which it is embedded.

The generality can be seen recurring immediately in the present tense closure which ends the story: "Sometimes they are very frightening. Other times - no, it's not." By thus returning from the individual to the general, the narrator becomes a mere speaker again and the hearer can take up the general point and follow with a discussion or another narrative. Though hearers may and do ask questions and make comments within the narrative, these are interruptions, for the occasion is in essence unique and peculiar to the narrator. A return to the general is the narrator's way of passing on the conversational baton.

The tense use in the basic narrative scheme then is:

1.	(pre-narrative)	= present tenses, perfectives, modals
2.	(aperture)	= predominantly simple past (also marked lexically)
3.	(abstract)	
4.	orientation	= simple past tenses (or sometimes historic present)
5.	complication	
6.	(resolution)	
7.	(closure)	= present tenses, perfectives, modals

In continuative narratives an eighth element is present - the discussion, reframe or repeat. Discussions keep to the tenses of closures, but repeats and reframes, because they are narrative, revert to the simple past. A glance at Chapter 10, Section 5.3, where continuative narratives are discussed will show the pattern. In Winifred's story, for example, the core of the narrative ends in the simple past.

> He was a bit cross with me as I thought, for
> bringing him back, because he looked very unhappy.

and the discussion begins in presents and conditionals:

> ... and I'd never do it again because I think
> once you go, you're rested and that, and I
> don't think - . I think, in my way, you're so
> happy you don't want to come back. That's what
> I think.

and the closure is appended after a place marker in a simple present

and perfective ("so that is the only experience I've had"). The re-

frame then starts in the simple past ("Anyway, he had to have an

operation on his head"). Likewise, Agnes' narrative (p.449) and

Zillah's (p.450), Edie's (p.451), Laura's (p.452) and Lettice's

(p.453) all move from present tense closure or a discussion in a variety

of complex tenses to repeats or reframes in the simple past, and return

the conversational initiative with a final present tense. The table

below lists the possible elements of structure found in stories of the

present corpus on the left, and on the right notes the tense, aspect and

mood of the verbs at each stage. For the sake of simplicity this column

is marked as positive/negative for (1) pastness, (2) presence/absence

of modals, (3) presence/absence of simple verbal aspect. The simple past

verb (marked 101 in the table) is the norm usually associated with narra-

tive. How far this accounts for the real complexity of narrative tense

usage may be seen from the table.

Table 4: Structural elements of memorate and associated verbal tense,
mood and aspect

ELEMENT	VERB		
	Past	Modals	Simple Aspect
1. pre-narrative	0	1	0
2. aperture	0(1)*	0	1
3. abstract	1	0	1
4. orientation	1	0	1
5. complication	1	0	1
6. result	1	0	1
7. closure	0(1)*	1	0
8. continuation (i) discussion	0	1	0
(ii) narrative ⌐repeat	1	0	1
└reframe	1	0	1
(iii) closure	0	1	0

*NOTE: Normally in present tense but some examples of past tense
usage.

The alternations between the general and the particular (the present tense with modals, progressives and perfectives on the one hand, and the simple past on the other) shape and structure stories such as the memorates of the present corpus, showing how they contrive to be both universal and individual.

Once this basic present-past-present alternation is understood, the apparent strangeness of some narrator's tense use and construction makes sense to the analyst. Clara's narrative (B) for example was criticised by our imaginary critic for its tense usage in the opening sentences. Something strange is indeed happening in the opening clauses of this narrative but the apparently confused tense usage is only a symptom of a more deep-seated confusion. Simply, it is that at first Clara cannot make up her mind whether she is giving a pre-narrative introduction or an abstract, and later runs the abstract into the orientation without marking the disjunction, and therefore has to realign herself to begin again properly with the necessary orienting information. Set out in tabular form this confusion is apparent. In the table each clause is set out on the left hand side with the verbs underlined to show tense use and the narrative stage is suggested on the right by virtue of the tense use.

[G.B. Have you ever had your fortune told?]		
CLAUSE	TENSE	SLOT
1. Yes, and it's not made any great impression	Present	pre-narrative
2. and we once had -	past	begins abstract
3. she's a friend of my parents actually -	present	⌠fragment of ⌡pre-narrative?
4. who used to read the cards	past	abstract resumes
5. It's horrible actually	present	⌠pre-narrative ⌡fragment
6. and it was only after ... (to) ... until it happened	past past	abstract completed

Clara is confused here between wanting to make general comments (the
experience remains horrible to think about but even so it has not made
her a believer in fortunetelling) and the abstract she has precipitately
begun on. One can see that logically the abstract is complete when the
prediction has "happened" but Clara confusedly adds and and begins the
orientation without even marking the place.

7.	and my sister had one boy	past	orientation begins
[8.	who lived at Bristol]	past	
9.	who was absolutely marvellous	past	

Perhaps dissatisfied or realising the story may now run away with her,
she intervenes to halt its onward flow with a present tense internal
comment which creates a break and allows her to start on a fuller
orientation.

| 10. | Anyway, we all think our family are marvellous. | present | internal comment |

The orientation proper now resumes at proper pace, "He was sweet and kind
and clever", and so on.

An interesting pattern is also observable in Vera's narrative first
discussed above, chapter 7, p 295 . In this case Vera uses identical
subject matter first as pre-narrative, then as narrative core, then as
closure.

SLOT	NARRATIVE	TENSE
Pre-narrative	My mother was Highland. Once or twice I see her come back. She comes if there's anything ill going to happen in the family or anything like that, any trouble or anything.	present
Orientation	When my brother died that was the last incident that happened in the family.	past
Complication	She came, I could see her quite distinctly and I said, "Well, something's happened, something's going to happen", and I heard a few days later that George had died suddenly.	past
Closure	Any trouble in the family, she's there. She always comes. But I feel her. She's there and not very far away. I don't know.	present

This sort of analysis shows the logic of Vera's story where a cursory glance might find nothing but a seemingly pointless series of repetitions. A very similar arrangement structures Carrie's narrative (above, chapter 10, p.470). She begins in the present with a pre-narrative section:

> Do you know, if anyone's going to be ill in my
> family my mother comes to me

moves to present historic via various modals to give an account of her mother's visit and subsequent injury and then returns to present tense for a closure:

> Isn't it strange how she comes to me every time
> and she's stood at the side of the bed and then
> it's gone.

Interestingly enough, when pressed to give another particular example,

Carrie simply retells this episode using exactly the same formulation but substituting simple past for past historic,

> But my mother comes to me more than anybody, and
> just when somebody's going to be ill. Isn't that
> funny? I always say, "Hello! Someone's going to
> be ill in our family", or they are ill. Well,
> that day when my mother came to me, I fell coming
> out of the cemetery and my back's not been right
> since. Of course, with all these horoscopes,
> some are for one and not the other, aren't they?
> I always read them but I don't believe them. But
> I do read them.

Even so brief a little story as this, then, adheres to the present-past-present alternation. This alternation helps fix the boundaries of narrative and at the same time shows the status of memorate: that is, the particular example within the general class. It is thus in a very real sense the natural structural pattern of belief stories.

3.3   Tense, mood and aspect within the narrative core
         (orientation and complication)

The present-past-present tense alternation within the larger narrative framework does not, of course, exhaust the possibilities of tense switching. Rose's narrative (D) above, for example, after the pre-narrative and before the closure switches from simple past to other tenses and aspects no fewer than six times, excluding quoted speech. Rose's earlier narrative (C) switches once to simple present in the orientation section, and Clara's narrative (B) switches twice to past perfect in the complication. These are not rarities: this is the usual way a story gets told. Labov drew attention to this sort of tense switching when he discussed "evaluation by suspension of the action"[7] between complication and result. In fact, this suspending of the story

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7   Labov (1972), pp. 370-393.

takes place in other places too - at the end of a long orientation section, for example, and often throughout the complication as well. Rose's narrative (D) shows this particularly well. The first tense switches from past to present begin to occur at the end of the long orientation ("and there's one window there" "and she's lying with her face turned to the light"). After place markers ("Anyway" "Oh God!") Rose then moves back further into the past with a past perfective section which ends with a bit of quoted speech in the future, which heralds the complication. She again puts in a place marker ("So") and begins another section, this time in the present. Eventually, after two place markers ("So me", "So me") which precede clauses the verbs of which are in the present progressive, Rose returns to the past tense for the rest of the complication and the narrative hurries to a close. The first tense switches occur at the end of the orientation, the rest throughout the early preparatory stages of the complication. These tense switches are not random; they have a definite form and value.

Most tense switching represents a shift of narrative emphasis away from onward progression. One type of tense switch holds up the onward flow by freezing the moment, the other by running the action backwards. A comparison with film makes an apt parallel here. Normally a film runs continuously forward without hindrance through a succession of frames. The projectionist or editor may, however, freeze a particular frame to create a still, or may run the film backwards to an earlier succession of frames and show them as flashbacks and thus "shift" the forward time orientation. This is exactly what happens in narratives like Rose's. There are two sorts of SHIFT: in one, the present tense freezes the moment by referring to conditions which are constant or STILL. In the other the perfectives track back to a completed action in a FLASHBACK. The principal function of these "shifts" is what it would be in film: to

delay the climax of the story, but to delay it, if possible, in such a way as to underline it.

When discussing "rhetorical underlining" at the "peak" of narrative, Longacre draws attention to the sheer wordiness of writers and traditional storytellers at the climax of a story. He says:

> The narrator does not want you to miss the
> important point of the story, so he employs
> extra words at that point.... A colleague
> of mine was taking a course in creative writing
> at the University of Michigan. The Professor
> said 'at this point in the story I want more
> words. It goes by too fast.' 8

This is exactly the technique Rose adopts. Her story (D) has remarkably little incident at the crucial point. She is disturbed by Aunty Ethel's condition and feels she must get out of the house, goes upstairs to visit the toilet before leaving, while there sees a warning figure pass by on the landing, and Aunty Ethel dies. If Rose had told her story in so few words it would have been over before the audience had registered its import, but she inserts SHIFTS to slow it down, in order (a) to allow the hearer to keep pace with the action, (b) to crucially underline it, and (c) to let its significance sink in.

The bulk of Rose's shifts occur at the end of the orientation. There she first has a still (the description of the windows in the room and Aunty Ethel's lying facing them). Then after a brief past orientation, a substantial flashback follows. The complication has hardly begun before Rose inserts another still (the description of the geography of the house). So between the bulk of the orientation and the climax of the complication no fewer than sixteen clauses have been inserted at

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8   Longacre, pp. 217-218.

regular intervals; these clauses effectively prevent the climax rushing on too fast.

SHIFTS, therefore, fulfil similar functions to the familiar repetitions and refrains of ballads: they are halting, emphasising, underlining devices meant to focus the listener's attention on key narrative stages by making him or her wait for the next piece of action.

Elsewhere, a shift helps structure a narrative by realigning it, perhaps drawing a long orientation to a close by breaking the verbal pattern and thus preparing for the onset of another narrative stage. The following story, for example, shows how even the briefest SHIFT can prepare a listener for a change of narrative focus. The story begins:

> Now I do, now that is something that I do believe
> in. I suppose one of the best I could answer that
> is, in - . During the war I went to America, and
> I went to a naval air station that we were based
> at in Brunswick, Maine, and a group of us decided
> to, one Sunday, to go out, and ... I was describing
> a church to them and a particular area and it's
> something I've never been to before in my life and -
> even to this day [G.B. And was it there?] and it
> was there [G.B. It was there?] everything was there.
>
> (Narrative 107: Alec)[9]

In these opening sentences, Alec first begins with a fairly long orientation, told in a straightforward simple past tense. As this draws to a close, he slips into the past continuative ("I was describing a church to them") and then into a brief present-tense SHIFT ("and it's something I've never been to before in my life"). The story complication then begins with dramatic suddenness ("And it was there", "Everything was there"). It is the re-structuring and re-aligning effect of the SHIFT that allows the drama of the complication to begin so precipitately.

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9   For the full transcription see below p.553

Alternatively a SHIFT may be useful in helping to fill out a too-scanty _orientation_ section, which would cause the events to rush on to their climax before the listener had had time to register the fact that a narrative is in progress. This is the pattern in Rose's first story quoted above (C), as it is in a story told by Audrey (narrative number 15), an extract from which is quoted below:

aperture	Well, it's a funny thing happened.	
orientation	I lost my pension book one day and I couldn't find this pension book anywhere.	
SHIFT	_Now_, I always put it in _one_ place, keep it in one place as soon as I - . I have it in a pouchette, you see.	STILL
	I'd taken my money out, I'd put my pension book back and put it in the sideboard drawer which I've always done.	FLASHBACK
Complication	So one Thursday	

Strictly speaking, the information contained in the SHIFT could be omitted, but this would make a very short _orientation_ of only two clauses. Audrey, as a teller of memorate, knows that she must provide a larger scene and setting stage and so puts in the _still_ and the _flashback_ to provide a little extra interpretive background information, and allow a little more time for the hearer to adjust to the role of audience.

Something very similar happens at the start of Maura's story, number 13 (see above, chapter 7, p. 290). Here as well as filling out an inadequate _orientation_, the SHIFT underlines the significance of the story's context before the narrative core is developed.

pre-narrative	I think I must be a little bit psychic.
aperture	I had one rather strange experience.
orientation	I had a friend. He lost his wife and I went round really to help him get rid of the things, her things and - erm [pause]
still	I hate doing it actually. I hate -
flashback	and I've had about five occasions. I mean my own father's home and my own sister died tragically and she had - her home was given up. My husband's home was given up after his family - .
orientation	But it was just a friend
still	and I really hate looking in other people's affairs. I'm not very keen on that kind of thing.
complication	Anyway I do it and I went, you know got rid of all her things....

