A cognitive linguistic approach to describing the communication of mental illness in comics

Richard Finn

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics

Thesis submitted to The University of Sheffield in partial requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2022

Summary

This thesis examines the ways in which subjective experience is communicated through comics about mental illness and how such communication can be described and analysed. I chose to focus on comics about mental illness to draw on my own lived experience and because of their common thematic focus on subjectivity. I applied a mixed methods approach, using personal reflection, qualitative analysis of discussion group data and intuitive linguistic analysis.

The central analysis focuses on three contemporary comics that tell stories about experiences of mental illness: *Lighter than My Shadow* by Katie Green, *Tangles*, by Sarah Leavitt, and *The Nao of Brown* by Glyn Dillon. I propose a means of describing comics based on aspects of cognitive linguistics, including Text World Theory and cognitive grammar. Given its grounding in aspects of cognitive psychology such as attention, focusing, scanning and construal, cognitive grammar provides a common rubric for engaging with the text, images, and composition of comics. I supplement this approach with aspects of Text World Theory, which provides a framework for describing the interface between the content of comics, the context of their production and reading, and how these two aspects of communication relate to one another.

In carrying out this analysis, I used data from reading group discussions of the three comics to guide the focus of my analysis and to supplement my own interpretations with the more naturalistic reading experiences of reading group participants. This led me to focus on aspects of reading including discourse structure, agency, multimodal metaphor, archetypal roles, perspective, event structuring, and reality conceptions. As well providing developments to the application of cognitive linguistics to multimodal communication, my overall findings point to the importance of alternatives to verbal communication, such as comics, as means of differently framing the conceptualisation of experiences of mental illness.

Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

For those of us who didn't make it, those of us who won't make it, and those of us who find another way through.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ... *8*

List of Figures ... *9*

Reading group discussion transcription key ... *12*

1 Introduction ... *13*

1.1 Personal experiences of drawing, storytelling and subjectivity ... **13**

1.2 Personal experiences of mental illness ... **17**

1.3 Subjective experience ... **22**

1.3.1 Emotion, consciousness and subjectivity ... 23

1.3.2 Experiencing mental illness ... 25

1.4 Comics: cultural context ... **28**

1.4.1 Historic development ... 28

1.4.2 Contemporary cultural context ... 31

1.5 Comics about mental illness ... **33**

1.5.1 Overview ... 34

1.5.2 Specific publications ... 36

2 Literature review ... *39*

2.1 Semiotic approaches to understanding comics ... **39**

2.1.1 Words, pictures and stories ... 39

2.1.2 Medium, narration, language ... 42

2.1.3 Conventions, components ... 43

2.2 Cognitive linguistic approaches to understanding comics ... **45**

2.2.1 Conceptualising entities through depiction ... 46

2.2.2 Conceptualising processes through depiction ... 49

2.2.3 Text World Theory: comics in discursive interaction ... 53

2.3 Subjectivity in storytelling ... **54**

2.3.1 Subjectivity in comics ... 57

2.3.2 Physical responses and metaphor in comics ... 57

2.3.3 Direct thought in comics ... 59

2.3.4 Action and unconscious thought in comics ... 60

2.3.5 Focalisation in comics ... 61

2.4 Cognitive grammar ... **64**

2.4.1 Principles ... 65

2.4.2 Construal ... 67

2.4.3 Viewing events ... 69

2.4.4 Discourse ... 72

3 Methods ... 77

3.1 Research questions ... 77

3.2 Reader response ... 77

3.3 Research design ... 81

3.3.1 Research design: comic selection ... 81

3.3.2 Reading group formation and participant recruitment ... 82

3.3.3 Ethics ... 83

3.3.4 Data collection and protection ... 84

3.3.5 Transcription ... 85

3.3.6 Analysis and synthesis ... 85

4 Lighter than My Shadow: Discourse, enactors, and abstraction ... 87

4.1 Plot overview ... 88

4.2 Real stories, real people, fictional responses ... 93

4.2.1 Authenticity ... 94

4.2.3 Personal experience, performance and generalisation ... 95

4.2.4 Honesty ... 96

4.2.5 Formal expectations ... 98

4.3 *Lighter than My Shadow* as discourse event ... 100

4.3.1 Visual world-building ... 101

4.3.2 Enactors ... 101

4.3.3 World-switching ... 104

4.4 Visual abstraction of subjective experience ... 109

4.4.1 Squiggle, scribble, shadow ... 109

4.4.2 Current discourse space, focus and attentional frames ... 118

4.4.3 Agency and interaction ... 123

4.4.4 Split-selves, reflexivity and resolution ... 138

4.6 Conclusions ... 146

5 Tangles, subjectivity, and grounding; or, everything is conceptualisation if you think about it ... 151

5.1 Introduction ... 151

5.2 Plot overview ... 153

5.3 Reading about Alzheimer's ... 155

5.4 Stopping reading: event structure and response ... 159

5.4.1 Narrative and depictive perspective ... 161

5.4.2 Depictive event structuring ... 162

5.4.3 Experiencer roles ... 164

5.4.4 Phone conversation: event focus 165

5.5 Depictive and narrative viewing arrangements 168

5.5.1 Surrogate grounding in reading 170

5.5.2 Grounding dynamics 172

5.5.3 Focusing on Midge's experience 175

5.6 Conclusions 177

6 The Nao of Brown: Being and The Nothing-ness 183

6.1 Introduction 183

6.2 The Nao of Brown: overview 184

6.3 Introduction to discussion group 194

6.4 Imagined events 198

6.4.1 Stylistic strategies for differentiating levels of reality 200

6.4.2 Integration of real and imagined event structures 204

6.5 Back to life, back to reality 205

6.5.1 Levels of reality in *Nao of Brown* 207

6.5.2 Reading reality 208

6.6 Conclusions 213

7 Endings 217

7.1 Overview 218

7.2 Summary of findings 227

7.2.1 How do comics depict experiences of mental illness? 227

7.2.2 How do people discuss experiences of reading comics? 229

7.2.3 How effectively can cognitive poetic methods be adapted to comics? 230

7.3 Final thoughts and future directions 232

List of references 237

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I owe my immeasurable gratitude to my supervisor Jo Gavins, who has guided me through this protracted perfectionist tumult of self-doubt with endless patience, compassion, generosity and wisdom. I would not have been able to stay the course without her honesty, support and friendship. Likewise, my second supervisor, Sara Whiteley offered moral support and expertise throughout, helping to shape the design of my research and providing invaluable insight into empirical data, methods and emotional responses to reading. It has been a rare honour to work with two people whose work I respect so much. Having forgotten to include acknowledgements in the mad fury of submitting my master's dissertation, I finally offer my long overdue appreciation to Elena Semino for introducing me to stylistics and cognitive linguistics, for her adept supervision, and for assisting my PhD application in the otherwise rudderless hinterland between postgraduate programmes.

I owe my very existence to the countless NHS and University of Sheffield workers who have cared for and supported me, and I owe much of the freedom of thought to the many teachers who inspired me throughout my childhood and adolescence. The public health and public education I have enjoyed throughout my life are miracles of socialism built in the ruins of a cruel global empire. The only meagre thanks I can offer is to continue to strive to preserve these goods against the insidious and enduring old powers of greed, dominion, subjugation and exploitation for any future generations that may survive us.

Thank you to my friends Mark and Kate; Hugh, Grace and Ada; Earney; Ed and Hannah; Chris, Dylan and Matt; Rich, Zelda, Matt, Pete, Matt and Sophie; Cath, Sarah, Joe, Sophie and Jamie; Conal, and Charlie; Jack, Steve, Keith and Paul; Wil, Keith and Helen; Paddy and Lisa; Alice, Alison, Joe, Jess, Jess, Sarah, Sam, Pete and Dave, everyone I see regularly or have not seen for years. To my fellow worms Sporty, Ginger, Baby and Scary and everyone else at Hatch and on the DIY scene for being there when I made weird sounds and for making them right back at me. To my brothers for talking to me about football or cricket when I couldn't bear to talk about my thesis. To my sister, for talking to me about Star Trek when I couldn't bear to talk about my thesis. To my parents for instilling in me the values that inspire the better aspects of my nature and for always loving and supporting me without question. I will find you all and thank you properly for being there for me if I can. And it will finally be safe to ask me how my thesis is going.

Finally, to Lotty, for loving me with a darkness filling constancy, despite my worst efforts to hate myself. You were here with me for every single word, picture and wacky diagram, every failure and triumph, and this is as much your achievement as it is mine.

List of figures and table

Figure 2.1: *La Trahison des images (Magritte, 1929)* ***46***

Figure 2.2: *Narrative structure for a sequence of images (Cohn et al., 2012: 6)* ***50***

Figure 2.3: *Non-standard speech bubble to communicate anger (O'Malley, 2010)* ***60***

Figure 2.4: *Action chain and clausal alignment* ***71***

Figure 2.5: *Action chain and passive clausal structure* ***71***

Figure 2.6: *Current discourse space (Langacker, 2001: 145)* ***74***

Figure 2.7: *Minus, zero and plus frames (Langacker, 2001: 151)* ***74***

Table 3.1: *Adapted from Swann and Allington (2009: 248)* ***80***

Figure 4.1: *Katie uses drawing to communicate with her parents (Green, 2013: 161)* ***90***

Figure 4.2: *Katie represses her trauma (Green, 2013: 315)* ***91***

Figure 4.3: *Katie contemplates suicide (Green, 2013: 380–1)* ***92***

Figure 4.4: *Katie reconciled with her family, enjoying some cake (Green, 2013: 495)* ***93***

Figure 4.5: *Katie dissolves (Green, 2013: 125)* ***102***

Figure 4.6: *LTMS cover (Green, 2013)* ***103***

Figure 4.7: *World-switches (Green, 2013: 2–3)* ***105***

Figure 4.8: *World-switches continued (Green, 2013: 4–5)* ***105***

Figure 4.9: *Katie taking control of trauma through drawing (Green, 2013: 6–7)* ***108***

Figure 4.10: *Examining self in mirror (Green, 2013: 118)* ***110***

Figure 4.11: *Negative self-talk and sleep (Green, 2013: 119)* ***111***

Figure 4.12: *Summary of agentive process* ***113***

Figure 4.13 *Agentive process as sequential scan (Green, 2013: 118)* ***114***

Figure 4.14: *Thematic process as sequential scan (Green 2013: 118)* ***114***

Figure 4.15: *Summary of thematic process* ***115***

Figure 4.16 *Absolute construal* ***115***

Figure 4.17: *GROW image schema* ***116***

Figure 4.18: *BELOW image schema.* ***117***

Figure 4.19: *ABOVE image schema.* ***117***

Figure 4.20: *LTMS current discourse space from reader's perspective* ***119***

Figure 4.21: *CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema* ***121***

Figure 4.22: *CONTAINER image schema* ***121***

Figure 4.23: *APPROXIMATION and ATTRACTION image schemas* ***121***

Figure 4.24: *Squiggle accumulating over Katie (Green, 2013: 156)* ***126***

Figure 4.25: *Squiggle pushing into/out of Katie's head (Green, 2013: 157)* ***127***

Figure 4.26: *Agentive process* ... **128**
Figure 4.27: *Image schema structure of enter (Langacker, 2008: 32)* ... **128**
Figure 4.28: *Katie leaves the table (Green, 2013: 159)* ... **131**
Figure 4.29: *Sequentially scanned processes compressed into summarily scanned entity* ... **133**
Figure 4.30: *LTMS dream (Green, 2013: 480)* ... **134**
Figure 4.31: *LTMS nightmare and binge eating (Green, 2013: 481)* ... **135**
Figure 4.32: *LTMS self-soothing (Green, 2013: 482)* ... **136**
Figure 4.33: *LTMS resolution (Green, 2013: 483)* ... **137**
Figure 4.34: *Schematic depictions of reflexivity* ... **141**
Figure 4.35: *Katie and Scribble (Green, 2013: 504)* ... **143**
Figure 4.36: *Katie and younger self (Green, 2013: 505)* ... **144**
Figure 4.37: *Katie comforting younger self (Green, 2013: 506)* ... **145**
Figure 5.1: *Leavitt (2011: 116–117)* ... **160**
Figure 5.2: *Agency in illustrative depiction: ‘Dad […] held the phone to Mom’s mouth’* ... **162**
Figure 5.3: *Midge’s intention direction away from telephone/Sarah* ... **162**
Figure 5.4: *Sarah actively listening to Midge* ... **163**
Figure 5.5: *Midge as implicit agent, Sarah as passive experiencer* ... **163**
Figure 5.6: *Examples of Sarah with eyes closed (Leavitt: 2011: 58, 60 and 102)* ... **163**
Figure 5.7: *Attention directed across world boundaries between panels* ... **164**
Figure 5.8: *Abstracted depiction foregrounding experience* ... **165**
Figure 5.9: *Agentive intentionality turning against depictive flow* ... **166**
Figure 5.10: *Final four panels (Leavitt, 2012: 116)* ... **167**
Figure 5.11: *Canonical speech event and surrogate ground* ... **170**
Figure 5.12: *Discourse participants and text-world enactor correlates* ... **171**
Figure 5.13: *Page 89, as referenced by D* ... **173**
Figure 5.14: *Topic focus on aspects of discourse situation* ... **174**
Figure 5.15: *CDS progression* ... **174**
Figure 5.16: *Focal shift across panels* ... **175**
Figure 5.17: *Potential reading path and feedback loop* ... **176**
Figure 6.1: *Nao as Binky Brown (Dillon, 2012: 8)* ... **186**
Figure 6.2: *Nao snapping the driver’s neck (Dillon, 2012: 11)* ... **187**
Figure 6.3: *ichi title sequence (Dillon, 2012: 19)* ... **187**
Figure 6.4: *Pictor riding a sheep (Dillon, 2012: 21)* ... **188**
Figure 6.5: *Nao stabbing Nagarjuna with a pen (Dillon, 2012: 30)* ... **189**
Figure 6.6: *Nao (not) running over a child (Dillon, 2012: 33)* ... **189**

Figure 6.7: *Nao slams Steve's face into the counter and breaks his finger (Dillon, 2012: 53)* .. **190**

Figure 6.8 *Nao struggles with intrusive thoughts at the hairdressers (Dillon, 2012: 91)* **191**

Figure 6.9: *Nao smashes a glass into Gregory's face (Dillon, 2012: 110)*................................ **192**

Figure 6.10: *Nao depicted as red, '3 out of 10', then white (Dillon, 2012: 109-10)*.................. **201**

Figure 6.11: *Thought and narration captions (Dillon, 2012: 13)*.. **202**

Figure 6.12: *Colouring used to differentiate levels of reality (Dillon, 2012: 110)*...................... **203**

Figure 6.13: *Panel 1 (Dillon, 2012: 22)*... **204**

Figure 6.14: *Panels 2,3 and 4 abstracted (Dillon, 2012: 22)*.. **204**

Figure 6.15: *Elaborated epistemic model of reality (Langacker, 1991: 277)* **206**

Figure 6.16: *Nao's subjective conception of train shove*... **207**

Figure 6.17: *Reader's objective conception of train shove* **209**

Figure 6.18: *Backtracking and reconceptualization* **210**

Figure 6.19: *Influence of Nao's past projections*... **210**

Figure 6.20: *Integration of belief state into Nao's conception of reality* **212**

Figure 6.21: *Nao's 'Now' enso (Dillon, 2012: 201)*.. **216**

Figure 7.1: *Nao as ink-spewing monster (Dillon, 2012: 152)* **228**

Reading group discussion transcription key

A: Turn and participant identifier.

. Pause (< 0.5 secs).

… Pause (> 0.5 secs).

[over]

[lap] Overlapping talk.

< > Non-verbal feature. General laughter is marked as separate turn without an identifier.

bold Emphasis (e.g., modulations in volume, duration, pitch).

~*indist*~ Talk is indistinguishable on the recording.

1 Introduction

In this thesis, I will investigate how comics about mental illness can provide insight into different aspects and dimensions of subjective experience. Comics tell stories through drawing and writing presented according to established and emergent conventions (El Refaie and Hörschelmann, 2010; El Refaie, 2009). Depending on the perspective of storytellers, comics with a significant focus on mental illness can be told from subjective vantage points that are more or less implicated in the states and experiences being described. **Mental illness** describes a state of subjectivity where a person's experience and behaviour become harmful to them or to those around them. The causes can be environmental, innate, genetic, interpersonal, socio-economic, physical, hormonal, neurochemical, short-term, or long-term. Telling stories about these states requires storytellers to be able to excise relevant aspects of experience and to be able at least to attempt to disentangle causes and effects of mental illness from general life experience, all while potentially living through the distorting effects that mental illness can have on subjectivity.

This thesis is similarly an entanglement of threads of personal experience and interests relating to storytelling, drawing, writing, subjectivity and mental illness. In this introductory chapter, I will unpick these, as best I can, to show how this research project came about, and to provide personal context for my discussion of comics, mental health and mental illness throughout later chapters. I will begin by outlining my personal experiences of learning how to draw, read, write, and tell stories, and how they have led to an interest in the limits and possibilities of communicating subjective experience. Within this section, I will include a short account of my how my relationships with comics and literature have developed. I will then explain how I came to focus on mental illness as a means of engaging with subjectivity, before outlining the development of my understanding of mental illness and how it shapes my evolving experiences of living with long-term mental illness. As well as contextualising and outlining the origins of this research, I provide this information as a means of grounding my research in what I am able to perceive as the limitations of my own experience.

Having established my relationships with and understandings of storytelling and mental illness, I will then introduce contemporary definitions of comics and mental illness. Finally, I will draw these threads together by introducing some examples of comics that deal with mental illness. In the following section, I will begin by explaining my early experiences with drawing and storytelling to illustrate how I have come to value and understand these practices in my own life.

1.1 Personal experiences of drawing, storytelling and subjectivity

In this section, I will outline formative and developmental experiences that have shaped my

understanding of drawing, storytelling, and subjectivity. This personal reflection will demonstrate how I arrived at my basic understandings of these central considerations of this thesis. By including relevant personal experiences, I also aim to establish the importance of acknowledging their implication in the thinking and writing involved in carrying out and communicating research.

The first time I remember baulking at negative criticism of my visual artistry was in nursery. On that day, we were rewarded with two sweets (a choice of gummy bears or lurid marshmallows) for a picture judged to be 'good' and one sweet for having produced anything, regardless of its received quality. Having successfully created a two-sweet-worthy painting of Rodimus Prime (the then unpopular leader of the Autobot faction of the *Transformers—Robots in Disguise*), I embarked on the more ambitious undertaking of painting a Transformer exploding. For this second image, I used colour and disintegration of form to capture the dynamic violence of the depicted explosion. This abstraction away from the placid representational verisimilitude of my first piece resulted in a 50% reduction in sweet yield upon submission. Angry and upset at this ruling, the lesson I took away with me was that *pictures must look like things to be worth two sweets*. In hindsight, my nursery critics will also have been looking for any excuse to limit our sugar intake and were likely not expecting the operant conditioning of the reward system to inspire such prolific output of paintings on my part.

In a similar vein, my earliest documented instances of self-critique all relate to my ability to write stories. In all my primary school reports, when asked how I could improve, I asserted that I wanted to be better at writing stories. Storytelling is important to me because it was one of the first ways I remember connecting with my parents. Both my mum and dad would improvise bedtime stories for me as an infant that I remember aspects of vividly to this day. More generally, stories were how I interacted with friends and how I elaborated my sense of my own reality by fantasising, exaggerating, and lying. The task of telling stories through the combination of writing and drawing stands out as a prominent memory of my first years in school: a sentence or two describing 'What I did at the weekend' and a drawing to either illustrate or elaborate the story. Creative storytelling took the same form. I was once praised by remediating into drawn and written form a story about a guinea pig called Haggis originally told to me by my mother. Throughout my schooling, the amount of page dedicated to illustration diminished in proportion to the amount of writing. Drawing (and other related modes of visual communication) became distinct from the act of storytelling and these practices and skills were compartmentalised under the subject banner and cultural category of 'art'.

By age sixteen, the value judgements implicit in these distinctions between writing and drawing coalesced into an understanding that, with a view to applying to universities, art was not an 'academic' enough subject. I came to see drawing, painting, sculpture, and so on, as either pastimes or as esoteric forms of high cultural communication, while writing was the medium of accurate scholastic and academic communication. Even within the subject of art, this bias was reconfirmed by the requirement to produce explanatory portfolios in which we were encouraged to unpack the

conceptual structure and intentions of our visual artworks by writing about them and any relevant historical context. This led to me studying literature as an undergraduate, through which I consistently encountered two problems in literary critical discourse. Firstly, the further I progressed the more I realised that I was ill-equipped to critique and understand the practice and function of writing both as the medium of literary production and as the medium of my and others' engagement with literature as an object of study. Secondly, a consistent interest in subjectivity yielded similar uncertainties and questions relating to concepts such as experience, mind, thought and consciousness. As with language and writing, I tended to uncritically engage with these concepts as steppingstones to discussing other points of interest.

Rather than finding the precise definitions and conclusions that I was expecting in scientific research, I found a plurality of possible ways of understanding language, writing, mind and subjectivity. This long-term lack of consensus across discourses and practices requires fluid and adaptive understandings of the nature of subjective experience as it exists for people in contemporary society, both as an objective concept and as a subjective state of being.

A related but distinct facet of my understanding of storytelling is my experience as a reader. Throughout my scholastic and academic development outlined above, I came to attribute greater importance to the historic, ancient and canonical literature that featured on the courses that I undertook. In addition to this, my interests in communication and subjectivity meant that I particularly appreciated works that either experimented with modes of literary communication or challenged basic understandings of subjectivity (e.g., Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Derrida's *Jacque le fataliste*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and Montaigne's *Essais*). At school and then as undergraduate student I developed skills and reading practices that enabled me to try to produce more and more esoteric readings of texts, and to use these as starting points for theoretical conjecture. Because of this, engaging with storytelling, and reading literature, became a means of engaging with and challenging philosophical and ethical ideas. For me, this professionalisation made *all* reading an effortful undertaking that became progressively more difficult to engage with for pleasure.

The influence of this practice extended to all storytelling media, though foundational experiences with different media resulted in distinct cultural associations and expectations. As a child I occasionally read *Transformers* comics. These were published by Marvel and featured warring factions of anthropomorphic extra-terrestrial robots who could 'transform' into alternate forms (often vehicles, weapons or everyday objects). This introduced me to a style of writing that was grounded in pulp science-fiction and fantasy and a style of drawing that used the same visual language as other mainstream comics from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. My understanding and expectation of comics was shaped by this early reading experience. Unlike other books, comics were a luxury item purchased from the same corner shops that I might buy sweets or rent VHSs from as a treat

when grandparents came to visit. Inside, the actual comic strips were interspersed with adverts for the toys and related products that the comics had been published to help sell. As a child, my family also had copies of the Raymond Briggs comics *Father Christmas* (Briggs, 1973), *Father Christmas Goes on Holiday* (Briggs, 1975) and *Fungus the Bogeyman* (Briggs, 1977), all of which were stories told in comic book form that combined elements of humour, mundane social realism and fantastical yet accessible writing and illustration. The style and quality of these comics made a lasting impression on me.

Reading in school initially involved both words and pictures, but as with writing and drawing, the size of pictures gradually decreased, while the amount of text gradually increased until reading books and reading comics came to feel like completely distinct undertakings. Comics were for pleasure; books were for learning. Though these early perceptions slowly evolved as I started to read for pleasure outside of school, the foundational associations that I formed in relation to these media remain part of how I understand them to this day.

As I became more engaged with literature, my exposure to comics began to diminish. In line with the development of my educational practices, by secondary school age I had come to think of comics as childish and frivolous, whereas reading literature had the potential to be informative, intellectually stimulating and impressive to others. The development of my literary reading and interpretation outlined above, informed both how I read comics and which comics I chose to read later in life. The prejudices I had developed in relation to mainstream comics in combination with an apparent culture of gatekeeping, complex lore, and excessive cost dissuaded me from engaging with them until friends started recommending 'serious' comics to me, such as *Watchmen* (Gibbons and Moore, 1987), *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1980–1991), and *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth* (2003). Reading and engaging with these comics in the same ways that I read and engaged with literature gradually led me to question the understanding of comics that I had held, allowing me to consider the artistic potential of the medium beyond the limited experiences I had of reading them in the past. Challenging my understanding of reading comics also led to challenging how I read and valued literature, which has allowed me to engage more casually with literature. Regardless of how I position myself in relation to comics and literature now, my understanding of both will always be framed by the formative distinctions between easy, fun, and silly comics, and challenging, difficult and rewarding literature (Duncan and Smith, 2010; Saraceni, 2003: 3; Versaci, 2007; Wolk, 2007: 22; see sections 1.4.1–1.4.2 for an extended discussion of comics' cultural status). Reading both with some awareness of the influence of these perceptions has helped to broaden my perspective on the possibilities and value of consuming any media despite any prejudices or expectations that I may hold. As such, these foundational experiences will influence any personal reading experiences and appraisals that I present in the forthcoming chapters.

1.2 Personal experiences of mental illness

In this section, I will outline the development of my personal understandings of mental illness to provide context to my analyses in later chapters. Aside from my academic interests, as outlined in section 1.1, the part of my life in which I am most regularly challenged to consider the nature of subjective experience is in discussions of my mental health with family, friends, and healthcare professionals. Because of this and owing to my experiences of living with and trying to communicate mental health problems, I identified it as a productive means of both developing my understanding of mental illness and of the communication of subjective experience more generally. To this end, I made original contemporary comics that engage intensively with mental illness the focus of this thesis. As in the previous section, I will provide a reflective account of some of my relevant lived experiences of mental illness to explicate how my experiences have shaped my understandings. Again, by doing so, I hope to demonstrate the importance of centring my own subjective experience as a researcher, especially when carrying out qualitative research.

Like my experience of studying language and subjectivity more generally, my experiences of researching and living with mental illness and related conditions have yielded no clear and definitive understanding of what they are. The understanding of mental illness that I gleaned from my childhood was defined by the prominence of psychiatric in-patient hospitals in popular media and casual discussion of mental illness. This recombined with notions of individual determinism and responsibility that I learnt from Catholicism and ambient cultural Thatcherism. According to my understanding, people who were mentally ill were incarcerated firstly for the protection of a normal, mentally well majority, and secondly because their illness made them unable to contribute productively to the presumed social good of constant economic growth. This is reflected in the concept of criminal insanity that is central to the *Batman* mythos (Fawcett and Kohm, 2020), and has been a common storytelling feature of *The Simpsons* (Fink, 2013). Through both influences, I saw mental illness as an innate flaw in people's character that was inextricably part of who they were and, therefore, a trait that I feared in other people and that I was scared of manifesting myself. Through a pervasive culture of ableist dismissal, silencing and dehumanisation of mentally ill people, I also—and incompatibly—came to believe it was possible not to be mentally ill by *choosing* not to be mentally ill. Under the shadow of Thatcher's cultural influence, I saw mental illness, like poverty, as something that could be avoided by applying effort. According to this understanding, anyone willing to be poor or mentally ill deserves to be poor or mentally ill. This understanding of humanity would have it that what a person has, is, and feels is what they deserve either according to the will of God and rich people, or according to their willingness to apply themselves to self-betterment within an inherently just society (Gorman, 2013; Fine, 2012; Fink, 2013; Fisher, 2009; LeFrancois et al., 2013; Russo and Beresford, 2015).

Growing up believing that mental illness was a sign of innate weakness meant that my experiences and acknowledgements of mental illness resulted in an internalised ableism. In these terms, any flaw in my character can be construed as a manifestation of the fact that I do not deserve to exist and all failure to live up to unrealistic standards is both disastrous and my sole responsibility. When I am unable to embody the tacitly held social values and functions outlined above, this either worsens or reconfirms my self-criticism. As well as harming others, actively and passively engaging with similarly bigoted beliefs, practices, and discourses of dehumanisation (e.g., fatphobia, racism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexism) it also involves turning those bigotries back on myself where my own ethnicity, physiology, capability, behaviour, thoughts, and impulses fall outside of any social norms I have consciously or unconsciously come to accept, and that I observe or assume are accepted by others. When dealing with such categorical delineation of dimensions of experience, it is easy to be caught in socially established and individually learned patterns and structures of self-criticism: *This is my fault. I am lazy. I could will myself out of this if I tried harder. The fact that I can't confirms my lack of worth. That is my fault*. Again, this self-criticism derives from the way I have learnt to understand and respond to others' problems, which I then internalise and apply to myself. I reap the disdain that I sow.

The harmful behaviours and experiences that have arisen from these circumstances and beliefs have at different points in my life manifested or been characterised as health anxiety, social anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-harm, risk-taking behaviour, disordered eating, body dysmorphia, chronic fatigue, loss of interest and motivation, low mood, anhedonia, inability to concentrate, avoidance, disturbed sleep, low self-esteem, confusion, brain fog, inattentiveness, irritability, paranoid delusions, intrusive thoughts, chronic diarrhoea, stomach cramps, and joint pain. In isolation, each symptom is a potentially manageable problem that people deal with on a regular basis with relative ease. In relentless, chronic combinations modulated by the self-perpetuating thought-traps outlined above, they are—without skilled intervention—unmanageable except through avoidant self-abnegation and a general performance of wellness to others. These symptoms fall differently into diagnoses of specific conditions and more general symptom description. Yet they are all variously co-morbid and interconnected in such a way that they feed into one another and cannot be separated out into unitary problems that can be addressed one by one. For the sake of offering practical help, this complexity requires simplification through diagnosis. From a personal perspective the difference between diagnosis and description is largely one of validity and communicability. In the cultural context described above, diagnosis provides a pathological authorisation of these experiences, helping to reinforce a sense of worthiness to receive help. A shortcoming of diagnostic triage is that it risks compartmentalising problems in such a way that some but not all of them are addressed owing to correlation or lack of correlation of overall symptoms in relation to current diagnostic criteria, not to mention the limitations of self-report by someone experiencing mental illness. For example, my ongoing problems align with multiple clinical diagnoses to varying degrees including clinical

depression, generalised anxiety disorder, attention deficit and/or hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorder and various personality disorders. In my own experience, I have found that the interventions that have helped me most have paid less heed to the importance of a particular diagnosis (and subsequent clinical pathways), and more to investigating how these problems affect one another, and how, with limited resources, I might change my life to alleviate their recurrent and cumulative impact on my health and well-being.

Accepting that I need help and pursuing help have been consistent impediments to me resolving ongoing problems. I especially struggle to talk about these problems with people who care about me or want to help me, because acknowledging and engaging with their love for me increases the guilt and shame that derive from my inability to value myself. I have found that one of the paths of least resistance to not experiencing or acknowledging health problems is self-abnegation. If I can't achieve this through pretending to be well or believing that I am well, I distance myself from family, friends, and society in general to direct my attention away from my own experiences. At various points in my life, I have taken prescription and non-prescription drugs to try to achieve this. Where medication has clearly and causally altered my state of being in any way, it provides a sense of control over how I feel. When I choose or am prescribed to take *X* I will feel *Y*. *Y* is not always 'better', but sometimes it is enough that I feel something else and that I have had some degree of agency in bringing about this change of state.

Aside from chemical interventions, most of the work I have done and the help I have received has taken place through in-person verbal communication. My initial social categorisation as a mentally ill person was self-actualised through seeking help from a general practitioner (GP). My recollection is that by visiting a GP and explaining that I felt depressed, I was prescribed SSRIs (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors) and a short course of talking therapy. Other than what I had declared myself, there was no specific diagnosis. Based on an initial evaluation, my therapist and I addressed my tendency towards perfectionism over eight sessions of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This form of therapy involves addressing the learned patterns and structures of thought associated with certain behaviours and developing alternate strategies to avoid harmful ways of thinking. Ironically, my perfectionist tendencies led to me convincing myself and my therapist that I had resolved all my problems by the end of the course. Rather than engaging with the cognitive and behavioural strategies outlined in the course, I became 'well' by believing in my own performance of wellness and following what I assumed to be the expected trajectory of a patient in these circumstances. By filling in quantitative questionnaires in ways that demonstrated gradual improvement, I managed to superficially reassure myself and my therapist that we had sufficiently resolved whatever I had been struggling with. This amounted to me allowing myself to ignore the problems that I had called to attention and return to a belief in my individual self-determination and responsibility. In truth, I was still acutely anxious in most interpersonal interactions in a way that eventually deepened my depressive and other self-destructive tendencies. All I had done was allow myself to temporarily

ignore these conditions without fully addressing what they were and how they were limiting and harming me.

My participation in talking therapy has tended towards similarly self-deceiving resolutions. I experienced this when I received counselling sessions while doing a master's degree. In that instance, we addressed social anxiety and procrastination. Both therapists used materials from the Australian Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI, 2020), which are designed to permit self-help with the guidance of a counsellor or therapist. In contrast to my superficial performance of improvement, I remember being privately averse to the content of these materials and maintaining a cynically defiant attitude in the face of what I felt to be patronising worksheets and information sheets. Behind this bluster, I was afraid of engaging with these activities, and of disclosing the full extent of my problems, which resulted in me avoiding doing the work required to change my thoughts and behaviours. To avoid the shame of failing to engage with the tasks required for my self-improvement, I pretended that it was all working and that I would be fine. My performances of wellness, improvement, and functionality were what had allowed to get by since I had first struggled with these issues as a teenager, but in therapy, as in the rest of my life, this only served to divert my attention, and the attention of everyone trying to care for me, away from the problems that still needed to be resolved.

In the longer term, my experiences of talking therapy have pointed to the fact that without absolute honesty on my part, it has the potential to exacerbate existing mental health problems and to complicate those problems through circuitous reasoning. This is another reason I was drawn to depiction and illustration as additional resources for engaging with and understanding mental illness. Having had less experience with illustration of mental illness in a formal capacity, it is less weighed down by presuppositions and expectations.

I often find myself struggling to do anything at all, which results in me pushing back against interventions that require me to do things. A therapist once advised me to read a book titled *Isn't it about Time?* to address my procrastination, but because of my tendency to procrastinate (and what I felt to be the insipidly patronising nature of the title), I have yet to read more than a few pages. Aside from my own attitudinal resistance, I have found the idea and undertaking of self-help consistently overwhelming because of the volume of material that is potentially relevant to me. Of the self-help sections available on the CCI (2020) website, for example, sixteen out of the seventeen available modules relate to problems that I have experienced concurrently, chronically, and in an interrelated manner. Choosing one or two to address prioritises improving certain problems at the expense of other interrelated problems. The prospect of trying to address all of them individually with the same focus and effort is so daunting as to seem impossible.

I was confronted by the same problem in a different context as an undergraduate student. Prior to starting my undergraduate degree, other state-educated students and I were offered supplementary tuition to catch us up to the level of the predominantly private and grammar school educated students. Through indignation at having to do more work to start on the same footing as my more expensively educated peers, as well as a general fear at having to start earlier than I'd expected, I declined this offer. Later, in my second year, I broke down in a tutorial when my tutor asked me why the quality of my work was slipping. Having gained some perspective on what I was crying about (albeit limited by my lack of self-awareness) they advised me to take additional study skills modules, or potentially to consider dropping out of university altogether. I emerged from that intervention with a reinforced sense that I did not deserve to be at the university (a worry I had carried with me from the start) and with heightened anxiety about not having the energy to do the additional work I needed to do because of the work I was already struggling to do. This requirement to do more work to get over a state of being where I am struggling to work on anything has been a recurring motif in all aspects of my life.

Presently, I have learnt to manage this in part by managing my expectations of myself and others. Previously, I have been limited by the assumption that any health problems I have should be permanently cured either through identification and treatment of symptoms, or through diagnosis and appropriate intervention. This expectation is completely undermined by the reality of my experiences of health, well-being and treatment in general. The mental health and other health problems I described above are mostly chronic or recurring. Rather than expecting a silver bullet intervention to resolve them absolutely, more recently, my processes of treatment and recovery have involved repeated acknowledgement, increasing awareness and acceptance of these conditions and problems as long-term aspects of my existence. This has helped me come to terms with the potential permanence or recurrence of many of these problems, as well as helping me see the ways in which my experiences of illness, discomfort and distress are interconnected. Whenever I am allowed the time, space and resources to acknowledge what is wrong with me, my ability to understand, seek help, accept help and make changes improves. For me, the most crucial (yet often, most difficult to access) resources include access to mental healthcare, income support, stable housing and secure employment. When I do not have these things, the struggle to access them has the potential to trap me in a prolonged state of worsening ill health and social isolation, as well as damaging my trust in others and my ability to seek and accept help, support or sympathy. When I have these foundational benefits, I am much better equipped to respond to problems as they arise and trust that others want to help me and that they are not necessarily beholden to the same harmful preconceptions, bigotries and unrealistic standards that I apply to myself.

Even all of this, though, I write only as an approximation of who I was at the time of writing, and never as a comprehensive encapsulation of who I will always have been. In a month or a year, I will likely only recognise some of myself in this, and my new vantage point will yield new perspectives

on who I was and who I might yet be. Disclosure is only as useful as it is honest, honesty is bounded by self-awareness, and self-awareness is bounded by infinity, like the invisible edge of sight.

In the following section, I will introduce relevant literature to establish working understandings of subjective experience and mental illness before examining how they have been described in comics and other forms of storytelling.

1.3 Subjective experience

Though all of the comics I will be looking at make explicit or allusive reference to clinical definitions of mental illness or to clinical interventions, I am more broadly interested in the depiction of people's experience of mental illness and how this frames reading and discussion. Consequently, in the following sections, I will focus on setting out a working definition of subjective experience along these lines. My aim is to allow participants' ideas about mental health to arise naturally from discussion and reading, foregrounding the reality of people's experience and understanding of mental illness and mental health issues (including my own), rather than framing my discussion in terms of expert medical discourses alone. This decision is motivated by the fact that most people's understanding of mental illness is very general, grounded in their own or others' experiences, and framed by popular consensus regarding psychological and emotional phenomena. Emotion, for example, has a social dimension which suggests that emotional responses have communicative and transferable functions (Burkitt, 1997: 101–16; Parkinson, 1995; Parkinson and Simons, 2012). Jackson (1993: 207) observes that 'language ... contributes to the cultural construction of emotions and is a means by which we participate in creating a shared sense of what emotions are'. Yet, while language frames description of emotion, it can also limit it by drawing familiar conceptual boundaries around peculiar emotional states or responses. This can affect the possibility of communicating the true complexity of emotional experiences, which are rarely simple or discrete in nature. The same is true of expert, non-expert and general cultural categorisations of mental illness. The establishment of strong categorical boundaries around nuanced dimensions of experience has the potential to prove too inflexible for people to identify these concepts and categorisations with their own experiences. This is further dissuaded by perceived or practised social stigma and prejudice. With something as individually subjective and private as experience, prototypical categorisations are liable to be difficult to generalise.

Accepting the subjective variability of experience involves asserting the reality of phenomenal or aesthetic experience in light of prevalent misconceptions or limited understandings of subjectivity as outlined by Johnson (2007: xi):

> Chief among these harmful misconceptions are that (1) the mind is disembodied, (2) thinking transcends feeling, (3) feelings are not part of meaning and knowledge, (4)

> aesthetics concerns matters of mere subjective taste, and (5) the arts are a luxury (rather than being conditions of full human flourishing).

These assumptions give rise to ignorance of the involvement of emotion in cognition, reasoning and consciousness (Damasio, 1994, 1999, 2003; Johnson, 2007: 9) and the extent to which conscious awareness is bound up in and produced by ‘our bodies … inhabiting and interacting meaningfully with their environments beneath the level of conscious awareness’ (Johnson, 2007: 24). For Fludernik (1996: 26, 49) the anthropomorphic experientiality implied by this understanding of subjectivity is a central concern of ‘narrative’:

> all narrative is built on the mediating function of consciousness. This consciousness can surface on several levels and in different shapes. Consciousness comprises both lived experientiality and intellectual attempts to deal with experience, and it includes the comprehension of actancy just as it necessarily embraces an understanding of mental processes.

The sense of the mind of an experiencing subject that arises from this is said by Palmer (2004: 19) to include ‘all aspects of our inner life: not just cognition and perception, but also dispositions, feelings, beliefs, and emotions’. This expansive understanding of ‘mind’ resonates with my own understanding and experience of the integrated nature of the subjective experiences of emotion, thought and consciousness. These descriptions suggest a natural orientation in storytelling towards an integrated sense of subjective experience, that is predominantly divided through differences in linguistic report (a person can subjectively and passively *be* or *feel* an emotion, disposition or psychological state; they can deliberatively and actively *have* or *think* a propositional thought). In the following section, I will outline an understanding of subjective experience that encompasses the multiple aspects of subjectivity introduced above. From there, I will outline my position in relation to psychiatric and popular discourse regarding mental health. This will provide the basis for examination of subjective experience in comics from a perspective grounded in my own lived reality of the nature of such phenomena, as introduced in section 1.2.

1.3.1 Emotion, consciousness and subjectivity

Focused hypothesis-driven scientific and philosophical investigation of subjective experience involves research-specific categorisations of aspects of experience. In aggregation, this results in disagreements as to what can rightfully be described as ‘emotion’, ‘consciousness’, ‘cognition’, ‘appraisal’ or ‘mind’ when understandings are extrapolating from functionally distinct categorical starting points. Emotion, for example, might be best understood as a very loose concept that includes several contributing processes. While subjective experience of emotion feels unitary or integrated, a general theory of emotion would have to account for higher level cognitive appraisal of bodily states (Lazarus, 1991; 1984); pre-appraisal activation of bodily responses to stimuli (Murphy and Zajonc, 1993); and sub-cortical responses such as fear (LeDoux, 1996), which may prompt perceived

emotional response without appraisal or higher cortical activation (i.e., awareness, deliberation, assessment and so on). As Prinz (2003: 77) points out, 'cognitive theories are well suited to capture the meaningfulness of emotions. They identify emotions with judgments or with more complex mental episodes that include judgments as parts'. A suggestion here is that the nature of an emotional response is characterised by the nature of its stimulus and the situational context in which a stimulus is perceived. However, Prinz also suggests that emotions and cognition (in particular, appraisals, and calibrating causes of emotion) should be described as completely distinct and only functionally interrelated. Contrary to Lazarus (1991, 1984) who defines emotion in terms of situated and projected appraisals (i.e., primarily cognitive) and Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1986) who suggest 'elaborated emotions' as a means of accounting for emotion plus appraisal, Prinz (2003: 81) asserts that because explicit judgments neither intercede, nor co-occur with what he calls already meaningful emotions, they are 'inessential to emotions' and that 'we should not count them as emotion constituents even when they do occur. They are no more a part of an emotion than a premise is a part of the conclusion'. Though a premise is not part of a conclusion, they are both components of thesis formulation. Likewise, emotion and cognition may be distinct according to some descriptions, but they nonetheless contribute to and are part of subjective experience.

Extrapolating from emotional responses and cognitive processes towards a unified sense of subjective experience presents a conflict between cognitive science and intuitions about the nature of consciousness:

> On the one hand, our everyday experience provides a compelling and anchoring sense of self-consciousness. On the other hand, cognitive science assumes a fundamental self-fragmentation, because much of thought is putatively mediated by mechanisms that are modular, independent, and completely incapable of becoming part of conscious experience.
>
> Dawson, 2013: 362; see also Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991: 49

The experiential aggregate of these components might best be understood in terms of what has been dubbed the 'hard problem' of consciousness. Chalmers (1995) posits two broad categories of consciousness: 'access consciousness'—aspects of experience accessible through report which is scientifically observable and experimentally testable; and 'phenomenal consciousness' which relates more broadly to the unified, subjective experience of reality, akin to the 'what it's like' dimension of consciousness described by Nagel (1974). The latter of these categories presents the 'hard problem' to cognitive sciences. However, the hard problem is only hard to certain ways of knowing. People intuit the quality of their own phenomenal consciousness even without reflexive categorisation, objectification and nominalisation. Regardless of whether phenomenal consciousness might be dismissed as an epiphenomenal evolutionary by-product of biological human functioning (Bailey, 2006; Dennett, 1991), it is a prominent dimension of human experience regardless of its functional or evolutionary relevance. In these terms, consciousness is something that is learnt through

engagement with the world and that is embedded in cultural understandings and social interaction (Margolin, 2003; Baker, 1999).

Though apparent to all conscious beings, there are dimensions of subjective experience that remain inscrutable. Describing consciousness, Turner (2011: 4) asserts that

> the way we think isn't the way we think we think. We are not designed to look into the way we think. We are designed not to see what makes us human. Common sense, ready-to-hand ideas about the way we think have proved to be a very poor guide, perhaps a kind of distracting reassurance provided by cultures so we can have a sense that we have some idea of who or what we are and how we work.

Turner suggests that there is more going on beneath the surface of experience that is unavailable to personal reflection. However, this still does not disavow the subjective reality of the intuition that *the way we think* is *the way we think we think*. In everyday life, awareness of lack of self-awareness does not change a person's level of awareness; subjectivity is, in this way, impenetrable and basic. Storytelling cannot point the way to solutions as to the nature and functioning of subjectivity in the sense of scientific investigation into Chalmers's hard problem. Instead, unless specifically deployed to do otherwise, storytelling predominantly deals with mundane, 'folk psychological' understandings of subjectivity (Margolin, 2003). Folk psychology refers to everyday, shared understandings of how minds work that inform interactions with others (Goldenweiser, 1912). While the utility of folk psychology in psychological research has been questioned (Fletcher, 1995), this socially significant dimension of experience is seen by Currie (2010) as the thing that storytelling can shed most light on. Similarly, Burke and Troscianko (2013, see also Margolin, 2003: 272) see literature as a means of exploring 'cognitive processing and its experiential manifestation', which is to say, cognitive processing as filtered through subjective experience. This is a more holistic concern than a focus on emotion, cognition, consciousness or minds in isolation. Storytelling deals with an integrated sense of what it is like to experience being in the world (Herman, 2011a: 160; Fludernik, 1996). Categorically distinguished aspects of experience (e.g., emotion, thought) can be specifically brought to prominence, but they are always framed by a mundane, personal and culturally defined sense of phenomenal experience. This is the reality of subjective experience that I intend to engage with both as a topic of enquiry and as a foundational concept in storytelling. Along these lines, I will explore how basic and broad understandings of subjectivity are involved in conceptualising stories in section 2.3. In the following section, I will examine how more fluid and expansive understandings of subjectivity relate to ways of understanding mental illness.