Very occasionally a narrator may switch tense for different reasons or with different effect. A usage in many ways similar to a SHIFT is to be found in narrative number 79. There Lizzie tells the story of a visit to a medium. She tells it in linear style keeping to the simple past. Briefly, the story records how she went to a seance after the death of her mother, hoping to make some sort of contact with her. The medium does indeed have a message for her, but it is from somebody else whom she cannot immediately identify. As she is unresponsive, the medium turns his attention to other sitters. When she gets home she tells her husband and he responds, "Good heavens! If you tell mother that, she'll say 'Uncle George!'". So the mystery is solved. This makes a dreadfully weak resolution to the story, so before adding a coda, Lizzie goes into the flashback mode and tells about Uncle George, his death, his little legacy

to her and their common love of music (the key to his wishing to contact her through the medium). Thus this flashback (all in perfectives) underlines and interprets the significance of an otherwise weak resolution.

Elsewhere, changes in tense correspond to structural changes. In narrative number 34 told by Alma, for example, a complete change of tense occurs between complication and resolution. Alma's story is about a foreknowledge experience. The whole of the account of the prediction is told in the present progressive ("You're going somewhere in a hurry"; "You're going somewhere in a desperate hurry"; "You're leaving everything"). The validating event, however, is told in the simple past ("And she left everything"; "She dropped everything and she went off").

SHIFTS, therefore, in the form of the present tense still or the perfective flashback, account for most variations in tense use in the main body of narrative. Typically they occur between orientation and complication, at intervals throughout the complication, and between complication and resolution. Their main functions are to spin out a brief narrative core, to delay the climax, to provide a mechanism for repeating key effects and events, and to cue hearers in to crucial narrative stages. In addition, they help pace and structure the narrative by their regular patterns, they underline the significance of circumstance and event, and by their ebb and flow provide a rhythmic spoken rhetoric.

Far from being disorderly, inconsistent or random, therefore, tenses are used meaningfully in ordinary storytelling. Whether consciously or unconsciously, skilfully or clumsily, narrators are calling on the inbuilt resources of the language. The variety of forms into which verbs can be cast are utilised to give shape and pattern to narrative, changes in speaker's usage alerting hearers to the status of the various parts of the story. The hearer can follow the narrative outline by following the simple past verbs, treating clauses in other tenses and aspects as in

parenthesis. The parenthetical sections change the forward orientation of the narrative, holding it up momentarily, and thus stage, pace and add dramatic emphasis to the narrative outline.

Because they alter time orientation they are here called SHIFTS. SHIFTS come in two principal forms: stills, which hold the action steady by use of the present tense and reference to constants of circumstance or context; flashbacks, which take the action back to a further past time of completed events by use of the perfective aspect. Both are used at specific points in a narrative and have functional value. Rather than showing a failure to maintain past orientation consistently, the tense-switching reveals success in managing the resources of the language.

4. Dialogue, pseudo-dialogue and drama

4.1 Dialogue: an integral feature of storytelling

The imaginary critic, whose complaints about the narrative style of the present corpus were listed at the start of this chapter, was thought likely to disparage the women's handling of dialogue as well as their sentence construction and tense use. By now perhaps it might have become apparent that judgements such as that, based as they are on too conventional a set of criteria of 'good' literary storytelling, might be well wide of the mark as regards oral narrative.

It was suggested that the imaginary critic might complain of the dialogue in the stories for being unnaturalistic, banal, unsubtle and apparently used at random. The first three complaints are, strictly speaking, irrelevant. Whether one prefers subtle, original, naturalistic dialogue is merely a matter of historical fashion and personal taste. It

is a more serious criticism that dialogue is used ignorantly and without aesthetic effect or purpose. In the discussion which follows, therefore, the subtlety or otherwise of the dialogue will not be in question, only the skill and purposefulness of its handling.

First of all, it must be pointed out that so far it has been shown that when a particular stylistic feature occurs with any regularity throughout the narrative corpus that feature is productive.

The memorate corpus consists of 111 stories: only twenty-five of them use no dialogue. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that dialogue is an integral feature of storytelling, that it will be used according to performative rules and that these rules will have functional effect.

4.2   Terminology

Before beginning to analyse dialogue use throughout the corpus, some mention must be made of the terminology used in the title of the section - "Dialogue, pseudo dialogue and drama". The terms are borrowed from Longacre.[10] He uses the term "pseudo dialogue" to refer to apostrophe and rhetorical questioning, "dialogue" is self-explanatory, and "drama" refers to that sort of dialogue which omits quotation marks and intro- ductory verbs of speaking, and sets the exchanges out as in a play. The usage here has been slightly altered to correspond to that found in the corpus. While keeping the terms "drama" and "dialogue" for the usage Longacre suggests, the application of the term "pseudo dialogue" has been changed. Instead of referring to apostrophe and rhetorical question, it is here used to accommodate a wider spectrum of devices. Apostrophe and rhetorical questions do, of course, appear in the narrative corpus (for

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10   Longacre, pp. 221-222.

example - Dorothy's "Blow me down!" (narrative (A), p.484); Clara's

"Isn't that dreadful?" (narrative (B), p.485); Rose's "What greets me?"

and "Guess to what?" (narrative (C), p.485) and "So me - I'm not having

the door shut am I?" (narrative (D), p.486)). They are used throughout

to point up the climax and to grab the hearer's attention. They corres-

pond to Labov's category of "external evaluation" and thus are best seen

in this light, as performative options, rather than forms of dialogue.

By taking apostrophe and rhetorical questioning out of the category

of "pseudo-dialogue", the term is left open for a variety of more

narrative-like effects which are constantly used for structural purposes

in the present corpus - reported speech, externalised thought, the quota-

tion of the narrator's own words, and one-sided talk. Examples of these

types of usage are quoted below.

4.2.1   Types of pseudo-dialogue

(a)   Reported speech

> She didn't tell me this until a long time
> after he was killed. She said it - the
> kind of farewell given him, his age and
> everything was just like her brother who
> was killed in the first world war, she
> said and she had the feeling....

(Narrative 37)

(b)   Externalised thought

> I heard my mother call my name as plain
> as ever and there was nobody there and I
> thought, "Of course! That was my mother!"
> and I listened but it didn't tell me
> anything.

(Narrative 17)

(c)   Quotation of narrator's own words

> As I passed by her, I turned round to her
> and said, "Beryl, someone's going to ask
> you to marry him."

(Narrative 35)

(d) <u>One-sided talk (quotation of another person's words)</u>

> All he could keep saying was, "It's
> wonderful, it's wonderful!"

> (Narrative 10)

4.2.2 <u>Dialogue</u>

Dialogue hardly needs any explanation or illustration. Essentially the term is used, as it usually is, to refer to reciprocal talk which uses quotation marks and introductory verbs of speech.

> I went to see the Vet - Mr. Freeman.
> I said, "Have you seen - ? Nobody's brought my
>   cat in, have they, Mr. Freeman?"
> He said, "No. Why?"
> I said, "I've lost it. I can't find it anywhere!"
> So he said, "I hate to tell you this, Mrs. Allman,
>   but you know when you brought it in - . I
>   hated to tell you this because I knew how fond
>   you were of him but he wouldn't, he wasn't
>   going to live long. Though as you were so
>   fond of the cat - . They go away. They won't
>   die in the house."
> So he said, "The cat's gone away."
> I said, "Oh dear!" Oh, I was upset!

> (Narrative 5)

Of these types of speech presentation, the more vivid are the more common. Thirty-two narrators use dialogue and thirty-five use quotation of their own or somebody else's words (e.g. 4.2.1(c) and (d) above).

4.2.3 <u>Drama</u>

Drama is a rare phenomenon in the present corpus. Only one narrative shows it in full form, in two a single speech in the middle of dialogue exchange is quoted without an introductory formula, and in one further narrative, number 102 (see chapter 10, p.469 above), the narrator alternates between drama and dialogue when reporting the conversation between herself and the child who has heard ghosts talking in her attic.

The narrative that shows the dramatic mode in full is Agnes' narrative, number 56 (see above, chapter 10, p. 449). The <u>complication</u> of the story is:

> Anyway, "Could Granny give her a bit of this?"
> "No, I haven't got it."
> "Have you got a pair of your husband's old shoes?"
> "No. I haven't got any old shoes. I haven't got a
>   husband."
> "Well, one of your lads then? An old pair of
>   trousers?"

These then are the ways speech is presented in the narrative corpus. It remains to analyse how it is used, to discover if it really is as haphazard as the critic might claim.

4.3   Dialogue in the complication

The first thing that must be noted is that in all but nine cases,[11] the pseudo-dialogue or dialogue occurs in the <u>complication</u>; that is, at the heart of the narrative. Not only is it thus usually placed in the centre of whatever action there might be, but it exists in a value-adding relationship to it. These small examples indicate the larger pattern.

(a) <u>It may precede the climactic action</u>

> I said, "Please God, just let me see him. <u>Please</u>
> let me just see him!" and he walked round the bed-
> room door.
>
> (Narrative 3: Laura)

(b) <u>It may be simultaneous with the climactic action</u>

> One day in the office I was going past one of the
> girls (...). As I passed by her, I turned round
> to her and I said, "Beryl! Somebody's going to ask
> you to marry him." I <u>felt</u> the - .
>
> (Narrative 35: Inez)

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11 Narrative (D) above, p .486   is one example.

(c) <u>It may follow the climactic action</u>

> Well! during the course of the day that
> <u>disappeared</u> and a red flannel tab-thing that I
> keep needles in. That disappeared too! And
> I've never been able to find either of them
> since, and yet! They were never taken out of
> the room as far as I know. And I said to myself,
> "I wonder whether there's an evil spirit floating
> around?"

> (Narrative 64: Joan)

In each of these extracts, a small piece of pseudo-dialogue has a functional and positional relationship with the central action of the story. In (a) the pseudo-dialogue prepares for the action; in (b) it is a dramatic way of presenting it; in (c) it repeats and interprets the action.

These are only a few of the ways dialogue or pseudo-dialogue may be used for rhetorical effect. In longer stories with a developed dialogue, speech may serve a wide variety of functions. As well as (1) preparing the way for action; (2) being a dramatic way of presenting action; or (3) a way of repeating or (4) interpreting action, as shown briefly above, dialogue and pseudo-dialogue may also: (5) retard the narrative for rhetorical effect both (a) to delay the climax and (b) to lengthen the narrative core; (6) carry secondary rhetorical devices; and where used at stages other than <u>complication</u>, (7) pace narrative, and (8) be used as the primary method of information transmission.

Any given piece of dialogue or pseudo-dialogue may, of course, fulfil more than one of these functions. However, in the discussion that follows, for each narrative example only a single functional characteristic will be illustrated.

4.3.1   Preparing the way for action

In one sense most or all of dialogue may prepare the way for action, particularly in stories of predictions where the fortune-teller's words are quoted and then set against the eventual outcome. This is quite effective when the narrator echoes the words of the fortune-teller in telling of the outcome. Narrative 14 (told by Cora) is constructed solely by means of this contrast:

> [G.B. Have you ever had your palm read?]
>
> Cora: Many years ago when I was young. Everything
> she predicted was entirely wrong! Now this
> fortuneteller told me that when I got
> married there'd be no wedding bells. I should
> be married in a rush, quickly. I wasn't!
> It was all as planned. I had a lovely wedding
> at my own Chapel. Everything went as we
> planned it. It was nothing at all like they
> told me! So I've been a bit sceptical ever
> since.

Its most dramatic use, however, is in stories like Laura's or, as in the three extracts below, where a catastrophe is heralded by a bit of quoted speech.

(a) From number 28 (Vanessa speaking of her husband's death)

> I thought, "Oh, it's going to be in March!"
> Now I had that feeling. But it wasn't. It
> was in April that it happened.

(b) From number 50 (Polly speaking of her husband's death)

> At five to one I looked at the clock and said
> to the lady next door, "I hope he's put those
> mushrooms on. They should be very, very nice
> you see!" And then I went back home and there
> he was on the floor dead and I had no premoni-
> tion of that.

(c) From number 53 (Edna's story of her cousin's blinding)

> Before she opened the letter, before my Aunty
> opened the letter, my mother said, "My God,
> it's his eyes! My God, it's his eyes!" And
> she'd - I can't remember what it was she'd
> dreamt, but she'd dreamt something about it.

On these occasions the pseudo-dialogue acts as rhetorical underlining

of the ensuing event.

4.3.2   Presenting the action

It is quite common, especially in stories of foreknowledge,

for the whole of the complication or result to be presented as dialogue.

This, for example, is what happens in narrative (A), the story told by

Dorothy with which this chapter began. Narrative (C) too, the first of

the two told by Rose above, presents the first part of the complication

(the 'token' Rose receives) as a block of dialogue.

> "Ooh!" I said [.......... embedded orientation ...]
> He said, "What's the matter?"
> I said, "I've just seen somebody standing in the
> corner."

In the pair of stories below (both told by Agnes), the first gives

the whole of the complication as dialogue, the second the whole of the

result as pseudo-dialogue.

Narrative 58

aperture	But I always hope
orientation	One old lady, about nine years ago now, I was out weeding. It was a beautiful day and a lady went by. I should think she'd be - oh, about sixty. She wasn't grey. She wasn't a gypsy - she looked Spanish or something like that. She was very swarthy. Quite nicely dressed, and she'd got a big hat on, a sort of big - [Sombrero?] No, more like a straw hat, and she'd got a basket with some fruit on her arm and she passed by and looked at me gardening and I smiled and she said - .
complication	"Hello", I said. She spoke in a distinctly foreign accent, "Hello. Isn't it a beautiful day?" and she said, "Yes. You're busy!" and I said I was, and she came up to the wall, put her basket on the pavement, and she said, "You've always had to work hard for every penny you've got." I said, "Yes, I have!"

	She said, "Yes, well, you can take it from me that the time is coming when you'll get a lot of money you haven't earned." I said, "Ooh! I don't believe in that."
	"Alright," she said - and she wasn't trying to sell me anything - She said, "You'll remember, you wait and see, and you'll remember what I've told you! Ta-ta!"
resolution	I'm still waiting for it!

Narrative 45

aperture	The thing, the one instance that stands out is Mrs. Orlando.
complication	I could not get her out of my mind! She was on the face of it the healthiest, brightest woman that ever you could imagine, and she rode down on her bike because her husband had got the car to go to cricket at Old Trafford, and she had to go to hospital and there was no question there was anything bad at all about it. She just went on her bicycle and they did some tests and somehow or other this Mrs. Orlando - I just could not get her out of my mind, and Jack12 had to visit somebody who's a member of church and he came back very upset.
resolution	He said, "Mrs. Orlando's very ill. She's in the cancer hospital and she wanted to be told the truth apparently. They told her she'd only got a very short time to live and when she'd gone on this particular day they'd discovered an inoperable, incurable cancer."
closure	I'd had that woman on my mind for no reason at all and I can distinctly remember that!

Dialogue thus represents a more interesting, livelier way of giving

crucial information. It has impact and immediacy where a bald statement

would be shorter and fall flatter. It is interesting to note that only

a few narrators use dialogue throughout the whole of a story: most choose

the more dramatic option of foregrounding only complication or resolution

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12   Agnes' husband.

with dialogue, so that the contrast of styles both isolates and emphasises the crucial structural element.

4.3.3   Repeating key events

Pseudo-dialogue puts thoughts into words and thus gives the narrator a second chance to say something she thinks important, as here in this extract from one of Violet's stories:

> When I look back, I couldn't have done it on my
> own steam. I had help there! You know, we both
> look back and we think, "Well! we could never
> have done it on our own steam!"
>
> (Narrative 25)

This extract (see above, chapter 10, p 443 for full transcription) shows how exactly internal narrative comment may be externalised with pseudo-dialogue, allowing a simple statement to be repeated in a less tedious way.

Perhaps the best example of the skilful use of dialogue as repetition, however, is narrative 33, told by Alma. It is worth repeating in full to get the flavour of a well told story. Alma uses dialogue twice, initially the matter of the prediction is given as dialogue between Alma and her mother's friend. A subsequent dialogue between Alma and her mother, however, allows the whole of the central part of the story to be retold, so as to ensure that even the most careless listener has not missed the point.

> I'll tell you one thing. When I was younger I used
> to look into teacups. (giggles) Mother had a
> friend who was terribly - superstitious, terribly
> superstitious and she al - whatever I said, you know,
> she took for gospel. Things did happen that way,
> but a lot of it didn't - but I know, the last time
> that she asked me, she said, "Ooh, you must read my
> cup!" And I looked at it and I said - er, "Oh!" I
> said, "there's nothing there." "Ooh," she said,

"there must be." I said, "No, there isn't," I said,
"there's nothing there at all" and I couldn't see
a - . Well, she was very offended, very offended
about this, and I said - er - , "No, there isn't."
That was another time. And when I came home,
mother said, "Oh," she said, "why didn't you tell
her something?" I said, "Look, mother, there was
no future for her. None at all." She said, "There
must've been." I said, "There wasn't! I can't see
a thing in that cup. And," I said, "I got a queer
feeling when I picked up that cup. There wasn't
anything there." Do you know? The next week we
were out and we met a friend and she said, "Oh, do
you know about - " She'd been taken ill, she'd had
a stroke, and she only lasted three days - The next
thing we knew, my mother was going to her funeral.
But now, that was the last time that I ever did it.

(Narrative 33)

4.3.4   Interpreting the events

In this case the narrator usually reports the events in

chronological order as they originally happened, then she extends the

complication or resolution section by showing herself discussing the

events with another person. This is neatly achieved in a story told

by the youngest informant of all. Clara came to the surgery accompanied

by a teenage employee of the family business. The girl, Carmel, has not

been included in the sample of younger women by reason of her much greater

youth. However, she told the following story, remarkable for its con-

tent as well as the intensity of its telling. The content is quite

different from anything in the corpus and is the only instance of a

malevolent supernatural occurrence within a family context.

Carmel's narrative

aperture	Like when my grandad had died.
orientation	We was on holiday in Exeter, down near Exeter - Devon, and we was down there and it's funny coincidences, you know what I mean? Like he was - my father had gone home to the funeral and we carried on staying down there and the funeral was at half past three.

complication	I was just playing outside in the garden and all of a sudden my sister fell down a cesspit, and she was, you know, drowning, drowning, and she kept going up and down, up and down, and you know, you - like you don't -, you just - I didn't even bother, I just jumped in and just life-saved her, and it was funny that it happened just on half past three, and I said that to my mum, "It's a bloody big coincidence," I told her straight. Well, she was. It was awful to see her, somebody like that, struggling like that. It was, it was on my mind. I used to wake up screaming. But the only thing you can do - , it's just when you see somebody like that, you just jump in.
resolution	I just jumped in. It was awful because I had to go to hospital, disinfectant and stayed in - typhoid - and everything. It was awful.
closure	But it's the funny coincidences.

Carmel telling her mother "straight" allows the foregrounding of the element of "coincidence" on which this story rests.[13] In instances like this the interpretation, by being made explicit and external through the pseudo-dialogue device, is not only underlined but made to appear dispassionate and therefore comes with greater force.

4.3.5 Retarding the narrative

The importance to a storyteller of devices which allow her to slow down the presentation of climactic events has already been discussed above in relation to stills and flashbacks. As well as shifts of time, a storyteller may use blocks of dialogue to fill out key events in a meaningful way. Carrie's little story shows this quite clearly. She has very little of real event to report - the appearance of her dead mother is a warning of danger; and once her mother appeared to her in the night and the next day Carrie fell and injured her back. The dialogue

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13 Compare Labov's "embedding of evaluation". Labov, pp. 372-374.

which Carrie incorporates into the story in logic is completely unneces-
sary. But it serves vital rhetorical functions. Apart from the dramatic
emphasis which the quotation of the dead mother's words provides, the
little bit of dialogue about the telephone call retards the narrative
at a critical stage so the story will not be over before the hearer gets
the point.

Narrative 26

> Well, it's funny. Do you know, if anyone's going to
> be ill in my family, my mother always comes to me. Yes.
> I always know , my mother comes to me. You know,
> when our Walter used to be ill, I'd ' . get on the
> phone and I'd say, "Hello, Nellie, how are you?"
> and she says, "I'm alright, but Walter's in bed," and
> before I had my back done, like before I fell in the
> cemetery, in the night my mother come to me and she
> says, "You can't sleep", or something like that. She's
> stood at the side of the bed, and I've not been well
> since. Isn't it strange how she comes to me every
> time? and she's stood at the side of the bed and
> then it's gone.

Sections of pseudo-dialogue throughout a narrative also serve to
retard the action, simply by putting in extra words in a different form.
In narrative number 39 Agnes tells how, when her mother-in-law (who lived
with Agnes and Jack for the last years of her life) was away on holiday,
Agnes, alone in the house, hears the front door open, footsteps going up
the stairs and then a bedroom door open and shut. She concludes that
her mother-in-law has just died and returned to find those she loved best.
The central part of the narrative is:

> It was about lunchtime, about the time Jack would
> have come in, that I heard the door open and shut
> as if someone had shut it in a bit of a hurry, and
> I heard what I thought was Jack rushing upstairs
> and I said, "Is that you, Jack?" and there was no
> answer and then I heard our bedroom door open and
> shut, and I run to the bottom of the stairs, not a
> bit afraid or anything because I was quite sure it
> was Jack, and called again and again, "Is that you,
> Jack? Jack, is that you?" and there was nothing.

Agnes is able to spin out a simple account of a momentary perception

because she can space out her repetitions by inserting pseudo-dialogue

between them, pseudo-dialogue which itself (with the "and there was

nothing") reinforces the central idea.

Elsewhere the rhetorical effect of the introduction of dialogue or

pseudo-dialogue is to delay having to come to the climax of the story.

In this respect Rose's narrative (D), one of the four stories with which

the discussion began, has an interesting use of a piece of externalised

thought. At the end of a lengthy orientation Rose inserts first a still,

then a flashback. She then breaks both tense and alignment.

> "I know what I'll do. I'll take Patch - that's the
> dog. Or is it Butch? - I'll take her out for a
> walk. We'll go for a walk. I'll go upstairs and
> spend a penny."

The functions of this bit of pseudo-dialogue are numerous: it breaks

the flashback and thus ends the orientation, and it begins the complica-

tion (by providing the reason for her going upstairs); and it signals

the change of structural stage by a complete tense change. Also, while

providing the mechanism for the hurrying on of the climax and signalling

its approach, it yet delays its final approach by adding another layer of

texture and detail.

4.3.6.1 Carrying rhetorical devices

At this point it is necessary for a while to digress briefly

from the subject of dialogue and consider the types of rhetorical devices

a narrator may use to bring drama, point and emphasis to the climax of a

story. When that ground has been covered in general, it will be possible

to return to the subject of dialogue and discover how far it is necessary

as a vehicle for all or any of these rhetorical devices.

Two of the scholars to whom the largest debt in terms of analytical insight into narrative form is due deal in some depth with this subject. Labov's discussion of types of evaluation[14] and Longacre's of "marking of surface structure peak"[15] are complementary and, for the most part, overlapping.

Labov's 1972 paper modifies his earlier idea (with Waletsky) of a single evaluation section and speaks instead of "waves" of evaluation, the epicentre of which is the junction of complication and resolution.[16] Evaluative devices which can thus mark the climax of the story are:

1. external evaluation

2. embedded evaluation

3. evaluative action

4. evaluation by suspension of action

5. evaluative syntax (departures from basic narrative syntax)

Longacre uses the terms 'Peak' (climax) and 'Peak' (dénouement) to refer to the last stages of what Labov would call complication and the first of resolution; that is, the narrative stage which is the epicentre of evaluation in Labov's model. Thus the features Longacre sees as marking the surface encoding of peak and peak are "evaluative" in Labov's terminology. Longacre lists these features as:

1. rhetorical underlining

2. concentration of participants

3. heightened vividness in terms of

   (a) tense shift

   (b) shift to more specific person

   (c) shift along the axis: narrative —→ pseudo-dialogue —→
       dialogue —→ drama

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14   Labov, pp. 370-393.

15   Longacre, p. 217.

16   Labov, p. 369.

4.   Change of pace in terms of

   (a) variation of length of sentences

   (b) less conjunction and transition

5.   Change of vantage point.

Two of these features (the second and the last) cannot <u>per se</u> apply
to the present corpus. There are already so few participants in oral
stories that the number cannot be effectively reduced. Likewise, a change
of vantage point from one character to another is not usually possible in
personal stories. If these features are omitted, this leaves a list as
follows:

1.   rhetorical underlining

2.   heightened vividness

3.   change of pace.

Two of these features have direct parallels in Labov's model. Labov's
"evaluation by suspension of the action" corresponds to Longacre's
"rhetorical underlining" (that is, the "more words" principle), and
Labov's "evaluative syntax" corresponds to Longacre's "change of pace".
A third of Longacre's features has some correspondences in the Labovian
model, Labov's external evaluation is much like Longacre's pseudo-dialogue
which is one of the ways of creating heightened vividness. Indeed, the
parallel may perhaps be stretched further, for the Labovian "embedded
evaluation" and some types of "evaluative action" (e.g. "I never prayed
to God so fast in my life"),[17] are externalised thought and reported
speech such as the extended use of the term 'pseudo-dialogue' used in
this work covers. There is thus a measure of agreement between the two
scholars about what features to expect narrators to use to mark the

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17 Labov, p. 373.

climactic part of a story, Longacre's list perhaps giving slightly greater detail.

Labov's list of evaluative devices can all be subsumed under headings in Longacre's list of surface features; but Longacre mentions one or two extra devices not noticed by Labov. It is useful to work through the longer list and briefly discover how many of these rhetorical devices are revealed in the present corpus.

(a) Rhetorical underlining

Longacre defines this as the "more words" principle (discussed above, Section 3.3). As the analysis shows, the principal method by which the narrators introduce "more words" and thus delay the action long enough to underline its significance is the SHIFT in the form of stills and flashbacks. The same result can also be achieved by the use of dialogue (see above Section 4.3.5). As the analysis shows, dialogue and pseudo-dialogue occur mainly in the complication at the height of action or event.

(b) Heightened vividness: tense shifts, shift to more specific person, shift along the axis: narrative —→ pseudo-dialogue —→ dialogue —→ drama

(i) Tense shifts are obviously incorporated in SHIFTS, being the definitional criterion by which a SHIFT is judged to be taking place. To a lesser extent it must be noted too that in stories as short as those of the present corpus, the shift to the simple basic narrative syntax from the complex modals and perfectives of chat and pre-narrative represents a sharpening of focus; it is itself a change from the predominant conversational tenses. So the narrative core sharpens the focus by a tense shift and then successively increases the focus by internal tense shifts.

(ii) A shift from narrative to dialogue forms obviously occurs at the height of narratives in the present corpus, though the stories are

too short to show a development from weaker to stronger dialogue forms. The narrative-to-drama axis represents a continuum from lesser to greater degrees of performative energy and involvement by the narrator. In so far as the narrators of the present corpus move from subjective narrative to forms of dialogue, they too show this increased expressiveness at the heart of their stories. They too move from description to re-enactment.

(c) Change of pace

Once again the preceding analysis has already shown that the narrators of this corpus respond to cultural performative conventions. Longacre notes the important aspects of change of pace as "variation of length of units" and "less conjunction and transition". To some degree the employment of SHIFTS achieves this sort of change of pace. More explicitly it is achieved by the variation in sentence length discussed above (pp.497-500) where the setting up or breaking of large groups of and-linked clauses was seen often to mark the climax of the story. What is of particular - and vital - interest here is that Labov's model was formed from consideration of a corpus of stories drawn from young, mainly black, Americans, Longacre's from literature and traditional oral narrative. Both not only agree with each other as to what are the cultural conventions for marking the peak of a narrative, but the conventions they uncover are exactly whose which structure a corpus of supernatural stories told by elderly English ladies. Clearly we are dealing here with the basic resources open to storytellers - something very akin to Olrik's "Epic Laws".

Only in one respect has the analysis of the present corpus failed so far to uncover narrative techniques discovered by Labov and Longacre. One of the devices mentioned by the latter for creating "heightened vividness" at peak is a shift to a more specific person. It remains to be seen whether the women of Gatley also adopt this rhetorical technique.