1.3.2 Experiencing mental illness

For a dimension of a person's experience or behaviour to be classified as a mental illness—or, in contemporary medical categorisations, a **mental disorder** (APA, 2013)—it must be construed as deviating from some societal norm of subjective experience or behaviour (Francis, 2013). The

distinction between 'normal' and 'disordered' requires appraisal of whether symptoms arise in a way that would be expected in a given culture—e.g., grieving the death of a loved one—or whether symptoms fall outside of anticipated experience or behaviour—e.g., experiencing chronic intrusive thoughts relating to the death of a loved one (Wakefield and First, 2013). A danger of this categorical consideration is that, as cultures evolve, dysfunctional dimensions of experience are liable to be normalised, while normal dimensions of experience are liable to be labelled as dysfunction (Hyman, 2010), especially if doing so benefits powerful institutions (Reznek, 1991; Scheff, 1974, 1975).

In psychiatric terms, relaxing diagnostic thresholds for categorising phenomena as 'disordered' risks **overdiagnosis** of disorder and **medicalisation** of experience (Bolton, 2013; Cooper, 2013). These refer to psychiatric or any other clinical categorisation of experiences and behaviours as disordered that might also be understood through other means (Francis, 2013; Healy, 2013; Horowitz, 2002; Szasz, 1970, 1984, 2009). Just as not recognising experiences as disordered can benefit certain institutions, overdiagnosis of problems as mental disorders can also benefit institutions. For example, increases in pharmaceutical prescriptions are encouraged by pharmaceutical corporations that stand to benefit from establishing long-term dependencies among large portions of the global population (Francis, 2013; Healy, 2012; Whitaker, 2010).

In response to this, there are arguments against medicalisation that propose greater focus on social models over medical models of mental illness and treatment. At one end of the scale, Szasz (1974, 1970, 1984, 2009) consistently argues against the existence of mental illness altogether. Szasz (1974) prefers to characterise mental illnesses as 'problems in living' and psychiatric symptoms as 'behaviours'. His understanding asserts the personal responsibility of all individuals, regardless of their state of mind (Szasz, 1970; 1984).

Conversely, Fisher (2009: 19) frames medicalisation of mental illness as a 'privatization of stress' resulting from the capitalistic cults of individualism and empirical objectivism:

> By privatizing these problems—treating them as if they were caused only by chemical imbalances in the individual's neurology and/or by their family background—any question of social systemic causation is ruled out.
>
> Fisher, 2009: 21

Whereas Szasz asserts individual responsibility, Fisher places a stronger emphasis on collective responsibility and pathologies that extend beyond an individual to the culture they exist in. Fisher claims that capitalism after the financial crash of 2008 is particularly limiting in that it precludes imagination of any other alternate mode of existence for humanity. The individual trapped within entrenched, state-protected capitalism can only search for alternatives and change within capitalism and must do so in anti-communitarian isolation with absolute responsibility for their own well-being. Culture also frames personal and systemic understandings of mental illness and mental health,

which affects how people experience phenomena that may or may not be considered mental illness in their culture (Bhui and Dinos, 2008, Ciftci et al., 2012).

Szasz's notion of individual responsibility has been taken up in an alternative manner by scholars working in the field of 'mad studies' (LeFrancois et al., 2013). Mad studies draws on the practices of disability studies and places people with mental health problems at the centre of research about their own experiences in opposition to the dominant discourses that define these dimensions of their experience (e.g., psychiatric institutions, employers, governments, law). LeFrancois et al. (2013: 13) describe it as 'a project of inquiry, knowledge production, and political action devoted to the critique and transcendence of psy-centred ways of thinking, behaving, relating, and being'. This focus on personal experience, as opposed to epidemiological generalisation, encourages discussion of race, class, poverty, gender, and identity politics, as well as allowing peculiarities of personal experience and understanding to contribute to general understanding of actual experience of mental illness (Gorman, 2013; Fine, 2012; Russo and Beresford, 2015).

The mad studies approach is related to first-person phenomenological approaches to understanding mental illness (Ghaemi, 2007; Ratcliffe, 2009; Gallagher, 2009), which again prioritise the actual experience of people whose experience can be categorised as mental illness, while questioning how this relates to more 'reductionist' scientific understandings (Ghaemi, 2003; Zalta, 2018). Because my research is focusing on interpersonal communication of experiences of mental illness, I will also prioritise this kind of phenomenological approach in this thesis. Scientific and expert definitions will only be relevant to my discussion where they are made so explicitly by discourse participants (i.e., the participants in the book groups included in the methodology of this thesis, authors, me as reader and researcher). Because of this, where relevant, I will predominantly take my cues regarding understanding of the illnesses and experiences being presented from group discussions, the content of the comics and by drawing on my own experiences (as outlined in section 1.2). Although they are useful as a means of differentiating conscious functions, expert perspectives on subjectivity and mental illness are liable to disavow the reality of lived experiences by forcibly objectifying them (Gallagher, 2009). Construing people's reality as deficient or abnormal effectively strips them of their intuitive sense of self and their personhood. I will start from an acceptance of others' intuitions about the nature of their own experience, while remaining wary that a person's understanding of their reality can potentially be limited or distorted by illness or culture. The concepts of illness, wellness and soundness of mind are themselves subjective in nature, and so it is impossible to describe anything against an absolute benchmark of normality. Studying stories about mental illness requires a flexible approach to psychology that allows for impressionistic and personal accounts of experience rather than rigidly and externally defined categorisations. Where relevant, I will introduce definitions of conditions with reference to my own experience, reader discussion and the content of the comics. In this way, I will attempt to avoid judging the validity or nature of different experiences of mental illness, while accepting that I can only do so based on my own experiences and understanding.

Having introduced my formative experiences and enduring understandings of storytelling, subjectivity, and mental illness, I will use the remainder of this chapter to introduce working understandings of comics, subjective experience, and mental illness. First, I will establish a contextual framework for thinking about comics by outlining a history of English language comics, current cultural perceptions, and some relevant contemporary definitions. Then, I will provide an overview of the history of comics about mental illness, before introducing some contemporary publications that fall under this category.

1.4 Comics: cultural context

In this section, I will unpack some of the cultural baggage of comics culture that comes with what Versaci (2007: 12) describes as comics' 'powerful marginality'. In section 1.4.1, I will give an overview of the history of comics from their precursors to the present day. My aim is to describe the contemporary cultural status of comics to provide contextual grounding for my analysis. In doing so, I will consider dimensions of evaluation and prejudice, like my own as discussed in section 1.1, that are liable to frame readers' engagement with and discussion of comics.

1.4.1 Historic development

The emergence of depictive narrative in ancient cultures is used by some (e.g., McCloud, 1993; Duncan and Smith, 2010: 7; Kunzle, 1974) as a means of historically contextualising contemporary comics. Whereas McCloud makes the strong claim that all depictive narrative practices fall within his definition of comics, others (e.g., Baetens, 2001; Duncan and Smith, 2010; Groensteen, 1999; Wolk, 2007) see retroactive redefinitions like McCloud's as rhetorical means of aggrandizing contemporary comics. They treat earlier examples of depictive narrative rather as cultural and formal precursors that evidence a human tendency to tell stories through pictures (and words). Kunzle's (1974: 2) history focuses more on the invention of the printing press, which allowed for the popularisation of visual media and its use as propaganda, satire, and for purposes of social control. Of these early factors, populism, satirical or irreverent intent and the ability of visual narration to influence people have had the most impact on the development of modern comics and their perceived cultural status. It has been the comics with the widest distribution that have shaped understandings of the art form (Duncan and Smith 2010: 87). My childhood comic reading consisted of Marvel *Transformers* comics and editions of a short-lived *Sonic the Hedgehog* comic that were gifted to me after I received my First Holy Communion. Both were published and distributed on a global scale and were designed in part as promotional tie-ins to encourage purchases of toys and videogames, as well as more general brand buy-in through development of trans-medial fandom. In line with my own early reading experiences and understandings, the focus on popular, mass-produced, child-focused comics has historically resulted in perceptions of comics as easy to read, disposable and of no great philosophical value (Groensteen, 2007: 20; McCloud, 1993).

The cultural lineage of comics becomes easier to trace once recognised modern conventions start to coalesce into more regularly reproduced forms. Early comics were incorporated into newspapers, which resulted in formal limitations based on allotted page space and a sense of impermanence and disposability (Duncan and Smith, 2010; Wolk, 2007). Among the first stand-alone comics were promotional publications such as *Funnies on Parade* produced by Eastern Color Printing Company in 1933, which was a promotional device given away by Proctor and Gamble. This example reflects two issues that have affected the long-term development and reception of comics as a medium. Firstly, comics were, from the start, entrenched in commercialism and were designed for mass appeal (Duncan and Smith, 2010; Wolk, 2007: 22; Saraceni, 2003: 3). Secondly, as the word itself suggests, they evolved out of a particular genre of humorous publication referred to as 'funnies' in the USA. Even as this characteristic became less intrinsic, the related term 'comic' continued to be used, which has resulted in the widespread use of a word which has the power to casually undermine the medium it names (Saraceni, 2003: 3).

Comics' readership expanded massively during the 1930s, which saw the release of the earliest superhero comics. The popularity of titles such as *Action Comics* led to numerous imitations of popular characters and significant rivalries between competing publishers. To garner mass appeal, publications tended to be simple and accessible in style (Groensteen, 2007; Wolk, 2007; Duncan and Smith, 2010). Several diverse genres sprung up alongside superhero comics, including horror, romance and crime. As these genres developed, comics stories began to feature more violent, criminal and potentially disturbing material, which, by the 1950s led to well publicised moral outrage in the USA and the UK (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 23). Numerous attacks from outside of comics culture targeted what non-readers presumed to be the impoverished quality of content, form and morality (see Beaty, 2012). Most prominently, Wertham (1954) in the USA and Pumphrey (1952) in the UK published polemics that critiqued the potential moral and psychological impact of comics on children. Consequently, bad morals, impoverished narrative art and exploitation became uncritically and generally associated with all comics. To preserve access to the lucrative children's comics market, censorial attacks on comics led publishers to agree to an industry-wide programme of censorship that was branded the **Comics Code**. This was intended to guarantee that comics bearing the comics code mark would be suitable for consumption by children. This led to a broad divergence in modes of production, distribution and content in children's and adults' comics. To preserve the children's comics market, mainstream comics publishers returned to popular conventions from the 30s, relaunching superhero characters under the constraints of the code. The 60s saw the rise of Marvel comics, which brought social realism to the superhero genre and engaged more with issues concerning the lives of its teenage readership (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 40). Within educational and library settings, comics came to be seen as 'problematic or even dangerous texts whose sole value was to increase the literacy skills of young male non-readers, or that they were not actually books at all' (Gibson, 2012: 268).

While mainstream publishers tried to emulate the success of the golden age of the 1930s and 1940s (in what would later be dubbed, the silver age), content that subverted the comics code began to find a new home in independent, small-scale publications. These **underground comix** were sold in headshops or independently, rather than being mass-distributed for sale in newsagents, on news-stands, or anywhere else comics were usually distributed. This newfound freedom allowed artists and writers to cover new topics and to experiment with formal and stylistic conventions. By pushing comics underground, outrage and censorship created conditions in which comics creators were able to treat more varied, personally explicit and taboo topics. Underground comix brought about an enduring trend of confessional storytelling:

> When the absurdity of the traditional cartoon mode was reworked in the underground comix to encompass the tragedy inherent within the comedy of life, the comics form became a place where caricature, burlesque and slapstick could become methods to not only depict, but to embody the psychic experience of the human being alone and with other people.
>
> Witek, 2012: 41

Though mainstream comics started to be used to address issues that were affecting their readership including drug use, sex or bullying, the small readership of underground comix meant that artists and writers could address more specific aspects of personal experience given that they were not required by corporate guidelines to make content generalisable or broadly relatable.

This tradition laid the foundation for the development of more broadly distributed comics that began to address complex themes through more artistically expressive means. Even within the mainstream, artists began to be able to work outside of the in-house styles of major publishers, which led to a diversification of artistic styles being used to address ideas and themes that had previously been passed over in mainstream comics. Stylistically, comics such as these are marked by the possibility of eschewing the ‘ideal of readability which governs everything that comes out of the industry’ (Groensteen, 2012: 4, my translation).

This shift in the content and intent of comics is often associated with series such as *The Watchmen* (Gibbons and Moore, 1987) and *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1980-1991), which addressed more complex themes through the comics medium, while being distributed on a larger scale than was typical of underground publishing practices. These titles mark a shift both in mainstream and underground publishing practices in that these and other series from this time started to be collected into single or multiple volume trade paperbacks that have since come to be marketed as and commonly referred to as **graphic novels**. *Maus* illustrates a transition from independent publishing in the underground comix tradition to practices which have become typical of what some have dubbed **alternative**, **independent** or **adult comics** over the last few decades (Hatfield, 2005; Sabin, 1993; Wolk, 2007). *Maus* was originally serialised in *Raw*, a comics anthology published and edited by Françoise Mouly and Art Spiegelman between 1980 and 1991. The early chapters were subsequently collected into

a single volume in 1986 that found a large readership through its distribution in general bookshops, rather than specialist comic-book shops (Kaplan, 2008). Though publishing practices vary widely, these developments broadly capture the contemporary status of graphic novels, alternative comics, independent comics or adult comics and the cultural heritage that frames their production and consumption as a subset within the comics industry (Hatfield, 2005; Sabin, 1993; Baetens and Frey, 2014). The tendency among those working through what might be considered the 'graphic novel market', is marked to varying degrees by aspirations to emulate the comparative prestige afforded literature (Baetens and Frey, 2014). Though the term 'graphic novel' has proven problematic (Baetens, 2001: 8; El Refaie, 2012; Samson and Peeters, 2010), it is nonetheless representative of a general trend in independent comics to attempt to distance the medium from the perceived excesses and limitations of the mainstream (Groensteen, 1999, 2006).

1.4.2 Contemporary cultural context

The history outlined above provides a general contextual frame for understanding comics' cultural status. In particular, the general divergence of modes of production and consumption in the mainstream and independent/underground traditions continues to frame contemporary comics culture. Because distribution and general cultural visibility of independent comics is comparatively limited, it is the mainstream (and its trans-medial derivatives) that continues to inform general understandings of comics culture. The perceived cultural status of comics as irreverent, disposable and childish that arose from this has persisted as an anxiety in criticism, production and publication over the past decades (e.g., Baetens, 2001; Hatfield 2005; Groensteen, 1999, 2006, 2011; McCloud, 1993; Peeters, 1991; Saraceni, 2003; Wolk, 2007; Versaci, 2001). As Groensteen (2007: 20, 56; 2006) describes, these cultural conceptions are reified from within the comics industry and comics culture more generally. He cites the infantilisation of comics audiences, increased merchandising and industrial factors as contributing to diminishing comics' cultural valuation. Consequently, 'comics' is used to define cultural phenomena that are strongly associated with the content of mainstream publications, including adaptations of comics in other media (e.g., 'comics movies') and related merchandising (Wolk, 2007: 11). This licensing of intellectual property leads to a decontextualised and narrow exposure to comics culture for general audiences (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 105).

Another contributing factor posited by Groensteen (2007: 56) is the presumed ease of reading comics compared to reading literature. In English-speaking cultures, this is also partially attributable to a cultural and educational tendency to value writing over other forms of communication as being more precise, expressive and intellectual (Cohn, 2014; Kress, 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). As alluded to in section 1.1, primary education often involves a gradual diminution of the importance of drawing as a means of storytelling in inverse proportion to the increase in importance of writing (e.g., Childers et al., 1998; Cox et al., 1998; Cox and Rowlands, 2000; Hallam et al., 2011; Herne, 2000; Hrenko, 2014; Jolley, 2010; Sharp, 1990). Beyond this,

drawing and other methods of producing images are isolated from general communication as 'art education' through which curriculum and teacher attitudes influence the way learners produce and value pictures (Darras, 2000; Golomb, 1992; Granö, 2000; Hallam et al., 2008, 2011). As a result, these prejudices inform the way in which learners understand and communicate through different modes and media (see also, Cohn, 2012a, 2014). In discussing the medium, Ware addresses how the cultural considerations outlined above combine with intuitions about the value of the medium and how it is consumed:

> Any artwork created for reproduction flirts with this sort of esthetic dismissal; inherently valueless as an 'object', a printed picture vibrates with no resonance of having been touched by the artist, except as a sort of cheap souvenir.
>
> […]
>
> A cartoon drawing lives somewhere between the worlds of words and pictures, sort of where road signs and people waving their arms in the middle of lakes operate: you don't really spend a lot of time considering the esthetic value of an arrow telling you not to crash, or the gestural grace of a person drowning; you just read the signs and act appropriately.
>
> Ware, 2004: 11

Ware suggests that comics are cheap by dint of the way they communicate and how this sits within its native culture, trapped somewhere between the practices of reading literature, viewing fine art and processes of mass production, symbolic communication and drowning.

Similarly, Baetens (2001: 8) sees the use of the term 'graphic novel' as deriving from scholarly debates around the relative importance of words and images in comics and the cultural importance of verbal art in English language culture, as compared with a greater cultural focus on the visual in European culture. In English language comics cultures

> the 'graphic novel' is, at least theoretically, used to make a clear-cut distinction between the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys', between comics pulp fiction and more or less high art visual narratives in book-form whose ambition it is to save the literary heritage in an illiterate world'.
>
> Baetens, 2001: 8

While Groensteen (1999, 2007) tends to assert the importance of comics' pictorial nature, he also points to certain modern comics that seem to force a greater degree of engagement and attentiveness from the readers as **bandes dessinées *poétiques*** (Groensteen, 2011: 11; see also, **art comics**, Wolk, 2007) thereby drawing on literary quality to reinforce the artistic value of the comics he is describing (see also, Samson and Peeters 2010).

While the term 'graphic novel' lays claim to the same cultural status as literature by means of association, some scholars, such as Hatfield (2005, 2010) and Versaci (2001), have more directly

asserted that comics are a literary form. Hatfield (2010) summarises the essence of this debate, again drawing on the image/text distinction put forward by Baetens (2001) and situating himself and Versaci on the text side of the argument in opposition to theories put forth by Groensteen (1999, 2006), Baetens (2001, 2005) and Beaty (2007) of seeing comics as 'a primarily visual, rather than literary, form of communication' (Beaty, 2007: 249). Hatfield (2010: 9) asserts that 'the study of literature ought to include the popular, the visual, the liminal and uncategorizable' and he tends to align himself with Versaci's (2001) positioning of comics as a 'true literature', a discussion which is framed by issues of cultural legitimacy (Versaci 2001, 25). In his own work, Hatfield (2010, 2005) describes comics as literature and alternative comics 'as an important nexus of literary production'.

This contested cultural status is intrinsic to the very nature of contemporary independent comics (Beaty, 2012; Wolk, 2007), as is to be found in Chris Ware's ironic admonishments to the reader for choosing to read something as base and unsavoury as a comic in *Jimmy Corrigan*. Worden (2006, 892) describes the productive value of this status:

> The workings of shame, as both a force of individuation (the comics reader is unlike normal readers) and relationality (all comics readers share in this unique cultural practice), produce a space for the development of a comics-based aesthetics and counterpublic.

From an aesthetic perspective, the marginality of independent comics in comparison with the accessible mainstream is a practical truth to be embraced and worked with rather than to be railed against. Functionally, comics are ultimately like all media in that they are not innately easy or difficult to read. Rather, they are all more or less difficult to read depending on the complexity of the composition and thematic content, the level of adherence to basic conventions, and the expertise of the reader.

The historic valuation of literature as a means through which ideas have been promulgated creates conditions in which comics are liable only to be considered as worthy of attention to the extent that they resemble literature. Though there is value in comparative study of literature and comics, this should not be the default and comics should be produced and understood in terms of what is unique to the medium, rather than pursuing 'literariness' as an ideal or using it as a benchmark of quality. Appraisal of the contemporary status of comics shows that neither the communicative efficiency of a medium nor its history limit artists' and writers' ability to tell highly affecting, aesthetic and intellectually challenging stories. The real differences between media lie, rather, in their affordances. Different media are suited to communicating different things in different ways.

1.5 Comics about mental illness

As discussed in section 1.3.2, most definitions of good mental health, bad mental health, and everything in between arise from cultural factors that are not necessarily flexible enough to account for the reality of some people's experiences. Personal accounts and stories are a means of

accessing this information and broadening the knowledge base through which unwell people, neuro-atypical people, carers, advocates, professionals, services, organisations, governments and cultures can productively engage with the broad range of understandings and experiences that form any shared sense of what mental illness might be.

As well as a means of broadening cultural understanding, publications of personal accounts and fictional stories offer a relatively safe means of expressing and reading about such experiences. Mental illness is still a dimension of experience that people are cautious about sharing—especially with people who seem well—because of either presumed or explicit prejudice and stigma (Tavormina et al., 2016). The acts of writing, drawing and reading comics potentially provide safe spaces for engaging with mentally ill characters' experiences and related issues.

By using images as well as text to communicate experience of mental illness, and by focusing on individual subjective experience of illness, comics offer resources for communicating the nuances of people's different experiences of illness (Williams, 2012). As I will explore further in section 2.2.2, images have the potential to be referentially expansive and accessible to a general audience. This does not preclude the potential for disengagement among readers who lack relevant experiences that might facilitate understanding. However, it does potentially broaden the inclusivity of even the most personal of narratives. The expressive potential of visual metaphor and combinations of textual and pictorial approaches to representing subjective experience draws on functional commonalities between textual and pictorial communication and subjective experience itself (Barsalou, 2003, 2009; Langacker, 2008, see section 2.4). Comics also engage with embodied experience through iconic depiction of stance, facial expression and emotional response (Keen, 2011; Kukkonen, 2013: 151; McCloud, 2006; Mikkonen, 2008, 2013: 101), and through visual traces of the nature of gestures and actions involved in drawing (El Refaie, 2010; Pignocchi, 2010). All these elements provide distinct means of engaging readers emotionally and psychologically that can supplement, replace or interact with textual communication of character experience. In the following section, I will explain how comics about mental illness fit into the history of comics outlined in section 1.4 by discussing specific comics and traditions of publication.

1.5.1 Overview

Underground and alternative subcultures of English language comics have historically provided fertile ground for the communication of experiences of mental illness. One of the first publications to deal with such subject matter at length was *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* (Green, 1972). Green uses the character of Binky to tell stories about and explore living with compulsive behaviours and disturbing thoughts relating to sexuality and Catholicism (later diagnosed as obsessive-compulsive disorder). Published during the heyday of the underground comix scene of the 1960s and 1970s, *Binky Brown* is exemplary of the confessional style that became a hallmark of that

movement (Green, 2009; Spiegelman, 2009, Witek, 1989; 2011). This tradition has continued to varying degrees in contemporary alternative channels of comics publication such as graphic novels, webcomics (Jacques, 2016; Gran, 2016), zines (Doll Hospital Journal, 2015; O'Hara, 2015; Sarti, 2011), blogging platforms (Moreton, 2014; Brosh, 2011; McHurst, 2016) and small-press independent publishers such as Shortbox (Akhtar, 2020). Relative to the heightened commercial influence on creators in the mainstream (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 106), these methods of publication all allow more scope for stories to be driven by the personal motivations and inclinations of artists.

> Comics don't generally generate much money or fame. But precisely because they're not at the center of our culture—because they're not movies or TV—comic artists can pretty much do whatever they want.
>
> Glass, 2004: 7

In addition to this, the gradual de-stigmatisation of mental illness and its relative acceptance among newer generations of comics artists and diarists means that it is often included in stories, not so much as an experiential aberration or thematic focus, but as a common dimension of people's everyday life (e.g., Gran, 2016; Jacques, 2016). Though personal comics published through blogging platforms may still be culturally marginal, they are much more easily accessible to general audiences and have the potential to reach many readers, albeit limited to those who have access to the internet.

Of the above-listed alternative publication methods, graphic novels are perhaps closest to the middle-ground between alternative and mainstream comics owing to their dependence on publishing and distributing companies. As touched on in section 1.4, the term 'graphic novel' is often contested within comics culture and scholarship because of attempts to distance graphic novels from the perceived cultural limitations of the mainstream (Baetens and Frey, 2014: 1-2; Groensteen, 2011: 5). Though distribution tends to take place on a significantly smaller scale (Diamond Comics, 2016), for the most part, artists remain beholden, albeit to a lesser extent, to the need for their publishing companies to see a return on financial investment, as well as to the systems of mass distribution used by mainstream publishers (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 87). Descriptions of graphic novels sometimes distinguish them from the mainstream as being more intellectually ambitious, which often takes the form of an aspirational cultural association with 'literature' by authors or marketers (Duncan and Smith, 2010: 3; Hatfield, 2010; McCloud, 2007: 56; Versaci, 2007; Wolk, 2007: 61–4). As a result, graphic novels are able to achieve broad distribution—relative to most self-publishing ventures or early underground publishing models—while maintaining a degree of intellectual and creative autonomy. The international spread of contemporary independent publishers to some extent diminishes the influence of the focused, localised anti-authoritarianism which marked the underground comix movement (Green, 2009: 53–4; Sabin, 1993), but there are still examples of

common themes emerging within the current alternative comics subculture that challenge widely held assumptions. Mental illness is one such example.

As well as continuing to offer an outlet for personal disclosure, exploration of individual experience, and challenging taboos, comics about mental illness are starting to receive interest in medical and clinical contexts. Research in graphic medicine points to the potential for graphic novels to be used in research into cultural and medical issues in a creative manner well suited to addressing problems of individual experience.

> There is so much non-propositional information packed into a comic, that the medium lends itself to very powerful narrative, creating empathic bonds between the author and the reader
>
> Williams, 2011: 354; see also Williams, 2012; Al-Jawad, 2013

Alongside expert understandings of illness, visual techniques in comics can be used to challenge 'the implied accuracy of medical concepts when it comes to subjective illness experiences' (Vaccarella, 2013: 70). To conclude this chapter, I will survey some examples of approaches to conveying mental illness in graphic novels.

1.5.2 Specific publications

No story is only about a person's mental illness, nor are there graphic novels or comics that do not in some way engage with subjective experience. However, there is a trend in contemporary graphic novel publishing to give a platform to personal accounts of mental illness in which experience of the illness is significantly foregrounded, both in the stories themselves and through paratextual and intertextual framing in introductions, cover materials, interviews, reviews, articles, advertisements and so on. As discussed in 1.5.1, some of these publications began life as webcomics or blogs that were later syndicated or developed into graphic novel length comics (Cunningham, 2010; Forney, 2012; Green, 2013), again highlighting the contemporary repositioning of the underground confessional genre in both the alternative mainstream and personal online publishing.

Graphic novels about mental illness are often autobiographical in nature. *Lighter than My Shadow* by Katie Green tells the story of her problems with eating disorders, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, which relates to incidences of sexual abuse that form part of the story. Similarly, *Becoming/Unbecoming* by Una deals with her experience of sexual abuse, while also addressing the mental health problems caused by this, including suicidal ideation (also dealt with by Green). The difference in how the two comics engage with mental illness lies in the differing focuses (eating disorders and the Yorkshire ripper respectively). Una (2015) focuses more on the social context that framed and brought about her experience, while Green (2013) focuses more specifically on her experiences of illness through different periods of her life. Like Green (2013), Ellen Forney (2012) foregrounds her experience of illness in *Marbles*, in part through extensive engagement with

psychiatric discourse. She narrates her diagnosis and subsequent treatment for bipolar disorder exploring how her illness relates to her artistic identity and practice by outlining her experiences of mania, depression, therapy and pharmacological treatment.

Other autobiographical comics in this genre deal more generally with personal experience, or biography of others' illness. *Psychiatric Tales* bridges the gap between these two approaches as Darryl Cunningham (2010) deals with his experience of other people's illness as well as his own in a series of thematically linked short stories about his time as a psychiatric nurse. Leavitt provides a carer's and child's perspective of her mother's Alzheimer's in *Tangles*, while Perry and Graat (2010) tell Perry's story of working as a psychotherapist through a comics case study. However, not all comics of this genre involve direct experience of other people's illness. *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* by Talbot and Talbot, for example, tells parallel stories from Mary Talbot and Lucia Joyce's childhoods, both of which are framed by their relationships with their fathers. In this instance, the story of Lucia's illness and eventual incarceration are products of the author's research, yet it still resonates thematically and emotionally with Talbot's autobiographical content. All titles that deal with others' experience of illness at least engage with subjective accounts of emotional responses and often experiences of illness caused by the illness of others.

As well as biographical accounts of mental illness, there are a number of fictional stories that either draw on experience or research as a means of telling stories about living with mental illness. Where this work does not necessarily draw on personal experience (e.g., Dillon, 2012) or subjective experience (Powell, 2008) there is potential for the authenticity of the fictionalised experience of a particular illness to be criticised, especially where issues relating to illness, gender identity, or ethnicity also do not derive from the author's personal experience (see Thomas, 2013). This potential ethical dilemma is avoided by titles that use fictional accounts as a means of exploring personal experience (e.g., Williams, 2011; Green, 1972).

There are more comics within this genre and mode of publication that deal with mental illness directly and tangentially including many graphic novels about other types of illness and stories more generally (though with varying degrees of prominence). Though there is a professionally and culturally established categorical divide between physical and mental illness, both dimensions tend to be involved in some way in all illness. Though psychological issues may not be specified or diagnosed, they are always a part of physical illness and *vice versa*. The difference in narratives of mental illness and illness is not to do with the absence of psychological, emotional or physical trauma in either type of narrative, but rather, the extent to which these elements are foregrounded as being a prominent feature of people's experience of their illnesses. While my own research effectively reifies this division through a psychological focus, I do so while recognising that physicality and mentality are fully interrelated and that mental health is a part of everybody's lives and everybody's health, be it good or bad.

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined my experiences and understandings of storytelling, comics and mental illness, described my general approach to engaging with the idea of subjective experience, provided an overview of the development of comics culture, and introduced some examples of how people engage with experiences of mental illness through comics. In the following chapter, I will review research that research that offers definitions of comics with a view to establishing an understanding of comics that is appropriate to my own research. Beyond that, I will examine semiotic and linguistic approaches to analysing and describing comics and I will explore how I can build on these approaches by integrating concepts and approaches from cognitive linguistic discourse analysis.

2 Literature review

Having summarised comics' historic development, given an overview of their current cultural status and suggested a loose working definition (see sections 1.4 and 1.5), in the following sections, I will look at existing approaches to comics research, with a particular focus on any that pay attention to the nature of comics reading and comprehension. In 2.1 will start by working through semiotic ways of defining and understanding comics that have emerged from a range of research traditions and I will explore how these approaches describe specific features and functions of comics. In section 2.2 I will look at approaches to comics research grounded in cognitive linguistics. In section 2.3 I will build on the ideas introduced in section 1.4 to focus in depth on ways of describing the communication of subjectivity in discourse and comics specifically. Finally, I will introduce cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008; Giovanelli and Harrison, 2018) as a flexible theoretical framework that can be applied to common dimensions of words, pictures and anything in between.

2.1 Semiotic approaches to understanding comics

Defining comics is a common preoccupation of comics research, which tends to result in inevitable differences of opinion arising from differences in approach. I will use this section to review some of the ways in which researchers from different traditions have tried to define comics, and work towards definitions appropriate to my research that account for comics' function as social objects and as a storytelling medium, as well as accounting for conventional features that will be relevant to my own discursive analysis of subjectivity in comics.

2.1.1 Words, pictures and stories

Research into the definition and functional description of comics has developed across a wide range of disciplines and traditions. This has resulted in conflicting definitions and categorisations of comics, either as a medium, a language, or a cultural object, that draw on established theories and vocabularies that are not always complementary (Hatfield, 2010: 2). Wolk (2007: 11), for example, prefers to categorise comics as a medium as opposed to a genre (as suggested by the genre of 'comics movies'), while Ware (2004: 12) sees comics as a 'developing language'. Though, as Miodrag (2011) has pointed out, there is a tendency towards a theoretical focus on or prioritisation of the visual mode in comics (see also Hatfield, 2010, 2005), there is some agreement that comics involve the interplay of modes that communicate storytelling in different ways (e.g., Bongco, 2000: 46–49; Cohn, 2012; Harvey, 1994: 8; Saraceni, 2003: 4–5). The separation of verbal and pictorial modes and prioritisation of the visual is a feature of some multimodal analysis of comics (e.g., Chute and de Koeven, 2006; Groensteen, 1999, 2011). Meskin (2007: 235) points out the risk of ignoring the interrelation of these modes that potentially arises from this:

> it is a mistake to treat the images and text as comprising separate narrative threads. If the images and text in a standard commercial comic are prised apart one typically does not get two narrative threads even though it may look that way—instead one gets a mere temporally ordered picture sequence and a temporally ordered text sequence.

Though reading words and pictures are intuitively distinct processes, the process of reading a comic also involves, for me, an intuitive integration of these modes into a single reading experience.

With reference to **abstract comics**, i.e., comics lacking figurative depiction while retaining some recognisable comics elements, Molotiu (2011) challenges definitions of comics that rely on either the co-presence of verbal and visual modes or even a storytelling function. He describes abstract comics as having abstract or representational elements that 'do not cohere into a narrative or even into a unified narrative space' (Molotiu, 2009). However, to the extent that they might even be considered comics, abstract comics, though lacking coherent storytelling, can only be considered as comics through the existence of storytelling, figurative comics. In both potential examples arising from the removal of these features—i.e., wordless comics and comics with non-referential images—it is more productive to consider these types of comics as peripheral examples within the category of comics in relation to a storytelling, verbal-visual prototype (Barsalou, 2003). Such consideration would allow for the inclusion of examples of comics-like discursive artefacts, such as those including only a few typical features (e.g., panels, word balloons, or referential visual storytelling) without rendering the definition banal through over-extension. Atypical comics with non-referential (i.e., abstract) images are reliant on knowledge and experience of more typical comics to be categorised in this way at all. As such, storytelling and multimodality, though not necessarily always present, should still be considered as functionally prototypical features of comics.

While the inclusion of abstract comics in the general theorisation of the medium should not change the basic understanding of comics as typically narrative and multimodal, Molotiu's approach does shed light on potentially important dimensions of comics communication. Considering the function of abstract comics requires investigation of the basic aspects of comics reading, writing or drawing that remain in the case of abstract comics. By investigating this, Molotiu draws attention to what he terms 'sequential dynamism'. According to Molotiu (2011) introducing this concept to the theorisation of all comics

> is to acknowledge that the medium's purpose is not only narrative and mimetic, basing its sense of sequence on the logic of a represented storyline, and therefore on the progression of diegetic time; rather, it is to understand comics as a means of providing the viewer with a visual aesthetic satisfaction that is not the static satisfaction of traditional painting or drawing, but a specifically sequential pleasure achieved by putting the eye into motion, and by creating specific graphic paths, speed of scanning, and graphic rhythms to enliven its aesthetic.

The sequential dynamism that Molotiu posits as an essential and general formal feature of all comics (including abstract comics) only functions as such in line with conventional features of comics such as left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading direction, the consideration of panels or shapes as marking distinct attentional units, and the context of presentation, including paratextual and extratextual features such as titles, verbal introductions, interpretative blurbs and so on. In this way, they define themselves as comics relationally through the conspicuous absence of the things that define the medium more typically. As I will discuss further in sections 2.3 and 2.4, these schematic functions all contribute to the experiential aesthetic of reading comics.

Similarly, Molotiu (2011) proposes that comics theorisation should take **iconostasis** into account, suggesting that parsing an entire page or double page at a glance is a part of the aesthetic experience of reading any comic, though one made more prominent in abstract comics. While there is limited research to support the general importance of this aspect of reading (Cohn, 2013; Cohn and Campbell, 2014), it is frequently intuited to be a part of the reading process (Lob and Forest, 1986: 104; Groensteen, 1999; Horstkotte, 2013) and is worth considering as a part of the reading experience that can be made more or less relevant through stylistic choices or contexts of reading.

Considering iconostasis leads Horstkotte (2013: 36) to protest that descriptions of comics in terms of signs (e.g., Frahm, 2010) is 'reductive' and to warn that linguistic approaches force an excessively linear reading on comics pages that is unnatural. Horstkotte (2013: 38) argues that a focus on linear sequentiality precludes discussion of whole page or double page appraisal. Yet linear sequentiality has been presented as taking place within the context of whole page appraisals, hierarchic relations and other broader features of reading that a rigidly sequential conceptualisation of reading would potentially disallow (e.g., Cohn, 2007; Cohn et al. 2012; Groensteen, 1999, 2011). As with abstract comics and storytelling, the linear structure of graphic narrative is a norm from which artists can deviate to a greater or lesser degree. It is the extent to which a reading might be non-linear that Horstkotte (2013) examines, which, should be considered as an important dimension of style. As in this instance, reducing comics to describable prototypical components or functions like sequentiality can provide a baseline for engaging with broader issues of discourse comprehension. I expand on this further in section 2.3 and throughout section 2.4 by looking at how consideration of structural hierarchies is built into certain cognitive linguistic theories in ways that permit consideration of reading experience at different levels of discursive focus.

Overall, redressing or supplementing existing definitions of comics to accommodate new and experimental phenomena can be dealt with through consideration of comics in terms of categorical prototypicality (Lakoff, 1987; see also Wittgenstein, 1953 on ‘family resemblances, and the ‘rough ground’ of human communication). According to this approach, abstract and non-linear comics can be described as atypical examples of comics that share certain family resemblances with more typical examples. For them to be understood as comics at all, they require the established

conventions of more typical storytelling, representative and linear comics. Formally atypical comics can only point away from formal conventions while simultaneously pointing back at them. On this basis, I feel that definitions of comics that engage with the experience of reading and drawing them, need to involve consideration of common reading conventions relating to storytelling, drawing, writing, and reading. As suggested above, something can be defined as a comic without engaging all these aspects directly, but the act of definition itself requires the existence of categorically central examples and typical features.

2.1.2 Medium, narration, language.

Aside from focusing on formal aspects, definitions of comics can also involve an understanding of where researchers see their use of the word 'comics' fitting into a discourse structure involving production, consumption and transmission. This causes conflict over how the word 'comics' is deployed by different researchers. Cohn (2005), for example, criticises attempts to describe comics as a *medium* through common structural features (see also Eisner, 1990, 1996; McCloud, 1993; 2006), preferring to use the word 'comics' to refer to objects defined by cultural contexts of production and consumption. Rather than researching comics as a medium, the focus of Cohn's research is what he describes as the **visual language of comics** (e.g., Cohn, 2007, 2013), which accounts for the shared conventions that allow artists, writers and readers to communicate through comics. According to this perspective, comics are composed in 'visual language' in the same way that novels are typically written in the writing system of a particular language.

Similarly, Chute (2008) and Chute and DeKoeven (2006) suggest **graphic narrative** as the focus of analysis. Both approaches seek to separate the communicative function of comics as an object of study from comics as cultural objects that employ those systems. Cohn (2012: 2) proposes that:

> the behavioral domains of writing (written/verbal language) and drawing (visual language) should be the object of linguistic inquiry, stripping away the social categories like 'comics', 'graphic novels', 'manga', etc.

This amounts to a distinction between the conventions and competencies through which comics are produced and read (visual language, written language, cognition), and the social objects that result from these practices (comics, culture, context). Whereas Cohn (2007, 2013a) posits a commonality of the visual language of comics with other means of visual communication (e.g., cinema, sign language), Chute's (2008) definition of 'graphic narrative' specifically refers to the function of telling stories through combinations of pictures, words, and the formal conventions that allow comics to be communicable art forms.

Meskin (2007: 227) warns against conceiving of comics' visual mode in linguistic terms on the grounds that 'the visual meaning of comics does not seem to be compositional as it is in natural language'. While I feel there are conceptual aspects of images in comics that do demonstrate

compositionality (see sections 2.2.3, 2.3.2 and 4.4.2), the observation that the drawn and written modes in comics function differently is important as a caution against overstating similarities between the two. 'Visual language' or 'graphic narrative' are distinct from spoken and written language and storytelling in many ways and there is potential to constrain understanding of how the medium works by forcing analogies with linguistic description where it may not be appropriate or productive. However, as a medium that involves both visual and verbal storytelling, a non-reductive search for commonalities between visual and verbal communication has the potential to yield new understandings of how they interact in comics writing, drawing and reading.

Definitions in comics studies arising from distinct research traditions are complicated by the trans- and multi-disciplinary nature of comics studies as a whole. Within this, conflicting research aims produce mismatched approaches and categorisations that are sometimes inappropriately tested against one another. If terms are well defined, evidenced and justified in relation to specific research aims, oppositional ousting of other approaches should be redundant. Taking functional definitions from one research tradition and analysing them in terms of another will always result in unfair appraisals of intent and efficacy. Because of this, definitions should be seen as practical heuristics designed to serve specific functions rather than absolutely definitive descriptions. Different researchers need to draw conceptual boundaries around different features of comics to distinguish and draw attention to different phenomena. With this in mind, I will not use this research to generate strong claims as to the linguistic nature of comics and how they are read, or to assert a definitive definition of comics *per se*. Instead, I will approach my own analyses with a view to exploring the conceptual similarities between images and writing in the comics I choose to analyse. Through this, I am not asserting that comics are a language, or even that there is a strong case to describe them as having a uniquely complex and describable visual language. Rather, this should be taken as an analogy between reading images and reading words that is significantly stronger at a **semantic level**, as opposed to the **phonological** or **depictive level**, i.e., the manifestation of communication in some mode, through some medium (see 2.4.1). To investigate these aspects of comics, like Cohn (2007) and Chute (2008) I will make a functional distinction between comics as social objects (comic books, graphic novels) and the way in which people can tell and understand stories through them (visual language, graphic narrative). In my own analysis, I will tend to focus on the latter of these interests, though, as outlined above, I will do so with an awareness of the cultural context in which comics are produced and read where this is relevant. I will expand on and refine these ideas further in section 2.2.

2.1.3 Conventions, components

Comics research often involves the identification and description of functional units within comics. In line with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001: 115) social semiotic approach to communication, these units tend to be seen as conventionally shared competencies which enable communication through

comics as social semiotic objects. Along these lines, some research examines these competencies in terms of general multimodal literacy (e.g., El Refaie, 2009; El Refaie and Hörschelmann, 2010) and more specific comics or manga literacy (Ingulsrud and Allen, 2009; Nakazawa, 2004, 2005) framing comics reading in terms of the acquisition of skills or frames of reference. Additionally, comics artists/writers and readers can draw on competencies inherited from other media such as novels, theatre (especially in early comics) or film (Groensteen, 2007: 53).

These approaches break down conventional components and work towards generalisations about how they combine to provide a framework for storytelling. Some works pursue this at a morphological level, describing how minimal graphic components contribute to larger entities or narrative sequences and how they constrain meaning (e.g., Cohn, 2013c: 23–50; see also, Cohn, 2013: 3–4; Groensteen, 1999: 3–4). Eerden (2009), Abbott and Forceville (2012) and Cohn (2013c; 2010a) have carried out similar work on non-representative symbols in comics, including motion-lines, action stars, psychological and emotional 'upfixes' (i.e., signs appearing above characters' heads) and other elements of panel content that are not intended to communicate visually perceptible elements of the depicted world. This level of detailed analysis tends to be productive as a means of categorising ways of drawing within a particular corpus pointing to intra-textual and intertextual conventions, while providing the groundwork for further research looking into the motivations of these visual elements. Other research in this vein engages with larger units such as balloons, panels, gutters (the spaces or borders between panels), pages, double pages and entire works describing how they function to direct narrative flow or achieve certain effects (e.g., Groensteen, 1999, 2011; McCloud, 1993; Peeters, 1991; Saraceni, 2003).

Part of this work often involves classification of signs according to semiotic categories adapted from Peirce (1931; Cohn, 2007; Forceville et al., 2010; Magnussen, 2000; Saraceni, 2003). **Icon** is a sign that bears some manner of resemblance to its conceptual target (e.g., a picture of a dog that functions as a two-dimensional static encapsulation of aspects of the visually perceivable facets of the concept DOG); **index** accounts for signs that metonymically 'point' to conceptually inferable targets (e.g., embodied reactions suggesting stimuli, smoke suggesting fire); **symbols** account for signs that have conventionalised relationships with conceptual targets (e.g., words and speech marks in writing, word balloons in comics). These categories allow for the distinction of the function of some visual elements within comics and are useful for engaging with the more symbol-like nature of more 'cartoony' comics which rely on inference of iconic reference from basic depictions (see also, McCloud, 1993: 52–3). As this suggests, these approaches require some degree of categorical fluidity and supplementation when dealing with ambiguous cases, such as deformation, abstraction or simplification (see section 2.4.2).

Engaging more specifically with the textual content of comics, Miodrag (2010, 2011) challenges research that downplays or ignores the importance of text in comics. By focusing on the positioning,

presentation and stylistic quality of text, Miodrag suggests ways of analysing the literary effect of text in comics. Through this, Miodrag addresses a general imbalance in focus in comics research, though one that can be accounted for to some extent through the more extensive existing body of research on verbal storytelling. By addressing how text is incorporated into comics pages, Miodrag's work helps to bridge the gap between pictorial and textual analysis and goes some way to explaining the functional integration of different modes in comics. I will further investigate the function of different types of text-incorporation in section 2.3 and will address how specific instances contribute to the discursive structure of comics in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

What these approaches tend to have in common is a focus on generalising an ideal of how comics function using abstracted conventions (e.g., pages, panels, balloons) as the building blocks of their theories. These componential descriptions contribute towards broader theorisations of the discursive relationship between artists, writers, comics and readers. These types of ideas about the general function of comics are compelling, but as Miodrag (2011) warns, such analysis cannot account for how comics are read, without bringing all relevant aspects of comics reading together. As such, they are only useful if they are either applied as investigative heuristics, tested through experimentation or expanded on through cognitive theorisation. I will examine methods that, in line with cognitive linguistic approaches, attempt to expand these theories by addressing how comics are written, drawn, or read. Having introduced a range of approaches to theorising comics and having identified a broad approach to how I will engage with them in my research, I will use the following section to investigate how cognitive linguistic and cognitive psychological theories have been and might be applied to understanding comics.

2.2 Cognitive linguistic approaches to understanding comics

Cognitive linguistics is grounded in the theoretical assumption that language draws on resources from across cognitive modalities (Croft and Cruse, 2004; Evans and Green, 2006; Ungerer and Schmid, 2001). Applying the same theoretical assumption to the analysis of pictorial communication offers a means of describing the function of verbal and visual aspects of comics storytelling grounded in basic cognitive operations (e.g., attention, memory, categorisation, metaphoric and metonymic reasoning). While more typical comics involve a particular integration of textual and pictorial modes, this does not preclude analysing them as distinct streams of information. As I will explore in the following sections, certain types of textual and pictorial content in comics contribute to reading experiences in markedly different ways. To mark this distinction, I will refer to instances of textual storytelling as **narration** and instances of pictorial storytelling as **depiction**. In line with the integrative nature of graphic narrative described in 2.1.2, these are functional distinctions that do not presume a total separation of depiction and narration. Rather, this distinction permits mode-specific analysis of how textual and imagistic storytelling contribute to overall conceptualisation of comics, and how they interact to achieve this.