(d) Shift to more specific person

Longacre defines this as a move from first person plural to first

person singular or from third to first person. Like concentration of

participants, a shift to more specific person is hard to calculate in

memorates, for the cast of characters is very limited and the first person

voice already the dominant one. At most three or four people, including

the narrator, may appear in any of these stories. One other beside the

storyteller is the norm. Even so, there is evidence of some shifting

to more specific person taking place at the climax of forty-eight of the

111 stories. This shift is achieved in three ways:

(i) A direct shift

For an example of this see Violet's narrative, number 25 (above,

chapter 10, p 443   ).

> Now for instance, my brother died suddenly and he had
> a bungalow in North Wales and we had to get rid of it,
> Howard and I in - . Now, it seems incredible that we
> could clear the bungalow, a big bungalow, and sell it
> for cash in one week, but we didn't do that on our own.
> You couldn't, not - . When I look back, I couldn't
> have done it on my own steam.

Here the pronoun changes from he to we, to the neutral you and then to I.

Howard's part in the experience is written out for one significant climactic

statement. "We didn't do that on our own" becomes "I couldn't have done

it on my own steam". Violet returns to first person plural for the

following plane of narrative but at the next critical stage for the inter-

pretation, she again shifts to the first person singular:

> We cleared it in a week! But I felt then as though
> I was being shown what to do.

In stories like these, where the narrator shares her experience with

another participant, the other is often thus faded out at climactic moments,

the narrator concentrating on her own perceptions and feelings, apparently forgetting that others were present.

> (ii) The fading of dialogue into monologue for a while at the climactic point of the narrative

Stories which use a great deal of dialogue shift to a style much more akin to monologue, in which the conversational contribution of the other person becomes briefer or absent altogether. Some reference has already been made to narrative 13 told by Maura. This story provides an excellent illustration of the fading out of the third person. Maura's story concerns her experience when helping to clear out the effects of a friend's recently dead wife. The bulk of the story proceeds as dialogue between Maura and her friend and discovers them finding a letter from a Building Society which refers to a secret account the dead woman has been putting her savings into. The widower would, of course, like to claim the money - a thousand pounds - but cannot do so unless he can find the paying-in book which, of course, his wife had hidden. After much discussion and one false lead, Maura suddenly says, without knowing why, that it is probably hidden under the paper in the bottom of the wardrobe. This is exactly where they find it. Up to the point where they follow the false lead, the story has proceeded through a strict alternation between what Maura said and what her friend said (six exchanges and twelve speeches in all), and what the friend said to the man at the Building Society (two pairs of utterances: four speeches). At this point the pattern changes.

Resolution	So [18] I said, "Well, I don't know where she's hidden it, unless she's hidden it under the paper in the wardrobe!" So I pulled the paper up and there it was,

---

18   "So" is used as place marker here; it does not indicate that Maura's words are a reply to something her friend said (Maura was the previous speaker).

	you see. I felt as though I wanted the earth to open for me. It was, it was absolutely - .
Closure	That was a funny thing to happen, wasn't it?

At the climax, the story concentrates on a more specific person in two ways. First of all the strict rotation of speech between Maura and the friend is interrupted - for once the friend has nothing to say. Secondly, for the first time in the main body of the narrative, subjective thoughts and emotions enter a story which has so far developed as objectively as a play. This is the second way in which, even in stories as short as those in the present corpus, a narrator may shift to a more specific person at the climax of the story. Both these methods are adopted in stories where the narrator is already (alone or with another) the central character of the story.

(iii) Foregrounding oneself

In other stories the narrator, rather than experiencing the events herself, is witness to another person's experiences or perhaps a subsidiary character in the event. In these stories the shift to a more specific person is even easier to detect, and is achieved either by the narrator's re-focusing the narrative on herself, or by the introduction of (pseudo) dialogue. Both these techniques can be seen in narrative 87. The narrator, Laura, is the woman whose little boy was drowned and re-appeared to comfort his mother after his death (narrative 3). Laura must have suffered some tragically traumatic years, for narrative 87 records the harrowing experience of her close friend:

I don't know whether you believe in spiritualism.
Well, my friend, opposite the Tatton was a butcher's
and it's not them that owns it now, it's a brother
that owns it now. Now his wife and I were great
friends, their daughter - was friendly with my son,
great friend of my son's, she fell in the school yard
of Gatley Primary School, and - hurt her leg and she

had a <u>lump</u> on her leg and for <u>ages</u> after her mother
said, "She's limping. Can you come and see if there's
anything wrong with her?" So she brought her down to
my house. I said, "Well, does it hurt you, Judith?"
She says, "Not really." I said, "Well, what are you
limping for?" I said, "Let me have a look." And there
was a lump at the back of her <u>leg</u> in the knee. They
took her to the hospital and she'd got cancer and they
gave her six months to live. That's my friend! But
my son was drowned,like,in between and we used to go
away always together for holidays and all that and -
she did <u>die</u>. We took her away. They said, "If she
can live just another six months she'll be alright."
<u>She didn't</u>. You could see her going down and down and
down. Another tragedy to me - and my friend, it was
<u>dreadful</u>, so somebody said would she go to the
spiritualist meeting in Manchester so we <u>went</u> and -
they said to my friend, they pointed to my friend and
they said, "Don't be upset and don't your <u>friend</u> be
upset. Your little girl - ", and she had her leg off
by the way, the cancer, and she'd got an artificial
leg and she'd ride a horse and she could swim, but you
see gradually faded away, and she said, "Your little
girl's very, very happy and she's running in a field
and holding a little boy's hand, blonde curls and brown
eyes and it's her little friend and they're both playing
together. She's got her own leg and she can run and
skip." I went cold all over because - , and then she
says, "<u>Your</u> little girl", then she did this gesture,
this woman did - she went - <u>Judith always</u> went to sleep
curling her hair up in a knot like that.

This story concerns the friend and the friend's child: Laura is

only a witness of the tragedy. At the two most critical stages, however,

Laura moves herself to centre stage (not to take the spotlight off the

friend's suffering, but rather to bring the events closer to the hearer

by personalising them as much as she can). The two most impactful

happenings of the story are the discovery of the lump in the little girl's

leg and the medium's reassurances of the happiness and healthiness of the

dead child in the 'spirit world'. For the first climactic event Laura

introduces a bit of dialogue between herself and the child, which allows

a move from the impersonal third person to the first person voice. For

the second climactic event Laura introduces her own child as companion

to the restored and happy little girl and a message of comfort from the

medium to <u>both</u> women. At each critical stage, then, the more specific

person in the shape of the narrator herself moves into a narrative the

events of which, strictly speaking, concern the third person's life.

4.3.6.2 <u>The role of dialogue as carrier of rhetorical devices</u>

The narratives of the present corpus show all the features

which leading analysts of narrative structure have suggested are typical

features marking the climax of stories and storytelling. They exhibit

'rhetorical underlining' by a suspension of the action; a heightened

vividness shown in terms of tense change, a change to a more specific

person, and the introduction of speech forms through which to re-enact

these highlights; and a change of pace. The role of dialogue in marking

the central climactic core of a story can be seen to be crucial. In the

first place, dialogue allows a vital change of pace at the climax;

secondly it creates heightened vividness; thirdly it is the vehicle for

another important rhetorical device, namely shifts along the axes third-

to-first person, plural-to-singular, which accomplish the centring of

the action on the specific and individual person. In thirty of the cases

where narratives show a switch from third to first person, or from

first person plural to first person singular, this switch is achieved by

means of dialogue or pseudo dialogue which allows the narrator to step

in and speak directly to the hearer in her own voice. In any story,

therefore, where the narrator is, strictly speaking, a secondary witness

rather than a central experient, dialogue is essential as the vehicle that

allows a shift to the particular and personal first person voice. Without

dialogue the narrative remains distant and impersonal, even where the

drama should be most intense.

Conversely, with the aid of dialogue a third person experience may

become, or seem to become, <u>personal</u> experience, hence more 'real' and

more immediate.

One example can serve to show a variety of the ways dialogue enables the storyteller to foreground and underline narrative events, and how it can pace, temper and emphasise the story. Though this story has already been quoted in full, for convenience sake it will be transcribed again here. The narrator is Cecily, the story, narrative 102.

> They came the other night with this little boy and
> he was about four (they said he was about four) and
> took this child round with them and they got as far
> as the spare room and he hadn't said very much at all
> but apparently he liked the cellar, He thought that
> was terrific-and the other rooms,and then they went
> up to the room at the top which we've always called
> 'the attic'. We no longer call it the attic - we
> call it 'the fourth bedroom'! And the child came down,
> sat in the corner for a minute and he told this most
> <u>fantastic</u> story about there being a ghost up there!
>
> I said, "A ghost?" I said, "Well, that's very odd.
> I've never seen a ghost and I lived here a <u>very</u> long
> time." I said, "I've never seen one. I'd <u>love</u> to
> see one. What's he like?" you see.
>
> So-"Oh, he's a nasty one, a nasty one." So his
> father said, "Well, there's nice ghosts as well as
> nasty ones."
>
> "Oh, this is a nasty one, daddy." So I said, "Well,
> what did he look like?"
>
> "Oh, I didn't <u>see</u> him," he said, "I <u>heard</u> him. He
> was talking to another ghost and he was nasty too!"
>
> Nothing would persuade this child that there
> wasn't one.

The dialogue makes the total effect of this small story. As far as event goes nothing much happens (a little boy says he hears two ghosts talking in Cecily's attic, that is all), but by using dialogue Cecily is able to spin this small circumstance into a delightful story. The dialogue makes the story last longer; allows the word 'ghost' to be repeated often enough to let the significance of the occasion sink into the dullest brain; allows the whole of what action there is to be repeated several times; and both presents and interprets the events. In addition, the dialogue is the vehicle for the rhetorical devices mentioned by Labov

and Longacre as marking the climax of stories. It underlines the action
by introducing "more words" at the critical narrative stage, not allowing
the event to go by before its significance is recognised; it allows for
a shift of tense and for the introduction of the first person which to-
gether create heightened vividness; it changes the pace, isolating the
complication from orientation and closure. Dialogue is both meat and
seasoning to the story, and far from ignorantly used.

So far, then, it is the ways that dialogue is used at the climax of
a narrative that have been examined. In a small minority of stories,
however, dialogue occurs elsewhere - perhaps during the orientation, but
in most cases throughout the story, either as (a) a method of pacing the
narrative, or as (b) the primary means of information-presentation. These
usages will now be very briefly illustrated.

4.3.7   Pacing the narrative

Dialogue has the ability to 'fix' an incident by attaching a
little more force or drama to it. A skilful or lively narrator often
capitalises on this aspect of dialogue in order to pace her narratives
or to guide a listener through a long episodic account. Narrative (D),
the story told by Rose with which this chapter began, illustrates this
technique particularly well. It is paced by its dialogue and pseudo-
dialogue. The orientation of this story takes place in two main informa-
tion blocks, the first concerning the cause and nature of Rose's journey
to Walsall, the second concerning the physical condition of Aunty Ethel.
Between the two information blocks, there is a block of dialogue between
Rose and her cousin which serves to make a smooth transition from one
to the other. Later again, the orientating information about Aunty
Ethel's condition is followed by a flashback about the last visit Rose
had made to the sick woman. This flashback is both preceded and followed

by pseudo-dialogue. The climax of the story is when Rose sees her
warning figure walk past the toilet door. This information is given,
sandwiched between pseudo-dialogue,

> ... and my cloaked figure went past. Well! I just
> literally froze. I said, "It's ages and ages since
> I saw that!" and I just <u>looked</u>. "My God! The
> Angel of Death! It <u>had</u> to be!"

The result then follows ("So, I went down") again fixed by pseudo-
dialogue ("Come on, dog, let's go for a walk!"). A bit of dialogue with
her husband follows the apostrophe ("I was right, you know. That one
never came downstairs"). Every crucial structural or rhetorical stage
is thus fixed by the quotation of thought or speech.

Many of the illustrations of the ways narrators use dialogue have
been from stories told by storytellers who have already been much quoted
in this study - Rose, Agnes, Laura, Audrey and Violet. In case it should
be thought that the rhetorical techniques discussed here are merely
peculiarities of these women's styles, the second illustration of the
pacing of a narrative by dialogue will be drawn from a story told by a
previously unquoted storyteller. This is an entertaining but episodic
account of a visit to a medium. Like all multi-episode stories, its
structure is less well defined than in single episode narratives, but can
be defined as follows: first, there is an orienting episode; then three
<u>complication</u> episodes which take place at the seance; then an episode
which forms a <u>closure</u> and presents a moral to the whole. Each episode
itself thus corresponds to one of the familiar structural elements -
<u>orientation</u> to <u>closure</u>.

Narrative 77 told by Jane

aperture	When I was in business, this is what I used to do and I had a funny experience.

Orienting episode

orientation	narrative	I was reading the cup and I said to one girl,
	pseudo-dialogue	"Ooh, there's a little black girl in here!"
complication	narrative	Both the other girls said - there were about five of us friends together - and
	dialogue	she said, "What about going to the spiritualist's tonight?"
result	dialogue	So we said, "Oh, yes!"
	narrative	and we went but we didn't know what we were letting ourselves <u>in</u> for!

First seance episode

orientation	narrative	It was a developing circle for mediums (and, however, the lady on the door -. I got the -)
	pseudo-dialogue	"Ooh!" they said. "All take hands, friends."
complication	narrative	They turned the lights off and I got the giggles and I couldn't stop laughing. The medium on the door said,
	dialogue	"Keep on laughing, friend. You've brought that little <u>black</u> girl <u>with</u> you." I said, "Oh?"

Second seance episode

	narrative	I giggled all the while. I couldn't stop, and she described my grandfather to me. He was a marvellous musician, played every instrument. She described him to me,

	dialogue	and my friend said, "Oh! Let's go home! Ooh! Let's go!" I said, "Oh, no! I'm not going now. I want to see what's going on!"

Third seance episode

	narrative	They had one of those dark stoves - black stove with a pipe going up - and in a little while a woman jumped up, a young woman, and banged her head on this thing and they had to bring some man in from outside, I don't know who he was and he had to massage her for about half an hour before she came to. It frightened me to death,
	pseudo-dialogue	and I thought, "Oh! It's just as in the Bible - possessed with devils."