To frame this discussion of cognitive approaches to comics research, I will start by focusing on how the basic conceptualisation of **entities** and **processes** can be achieved through depiction. 'Entity' refers generally to any **thing**—precisely defined as 'a region in some domain' (Langacker, 1991: 555)—conceived of or referred to 'for analytical purposes' (Langacker, 1991: 548, see also 16). 'Process' refers to 'a relation comprising a series of component states distributed through a continuous span of conceived time and scanned sequentially' (Langacker, 1991: 551). By focusing on these basic ideas, I can discuss comics depiction in terms of how it communicates **things**, and how it places those things into relation with one another in conceived time.

2.2.1 Conceptualising entities through depiction

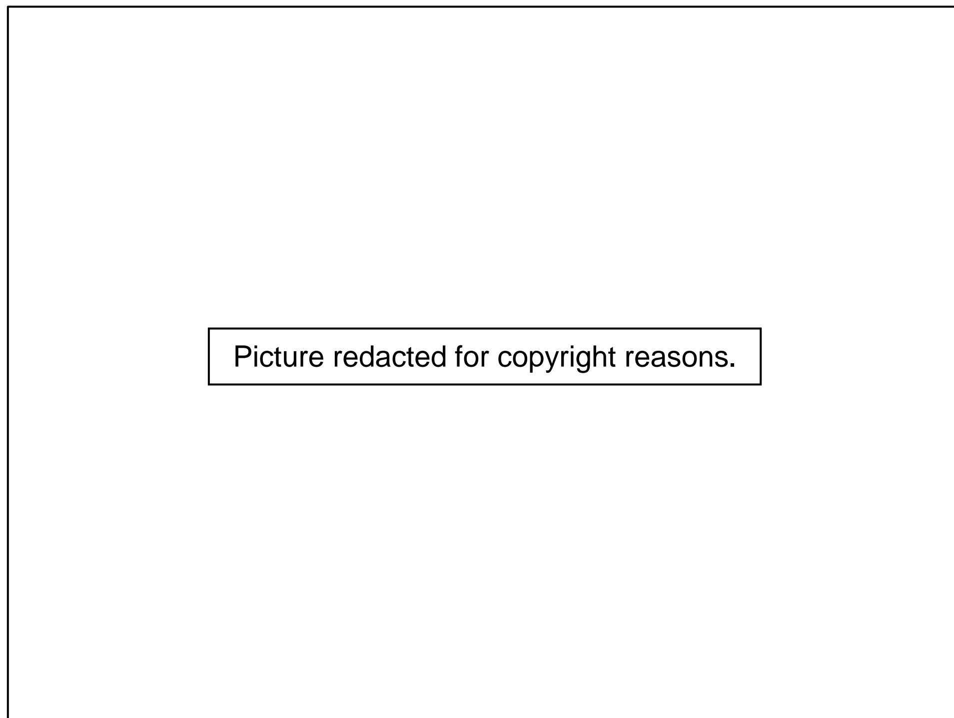


Figure 2.1: *La Trahison des images* (Magritte, 1929)

Research in cognitive psychology suggests that 'action execution and observation are closely related processes, and […] that our ability to interpret the actions of others requires the involvement of our own motor system' (Kilner and Lemon, 2013). This theory has been experimentally extended into research into reading comprehension, suggesting further links between action, execution, reading comprehension and information retention (Glenberg, 2011). Beyond any such potential cognitive or neurological parallels, the distinction between the conceptualisation involved in reading a comics panel and the conceptualisation arising from direct experience can be broached through a consideration of the function of **attention** in both contexts. 'Attention' describes the cognitive function of focusing on—or, attending to—different aspects of either primary sensory stimuli or secondary conceptual representations. We can primarily attend to aspects of a situation that we are looking at, hearing, smelling and so on; likewise, we can secondarily attend to aspects of conceptualisation,

which might include aspects of subjective interpretation, aspects of imagination or aspects of abstract thought (Styles, 2007; Pashler, 1998). Attention can be voluntarily or involuntarily selective based on sensory attractors, habituated patterns of behaviour, or wilful effort (Styles, 2007; Pashler, 1998).

When applied to comics, attention must be understood as having a dual function, one part of which is implicated in the process of producing an image in a comic. What a reader sees in an image is not 'just there' in the same way that environmental stimuli are 'just there' for people to perceive. It has been preselected and parcelled into available resources by an artist in a way that is analogous to the selective nature of perception as directed by attention (Kukkonen, 2013a: 57). This is then subject to the aptitudes, proclivities and learned behaviours of a reader, all of which further influence how they might engage with the proffered content.

Intuition might suggest that an iconic picture is communicatively tautologous and that meaning inheres depictive form. As demonstrated by Magritte (see figure 2.1), the certitude with which observers engage with depictions of reality is not as simple as they might assume it to be. To say, "that's a horse" of a picture of a horse involves a different conceptualisation from saying, "that's a picture of a horse." Groensteen (2007: 9) remarks that though comics seem, in this way, easy to read, there is more going on in the perception of images than readers might be able to casually intuit (see also Turner, 2011; section 1.3.1). Ware (2004: 12) refers to this as 'the simulated certainty of pictures' as a means of flagging the misleading nature of the experience of conceptualising images as being analogous to the presumed certainty of visual perception latent in culturally pervasive metaphors of knowledge such as UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING (Sweetser, 1990). Eye-tracking studies suggest that

> an observer typically focusses on four or five small parts of a scene, and continues to scrutinize only these details, even when they go on looking at the same thing for some time. Yet their subjective impression is that they've observed the whole image.
>
> (Carter, 2002: 13)

It is only when an observer tries to recall every part of a scene that it becomes apparent that they have not attended sufficiently to peripheral elements to make them available to voluntary recall. They may have passed through awareness enough to have registered at a subconscious level such that they might be recalled involuntarily through additional prompts, but peripheral attention is less likely to form part of recall and description of reading experiences than aspects that readers are aware of more prominently (Styles, 2006: 35–6). As with the involvement of inference in comics reading, 'impoverished visual perceptions are fleshed out by our memories of the perceptions that went before, and our expectations of what will come next (Carter, 2002: 16). Perception of a scene or situation can also include a sense of potential for interaction with an environment (Clark, 2008; Noë,

2004; 2006) which contributes to categorisations of perceived entities and by extension, of processes and other relationships. Again, in reader conceptualisation of comics depiction, as in image perception more generally, the available information, relative to a comparable real-world perceptible environment, has been delimited through artistic selection and composition. Part of this composition relies on implicit expectations of the sorts of things that readers might attend to. Studies of change blindness of distorted images suggest that changes that are most likely to attract attention are 'typically the central or "action" part of the image, or something that has particular emotional salience, for example a facial expression or a scene of social interaction like a kiss' (Carter, 2002: 15; Reagan et al., 1999). In addition to this, composition and conceptualisation of comics are further affected by the fact that both text and faces seem to be strong attentional attractors (Graham and Meng, 2011; Omori, 2004). Stockwell (2009) extends this idea into textual analysis, identifying similar attentional attractors operating in the conceptualisation of text. This demonstrates the applicability of attention to the analysis of the conceptualisation of both text and images.

The fixed images in a comics panel that can give rise to rich conceptualisation in comics reading can in part be understood by considering the drawing and reading of a comics panel as conceptually metonymic (Groensteen, 1999: 50–1, 190; 2007: 44; 2011: 35; Peeters, 1991: 21). Conceptual metonymy involves focus on a particular aspect of a concept as a reference point for engaging with another aspect (Blanco-Carrión et al., 2018). In relation to entities depicted within panels, this functions in two ways: the compartmentalisation of representations of entities that require readers to infer, recall or mentally extend a complete sense of a situation (including established, implied and occluded entities and processes); and comprehension of simplified icons (e.g., understanding a dot as an eye in a schematic depiction of a face). In this way, readerly inference based on available information should be understood as a process whereby specific and limited textual and pictorial prompts are fleshed out as part of a richer conceptualisation that is updated as discourse progresses. Barsalou (2003) describes this as **situated simulation**, whereby conceptualisation of a particular target takes place in relation to multiple contextual reference points. Predictions and assumptions derived from experience guide both perception and conceptualisation of familiar and non-familiar entities, processes, and situations. In addition to this, context, established information and predicted information all influence the nature of conceptualisation. If presented with the basic concept DOG, a person will conceptualise a typical example of a dog based on their culture and experiences. The situated extension of this conceptualisation may prompt conceptualisation of prototypical dog environments, behaviours and objects. With context, the nature of the dog and the situated properties of the richer conceptualisation will change. 'A dog in an 18th century French palace' prompts a situated conceptualisation that is very different from the conceptualisation prompted by 'a dog on a 20th century Irish farm', and both are more precise than simply conceptualising 'any dog'. In comics, this kind of situated conceptualisation, as well as fleshing out and extending the limited vantage points proffered through comics depiction, might also involve a reader retaining a conceptual

model of a situation that allows them to infer positions and identities of characters despite changes in perspective in relation to a single location. I will explore this idea further in sections 2.2.3 and 2.4.4.

2.2.2 Conceptualising processes through depiction

Because it stands out as a defining feature of the medium, a lot of attention has been paid to how sequential transitions from image to image between panels generate a sense of dynamic processes taking place within an active imagined world. McCloud (1993) categorises serial transitions according to salient changes in the conceptual **domains** (i.e., dimensions of experience) of TIME (action, moment), and SPACE (aspect, subject, scene). This relates to Groensteen's (1999) description of **spatiotopia**, which accounts for the encoding of time as space in a comics page (see also Chute and DeKoeven, 2006: 769). By way of contrast, Cohn (2010: 131) links assumptions linking time and space on comics pages to 'the belief that panels equal moments'. This leads to a perception of panels as freeze-frames that capture instances within a story, with the gutter (the gap or border between panels) defining the scope of the available visual perspective on a scene (Bongco, 2000: 58; Kukkonen, 2013: 20; 2013a: 54). Though he engages with this idea, Groensteen (2007: 25) acknowledges that a panel rarely represents a single moment. Similarly, Kukkonen (2013a: 54) entertains the potential that a panel might represent a moment or that it might be intuited as such (2013: 20) but asserts that 'even if the panel image indicates only a single moment, the readers' engagement with the interaction potentials that the bodies imply, make it unfold in time'. Cohn (2010a: 134) takes a harder line on this issue, stating that 'panels as units do not stand for moments or durations in fictive time, but direct attention to depictions of "event states" (Cohn 2007) from which a sense of "time" is derived'. Sequence, conceptual time (the time imagined as having elapsed in propositional content on the basis of a verbal or pictorial prompt) and processing time (the time taken to read and comprehend something) are dependent on reader fluency and level of engagement (Langacker, 2008: 30). As with attention, these aspects of conceptualisation are also delimited by the artistic content selection, sequencing and composition of panels.

Groensteen (1999) describes comics reading as involving a process of **braiding** (tressage), which 'involves a network of memory, echoes and resonance' (Groensteen, 2007: 69) through which a story coheres for a reader. Structurally, this is governed by **arthrology** (arthrologie) which accounts for the ways in which panels and other units within comics can relate to one another at numerous symbolic levels outside of the basic panel-to-panel sequence (Groensteen, 1999: 25–8). Kukkonen (2013: 36) takes this analogy further, equating Groensteen's idea of the **énonçable** (elements that give rise to linguistic propositions) and **interprétable** (meaning that arises across panels drawing on encyclopaedic knowledge) with van Dijk and Kinsch's (1983) notions of **textbase** and **situation model**. While Groensteen's ideas are best geared to a technical description of comics in general, the underlying psychological principles that he engages with, such as memory, resonance, relational

conceptualisation, propositional content and encyclopaedic knowledge, will form part of my own theorisation of comics conceptualisation.

Though his approach builds away from entirely sequential understandings of comics storytelling (e.g., McCloud, 1993; Eisner, 1985) to account for the cognitive processes touched on above, Cohn (2008) questions whether Groensteen adequately accounts for how such links might form across a narrative. Cohn (2007; 2013) and Cohn et al. (2012) posit a narrative hierarchy that draws inspiration from hierarchical description of linguistic syntax (e.g., Jakendoff, 1990; 2002) within which they categorise the function of panels in terms of how they contribute to narrative development. This interfaces with the accretive function of sequential reading rather than superseding it entirely and accounts for links between non-adjacent panels through hierarchical bracketing of groups of functionally related panels.

This approach categorises individual comics panels in terms of how they function as part of longer and related event structures organised at different levels of comics discourse. In figure 2.2, two distinct but causally related event structures are distinguished through a shift in perspectival focus on different aspects of a broader situation. While this functional description can be scaled up to higher levels of discourse (page, scene, chapter, whole book, series, genre), it also points to a more granular level of focus on event structure not just *between* panels and their hierarchical event structures, but also *within* panels. Considered in this way, there are multiple tributary event structures nested within the broader event structures described by Cohn (see 5.4.2 for further discussion).

To explain readers' comprehension of comics narrative, McCloud posits a processual version of **closure** as taking place in the gutter 'between' panels (McCloud, 1993: 66). 'Closure', in this sense,

Figure 2.2: Narrative structure for a sequence of images (Cohn et al., 2012: 6)

refers to one of the gestalt psychological principles of grouping that also includes **proximity**, **similarity**, **continuation**, **common fate**, and **good form** (Enns, 2003; Palmer, 1999). Closure specifically refers to object recognition despite incomplete visual information (i.e., perception and

conceptualisation of obscured or otherwise discontinuous visual stimuli). McCloud's proposed understanding of closure posits an extension of this sense into dynamic conceptualisation—the comics reader fills in the literal blank between panels to arrive at an understanding of depicted events. While closure alone does not account for the complex processing involved in comics conceptualisation, McCloud's theory can be expanded by incorporating the other categories of gestalt grouping. Beyond gestalt psychology, these principles can also be usefully incorporated into the theorisation of comics conceptualisation with reference to more basic aspects of cognition such as attention, grouping, instantiation, specification, generalisation and scanning (Langacker, 2008, see 2.4 for further discussion). Taking these cognitive functions into account, comics reading, from panel to panel involves a starting set of principles (e.g., entities in an environment) that through principles of grouping and other predictive inferences are tracked into the following panel which either confirms, modifies, or passes over those predictions and inferences. This kind of theorisation has resulted in the gutter being described as a functionally significant component in comics. However, its significance is better understood as deriving from its function as a means of directing, pacing and framing attentional focus and selection rather than as an actual site of inferential activity (Chute and DeKoeven, 2006: 767; Gavaler, 2016; Mikkonen, 2008: 4; Saraceni, 2003: 9). As Cohn (2010: 134) notes, 'the gap cannot be filled unless it has already been passed over, making closure an additive inference that occurs at panels, not between them'. While anticipatory inference based on whole page perception, reading ahead, or encyclopaedic knowledge may take place between panels, the type of inference involved in McCloud's idea of closure cannot take place without both panels having been read. The gutter's symbolic function, then, lies in it being a part of a page that a reader would tend *not* to attend to unless made prominent through stylistic variation or signification, rather than it being an absence of information that prompts imaginary extrapolation or inference. For Saraceni (2003: 9) gutters mark a 'conceptual separation between panels'. In doing so, they delimit the available attentional resources in panels by marking a distinction between points of focus that engage with a depicted world, and non-focal areas that do not.

As with the conceptualisation of entities, conceptualisation of processes is described by some in terms of readerly inference (e.g., Bongco, 2000: 55; Cohn, 2010a; Groensteen, 2007: 64–5; Kukkonen, 2013, 2013a), which can again be understood through Barsalou's (2003) description of inference as being involved at the interface between perceptual and conceptual processes. White-Schwoch and Rapp (2011: 7) remark on a tendency for readers to infer action so strongly that they mistakenly support them as having appeared in a story. Rather than a loose unbounded process, inference should be understood as 'a rule-based extension from partial data to the most appropriate solution. It is constraint satisfaction' (Cavanagh, 2011: 1538). Again, this is framed well by considering local inference between panels as constrained by their content and the context of reading (including reader ability and experience). White-Schwoch and Rapp (2011: 7) note how comics can prompt readers to make predictive inferences on a broader scale, while Bongco (2000:

55) notes that 'readers make inferences that are open-ended, probabilistic and subject to corrections'. In these terms, the process of reading is grounded in experience, is predictive in nature, and is prone to correction (see Langacker, 2008: 80–2, Harrison, 2017: 20). However, these suggestions should not lead to an overly expansive understanding of the function of inference. Peeters (1991: 27), for example, describes how ellipsis can be used as a story boundary, but also (e.g., in Hergé) as an acceleration of time that requires the reader to fill in large blanks. On the other hand, ellipsis as a story boundary doesn't necessarily require a reader to fill in blanks. It can also encourage readers not to infer irrelevant information or to reconstrue the deictic focus of narration in terms of time, space and enactor (see also Harrison, 2017: 100–10; Talmy, 2000: 257 on conceptual 'gapping').

The suggested involvement of inference and basic conceptual domains points to an understanding of comics panels as **compressions** of rich conceptualisations of entities, relations and processes at point of composition that are expanded into a meaningful sequence through readerly inference. The drawing, writing and compositional processes lead to compressions of conceptual domains such as SPACE and TIME into a two-dimensional visual representation (textual and pictorial). In line with this, a loose mapping between physical space on a page and conceptual time holds. However, the proportionality of this mapping is subject to other contextual and cotextual cues. **Conceived time** (Langacker, 2008: 30), time within propositional content as conceptualised by a reader as opposed to **processing time** (actual time taken to read something) is compressed, extended, manipulated and elided according to the nature of what is depicted and how it is depicted on the page. Tracking the influence of discrete representations along the compressed conceptual dimensions leads to dynamic simulation of an imagined world. Through **conceptual compression** (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002), depiction can indexically prompt embodied inference by showing enough indication of an event in summary. Conceptual compression, in line with the related concepts of **conceptual integration** and **conceptual blending**, theorises that conceptualisation involves **input spaces** for basic concepts, that can be combined to produce complex and novel conceptualisations. This is how a single image can communicate an event without necessarily leaving a viewer in eternal suspense—the act of composition involves the compression of numerous concepts into aspects of an image that are reconceptualized, or unpacked, through the process of 'reading' it.

Because of this, describing a panel as a window on a moment in time (e.g., Bongco, 2000: 58) limits understanding of how conceptual information is encoded and decoded in comics reading and writing. While many of these theories engage with panels as an essential syntactic unit (e.g., Cohn, 2007: 36) and sequential reading as a fundamental operation of comics reading, considering panel contents in terms of cognitive linguistics and reading conventions, there are analysable structures and combinations within and between panels that are more complex than a panel-based description of comics conceptualisation would allow. Herman (2011a: 168) describes individual panels as 'timeslices', acknowledging that their design 'reflects a more or less detailed, ground-level

representation of what characters' own encounters with the storyworld are like'. Herman borrows the idea of **construal** from cognitive grammar as a means of analysing the way in which this experience of a storyworld is framed within comics (Langacker, 2008; see also Herman, 2009). Within this framing of construal, **dynamicity** is used to account for the degree to which 'the temporality of a situation is made prominent as part of its resulting conceptualisation' (Harrison et al., 2014: 9; see also section 2.4.2). Combining the two to incorporate a consideration of dynamicity as a dimension of construal (Harrison et al., 2014: 9; Langacker, 2008: 33) shows that the construal of time within and across panels is more than an evenly metred unfolding of time according to discrete moments represented by individual panels in sequence. This approach itself demonstrates the limitations of treating panels as 'timeslices', as this still neglects the potential for time to be compressed differently by different parts of an image within a single panel.

Having explored some of the ways in which the basic functions of comics depiction can be described, I will now look at how Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999) can provide a means of delineating the relationship between the conceptualisation involved in reading comics and the context in which they are read.

2.2.3 Text World Theory: comics in discursive interaction

The above discussion of comics reading suggests a need for readers to maintain a mental representation of the world presented by a comic to allow them to make inferences and conceptualise the world of the comic they are reading. Cognitive approaches to this issue recognise that the variability of reading experiences is constrained by **text** and **context** (e.g., Gavins and Stockwell, 2012). From a readerly perspective, 'text' accounts for the means of communication including the content of objects such as novels, magazines or comics; 'context' might include a reader's life experience, capabilities, beliefs and disposition, as well as incidental factors including how, when, and where they are reading (Emmott, 1997, 2003; Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999). Reading comics is always at least tacitly framed by the issues discussed in 2.1–2.2 and is dependent on readers' degree of cultural awareness and formal competence.

A Text World Theory approach (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999) can help investigate how depictive and textual features in comics relate to contextual factors of reading and experience in this way. Text World Theory describes how **discourse participants** create and update mental models or **text-worlds** based on text and context. When people are introduced as part of the text-world, they are distinguished from discourse participants as **enactors**. This permits distinction between discourse participants and versions of them introduced into the text-world. For example, in (ii), 'I' prompts conceptualisation of an enactor of me—as does the 'me' in the sentence.

(ii) I am typing this sentence.

Context is in part informed by discourse participants' experience of reality, including the circumstances of the communication, which is referred to as the **discourse-world**. For comics, the discourse-world is potentially complex, involving multiple participants of greater and lesser prominence at points of composition (e.g., artist, writer, colourer letterer etc.) and production. These compositions tend to be spatiotemporally removed from acts of reading resulting in a discourse-world in which participants communicate through writing, drawing, and reading comics. This is described as a **split discourse-world** (Werth, 1995: 54–5), the conditions of which mean that readers rely more heavily on text to prompt conceptualisation, owing to the limited discourse-world resources in comparison with face-to-face interaction.

The process of reading is understood in Text World Theory as an interaction between **world-building**—the population of a situated simulation of a world with interrelated entities and qualities, and **function advancement**—the conceptual evolution of the simulation as guided by text and context. As touched on in sections 2.1–2.2 there are two analysable streams of world-building in the pictorial and textual modes of comics, which can be used to advance discourse and develop readers' conceptualisation of the text-world. As previously stated, I will refer to these distinct modes of world-building in terms of **depiction**—i.e., telling stories through pictures, and **narration**—telling stories through (written) language. To reiterate, in line with the understanding of comics outlined throughout this section, this distinction does not preclude interaction of these modes. Instead, it is intended as a means of functionally distinguishing writing and drawing with a view to investigating how they individually and interactively contribute to ongoing conceptualisation.

The distinction between text-world enactors and actual storytelling discourse participants is particularly useful when considering subjectivity and how it is or is not conceptualised in these levels of discourse. In the following section, I will use Text World Theory as a starting point for a review of methods of describing subjectivity in storytelling and in comics.

2.3 Subjectivity in storytelling

People's sense of self both depends on and informs interactions with other people.

> The core of every human consciousness appears to be an immediate, unrational, unverbalised, conceptless, totally atheoretical potential for rapport of the self with another's mind.
>
> Trevarthan, 1993: 121

Engaging with others' subjectivity entails an ascription of subjectivity to them based on personal experience.

> We assume others are, in basic mechanics, the same as us, and we anticipate their beliefs, motives, speech and actions accordingly by projecting them in their circumstances. This is

> to an extent circular and mutually reinforcing, as our anticipations—sharpened experientially by internalised cultural norms and our own encounters—prove generally accurate.
>
> Stockwell, 2009: 133

This is a type of predictive and approximate **mind-reading** that people are more or less adept at. Subjectivity is also a dimension that can be more or less conspicuous, while always being present in discourse (for all participants), and that tends to be prominent in narration (Fludernik, 1996; Langacker, 2008: 260). On this basis, Palmer (2004: 12) makes the claim that 'narrative is the description of fictional mental functioning'. Reading can be similarly understood as the simulation of mental functioning from a descriptive prompt (Palmer, 2004, 2010). Comparing the fictionality of minds and fictional mind-reading with real minds, Coleman (2006: 304–6) critiques Palmer's (2004: 9–11, 88) functionalist standpoint on the nature of real minds, pointing out the incompatibility of the intuitively apparent inaccessibility of minds (private thought) and their purported accessibility through observance of behaviour.

> The publicity intuition implies, for example, that what I truly want will ultimately be revealed by what I do. (I say that I want to get married, but whenever you ask about setting a date, I change the subject.) By contrast, the privacy intuition implies that I can keep my true feelings completely hidden if I choose to. It may be possible to resolve this conflict, but Palmer seems unaware either that a conflict exists or that it poses a problem for him.
>
> Coleman, 2006: 306

There are formal, theoretical and practical implications relating to the way experience of mental illness is socially perceived. In fiction, this more specifically necessitates consideration of the reliability of a narrator, the degree of access to enactors' thoughts, and any prejudices or misinformation held by a reader or artist/writer (Booth, 1983, 1974; Cohn, 2000, Hansen, 2007).

Reading stories, then, involves a mediated form of mind-reading. It is analogous both to the narrativising function of consciousness (Dennett, 1992), and the everyday social activity of inferring the dispositions and intentions of others from their speech, gesture, body language and action (Zunshine, 2006; 2008). Whereas real-world mind-reading is mediated through the behaviour and language of others (as well as subjective assumptions and predictions on the part of the mind-reader), discourse involves a mediation of subjective experience by a discourse-world author (a real-world participant who composes a story) and any number of text-world enactors (human or human-like entities either implied or explicated by a text). Readers simulate the subjectivity of enactors by drawing on their experiences of doing so in actual interactions.

> The analogic nature of all text-worlds means that enactors are conceptual representations of real human characteristics, and we endow them with the same abilities, emotions and reactions as we would expect from the human beings we encounter in the real world. The

> inclusion of enactors in a text-world always results, to varying degrees of intensity, in an empathetic identification on the part of the discourse-world participants. The relative positivity or negativity of that reaction depends to a great extent on the manner in which relationships between enactors and their text-world environment is presented by the text.
>
> Gavins, 2007: 64

Comprehending discourse involves processes of experiential simulation, identification, empathy and appraisal of interaction that are experienced similarly to non-discursive social interaction. Identification, empathy and sympathy are also variously used to refer to 'recognition in text-world characters of aspects of the reader's own self-aware personality' (Stockwell, 2009: 138; see also Bray, 2007; Bortolussi and Dixon, 2003; Herman, 2004; Kuiken et al., 2004: 180). This type of 'self-implication' (Miall and Kuiken, 2002; Kuiken et al., 2004) has been shown to involve comparative and potentially transformative mappings between readers and enactors that can be metaphoric and metonymic in nature (Kuiken, et al., 2004).

Keen (2006) defines narrative empathy as the experience of emotions that resonate with those that enactors might be expected to experience. To empathise is to share the emotions of another, either in an imaginative manner—as through reading—or socially, through emotional contagion (e.g., Hatfield et al., 1993). In text-world terms, this can be understood as a projection of the reading self into the deictic centre, or *origo*, of a text-world as cued by spatial and temporal deixis resulting in differing degrees of immersion based on the conceptual proximity of deictic cues to the *origo* (Gavins, 2007: 40; Lahey, 2005). Semantically, this can also function as a projection into point of view and emotional experience, allowing readers to engage with text-world entities as simulations of real people (Gavins, 2007: 42–3; Lahey, 2005: 285). Stockwell (2009: 140; see also Nuttall, 2013; 2015) proposes **mind-modelling** as a cognitive poetic-specific term to engage with these dimensions of reading. This is in preference to 'mind-reading' (as outlined above) and **theory of mind** (ToM), which has been adapted by Zunshine (2003, 2006) as a means of framing analysis of psychological metarepresentation in discourse (i.e., enactors conceptualising the conceptualisation of others). As the definition of ToM has evolved in line with the more precise requirements of experimental cognitive psychology, 'mind-modelling' is a preferable term for qualitative analysis of enactor subjectivity as it is broad enough to account for multiple aspects of the reading experience, whereas ToM is specifically focused on goal orientation of other people (Belmonte, 2008; Bortolussi, 2011). Moreover, ToM—and especially received assumptions relating to autism arising from early ToM research—have been brought into question as being inaccurate and potentially harmful (Gernsbacher and Yergeau, 2019).

2.3.1 Subjectivity in comics

In relation to comics, the idea of meta-representation remains useful as a means of tracking levels of discourse in relation to different enactors. The depictive and narrative modes in comics mark modality differently causing conceptualisation of enactor subjectivity to be potentially split between the two modes. Because of this, mind-modelling (Stockwell, 2009: 140) is useful as a means of framing, identifying and combining instances where such elements are tracked and combined across different comics modes as part of ongoing simulation of enactors' subjectivity.

Kukkonen (2008, 2013, 2013a; see also Aldama, 2009) builds on this idea by applying Palmer's notions of **fictional minds** (2004) and **social minds** (2010) to describe the ethics of how readers appraise character morality. Comics are seen as providing cues that invite readers 'to attribute fictional minds to […] characters based on their stated intentions, their actions, and their responses to events' (Kukkonen, 2013: 130). These fictional minds are equated with Dennett's (1992) concept of personal identity as 'centre[s] of narrative gravity'. This points to a working definition of consciousness or mind as a thing that is constructed and contingent both for the conscious experiencer and an external observer.

Tracking fictional minds as a means of arriving at moral appraisals can be understood as a way of understanding characterisation in storytelling (Culpeper, 2002, 2009) that focuses on inference of character motivation and psychological development. This relates to Miall's (1988) suggestion that empathy with and projection into characters can be accounted for through an understanding of their motives. As Keen (2006) notes, 'it remains unclear when, and at which cues, readers' emotional self-involvement jump-starts the process of interpretation'. Similarly, Palmer's (2010) theory of social minds resonates with Booth's (1983: 158) assertion that 'what we call "involvement" or "sympathy" or "identification", is usually made up of many reactions to author, narrators, observers, and other characters'. This reinforces the idea that mind-modelling should never be conceived of as unitary. It involves tracking the interrelation and development of subjective simulations of all discourse participants, enactors and the self through prediction, projection and imagination, as well as processes of grouping, metonymy and prototypicality (Stockwell, 2009, 2014). Kukkonen (2013: 151) goes some way to identifying cues for characterisation inferences in comics, citing thought bubbles, gesture, facial expression, embodied reaction, action, focalisation and perspective as prompts for modelling fictional minds. I will review and expand on these for the remainder of this section.

2.3.2 Physical responses and metaphor in comics

While characters' physical responses have been identified as empathic prompts in other narrative media (Keen, 2006; Oatley, 1994, 2003), Keen (2011) cites comics and cartoons as special cases of presenting simplified shortcuts to empathic engagement through abstraction of physical forms and potential exaggeration of responses. As with comics panels in general (see section 2.2.2), this might

be better framed in terms of conceptual compression or integration (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002). In these terms, a character responding in an exaggerated manner involves the compression of multiple aspects of emotional response into a single representational act. Rather than necessarily employing simplification or amplification, the encoding and conceptualisation of emotional response in comics are better understood as being different in nature from those in literature or film, for example. The nature of the difference Keen suggests may be an extension of cultural expectations relating to the nature of comics (see section 1.4.2).

Moving beyond conventionalised expectations of comics as a sensationalist medium, Groensteen (2007: 51) points to the expressive, non-mimetic potential of comics to extend meaning beyond the conceptual boundaries of figurative representations of entities, processes and relationships. Visual and multimodal metaphor or metonymy are commonly used as non-verbal means of expressing discrete emotional responses (Abbott and Forceville, 2012; Eerden, 2009; El Refaie, 2003, 2019; Forceville, 2005), to establish a sense of 'mind style' (e.g., Semino, 2011; Pedri, 2013: 147), or to establish a more general, non-character specific sense of 'aspectuality' (Horstkotte and Pedri, 2011, 337; see also Palmer, 2004). As Gibbs (2008: 209) observes, 'metaphor has a special ability to evoke deep emotional responses'. These responses are generally theorised through **conceptual metaphor theory** (CMT, Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) on the understanding that an image can prompt a source domain, that is mapped conceptually onto a target domain. Forceville (2005) addresses this through Kövecses's (1986, 2000) description of anger metaphors, citing ANGER IS THE HEAT OF FLUID IN A CONTAINER as a general conceptual basis for multimodal metaphors of anger (e.g., increase in head size, excessively reddened faces, steam coming from ears etc.). Abbott and Forceville (2012: 104) also use CMT to explain the conceptualisation of intratextually conventional metaphors for emotional responses, such as LOSS OF HANDS IS LOSS OF CONTROL in *Azumanga Daioh! 4* (Abbott and Forceville, 2012), as opposed to culturally specific grammaticised symbols that are intertextually conventional, such as hearts in eyes in English language comics depicting love, or shooting nostril blood in manga depicting lust (Cohn, 2013c: 34).

Taken as a conceptual reference point, an image can have multiple properties that are more or less likely to be mapped, depending on context, and compatibility between the source and target domains (Stockwell, 2014). For more complex instances that obviously draw on two or more source domains, Forceville (2016) identifies blending, or conceptual integration (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Turner, 2006, 2010), as a means of analysing visual and multimodal metaphors. Multimodal metaphor in a comic has the potential to present different source domains in text and image, which are understood in blending as mental spaces that are conceptually integrated to produce a conceptually complex output where the target domain integrates aspects of distinct sources. This is also of use when the source domain is conceptually imprecise, and/or posits multiple possible conceptual mappings. Similarly, reducing analysis to constituent **image schemas**—models of comprehension based on basic experiential phenomena (Forceville, 2005; Johnson, 1987, 2007;

Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999)—makes visual metaphors more analysable and avoids passing over features that may not fit into a unitary conceptual mapping. The nature of such metaphors and how they qualify the storytelling of lived experience will be addressed in chapter 4.

2.3.3 Direct thought in comics

As Mikkonen (2008: 302) points out, 'extended employment of inner speech, direct thought presentation, and thought report is relatively rare in graphic narratives'. Direct thought report (textual realisation of thought marked by a thought bubble or caption) relies on a conceit of direct access to character subjectivity, which is closed off in everyday interaction (Ryan, 2011: 656). This leads to a sense of artificiality (as compared with less obviously artificial direct speech presentation) that results from the 'interference' of discourse-world authors and any intervening enactors including narrators and older enactors of characters (Saraceni, 2003: 60–5). It is often noted that comics inherently foreground their own subjectivity through 'distortion and symbolic abstraction (Wolk, 2007: 120). However, this is not unique to comics—subjectivity, as a dimension of *all* utterances, can always be made more or less prominent (see sections 4.4, 5.4 and 5.5).

This artificiality is metaphoric or at least metonymic in nature, given that not all thought is necessarily externalised, verbalised or formed as coherent language or concepts. Kukkonen (2013: 19) relates speech and thought bubbles to the metaphor COMMUNICATION IS CONDUIT (Reddy, 1979) in that words 'flow' from a speaker 'carrying' a message to a reader. This is reinforced to some extent by the form of the tails of speech and thought bubbles, which act as vectors emanating from a character towards their speech or thought (see also section 2.3.2). Similarly, the common differentiation between speech and thought bubbles—smoother lines for speech, simplified cloud shapes for bubbles—employs a metaphoric association between shape and speech or thought act to characterise the relative tangibility of text-world immanent speech and thought acts.

Thought and speech can also be textualised in captions, which, unlike speech and thought bubbles tethered to depicted characters, are extrinsic to the reality of the depicted level of the text-world. In terms of discourse structure, the space of a depicted text-world tends to supervene upon the space indicated by the narration—i.e., a space populated by a narrator and an implied narratee (Prince, 1971, 1985; see also sections 2.3.4 and 4.3). More generally, words in any balloon are fundamentally metaphorical and abstracted. This is a necessary by-product of mediating speech or thought through text that limits the amount of qualifying detail that can be immediately conveyed, as compared with actual speech and conscious or even unconscious thought. Direct speech and thought report in comics tend to avoid adverbial qualification, relying rather on contextual framing and visual metaphor to establish a sense of how a character is speaking or thinking. In figure 2.3, for example, the speech bubble in a panel from *Scott Pilgrim* (O'Malley, 2010) has a jagged and pointed outline as opposed to the more conventional smooth ovoid outline that occurs more frequently in comics, including that

series. Based on the suggestion above, the jagged outline can be analysed as a visual manifestation of the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS A SUBSTANCE IN A PRESSURISED CONTAINER as described in language by Kövecses (2010; see also Kövecses et al. 2015) and applied to the analysis of comics by Forceville (2005). The process of mediating depicted spoken language in comics similarly involves the functional metaphorical conceptualisations SPEECH IS WRITTEN LANGUAGE or THOUGHT IS WRITTEN LANGUAGE. Additionally, the representation of thought in this manner relies on an idealisation of thought as coherent speech, and the similarities of presentation point to SPEECH IS THOUGHT being a fundamental mapping in direct thought presentation.

2.3.4 Action and unconscious thought in comics

Kukkonen (2013: 18) explains action as a prompt for mind-modelling in terms of implicature, stating

Figure 2.3: Non-standard speech bubble to communicate anger (O'Malley, 2010)

that inference rather than semiotic encoding links an utterance to comprehension (see Sperber and Wilson, 2008: 9). Between panels, 'readers construct the events and the characters' relations, confirming previous hypotheses ... and projecting the future course of action' (Kukkonen, 2013: 31). This predictive dimension is particularly relevant in cases of unreliable narration, where predictions are likely to be confounded, requiring retroactive world-repair (Gavins, 2007), including re-characterisation based on new information.

As a means of characterisation, this inferential engagement with fictional minds involves a projected simulation not just of propositional thought, which is addressed by direct thought, but also less obviously accessible dimensions of thought including learned behaviours, automated actions and responses, and unconscious processes, which may all contribute to how a character behaves and how a reader might respond to them. Though these elements of mind may not be flagged or directly considered by a reader, they are nonetheless involved in the more intuitive process of

characterisation. This is apparent in the difference between narration of a premeditated murder and murder that might be contextually excusable, such as someone startled while chopping carrots or killing enemies in a war.

While there is always the potential to infer thought from action, some constraints should be placed on this for the purpose of analysis. Inference of implicature from actions or speech has to be motivated in some way by image/text and/or context. If a character is eating a sandwich, it is more than likely that we will pass over the thought processes involved in this (hunger, desire for sandwich, deliciousness, satisfaction) unless they are made prominent stylistically or contextually. Not all action is likely to prompt a reader to infer relative and relevant thought processes. A situation can be framed in such a way as to bring these to prominence, and this should be the focus when considering how, when reading, action might relate more broadly to motivations, goals, assessments, ethics, emotion, deliciousness and so on. Not all processes that we can infer from visual-verbal sequences will necessarily contribute to the accretive process of tracking a character's consciousness. Things that fall outside of awareness or that are not prominent facets of phenomenal experience, while still being part of the 'mind' of a character, are less likely to contribute to ongoing psychological characterisation.

2.3.5 Focalisation in comics

Focalisation describes both the organisation of fictional consciousness within a text, and how textual choices enable and limit a reader's ability to build a text-world by limiting available resources. In relation to literature, Genette (1980, 1988) proposes a typology of focalisation that hinges on a distinction between internal and external vantage points on consciousness:

A. Nonfocalization/zero-focalization ('vision from behind'): events are presented from a wholly unrestricted or omniscient point of view

B. Internal focalization ('vision with'): presentation of events restricted to the point of view of one or more focal characters

   1. Fixed: focalization restricted to a single focal character

   2. Variable: focalization alternates between several focal characters

   3. Multiple: presentation of the same event(s) as seen through several focal characters

C. External focalization ('vision from without'): presentation restricted to behaviourist report and outside views.

(Genette, 1980: 189–90)

Specifically, these categories define the relationship between narrator and character, as framed by the linguistic choices made by an author. The much quoted and debated aphorism: 'who sees? … who speaks?' (Genette, 1980: 186) is potentially misleading and confusing, as metaphorically, these terms could be understood as applying to any number of the imagined processes relating to discourse-world or text-world enactors—including narrators and authors (cf. Jahn, 1996: 243). Expanding on his original definition, Genette (1988: 74) describes focalisation as 'a restriction of 'field'—actually, that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called omniscience'. In these terms, focalisation is about the quality and quantity of information a narrator is able to communicate on the basis of authorial choices. Because of the potential internal and external nature of focalisation in relation to character consciousness, focalising 'through' enactors—a divergent interpretation of focalisation potentially arising from a loose translation of 'focalisation sur' (Niederhoff, 2011)—only applies to cases of internal focalisation. In other cases, narration focalises on or around enactors, but not necessarily through them.

Other approaches see focalisation, not just as a textual function of constraining information, but also in terms of the focal perspective of characters, whether explicated through internal focalisation or alluded to through external focalisation (Bal, 1977; Horstkotte and Pedri, 2011; Mikkonen, 2008, 2013; Phelan, 2001). Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 330) argue that this approach

> allows researchers to differentiate between the narration of a story on the one hand and the mental processing of that story by a character—or by the narrator—on the other.

Focalisation in this sense engages with enactor conceptualisation and response to the text-world, thereby relating it to matters of projection and identification touched on in section 2.3.1.

These approaches address different aspects of focalisation in terms of attentional focus: the former asks what information is made available to world-building in relation to text-world enactors; the latter tends towards investigation of who experiences a story and how this qualifies the text-world. Both are of relevance to examining consciousness in narrative, though they engage with different dimensions of both narrative and consciousness. Jahn (1996) simplifies these categories under a broader distinction between **narratorial focalisation**, which is primarily concerned with selection events and things, and **reflector focalisation** (see also, Stanzel, 1981), which is more a matter of particular characters' subjectivity. The schematic difference between the two could be described as follows: reflector focalisation is informed by real world experience of a range of environmental interactions by a conscious entity, whereas at a basic level, narrator focalisation is informed by experience and understanding of the processes and practices of narration.

The multimodality of comics presents challenges both to focalisation theory and intuitions about the nature of reading images in comics. Visual and textual modes can be used to frame scenes from multiple perspectives. Typically, narrative captions, for example, indicate a narrator who tells a story

about a focal enactor who may also be prominent in the visual stream. Primary subjective influence is defined by the content and presence of these different means of engaging with a character through different enactors (Stanzel, 1984). Additionally, a literal 'who sees?' questioning of comics stories complicates established narrative models of text-world enactors. The shifting visual perspective of many modern comics was less common in early comics, the visual perspective of which was more analogous to theatre (Groensteen, 2007: 53). Developments in cinematography are likely to have influenced the development of the comics medium in much the same way. This suggests a degree of transmedial cultural conventionality in how readers and artists engage with narrative visual perspective. Being able to process shifts in perspective *without* considering 'who sees' seems to be a convention of contemporary visual communication (Mikkonen, 2008: 316). As Kukkonen (2013: 153) notes, 'an image represents something but usually we do not consider the perspective from which they represent'. This is not to say that perspective is not important. It can metaphorically frame relationships between characters through viewing angle, involve a reader in a character's perspective, and expand a scene beyond the immediate scope of character perspective. However, the enactor through whose eyes readers view panels is unimportant to the reading experience by default. This only changes if they are specifically made prominent contextually or stylistically.

Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 331–2) attempt to expunge visual perspective from discussion of focalisation in comics altogether, proposing a hard distinction between

> focalization, a narratological concept whose main relevance lies in its potential to distinguish between the processing activities of an agent and the voice of the narrator articulating that filtering, and visual perspective, a technical concept without an explicitly narrative function.

They relate this understanding of focalisation to Palmer's (2004) concept of **aspectual filtering**, which 'includes cognitive as well as perceptual processes so that focalization is distinct from (and irreducible to) optical perspectivation' (Horstkotte and Pedri, 2011: 332).

While this functions well as a means of engaging with character subjectivity, it precludes a semantic analysis grounded in the images, language and composition of a comic. As proposed by Herman (2009, 2011, 2013) and Pleyer and Schneider (2014) this is better achieved through the cognitive grammatical notion of 'construal' (Langacker, 2008). Herman (2009) proposes construal as a means of expanding focalisation to consider dimensions of conceptualisation including prominence, perspective, focusing, dynamism, and specificity. Consideration of these conceptualising operations permits an analysis that accounts for how narrative information is constrained, and how these constraints might affect reading experience. I will expand on this further in section 2.4.2.

Discussing focalisation in relation to fictional minds, Margolin (2003: 273) suggests that cognitive mental functioning is relevant at all levels of narrative communication including author and reader; implied author (Booth 1983) and implied reader (Iser 1974); textually inscribed narrator and their

narratee (Prince 1971, 1985). In text-world terms, these are all enactors who are made more or less prominent through the way in which they are presented by discourse participants. Engaging with narrators, focalisers and characters in this way offers a parsimonious means of engaging with the involvement of enactors at different levels of narration when conceptualisation of them is prompted by images or text.

Many of the approaches to describing discourse touched on in this chapter were initially designed for the purpose of analysing verbal or textual discourse specifically. In the following section, I will look at how cognitive grammar (Langacker, 2008), while also language-oriented at point of inception, offers an adaptable framework for multimodal analysis of comics.

2.4 Cognitive grammar

A cognitive approach to analysing comics should be grounded in 'experiential realism', i.e., 'the view that there is a world outside the body that exists objectively (realism), but our only access to it is through our perceptual and cognitive experience of it' (Stockwell, 2009: 2). This view contends that discourse is necessarily constrained by embodied limits on perception, cognition and the human condition. As an attempt to explain language use in these terms, cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008) offers a means of describing discourse that is realistically grounded in cognitive processes that are applicable to communication in any mode (e.g., attention, foregrounding, categorisation, scanning and so on). Moreover, it is based on the analysis of actual language use and plausible psychological processing, so it provides a framework well-suited to dealing with actual usage events (i.e., real readers reading and discussing comics).

Drawing on the productive application of cognitive grammar to the analysis of literary reading (e.g., Harrison, 2017; 2017a; Harrison et al., 2014; Giovanelli and Harrison, 2018; Giovanelli et al., 2021; Stockwell, 2009), previous sections have suggested that concepts from cognitive grammar might be useful starting points for understanding how comics are read and produced. This has been demonstrated in analyses of comics by Herman (2009; 2011) and Pleyer and Schneider (2014; see also Finn, 2021). As touched on in section 2.3.5 (see also section 2.4.2), Herman (2009) proposes cognitive grammar as a more expansive means of engaging with the psychological aspects of narrative discourse, as it is theoretically grounded in aspects of cognition that have been experimentally investigated and described in cognitive psychological research (Langacker, 2008). Pleyer and Schneider (2014) and Finn (2021) develop Herman's focus on construal to include other aspects of cognitive grammar, including the concept of current discourse spaces (see 2.4.4) and Langacker's (2008) description of psychological and grammatical subjectivity as aspects of discourse and experience.