Closing episode

complication	narrative	That's what - and I went to see my grandma just after that
	pseudo-dialogue	and I told her, you know, that this lady said that this gentleman who was so musical - . "There was an old lady and he would be waiting for her and would guide her when she came to pass away." I told my grandma this.
result	narrative	Well, she jumped on me. She said,
	pseudo-dialogue	"I've never heard such rubbish!"she said, "I can get there myself! I don't want anybody's help! Don't go to that place anymore - it's the work of the devil!"

Jane's narrative shows, therefore, how accurately, delicately and amusingly dialogue may structure and pace a long narrative.

4.3.8   Dialogue as primary means of information-presentation

Occasionally a narrator uses dialogue not only to mark the climax or the successive structural stages but as the primary narrative technique,providing information by means of dialogue alone. Narrative

number 13 (see above, pp.542-3) uses this technique. The story proceeds, after the orientation, solely by means of dialogue until the climax. In all there are nineteen quoted speeches in the complication, a further two in the reframe which follows the main story, and it even ends with a dialogue-like gloss.

> You'd naturally think, "Bet she's looked there
> before!" But, oh, no. One or two things have
> happened to me that seemed odd, you know.

To move a narrative along solely or primarily by means of dialogue appears to be rare, though of course the tendency to rely on dialogue varies from person to person. However, of the women in the main sample, only Audrey consistently uses dialogue as a primary narrative technique. Of six stories told by means of paired exchanges of dialogue, in which the discursive narrative voice played little part, four were contributed by this single storyteller. Using dialogue as the means by which a story is moved along may therefore be one of the few aspects of storytelling that can be seen as an individual stylistic preference rather than a culturally determined convention.

However that might be, dialogue in some form and measure is obviously a structural and rhetorical necessity in oral storytelling. Not only is it necessary, but it is seen to be necessary by the storytellers themselves. This is most obvious where narrators seem deliberately to distort logic in order to be able to introduce a little dialogue interlude. For example, the strange presentation of the events of the following narrative can only be accounted for by the desire to use dialogue.

> [GB: You wouldn't like to tell me about it,
> would you?]
>
> Yes! You see, my mother died when I was very
> small and we were brought up by our grandparents.
> And one morning, I said to one of my aunts, "Why
> did you come into my bedroom last night," and she

said, "But I <u>didn't</u>." And I said, "Oh, well, I woke
up and there was a <u>lady</u> bending over me", you see.
So they said, "Well, it was probably your <u>mother</u>
coming to see how you were." That's how my family
talk, you see!

(Narrative 23: Dora)

Again, another story includes in pseudo-dialogue information that
could more easily and directly have been given as a statement.

Only <u>one</u> time that I vividly remember and this was
many years ago and we were in Spain, and my husband's
mother. We <u>wanted</u> to take her with us actually but
she wouldn't come, and oh, it must be about eighteen
years ago and this was about - two o'clock in the
morning. Now it wasn't dark or anything, we'd just
come back from a nightclub, yes, I think it was in
1971 when it was very, very cheap, and my husband
was in the bathroom. He was cleaning his teeth or
something and I just said to him, and we'd not had
a lot to drink or anything like that, I said, "It's
funny, I've just seen your mam. Isn't it silly?" Now,
all the lights were on and I forgot <u>all</u> about it until
the next morning. We were going out to this - um -
bowling that they have in the open air and we had a
telegram saying that his mother had died. That was
unexpected because although she had sugar diabetes,
when we left her about eight days previously, she was
well, and she'd died at - um - as far as the coroner
thinks, about quarter to two on the Tuesday night, but
it was the Wednesday morning before they found out
because the bedroom door was <u>locked</u> and they couldn't
get in. Now <u>that</u> - and I've never forgotten that.
It's very funny.

(Narrative 101: Gloria)

Here the dialogue ("'It's funny, I've just seen your Mam. Isn't it
silly?'") is meaningless except as a rhetorical device, its use here a
testimony to its stylistic ubiquity.

It is no wonder that dialogue is seen by storytellers to be so neces-
sary. Consider, for example, the difference between the two stories
below. Both are told by retired men and both tell of déjà vu experiences.
They are remarkably alike as experiences: remarkably different as
stories.

(A)   Now I do, now that is something that I do believe
        in. I suppose one of the best I could answer that
        is in - during the war I went to America, and I went
        to a naval air station that we were based at in
        Brunswick, Maine, and a group of us decided to, one
        Sunday, to go out and ... I was describing a church
        to them and a particular area and it's something I've
        never been to before in my life and - even to this
        day - and it was there! Everything was there and one
        of my colleagues was absolutely amazed and I said,
        "Well, I don't know why", and that's the ONLY TIME
        in my life! I said, "I've been here before!" But I
        hadn't. I knew I hadn't. I'd never been to America
        before so I knew it was just impossible and I thought,
        "Well - ." When I started to reflect I thought, "Well,
        is there - ? Have I read a book or a description or a
        novel in which some of the buildings were described?"
        I couldn't recall at all, but I must admit I was some-
        what nonplussed when I got there. They said, "Well,
        how did you know to get there?" and I couldn't tell
        them but I just knew. It was amazing. I suppose in
        the sense that I think ... in wartime, particularly
        if you're on active service, I think you develop a sort
        of sixth sense.

                                    (Narrative 107: Alec)

(B)   I once had a peculiar experience, it would have been in
        the 1930s. I went to Guernsey of all places - for a
        holiday - and do you know a little chapel called - ?
        Well, it's made out of bits of pottery done in a kind
        of mosaic. As I walked round the corner I had a feeling
        that I'd been there before and I've never been there
        before in my life. I don't know why and I couldn't think
        of why anything like that would have happened, but
        normally I don't really have very much idea about these
        things.

                                    (Narrative 108: Joseph)

Alec's story is longer, more dramatic and more convincing than Joseph's.

The men's experiences are virtually identical, the situations identical,

the events identical and the subjective accounts identical. The only

difference between Alec's account and Joseph's is that the former uses

extensive amounts of dialogue.

    Dialogue, then, is basic to effective narrative and is seen as such

by even relatively unskilled storytellers. Far from using dialogue ig-

norantly, storytellers respond sensitively to a feeling for the narrative

art itself, and far from using dialogue at random and without aesthetic effect, they use it in accordance with universal cultural rules which have been demonstrated to underlie literary storytelling, traditional tales and oral storytelling from very different contexts. These rules are part of a narrative cultural tradition and the tellers of the stories considered here are therefore in a very real sense folk narrators.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to discover the basic linguistic and narrative techniques that are available to even the most inexperienced storyteller. The men and women who told the stories that have been studied in this research are not great artists and they have not had repertoires of well tried traditional tales at their disposal. They have had to work with their own personal experience as their subject matter and the basic resources of the language as their tools. Even so, the stories they have told have not been without drama, suspense and the power to move - they have a kind of structure and poetry.

If, therefore, von Sydow's original definitional description of the memorate genre is now reconsidered, it may be found to be surprisingly far from the mark. Rather than being purely personal, 'personal' stories such as these are traditional and communal in a remarkable number of ways. In the first place, only traditional concepts and communal beliefs are capable of making sense of the experiences these stories tell of, and the stories are told with just this purpose in mind. Secondly, in being reported as narrative, these experiences are further shaped by culture: the

culture provides the narrative mould into which they can be put. Once an experience is put in a particular narrative mould, the audience for that story expects certain features to be present and their expectations further shape the experience both in the private thoughts of the narrator and in the public expression she gives them. Thirdly, by making private experiences into public story, a narrator provides the mechanism whereby her experiences may be discussed, interpreted and even re-formulated. This may affect the way she remembers the experience: it will certainly affect the way she next tells someone about it. At every retelling, at every mental rehearsing, at every private review and remembrance of her experience it will become increasingly traditional and increasingly close to the cultural consensus.

Nor are memorates (at least as represented in this present work) structureless. When the stories are examined in fine detail, nearly every effect appears to derive from some cultural consensus about the proper way to tell a story. Though the overall structure the women use is very often not the linear, cause-and-effect, chronologically-linked one which Western convention has taught us (erroneously) to think of as the only fit and necessary way to tell a story, structure nevertheless the stories do always have. These structures are particularly well suited to oral stories which deal with questions of truth and reality. They allow the narrator to pay attention to the detail she herself finds significant and to emphasise those she hopes her audience will find most persuasive. Rather than paying out her narrative line in even lengths, she may choose to fetch a little of it back in order to pay it out again and again at varying speeds, or she may tangle it together to make a complex pattern round a core event. These are not inefficient or deviant ways to tell a story, nor are they structureless: they are simply alternatives.

Thirdly, these stories have a sort of poetry - the poetry that comes from power to move. That power in turn comes because the women are handling cultural narrative patterns with the skill and familiarity which is given to them simply by virtue of having been born into that culture. As hearers too, the audience respond to the patterns the tellers create, hardly recognising perhaps the cause of their sympathy. The devices (if such a self-conscious word may be used) the storytellers use evolve from the language itself - from its syntax in particular. By means of simple conjunction and disjunction, blocks or events may be welded together or isolated from each other to form a semantic complex at each structural stage of the story. The inherent resources of the language's wide range of tenses is utilised to pace a narrative, to delay it, suspend it, or alternatively move it forward with force and speed.

It is not only tempo that may be varied: so may the amount of personalness, directness, or subjectivity. Here the ordinary ability to express the past spoken word in a present account gives a narrator the power to narrow the story to a simple dramatic focus, to a personal re-enactment of a past which is necessarily impersonal to the hearer.

These are no doubt very simple stories. In a sense, though, that is their interest for the observer-analyst. From them we can learn what perhaps it is most necessary to learn: that is, what are the basic linguistic resources open to a member of a culture when he or she sets out to tell a story.

5.2 Specimen analysis

The analysis below attempts to show, as completely as possible, the way a good, but artless and untrained, native storyteller manipulates the three variables considered in this chapter - conjunction and disjunction; tense; and dialogue - in order to entertain, convince and engage

the sympathies of an audience. In passing, too, it illustrates the main

structural elements to be found in an oral story and one of the major

patterns into which those elements are arranged.

With this worked and annotated illustration of some of the main themes

of this and the previous chapter, the analysis of the memorate corpus is

brought to an end.

Narrative Number 60 told by Rose

Rose:	What do you want me to tell you?
GB:	Tell me how you think you're psychic.

Pre-narrative	Because I know what's going to happen. I've got a pretty good idea, yeah. How do I know? Inside there and the fact also I've been able to tell fortunes by cards. (Verbal complexity, universal experience and) (condition)
Aperture	
Abstract	I was able to read cups, reading tea-leaves and this was when I was - oh forty, fifty years ago. I was young, in my teens then, you see, and I frightened myself to death, so I said, "No way!" So I left tea-leaf business alone. ((a) Tense shifts to simple past, the basic narra-) (tive mode, to begin abstract.) ((b) Main events charted in a pair of co-) (ordinate clauses.) ((c) Resolution element of the abstract signalled) (by the place marker 'So'.) ((d) Pseudo-dialogue underlines moral of the) (story.)
Orientation	When I was married, and we'd been married about - Lord knows how long (outer time frame.)
{ explanatory comment	The war interrupted, of course, we never had any children until 1947.
orientation resumes	Now in that summer of 1947 I used to tell all fortunes by cards. (place marker (now) realigns narrative) (inner time frame, dated exactly)

interruption and reply	[GB: What's this? Tarot cards?] No, no, playing cards, each card has a meaning, and all the cards together spell out a message.
orientation resumes	Anyway, (place marker realigns story after interruption) I was about six or seven months pregnant and we go down to see a relation of my aunt, no, not my aunt, my husband's aunt, and she was a great believer in the cards and they have one son. Now (place marker focuses attention on son.) he was in a very good way of business. He was quite a top-notch in Rolls Royce. and anyway (second place marker realigns orientation to its) (major concern.) we got down there on the Saturday afternoon and there was Aunty Ethel, Uncle Harold, who are John's aunt and uncle, myself complete with lump of course, and John, and Uncle Will met us at Crewe, at Crewe station, you see, with Rolls Royce and that naturally, and took us to his house and we'd a terrific thunderstorm in the afternoon. (excluding one interruption and two interpretive) (comments, the orientation has been blocked in) (in a single sentence of eleven clauses, simply) (linked with and)
Complication (1st plane)	So - (Place marker) To pass the time away, Will and his wife said "Let's tell our fortunes, Rose," so I said, "O.K. then," never thinking about anything and they got the cards out and we started you know, and all I could tell her was that all I could see and all I could smell was flowers and all I could see was a coffin sitting there in the hall on a bier. ((a) Begins with common place marker (so).) ((b) First plane of complication is another long) (co-ordinate sentence (ten clauses linked by) (and).) ((c) Dialogue exchange precedes climactic action,) (serving to underline the seriousness of the)

(ensuing event by the nonchalance of the   )
(discourse exchange.)

Still

Now it was a beautiful house with a great big square hall you see. There's the lounge at the front and there's a dining room and there's a morning room and there's this, that, and the other, you see.

((a) Begins with place marker (<u>Now</u>).   )
((b) Still begins in past tense but moves imme-)
(diately to present.)
((c) Freezes the moment in order to:)
((i) Separate narrative planes, and)
(therefore –)
((ii) allow repetition of account of her)
(vision. Together these –)
((iii) help space out the narrative at this)
(critical stage.)

Complication

(2nd plane)

Went to bed at night, everybody laughed – they thought, "Oh, she's just, you know, she's preg-nant, you know." We went to bed at night and I was crying and John said to me, "What the hell's the matter with you?" he says, "I can't under-stand you." I said, "I want to go home. All I can see, John – I can smell flowers and all I can see is a coffin and it's on a bier in that hall." He said, "Oh, don't be so silly, Rose! Let's go – . You'll be alright. Get off to sleep!" No sleep for me!