As a theoretical approach to analysing text, image and related symbolic systems found in comics, cognitive grammar is well suited because the theoretical description, as well as being grounded in

broadly psychologically plausible principles, is also extensively described through analogies to visual perception and cognition. Moreover, cognitive grammar is a functional grammar, meaning that it is designed to account for actual usage, communication and comprehension. In the following sections, I outline the elements of cognitive grammar that I take into consideration when carrying out my own interpretative analysis. While this provides an overview of the theoretical framework I apply in my analysis, I explicate the details of concepts where relevant in chapters four to six.

2.4.1 Principles

Cognitive grammar (CG), developed by Langacker (1987, 1991, 2008), is a functional approach to the description of language that is grounded in cognitive psychological and cognitive semantic principles (e.g., Barsolou, 2003, 2009; Bergen, 2005; Fauconnier, 1997; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Hampe, 2005; Kosslyn, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999; Talmy, 2000, 2000a). A basic tenet of CG, and cognitive linguistics more generally, is that the way people think—including basic cognitive processes involved in perception, conception, imagination, memory, consciousness and physical interaction with the world—both enables and constrains communicative function. Because it is understood as arising from cognition and embodied experience rather than being the product of a specialised neural language module, CG sees grammar as inherently meaningful, which means that 'by using a certain grammatical element one is always imposing a certain construal' (Langacker, 2014: xiv. See section 2.4.2 for an expanded definition of 'construal').

In CG, then, language use is understood as involving a relationship between **conceptualisation** (dynamic processing of experience) and overt, interactional expression of communicative intent (communicative form). According to Langacker (2008: 30), conceptualisation involves:

- both novel and established conceptions;
- not just 'intellectual' notions, but sensory, motor, and emotive experience as well;
- apprehension of the physical, linguistic, social, and cultural context; and
- conceptions that develop and unfold through **processing time** (rather than being simultaneously manifested).

Similarly, communication is understood as being inherently multimodal, involving prosody, gesture and orthography (Langacker, 2008: 15). A **usage event** realised through speech, gesture or orthography, establishes a bi-polar **symbolic structure** with **semantic** (conceptual) and **phonological** (expressive) **poles** (Langacker, 2008: 15). In comics, both depiction and narration contribute to the same complex integrated conceptual space at the semantic pole, while being realised expressively through distinct yet co-presented modes of expression at the phonological pole (i.e., images, text and conventional symbols and structures). Symbolic structures are combined into larger **symbolic assemblies** in line with conventionalised schematic structures, which are, in turn, entered into categorising relationships (e.g., complementation, modification, anaphora etc.). These

components are described as part of Langacker's working hypothesis of linguistic 'content requirement':

> the only elements ascribable to a linguistic system are (i) semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures that actually occur as parts of expressions; (ii) schematizations of permitted structures; and (iii) categorizing relationships between permitted structures
>
> Langacker, 2008: 25

Structures become **conventional units** through individual experience of language use and within a speech community through what Langacker (2008: 16) terms **entrenchment**, whereby units become automated through repeated, successful use (Taylor, 2002: 26). A unit may have an established conventional link between phonological and semantic poles (e.g., understanding that '💬' indicates speech in most comics), or it may be characterised schematically as a structure that can frame meaning. For example, the schematic relationship in (i), where the position of the balloon's tail indicates the golfer as the speaker (Langacker, 2008: 16–7; Taylor, 2002: 26–7). As with much of CG, unit status is a matter of degree, so some units may be differently entrenched for speakers in distinct or intersecting language communities. Entrenchment of a schematic structural relationship can be reinforced by prototypical expectations, such as, in the case of speech bubbles, the sympathetic conceptual understanding of the tail of the speech bubble resembling the basic conceptual mapping SONIC EMANATION IS EXPANSION. Accordingly, the smaller part of depiction of this concept describes the point of emanation. Another aspect of the schematic structure is the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL **image schema**—a conceptual relationship grounded in basic embodied experience such as ABOVE, CONTAINMENT, AROUND (Johnson, 1987, 2007; Lakoff, 1987)—in which the speaker is SOURCE, the utterance is PATH, and the listener is GOAL.

People with adequate golfing and comics cultural awareness will likely fill in the wordless balloon with verbal exclamations that they associate with someone just having played a golf-stroke, such as 'fore!' or a barrage of swear-words. As demonstrated in this schematic description of speech bubbles, linguistic knowledge, as understood in cognitive grammar, is not defined in terms of separate memorial repositories for lexis and grammatical rules. Rather, it is understood in terms of basic psychological phenomena such as 'association, automatization, schematization, and categorization' (Langacker, 2008: 25). Similarly, the psychological processes involved in conceptualisation are not unique to language:

> Conceptualization is fundamentally imagistic rather than propositional. Instead of there being a unique set of semantic primitives, there are different kinds of elemental conceptions, each basic in its own respect. Certain fundamental grammatical notions are semantically

> characterized both schematically, in terms of basic cognitive abilities, and prototypically, in terms of experientially grounded conceptual archetypes.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 27

Though speech is the focus of Langacker's description, the generic nature of cognition involved in conceptualisation and linguistic knowledge allows for the application of these principles to other modes of communication, albeit with unique, though often related, conventional units, structures and 'lexical' items. Because of this, cognitive grammar provides a productive means of discussing comics, as it provides scope for describing and integrating conceptualisation of and through distinct modes. This multimodal compatibility is exemplified in Langacker's use of visual perception as a metaphor for linguistic conceptualisation (see 2.4.2).

When considering reading text, this analogy with visual perception is less likely to draw attention to the visual perception involved in reading or to compositional features as these aspects of reading experience tend to be conventionalised to such an extent that engagement with them is mostly, if not entirely automated (see Gibbons, 2012 for a discussion of notable exceptions). In text-heavy publications, the mode of communication is principally phonological. In comics, a version of the visual analogy described above is part of the basic function of the visual mode in a way that collapses semantic and phonological structures on the page. Looking at a comics page is more directly analogous to looking at the things represented on a comics page, yet they are still construed in specific ways by comics authors that result in a limited and compressed depiction of a scene. Because of this, there is a temptation to collapse visual perception of a comic and visual perception of an actual, perceptible and interactive environment. Though functionally comparable, perceiving the visual content of a comic is distinct from actual visual perception in that it involves the influence of at least one other conceptualiser (one or more authors). Conceptualisation of the content of a comic is better understood, then, as involving attenuated simulation of the experience of visual perception proposed by images (Langacker, 2008: 536–7). Visual perception must remain analogous to the reading process, rather than entirely constitutive of it. Conflating the two risks ignoring the processes of conceptualisation involved in composing and reading a comic.

2.4.2 Construal

Herman (2009, 2011) and Pleyer and Schneider (2014) have applied the CG concept of **construal** as a means of engaging with issues of focalisation and point-of-view in comics in ways that extend beyond visual perspective. Langacker describes construal as 'our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways'. As alluded to in 2.3.5 and 2.4.1, he uses vision as a metaphor for explicatory purposes:

> In viewing a scene, what we actually see depends on how closely we examine it, what we choose to look at, which elements we pay most attention to, and where we view it from.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 55

He stresses that construal phenomena can apply to any dimension of conceptualisation and within any relevant domain of knowledge (2008: 55). The main classes of construal phenomena identified include:

- **specificity**: the degree of granularity of a conception
- **prominence**: the attentional focus (profile) of an expression
- **focusing**: conceptual foregrounding and relationships between entities
- **perspective**: the conceptual vantage point of an expression and how this relates to the conversation situation and discursive setting
- **dynamicity**: whether entities or relationships are scanned summarily or sequentially.

All these dimensions are involved in any given construal of a situation (be it fictive or actual), though the degree to which they are implicated varies according to the nature of the construal and how it relates to the discourse situation.

While all these phenomena are interrelated, perspective in particular overlaps with other dimensions of construal including **objective** and **subjective construal**, **grounding** and the **viewing arrangement.** The viewing arrangement refers to 'the relationship between the conceptualizers and the object of conception', which forms part of the conceptual substrate of an expression (Langacker, 2008: 467). Canonically, this consists of 'two interlocutors together in a fixed location, from which they observe and report on actual occurrences' (ibid.), though discourse situations can differ from this configuration to varying degrees. Within this model, the conceptualisers, the immediate situation and knowledge presumed to be shared (experiential, contextual or anaphoric) comprise the **ground**, while the 'object of conception' is the attentional focus of discourse, or **profile**. Langacker (2008: 260) describes this in terms of a fundamental though gradated asymmetry:

> The subject (S) engages in conceptualizing activity and is the locus of conceptual experience, but in its role as subject it is not itself conceived. An essential aspect of the subject's activity is the directing of attention. Within the full scope of awareness, S attends to a certain region—metaphorically, the "onstage" region—and further singles out some onstage element as the focus of attention. This, most specifically, is the object of conception (O). To the extent that the situation is polarized, so that S and O are sharply distinct, we can say that S is construed **subjectively**, and O **objectively**.

Along these lines, **grounding** refers to the process of relating the **onstage** object of conception to the **offstage** subject of conception and is 'the grammaticized means of relating the thing profiled by a nominal, or the process profiled by a finite clause, to the ground (the speech event and its

participants) (Langacker, 2008: 256). Linguistic grounding elements include deixis and quantifiers (for nominals) and tense and modality markers (for clauses). An expression can profile either a **thing** (e.g., a noun) or a **relationship** (e.g., prepositions or verbs) which are conceptualised according to how they are construed by conceptualisers in relation to the ground. This is relevant to comics analysis because it provides a means of engaging with fluctuations in perspective across modes and between panels that can be explained in terms of fictive vantage points and conceptualisers that actual conceptualisers are forced into alignment with. This idea is explored further in my analyses in chapters 4 and 6.

Langacker (2008: 72–3) points out that construal is imposed on rather than being inherent to reality:

> If we look at our surroundings, we do not see objects bordered with heavy lines to mark them as profiles, nor is something intrinsically a trajector or a landmark. Like other aspects of construal, prominence is a conceptual phenomenon, inhering in our apprehension of the world, not in the world per se.

When considering images in comics, this consideration helps avoid the trap of assuming that all things/entities and relationships/processes have an inherent, basic grammatical role or semantic profile. A comics panel can profile multiple relationships, within which entities can adopt multiple grammatical roles and mean different things within different attentional configurations (see, for example, section 4.4.2).

2.4.3 Viewing events

Langacker (2000: 24) describes the (conceptual) **viewing arrangement** outlined in 3.3.2 as a 'stage model', which 'is a reflection of perceptual (especially visual) experience'. In what he describes as a 'canonical event model', this is combined with a 'billiard ball model', which is subsumed within the stage model as the 'onstage' focus of attention. The model itself is posited as the experiential basis of the conceptualisation of processual relationships between entities as profiled by verbs. This is described as a 'series of forceful interactions, each involving the transmission of energy […] from one participant to the next' (2008: 355–6). In this way, the billiard ball model offers a schematic means of understanding **transitivity** in terms of **force dynamics** (Talmy, 2000). It posits a conceptual event structure involving unidirectional, asymmetrical transmission of force between entities—schematically, from a subject to an object; prototypically, from an **agent** (energy source) to a **patient** (energy sink) (Langacker, 1991; see also Croft, 1991, 1998). As I will explore throughout my analysis, the sense of a schematic force dynamic depictive impetus is a conventionalised aspect of comics composition and reading that influences the feel and meaning of comics depiction.

Above, 'agent' and 'patient' are used to describe semantic roles within an event structure that are based on non-linguistic experiential archetypes. The non-exhaustive list of **role archetypes** posited by Langacker (1991) includes:

- **Agent**: (willful) initiator of action
- **Patient**: undergoes change as a result of action
- **Instrument**: used by agent to bring about change in patient
- **Experiencer**: perceives, imagines, emotes etc.
- **Mover**: a moving entity
- **Zero**: static participant

The nature of these roles is defined by the nature of the transitive relationship, and entities can feasibly have multiple roles. Dowty (1991) suggests that these roles are reducible either to prototypical agent or patient roles and can always be described in these terms. In the most schematic terms of engaging with conceptualisation of event structure, this can help explain the basic semantic value of related entities. However, Langacker's suggestions provide a useful means of describing relationships between entities in processes, event structures, and situations based on how those relationships are profiled and conceptualised.

An **absolute** construal of event structure differs in that there is either no change of state or the transmission of energy is elided by exclusion of an agentive entity. For example, *the vase broke* and *Link broke the vase* both describe the same event, but with absolute construal and force dynamic construal respectively. Because transmission of energy isn't profiled, agent and instrument roles do not feature in absolute construal.

These aspects are brought together under the rubric of the **canonical event model**, which 'represents the normal observation of a prototypical action' (Langacker, 1987: 298), which can be sketched out as follows:

[V ⇢ [… **AG ⇒ PAT** …]]

V, AG and PAT stand for viewers, agent and patient respectively. The dashed arrow stands for an act of perception and the double arrow stands for 'an interaction involving the transmission of energy' (Langacker, 1999: 24). This relationship is in bold type to signify its onstage prominence as a profiled relationship as opposed to the offstage viewers. The ellipses either side suggest that the perceived relationship is embedded within a situational context that is perceptible, but not attended to.

Clauses such as the canonical example described here tend to align with **attentional frames**, which Langacker (2008: 481–2) describes as 'successive windows of attention, each subsuming a manageable amount of conceptual content' that tend to align with clauses. To reiterate the point made in 2.3.1, images in comics can profile multiple relationships and processes that do not necessarily align with elements that have previously been identified as minimal attentional units (e.g., panels, panel transitions). A panel has the potential to subsume multiple attentional frames organised according to the logic of the depicted situation, conventional reading paths, text

incorporation and the discourse context, which can help bring certain aspects of the discourse to prominence.

In language, the canonical conceptual structure described above tends to align with its phonological realisation in terms of clausal subject and object relation. In this way, the linear nature of discourse unfolding in time typically aligns with the causal logic of an **action chain** (a consequential chain of physical interactions) unfolding in **conceived time**. While it can be semantically discontinuous (e.g., anaphoric reference, tense, repetition, re-reading), discourse is phonologically linear. It always unfolds in time according to people's capacity to produce and comprehend discourse, which is limited by their experience of time—at least while in a 'normal' conscious state—as a unidirectional continuity. There is a tendency for the semantic pole of discourse to align with its necessarily linear phonological pole, resulting in what Langacker (2008: 79) terms **temporal iconicity**:

> There is a natural tendency for conceived time and processing time to be coaligned, such that the order in which events are conceived as occurring dovetails with the order in which they are conceptualized and described.

He also notes that this is only a tendency and that speakers 'can mentally access events and describe them linguistically in a sequence that diverges from their order of occurrence or even runs directly counter to it'. Generally, where an action chain (semantic pole/conceptual structure) and an expression (phonological pole/clausal structure) align structurally and conceptually, as in *Millie hit Egg* (figure 2.4), the conceptual prototypes and role archetypes are reinforced through their alignment with grammatical schemas. When passivized as *Egg was hit* (figure 2.5), the conceptual structure remains the same, while the polarity of the clausal structure is inverted. This results in an absolute construal whereby the patient (Egg) occupies the non-prototypical subject position. Even if Millie is specified in a prepositional complement (*Egg was hit by Millie*) the grammatical sense of her agency is removed by the absolute construal and the passive structure.

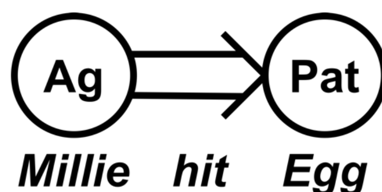


Figure 2.4: Action chain and clausal alignment

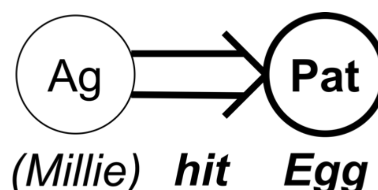


Figure 2.5: Action chain and passive clausal structure

In comics, temporal iconicity can be understood as a conventional tendency of composition and reading that tends to align with action chains in the conceptual substrate. This results in a discursive impetus present in most comics whereby processes profiled within panels are composed AG ⇒ PAT in alignment with conventional reading direction (i.e., left-to-right in English language comics). These combine to form a discursive impetus within and between panels that can be used to create different effects by placing entities or relationships with or against this common discursive trajectory as in the passivized Millie and Egg textual example above.

Applying absolute construal to comics can help to describe and understand instances where established entities are backgrounded, elided, or occluded in panels. Phonologically, they are not present, but their presence remains in the **maximal scope** of the conceptualisation, that is, 'the full extent of the content evoked as the basis for [an expression's] meaning' (Langacker, 2008: 463). This meaning arises from and contributes to the evolution of a 'conceptual substrate', which incorporates 'the many domains of knowledge invoked, mental constructions (e.g., metaphors), the linguistic interaction itself, and apprehension of the context in all its dimensions' (ibid.). In the final section of this chapter, I will explore how CG describes discourse in relation to this conceptual substrate of linguistic meaning.

2.4.4 Discourse

Cognitive grammar is, at least notionally, based on 'actual utterances in an actual discourse context' (Langacker, 2001: 146). Because of this, discourse is understood as comprising **usage events**, which Langacker (2001: 144) describes as 'actual instances of language use' consisting of 'a comprehensive conceptualization, comprising an expression's full contextual understanding, paired with an elaborate vocalization, in all its phonetic detail'. These usage events are grounded both in awareness of the communicative situation (described in 2.4.2 and 2.4.3) and in awareness of preceding discourse, prediction of coming discourse, presumptions relating to relevant shared knowledge and an understanding of how these factors relate to ongoing discourse. This tracking of discourse is described by Langacker as the **current discourse space** (CDS), which is posited as a type of mental space (Fauconnier, 1997) combining awareness of prior discourse and relevant domains of knowledge presumed to be shared by discourse participants.

> [The CDS] comprises everything presumed to be shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for communication at a given moment. Part of the CDS, of course, is the current discourse itself, including both previous usage events and any that might be anticipated. Also part of the CDS are other mutually evident aspects of the transient context, as well as any stable knowledge required for their apprehension or otherwise invoked.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 466

As well as encompassing background knowledge, the CDS evolves on a moment-to-moment basis as discourse progresses, updating according to the content of utterances and providing the basis for interpretation of subsequent utterances, while also framing its content and attentional focus:

> Only certain portions of the CDS are specifically invoked and brought to bear on the interpretation of any particular utterance. Those portions—the scope of concern at a given stage of the discourse—constitute a **discourse frame**. As a discourse unfolds, therefore, the interlocutors negotiate a series of discourse frames, each produced by updating the previous one.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 281

On this basis, comics panels and pages might be better understood in relation to discourse frames rather than (necessarily) attentional frames because they introduce new information to the CDS allowing discursive interpretation to progress.

As a high-level cognitive domain relating to the organisation of usage events in discourse, the CDS encompasses aspects of communication described in previous sections. Figure 2.6 illustrates how the ground, viewing arrangement, and profiling fit into this model in terms of a usage event involving a speaker (S) and a hearer (H).

Langacker (2001: 144) is concerned with the interactive and conceptual dimensions of discourse, describing a usage event as ‘an action carried out by the speaker and hearer’.

> The speaker (S) acts in an initiative capacity, the hearer (H) being responsive; but whether their role is active or reactive, each has to deal with both a conceptualization and a vocalization, the two basic ‘poles’ of an utterance. The speaker’s and hearer’s action involves the directing and focusing of attention (- - ->). In successful communication, they manage to coordinate this action and focus attention on the same conceived entity. Of course, we can only conceive of so much at any one time. We have a limited visual field, taking in only so much of the world at any given instant. Analogously, we have a limited ‘conceptual field’, delimiting how much we can conceptualize or hold in mind at any given instant.
>
> Langacker, 2000: 144

In discourse, the viewing frame metaphorically alludes to the **immediate scope** of a conceptualisation, within which the profile is the focus of attention.

Drawing on a suggestion from Harder (1996), Langacker (2001: 151) proposes that

> we might think of linguistic structures (of whatever size) as instructions to modify the current discourse space in particular ways. Each instruction involves the focusing of attention within a viewing frame. A discourse comprises a succession of frames each representing the scene being ‘viewed’ and acted on by the speaker and hearer at a given instant.

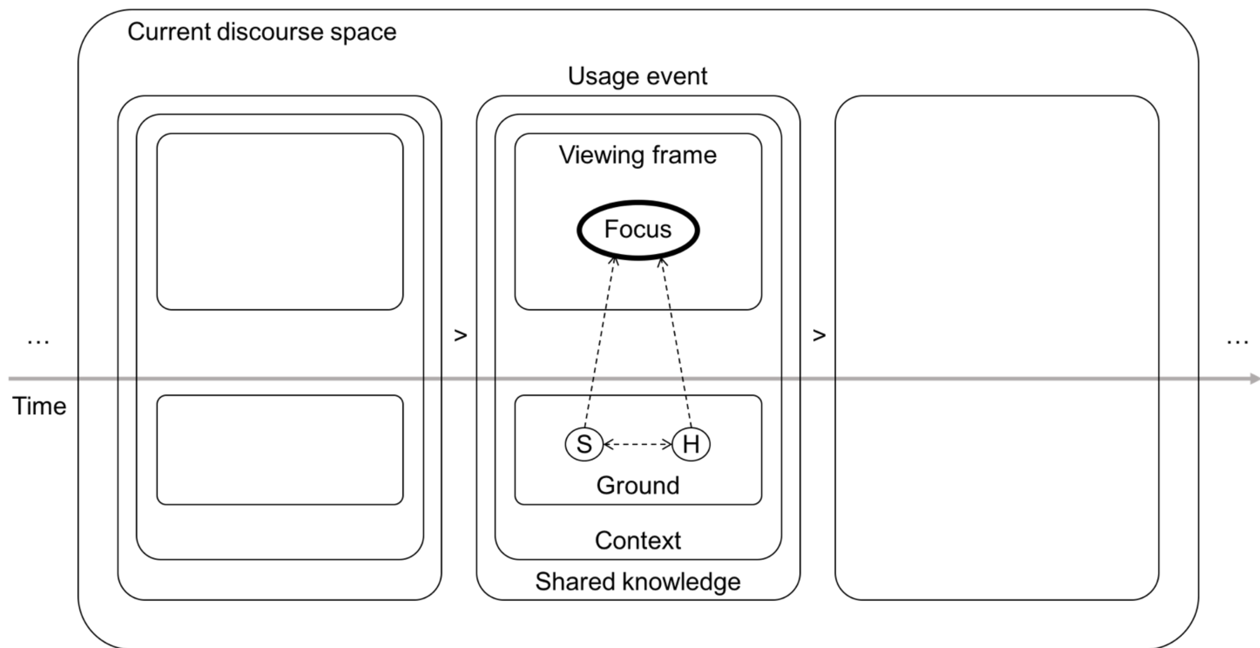


Figure 2.6: Current discourse space (Langacker, 2001: 145)

These frames sequentially update the CDS as shown in figure 2.7. Langacker dubs the central frame the **focus frame** or **zero frame**, which—as indicated by the bold line—constitutes the immediate scope of conceptualisation and the present state of the CDS. It is preceded by a minus frame (knowledge of a previous viewing frame) and a plus frame (expectations and predictions relating to coming frames), both of which influence the structure of current conceptualisation, but are not part of its immediate scope.

Within this description of conceptual framing, linguistic elements can make retrospective and prospective specifications such as establishing or referring to discursively established or presumed **reference points**—entities used to '[establish] mental contact' with other entities (Langacker, 1993). Such linguistic units may make specifications in the minus frame, the plus frame, or both.

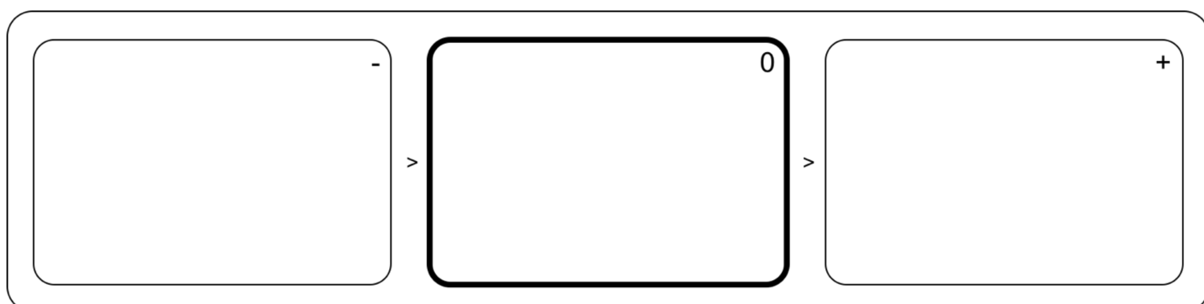


Figure 2.7: Minus, zero and plus frames (Langacker, 2001: 151)

When describing comics, this idea of a viewing frame offers a compelling means of describing conceptualisation of panels as constituting a period of focus on aspects of a situation. This works particularly well when combined with the concept of attentional frames, which accounts for the

multiple attentional configurations within panels, as they relate to 'the management of attention in the flow of discourse, especially at a consciously accessible level' (Langacker, 2001: 151). Langacker identifies these single attentional 'gestures' with Chafe's notion of intonation units, which account for segmentation of discourse according to phonological features including 'pauses or breaks in timing, acceleration and deceleration, changes in overall pitch level, terminal pitch contours, and changes in voice quality' (Chafe, 1994: 69). The 'gestures' in comics tend to be marked by features such as text incorporation devices, intra- and intertextually conventional symbols, and contextually interpretable depictions of events (see sections 2.1.2–3). Broader shifts in viewing frames are generally marked by panel framing, page layout. All are more or less constrained by reading conventions, which can be used to guide or confuse attentional paths. Transitions between viewing frames update the CDS and attentional frames guide attentional focus. Because of this, within a CG description of comics, panel transitions are not unitary relations between viewing frames, rather they contribute to overall conceptualisation. A process, or sequence of related processes can be scanned sequentially across multiple frames with only certain parts of the process(es) being profiled at different points. The start and end of a process might be made prominent at the start and end of a page, while being backgrounded, occluded, omitted, elided or otherwise ignored in intervening panels. The processual relationship is understood in terms of a reference point relationship between the initial panel (reference point) and the later panel (target), which defines the scope of the sequential scan of the process (i.e., it is grounded temporally).

Langacker (2001: 151) suggests that 'any aspect of a single usage event or a sequence of them in a discourse is capable of being abstracted as a conventional linguistic unit. The entrenchment of linguistic conventions involves discourse expectations relating to linguistic units of any size.

> What level we examine determines the scope of the patterns and dependencies described, and what counts as a single usage event for this purpose. It is equally a matter of discourse expectation that a preamble will be followed by a main body of text, that a conditional protasis will be followed by an apodosis, and that a prefix will be followed by a stem. A unified approach is thus adopted for lexical items, grammatical constructions, and discourse patterns of any size.
>
> Langacker, 2001: 151

As conventionalised linguistic units, the apparent discourse expectations associated with higher level categorisations such as 'comic', 'graphic novel' and 'story', as well as smaller linguistic units, will be of relevance to my analysis.

This overview introduces concepts from cognitive grammar that I will apply in the following analyses of comics about mental illness. There are further details within these broadly outlined concepts that I will elaborate where relevant to my analysis.

3 Methods

In line with other mixed methods approaches to researching literary reading in cognitive poetics (e.g., Bell, 2021; Browse, 2018; Gavins, 2013; Gibbons, 2017; Giovanelli and Mason, 2018; Mason, 2019; Mason and Giovanelli, 2017; Norledge, 2019; Peplow et al. 2015; Voice and Whiteley, 2019: Whiteley, 2010; 2011; 2011a), I employ a combination of empirical and introspective methods to gain a broader understanding of comics about mental illness. In the following sections I outline my research questions, research design, and my methods of data collection and analysis. In 3.2 I give an overview of linguistic reader response research before outlining my own research design in 3.3.

3.1 Research questions

Based on the preceding discussion and my overall research aims, I will address the following questions in this thesis:

- How do comics depict experiences of mental illness?
- How do people discuss their experience of reading comics about mental illness?
- How effectively can cognitive linguistic methods be adapted to analysis of depiction in comics?

As I will explain further in section 3.2, the second of these questions is subsidiary to the first in that I will use my findings relating to how people discuss comics to frame my analysis of how comics depict mental illness. The third question addresses a hypothesis posited by the psychologically multimodal nature of linguistic conceptualisation posited by cognitive linguistics. Specifically, a prediction that concepts from cognitive linguistics can be employed in the analysis of the conceptualisation of visual elements of multimodal narration (see section 2.4).

3.2 Reader response

While the personal reflections presented in sections 1.1 and 1.2 go some way to explicating the influence of my subjectivity throughout this thesis, there are also benefits to mitigating the influence of my subjectivity on the cognitive linguistic analysis that I will carry out in the following chapters. Empirical research of reading provides a means of diversifying the understandings, experiences and interpretations that form part of the overall qualitative analysis. It also allows for the incorporation of non-specialised reading practices into the analysis. As a literary linguist and comics researcher, my reading experiences and practices are modulated by the requirements, interests and constraints that delimit my reading. By researching reading experience, empirical approaches provide a means of grounding aspects of my analysis in less specialised—though nonetheless unique and insightful—reading experiences. In this section, I will survey a range of empirical methods of investigating reading before outlining my own research design in the following sections.

Discussion of reading is a natural extension of the act of reading (or, equally, of *not* reading) comics. It is one of many possible activities that overlap with and influence reading over time (Peplow et al., 2015: 16). Such discussion can occur before, between, after or (arguably most annoyingly) during periods of reading and can acutely and chronically change a reader's appreciation of and engagement with a book. All of this is framed by experience of these activities, as well as experience in general, to produce uniquely personal, complex and diachronically variable understandings of books, experiences of reading them, experiences of discussing them and lasting impressions of all of these activities. Some activities closely related to and potentially falling within the category of reading comics include: a prompt to read; acquisition of a comic book; actual periods of reading; recollection of/reflection on reading experience; reflective discussion of/through recollection; reflecting on recognition of discussion; re-reading. The part of this loose chronology that reading group discussion sheds light on is the 'reflective discussion of/through recollection' of previous reading and related activities. These accounts are unreliable as descriptions of reading *per se* because of the irregular distribution of reading events among participants, the variability of remembrance and retelling, and potential prestige effects, experiential limitations and social dynamics among participants that might affect how readers relate their experience. However, being wary of these factors as secondary considerations permits investigation of reading group discourse as a means of gaining '[insight] into readers' interpretative activity' (Peplow et al. 2015: 3). Though only a part of the overall experience of engaging with a book, book talk is a very real part of how people engage with and experience comics as social objects and their ideas about comics are mostly prompted by their prior interpretative engagements with those comics.

Ways of researching reading and reading related discourse range from quantification of specific aspects of reading to investigation of the quality of reading experiences more generally (Peplow and Carter, 2014; Steen, 1991; Whiteley and Canning, 2017). Swann and Allington (2009) categorise these two approaches as 'experimental' and 'naturalistic' respectively. The former approach can investigate aspects of reading such as tracking story boundaries (Magliano et al., 2001; Zwaan, 1996; Zwaan et al., 1995), categorisation of constituent elements (Cohn et al., 2012), event comprehension (Cohn and Kutas, 2015; Cohn and Paczynski, 2013), foregrounding (Kuiken et al. 2004; Miall and Kuiken, 2002; Miall, 1990, 2005), and narrative perspective (Bell, 2019; Giovanelli, 2022; Grisot, 2020; Van Peer and Pander Maat, 2001). The latter approach is better suited to more holistic phenomenological accounts of reading or, more accurately, verbal or textual recollections and retellings of reading. Table 3.1 shows how Swann and Allington (2009: 248) outline some of the characteristics of experimental and naturalistic reading group research.

Whereas experimental studies seek to control reading experiences to learn about specific phenomena, naturalistic studies are concerned with how the nature of the experience of reading is communicated through group discussion:

> Working with the—admittedly somewhat slippery—stuff of naturally-occurring discourse permits us to deal more directly with questions of meaning and value [...] for the simple reason that these also arise in discussions between readers outside the academy
>
> Swann and Allington, 2009: 249

Because of this, one imperative of naturalistic research design is to keep conditions as similar to a reader's normal reading habits as possible. While experimental studies tend to focus on reading of abstracted material in a constrained environment (e.g., Coderre et al. 2018; Cohn and Kutas, 2017; Cohn et al., 2012; Cohn et al. 2017; Cohn and Paczynski, 2013; Foulsham and Cohn, 2016), naturalistic studies focus on reading of non-manipulated texts in more familiar environments (Allington and Swann, 2009; Gavins, 2013; Nuttall, 2015, 2017; Peplow, 2011; Peplow et al. 2015; Stockwell, 2009; Swann and Allington, 2009; Whiteley, 2019). The benefit of this, as opposed to the focus and control of experimental studies, is that reader response is not constrained by the interests of a researcher or the design of an experiment.

> Taking the reading process as it comes forces the researcher to follow the research participants' lead, learning about the preoccupations evident in their discussion rather than imposing an alien agenda upon them (an interest in foregrounding, say).
>
> Swann and Allington, 2009: 249

Because, for most people, normal reading conditions tend not to involve any of the attention dividing intrusions involved in data acquisition, reading manipulated materials, curtailment of the reading experience, or academic interference causing priming of expectations or anxieties arising from the circumstances, naturalistic research aims to limit these kinds of interventions. However, because *some* intervention must be made to access reader experience, compromises must be made between the imperative to generate data and the imperative to keep reading experiences as natural as possible. For the purposes of researching comics, and especially with regards to the research questions outlined above, a naturalistic approach is preferable, though, as suggested by Fernandez Quintanilla (2020), in practice, this tends to amount to something that sits somewhere between the notional poles of naturalism and experimentation because of the inevitability of researcher influence. As well as responding directly to my research questions, a mixed approach tending towards naturalism and qualitative analysis is also better suited to theory generation, which I feel is a suitable starting point for researching comics based on extant understanding and research (see sections 1.4–2.3). The output of this research should, in turn, provide the basis for testable hypotheses relating to the production and reception of comics. I discuss necessary limitations and compromises in my own design in the following sections.

Within naturalistic research, a further distinction can be made between discursively focused research and cognitive poetic approaches (Peplow et al., 2015; Swann and Allington, 2009). Whereas

Experimental studies	Naturalistic studies
Focus on contextualized, pre-specified and isolated aspects of reading/interpretation	Focus on contextualized reading practice(s), usually more broadly/holistically defined
Readers in a controlled but artificial environment, engaged in atypical reading behaviour	Readers in their usual environment, engaged in habitual reading behaviour
Atypical presentation of texts, or textual fragments	Texts presented whole, and in their typical form
Readers often interact only with researcher	Readers interact freely with others

Table 3.1: Adapted from Swann and Allington (2009: 248)

discursive naturalistic research focuses primarily on the analysis of group discussion (Allington, 2011; Benwell, 2009; Peplow 2011; Swann and Allington, 2009), cognitive poetic approaches tend to combine analysis of discussion of texts with introspective cognitive linguistic analysis (e.g., Gavins, 2013; Gavins and Stockwell, 2012; Nuttall, 2015, 2017; Stockwell, 2009; Whiteley, 2011, 2014, 2019). Though cognitive linguistic approaches to describing language, such as those outlined in sections 2.2–2.4, have been criticised for their reliance on intuition and introspection, which potentially inhibit generalisation of observations or theorisations (Kertesz et al., 2012), mixed methods approaches involving introspective analysis and other empirical methods present the possibility either of testing subjective intuition against a range of naturalistic reading experiences, or taking naturalistic discussion as a means of directing and constraining introspective analysis to features made prominent in group discussion.

This is the approach that I will favour in my own analyses by using reading group discussion as a starting point for introspective cognitive linguistic analysis. A broadly naturalistic, cognitive poetic approach allows me to use a range of responses as a check on using my own intuitive analysis as a means of reconfirming or questioning my own interpretations and biases. By taking the outcome of relatively unconstrained group discussion as a starting point, I can focus my analysis on explaining these responses in relation to the comics and to my own reading experiences and address the issues of how comics tell stories about mental illness and how people talk about their understanding of these stories. Using reading group data mitigates issues relating to the cultural context of readings by providing a focal point for reading, comprehension and discussion that is grounded in practices and relationships established by the group themselves, albeit limited by imposed constraints on time, location and participants. The trade-off for these limitations, is the range of interpretations and understandings of books that reading groups potentially present. Reading group data, as well as my

own understandings of the comics, presents the 'what' of comics reading, while cognitive grammar (see section 2.4) provides a means of analysing how comics storytelling might produce such understandings.

3.3 Research design

In the following sections I outline how I designed my research in line with the preceding discussion, before expanding on how I integrate analysis of the reader discussion and intuitive cognitive poetic analysis (as outlined in sections 2.2–2.4).

3.3.1 Research design: comic selection

My first consideration was the selection of comics that would address my research questions, both as objects of introspective analysis and group discussion. To this end, I established the following criteria for the selection of my primary texts:

(i) Published within five years of the start of the reading groups.

This criterion was intended to ensure that the content of the comics would be as contemporary and generally culturally accessible to the readers as possible.

(ii) Thematic focus on the experience of mental illness, either personally or proximally.

My aim here was to limit my selection to titles that would most likely prompt discussion that would address my research questions. For the sake of broad categorisation and to minimize confusion I ruled out titles such as *Stitches* (Small, 2009), or *Mom's Cancer* (Fies, 2006) as dealing primarily with physical conditions, even though both engage with aspects of mental illness by proxy. Mental health, as a ubiquitous dimension of human existence, is an either explicit or implicit consideration in *all* comics narratives. However, the titles I have selected either directly, contextually, or paratextually indicate experience of mental illness to be a primary focus of the comic.

(iii) English language.

The comics should be legible to all participants. Participant competence in English language also falls under this criterion, which, though not specifically designed into the call for participants, did not prove to be a problem.

(iv) Conform to my working definition of comics (including comics expressly or commercially identified as graphic novels).

This criterion rules out threshold titles such as *I Had a Black Dog* (Johnstone, 2007), which shares a family resemblance to comics, but would be more readily characterised as a picture book (For

discussion of this distinction see Nel, 2012; Horsman, 2014). Given that I am examining the impact of formal features on reader interpretation and storytelling, the formal distinction between how picture books and comics tell stories is a variable that falls outside of the remit of my research questions.

(v) Single volume, long-form comics.

This ruled out webcomics, other serials and small press publications that deal with issues relating to mental health. This is complicated somewhat given that serialised webcomic publication is a common precursor to publication of the same series as a cohesive, single volume long form narrative. Because of this, I considered titles such as *Marbles* (Forney, 2012), *Mother Come Home* (Hornschemeier, 2009) and *Psychiatric Tales* (Cunningham, 2010) as these were all published as single volume comics after having previously been serialised in some form.

Taking all of the above into account, the five texts selected for people to read were: *Lighter than My Shadow* (Green, 2013), *Marbles* (Forney, 2012), *The Nao of Brown* (2012), *Tangles* (2011) and *Swallow Me Whole* (Powell, 2008). In addition to the practical considerations outlined above, my selection was inevitably biased in favour of titles that I had enjoyed reading or in which I had found a compelling description of mental illness. Rather than control against this possibility, I felt that allowing my own preferences to be part of the selection process would help to limit inclusion of titles that might be unpleasant, hateful or otherwise harmful. Each of the selected books contained some aspect of experiencing mental illness that resonated with my own experiences including suicidal ideation and eating disorder (*Lighter than My Shadow*); cycling endlessly through combinations and dosages of medications and the absolute inertia of severe depression (*Marbles*); intrusive thoughts and obsessive self-talk (*Nao of Brown*); losing a loved one to Alzheimer's (*Tangles*) and dissociation, psychosis and altered consciousness (*Swallow Me Whole*).

3.3.2 Reading group formation and participant recruitment

Whereas other studies have worked with pre-existing reading groups, at the time of my research I was unable to find any such groups meeting locally to discuss comics. Because of this, the discussion data are more accurately defined as emerging from unstructured focus group discussions rather than a reading group *per se*, which in previous studies tends to refer to a pre-existing community of practice (Peplow, 2011; Peplow et al. 2015; Swann and Allington, 2009; Whiteley, 2011, 2014). Though different in this sense, the reading group that I set up for this research project retains the key characteristics of permitting a natural conversational dynamic (Krueger 1994; Litosseliti 2003: 1–5).

Rather than attempting to get an existing literary reading group to read comics, I was initially more intent on working with people with interest in or experience of either mental illness or of reading comics. I sought to set up two groups: one consisting of mental health advocates, experts and carers,

and one consisting of comics readers and experts. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the potential complications and ethical concerns of setting up and running such groups, I consulted with the Research and Development and Patient and Public Involvement departments at Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust. As a result of this consultation, I concluded that owing to the scope of the research project, it would be more efficient to run a single, open group. I advertised this through Sheffield University and local comics and mental health networks (including student societies, online forums and mailing lists) with the expectation that the advertised content would attract participants interested in either comics, mental health, or both. All participants who showed interest within a two-week period of advertisement were invited to participate.

Once they had confirmed interest in reading and discussing comics about mental illness, potential participants were provided with consent forms and separate questionnaires designed to establish each participant's self-reported awareness of mental health issues and ability to read comics. The principal purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the spread in interests, potential motivations and comics reading expertise among participants. Six participants confirmed interest. This recruitment method produced a reasonable spread of interests among participants and a balance of expert and inexpert comics readers.

3.3.3 Ethics

Discussion with mental health professionals led to the prioritisation of a number of ethical considerations over the naturalness of the conditions of data collection. Given the potentially upsetting nature of the content being read and discussed, it was advised that I attend the sessions with a view to assisting participants should they become distressed. Additionally, it was made clear in initial emails and consent forms that participation was always conditional on participants' desire to attend. Because the content of the books had the potential to prompt personally revealing and sensitive conversations, participants were advised and agreed through consent forms that the content of these discussions would remain confidential where practicable. I have avoided publishing material specific enough to provide obvious means of participant identification, including any identifying details disclosed in the discussions.

My research practice has been informed throughout by the consideration of potential repercussions resulting from the autobiographical nature of the content of both the reader discussions and the comics. I have tried, where practicable, to be honest about my own experiences, responses, and feelings in relation to both the comics and the discussion in my data collection and analysis. I felt that this would be necessary given the subjective nature of experiencing, not experiencing, or not knowingly experiencing mental illnesses and the impact this has on my own critical and analytic engagement with them (see section 1.2).

Though the aim of including reader discussion in my research is not generalisation of findings about the nature of reading comics or the discussion of reading, it is worth explicating the demographic limitations of the reading group data. The following restrictions were actively built into the design of the research and the recruitment processes: being able to read, being able access university buildings (to attend sessions) and having access to electronic media (how most became aware and applied). Because the participants who applied and agreed to participate were all from a university background, there were also some certain circumstantial limitations on the group demography—specifically, age (all participants were aged between 18-30 at the time) and level of education (all had experience of higher education).

Given the scope of this research project and that my intention is to use the reader discussion as a prompt for and constraint on my own analysis, convenience of sampling was a more pressing consideration than breadth of representation. Given the small number of participants, I did not gather demographic data. However, my interpretation and application of the discussion data should be understood with the caveat that the participants represent quite a narrow demographic and any future research aiming to produce more generalisable results would require a broader and more open sampling process.

My research design was reviewed and approved through the University of Sheffield's ethics approval system.

3.3.4 Data collection and protection

Sessions were an hour long and had a fixed start and end time. They took place on a fortnightly basis and comics were posted to participants who were unable to attend sessions. The sessions were recorded on a portable electronic recording device. Recordings started before participants arrived and ended five minutes before the scheduled end time. Because I attended the sessions, I was able to be responsible for starting, stopping and transferring recordings. Recordings were stored in MP3 format on secured university network servers.

Though crosstalk resulted in some incomprehensible audio, a single device was preferable to separate devices, microphones or audio streams for each participant as these would have been more conspicuous and would have had more potential to disrupt participants' attention and disrupt the natural flow of conversation. Similarly, I opted against video recordings as it would have necessitated training video recording devices on all participants, which would either have interfered with interpersonal eye-line (e.g., laptops, micro-cameras) or would have created a peculiar environment for discussion. Again, in a larger, more focused study, additional time could go into naturalising such a setup to capture more multimodal data. However, gestural response and gaze were not important enough to my analytic needs to encourage me to extend the data collection in this manner. In all, audio recording provided an efficient and relatively non-intrusive means of

documenting discussion in enough detail for me to be able to analyse how participants were presenting their understanding of the comics.

3.3.5 Transcription

I transcribed the discussions according to the requirements of my analysis. For the sake of noting potential hesitation, confusion or on-the-fly interpretation, I marked pauses of more than 0.5 seconds. Similarly, emphasis, either through amplitude, pitch or duration of sounds, is marked when it has apparent semantic function and deviates from standard prosody. Changes in inflection, tone or accent are noted where relevant to performance of past selves or others in discussion. Where such performative dimensions gradually phase out, an approximate endpoint is indicated. Turns, overlaps, disfluencies and mistakes are included as potentially meaningful to conversation and all participants are anonymised in the transcripts as participants **A**–**F**. As with the audio files, transcripts were stored on password protected university network servers. A transcription key denoting the conventions used to indicate these features is provided on page 12 of this thesis.

3.3.6 Analysis and synthesis

In seeking to answer the question of how comics depict mental illness, I take reader discussion of features or passages of text as a starting point for my own analysis of my chosen comics. I borrow principles from cognitive grammar to explore the extent to which extant concepts can be adapted to multimodal analysis of comics.

Naturalistic approaches to researching reading provide rich accounts of specific experiences. What is gained in breadth, specificity, naturalness and qualitative detail is traded off against the impossibility of making conclusive claims about the nature of reading, though this does not rule out the potential for hypothesis generation for future experimental testing. Framing introspective analysis with a cognitive approach to discourse applies psychologically realistic constraints to claims or observations made within a broadly qualitative methodology.

For each of the five comics selected for discussion I followed the same analytic procedure. I began by reading each comic prior to the group discussion so that my initial readings would not be influenced by group discussion. My aim was for these initial readings to be as natural as possible. To this end, I took no notes and read the comics at times I normally set aside for non-academic reading.

Having recorded and transcribed the discussions, I read through the transcriptions flagging recurring or peculiar themes and evaluative discussion. After analysing the transcripts, the following recurring types of talk became apparent in each discussion to varying degrees: content retelling, retelling of

reading experience, content evaluation, emotional response, performance, formal commentary, intertextual reference, and experiential reference.

Following Peplow et al. (2015: 22–3), I was cautious about making hard distinctions between on- and off-book topics (e.g., O'Halloran, 2011). This sort of categorisation risks omitting aspects of reading experiences that, though not directly related to the comics, are informative of the context within which the participants may have experienced the books. These elements of discussion are important to how people read, understand and discuss the comics. The topics groups bond over at the start and end of sessions or during extensive digressions have the potential to be as revealing of their reading experiences as the book-focused discussion itself (Peplow et al., 2015: 22). Therefore, while apparently divergent topics were less likely to be taken into consideration in my final analysis than topics relating to specific passages of text, they were not automatically dismissed.

For the purposes of my close reading and analysis of the comics, I selected the three comics and discussions that produced the most engagement among participants. Engagement was judged according to evaluative comments, fluency of conversation and levels of participation. Within these, I highlighted extended or repeated discussion covering themes specific to each comic and in particular, sections of discussion within these themes that identify specific features or passages within the comic. Through this, I was able to focus on passages and features made prominent in the group discussion rather than those I might otherwise have identified myself.

While engaging with real readers contributes more natural perspectives to my overall analysis, it is important to acknowledge that I too am a real reader, and my introspective analysis is a merely a form of reading that takes place in a particular context and with particular aims and practices. Specifically, I read these comics as someone with extensive personal experience of living with mental illness as a patient, friend, family member, professional and researcher. I also read these comics as someone with a lifetime of comics reading experience and with a professional interest in reading inflected by personal and educational experiences of reading, discussing and analysing comics. Because I, as a researcher, am not capable of socially or culturally quarantining myself from such stances, the most rigorous means of researching my own reading experience is, where possible, to both allow and account for these dimensions of my subjectivity, rather than to pretend away their influence on everything I do. These considerations are an inevitable part of and a limitation on the overall analysis. In summary, I intend to use reading group data to address issues relating to context of reading, as well as providing a range of interpretations and understandings to frame my intuitive analysis. In turn, I will use intuitive CG analysis, constrained by these data and my interpretation of them, as a means of theorising how comics storytelling functions.

4 Lighter than My Shadow: Discourse, enactors, and abstraction

We exist in a culture with a generalised hatred of fat people, fatness, and related health conditions or disabilities. There is a prevalent understanding that fatness and weight-gain are not only undesirable conditions, but also that they are morally objectionable and the absolute responsibility of an individual (Stoll, 2019). Rather than fatness being a condition of humanity that is accepted and accommodated, it is vilified, scrutinised, controlled, taxed and leant on in political and healthcare settings—often in markedly gendered ways (Felkins, 2019; Gottlieb, 2014)—as a convenient explanation for a variety of social and health problems for which we otherwise lack comprehensive explanation and understanding. Fatphobia—the institutions, discourses and systems of oppression that limit the lived experience and well-being of fat people—has been encoded into public discourse for the duration of my life, from the venal nutritional surveillance of Weight Watchers and the calorie counting traffic light infographics on certain types of food, to public health messaging and policy. A direct consequence of this that I have observed in conversations with friends, family members, colleagues and acquaintances, is a pervasive anxiety about weight gain and body image. In this way, there are strong overlaps between the problems of treating mental illness and of allowing fat people to exist without burdening them with the emotional and physical harm that are direct consequences of fatphobia.

I do not suffer the bigotries and cruelties directed at fat people. However, as with other aspects of bigotry that were native to the culture I grew up in, I have been culpable of fatphobia and guilty of not taking the suffering and oppression of fat people seriously. This has only changed through carefully listening to the experiences of fat friends and reading accounts of injustice, intolerance and dehumanisation. To a far lesser extent, as I have aged, struggled to exercise as a result of chronic injuries and leant on binge eating as a chaotic form of emotional regulation, the casual, unquestioned fatphobia of my youth and early adulthood has started to have a direct impact on my own body-image and self-esteem. As far as I am capable of judging such things, I understand my own disordered eating as a consequence either of stress, low mood, or periods of chronic fatigue. Within this, I experience a dissonance between a sense of rewarding myself with foods that were considered treats or luxuries in my childhood, and a sense of shame either at the excessive quantities I will sometimes eat without really being aware of doing so, or at the fact that I have eaten 'unhealthy' foods at all. I am fortunate that, in the short-to-medium term, my experiences of disordered eating are relatively manageable and do not pose a direct threat to my life. Many other people are not so fortunate. The difference between **eating disorders** (EDs) and disordered eating is a matter of degree of severity in terms of frequency and/or duration of episodes and levels of physical and emotional harm (Gottlieb, 2014). While it would be overreaching to claim that EDs and disordered eating are solely caused by the cultural obsession with excising fat people from humanity described above, EDs are nonetheless very much exacerbated by these basic conditions.

Lighter than My Shadow (*LTMS*) is an autobiography by Katie Green, described as 'a graphic memoir of eating disorders, abuse & recovery' (Green, 2013) that deals with the extreme life-threatening consequences of both severe EDs and **post-traumatic stress** disorder (PTSD). Contemporary graphic memoir has antecedence in the confessional underground 'comix' of the 1960s and 1970s (see section 1.4.1). Like these predecessors, the relative independence and free rein afforded to authors permits greater engagement with taboo, marginal and personal subject matter. Besides 'graphic memoir' (Green, 2013), life writing in long-form comics has been defined as 'autographics' (Whitlock, 2006), 'autographic memoir' (Watson, 2008; Whitlock and Poletti, 2008), 'autography' (Gardner, 2008), 'graphic life writing' (Herman, 2011), and 'graphic novel memoir' (Chaney, 2011a; see Peñalba, 2015: 156-7). The thread that unifies these definitions is the non-fictional nature of the storytelling, which is a central consideration in reading, evaluating, and talking about such texts (El Refaie, 2012; see also, section 4.2). The book was written and drawn over twelve years and tells the story of Green's experience of disordered eating, abuse, suicidal ideation and PTSD.

The reader discussion for this book took place over 45 minutes in a university teaching room. **B** had not finished reading the book and **F** was unable to attend. Beyond introducing the participants and reiterating the basic nature of the research, the discussion was unguided, though as previously discussed, I opted to attend the session on the advice of mental health professionals to offer support in case of any issues arising from the discussion. In the discussion, Green's extensive use of abstract depictions of aspects of her experience was picked up on as the 'most interesting' aspect of her storytelling. For the opening fifteen minutes, the group focuses on this topic, and in particular, on the recurring figure referred to by readers as 'squiggle', 'scribble', 'shadow', 'mist', 'cloud', or 'thing'. Taking my lead from the reader discussion, my focus in this chapter will be on this use of abstract depiction and how it works in combination with other depictive and narrative functions to bring about the types of understandings, recollections and reconstructions expressed by the readers in their discussion.

My analysis will focus on features and instances picked out by readers in discussion, or examples that engage with points they raise. These will be presented in the order in which they appear in the narrative to allow for discussion of how the depiction and narration develop throughout the comic. I will start by providing a plot summary to help ground the subsequent analysis.

4.1 Plot overview

The first section of the comic narrates Katie's early childhood, covering problems with eating that she experienced both at home and at school. Childhood fears and problems are explored, as are her family and friends' attitudes to food, physique and aging. More positive aspects of her childhood are acknowledged but dealt with in less detail.

The next section covers puberty, starting secondary school, and being bullied. The bullying leads to Katie's first binge-eating incident, as she tries to eat to suppress her negative feelings. This section is also marked by consistent references to awkwardness, embarrassment and reluctance in relation to growing up. This is told in tandem with various other characters' discussions of food, physique and sexuality, which affect Katie's self-esteem and body-image. Katie, embarrassed at the notion of having a boyfriend, withdraws from this aspect of socialising and buries herself in schoolwork.

The next section shows Katie starting to obsess about fitting in with her peers, her appearance in relation to others, and in particular, her body image. She vows to take control of her eating and gives up junk food and eating between meals for Lent. This garners praise from friends and family both on account of her weight loss and her discipline.

By Easter, when Katie tries eating junk food again, she finds the experience is accompanied by an unpleasant and overwhelming feeling of guilt. After eating a chocolate with her family, Katie tries to make herself sick, but is unsuccessful, so tries to work off the calories she's eaten by walking. She vows only to eat healthily and starts to obsess about nutrition and exercise. At this point, around her friends and at school, she has also started to 'zone out' and sometimes fails to follow conversations or activities.

Katie's obsession with food and feelings of disgust in relation to her own body lead her parents to take her to see a GP. She doesn't respond well to this visit and the awareness of her family seems to make her disordered eating and general anxieties even worse. This leads to conflict and poor communication with her family, who are also distressed by her condition. Katie then passes out at school. She is hospitalised, which leads to a formal diagnosis of anorexia. This is followed by treatments including meal plans, diaries and talking therapy, all of which Katie struggles with and is resistant to because of her continued feelings of disgust. At this point, Katie uses drawing as a way of communicating to her parents how she is feeling (figure 4.1). Therapy proves difficult, as Katie is more focused on giving 'the right answers' (Green, 2013: 176). Katie focuses her obsessive tendencies on following her meal plan, which leads to an outburst when she feels she's stepped outside of it, resulting in her throwing herself down a flight of stairs.

Katie starts to gain weight, seen by others as a basic sign of recovery, but is still plagued by feelings of disgust at her own body. Having reached a healthy weight, Katie returns to school to complete her exams. Though she achieves good grades, she is still shown to be in distress, and the section concludes with an apparent relapse, as she throws her lunch away. This follows onto the next chapter in which Katie goes with her father to see Jake, an alternative therapist. This seems to help Katie grow in confidence and independence, whilst also alleviating her problems with eating. Her parents are sceptical, which leads to a series of fallings out with her family, and in particular, her mother.

Despite a relapse, Katie stops seeing her therapist just before leaving for university and disregards his referral to another doctor. Meanwhile, she continues to see the alternative therapist, Jake.

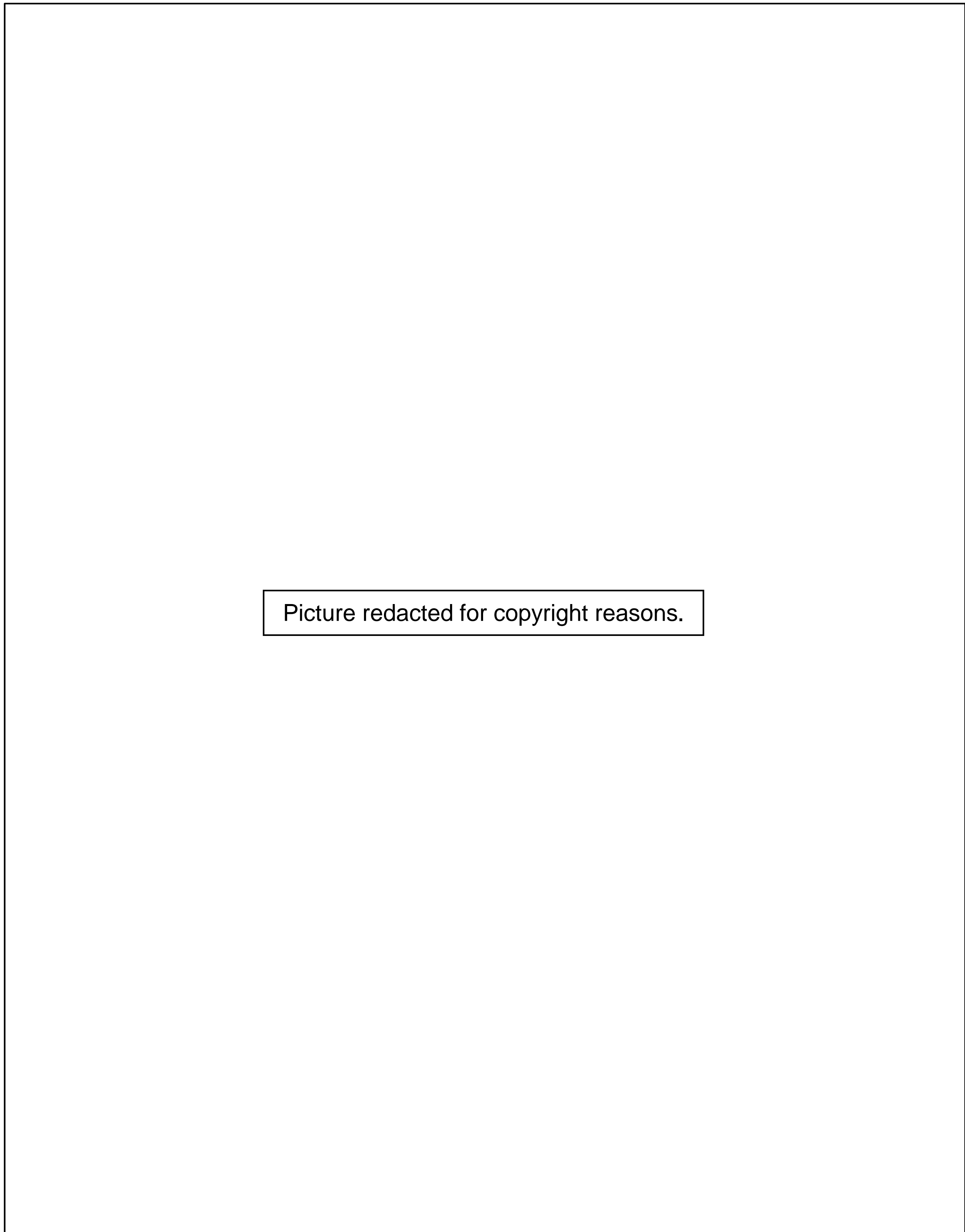


Figure 4.1: Katie uses drawing to communicate with her parents (Green, 2013: 161)

Figure 4.2: Katie represses her trauma (Green, 2013: 315)

At university, she presents herself as recovered, but alongside excessive work and problems with her boyfriend, her problems start to recur. Disagreements about Jake's trustworthiness cause Katie to fall out with her parents and a friend from home. Jake advises Katie to split up with her boyfriend, which, against her better judgement, she does.

In the next chapter, Katie attends a festival with Jake's family. She is encouraged to take magic mushrooms. While she is hallucinating, Jake sexually assaults her. Katie manages to stop him and runs away in distress, questioning everything that she had believed about Jake. She actively represses the negative emotions and trains of thought that arise from this (figure 4.2).

In the following chapter, back at university, Katie starts binge-eating and restricting her calorie intake again. After fainting in a yoga class and being caught eating from the bin by her flatmate, Katie goes to see another GP who is dismissive of her emotional and psychological problems based on her apparent physical well-being. Following this, Katie is struck by the apparently repressed memory that Jake had repeatedly sexually assaulted her when he was supposed to be healing her. This exacerbates Katie's problem with binge eating, while her distress and disgust mount to such a point that she almost commits suicide (fig. 4.3).

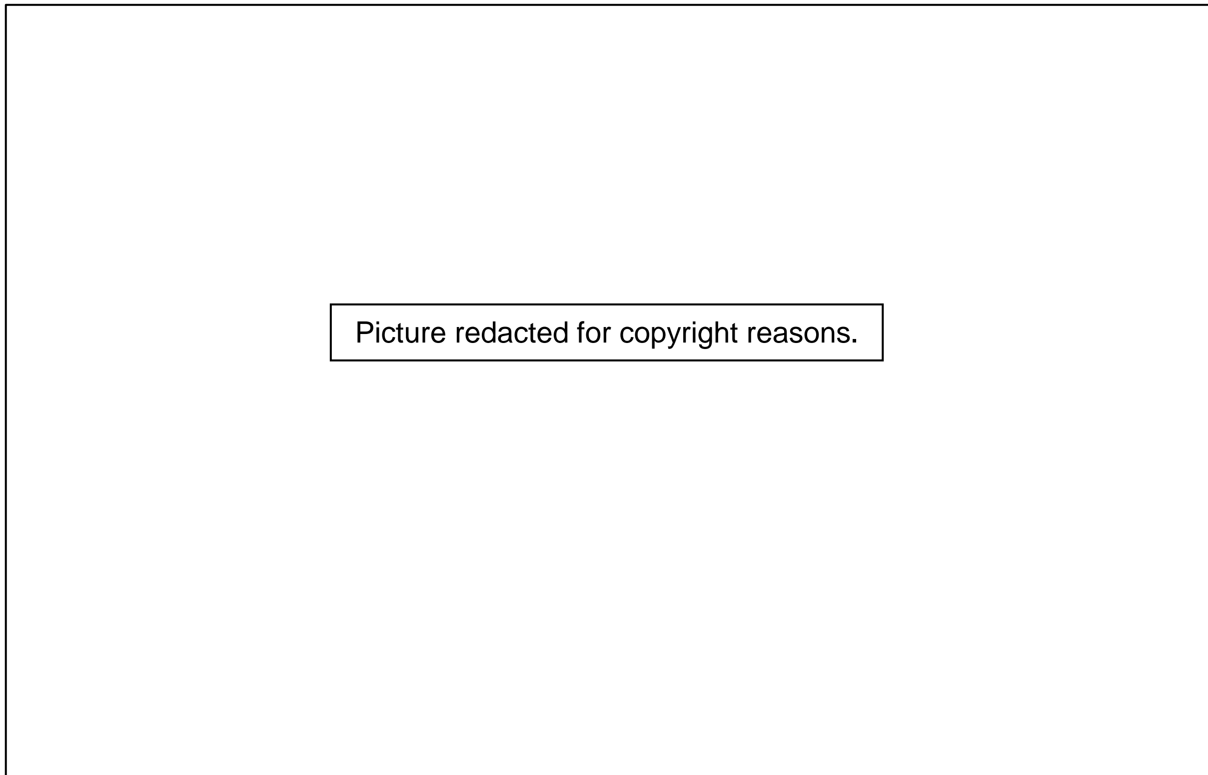
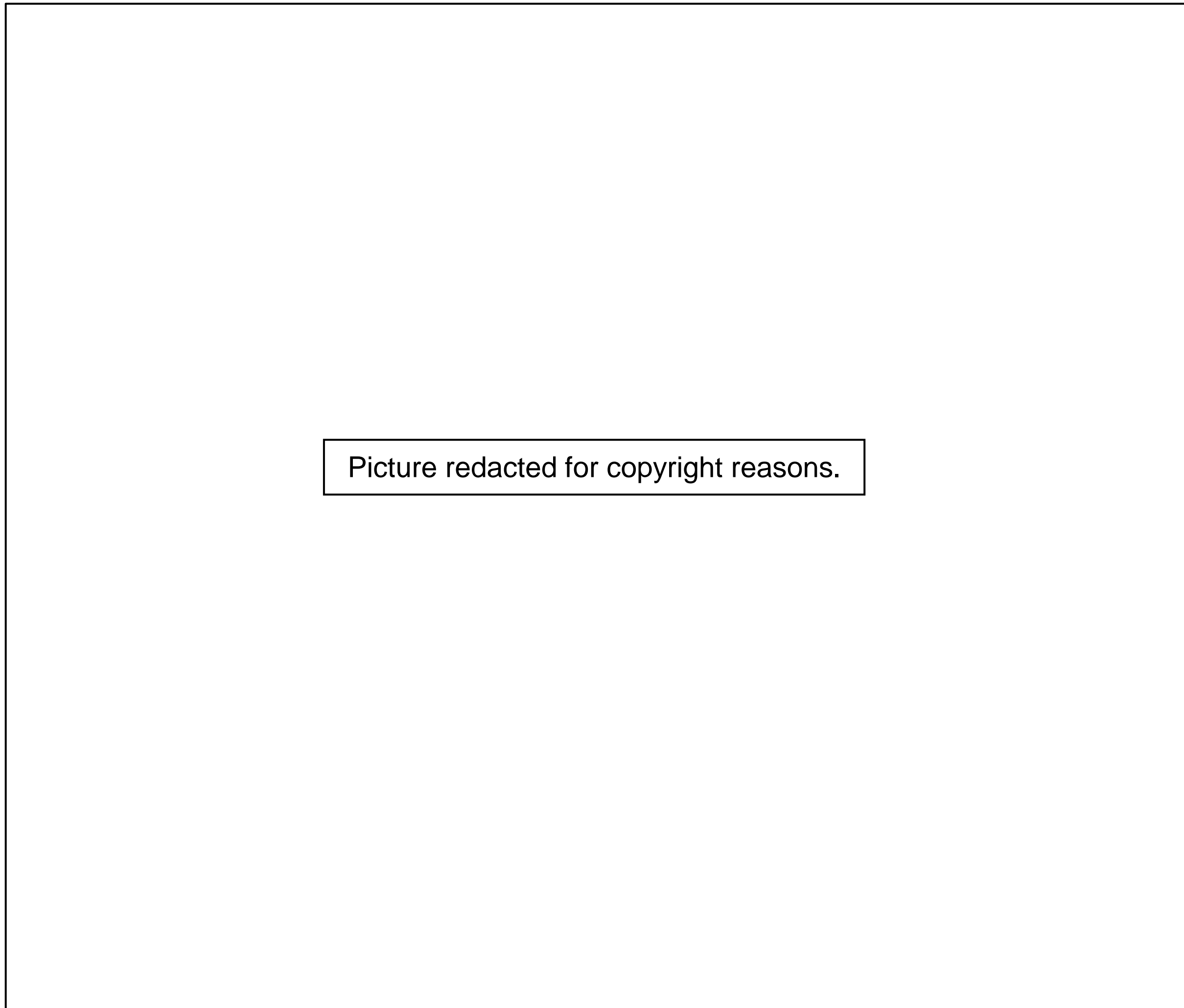


Figure 4.3: Katie contemplates suicide (Green, 2013: 380–1)

In the concluding section, Katie continues to have problems with binge eating and flashbacks but starts to see a psychotherapist from whom she gradually learns techniques for coping with relapses and for allowing herself to feel better. She successfully completes university and takes up a course at an art college. While still struggling with cycles of bingeing and flashbacks, drawing is shown to be another way in which she can control and express her psychological distress. The story ultimately concludes with Katie having reconciled with her family (fig. 4.4) and with her younger self, though she acknowledges that recovery is not something that she takes for granted.



Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 4.4: Katie reconciled with her family, enjoying some cake (Green, 2013: 495)

4.2 Real stories, real people, fictional responses

In the discussion of *LTMS*, the autobiographical nature of the events is described as influencing the way readers engaged with the text:

D: when . it kind of they did the big reveal that he'd been abusing her all along

C: mm

D: um . I was properly horrified for her

E: yeah

D cause like . the fact that it is … autobiographical

C: yeah

D: and … but yeah like you said the fact that she's managed to write about that and then come out the other side of it …

A: mm

D: you would be very proud of her

The autobiographical nature of the story is cited here in relation to the moment in the narrative where it becomes apparent that Katie's therapist has repeatedly sexually assaulted her (Green, 2013: 362-9). The implication of autobiography in this response suggests that the relative reality of the events being narrated intensifies the feeling of horror described by **D**. The emotional engagement with Katie as a text-world *enactor* is also explored here through a hypothetical projection of a text-world where the conditions of the narrative and existence of the book ('the fact that she's managed to write about that and then come out the other side of it') are combined with an imagined scenario in which **D** projects a hypothetical enactor of any of the readers. As mentioned in section 2.2.3, the concept of an enactor is used in Text World Theory to differentiate between instantiations of an individual across different text-worlds. Here **D** posits a hypothetical enactor of themself and suggests how they would feel, presumably if they were close to Green in real life ('you would be very proud of her'). This reader-generated text-world points to a means of emotional engagement with imagined enactors of Katie Green both as author and character. This takes place through imagined intimacy and interaction with Green that allows for a collapsing of the discourse-world boundaries as well as the categorical boundaries between Katie as character and Green as author. The perceived truthfulness of the book causes an imagined relationship between reader and character-enactor whereby an enactor of the reader is conceptualised as a way of relating to the author in the discourse-world. Managing and upholding this distinction was something that Green (Freeman, 2013) cited as being problematic in the writing and drawing process, showing similar potential issues of boundary blurring for both author and readers in the case of autobiography.

4.2.1 Authenticity

The sense of the relative authority of authentic personal experience and the importance of honesty in relation to this subject matter highlighted by Green above, are also criteria against which readers evaluated the book. As predicted in El Refaie's (2012: 137–146) and Beaty's (2008) descriptions of autobiographical comics, authenticity and honesty were raised as important evaluative criteria. Here, the group discuss the importance of authenticity in relation to their own experiences:

E: I think I like the fact that it came from ... from just her I suppose

A: yeah … although I think when I was growing up there was always this sense of like . oh well . one you'll grow out of it because you're like a teenager … or two that . most of what people are trained to deal with was . oh you've been bullied

D: yeah

A: you've had this happen to you and there wasn't really anything for someone to give you an example of well sometimes it just [happens]

C: [mm]

A: and that's also okay

D: not delegitimised [because … haven't had the right sort of]

A: [yeah … because you haven't kind of] . people are always trying to pinpoint it to a moment

B: [yeah]

D: [mm]

A: [because there is no moment] sometimes there is no moment … you just wake up one day . and there it is …

D: it doesn't have to be triggered

A: and it's nice to see that

Following a discussion of the fact that Green does not depict her childhood as traumatic, **E**, **A** and **D** praise how Green avoids pathologising her childhood. This is seen as allowing for the development of mental illness without obvious roots in childhood, which seems to resonate with the personal understandings of mental health problems communicated by **E**, **A** and **D**. For **A** in particular, it seems that this resonates with their own experience of becoming aware of and confronting mental illness. The generic past-tense negation ('there wasn't really anything') prompts a negative text-world with the counterfactual conceptualisation 'there was something', which resonates with **A**'s assertion of experiential validation.

4.2.3 Personal experience, performance and generalisation

Aside from this thematic focus, several prominent features of the discussion are also apparent in the above example: drawing on personal experience as a way of evaluating the text, building on the reading experience and negotiating a shared understanding of the text ('when I was growing up', framed in past tense, first person pronouns); use of generic statements, nouns, pronouns and adjuncts to invite others to share opinions based on these personal experiences ('you', 'people are always', generally in present tense, but can be embedded in past-tense/personal experience); performance of unspecified straw-person-like enactor roles and dialogue in support of argumentation ('oh well', 'oh you've been bullied', sometimes signalled by a change in tone of voice); and collaborative **back-channelling** (verbal and non-verbal indications of engagement or other discursive prompts) and interruptions.

The shift between personal experience and generic description in the extract above seems to be precipitated by **D**'s interjection:

A: and that's also okay

D: not delegitimised [because … haven't had the right sort of]

A: [yeah … because you haven't kind of] . people are always trying to pinpoint it to a moment

A picks up on **D**'s overlap and follows their shift from the generic past text-world ('there wasn't really anything') into a generic present text-world ('people are always…'), as the present tense 'and that's also okay' is unattributed dialogue that is grounded in the past-experiential text-world introduced at 'when I was growing up'. This reflects the dialogic nature of interpretation observed by Peplow and Whiteley (2021; see also, Peplow et al., 2015: 98–99; Whiteley, 2010; 2011), whereby opinions arising from group discussion are co-constructed and developed on-the-fly. In this instance, the collaboration is illustrated by the conversational overlap, which results in close alignment of **A** and **D**'s phrasing ('because … haven't had the right sort of' and 'because you haven't kind of').

It is also worth noting that the agreement and co-construction in this part of the conversation perhaps lead to the significance of Green's happy childhood being overstated. There are examples of bullying in the narrative that are presented as contributors to the development of Katie's eating disorder (Green, 2013: 16-7, 48-9, 51-3, 70-1), which runs counter to the point that **A** makes about problems in their own experience of mental illness—in particular, its evaluation and diagnosis. However, rather than showing how the reading group discussion leads people to misread, this seems indicative of how the nature of the discourse situation allows readers the freedom to bring thoughts, feelings and evaluations relevant to their experience, even if they are not directly prompted or entirely supported by the narrative.

4.2.4 Honesty

The readers also identify honesty as a criterion against which the book should be evaluated. In the reader discussion, honesty is framed through negation of a hypothetical, less honest narrative when **A** and **D** are discussing the conclusion of the book:

A: she doesn't end it with like and now I'm fine and everything's perfect

D: <laughter>

A: it's that kind of quite brave I think admittance of . sometimes it's gonna be like that but most of the time … it's gonna be ok now.

This example is indicative of **A**'s expectations of recovery narratives. A misleadingly positive approach is satirised here by 'enacting' a counter-factual straw-person to reinforce support of Green's storytelling method, (Peplow, 2016, Whiteley, 2011: 35; Holt, 2007). Again, reader disposition influences the extent to which this criterion is relevant (Stockwell, 2009: 43–53) and it is notable at this stage in the discussion that turns are predominantly being taken by **A** and **D**, as they seem to express more personal identification with the narrative and as a result are given, bid for, and take the floor more than others.

The criterion of honesty is intertwined with expectations relating to the fact that the events depicted in the novel actually took place and that the enactors depicted are likely to have discourse-world counterparts who may read the story, which is alluded to in the edition notice: 'This is a work of non-fiction. Except where permission has been given, all names have been changed' (Green, 2013). Once again, honesty is related to bravery through consideration of possible real-world consequences, which **A** explores again by hypothesising if they would be able to do the same:

A: it's very brave … ['cause]

C: [yeah]

A: some of the things that she reveals in it

C: yeah

A: you know it's her name it's her so who the people [in it]

B: [yeah]

A: will know if they were to ever see her which … is not quite relevant to the text but but it … it did strike me as . kind of something that I don't know if I'd be brave enough to do

C: [mm]

A: [and then] it made me feel … I don't know more for her

C: mmm

A: a bit like a **yeah . you go** sort of thing

E: an unusual sort of pride

Rather than being a matter of textual interpretation, which is implicitly valued over personal reading experience here, **A** couches their observation as 'not relevant to the text', which flags this comment as contextual. By extrapolating from the content and apparent conditions of publication, **A** hypothesises how they might cope in a similar situation. This differential results in an increased

sense of pride which **A** expresses by performing an enactor of themself reacting to the book, as indicated by their shift in tone, the 'like' quotative, and the second person address to a fictive, distal enactor of Green that **A** extrapolates on the basis of the enactors encountered in the comic. This shows how enactors of Green generated by readers' responses are drawn on to evaluate Green as a character, as an author and as a person who has experienced the events depicted by the comic. Though these different enactors are discursively distinguishable in the comic, they are conceptually integrated in the discussion. The way the readers talk about and respond to the different enactors of Green does not involve specification of these distinct text-world enactors. This shows how discussion of Green involves an ongoing reification of different enactors into a shared, integrated conceptualisation.

E's mention of pride here occurs before the example mentioned above, which on this basis could be seen as a reiteration of **E**'s initial evaluation in these terms. As in the previous examples, this sense of pride is tied to the relative truthfulness of the account, which though only paratextually asserted, is assumed by the readers to be the case.

4.2.5 Formal expectations

Besides personal experience and self-implication, another aspect of reader disposition that emerged from the general discussion was their expectations of comics and presuppositions based on the style of the comic, which **A** describes here as 'nicely but simply drawn':

A: the way that she does that bit … it does make you feel sick

D: yeah I properly [felt ill]

A: [the way that] … er … the way that the 'cause it's quite a simplistic artform

D: yeah

A: erm … which . you know a lot of things that deal with . certain mental health issues they have that really … confusing kind of … not ~*indist*~ that's the wrong word but kind of . the style is quite difficult to read because . of the subject matter whereas this is very … nicely but simply drawn

C: mmhm

A: almost to the point where if you just picked the book up off the shelf and you saw the art side you might … not

D: yeah

A: think that that's what it's about so when the terrible stuff happens

C: mm

A: it's more upsetting because you can't … kind of escape what's actually happening

E: I found myself reading quicker through it though … like where I spent a lot more time … I don't know … just looking at how well the rest of it was drawn

This suggests that the readers associate particular styles with expectations of what they would consider to be appropriate content. Here, the simplistic style is seen as being at odds with 'the terrible stuff', again creating a dynamic that is described as having intensified **A**'s feeling of upset. This is accompanied by a metaphor that suggests that in retelling their reading experience, **A** is conceptualising reading these events as being akin to having been trapped, while **E**'s reflexive notes an almost unconscious increase in their reading speed ('I found myself reading quicker'). Both of these comments point to a conflict between revulsion at the events being depicted and compulsion to continue reading the narrative.

Similarly, **C**'s discussion of page 125 (fig 4.5) suggests how media expectations and conditions of production can be implicated in the reading process:

C: because it's hand drawn and because it is … a comics medium I think there's some … it lends itself really well to obvious this is a very obvious thing to say but there's some of the surrealler moments and the

B: mm

C: grotesque moments and things like things like that like … for the sake of the tape

<laughter>

C: this is about a third . [a third]

[<laughter>]

A: there's [tiny little page numbers]

D: [some of them have got] [page numbers]

C: [is there]

D: so some of them might have page numbers

C: [on some of them]

A: [teeny tiny ones on] some

C: okay well this is a section where she's walking … and slowly dissolves into just a few . squiggles and it's like you know exactly what it that means and how empathise

> with how it feels but there's no . there's no words and there's hardly any … sort of recognisable . logic to it but you sort of can empathise with what that is supposed to mean

C's comments here are indicative of their expectations of the communicative capacities of comics and of drawing and writing as distinct modes of communication. The implication in **C**'s final turn in this extract is that conceptual information is communicated *in spite* of the lack of words. At the same time, he points to the communicative efficacy of the visual mode in establishing an empathic link with the enactor of Katie ('you know exactly what it that means and how empathise with how it feels'). Taken together, these two comments point to different experiences of reading word-heavy texts and extracts such as this that are wordless.

Having introduced some of the evaluative criteria and themes which framed the reader discussion, I will use the following section to explore how the 'sort of recognisable logic' in the prominent visual metaphors of the narrative can be understood through principles of embodied experience.

4.3 *Lighter than My Shadow* as discourse event

As Harrison (2017, 2017a) demonstrates, Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Gavins and Lahey, 2016; Werth, 1999; henceforth, TWT) provides a means of scaling up cognitive grammatical analysis to include issues of context and usage at the level of discourse. TWT describes discourse as taking place in a **discourse-world**, which comprises discourse participants, a text, and context. The discourse-world configuration of *LTMS* is relatively common to reading in that it involves a split-world (Davies, 2019: 221; Gavins, 2007: 26; Werth, 1999: 54) where participants (Katie Green, the editorial team, and readers) and discourse events (drawing, writing, composition, editing, reading and so on) are spatiotemporally separated. Because participant recruitment necessitated disclosure of the mental health problems and events covered in the story, domains of knowledge related to the readers' experience of mental illness and of mental health discourse will have been primed in advance of reading and discussing the comic. This prior knowledge forms part of the context for the readers' engagement with the comic. Because of this, readers will have read *LTMS* with expectations relating to their experience and awareness of autobiography, eating disorders, and mental illness more generally.

The cover of the comic (fig. 4.6) is the first point at which readers are provided with **world-builders**. In TWT, world-builders are the discursive prompts from which discourse participants conceptualise a text-world. The main prompts on this cover are the title and author name text, and depicted entities in the image, including depictions of trees, grass, a human character, and a shadow-like mass of scribbled black lines. I will start by looking at how this image prompts initial world-building, before moving on to how the text and image interact to establish the relationship between author and character.

4.3.1 Visual world-building

Basic textual world-building employs nominals, spatial deixis and relational phrases (e.g., verbs and adverbs) to establish the physical configuration of a situation. In CG terms, this can be understood as a **reference point model** in the spatial **domain** (a domain being a sphere of knowledge), where a number of **things** (the conceptual prototype of nominals) are related to one another in an objective scene (the immediate scope of discursive focus). Thinking about textual spatial world-building in this way helps describe the parallel processes of spatial world-building in an image. In isolation, the depicted forms of the cover would be meaningless, but in combination, they reciprocally refer to one another providing a contextual grounding that allows for recognition of entities positioned in relation to one another in a way that corresponds with a viewer's relevant experience of similarly situated entities. For example, trees are more readily conceptualised in figure 4.6 because they are depicted as perpendicular to the orientation of the **vantage point** on the page (i.e., the fictive perspective from which the scene is observed), which resonates with prototypical expectations of trees.

These aspects of depiction are not immanent to marks on a page; they are established through co-referential presentation and predictive reading practices (e.g., Cohn and Kutas, 2015) grounded in real world experience both of viewing images like this (photographs and other images of grass, woodland, people; schematic, iconic images in comics) and of experiencing actual grass in the actual world. An image relies on this co-referential contextualisation to establish a coherent and meaningful conceptualisation of a situation from marks made on a page look like a tree. In relation to this, iconicity can be understood as situationally grounded pattern recognition rather than as simply being a matter of intrinsic resemblance. This is why things depicted with minimal detail (maximal schematicity) can be intelligible to viewers who can both interpret schematic images and apprehend grass. Visual world-building relies on a type of situational **grounding** (see section 2.4.2) where co-presented entities within an image ground one another within an emergent situation. In comics, inferential possibilities emerging from forms in images are shaped as discourse progresses and similar forms are depicted in evolving or distinctive situations.

4.3.2 Enactors

An **enactor** is an entity that is a discursively attenuated version of a person's existence and experience, conceptualised as a 'living, breathing, thinking entity with the same kinds of emotions and reactions as any real-world human being' (Gavins 2007: 42). In this way, simulation of a character from discursive prompts is a form of **mind-modelling** (Gavins, 2013: 69–79; Nuttall, 2014, 2015; Stockwell, 2009), where readers make inferences about the intentions, emotions and behaviours of characters in an attenuated version of social interaction.

The cover of *LTMS* introduces two enactors of Katie Green: an enactor of the author prompted by

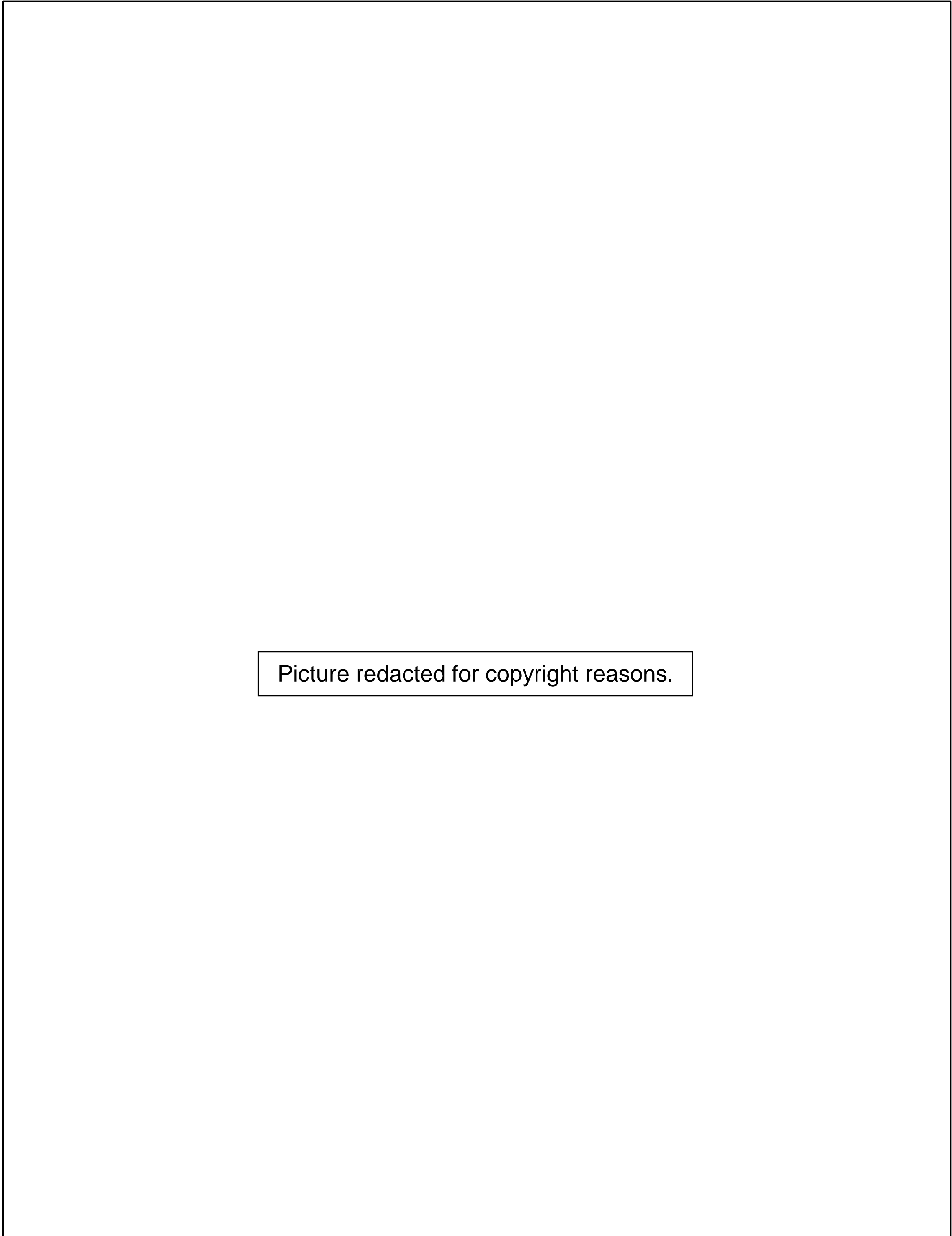


Figure 4.5: Katie dissolves (Green, 2013: 125)

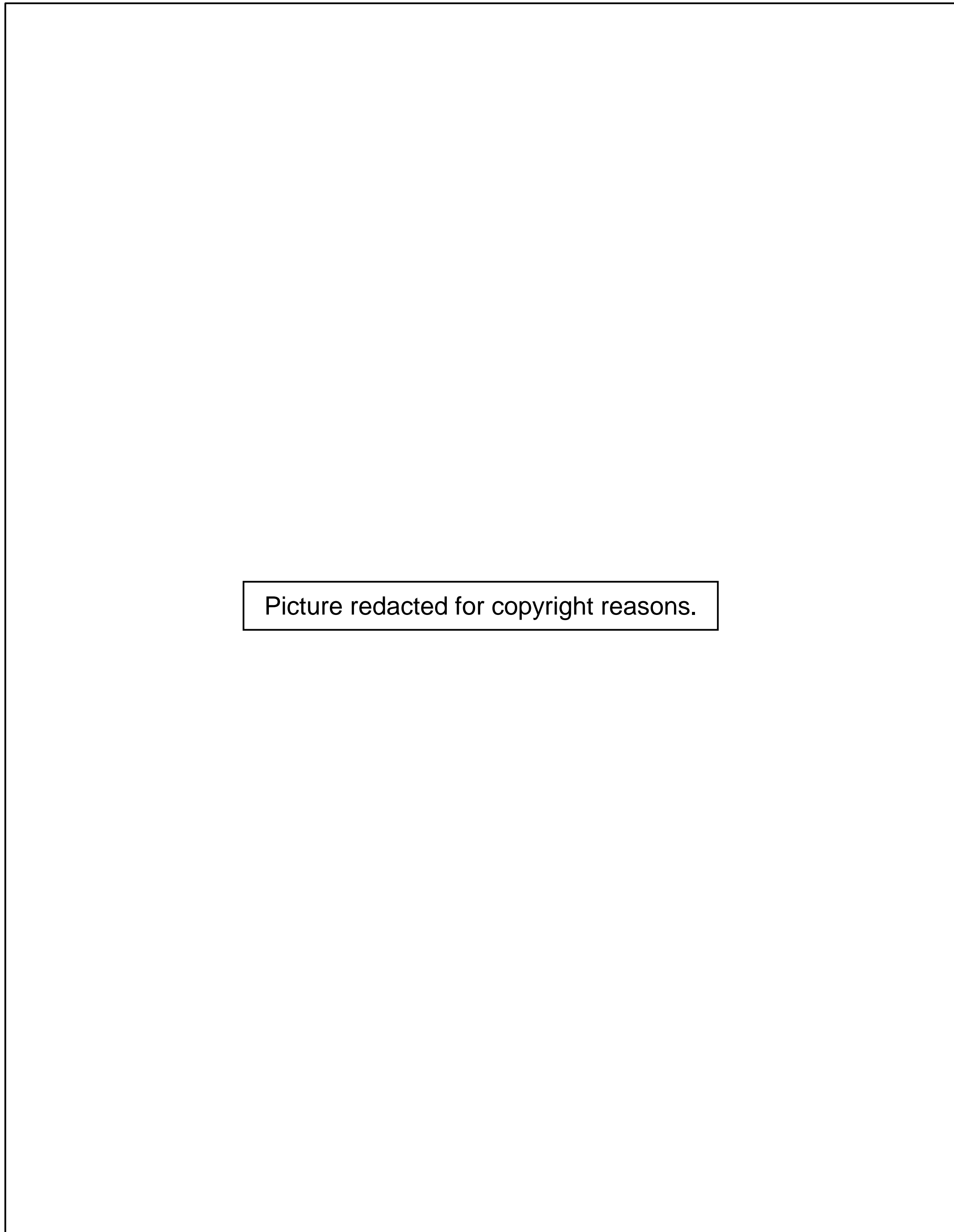


Figure 4.6: *LTMS* cover (Green, 2013)

the text 'Katie Green', and an enactor of the character prompted by the image. The former is conceptualised in a text-world that is relatively proximal to the discourse-world: I mind-model an enactor of Katie as author and artist intentionally producing this comic in an indeterminate place over an indeterminate period of time prior to me reading the comic. The matrix text-world of the story is accessed within this framing authorial text-world through the visual mode, which depicts an enactor of Katie Green as a character. Because of this, Katie's authorial influence is implicated in my mind-modelling of the depiction of Katie in a forest shadowed by scribbles. Though this mind-modelling is

limited by a lack of specification, extension and grounding with the cover being only a single (albeit complex) image, it operates as a primer for the way in which levels of discourse interact throughout the comic. This will be explored further in the following sections.