((a) Second plane told predominantly in dialogue)
(and pseudo-dialogue which allows: first an)
(ironic comment on; then a repetition of, the)
(central experience.)
((b) A change of pace in this plane is achieved)
(by dropping the <u>and</u>-linkage and presenting)
(almost identical clauses as discrete sen-)
(tences – "less conjunction and transition.")
((Longacre))

Complication

(3rd plane)

We went home on the Sunday and Aunty Ethel said to me going home in the train, "What was the matter with you yesterday, Rose?" So I told her. So I said, "There's a coffin – . There's a funeral in that house, you know." She says, "Is there?" I says, "Yes, I don't know who it is but it's definitely in that house!"

(A third person is introduced to ask questions and)
(thus enable Rose to repeat the information. The)
(complication has therefore been retarded, by)
(having two successive planes imposed on the)

	(first. It has also been rhetorically underlined) (by the change from the narrative to the) (dialogue mode, giving increasing emphasis and) (objectivity to a subjective experience. Note,) (too, how at this stage the focus is moved to a) (more specific person. Whereas in the orienta-) (tion seven out of sixteen pronouns refer to the) (first person plural (we/our) in the three) (planes of the complication the number of first) (person plural pronouns decreases to two out of) (ten, two out of eighteen, and two out of nine.) (Conversely, the number of first person singular) (pronouns increases from four out of sixteen in) (the orientation to five out of ten, seven out of) (eighteen, and five out of nine in the three) (planes of the complication. Likewise the second) (person, absent in the orientation, is intro-) (duced into the second and third planes of the) (complication, this shift, like the shift to) (first person, being made possible by the intro-) (duction of dialogue.)
Resolution	So, anyway, I think it was - oh, it would be - July 19th - in the August '47, that's right - their nephew - he was fourteen years old, their only son, their only child, everything planned and a brilliant scholar. He came over to see his aunty Ethel and contracted polio and in three weeks he was dead. Yes. And his coffin stood on a bier in hall. ((a) Double place marker (So, anyway).) ((b) In contrast to the protracted complication,) (the resolution stage of the story is short') (and simple, and from that contrast it gains) (in dramatic impact.) ((c) Note, too, that the resolution is given in) (a simple and-linked sentence, which con-) (trasts with the quickly alternating sen-) (tences of the dialogue which constitutes) (the second and third planes of the) (complication.)
Closure	So, it so affected me I said, "Never again will I tell a fortune." Frightened me to death. I said, "No!" (Closure marked with place marker (so) brings) (the story up to date and makes a value-) (judgement on the experience.)

The major stylistic and structural patterns in the stories of the memorate corpus as a whole have now been described. Previous chapters (six to nine) attempted to illustrate the types of belief upon which the stories rely and to see how far narrative is a reliable index of belief within a given community. It now remains, therefore, to try to bring together all the themes, analysis and arguments of the research in order to see what we have been able to reveal about supernatural belief, memorate and legend in an urban community. This is the task of the next, the concluding, chapter.

CHAPTER 12

Conclusion

1. General Remarks

The shaping aim of the study as it was first planned was to move away from the antiquarian bias of previous work on the folklore of ghosts and out into the community in order to "shed light on the present". As Richard Dorson argued, "we have done very little to collect our own culture, or even to recognise its forms".[1] This has been particularly true of the British work on supernatural traditions. The tendency of all but a very few scholars has been to retire to the library and compile collections of legends. In part the impetus for this latter approach is very understandable: and, as the present work got underway, it became only too apparent why collections of legends have so far been the favoured method of presenting the folklore of the supernatural. At its best the library approach to the study and presentation of ghost traditions has rested on sound instincts - delicacy towards other people's feelings, a search for continuing patterns rather than passing fashions in ideas, and a healthy reluctance to become involved in wrangles about the truth or falsity of supernatural concepts. When once the researcher decides to try another approach, to meet the problem so to speak head on and bluntly ask what and whether people believe, (s)he is immediately confronted with just these social and intellectual difficulties. It is impossible, faced with a dignified and intelligent informant who insists that she has seen a ghost, not to take a stance on the reality or otherwise of her experience: simply one has to decide whether to believe her or not. Secondly, having decided to believe her and to accept her interpretation of the occurrence, one has to try to assess how far her experiences and opinions are idiosyncratic and how far they might be common to her peer group and/ or the wider community. Thirdly, if one takes those steps - decides to

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1   Dorson (1981), p. 2.

believe, accepts the interpretation and does not dismiss it as idio-
syncratic - then one has to shoulder the moral responsibility for one's
informants' sensibilities. There could well be many among the women
interviewed for the present study who would be puzzled, hurt or shamed
to find their deeply held convictions classified as 'folklore'.

These problems, which now seem so difficult, however did not present
themselves when this work was planned; they revealed themselves slowly
and gradually after the hand was set to the plough. In many ways it is
having to wrestle with those problems which has led to some of the more
interesting, rewarding, and I hope valuable, parts of the work.

Technical and methodological problems also played a part in the
eventual shaping of the study. Once initiated, the work had to be con-
stantly adapted in the light of experience. Originally I intended to
study narratives but, as doubts about the validity of this approach to
belief developed, this scheme had to be modified to allow belief itself
to be the primary focus. By a perhaps fortunate irony, having asked about
beliefs I obtained narratives and the finished project became (except in
the historical chapters) principally a study of narrative. It is not,
however, a collection of or study of legends, but of memorates. It would
seem that in the context of belief it is the humbler, more elusive, less
well-known narrative genre that is the favoured one. Much of the interest
of the study has been in this discovery, and in the analysis of the forms
and functions of this neglected genre.

The work should perhaps be regarded as a pragmatic one which des-
cribes and examines what was presented in the course of the fieldwork and
does not seek too much to explore more distant territory. The method
itself is somewhat eclectic, developing ideas as they arose in the field-
work. The result is perhaps a work which is not as methodologically or
theoretically rigorous as I had hoped, but which is able at its best to

present a holistic picture of belief systems and the rhetoric through

which they are presented - a picture which is a more vital and less

limited one than is usually achieved in more formal studies.

Some of the most puzzling theoretical questions, though aired, remain

unresolved. Other questions, where there is more data to work on, have

been somewhat clarified. As far as the interrelationship of narrative

and belief is concerned, for instance, it has been possible to substan-

tiate three significant claims:

(1) that in one typical community speakers rely very heavily on

narrative in the explication of points of view;

(2) that in this context, narrative functions as a competence-claim;

(3) that, as personal experience constitutes for such reference

groups as the one studied in Gatley the strongest claim to be competent

to express an opinion, memorate is by far and away the preferred narra-

tive genre for the discussion of controversial topics. This offers clear

evidence for the original hypothesis that collections of legend are but

fitful and inaccurate reflections of the state of supernatural belief in

any given community, and that memorates, far from being idiosyncratic,

are good guides to the nature of contemporary traditions, both beliefs

and narratives. The best evidence for the existence of a continuing

vital tradition is provided when one can juxtapose old legends and newly

collected memorates and see that they are substantially the same in form

and content. At its best this is what the present study does; it can

therefore perhaps be fairly claimed that it has made a contribution to

modern folkloristics in the sense of bringing us one step further towards

the recognition of contemporary forms of folklore.

The work developed in three main stages: a review of the literature

which provides some historical perspective on the folklore of ghosts; an

analytic description of the types of supernatural lore found among the

women interviewed in Gatley; and an examination of structural and performative aspects of memorate as a genre. The following represents a brief résumé and appraisal of each of these aspects of the work.

2. <u>The literature and history of the concept of the ghost</u>

The most educative part of this study has been the critical reading of major texts on the supernatural since 1572, and the detective work involved in trying to reconstruct a history of the ghost. From this reading it would appear that the largest single influence on the concept of the ghost was the Reformation. Two shaping factors were apparently set in motion at this time: a change in the ghost's role from the religious to the secular and eventually to the domestic sphere; and a harsh polarisation of ghost types into devilish and heavenly. The banishment of the ghost from Protestant theology inevitably meant a diminution of its spheres of influence. From being the arbiter of spiritual matters it declined first to a social role, and today its chief occupations are intervention in domestic crises and the regularisation of family affairs. Another consequence of its banishment was the necessity to redefine ghostly encounters. It is at this stage, it seems, that the polarisation of ghostly types into wholly good and wholly evil manifestations was at its most extreme, for the humble ghost was transmogrified into the messenger of higher forces, either God himself or the Devil incarnate. In succeeding decades the close association of ghosts with demons and witches accelerated this polarisation. On the one hand, poltergeists and malignant phantoms wilfully hurt and frightened innocent people; on the other hand, lifelike apparitions of familiar people appeared on benevolent errands, righting wrongs, paying debts, preventing injury and injustice, healing

the sick and issuing timely warnings. The polarity, fear and confusion

of the age is well-expressed in Hamlet's famous exhortation to his father's

ghost:

> Angels and ministers of grace defend us! -
> Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
> Bring with thee airs from Heaven or blasts from Hell,
> Be thy intents wicked or charitable
> Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
> That I will speak to thee ....

Hamlet's address also reveals an aspect of belief in ghosts which was a

constant during the post-Reformation years:

> ... tell
> Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death
> Have burst their cerements! Why the sepulchre,
> Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urn'd
> Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
> To cast thee up again! What may this mean
> [....................................]
> Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?[2]

Simply, ghosts were thought to be meaningful phenomena: they had both

cause and purpose.

With the passage of time this seems to have been the aspect of the

supernatural stereotype which was most subject to erosion. Though the

eighteenth century provides less in the way of reliable contemporary

documentation of belief than the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, what

evidence there is about the folklore of ghosts in the period indicates

that there was an enlargement of the motiveless, non-lifelike, non-

benevolent forms of ghost at the expense of benevolent and recognisable

apparitions. This is, of course, what one would expect of an age in which

church and intellectual establishment joined to disparage, discourage and

discredit popular supernatural beliefs. 1710-1840 thus appears to be a

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2   _Hamlet_, Act I, Scene 4.

period when some of the older concepts, kept intact since the middle

ages despite the efforts of the Protestant church and clergy, finally

began to break down before a feeling for rationalism, the growth of the

secular state, the decline of magic and the rise of the mechanical

philosophy. In a mechanical world there was no place for a supernatural

world-order, therefore ghosts and other supernatural entities could only

be meaningless and disharmonious intrusions or private and probably

illusory personal experiences.

This movement is apparent too in the middle and later years of the

nineteenth century. Folklore collections published in the fifty years

succeeding the inauguration of the Folklore Society contain large numbers

of legends about apparently meaningless supernatural manifestations. In

these legends we see the ghost assume characteristics which in a previous

age were assigned to elementals, so that as well as countless animal,

fiery and grotesque ghosts such as were popular in the eighteenth century,

there are also numerous mischievous, alarming spirits such as boggarts

and bogeys. Accounts of 'ladies' of various hues multiply, as do visions

of 'monks' and historical characters. These essentially motiveless

apparitions, like the boggarts and bogeys, are peculiar to certain loca-

tions: other terrifying manifestations such as poltergeists might attach

themselves either to people or to places. These are the main charac-

teristics of the rural legends brought together by the compilers of the

early regional folklore collections.

Popular work of the period, drawing from these sources as well as

from guidebooks, local histories, oral testimony and personal experience,

presents a similar range of phenomena with one very important and sig-

nificant addition adapted from older traditions - that is, the purposeful,

lifelike ghost. The most common form the latter ghost type assumes in

the nineteenth century is that of the wraith - the spirit of the dying or

the not-dead: the second most common is the ghost who re-enacts his own death. A third type, only sketchily represented in the earlier stereotype, begins to figure more largely in these sources. The ghost who returns for love of life or earthly things and people, or who comes to intervene for good in the domestic life of its descendants, seems to be the forerunner of the 'witness' type of revenant which plays so large a part in the supernatural belief system of the women interviewed for this study. As far as the behaviour of the purposeful ghost is concerned, then, in the years from 1570 to the present we see a gradual movement from morally directed actions to personal caring - in effect a gradual domestication.

The work in Gatley also reveals the polarisation of supernatural types in extreme form. On the one hand, the women recognise a category of "ghosts", "spirits" and "things in houses". These are viewed with a mixture of terror, horror and revulsion: the women are very reluctant to admit to believing in them and try to dismiss them as "superstition" or unchristian ignorance. On the other hand, there is a high level of belief that dead family members can return at times of crisis. For the purposes of this work these two categories of manifestations have been termed "poltergeists" and "revenants" respectively. In the women's belief system they are not considered to be subtypes of a single overall category, but mutually exclusive, diametrically opposed poles of experience. Only "poltergeists" are supernatural phenomena: "revenants" are naturally-occurring features of the lives of loving and sensitive people.

Attempting to construct a history of ghost belief in the last four hundred years from the textual evidence available has also been extremely educative in a cautionary way. For each century the most readily available source-books present pitfalls for the unwary. In particular, the most frequently-quoted texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries - that is, the work of Glanvil, Bovet, Sinclair, Grose and

Brand - have been found to be potentially misleading. Glanvil, Bovet

and Sinclair are self-consciously and determinedly unrepresentative of

their age: Grose appears to have relied heavily on Glanvil rather than

describe the ghostlore of his own age; and Brand, in his section on the

supernatural, quotes extensively from Grose. This sort of cross-

fertilisation affects succeeding work to an equal extent. In nineteenth

century popular publications in particular, writers often make undis-

criminating use of texts of previous ages, mixing together items borrowed

from works written in very different cultural contexts and with very

different aims in mind. Unfortunately antiquarians and folklorists too

are not above using these popular sources, and elsewhere rely un-

questioningly on each other's published work. When they do foray into

the field to collect material, they go actively in search of legends in

the old style, what Hunt calls with unconscious irony "wild tales".[3] Thus

where the nineteenth century collections accurately reflect living

beliefs, they tend to be those of previous generations - at best a guide

to the folklore of the late eighteenth century, at worst mere passing

moments in the flux of tradition. Many or most present day works, texts

written by or for folklorists as well as those written for the commercial

market, similarly bring together material from extremely varied sources

relying not only on reputable antiquarian work such as that of Aubrey but

also on all the misleading authors mentioned above, plus guidebooks,

local histories, newspapers, nineteenth century legend collections and the

work of psychical researchers. There can be no way that such "hetero-

geneous ideas ... yoked by violence together"[4] can reveal much about the

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3   Hunt, p. xxi.