4.3.3 World-switching

The double page spreads in figures 4.7 and 4.8, taken from the beginning of the comic, elaborate the relationship between the matrix text-world and the authorial text-world introduced by the cover. The colours I have added in the marked-up figures show four different worlds prompted on these pages. The yellow world depicts an enactor of Katie standing on weighing scales against a generic background. The red world depicts an enactor of Katie in a range of poses suspended against a background of scribbled lines that extends across all four pages. The blue world depicts Katie in a hospital bed with her eyes closed, again suspended against the scribbled backdrop. The green world depicts an enactor of Katie sitting at a table with paper and pencil, looking at the scribbled backdrop. Aside from iconic resemblance across instantiations (Cohn, 2016; Groensteen, 1999) the identification of enactors of Katie between worlds is asserted by the situational continuity between yellow and green worlds, which share a similarly proportioned, textured and coloured background. While this smooth transition between worlds reflects temporal continuity, the feeling of the switches into and out of the red and blue world are drastically different. There are differences at the edges of these worlds and between the quality of the worlds depicted. The yellow, green and, to a lesser extent, blue world are rich in situational grounding. The red world is grounded only through the background scribbles and Katie's engagement with and awareness of the other worlds. The transition from yellow to green is both qualitatively and functionally smooth, while the transitions between red and other worlds are irregular, involve differing modes of depiction and interrupt the potential smoothness of reading from the yellow to the green enactor of Katie. Time passes regardless of individual experience, but experiences can severely disrupt appreciation or awareness of this.

Initially, the yellow world and red world are presented alongside one another. The yellow world is situationally grounded through the co-presentation of the as yet unnamed character (Katie) in pyjamas or leisurewear standing on scales looking either at the dial or possibly beyond it as an indication of emotional immersion. These potential ambiguities form part of the openness of this introductory image, which, on a first reading, lacks sufficient context and co-text to profile a specific process such as a physical action or emotional response within a defined timeframe. While a reader can infer processes from this image, the inferential extension of these processes is left open by its non-finite nature and by the lack of contextual grounding. There is no sequential extension of the image of Katie standing on weighing scales to determine either the scope of the conceptualised process in the temporal domain or the nature of her location and subsequent experience.

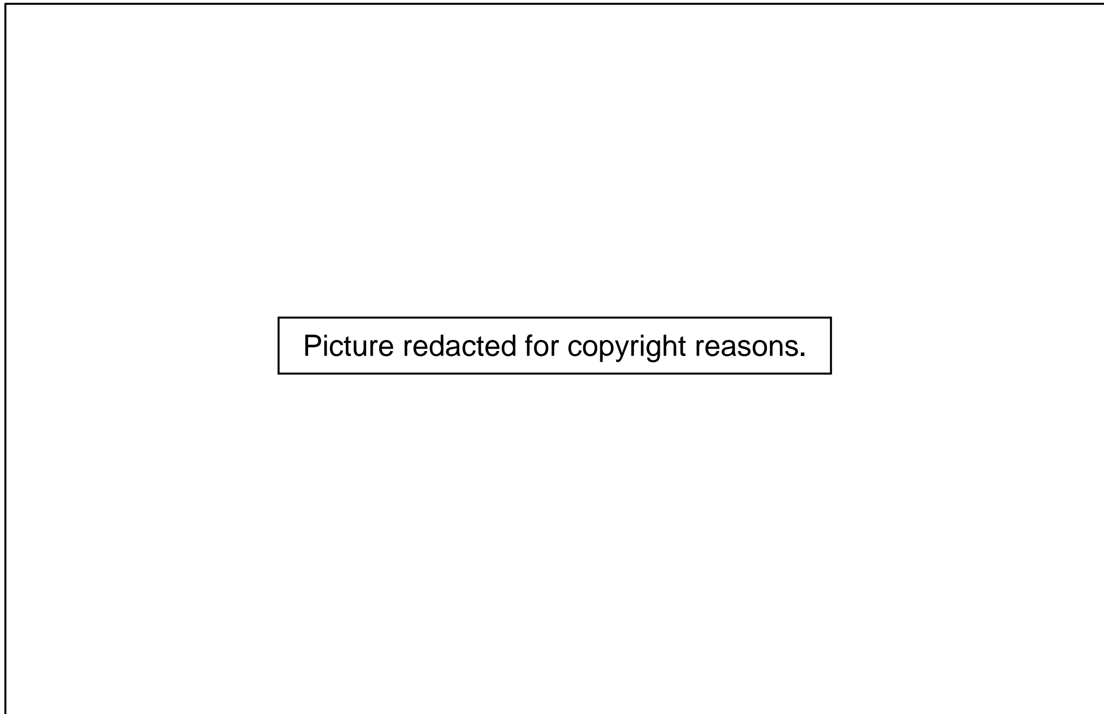


Figure 4.7: World-switches (Green, 2013: 2–3)

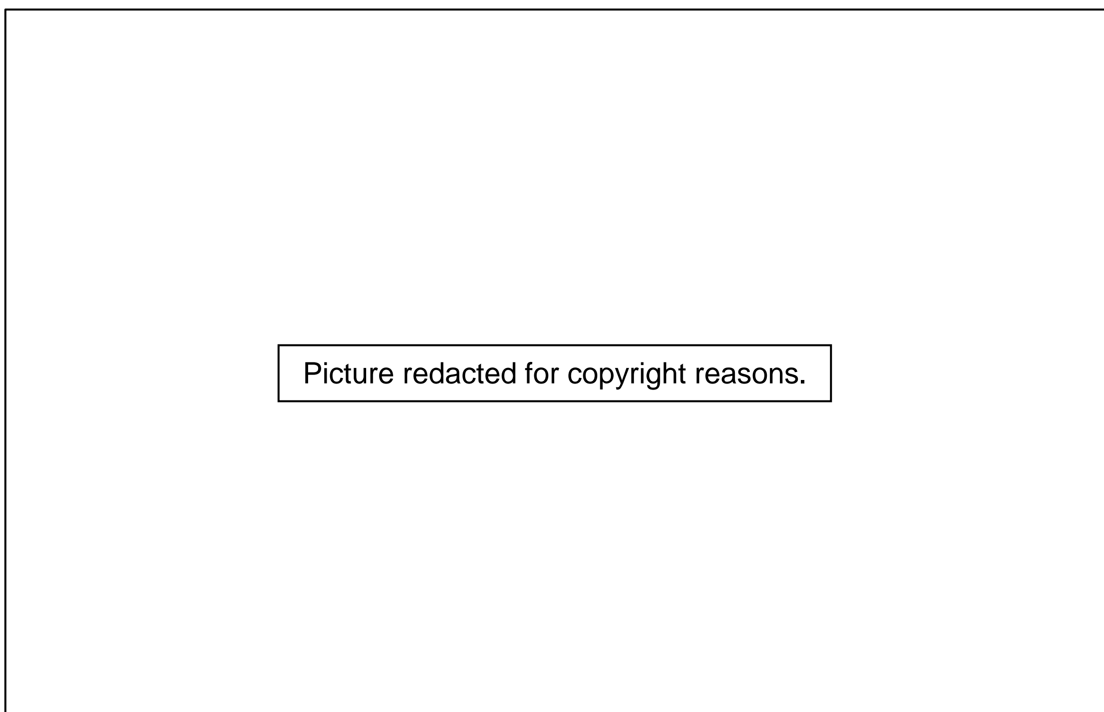


Figure 4.8: World-switches continued (Green, 2013: 4–5)

The red world is extended dynamically through repeated depictions of Katie. The lack of situational grounding in this sequence combines with variations in body language and facial expression to profile Katie's subjective experience more than specifying her interaction with her environment. Depending on how a reader engages with these pages, there are various possibilities for how they would switch between the different worlds. Switches are prompted by contextual and situational

discontinuities along a general left-to-right reading trajectory. While there is a general left-to-right tendency, the structure of the images does not strongly enforce world-switches in a stepwise manner. The co-presence and extension of the different worlds permits focal toggling between worlds (see Gibbons, 2012: 119–21), allowing for exploration of the interrelation of different dimensions of Katie's experience. The co-presented worlds prompt trajector/landmark focusing effects that shift as reading follows the left-to-right reading path. When focusing on the red world as **trajector** (focally prominent) the yellow world functions as its conceptual **landmark** (reference point used as basis for focusing) and vice-versa depending on how readers toggle between the two. The progressive abstraction and diminution of the depictions of Katie in the red world point to a progressive loss of sense of self within her experience of physical and psychological distress. This also marks a shift into prominence where the scribbles begin as landmark to Katie's experience in the red world and eventually become an entity in interaction with her in the green world. Collapsing this point of access into the distinct experiential world (or worlds) of remembrance into an aspect of the green world demonstrates the longstanding consequences of Katie's experiences on her life.

Focus is also guided by enactors' **intentional deixis**. I use this to refer to the depiction of characters' focal attention as indicated by posture and positioning, especially of facial features, angle of head and face, and depictions of perceptual action. In this way, it functions as a depictive analogue of **perceptual deixis** (Stockwell, 2002; Hausendorf, 2003) where it indicates the literal depictive point-of-view and direction of perceptual intention of a character and hence, a potential prompt for their text-world conceptualisation. Where it operates between characters, it also functions as a depictive analogue of **relational deixis** (Stockwell, 2002; Levinson 1979: 207) as it can convey an aspect of how a depicted character is relating to another depicted character. In this way, intentional deixis brings together aspects of perceptual and relational deixis in line with gaze and gesture analysis as part of multimodal conversation analysis, sociolinguistics and pragmatics (e.g. Brooks and Meltzoff, 2014; Fillmore, 1982; Flom et al., 2007; Mondada, 2005, 2012; Rossano, 2013; Stukenbrock, 2020). Typically, as in the above instance, this is achieved through depicted eyeline and direction of character faces, understood as a fictive emanation traced from the eyes to the apparent object of attention (Talmy, 2000a: 105–6; 125–6). This relies on an assumption that if someone is looking at something then they are attending to or aware of it in the same way as the subject who observes this observation (which may or may not be borne out by the context). Reading an enactor's conceptual focus through their depicted point-of-view can contribute to focal prominence in construal of the page at different stages of reading. In this instance, the intentional deixis indicated by character expressions and focuses of attention illustrates a hierarchy of enactor accessibility between worlds, i.e., the extent to which each enactor of Katie is aware of the other enactors' experiences. The blue and yellow worlds seem visually accessible to the enactor of Katie in the red world when her eyes are open. Similarly, green world Katie's attention is focused on the red world Katie and the surrounding scribbles. This does not imply a text-world in which Katie is able to directly observe her

past experiences; rather, it uses perception as a conceptual metaphor for recollection (REMEMBERING IS SEEING). Katie closing her eyes in the red world without the influence of the act of remembrance subsiding suggests that the more active inversion of this metaphor does not hold, that is, FORGETTING IS NOT LOOKING. The use of this metaphor suggests that ignoring and not examining problems is not a viable means of severing their influence on present experience.

In spite of this hierarchy of accessibility, there is still potential for ambiguity. Though the REMEMBERING IS SEEING metaphor can be construed as scanning FROM an experiencer TO another entity, the picture and the variable transitivity of SEEING do not enforce a 'looking at' type path of fictive emanation from experiencer to patient as the only possible construal (e.g., Talmy, 2000a: 115–125). The experiencer role can be either conceptually active or passive depending on construal. Langacker (2008: 371) cites the difference in conceptualisation between *he was sad*, in which the experiencer is a passive entity in a **thematic process**, that is, 'a minimal, single-participant process in which the theme's role is passive (i.e. not construed as a source of energy)' (Langacker, 2008: 370), and *I see it*, in which the experiencer is active in relation to a **zero** entity 'whose role is conceptually minimal and nondistinctive' (langacker, 2008: 356). Whereas *look* and *see* or *listen* and *hear* respectively prompt more active and passive construal of similar perceptual, cognitive and conceptualising activity, the intentional deixis of the depicted enactors of Katie (i.e. what she is and isn't looking at in each new instantiation) capture a complex evolution of active and passive relationships between the different enactors. By having Katie look away from and towards depictions of herself, Green uses intentional deixis to mark shifts between active and passive engagement with her trauma. This means that the potential for focal toggling can prompt consideration both of the act of remembrance (e.g., the active construal of looking back at herself from the green world to the red world) and its consequential impact on the remembering enactor (e.g., the passive construal of the red world Katie trying to close her eyes and her body to the unwanted remembrance of the yellow and purple worlds). The co-presentation of different experiences and the structural fluidity of these images help to capture the co-morbidity of trauma and recollection and the ongoing influence of trauma on experience both as bidden recollection and unbidden re-emergence. Each world-switch encapsulates a different dimension of Katie's experience by placing experiencing enactors of her in different relationships with other experiencing enactors and the scribble motif.

The red world, which depicts development of embodied experiences of psychological distress, is the only constant across these four pages. The background scribbles of the red world occupy the space above the yellow and green enactors of Katie, which is where psychological, emotional and communicative processes are often depicted (Abbott and Forceville, 2011, Cohn, 2013c). The physical responses and intentional deixis of the enactors of Katie provide emotional points of reference against the constant of the scribbles. These eventually resolve to repeated, shrinking depictions of Katie in a foetal position with her eyes closed. This repeated body language captures both a desire to ignore trauma through self-effacement, and its endurance and eventual

preponderance in spite of, and indeed perhaps *because of* such efforts. By presenting diminishing enactors of Katie, the sequence within the red world depicts a transition from explicitly embodied experience to predominantly abstracted or psychological experience. While the immediacy of physical response diminishes over time, the less specific abstract scribbles endure, capturing the difference between active, engaged remembrance and passive experience of enduring psychological and emotional consequences of trauma.

The relationship between these enactors of Katie resolves on the following pages through sequential extension of green Katie's engagement with this dimension of her experience. There is a transition from her looking back and focusing on past experience, to exerting influence over the direction of the scribbles in real time (fig. 4.9). In terms of grammatical roles, Katie becomes agentive in her engagement with her past by drawing it, instead of being a more passive experiencer of painful recollection. The redirection of the scribbles from above her head into the end of her pencil shows acts of drawing and storytelling to be ways of exerting influence on and controlling her enduring experience of trauma.

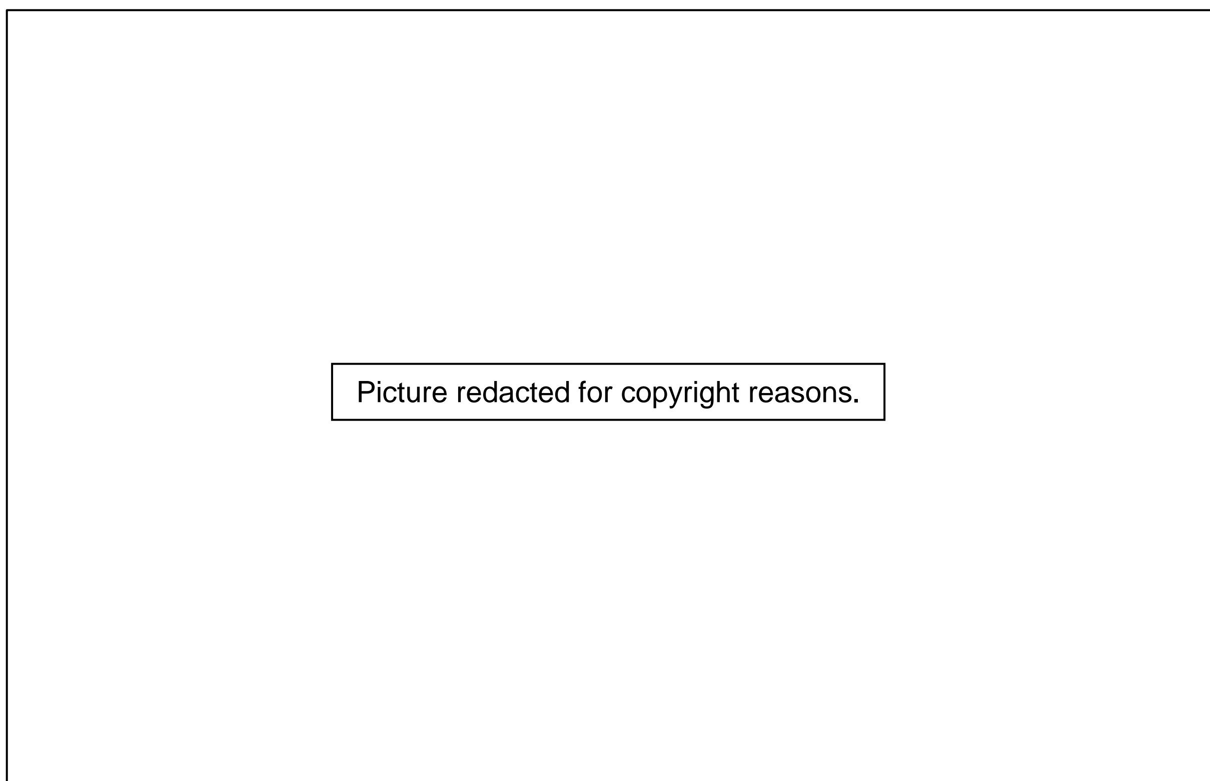


Figure 4.9: Katie taking control of trauma through drawing (Green, 2013: 6–7)

The idea of controlling and expressing psychological distress through drawing highlights a metonymic dimension of the scribble as a figure that points to the quality of the physical gestures involved in its realisation (i.e., scribbling). Through embodied simulation, reading the form of marks on a page can indicate the nature of the gestures that went into their production (Pignocchi, 2010). In this narrative, this is true of the scribble in particular:

D: I suppose it would be so individual to each person that you couldn't (.) um (.) but also (.) for me anyway it's never a (.) it's never a thing I can conceptualise the fact that it's like a frustrated scribble

C: mhm

D: that's how I want to describe it to people

This draws attention to **D**'s awareness of how the emotional dimension of the act of drawing is indicated by the mark made by the author. While frustration may be inferred from the general content of the narrative, the disorderly and inconsistent nature of the scribbled lines, as compared with the neat line-work elsewhere in the narrative, prompt an embodied simulation of the aggressive gesture involved in its production. This aspect of the scribble also seems to provide **D** with a way of conceptualising and communicating psychological distress that was not available to them before. As well as being representative of its unpredictable and inscrutable quality as part of Katie's consciousness, the open-endedness of the figure also provides scope for greater reader identification. **D**'s feedback suggests the benefit of reading such narratives as a way of coming to terms with personal experience, as well as the communicative efficacy of visualisation when applied to a topic such as mental illness, which can defy specific verbal categorisation.

In the following section, I will engage more with the interface between depiction and narration. To avoid confusion between different enactors of Katie across worlds and modes, as well as for ease of reference, I will refer to depicted enactors of Katie as $_{c}$Katie, textually narrated enactors as $_{n}$Katie and enactors relating to the discourse participant as $_{a}$Katie.

4.4 Visual abstraction of subjective experience

Subjective experience, in so far as it accounts for moment-to-moment engagement with perceived reality, is not abstract. It becomes abstract when people attempt either to engage in meta-cognitive reflection on it or communicate it. $_{a}$Katie uses a range of visual metaphors as abstractions of her psychological and emotional experience of different aspects of mental illness. I will mostly limit discussion to those features brought up in the reading group discussion, though where relevant, other visual metaphors will be introduced to help give a more comprehensive picture of how they develop as the narrative progresses. I will focus on specific extracts from the depiction and narration that exemplify features and ideas that came up during the reading group discussion.

4.4.1 Squiggle, scribble, shadow

The most prominent depictive figure in my reading experience, and in the reading group discussion, is what is referred to by the readers as the 'squiggle', 'scribble', 'shadow', 'mist', 'cloud', and 'thing'. The variation in how this feature is verbalised in discussion points to the range of concepts, processes and roles that the scribble depicts. This variation in conceptualisation is one of the earliest

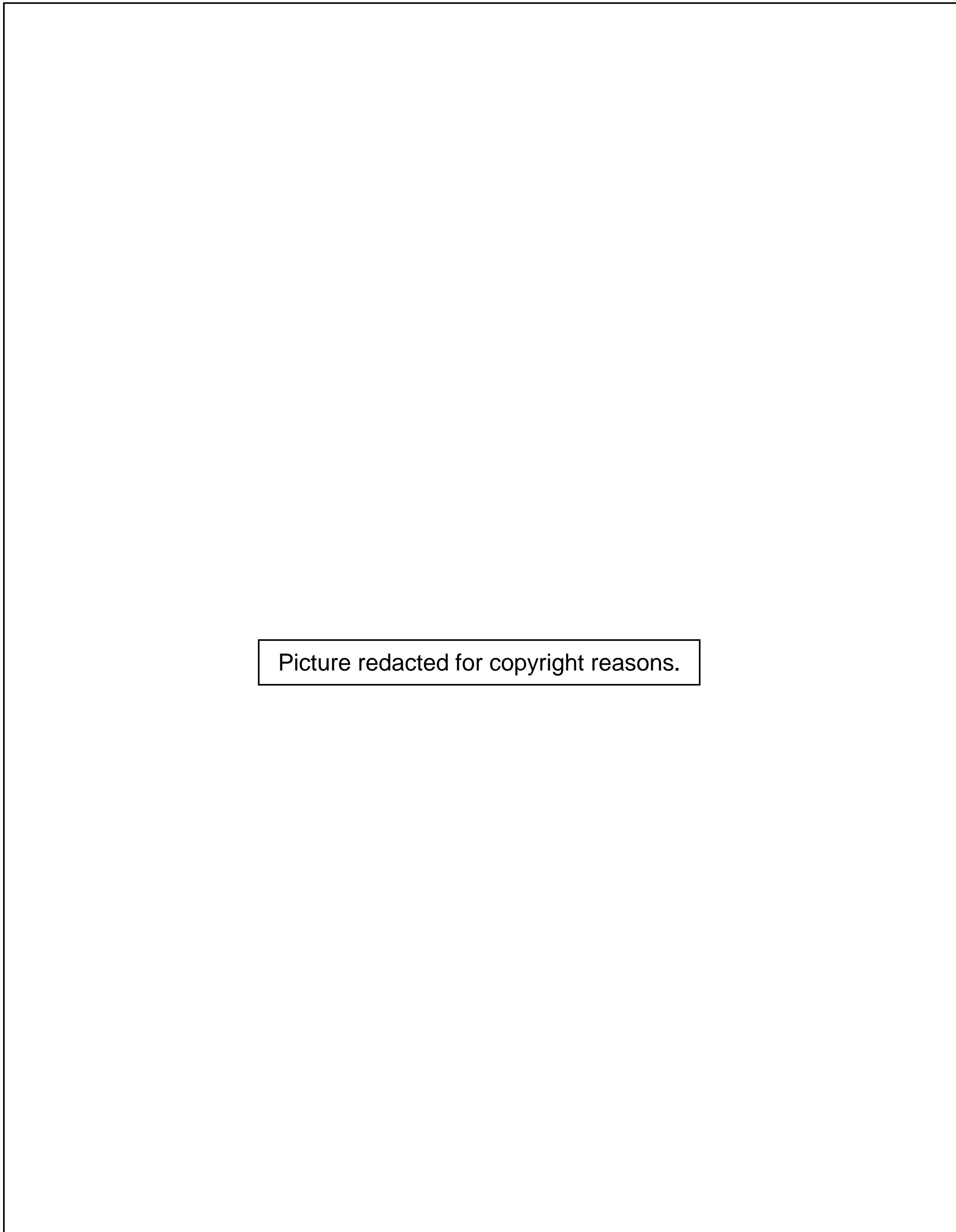


Figure 4.10: Examining self in mirror (Green, 2013: 118)

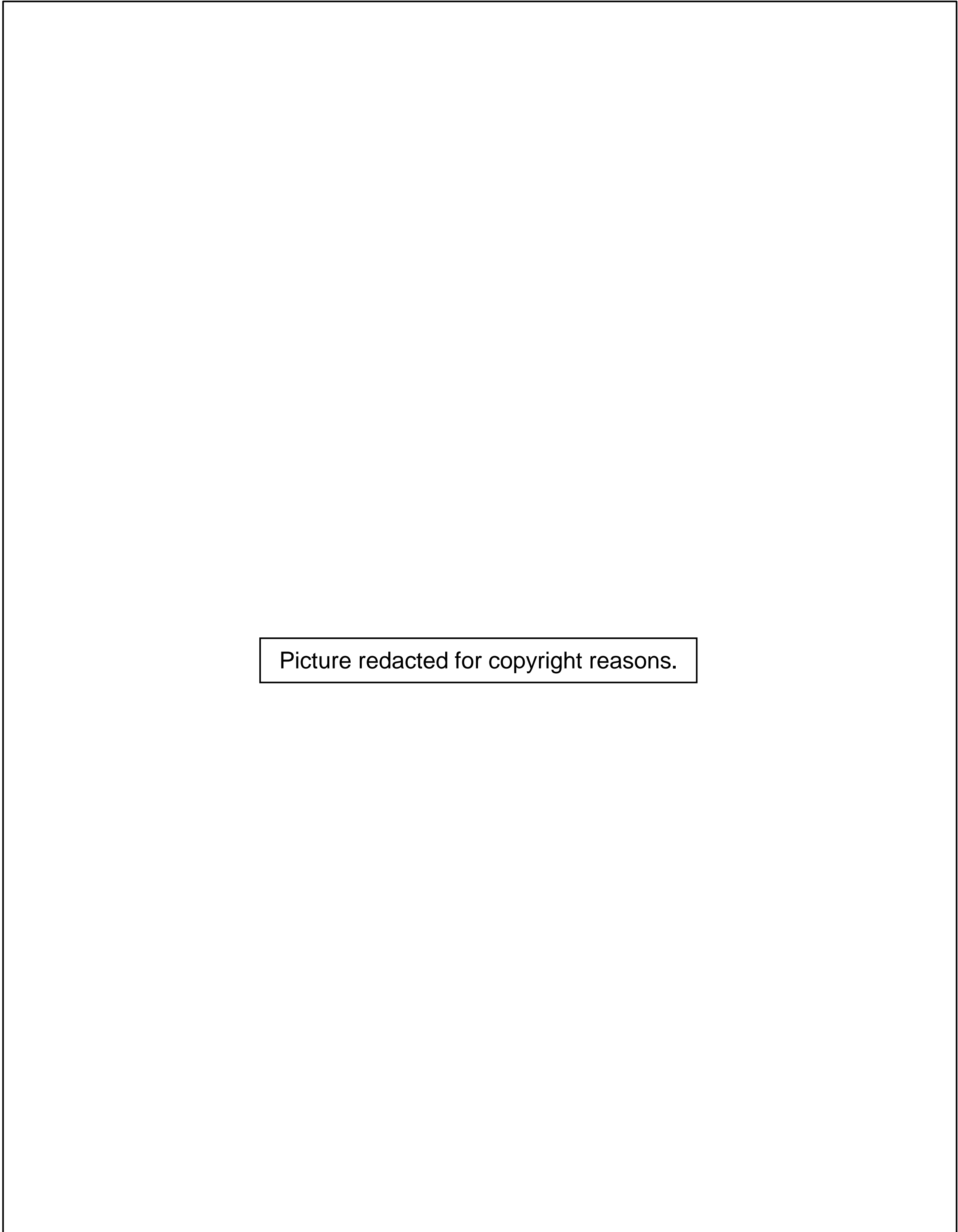


Figure 4.11: Negative self-talk and sleep (Green, 2013: 119)

features discussed by **A** and **D**:

A: it changes all the way through it changes shape it changes size

D: mm

A: like it gets

D: like it's her her sometimes it's her [shape like it's a shadow]

A: [yeah sometimes it's no shape] and sometimes it's huge and sometimes it's … tiny and it swells and it

D: yeah

A: it's so … simple in a lot of ways … [that make it …]

D: [like when she's …]

A: easy to connect to

D: yeah like when I think the the panels when she's eating a meal and it kind of gets bigger and smaller and bigger and smaller and the fact that it does kind of … like … grow and shrink a bit like … like symbolist I've had similar feelings like yeah

Figures 4.10 and 4.11 are evidence of the variation in size shape and function touched on here by **A** and **D**. In isolation, the scribble's function in the first panel of figure 4.10 could be interpreted as being similar to what Cohn (2013c: 42–6) describes as an 'upfix'. Upfixes are visually reader-accessible objects or symbols drawn above characters' heads that 'most often depict emotional or cognitive states' and 'convey […] conventionalised meanings' (Cohn, 2013c: 42–3). For example, a lightbulb above a character's head tends to summarise the process of having an idea. Because they depict psychological or emotional processes, visually and separately from a depiction of a character, they are visually enactor inaccessible. The degree to which the state or process they represent is enactor accessible in terms of cognition and emotion varies depending on the circumstances, though this is a matter of degree of awareness rather than an absolute ontological inaccessibility as tends to be the case in terms of text-world enactor visibility (hence the metaphorical nature of the 'looking' in section 4.3.3.

Though it fulfils the criteria of being above the head, and representing cognitive and emotional processes, the scribble in *LTMS* does not always fit into the upfix category because of its changing relationship to enactors of $_{c}$Katie. Though similar to the bad mood example given by Cohn (2013c: 42) the meaning of the scribble is less generic and, based on its varied description in the reader discussion, is harder to consistently specify. Unlike upfixes, it rarely only functions as a momentary compression of a discrete process or state. Instead, its presence is extended across multiple panels

and chapters, lending it the characteristics of an enduring entity that is physically present in the depicted situation.

This can be seen in the first three panels of figure 4.10. The prominent process depicted in these panels is the agentive process of $_c$Katie removing clothes as outlined in figures 4.12 and 4.13. 4.12 illustrates that $_c$Katie, as the agentive head of this conceptualised process, is the most prominent participant and that her intentional influence on her surroundings is the most prominent process. 4.13 shows how this broader process is broken down into specific visual reference points for subordinate processes, which are scanned sequentially across the three panels.

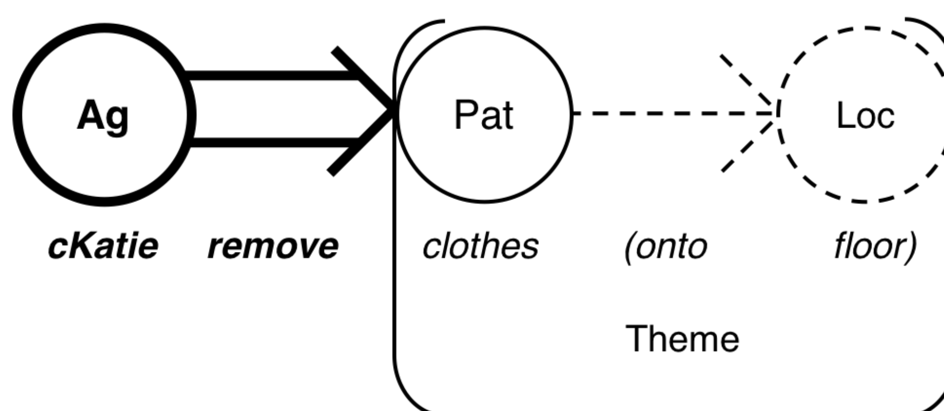


Figure 4.12: Summary of agentive process

Another process sequentially scanned across these three panels is the scribble's persistence (figure 4.14). As it remains largely unchanged and there is no direct interaction or influence on it, the scribble can be described as having a zero role in a thematic process (see section 4.2.3). In CG, a thematic process is 'a minimal, single-participant process in which the theme's role is passive (i.e., it is not construed as a source of energy)' (Langacker, 2008: 370). Zero, as a semantic role like agent and patient in the previous example, captures an archetypal quality of inertia and persistence. The scribble's conventional upfix position implies an experiential link with $_c$Katie, while its less conventional persistence draws focus away from $_c$Katie as the source of the scribble and invites readers to conceptualise it as a distinct and enduring entity.

Figure 4.15 posits a theme-oriented construal of this process whereby the persistence of the scribble is passively experienced by $_c$Katie, whose apparent access to and influence over the scribble are limited by the composition of the depiction. $_c$Katie neither looks at nor physically interacts with the scribble in these panels. This captures a lack of direct engagement between $_c$Katie and the scribble at this point in the comic, while $_c$Katie's role as experiencer of the scribble is implied through the upfix-style formal relationship.

The persistence of the scribble in the first three panels (figure 4.10) means that it can be seen as an influential part of all the depicted instances, without specifically emerging from these conditions in

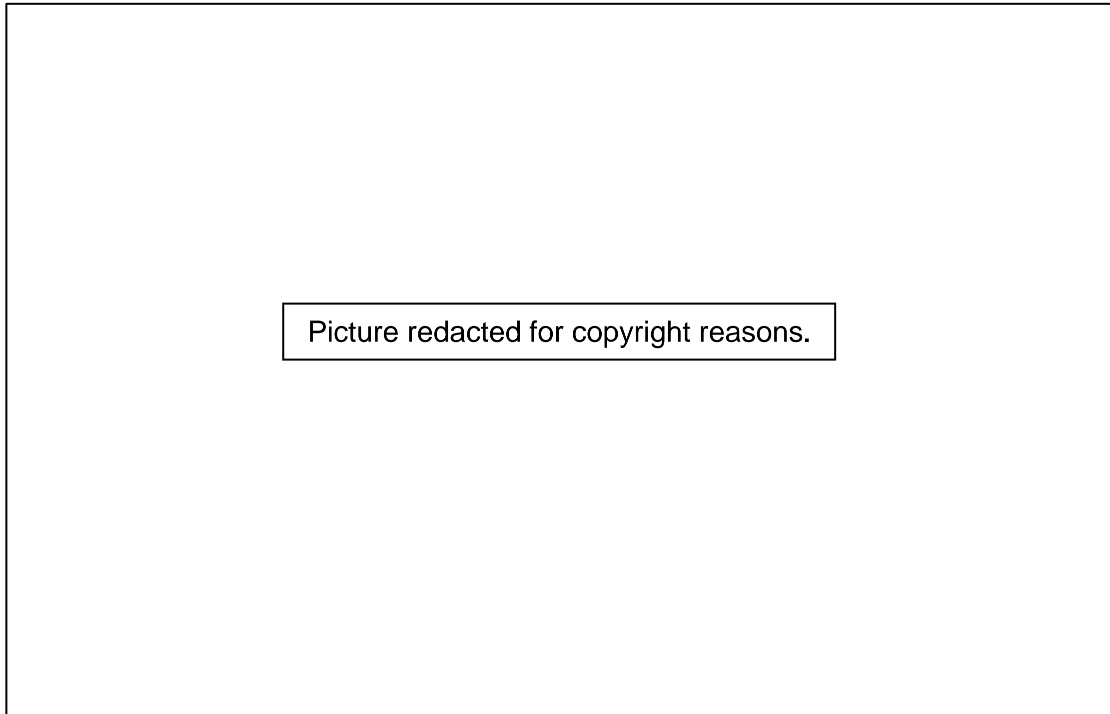


Figure 4.13 Agentive process as sequential scan (Green, 2013: 118)

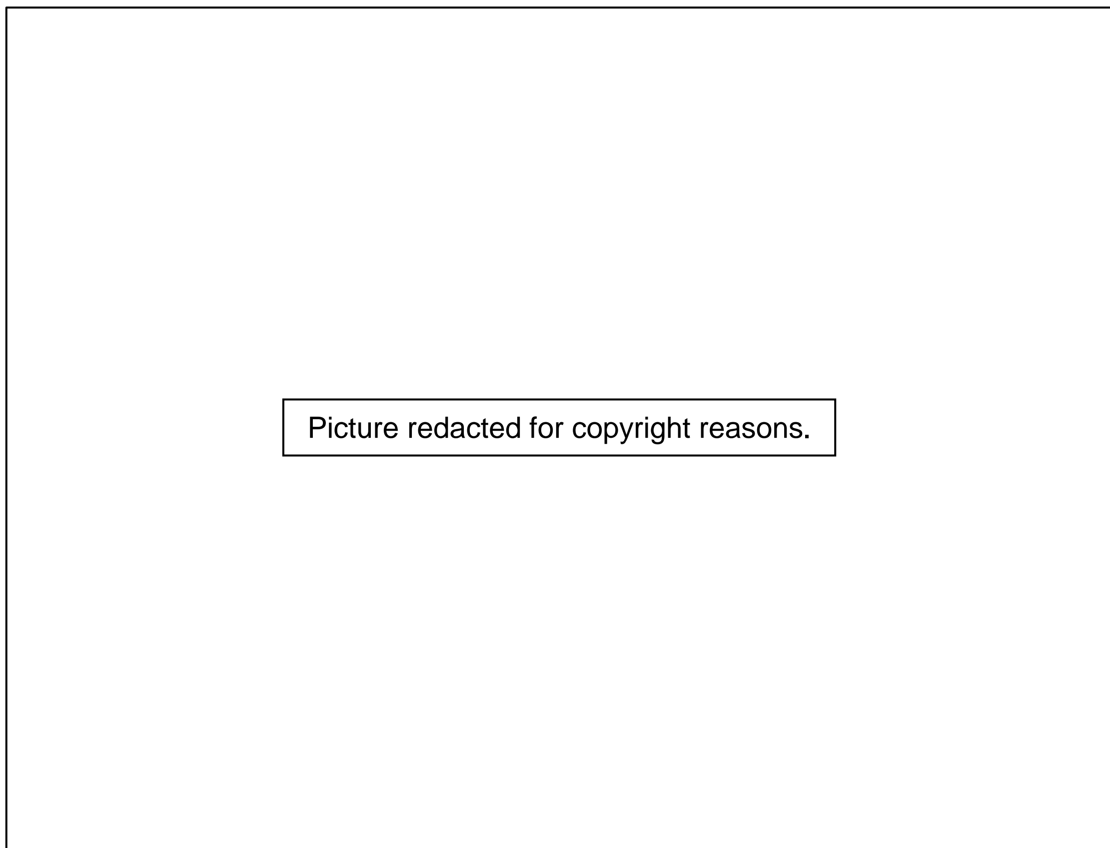


Figure 4.14: Thematic process as sequential scan (Green 2013: 118)

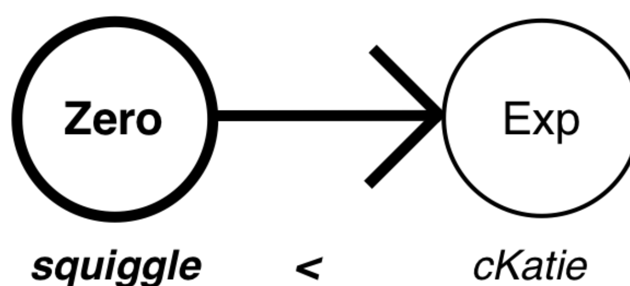


Figure 4.15: Summary of thematic process

the manner of an upfix. Though it doesn't interact with $_{c}$Katie, the scribble does marginally increase in size across the three panels. As the dashed oval segments in figure 4.14 illustrate, readers' ability to apprehend this change is curtailed by the edge of the panel. This means that most of the implied expansion takes place outside of the maximal scope of the panels, which reduces potential focus on this process. Because $_{c}$Katie and the scribble don't interact in the physical logic of the depiction beyond their spatial relationship, the scribble can be construed as a separate entity that is being increased in size by an unspecified force. While it qualifies $_{c}$Katie's experience through its upfix-like positioning, its persistence and gradual increase in size mean that there is scope for the scribble to be perceived as a distinct entity rather than a processual modifier. The discussion reflects this as readers at times characterise the scribble as a separate entity in **absolute** terms: 'it swells', 'gets bigger'. Absolute construal 'is a matter of viewing a thematic process solely in relation to the passive realm' (Langacker, 2008: 371). This results in a lack of explicit reference to an agentive source of energy.

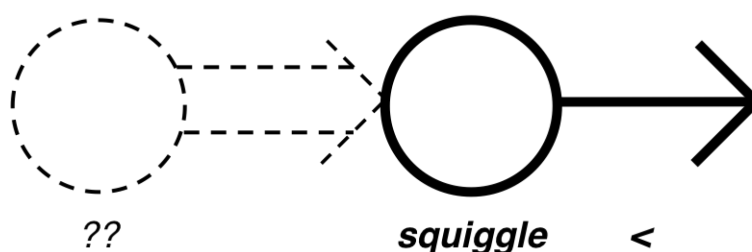


Figure 4.16 Absolute construal

On this basis, figure 4.16 outlines absolute construal of the process of the scribble increasing in size. This is similar in composition to an active transitive as in figure 4.12, except without the canonical imbalance of force inherent to agent-patient relationships. Here, the agent is implicit resulting in the would-be patient functioning as both trajector and landmark.

Eliding whatever agentive process or force that might have brought about an increase in size results in the scribble having a force dynamic relationship with itself across panels, whereby its increase in size is apparent relative to its previous size. The depicted form of the scribble in preceding panels becomes landmark to the trajector scribble in the next panel. This sequential shift in focus

establishes an increase in size that can be conceptualised through a transformational **image schema** as outlined in figure 4.17 (see also section 2.4.1). Image schemas are basic frameworks for conceptualising relationships that are grounded in physical experience and observation of interactions (Lakoff, 1987, Johnson, 1987; Johnson, 2007). Despite the abstraction in its depiction, scanning the scribble's autonomous relationships and processes allows basic understanding of it as an entity that has dynamic physical characteristics: in this instance, it can increase in size. This shows how initial understanding of the scribble as an entity is tied to the basic logic of how it functions in the depicted situation.

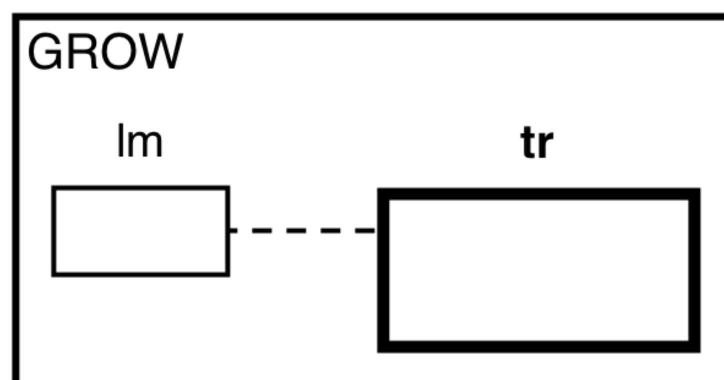


Figure 4.17: GROW image schema

The image schematic basis of conceptualising the scribble can be further expanded on by considering how the two processes discussed above might be focused on across these panels. Focusing on either the agentive or thematic process affects the conceptualisation of the relationship between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble. This can be understood through the spatial image schemas ABOVE and BELOW (figures 4.18 and 4.19). Construal of these processes in terms of the image schema BELOW asserts the prominence of the process of $_{c}$Katie removing her clothes. ABOVE implies the opposite configuration with the scribble's growth being situationally prominent. With $_{c}$Katie being the only explicitly agentive entity across these panels, the former is the more likely construal here.

The lack of apparent dynamic interaction between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble does not inhibit implication of the scribble in how readers might mind-model $_{c}$Katie in this instance. As observed above, the schematic relationship between the two fulfils the structural criterion of an upfix, which is a conventional cue for mind-modelling in comics. The image schemas outlined above also posit a basic, physical logic through which readers can build an understanding of the scribble as a dynamic physical entity in the text-world despite its abstract nature. Prior to this page, it has already been shown to commonly occupy the space above her head and to fluctuate in size in relation to her experience of schoolwork and social interaction (e.g., Green, 2013: 114–7). In addition to this, construal of the scribble growing as a thematic process can be conceptually linked to $_{c}$Katie's agentive process of undressing. In spoken language, 'an active transitive clause, such as *I opened the door*, evokes and profiles both an agent's exertion of force and the thematic process it brings

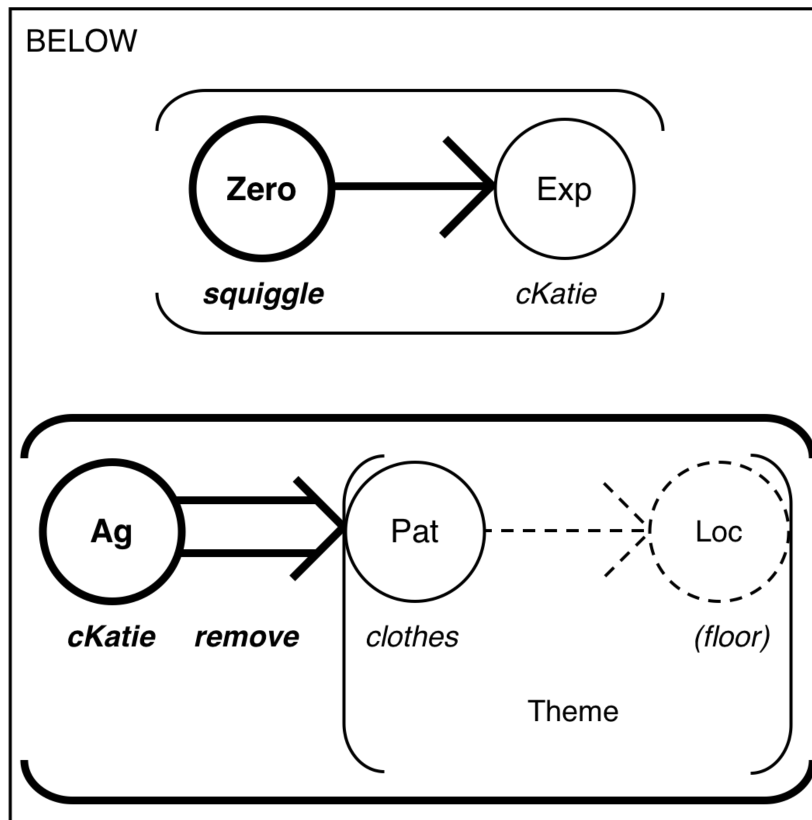


Figure 4.18: BELOW image schema.

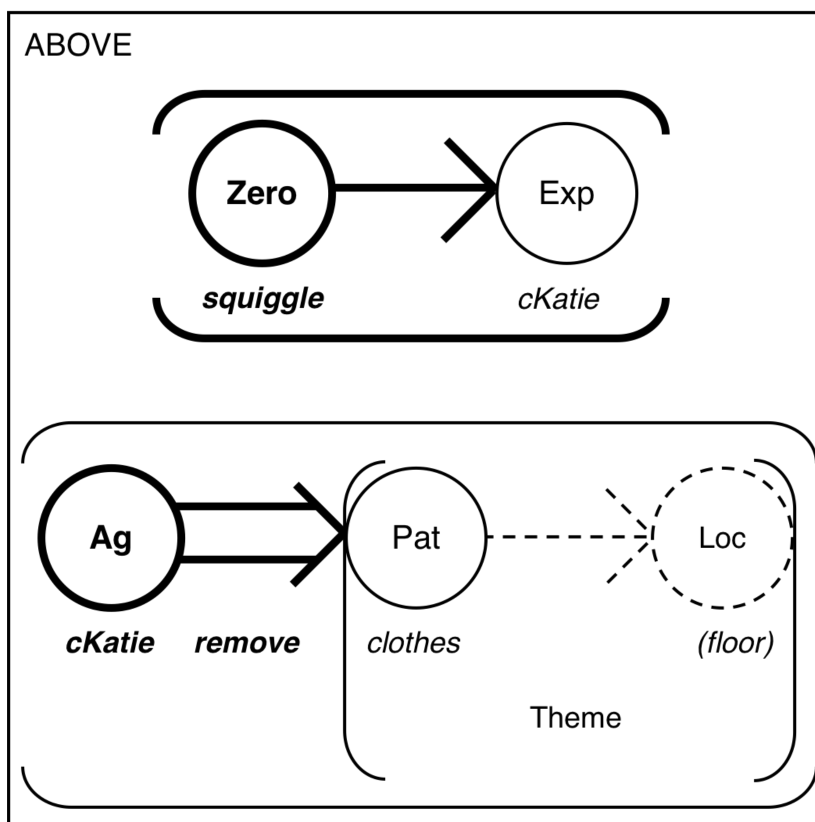


Figure 4.19: ABOVE image schema.

about' (Langacker, 2008: 385). Even without prior contextual establishment of the scribble's relevance, the co-presentation of these two processes is potentially enough to suggest a causal link.

However, the abstract nature of the scribble means that, unlike a conventional upfix, it does not lend conceptual precision to mind-modelling. Instead, it contributes to an overall confusion and imprecision that better capture the nature of $_c$Katie's experience. It adds an additional dimension of experience, alongside the other depicted processes $_c$Katie is involved in. The other depicted processes, including how $_c$Katie speaks, thinks and physically responds to situations, prompt contextualised mind-modelling of her character, which is modulated through the conceptually imprecise confusion of the scribble (Nutall, 2015; Palmer, 2004).

In the following section I will pick up the thread of the previous section and explore how different dimensions of narration and depiction prompt mind-modelling of different enactors of Katie. In doing so I will also examine other ways in which the scribble contributes to mind-modelling.

4.4.2 Current discourse space, focus and attentional frames

In the fourth panel in figure 4.10, $_c$Katie looks at herself in the mirror. Rather than the simple reflexive action this textual summary implies, there are multiple possible conceptualisations prompted by the layout and design of the text and images in this and the following panel. Figure 4.20 posits progressive construal of the first panel based on focusing on reading the text then the image. In the diagram, (a) describes construal of the narration and (b) and (c) describe construal of the depiction. These illustrate how the discourse progresses as the attentional focus shifts between attentional frames within the viewing frame. It proffers a 'line-of-best-fit' rather than an exhaustive account of all possible focal configurations. Each attentional frame describes a possible construal of the situation that advances the discourse through a shift in focus within the conceptualisation of the panel.

In (a) '$_c$Katie' is construed as the prominent entity, or trajector (indicated in fig. 4.20 by a bold outline) and '[part of $_c$Katie's body] in the mirror' is the landmark. The modal framing of the sentence ('I couldn't see') inverts the trajector-landmark relationship between subject and object profiled by the verb *see*, where $_c$Katie is landmark and the reflection is trajector (as opposed to, for example, *look* in which the experiencing conceptualiser is agentive). I posit (a) as a prominent attentional frame because of the previously established autobiographical topic focus (see 4.3.1) and how the sentence is **grounded** in the text-world (i.e., how it relates to the discourse situation it emerges from). The experiential modal 'I couldn't see' points subjectively to the text-world ground (see fig. 4.20), which is the conceptualised discourse situation involving $_n$Katie and an implicit narratee (marked -N in fig. 4.20).

The 'viewing frame' in figure 4.20 accounts for how subjective discourse participants such as $_n$Katie

Figure 4.20: *LTMS* current discourse space from reader's perspective

and -N engage with objective content such as that described above. Langacker uses a stage metaphor to further clarify **subjectivity** and **objectivity** in relation to a metaphorical **viewing arrangement**. Objective content is placed 'onstage' (the **viewing frame**), which incorporates **maximal scope**, **immediate scope**, and focal organisation. The subjective ground (discourse participants and the context of their participation) is prototypically 'offstage', with participants focusing attention away from the ground. Subjectivity can be brought onstage through linguistic grounding features such as deixis or modality, as is the case in (a). However, placing the ground onstage necessarily attenuates subjectivity because it can only be placed onstage by being presented objectively. Because of this, a first-person pronoun like 'I' points both to the speaker as discourse participant and as text-world enactor. Explicit reference to $_{n}$Katie ('I') brings the TW ground into the maximal scope of the viewing frame, though not into the immediate scope, which encompasses objectively construed entities ($_{c}$Katie, the mirror, part of her body). Though the ground is brought to prominence through subjective construal, only the narrating enactor is explicitly profiled. This is reflected in figure 4.20 where greyed-out content is discursively implicit, while black content has explicit discursive referents. This includes enactors and discourse participants, because, as with $_{n}$Katie in the example above, these can all be explicitly identified in the objective content. When implicit, discourse participants (and discourse participant-like enactors) remain offstage. In this way, grounding can bring discourse participants into the conceptualisation of a sentence to varying

degrees. In (a), tense establishes spatio-temporal distance between $_{n}$K and $_{c}$K, while experiential modality differentiates their awareness of the situation. $_{n}$Katie's ability to describe her own experience in negative terms requires the epistemological perspective of hindsight as afforded by time and emotional distance. While the profiled process here is $_{c}$Katie's inability to apprehend her whole body, the negation prompts a world-switch that points to $_{n}$Katie's narrative perspective on the text-world and how she is now able to construe her past experience differently.

The profiled relationship in the final two panels is of $_{c}$Katie looking at herself in the mirror. This is in part achieved through the greater degree of subjectivity in these panels. In the previous three panels, $_{c}$Katie is relatively objectively construed (she is more 'onstage'). The perspective of the depiction means that readers look at the depiction 'with' her (she is moved towards the text-world ground). However, $_{c}$Katie remains in the maximal scope of the panel for readers. This means that there are construal configurations that arise from readers focusing on the relationship between $_{c}$Katie and her reflection, the reflection and the scribble, and the scribble and $_{c}$Katie. The dual deixis of the textual 'I' points to a dual mind-modelling involved in reading the comic. In the depiction of the situation on this page, this is particularly significant in terms of how readers might mind-model $_{c}$Katie and $_{n}$Katie's relative awareness of the scribble through how they conceptualise it. As in the examples above, because the scribble is abstract in nature yet physically actual in the depicted text-world, it helps to analyse it in terms of opposing image schemas. This helps to explore how conceptualisation of the scribble might be mind-modelled from the different text-world perspectives.

Instead of an iconic depiction of a reflection, the mirror delimits the immediate scope of $_{c}$Katie's attentional focus. Mind-modelling her perspective, the scribble (landmark) is peripheral to the highly granular focus of her attention on parts of her body (trajector). From this perspective, the scribble can be understood through a CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema (fig. 4.21), which suggests that $_{c}$Katie is unaware of the scribble, or at least, that it only forms a background to her experience of looking at herself in the mirror. The I-narration prompts mind-modelling of $_{n}$Katie's perspective on the scene, from which the influence of the scribble can be construed objectively. This permits mind-modelling of a construal that is unavailable to $_{c}$Katie where the CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema is inverted and modelled as CONTAINMENT (fig. 4.22). From this perspective there is more of a sense of the influence of the scribble on $_{c}$Katie's experience. It frames and delimits the extent of her perception of her own body.

In the mirror sequence, the highly granular depictions of $_{c}$Katie's thigh and midriff are focally prominent within the immediate scope of each attentional frame, while the perspective again aligns reader and enactor attentional focus. This results in a construal of the panel where readers and $_{c}$Katie both attend to the portion of the image framed by the mirror. The high specificity of the depictions of $_{c}$Katie's body in the mirror are representative of the extent of her focal awareness. This attentional focus is reified by the narrative captions 'I couldn't see my whole body in the mirror' and

CENTRE-PERIPHERY

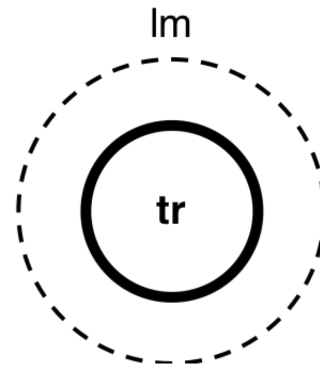


Figure 4.21: CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema

CONTAINER

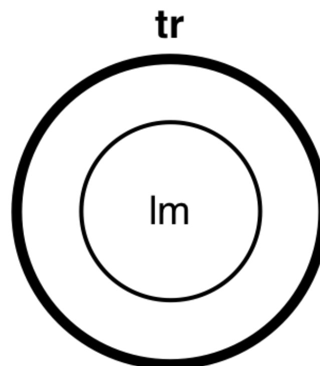
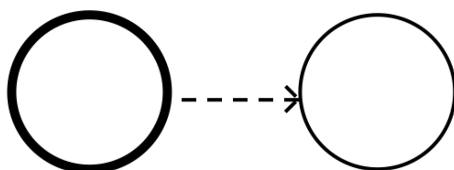


Figure 4.22: CONTAINER image schema

'I only saw parts of myself. The parts I hated'. As suggested above, the sense of dual deixis implicating $_{n}$Katie and $_{c}$Katie is reinforced by the negation and grounding of the narration. The perspectives and conceptualisation framed by the narration reinforce conceptualisation of the depicted scribble. In the depiction, the scribble lies at the boundary of what $_{c}$Katie '[could] see', which suggests its involvement in the fact that she 'couldn't see [her] whole body', as well as being something that $_{n}$Katie and by extension $_{a}$Katie have awareness of with the perspective of hindsight.

APPROXIMATION



ATTRACTION

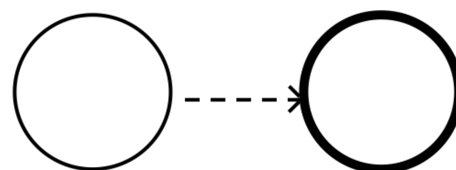


Figure 4.23: APPROXIMATION and ATTRACTION image schemas

The transition between panels six and seven in figure 4.10 profiles two basic processes: Katie moving away from the mirror to her bed and the scribble following her and reassuming its position above her head. Again, the dual deixis prompts two opposing construals of the depicted processes. The scribble's involvement can be understood in terms of the image schemas APPROXIMATION and ATTRACTION (fig. 4.23). APPROXIMATION suggests that the scribble is the forceful entity in the relationship and is acting under its own impetus to follow $_{c}$Katie. This aligns with $_{n}$Katie's perspective on the scene which is grounded in awareness of the scribble and construal of it as something that is affecting $_{c}$Katie. ATTRACTION suggests that $_{c}$Katie is the forceful entity, drawing the passive mass of the scribble towards her. This aligns more with $_{c}$Katie's perspective as she does not actively engage with or notice the scribble, causing her moving across the room to be the foregrounded process. The intentional deixis of $_{c}$Katie in the depiction suggests that she neither looks at or notices the scribble. This is reinforced by the experiential differentiation in the narration, which makes no mention of $_{c}$Katie being aware of this dimension of her experience. Because of these opposing construals, the scribble has different significance in the experiencing world of the depiction and the reflecting world of the narration. Both construals of the scribble's forcefulness are possible, which lends an unsettling ambiguity to its presence.

In the next three panels the scribble surrounds $_{c}$Katie's verbalised thoughts. In these panels there is a shift from the dual deixis previously prompted by the I-narration to a greater focus on $_{c}$Katie's immediate experience. $_{c}$Katie is objectively construed in the depiction, while in her verbalised thought she is placed offstage through the subject deletion of 'Shouldn't have had that snack' and the hanging adjunct of 'Too many calories'. The deontic modality of this assertion also points to a sense of requirement with unspecified origin relating implicitly to the fatphobia and perfectionism fostered in her early experiences (see sections 4.1 and 4.2). In the immediacy of this moment of distress, $_{c}$Katie is disconnected from the awareness of the origin of this sense of constraint, which has been presented cumulatively up to this point in the comic from $_{n}$Katie's perspective. In Text World Theory terms, this creates a deontic modal-world that reflects the influence of a tacit sense of personal requirement on the part of $_{c}$Katie relating to body image and eating. In addition to the origin of this requirement being unspecified in this moment, the deontic modal-world is further inflected by being subordinate to the epistemic modal-world created and constantly updated by the ongoing depiction and narration of $_{c}$Katie's experiences. For readers, this epistemic modal-world is created and updated through the depictive features outlined above (the scribble, body-language, composition) as well as through metacognitive report from $_{n}$Katie— 'I couldn't see my whole body … I only saw parts of myself. The parts I hated' (Green, 2013: 118)—and evaluative language in $_{c}$Katie's verbalised thought: 'I'm disgusting' (ibid.). The influence of her previous subjective experience remains explicit to readers through the depiction, where it is abstracted as the evolving form of scribble. At the same time, this perspective on her experience, like the awareness of the external

nature of the requirement that prompts the deontic modal-world, remains unavailable to $_{c}$Katie, making it discourse participant accessible (readers, $_{a}$Katie), but enactor accessible only to $_{n}$Katie.

In this instance, the scribble once again surrounds the focus of her attention (as in the previous CENTRE-PERIPHERY/CONTAINER example). The verbalised thoughts and the scribble are then conflated in the following panel, where the return of the $_{n}$Katie narration prompts another focal shift in perspective: ‘There was no escape from the thoughts…’. The established CONTAINER image schema depicted in the previous panels is reinforced by the ‘escape’ metaphor. The double deictic ‘I’ is offstage in the narration here, which, along with the definite article, shift focus onto ‘the thoughts’. The negation in the narration implies a conceptualisation of a successful attempt to ‘escape from the thoughts’. The narrative focus on ‘the thoughts’ as unspecified objects as opposed to verbalised propositions is reinforced by their transformation in the depiction into three smaller areas of scribble. The dissection of the scribble into three distinct objects suggests referential mutuality with the plural noun-phrase ‘the thoughts’. While these thoughts are less conceptually specific in terms of what $_{c}$Katie is thinking, they are more emotionally and psychologically explicit in that her thoughts are completely overtaken by the scribble. This shift to a non-textual depiction of ‘thought’ foregrounds the subjective dimension of complex psychological experience over more conceptually precise, verbalised thought. By continuing to avoid verbally specifying the scribble, its indeterminacy is made part of its nature.

The final two panels continue to zoom out from $_{c}$Katie’s conscious mind into the relatively unconscious state of sleep. This is achieved through the encroachment of the previously peripheral and backgrounded scribble into the foreground of the panel. Throughout these examples, when not at the periphery of $_{c}$Katie’s focal awareness, the scribble tends to be backgrounded. This contributes to the sense of it being a barely perceptible constant in her subjective experience, as well as the fact that it is an unconscious psychological constant that influences her behaviour and mood. As $_{c}$Katie starts to fall asleep, the scribble is foregrounded and now encapsulates the entire depiction of her. The increased visual prominence causes the scribble to supervene the depictive vantage point on $_{c}$Katie, illustrating how this unconscious dimension of her experience is overtaking her.

4.4.3 Agency and interaction

The relationship between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble in the previous examples transitions from a thematic relationship to a more interactive one. The reader discussion cited above pointed to conceptualisation of the scribble as a distinct entity, a notion which is reinforced by the nature of its depiction as a dynamic and independent entity. The discussion below engages with more physically explicit interactions between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble, suggesting that ideas of agency and influence are also involved in the conceptualisation of $_{c}$Katie’s experience. I will apply the conceptualisation of the scribble proposed by the readers to relevant examples from the comic to explore how

conceptualising the scribble as a distinct agentive entity contributes to an understanding of ${}_{c}$Katie's experience of psychological distress.

A introduces the topic of the scribble's interaction with ${}_{c}$Katie's head, which is picked up on and differently construed by **D** at the end of this extract.

A: there's then the bits where it cracks out of her head

C: mm

D: [yeah]

A: [that] … I thought that was really interesting . it's like that feeling where it goes from being like internal to external … but you're still the only person that can see it

C: mm

E: I think it freaks me out more when her reflection in the mirror turns into . more of that scribble

A: yeah

C: mhm

D: when she kind of fades into

E: yeah and that's all she can see

D: it's it's quite invasive as well . it's like it's always invading her body

B: like through her mouth

C: mm

A: yeah

B: through you know through through other … orifices …

D: I reckon that kind of that panel there on page … a hundred and fifty-six to fifty-seven … it's literally [pushing]

C: [mm]

E: [yeah]

D: [it's way] into her brain . which is just it's just really upsetting

The instances of the scribble 'pushing … its way into her brain' all occur after the first time ${}_{c}$Katie is hospitalised as a result of anorexia and are limited to a small period of time during which she is

adjusting to her diagnosis (Green, 2013: 157, 163, 183–4). In this way, this feature of the narration can be attributed to $_{c}$Katie’s newfound awareness of the link between the thoughts, feelings and emotions signified by the scribble and her eating habits, body image, and self-esteem. Whereas she was previously unaware of the influence of her psychological distress, it has been brought to her awareness and she is now forced to confront it. This sets up a conflict between her conscious attempts to address her illness and the destructive habits that she had subconsciously established as ways of coping with her distress. As the readers’ discussion suggests, $_{a}$Katie realises this opposition on the page by depicting a conflict between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble.

In the first panel of figure 4.24 (from page 156 as referenced by **D**), $_{c}$Katie, who at this stage has been forbidden from being involved in food preparation, is placed in an archetypally passive position within the panel in terms of the **natural path** of comics compositions. In CG, natural paths are used to describe any ‘series of conceptions where each leads readily to the next’ (Langacker, 2008: 500). In this instance, it is the extent to which the order of reading objects aligns with the conceptual flow of energy (most prominently, food being brought to the table by Katie’s mother). The nine panels on the next two pages that objectively focus on her trying to eat, further reinforce her passivity. The most prominent changes are the size and shape of the scribble, while $_{c}$Katie’s body language, and her facial expressions can be construed as reactions to this influence given that no other information is presented. The scribble increases and decreases in size as she attempts to eat while trying to ignore the distress this effort is causing her. In the strips of panels at the top and bottom of 157 (fig. 4.25), the increase in size is also accompanied by a sharpening of the point of the scribble or a cracking open of her head, depending on the how these images are interpreted. The scribble’s apparent agency does not mean that $_{c}$Katie is not acting, rather that she's trying to ignore the reality of her distress.

D initially describes the scribble in general terms rather than pointing to a specific example: ‘it’s it’s quite invasive as well . it’s like it’s always invading her body’. This builds on **A**’s characterisation by inverting construal of the interaction between the scribble and $_{c}$Katie. **A** describes it as cracking out of $_{c}$Katie’s head; **D** describes it as invading and pushing into $_{c}$Katie’s body and head. Both posited construals are apparent in the first and last three panels of the second page referred to by **D** (fig. 4.25).

‘Invade’ and ‘crack out’ both profile the scribble as an agentive entity acting on $_{c}$Katie (fig. 4.27). As before, the scribble can be understood as a dynamic and actual text-world entity through image schemas. Figure 4.28 illustrates how Langacker unpacks the verb ‘enter’ to describe it in terms of components of the image schemas OBJECT, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, and CONTAINER-CONTENT. Both construals posited by **A** and **D** retain this structure while introducing additional characteristics. ‘Invade’ involves a sense of resistant counterforce in the landmark. The phrasal verb ‘crack out’ introduces a transformational image schema, as well as a sense of resistance and rupture through

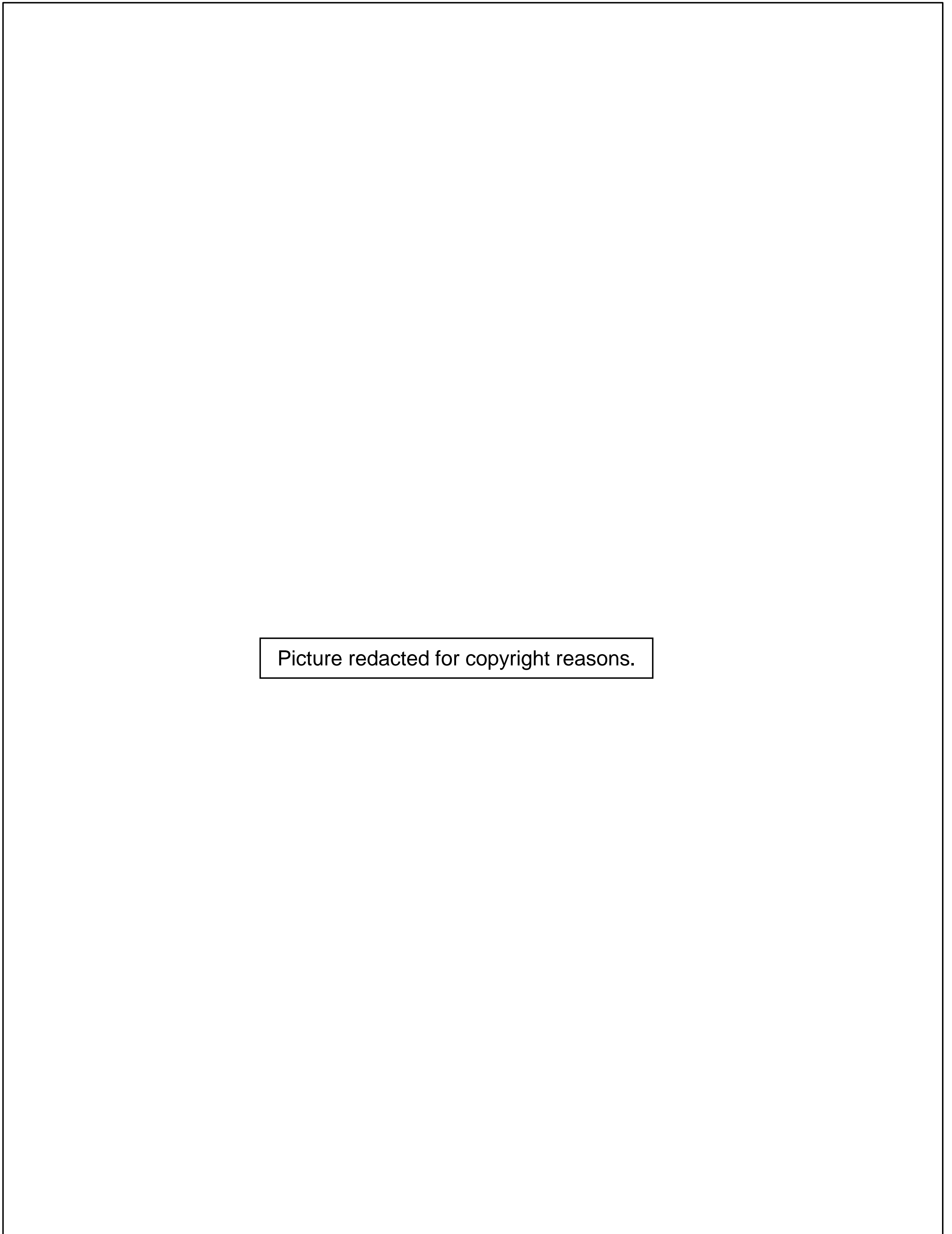


Figure 4.24: Squiggle accumulating over Katie (Green, 2013: 156)

Figure 4.25: Squiggle pushing into/out of Katie's head (Green, 2013: 157)

'crack'. It also inverts the conceived direction of travel between trajector and landmark. The process of exiting incorporates the process of the content cracking *through* the container. The depiction of physical trauma in the cracking open of $_{c}$Katie's skull uses projected experience of physical pain as psychological pain. $_{a}$Katie limits this particular depictive figure to this first period of psychiatric

intervention, which suggests that it is indicative of the problems $_c$Katie is having reconciling the conflict between the ideas that the distress she is feeling is a part of her and a product of her own experience, but that she has no control over it at this stage.

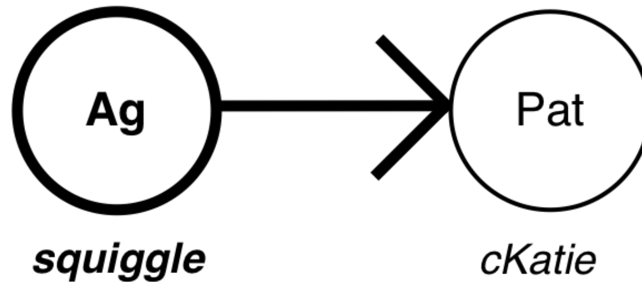


Figure 4.26: Agentive process

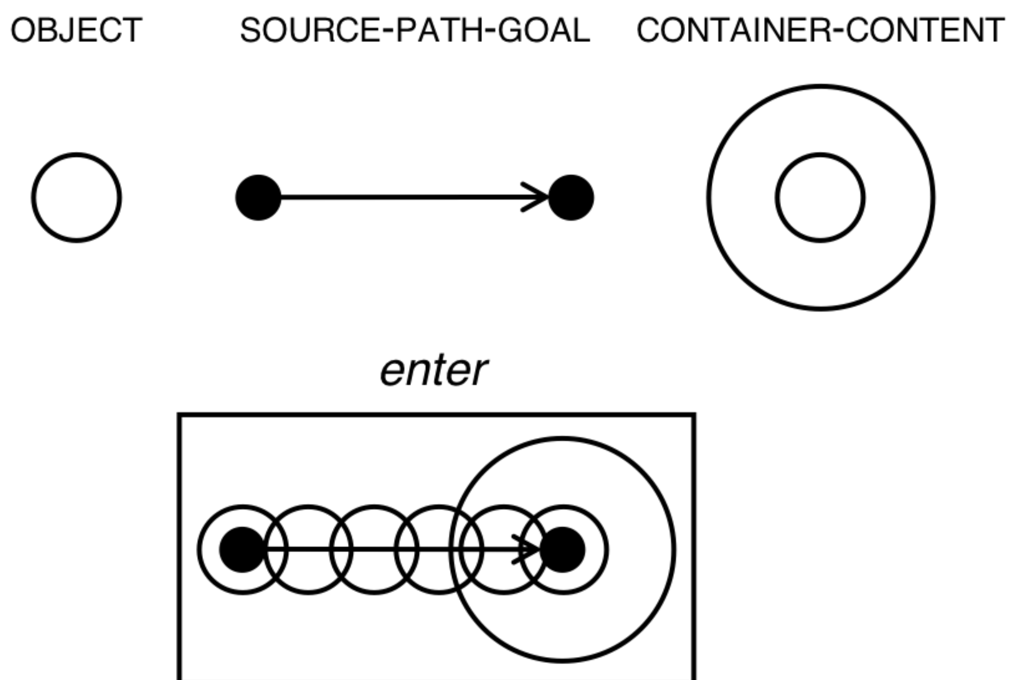


Figure 4.27: image schema structure of *enter* (Langacker, 2008: 32)

In the discussion, each description of the scribble's interaction with $_c$Katie characterises it as agentive, or at the very least, as having physical force:

A: it cracks out of her head

D: it's always invading her body

D: it's literally pushing […] its way into her brain

These physical forces provide a schematic structure for mind-modelling $_{c}$Katie's experience of trying to eat and the pain it causes her. The depicted interaction between the scribble and $_{c}$Katie shows how she is not resisting the act of eating; rather, she is resisting a forceful entity that invades or cracks out of her head as she tries to eat. The invasion construal most obviously points a sense of intentional agency which suggests that the scribble can be mind-modelled as an enactor intentionally antagonising $_{c}$Katie. Without dialogue or verbalised thought, mind-modelling also draws on the events that have taken place previously, and, in the immediate context of these pages, the interactional dynamic between $_{c}$Katie and her family established in the first panel in figure 4.24.

D also strongly asserts the literal nature of the scribble's actions, stressing the impact of the depicted events on their reading experience. Though the actual implication of the story is not that $_{c}$Katie's head was physically damaged in the text-world, **D** communicates the strength of their experience of this depicted interaction, which, though not part of the physical reality of the text-world, is part of the experiential reality of the text-world. The implication for **D** is that this is actually happening, demonstrating a heightened level of engagement with the reality of mental illness that Green (2013: v) aims to communicate. The depiction of $_{c}$Katie's experience in this manner lends it equal status to the more concrete physical entities that are also depicted. This contrasts with examples of visual metaphor cited by Forceville (2005) in *Asterix* comics. Like upfixes, the instances described by Forceville are depictions of emotional and psychological responses limited to single panels. There is similarity in the basis of interpreting images through embodied metaphors like ANGER IS HEAT and ANGER IS PRESSURE metaphors (see Kövecses, 1986, 2000, 2010). However, the difference once again resides in the endurance of the scribble as a distinct entity across multiple panels and pages, which contributes to the sense of its actuality and agency in the text-world.

A's appraisal is in part informed by their own experience of mental illness, which they describe as something that is mostly 'internal', but that can become 'external'. Though the physical logic of the sequence suggests that $_{c}$Katie is being attacked by a separate entity, the psychological reality is that the struggle and the conflict is arising from her experiences, memories, intentions, motivations and so on. The comic captures a certain way of relating to psychological distress that was hinted at by **D** and **B**'s comments, but the openness to interpretation apparent in the reader discussion of this feature reflects the flexibility of reading the comic, which produces multiple interpretations of the dynamic between Katie and the aspects of her psychological experience that she is both conscious and unaware of. Rather than a fault in communicating a precise proposition, this represents a successful communication of the disjointed and unsettling experience of coming to terms with the reality of mental illness while having to try to continue to go about your daily life.

As an earlier comment by **D** also suggests, there is a strong degree of psychological realism in this that allows some readers to strongly identify with $_{a}$Katie's storytelling:

D: yeah like when I think the the panels when she's eating a meal and it kind of gets bigger and smaller and bigger and smaller and the fact that it does kind of … like … grow and shrink a bit like … like symbolist I've had similar feelings like yeah

Neither construal of the relationship between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble accounts entirely for the physical logic of the image. Unlike the clear-cut active-transitive example above, the oscillation between these possibilities in the situated relationship between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble and the potential to conceptualise them as a single experiencer suggest these events can be understood in terms of the semantic **middle**. Conceptually, this lies between active and passive processes in an event where subject and object are poorly defined or indistinguishable. Unlike a reflexive, in which subject and object are the same entity construed dually as acting upon itself, a middle lacks a sense of conceptual distinction and subject-object weighting. Langacker notes how this means of conceptualising a process can be a part of communicating subjective experience:

> The force implied by a middle need not be physical or even objectively construed. It may just be the subjectively experienced force involved in apprehending an event that runs counter to desire or usual expectations.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 386

For these examples, this would suggest that the interaction between $_{c}$Katie and the scribble can be understood as a by-product of $_{c}$Katie's experience of the events depicted as taking place in concurrence (i.e., $_{c}$Katie trying to eat a meal). In this sense, the processes of her head cracking open and the scribble moving into that space are taking place at the same time, but both are thematic processes that $_{c}$Katie is experiencing because of the events taking place around her. In this sense, the events depicted here are *happening to* $_{c}$Katie and limiting her agency. This notion of a distinct entity as the source of $_{c}$Katie's distress—as described in the reader discussion and as depicted from $_{a}$Katie's perspective as the scribble—is reinforced by $_{c}$Katie's verbal characterisation of her experience of trying to eat as having a 'monster in your head screaming at you not to' (fig. 4.28). Her construal of the situation is that her agency is being impeded by a monster that is acting against her. This reinforces the conception of the scribble as an agentive entity established in the depiction and the reader discussion.

The scribble's status as an agentive entity is attenuated by its appearance in that it is generally not anthropomorphic. Nuttall (2015) uses Palmer's (2004) description of fictional minds to show how readers mind-model on the basis of action, but that this mind-modelling is limited by narrative construal effects and through social psychological limitations on empathy. The scribble's motion is construed by readers as 'self-propelled' and its action is (at least minimally) 'goal directed', both of which permit human-like mind-modelling of an entity (see Luo and Baillargeon, 2005; Morewedge et al., 2007; Premack and Premack, 1997). Because the scribble's form diverges significantly from

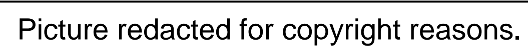


Figure 4.28: Katie leaves the table (Green, 2013: 159)

an anthropomorphic prototype, this limits mind-modelling to the actions defined by the image-schematic understanding outlined above. There is a sense of an agentive entity, but it is far from prototypical.

On the top half of page 158 (fig. 4.28), the scribble occludes everything but $_{c}$Katie and her immediate environment by surrounding her and forcing focus on her as in the example discussed previously. In doing so, the scribbles form panel borders and disrupt the ordered layout and left-to-right reading direction of the previous two pages, while $_{c}$Katie moves right-to-left against the established and expected narrative flow. All these compositional features contribute to a sense of disorder that amplifies the sense of $_{c}$Katie's distress.

The sequentially scanned events of these three panels are then **reified** (conceptually aggregated and compressed) into a summarily scanned entity that enters into a relationship with $_{c}$Katie much like the examples above and with the same potential ambiguities regarding agency and causation. What $_{a}$Katie shows here by encapsulating a sequence of events within a scribble is the fact that events are cumulatively contributing to $_{c}$Katie's ongoing state of distress. Reading the page as a whole, focusing on the bottom panel, this compression of the preceding events ($_{c}$Katie's outburst and running from the table) could be read as a transition from depicting them as events taking place, to depicting them as memories of events that have happened, and their immediate impact on $_{c}$Katie (fig. 4.29). Instead of influencing her in an ordered way they are compressed into a single, scribble-contained entity that is physically interacting with $_{c}$Katie in a painful manner. The reification of previous events 'atemporalises' them by 'reduc[ing] attention to their component states as part of an "attenuated" simulation' (Nuttall, 2015; see also Langacker, 2008: 537).

Focusing on $_{c}$Katie's role as an experiencer helps to explain the transitive ambiguity of these events. Langacker (2008: 392) notes the importance of

> the ambivalence of experiencers with respect to the agent/theme opposition. On the one hand, experiencer (along with patient, mover, and zero) is a basic thematic role: *She was happy*; *He fainted*; *I ache all over*. But as the locus of mental activity, an experiencer is also conceived as the source of a mental path establishing mental contact with another entity: *I'm watching you*; *He imagined it*; *She remembers me*. In this latter guise it is readily construed as being agent-like, in the sense of being active, volitional, or responsible for initiating an interaction. We can thus distinguish between a passive (or thematic) experiencer and one that is active (or initiative).

The potential to construe both sides of this experiential dichotomy is apparent in all the examples of $_{c}$Katie and the scribble interacting dealt with in this chapter. In figures 4.28 and 4.29, the scribbles and the events they encapsulate could be construed as pushing into $_{c}$Katie's head and causing her pain. Conversely, this depiction could be understood as $_{c}$Katie actively remembering or ruminating on these events. As the reader discussion seems to suggest, depiction can be understood both in

terms of initiative experience and passive experience depending on individual construal of events. Again, the weighting here favours neither entity especially. $_c$Katie is only obviously able to exert agency when she acts against the idea of eating: vocalising that she is unable to eat, flinging her food and running away from the dinner table (fig. 4.28). In the experiential processes that are depicted, her agency and involvement are much less clear. Once again, as an atypical agentive entity, the scribble is harder to mind-model and attribute intentional action, motivation, goals and so on.

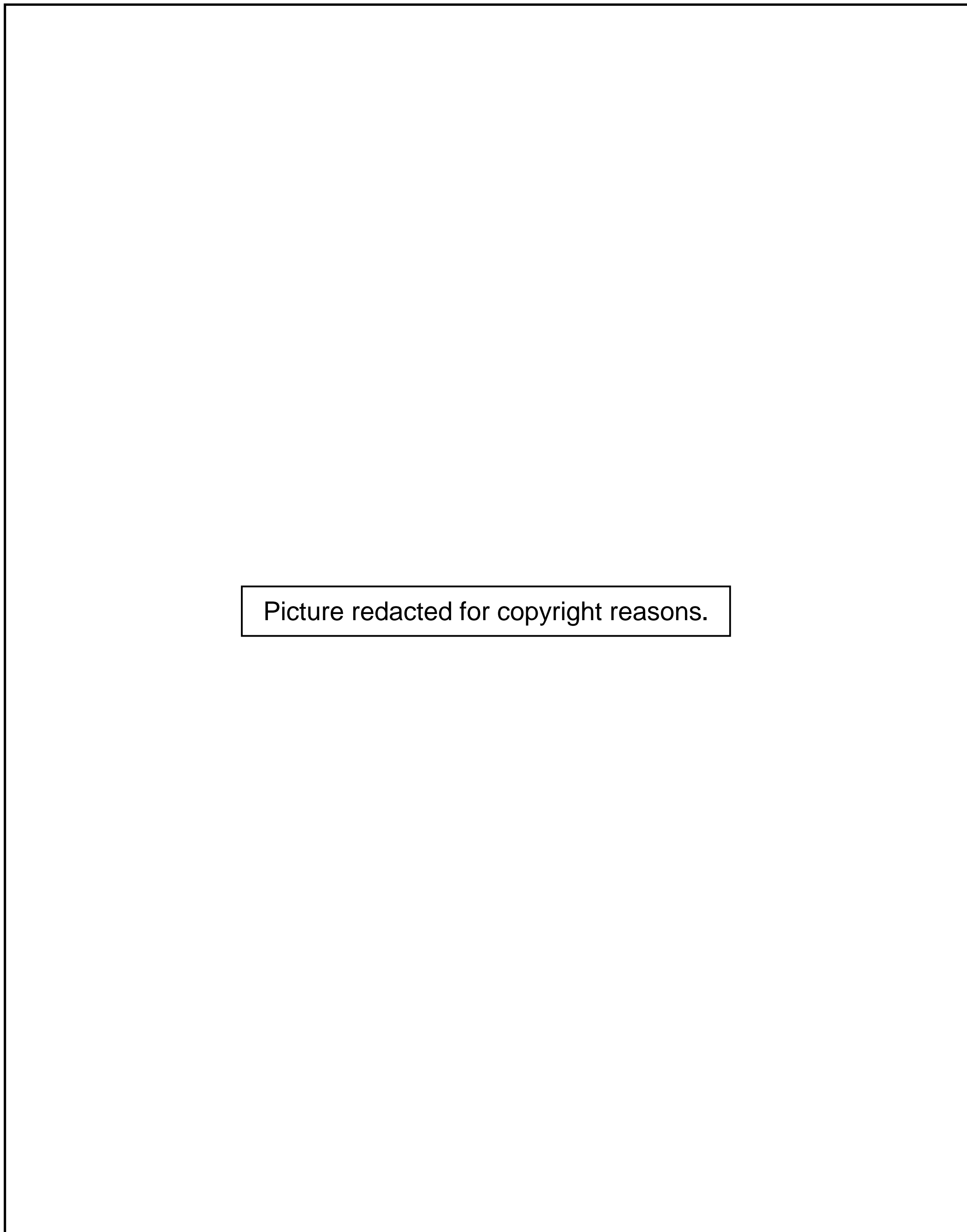


Figure 4.29: Sequentially scanned processes compressed into summarily scanned entity

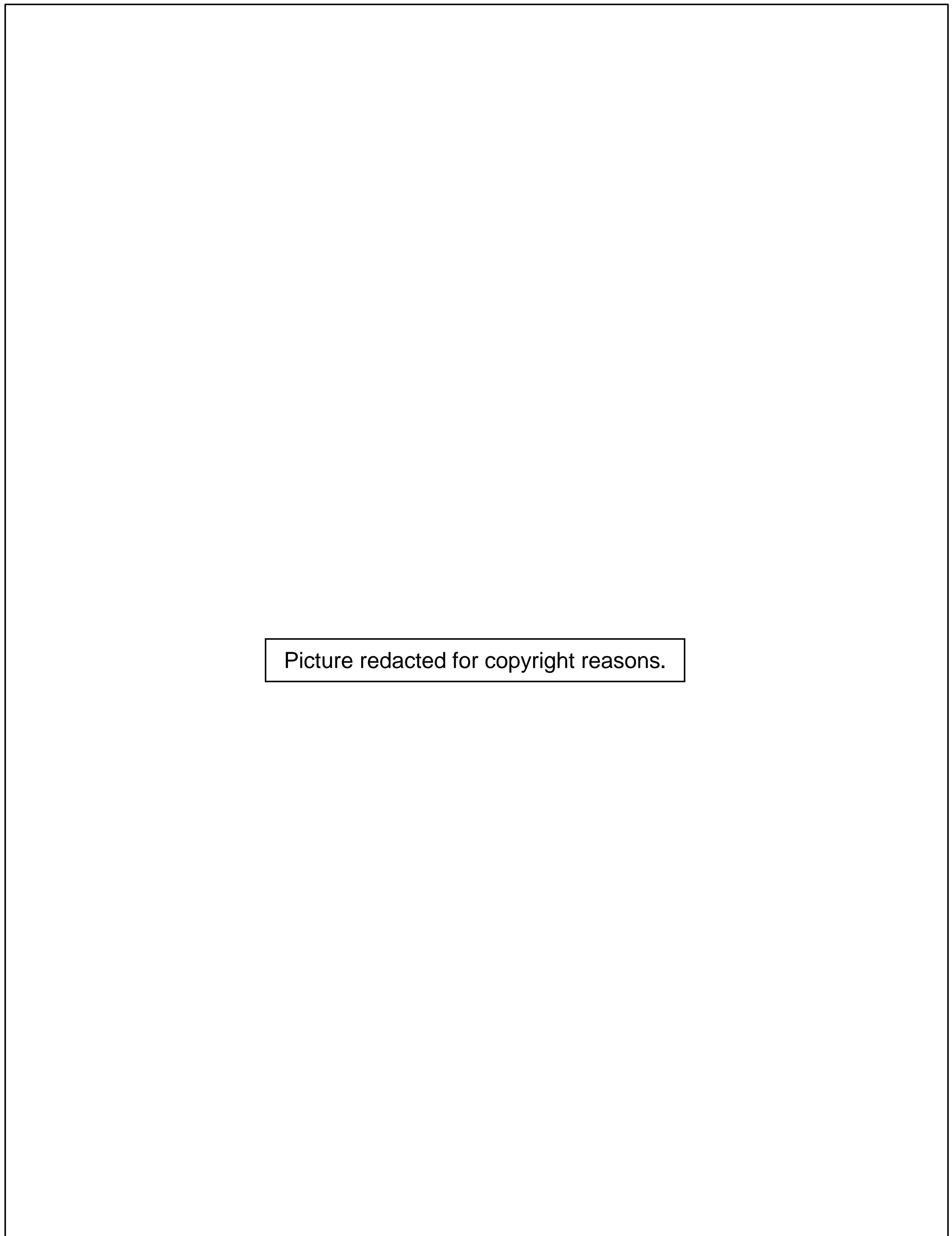


Figure 4.30: *LTMS* dream (Green, 2013: 480)

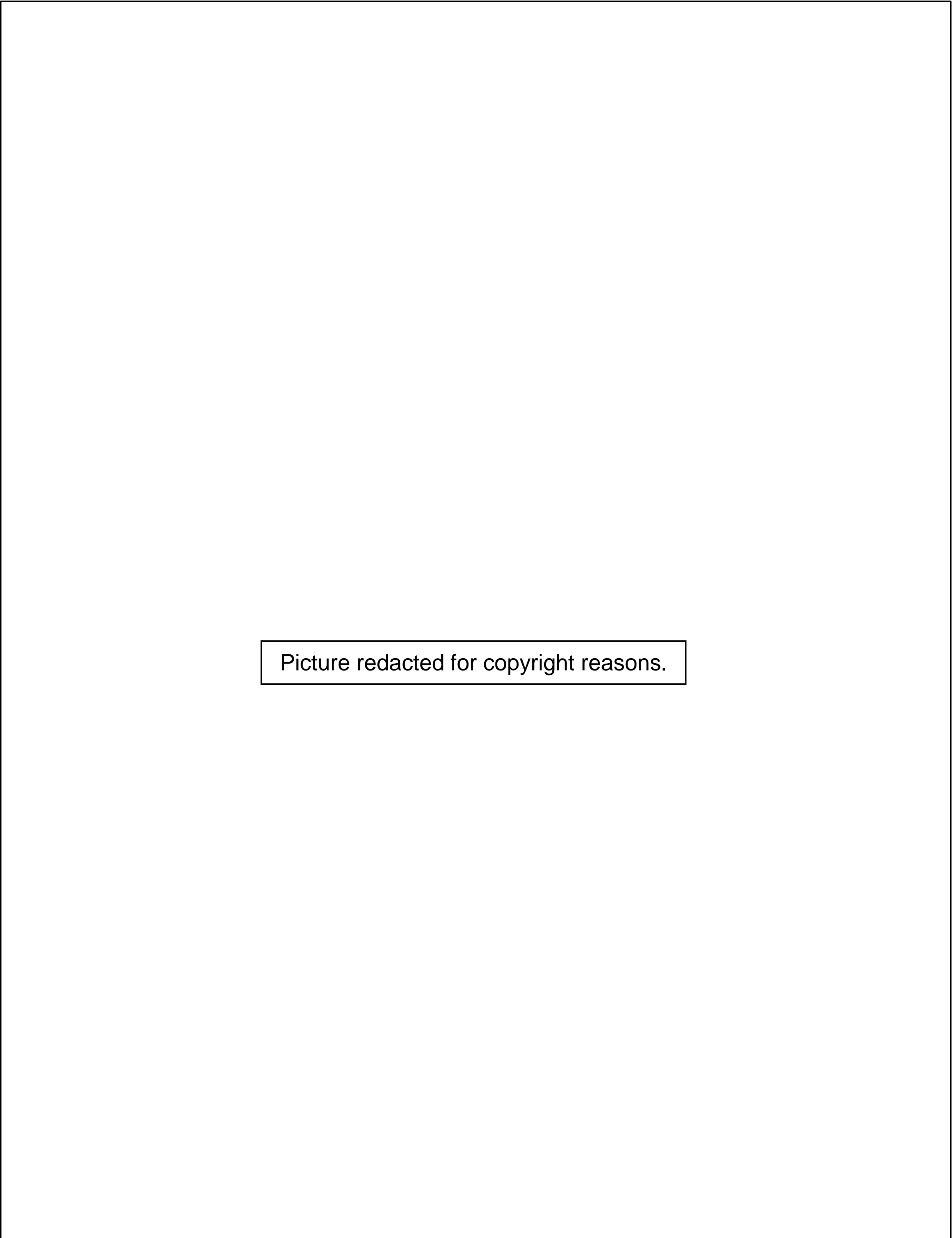


Figure 4.31: *LTMS* nightmare and binge eating (Green, 2013: 481)