4   Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, vol. I [London, 1954],
     p. 11.

present state of supernatural beliefs. As a consequence many important

questions about present day ghostlore have been left unanswered. In an

earlier chapter[5] of this work these were listed as follows:

1. Has the concept of the purposeful ghost been completely

   eroded?

2. How far is haunting restricted to specific locations?

3. What aspects of the stereotype of a haunted house have

   remained constant?

4. Of what does the experience of 'seeing a ghost' consist

   in our culture?

5. Is belief in the supernatural integrated into an overall

   philosophical system?

One useful product of the research is that it has been able to throw

light on these areas of concern, at least as regards one modern community.

We have been able to trace changes in the concept of the purposeful

ghost and to illuminate the stereotype of the meaningless malevolent one.

In particular it has proved possible to establish that in one ordinary

urban community the experience of 'seeing a ghost', or rather the expres-

sion "seeing a ghost", is restricted in use. As the women of Gatley see

it, "ghosts" are features of haunted houses, essentially phenomena limited

to special classes of place such as houses where suicides or murders

have been committed or where former residents have suffered intense

unhappiness. The crimes and sorrows leave their mark on the building

in the form of "waves" of "energy" which manifest themselves as mysterious

noises, self-opening doors, the switching on and off of lights without

human agency, involuntarily flushing toilets, flying objects or spirits

which interfere with living residents. These are in essence very similar

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5   Chapter 5, Section 5.

to the characteristics of haunted houses in the stereotypes of previous centuries, though perhaps less exotic, marvellous and baroque than the manifestations which, say, the seventeenth century could offer. In contrast to "ghosts" and haunted houses there is the friendly apparition of a dead member of the family which is personal to the percipient rather than peculiar to any location - the "revenant" which is the domesticated descendant of the enterprising, loquacious and insistent purposeful ghost of the immediate post-Reformation period. These findings contradict the assertions of several modern commentators on the supernatural who, because they have relied on the reports of the Society for Psychical Research instead of initiating their own enquiries, see belief in the supernatural as declining in present day Britain and the modern ghost as a pale and purposeless shadow of its former self.

The research has also shown that, just as in the past, supernatural concepts take their impetus from and are shaped by a comprehensive world view. The sphere of operation of the medieval ghost was an hierarchical spiritual world, that of the seventeenth century ghost was a world of social and moral obligations, rites and observances; that of the revenant perceived by the women of Gatley is an orderly, caring, domestic sphere reflecting an orderly, caring creation supervised by a personal God. Within such an overview the women's beliefs in revenants are fitted into a wider supernatural system. Belief in esoteric psychic powers is widespread, expressing itself through the concepts of premonitions, omens, second sight and telepathy. Together these beliefs have two vital psychological functions: they are strenuous attempts to bring rhyme and reason to a chaotic world; and they give the highest sanction to traditional female values and thus are the strongest justification for the lives the women have led and the duties which they have given their lives to performing. Beliefs in revenants, premonitions and so on are thus one aspect of a unified and consistent religious and social philosophy.

I feel that it is only through sympathetic fieldwork that insights such as these may be had. Archival researches have built-in á priori assumptions and also produce essentially contextless narrative material, or narrativeless (and therefore unillustrated and ultimately unproven) conjectural reconstructions. Only in face-to-face interviews does one acquire the specific within the general, the narrative in its context, the philosophy illustrated by the personal experience which validates it.

I would argue too that ultimately it is only through such work that the image of folklore can be improved and the term dissociated from its unfortunate connotations of fallacy and ignorance. We owe it to ourselves and to our informants to stop representing supernatural beliefs by a collection of stories about 'ladies', boggarts, fairies and giants and to seek honestly to present the real lore of contemporary folk.

3.   Memorate

The title of this study, "Aspects of supernatural belief, memorate and legend in a contemporary urban environment", reflects the assumptions brought to it in the planning stages. In particular it reflects the assumption, common among folklorists, that where belief exists one will find traditional legends. With hindsight it now seems that it would have been more appropriate to speak only of "belief and memorate", for legends are scarce in the collected data. Legends in the sense of traditional or historical legends are absent altogether: there are a small number of family traditions and a handful of stories told at second or third hand which are more difficult to classify. Memorate is the dominant narrative genre. It is used throughout conversation to demonstrate the speaker's understanding of the subject-matter and to explain, illustrate and justify points of

view. In this study, even where stories are told simply for the fun of

it, respondents still prefer to tell memorates.

Analysing these memorates to show their nature, function and

structure, and to describe the way they are performed in context, has

been the most enjoyable part of the research. I hope that these analyses

will go some way to improving our understanding of this neglected and

underrated genre. Through such studies one can discover, in Montell and

Allen's words:

> ... the role memorate can play in an individual's
> life, and ... the relationships between individual
> experience and community tradition. 6

Memorate's particular value is that it both internalises and externalises

significant experiences. It internalises them in the sense of being an

aid to memory. A continual mental rehearsal and/or public narration of

an incident sharpens the thinker/speaker's awareness of those aspects of

the original experience which had particular emotional or interpretive

significance and thus enables her to fasten them in her memory and to

incorporate them in her philosophy. Narrative externalises experience,

too, by being a public rendition. In this rendition, a speaker offers

the experience up for corporate discussion and cultural shaping. Memorates

thus provide the means by which private experiences may be adjusted to

communal patterns. In the case of memorates such as those studied here

their narration "gives body and form to ... saving beliefs"[7] in the

immortality of the spirit and the indestructibility of love. In thus

externalising and internalising experience, memorates show themselves to

be one of the most valuable conceptual tools at our disposal.

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6   William Lynwood Montell and Barbara Allen, "A Biographical Approach
     to the Study of Memorates", International Folklore Review, 2 (1982),
     103.

7   Bronislaw Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion", in Bronislaw
     Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays [London,
     1974], p. 51

The present data give evidence of memorate's functioning in both these major ways, and a clear indication in particular that memorates are, so to speak, an educative force. The research strongly suggests that accounts of extraordinary experiences, circulating in the form of memorates, provide the evidence on which a consensus view of the super-natural is built. Memorates are thus not only the product of a cultural tradition but one of the means by which it is formulated.

In his influential paper "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs" Lauri Honko neatly represents the relationship between tradition and experience and suggests the relationship of narrative to both, in a now-familiar flow-chart as follows:[8]

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8   Honko (1964), 16-17.

VALUE-STRENGTHENING BE-
HAVIOR ELIMINATES STRESS

ADAPTATION OF BEHAVIOR
(PUNISHMENT, REWARD, ETC.)

NARRATION IS REPEATED
NARRATIONS BECOME
TYPIFIED

OPINIONS OF OTHERS
SOCIAL CONTROL
COLLECTIVE TRADITION

INTERPRETATION →MEMORATE >>> LEGEND

SUPERNORMALITY IS TESTED

NUMEN > BARN-SPIRIT

(THE SPIRIT IS SEEN)

FORM OF PERCEPTUAL
STIMULI IS REARRANGED
(THE SPIRIT DISAPPEARS)

RELEASING STIMULUS
(A "STRANGE" SOUND)

VISION

CULTURAL EXPLANATORY MODELS

PERCEPTUAL CONDITIONS
(DARKNESS, ETC.)

CONFLICT ~ STRESS

PRIMARY STIMULI

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
MODELS

VALUE (SUCCESS OF THE WORK)

NORM ("YOU MUST NOT SLEEP")

VIOLATION OF NORM

SANCTION ("THE SPIRIT
BECOMES ANGRY")

THE INDIVIDUAL'S PSYCHO-
PHYSICAL CONDITION
(TIREDNESS, ETC.)

LEARNED TRADITION
(LEGENDS, MEMORATES,
ONE'S EARLIER SUPER-
NORMAL EXPERIENCES)

The work on memorate in Gatley would suggest that it might be useful

to make a small modification to this basic scheme by upgrading the status

of memorate and giving it a less peripheral role.

Honko's diagram analyses the numinous experience of an Ingrian

peasant. It suggests that the peasant's vision of a barn spirit when

woken from an unscheduled sleep is initiated by the stress caused by his

violation of a norm, operating in conjunction with his cultural experiences,

the traditions he has grown up with, and the darkness which makes clear

perception impossible. The supernatural nature of the vision is attested

by its disappearance, and cultural explanatory models and the opinion of

his peers aid his interpretation. Having interpreted his experience, he

may tell of it in a memorate, or offer successive repetitions to audiences

familiar with the collective tradition, in which case it becomes stylised,

a legend. Leaving aside the question of the present relevance of the

value —> norm —> violation —> sanction box of the diagram, which seems

more appropriate to malevolent than to benevolent apparitions, one might

suggest a slight reorganisation of the right-hand boxes as follows:
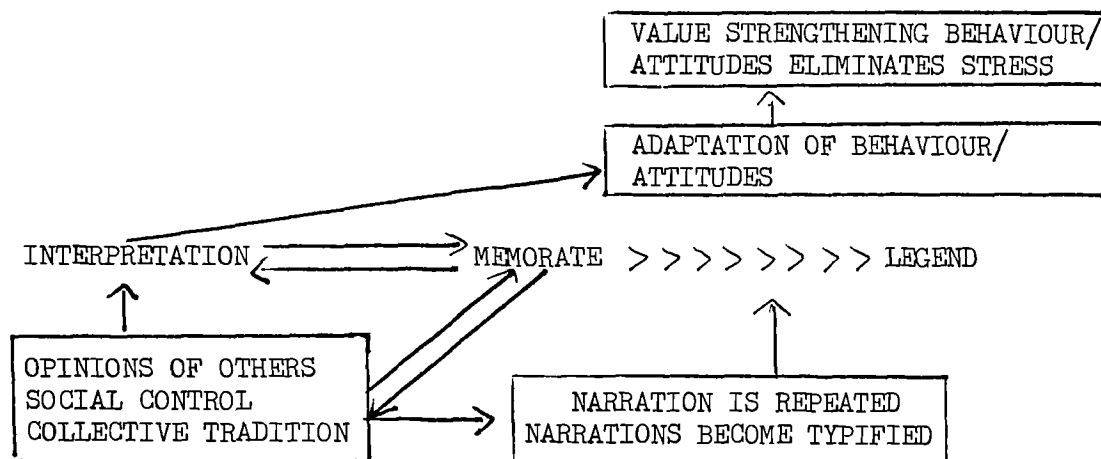
This revised diagram suggests that the interpretation of an incident does not necessarily precede the telling of a memorate (though of course it may); memorate may be synchronous with, or an aid to, interpretation — especially when submitted to the opinion of others, social control and collective tradition,through a public rendition. By making this sort of appeal to consensus opinion, experience is interpreted, behaviour or attitudes adapted, stress eliminated and value-strengthening behaviour/ attitudes encouraged. The telling of memorates is thus a vital part of the interpretive, norm-forming processes - an intellectual and cultural, as well as social and personal,form of discourse.

It follows from this that the reality of the experience, the 'truth' of the account and the 'belief' of both speaker and hearer are central to memorate. Discussing the concept of the supernatural and telling memorates about them are very delicate matters - delicate matters which have to be negotiated in public. The speaker must constantly endeavour to preserve her own memories and view of the world (that is, her own truth) while submitting them to the scrutiny of her peers. The hearer, too, has to know whether the experience is 'real' and the interpretation 'true' - she must decide whether to believe or whether, through discussion with the teller, to negotiate a reframing of the experience.

These philosophical, social, and psychological aspects of memorate telling seem to be directly reflected in the narrator's performative style, especially in the shape and structure which is given to the story. The present work has been able to show that models such as the Labovian one, which see narrative as the orderly matching of past events with chrono-logically arranged narrative clauses,do not adequately describe the sort of structures revealed in general by stories such as memorates. Though memorates with orderly linear outlines composed of events arranged in chronological order do appear in the corpus, this is by no means the

dominant pattern. It would seem that narrators of memorate prefer more flexible structures: that is, the 'cyclical' or 'continuative' narrative patterns. In a cyclical story the narrator loosely gathers story elements together regardless of chronology, the narrative gaining cohesion by its clustering round a central idea or event, repetitions of which hold the plot together. In continuative stories, the narrator first tells of the events in chronological order, beginning at the beginning and ending at the end, but when she reaches the end, rather than simply falling silent, she recommences the narrative adding <u>Discussions</u>, <u>Repeats</u> or <u>Reframes</u>. These alternative structures seem to be responsive adaptations to the memorate's function. They allow a storyteller to reformulate key elements time and time again. By telling stories in non-linear fashion, a narrator can foreground not only those aspects of the experience that have most interpretive significance for her, but also those which will best persuade a hearer to believe her. Furthermore, they allow a speaker to back down if she finds that her interpretation is not accepted by her hearer: in this case she is able to refocus the narrative by stressing alternative aspects of the experience, and she thus escapes the tension of an exchange in which she might have to defend her own world view against a hostile philosophy.

If we regard memorates as a problem-solving genre, one of the most puzzling features of their structure as revealed in the present story corpus is explained. Though the events recorded in the memorates are uniquely, even bizarrely, interesting, the narrators seldom (1) give full and accurate descriptions of what it was like to "see a ghost" or "have a premonition", and (2) often focus their account on peripheral detail rather than the central event. The key to this puzzle would appear to be that "seeing a ghost" or "having a premonition" are treated by the speakers as experiences the <u>nature</u> of which is not in doubt but the <u>truth</u> of which may be. The aim of the story is authentication. More than

anything else, it is the circumstances of the happening that provide the basis on which its truth may be judged. An account of those happenings must aim to provide explanatory comprehensiveness and to give assurances of the accuracy of the speaker's memory. Thus in telling their memorates, the women of Gatley load their accounts with orienting information, the Orientation section of the narratives usually being given both more narrating time and more attention than the Complication which recounts the events themselves. Such a structure, strange though it seems on the face of it, is in fact an adaptation to the social context and the psychological function of the story.

The present data have afforded particular interest by supplying a corpus of memorates which is not only sufficiently large to enable this sort of structural and stylistic analysis to be undertaken, but which, having been collected in a reasonably natural context, can relate structures to functions. Structural analysis on its own and for its own sake is a rather empty exercise - an academic game. But when such an analysis can be harnessed to the search for meaning and function, then it can be a very valuable tool. In the case of the present work, it provides an entry into the material, in the sense that the constant close reading which it entails gradually reveals patterns inherent in the texts themselves. Rather than imposing form from above, the approach may thus reveal the shaping assumptions which the narrators themselves bring to their performance. In addition to an examination of structure, the analysis of performers' lexis provides valuable insights into the traditional assumptions which pattern both experience and story.

Similarly the work has been able to show discourse in the context of interaction. A close reading of the texts of individual narratives has been useful in allowing an exploration of storytelling technique. In particular it has been valuable in countering popular misapprehensions

about women's abilities as storytellers. Older women are, for example, supposed to "go on a bit". The analysis undertaken here has shown that the apparent diffuseness and formlessness of this particular narrative style is (1) functional and (2) universal; that is, common to both men and women, younger and older people. In a very real sense, the women who "go on a bit" are experts in a particular form of communication. The features which characterise their speech acts are compound sentences of considerable length, tense change within the narrative, and the use of large amounts of conventionalised dialogue. The analysis has been able to show that, in the discourse of experienced talkers, all these features have distinct functional value and point to the speakers' expertise (not to their failure) as communicators. It has been shown for example that:

(a) Compound sentences linked by the word and create blocks of information which effectively structure the stories into the Orientation, Complication, Resolution pattern predicted by the Labovian model. The alternation of and with but signals the boundaries of significant narrative stages, the storytellers using and to join together diverse but thematically related material, and but to signal the beginning of each of these information-blocks and to separate it from the preceding one. By following through these patterns of conjunction and disjunction, one can see not only which sections of talk are intended as orienting information and which as the unravelling of events, but one can also detect the underlying interpretation which shapes the individual rendition of remembered experience.

(b) The analysis has also demonstrated that tense-change is purposeful not haphazard. Use of the simple past or historic present signals attention to plot and forward progression; use of more complex tense and changes of mood and aspect halt that forward progression by creating a Shift of viewpoint in the form of a Still or a Flashback. Shifts hold up

the action at significant points, pacing the narrative, stressing (and

in part creating) the underlying structural patterns, and allowing time

for the hearer to catch the significance of the point being made by the

speaker. They stop the action rushing on too fast by utilising a 'more

words' principle. Hence, far from showing a lack of skill in the organisa-

tion and presentation of past events, narrators utilise the basic resources

of the language both subtly and creatively.

(c) Similarly, the naive narrator's use of dialogue can be shown

to be meaningful, inventive, productive and creative. The dialogue that

is an almost invariable accompaniment of the unfolding of plot also has a

role to play in pacing narrative, and it is a significant rhetorical

device. It allows for the drama, tense-changes, repetitions, and personali-

sing that heighten the atmosphere at the climax of the narrative.

The work has thus been able not only to correct misapprehensions

about women's storytelling and storytelling styles, but also to reveal

the basic linguistic resources available to narrators in our culture and

how they are used in a given context to create a special sort of poetry -

that is, the power to engage the hearer's emotions.

4.   Assessment

I feel that the work has been instructive in two important ways -

the professional and the personal.

From a professional point of view I think that the value of approaching

belief through fieldwork has been proved. Whatever is of worth in this

research comes primarily from the freshness which such an approach en-

genders. Whether the conclusions reached here are valid or not, they

provide an alternative view of supernatural belief against which those

customarily promoted may be set. In a field of folkloristics where professional opinion in England has largely ossified, this must surely be useful. In particular, one might emphasise that the work casts doubt on received opinion in five important respects; that is, it calls into question:

(a) the credibility of important source books in the study of supernatural concepts;

(b) the plausibility of legend as an index of belief;

(c) the status of memorate as 'untraditional';

(d) dismissive attitudes to naive storytellers and their narratives;

(e) assertions such as that supernatural belief is declining or non-functional in modern Britain.

It seems to me that it is not very important whether opinions such as those expressed here on these matters are accepted or not, but it does matter that they are discussed. If the present work goes any way towards encouraging such discussions, then it has served a useful purpose.

From a personal point of view, the research has been valuable in simultaneously putting me in sympathy with a consensus philosophy into which I have not myself been encultured. At the same time, speaking to and discussing with a variety of people who hold views which formerly I would have regarded as culturally induced delusions has necessitated a sharp reconsideration of my own attitudes.

David Hufford has recently pointed out[9] that those who reject super-natural philosophies do so from a fixed set of attitudes and perspectives that are themselves traditional. The present work has emphasised just how true that is. In discussions with the women of Gatley, in reading the historical literature and in the introspection this often entails, it

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9   Hufford (1982).

becomes clear that two traditions oppose each other - those of belief and those of disbelief. On the one hand, there are those for whom the concepts of supernatural powers are rational explanations of discrepant experiences and who justify their belief in these concepts by appealing to universal human experience and the testimony of history and literature. On the other hand, there are those who deny this position by finding alternative naturalistic or 'scientific' explanations and by citing instances of human error, delusion, ignorance and fear to undermine oral and written testimony. Each uses the science, theology and philosophy of the age to provide a rationale for his/her position. Both are traditional attitudes, the rationalistic no less than the supernaturalistic. This realisation immediately lessens the hold of rationalism and puts one in touch with the alternative culture, allowing one to see it from the inside and in its own terms - from which position it seems both reasonable and natural, indeed even ordinary. This perhaps is the final, educative, irony of the present research, that by taking the lid off a covert area of tradition one finds no secrets, only commonly held beliefs, and that by breaking through to a subterranean level of experience one finds it to be an everyday one.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:   Narrative Data

Total narrative data collected = 314 : Analysed narrative corpus 143

1.   Narrative collected during fieldwork January to May 1981

   A.   Analysed corpus

      111 memorates

       32 'personal legends' on supernatural topics

   B.   Other

       25 miscellaneous personal stories

       33 modern urban legends

        7 topical legends circulating in Gatley January to May 1981

      208 Total narrative collected in fieldwork

2.   Oral narratives of supernatural encounters from other informants/
     sources collected October 1980 to May 1981

        18 informally collected (GB)

         1 contributed by Dr. Graham Shorrocks

         1 contributed by Professor Ervin Beck

         6 contributed by Gerald Maine (BBC Radio Blackburn)

        26 Total narrative from non-fieldwork sources

3.   Other oral sources, October 1980 to May 1981

        21 neo-narrative accounts of supernatural encounters

         8 modern urban legends (miscellaneous informants)

        29 Total additional oral data

4. <u>Written data October 1980 to May 1981</u>

        45 press cuttings (memorates and supernatural legends)

         4 memorates from correspondents

         2 modern urban legends from correspondents

        51 Total written accounts

APPENDIX 2

List of Informants
(with brief biographical details where known)

Abigail	(married, 70+, housewife)
Ada	(single, 70+, lives alone, retired postmistress)
Adrienne	(married, 60+, housewife)
Alec	(65+, textile worker, married to Valerie)
Alice	(married, 60+, retired teacher)
Alma	(widowed, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Annie	(married, 60+, housewife)
Agnes	(married, 60+, housewife)
Arthur	(65+, bachelor, occupation unknown)
Audrey	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Barbara	(married, 40-60, teacher)
Beatie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Berenice	(married, 40-60, office worker)
Bertram	(65+, married, retired lecturer)
Bertha	(married, 70+, housewife)
Beryl	(married, 40-60, housewife)
Bessie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Brenda	(married, 40-60, office worker)
Carrie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Cecily	(single, 60+, lives alone, dressmaker)
Christine	(no biographical details available)
Clara	(single, 60+, lives with sister, abattoir owner)
Clarice	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Claudia	(married, 40-60, occupation unknown)
Colette	(married, 40-60, housewife)
Constance	(single, 70+, lives alone, former occupation unknown)
Cora	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Cynthia	(married, 40-60, teacher)
Dora	(single, 70+, lives with a friend, retired civil servant)
Doris	(married, 60+, housewife)
Doreen	(no biographical details known)
Dorothy	(widow, 80+, lives alone, housewife)
Edie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, retired property speculator)
Edna	(single, 80+, lives alone, former occupation unknown)
Enid	(single, 70+, lives with sister,
Ella	(married, 70+, lives with grandson, housewife)
Evelyn	(widow, 70+, lives alone, cleaner)
Flo	(widow, 80+, lives with daughter (Sylvia), housewife)
Flora	(widow, 80+, lives alone, housewife)
Freda	(no biographical details known)
George	(70+, married to May, chronic invalid)
Geraldine	(single, 60+, lives alone, retired teacher)
Gert	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Gladys	(widow, 60+, lives alone, housewife)
Gloria	(married, 40-60, school dinner lady)
Gwen	(widow, 70+, lives alone, occupation unknown)
Harriet	(widow, 80+, lives with daughter (Iris), housewife)
Hazel	(married, 40-60, barmaid)

Helen	(married, 40-60, housewife)
Henry	(65+, married to Meg, retired businessman)
Hilda	(single, 60+, educational psychologist, lives with mother)
Howard	(65+, married to Violet, retired teacher)
Ida	(single, 70+, lives alone, occupation unknown)
Inez	(widow, 70+, lives with daughter, retired office-worker)
Iris	(married, 60+, housewife)
Jack	(65+, married to Agnes, retired gardener)
Jane	(no biographical details known)
Jenny	(single, 40-60, office-worker)
Joan	(married, 70+, housewife)
Joseph	(65+, married to Stella, retired businessman)
Joyce	(widow, 60+, lives alone, housewife)
Judith	(no biographical details available)
Julia	(married, 60+, actress)
June	(married, 40-60, housewife)
Kate	(no biographical details available)
Kathleen	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Laura	(no biographical details available)
Lavinia	(single, 60+, lives with sister, retired businesswoman)
Lettice	(married, 60+, housewife)
Lily	(married, 60+, housewife)
Lizzie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, retired musician)
Lydia	(widow, 70+, lives with daughter, housewife)
Mabel	(single, 70+, lives alone, retired businesswoman)
Margaret	(widow, 60+, lives alone, retired shop assistant)
Margot	(single, 60+, lives with sister, retired secretary)
Marian	(married, 40-60, housewife)
Mary	(married, 70+, housewife)
Maud	(widow, 60+, lives with son, launderette chain owner)
Maura	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
May	(married, 80+, housewife)
Meg	(married, 70+, housewife)
Miriam	(married, 40-60, shop assistant)
Molly	(married, 40-60, clerk)
Nadine	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Norah	(widow, 60+, lives alone, retired shop assistant)
Norma	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Olive	(married, 60+, housewife)
Owen	(no biographical details available)
Patricia	(married, 70+, housewife)
Paula	(married, 60+, housewife)
Philip	(65+, married, retired airport worker)
Phyllis	(single, 70+, lives alone, occupation unknown)
Polly	(widow, 70+, lives alone, retired teacher)
Queenie	(single, 70+, lives alone, businesswoman)
Renee	(married, 70+, housewife)
Richard	(65+, married, textile worker)
Rina	(married, 70+, retired Citizen's Advice Bureau worker)
Rita	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Robert	(65+, married, retired busdriver)
Rose	(married, 60+, bookmaker's clerk)
Rowena	(married, 40-60, bakery worker)
Ruth	(widow, 70+, lives with son, housewife)
Sandra	(no biographical details known)
Sarah	(widow, 60+, lives alone, housewife)
Sheila	(married, 40-60, secretary)

Stella	(married, 70+, housewife)
Susan	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Sylvia	(single, 40-60, lives with mother, solicitor's clerk)
Thomasine	(widow, 60+, lives alone, housewife)
Thora	(married, 80+, housewife)
Trixie	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)
Una	(widow, 60+, retired shopkeeper)
Valerie	(married, 60+, housewife)
Vanessa	(widow, 80+, housewife)
Vera	(single, 70+, lives alone, retired businesswoman)
Violet	(married, 60+, housewife)
William	(no biographical details available)
Winifred	(widow, 60+, lives with daughter, housewife)
Zena	(widow, 70+, lives with brother, housewife)
Zillah	(widow, 70+, lives alone, housewife)

N.B. A single story was contributed by Carmel (single, 21, secretary to Clara).

APPENDIX 3: Narratives and Narrators

A. Principal Narrators

Name	Narrative Number	Page Reference
AGNES	39	535
	44	332, 505-6
	45	531
	56	449, 527
	58	530-1
	69	-
	71	-
	72	400
	115	289
	129	271
ALMA	33	335(FN), 370, 532-3
	34	522
	76	-
AUDREY	5	526
	15	520
	59	-
	78	-
	82	-
	83	-
	84	304
	128	272
BERENICE	94	301
	132	268-9
	133	269
INEZ	35	343
	63	-
	75	414
JACK	104	408
	106	-
	109	497
	110	-
	111	275-6
	141	394
	142	-
KATHLEEN	4	299
	20	-
	21	300
	22	300
	30	469-70

LAURA	3	306, 452
	14	-
	87	543-4

LIZZIE	16	442
	70	-
	79	521-2

MARGOT	7	302-3, 436
	74	416-17
	90	-
	121	300

MAURA	13	521, 542-3, 551
	38	-
	91	407

ROSE	29	355(FN), 485-6
	36	486, 509-10
	54	332
	55	365
	60	366-7, 557-70
	81	-

VIOLET	8	-
	25	443, 465-6, 541
	31	471

WINIFRED	6	440, 441, 448-9
	65	-
	67	401
	127	-

B.   Other Narrative quoted

ALEC	107	401, 519, 553
ADA	88	406
ADRIENNE	17	297, 525
BERTRAM	105	410-13
CARMEL	not included in corpus	533-4
CARRIE	26	296, 470, 516, 535
CECILY	102	468-9, 546
CLARA	51	485
CORA	14	529
DORA	23)	551-2
	110)	296
DOROTHY	32	484
EDIE	9	451
EDNA	53	346, 371, 444, 529

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