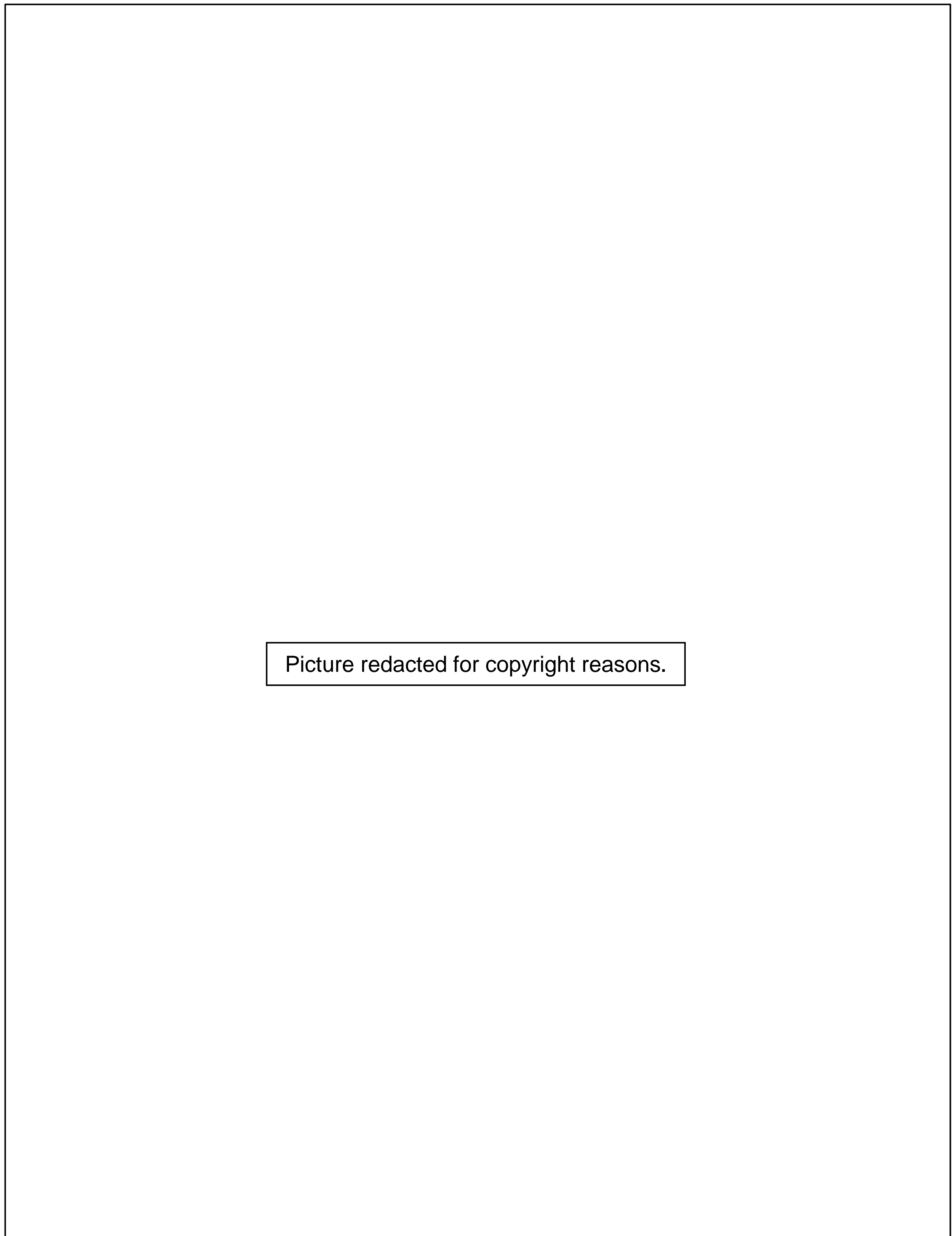


Figure 4.32: *LTMS* self-soothing (Green, 2013: 482)

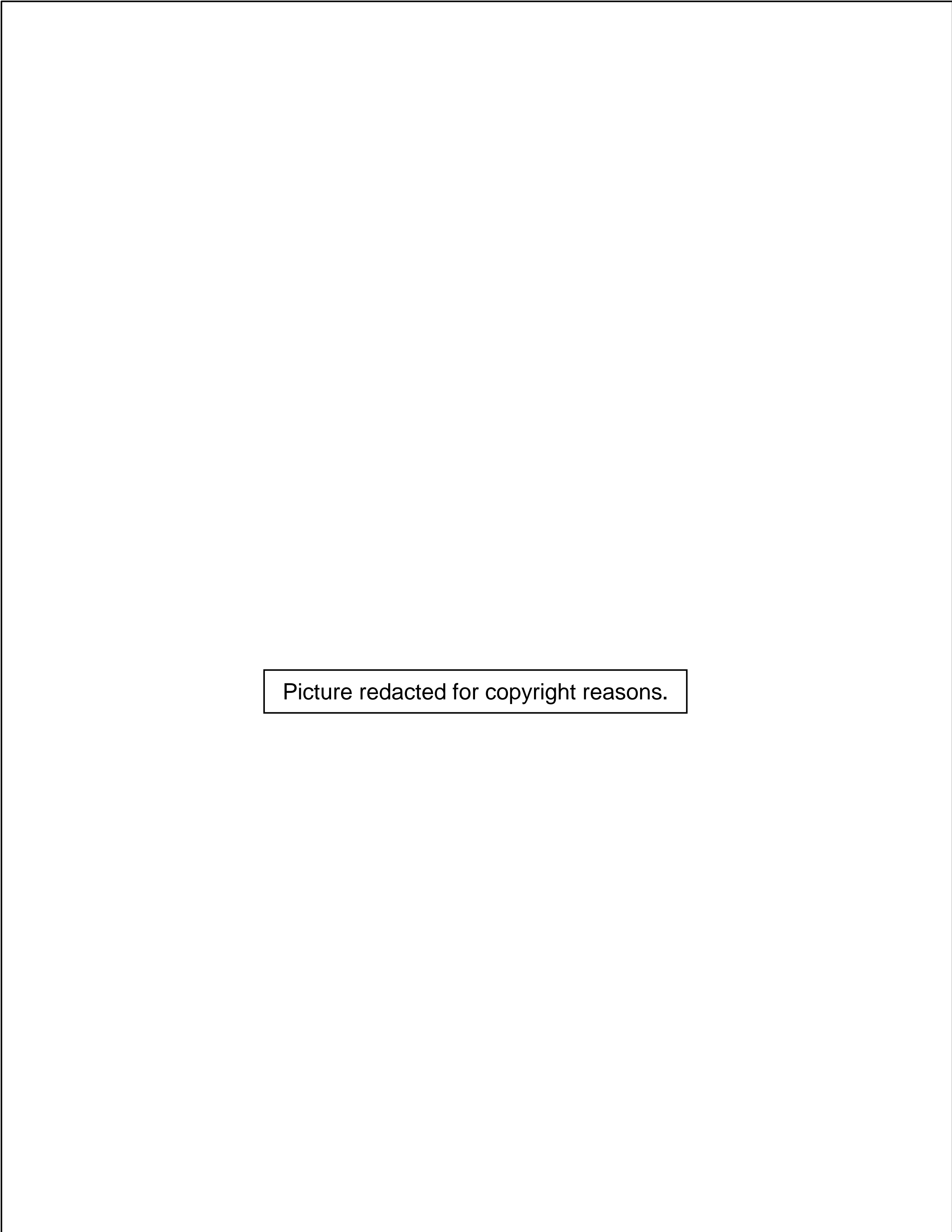


Figure 4.33: *LTMS* resolution (Green, 2013: 483)

4.4.4 Split-selves, reflexivity and resolution

In the final section of this analysis, I will focus on an event raised in the discussion which acts as a culmination of different threads in the story. Figures 4.30–4.33 feature examples of depicting distressing experience from throughout $_{c}$Katie’s life in the story. The suffused points of light in the final panel of figure 4.30 are also used to depict $_{c}$Katie’s experience of alternative therapy (Green, 2013: 131). Its depictive function parallels that of the scribble in that it persists across panels and physically interacts with $_{c}$Katie. It differs in terms of visual texture, colour and context. The scribble is darker than its background with sharply defined edges; the light is brighter than its background with softly gradated edges. As an experience of alternative treatment, these conceptual oppositions captured $_{c}$Katie’s perception of the treatment’s effectiveness at countering the effects of the scribble. Where the scribble interacts with her when she is distressed, the light mostly interacts with her when she is calm and peaceful. In fig. 4.30, lights appear above $_{c}$Katie as she falls asleep having reflected positively on romantic feelings she had experienced after encountering another person.

This peaceful state shifts abruptly in the following panel (fig. 4.31), where all of the visualisations of $_{c}$Katie’s negative experiences that have occurred in the story surround her from both ends of the panel. The structural parallels between these panels adds to the jarring sense of the appearance of this overload of traumatic psychological phenomena as the three gentle sequential transitions depicting $_{c}$Katie falling asleep are immediately disrupted by the sudden encroachment of distressing figures on the next page.

As well as the scribble, there are parts of ghosts, monsters, fire and what resembles a dragon’s abdomen and claws. These features appear earlier in the comic when $_{c}$Katie has a nightmare about monsters (Green, 2013: 27). The ghost and the claw to the right of the panel (fig. 4.31) are depicted as reaching towards her from the edge of the panel and the fire is directed so that the flames appear to be licking towards her. As with the form of the earlier scribbles, this implies a sense of malicious intent and threat from external agents towards $_{c}$Katie.

This is paralleled in the disembodied hands which are also reaching towards $_{c}$Katie from all corners of the panel. These first appear surrounded by scribbles interrupting a sexual encounter (Green, 2013: 274). The hands appear again after Jake sexually assaults $_{c}$Katie. At that point, $_{c}$Katie is depicted as taking the hands and their surrounding scribbles, placing them in a box and burying it, while saying ‘This didn’t happen’ (Green, 2013: 315; figure 4.2). This foreshadows $_{c}$Katie’s later disclosure that Jake had sexually assaulted her on other occasions and that she had similarly suppressed those traumatic experiences (Green, 2013: 361–3). Because of this, the hands can be understood as deriving metonymically from $_{c}$Katie’s direct experience as a victim of sexual assault and combining with the already established figure of the scribble.

Finally, there is a simple oval-shaped mouth on $_{c}$Katie's stomach with two rows of teeth and a tongue that is filled with scribbles. It first appears when she is binge-eating as an indirect consequence of her PTSD (Green, 2013: 334). The mouth metonymically relates to the act of eating, but its positioning on $_{c}$Katie's stomach establishes it as a distinct entity with distinct motivations. The mouth accompanies depictions of a daze-like state of consciousness that $_{c}$Katie slips into when binge eating suggesting that it is more in control of these actions than she is. It tends to disappear when $_{c}$Katie becomes more aware of what she is doing. This unconscious dimension was picked up on by **D** in the reader discussion:

D: when she starts using the imagery of the mouth on her stomach as well

C: [mm]

A: [yeah I know]

D: um … that was I [like the fact] that that

A: [~*indist*~]

D: yeah … where it . kind of . it was representing the fact that … it wasn't in her head that she wanted to do this it was like a physical . a thing that her body is doing and she's barely even . in control of it . or even conscious of it … like it seems to happen in a [daze]

C: [mm]

D: so it's not connected … to her brain at all … um so the thing over her head kind of transfers to her stomach . a bit … when I've felt various feelings I tend to … I almost don't feel it in my head I tend to feel it really really low in my stomach

The mouth figure is positively evaluated by **D** because it resonated with their experience of 'various feelings', and especially $_{a}$Katie's apparent acknowledgement of the strong embodied dimension of emotional experience. **D**'s sense of the unconsciousness of $_{c}$Katie's actions that the mouth on her midriff represents may in part have been influenced by the narrative caption on 340, 'It seemed to happen in a daze', which **D** quotes almost verbatim. Though it is impossible to tell from the transcript or recording whether she was reading from the page at the time, the shift in tense to the present shows stronger projection into the depicted text-world, as opposed to the matrix text-world indicated by the narrative caption. The epistemic modal 'seems' also relates to how **D** is projecting their perspective into the text-world in line with $_{c}$Katie's perspective, creating a 'compassionate connection' (Gavins, 2007: 103; Whiteley, 2011: 34).

In addition to the physicality of phenomenal experience and the unconsciousness of $_{c}$Katie's actions, the inside of the mouth is shaded with scribbles. Though they continue to surround $_{c}$Katie during these episodes, they are now set and firmly framed in her where previously they only invaded her

on a momentary basis. As it appears after Jake assaults her, this points to the fact that as a result of the trauma of this experience her distress and eating disorder have resolved into an automated coping mechanism. The fact that the mouth is permanently open suggests that $_{c}$Katie feels that these urges cannot be sated, and she is effectively feeding her own distress.

The same process is depicted as taking place in the following panels of figure 4.31. $_{c}$Katie's intentional deixis across these panels suggests that she is not looking at the entities causing her behaviour and distress. As before, she is experiencing the threat of their presence and responding to it through the learned response of binge-eating.

However, this instance differs in that it occurs after $_{c}$Katie has undertaken extensive psychotherapy, so she is now equipped with new ways of coping with her relapse. These events are picked up on by **D** in the reader discussion:

D: like the the bit where she talks about … she almost . lapses again … and then there's different versions of herself

C: yeah

D: and she's almost quite shadow like and … it's rather than kind of the shadow coming to attack her it's like she's hugging herself and you're like . **it's okay** <laughs>

C: yeah

D: **you can do this** . I really liked that bit

A: yeah that was nice

Here, **D** notes the transition from the conflict between $_{c}$Katie and 'the shadow' and the more reflexive and closed off response in these panels where $_{c}$Katie successfully takes control of her binge eating. In figures 4.31 and 4.32 this is shown through depictive splitting of $_{c}$Katie. In fig. 4.31 there are multiple enactors of $_{c}$Katie with graded emotional expressions ranging from distressed and eating, to neutral, to reassuringly smiling. Only the front-most enactor of $_{c}$Katie—initially also the most focally prominent in terms of brightness and contrast—has the open mouth image on her stomach, indicating the trauma-induced automaton-like state that takes over when she is binge eating. In fig. 4.32, focal prominence shifts to the left-most enactor of $_{c}$Katie through a reversal in colouring and a speech bubble, which attributes intentional action to this enactor. As well as guiding reader attention, this shift in focus helps indicate a greater degree of influence. Unlike with the scribble, trajector and landmark status are obvious here. Splitting $_{c}$Katie into multiple enactors results in a depictive realisation of reflexivity. This shift from conflict to reflexive reassurance is apparent in **D**'s recollection: 'rather than kind of the shadow coming to attack her it's like she's hugging herself'. The reflexive speech-acts indicated by the speech bubbles in fig. 4.32 interrupt the binge-eating process

that scans sequentially across the previous two panels. The notable shift here is between the automated, unconscious process of eating to the more intentional, reflexive processes of $_{c}$Katie talking to, reassuring, and hugging herself. The objective referent of the 'I' in the narrative caption 'For the first time, I was able to listen', marks a coalescence of these different versions of $_{c}$Katie back into a single enactor, who is objectively depicted in a whole-page panel (fig. 4.33), which bookends the transition from unconscious distress to conscious reassurance and control. The whole page panel slows the panel-to-panel pace of the previous pages, allowing extended focus on the emotional resolution of $_{c}$Katie's expression, the interruption of her relapse, and the diminution of the scribble, which had remained behind her in the previous panels.

Langacker (2008: 195) introduces reflexivity as a construction 'in which a single participant fills the semantic roles of both the trajector and the landmark'.

> a true reflexive and a middle represent successive degrees of departure from the archetypal conception of distinct objects interacting asymmetrically—they share the property of conflating dual roles in a single participant, but the middle goes farther by lacking even the expectation of distinct participants
>
> Langacker, 1987: 371–2

In terms of $_{c}$Katie's experience and the eventual resolution of the comic, coming to understand the depiction and narration in terms of reflexivity begins to show how $_{c}$Katie has agency in her own experience. The previous characterisation of $_{c}$Katie's events in terms of transitive and middle semantic relationships reflects a lack of clarity at that point in the comic as to her own involvement in the distress she is experiencing. From fig. 4.30 to fig. 4.33 there is a transition in the depiction between two modes of depicting reflexivity proposed by Langacker (1987: 368). Langacker (1987: 367) describes the semantic value of a reflexive as having a 'a schematically characterized relationship' the defining characteristic of which is 'the identity of the two relational participants'. This correspondence is indicated by the dotted line in fig. 4.34, while subject-object relational imbalance is indicated by the weight of the participants. Langacker provides the second diagram as 'a notational variant in which participant identity is shown directly by means of superposition'.

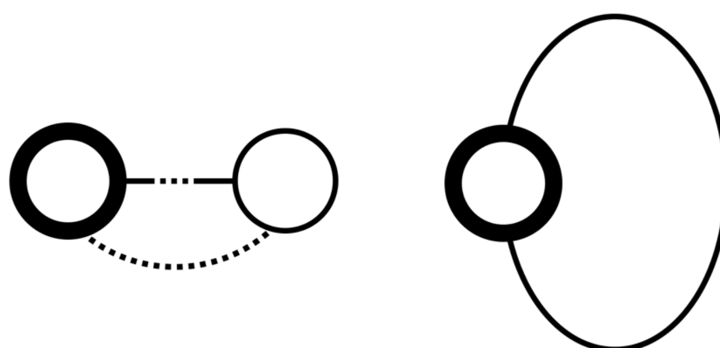


Figure 4.34: Schematic depictions of reflexivity

From figure 4.30 to figure 4.33, the identity of the enactors of $_{c}$Katie that have been in conflict throughout the comic are brought together through their reflexive interaction and gradual depictive superposition. Being aware of and responding supportively to her own state of distress allows $_{c}$Katie to interrupt this binge-eating episode and resolve the conflict within herself by identifying with the parts of herself that have been separate from her until this point in the story. Reflexivity resolves the conceptual particularisation of $_{c}$Katie's identity through reification of the different depicted enactors of her.

As well as the visual reflexivity of $_{c}$Katie hugging herself, **D**'s comment that 'she's hugging herself' reflects the reflexivity of the narration 'I could hear what I'd been telling myself all along'. **D** also echoes the spoken dialogue between the reassuring and distressed versions of $_{c}$Katie through their recreation of their own reading, or performance of a generic reader: '**it's okay**', which is a direct quote from $_{c}$Katie's reflexive dialogue. Once again, this suggests a high-level of participatory involvement in the narrative and a strong positive identification with the resolution of $_{c}$Katie's problems. The principal resolution that takes place is of the fundamental split in $_{c}$Katie's identity that becomes apparent throughout the comic. The scribble is framed as a separate entity in opposition with $_{c}$Katie. This episode marks a transition, as noted by **D**, from this conflict to a realisation that the problems that this figure indicates are a part of $_{c}$Katie and something that she can influence positively. In semantic terms, the depiction and narration of $_{c}$Katie's experience of mental illness broadly transitions from absolute construal where she is largely passive and unaware, to middle, where events seem to happen to her against her will, to reflexive, where she starts to become aware of her involvement and agency in her own experience.

The final depictive resolution of $_{c}$Katie's split identity is illustrated in figures 4.35 to 4.37. Figure 4.35 shows the scribble and $_{c}$Katie linked by a path on the ground. From the reader's visual perspective $_{c}$Katie is looking back along the bath towards the scribble. In fig. 4.36 the scribble is replaced with a younger enactor of $_{c}$Katie crying, hugging a teddy bear. This confirms the emergent sense of the scribble's identification with $_{c}$Katie's early experiences.

In fig. 4.37 the two enactors of $_{c}$Katie are interacting, with the older enactor kneeling next to, smiling at and reaching out to the younger enactor. This further reinforces the importance of engaging with past experience and of treating past versions of yourself, that you might engage with through storytelling or memory, with compassion.

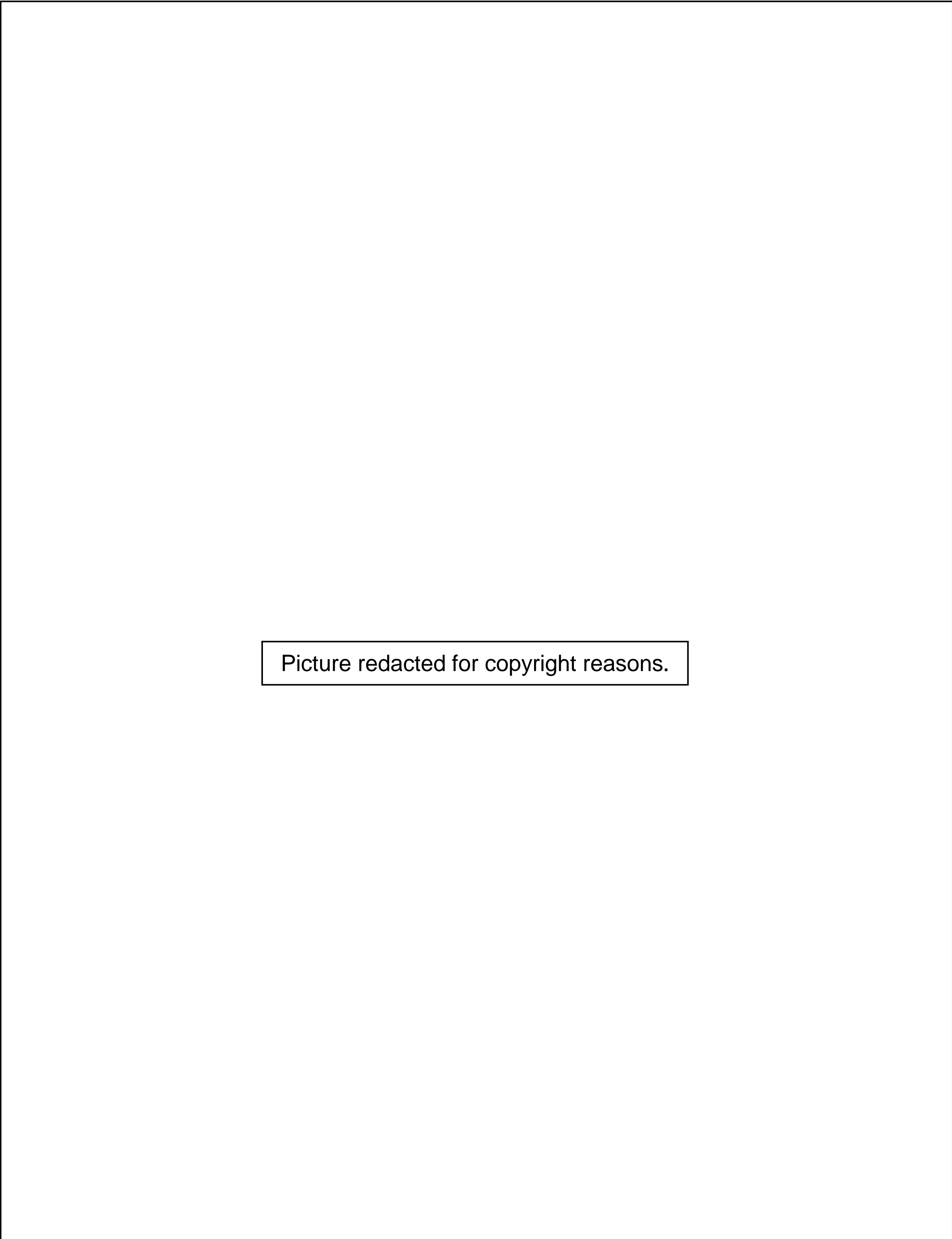


Figure 4.35: Katie and Scribble (Green, 2013: 504)

Figure 4.36: Katie and younger self (Green, 2013: 505)

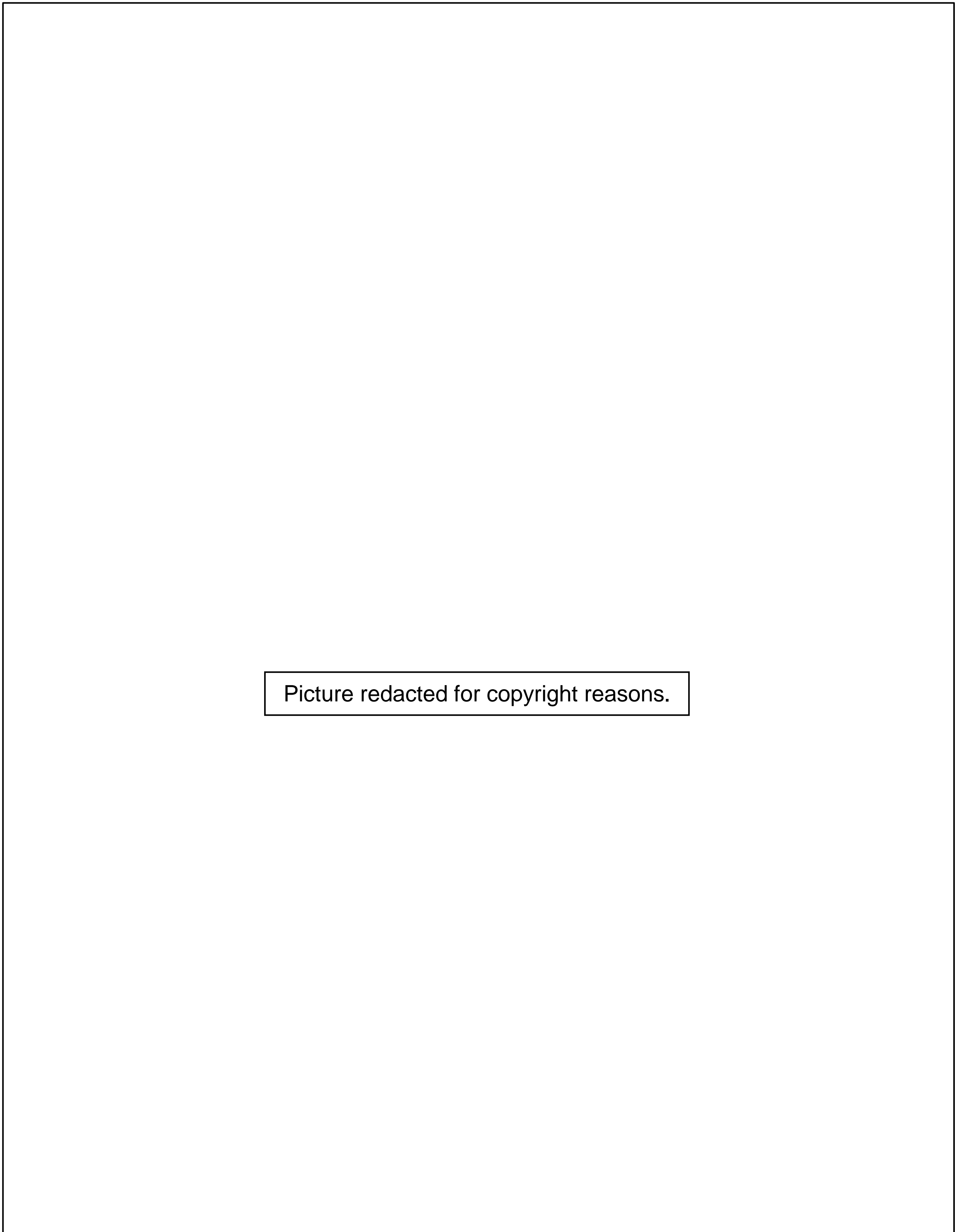


Figure 4.37: Katie comforting younger self (Green, 2013: 506)

4.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I reviewed reading group discussion of *Lighter than My Shadow* by Katie Green. From this, I identified common topics and evaluative themes including authenticity, honesty, personal experience and formal expectations relating to comics and, in particular, Green's style of drawing. I took extracts from the group discussion that engaged with specific stylistic features or story events as prompts for more in-depth analysis. Taking the cover and introductory pages as a starting point, I demonstrated how to apply Text World Theory, in conjunction with cognitive grammar, in a description of how elements of depiction are brought together to present a conceptualizable scene within a characteristically distal discourse situation. I described world-building in terms of schematic iconic depictions of entities whose meaning is established through cross-referential contextualisation with other depicted entities. I drew on the Text World Theory concept of enactors as a means of describing the inclusion of implicit and explicit conceptualising entities. This allowed me to describe how Green drew different versions of herself in different parts of the story.

The rest of the analysis focused on the scribble figure, which recurs throughout the story as a means of depicting a range of emotional responses, psychological states and complex aspects of how the depicted enactor Katie related to herself and her past experiences. In describing these different functions, I used the cognitive linguistic concept of image schemas as a means of describing the basic meaning of the scribble by engaging with the embodied aspects of how it is depicted and how it is related to Katie in the depiction. This provides a means of explaining the conceptual rudiments of depictive abstraction of subjectivity by grounding them in basic physical concepts. Finally, I used the cognitive grammar idea of the current discourse space as a way of tracking focus and attention in depiction and narration. This permits tracking of relationships between text-world enactors and discourse-world participants, how they are placed onstage and offstage, and how readers might focus on different aspects of a page at different times.

Placing subjectivity onstage, which is a necessary part of telling stories about mental illness, can only ever approximate actual subjective experience. Memory, storytelling and phenomenal consciousness are all subject to variously conscious and unconscious selections in their objectification of experience. Unconscious dimensions of experience, by dint of their very nature, can only be accessed through reflective reappraisal. In this way storytelling, narration and depiction reflect distilled versions of subjectivity that approximate actual experience. Subjectivity and objectivity are conceptual ideals that can only be experienced in combinations where one always necessarily mitigates the other.

This resonates with Pleyer and Schneider's (2014) analysis of subjectivity in the comic *Fun Home* (Bechdel, 2006). They describe how 'different degrees of attention can be assigned to the object and the subject of conceptualisation and their relationship' (Pleyer and Schneider, 2014). As

demonstrated above in section 4.4.2, there can be multiple conceptualising entities profiled within a single comics panel, whose subjective *origo* and discursive ground create distinct epistemic modal-worlds. Mind-modelling of these multiple subjectivities and how they relate to each other hierarchically in terms of access and awareness contribute to establishing an overall sense of the quality of subjective experience that is being communicated.

Textual narration in comics affords the possibility of specific grounding through deixis, modality and other linguistic grounding features. These can align with and influence, but do not entirely constrain the conceptualisation of accompanying depiction in comics. The subjectivity that arises from objective depiction can be understood in terms of mind-modelling of objectively depicted characters, which, as in social interaction, involves an emergent and ongoing integration of inferred motivation, emotion, mood and so on. These inferences arise from observation of a person’s actions, speech, emotional display as well as combinations and overlaps between these behaviours. In comics, this is achieved through depiction of embodied action presented sequentially across panels and summarily within panels, through textual representation of thought and through depictive abstraction of certain aspects of subjectivity.

While the scribble is an unconscious dimension of $_{c}$Katie’s experience, it is part of the objective content of the depiction and narration. It can be observed through the depiction, and it is placed onstage as an objective entity in the narration. Though abstract, the scribble is a dynamic objective depiction of $_{c}$Katie’s subjectivity. It is the most prominent depiction of $_{c}$Katie’s experience of mental illness and the most prominent feature of the comic noted by the readers. Though it is abstract and chaotic in nature, the way it is presented in relation to depictions of $_{c}$Katie creatively draws on basic principles of embodied knowledge as a way of making the quality of her experience more universally accessible, without closing off the interpretative dimension of conceptualising and identifying with different aspects of mental illness. This resonates with Semino’s (2010) observation that complexity and creativity in metaphorical descriptions of physical pain are an important part of their efficacy. There are elements of the scribble and other figures that are highly conventional, such as the area around the head being the locus of psychological processes in depiction (Cohn, 2013c), trauma resulting in a conceptual splitting of self in telling stories about illness (Emmott 2002), and psychological pain metaphorically communicated as physical pain. One common feature of illness metaphors that the comic critically engages with and ultimately moves beyond is the sense of opposition between a person and their illness, as evidenced in the use of metaphors of violence or war in cancer treatment (Semino et al., 2014). One of the most important and fundamental conclusions of the comic is the acceptance that illness is a part of the self and that recognition of this is an important first step towards emotional reconciliation of mental health problems. This principle could be extended to improving the emotional and psychological dimensions of experiences of living with all kinds of illness.

Emmott's (2002) examples of split-selves in patient narratives involve splits in how patients talk about themselves before and after traumatic events. The splits in $_{c}$Katie's identity involve the compartmentalisation, subsequent avoidance of and conflict with upsetting or uncontrollable behaviours, thoughts and feelings. The difference between $_{c}$Katie's former and present self is presented through the co-presentation of $_{c}$Katie's sense of self before traumatic events (her depictive avatar) and her experience after traumatic events, which she does not yet understand or identify with (the scribble, monsters, the mouth on her stomach, disembodied hands and so on. Traumatic events produce these ruptures either cumulatively or suddenly. The previously established integral sense of self ($_{c}$Katie) and the new, alien sense of self that is painfully difficult to resolve into a coherent identity, integrate and fully acknowledge. This results in altered states of consciousness and intentionality, like when $_{c}$Katie is unconscious of her actions, which are being directed by the depicted mouth on her stomach, the squiggle or the reported monster in her head.

That these emerge from traumatic events accounts for both the confused agency of the scribble and $_{c}$Katie's resistance to identifying with these experiences. Though $_{c}$Katie caring for herself and accepting that she has been harming herself are structurally important to her recovery, the influence of traumatic events importantly shows that she is not the cause of her own suffering and that mental illness is not a permanently integrated dimension of her identity. Effectively, the process of recovery is presented as the necessary yet painful internalisation of harmful external influence. In terms of the conceptualisation of all mental illness, this illustrates the potential for the experiencer to be wrongly seen as entirely responsible both for the cause of their illness and their recovery. Traumatic events, harmful interventions and effective interventions show how crucial external engagement and influence are in helping a person come to terms with their experience. Denying, ignoring and not-disclosing trauma or illness preserves a previously established sense of self, but also creates a newly compartmentalised and dysfunctional part of the self. Though this part of the self might be ignored and treated as imaginary, it will still exact a very real influence on the experiencer.

As a way of describing and understanding abstract depiction of experience of mental illness, the ambivalence of image schemas, particularly of opposing pairs as brought up in the group discussion, allows for a loose description of the conceptual interaction between abstract and iconic depiction. Whether the scribble is bursting out or forcing its way into $_{c}$Katie's head is a matter of reader construal and an inherent ambiguity of the depiction. However, both suggest uncommonly unpleasant physical violence, pain and consequent distress. In this way, the deployment of an abstract visualisation of Katie's experience of body dysmorphia, anxiety and PTSD works as a powerful visual metaphor for the experience of mental illness.

As a means of defining this very real part of Katie's experience of mental illness, the metaphorical physical harm done to $_{c}$Katie in the depiction captures both the difficulty of apprehending your own

experience and the benefit of hindsight in trying to do so. The readers respond positively to the fact that the conclusion is hopeful, yet realistically mitigated. As $_{n}$Katie notes in the concluding narration:

> Things are not perfect…
>
> …but I'm OK with that.
>
> Mostly…
>
> Green, 2013: 498–500

The strong identification and resonance with personal experience, particularly in **A** and **D**'s discussion, show potential psychological benefits as well as the potential for communicating such experiences to people who have suffered from or are suffering from similar mental health problems.

In the following chapter I will build on the descriptions of the discourse situation of reading autobiographical comics introduced in sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.2 to look at ways of describing depictive and narrative perspective in *Tangles* by Sarah Leavitt, which tells the story of her mother's experience of living with Alzheimer's. I will also expand on the concepts of grounding and subjectivity introduced above to address the fact that Leavitt's autobiography predominantly focuses on the mental health of her mother and not herself, which introduces distinct features relating to accessibility of subjective experience, which is further complicated by the progression of her mother's illness.

5 Tangles, subjectivity and grounding; or, everything is conceptualisation if you think about it

Jean Scorah, c.1960

5.1 Introduction

In 2014, my Auntie Jean died because of complications while she was being treated for Alzheimer's disease. She had progressively more and more difficulty forming new memories, accessing information and being able to engage with the world around her. We once had a conversation about a photograph of some of our ancestors in which her identification of the people in the photograph looped around several times. She pointed out great-uncle somebody then great-great-aunt someone else with the same fervour and delight each time she got back to the beginning. Before she died, I saw her for the last time just after she had been treated for a serious respiratory infection. As a result of that treatment, she regained a significant amount of cognitive function and emotional lucidity that had been assumed to have been permanently lost. She recognized us, where previously she would only recognize my mother. She spoke lucidly and communicated her thoughts, feelings and emotions

clearly and vividly. She was grateful for the life she had lived, modestly scared of death, and she loved us very much.

Though a person's lack of awareness of their own disfunction can be a complicating facet of mental illness (see sections 1.2 and 1.3.2), part of the potential for recovery or improvement comes from the ability to become aware of disfunction and to be able to communicate this to others. With Alzheimer's, dementia and other related degenerative disorders, this awareness is very much limited to the early stages of illness (Alzheimer's Research UK, 2022). My auntie's experience of Alzheimer's was only available to me from the outside and her ability to remain aware of and to communicate her experience was severely compromised. When her condition worsened, it was difficult to engage in conversation about anything, never mind the particulars of what she was going through. When her condition improved, there were fewer problems to understand and no recollection of prior disfunction. This gradually diminishing, eventually unipolar possibility of communication between two people is one of the features of the comic *Tangles* that I will look at in this chapter.

Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me is an autobiography written and drawn by the Canadian writer and artist Sarah Leavitt, first published in 2011. The comic tells the story of the end of Leavitt's mother's life following her diagnosis with Alzheimer's, and Leavitt and her family's experience of this. Leavitt documented her experience of the end of her mother's life by taking notes and drawing her experience where possible (Leavitt, 2011: 7). In her introduction to the book, Leavitt draws attention to the subjective nature of her account and of the central focus:

> This is the story that I have pieced together from my memories, my notes, and my sketches. Other people in my family may remember things differently. In the end, this is only my story: the tangled story of my mother, and me, and Alzheimer's.
>
> Leavitt, 2011: 7

How Leavitt depicts and narrates this relationship with her mother and how she captures both her own and her mother's subjective experience of this period of their lives will be the focus of this chapter. Because of this, my analysis will engage extensively with the concept of **perspective**. Thinking about conceptualisation metaphorically as 'the viewing of a scene', Langacker (2008: 73) describes perspective as 'the viewing arrangement, the most obvious aspect of which is the vantage point assumed'. In this chapter, I will look at how Leavitt engages with the concept of a viewing arrangement, vantage points and subjectivity to communicate her own and her mother's experience.

The reading group discussion for *Tangles* took place over 45 minutes in the same university teaching room as the previous session. All participants were able to attend. A and B both stated that they had not finished reading the book. The discussion remained unguided, though I attended the session to offer support. As in the previous chapter, I will use the reading group discussion to guide the specific

focus of the analysis in relation to the comic, and to use the groups reported reading experiences as context for my own understanding.

In the following sections I will present an event-focused overview of the plot before providing some general observations about the nature and content of the group discussion. The analysis will focus on several features of the comic that emerge from the reader discussion, including difficulty reading the comic because of the emotive and upsetting nature of the story, how readers engaged with the multiple perspectives and relationships, and how viewing arrangements in comics can be described using cognitive grammatical concepts.

5.2 Plot overview

Part one begins by giving an account of Sarah's relationship with her mother (Midge), father (Rob), and extended family by narrating events from her childhood and chronologically working through several of her grandparents', parents' and aunts' major life events. She quickly progresses through her adolescence, leaving home, and coming out to her parents, using these events to characterise her relationship with her parents. The subsection 'Signs' begins with a description of Midge losing her job, then struggling with a teaching job before eventually resigning. The section concludes with Sarah and her sister Hannah both remarking that they've noticed that something seems to be wrong with Midge. In the following section, Sarah confronts her father, and then her mother about behavioural symptoms that had been worrying them. Midge sees several specialists who make no conclusive diagnoses before she and Rob go away on a year-long visit to Mexico.

Sarah and her girlfriend Donimo go out to visit her parents in Mexico and continue to notice peculiarities in Midge's behaviour. On returning from Mexico, Rob's father encourages him to take Midge to see a neurologist. Sarah and Donimo visit again on the day of the appointment after which the doctor tells Sarah and Rob that Midge probably has Alzheimer's. The next section, 'Language', provides more context to Midge and Rob's relationship, telling the story of them getting together in college and the importance of art, creativity and literature to the family. The following section immediately turns back to Midge's diagnosis, focusing on the various procedures she was subjected to. Part one concludes with the neurologist ruling out all other possibilities and confirming that Midge has Alzheimer's.

Part two starts with a description of the family's religious background and Sarah's relationship with her Jewish cultural heritage. She describes starting to go to temple and discussing her mother's illness with a rabbi. Rob and Midge come to visit Sarah in Vancouver and aspects of Midge's behaviour are described as amusing by one of Sarah's friends. Sarah then looks after her mother with the help of her Aunt Debbie, while Rob takes a break from looking after her. Debbie suggests that Midge might wish she had killed herself before the disease overtook her, which upsets Sarah. Sarah then recounts a story her mother tells about getting lost in town. During this stay, Sarah

struggles with getting her mother to eat properly and with trying to record her mother's testimony about her illness, which Midge claims to want to do, but frequently becomes angry or upset during discussion. Eventually, Sarah asks Debbie to leave so she can spend time alone with her mother, though she continues to struggle to talk frankly with her about her illness and occasionally with her disoriented behaviour (e.g., angrily brushing her teeth in the middle of the night and refusing to stop).

Sarah starts to notice a decline in her mother's personal hygiene and is upset when she has to help her bathe, as Midge is no longer aware of dirt and unpleasant smells. This continues to be a problem when Sarah and Midge go to meet Rob at the airport on his return from Mexico. Sarah reflects on her mother's hair and the change in relationship from when she was a child and her mother would untangle her hair, to the present day where the roles have been reversed. She describes how she started keeping balls of her mother's tangled hair in her pockets and boxes of her own hair as a way of comforting herself.

The next section describes Midge's obsession with her unreceptive and aloof cat and Sarah's slight jealousy of the amount of attention it received. She then goes on to narrate the story of a friend's grandmother who seemed to have killed herself on learning that she had Alzheimer's. After a phone conversation in which Midge describes marital and relationship problems to Sarah, Rob talks to Sarah about thinking that Midge wants to kill herself but is unable to do so.

As Midge's problems start to become more numerous and apparent, Sarah keeps a journal of her experience, noting gaps in Midge's speech and continued fascination and obsession with animals and plants that angers Sarah at times when she feels a lack of connection with her mother.

Hannah announces her engagement, which at first angers Sarah, but she eventually calms down and visits the family to attend the wedding at which her mother is distant and uncomfortable. Later in the visit, teenage boys abuse Sarah and her mother, making fun of them for holding hands. This upsets and angers Sarah, causing her to be more cautious and uncomfortable about holding Midge's hand in public. Sarah, Hannah and Midge get caught in a storm and Sarah and Midge let her run home through the rain noting that she didn't seem to care about getting wet and just wanted to experience the feeling of falling rain. Part two ends with Midge struggling to swim at the beach and Sarah feeling embarrassed and guilty when Midge starts to remove her swimsuit in public. While Sarah is washing the dishes, Midge asks if she is running away. When Sarah replies in a confused manner, Midge explains she was trying to make a joke.

Part three begins with Sarah and Donimo staying with Midge while Rob is away visiting family. Sarah narrates different experiences she has with her mother, that vary wildly in terms of the extent to which they can communicate meaningfully. She tries reading some of her diary notes to her parents, which they all find upsetting.

Before Sarah's next visit, Hannah lets her know that Midge's condition has worsened significantly. When Sarah arrives, her mother no longer seems to recognise her, though there are occasions on which they are still able to connect on an emotional basis. Midge starts to struggle getting up and down the stairs, so Rob arranges to have their bedroom moved to the ground floor, hoping to keep Midge at home with him for as long as possible.

Trying to give Rob a break, Sarah reflects on trying to sleep next to a restless Midge during a visit the following summer. Later, Midge falls out of her bed, injuring her face quite badly, upsetting Sarah and causing some conflict between her and her father. The section ends with Sarah noting that after three or four years, her mother was no longer aware of her illness.

Sarah reflects on having had to groom her mother, the discomfort this caused her and her family, and the loss of dignity caused by the lack of privacy afforded to an ill body. She fantasises about the illness having been a ruse set up as part of a social experiment.

Hannah has a baby and Sarah and Donimo visit Fredericton. Midge is starting to lose her ability to speak and relate to others and Sarah notes the last thing she remembers her mother saying to her. She notes the extremes of emotion she experiences. Following an accident in which Rob injures himself, he decides to move Midge to a nursing home. After moving in, she gradually becomes less and less responsive to visitors, starts to eat less and gets an infection that she struggles to overcome.

Sarah learns that her mother is dying and rushes to be with her at the end. Sarah visits with her mother, sits with her and draws her and her Aunt Sukey. Eventually, Midge dies. The family return to Rob's house and drink a lot of wine before falling asleep. Soon after, Sarah reacts angrily to family and friends before her mother's remembrance service. She describes saying Kaddish for her mother. The book concludes with a dream about her mother planting seeds on her shoulders that grow into paper flowers.

5.3 Reading about Alzheimer's

While all the comics in this study engage with unique psychological experiences that might be difficult for some to relate to, *Tangles: Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* by Sarah Leavitt perhaps presents the greatest imaginative and emotional challenge to readers, while also engaging with something they may have some experience of in their own lives. This is reflected on by the group early in their discussion, which engages directly with Leavitt's use of perspective and how this relates to other comics or stories:

> C: this is also the first time we've experienced mental illness from the position of spectator as well isn't it
>
> A: [yeah]

D: [yeah]

F: [mm]

C: [so it's not from the]

A: and the person dealing with it

C: yeah

A: rather than the person experiencing it

The positioning put forward here by **C** suggests that the comic has a predominantly external perspective on Midge's experience of Alzheimer's, which reflects the reality of the condition for people with the illness and for those around them. However, this difference is only formally present in the textual narration to the extent that the person experiencing the illness is not the focal consciousness through which we engage with the text-world (i.e., the I-narrator enactor of Sarah). In the depiction, Midge's experience is very much put on stage and focused on at certain points in the story. However, Leavitt makes it clear through her narration how she becomes progressively less able to engage with her mother's experience of the world.

Within **C**'s framing of the comic's overall perspective is a conceptualisation of mental illness as a phenomenon that can be experienced from outside of the affected consciousness as it is 'experienced … from the position of spectator'. When compared with *Lighter Than My Shadow*, the perspective in the depiction is not especially different: both Sarah and Katie figure as an enactor in the depiction and narration and as discourse participant in their respective discourse-worlds. Again, the distinction arises from the thematic focus of the story on Midge, who is unable to participate in the discourse-world interaction between Leavitt, her editors (and so on), and readers. Along these lines, **A** asserts a distinction between 'the person dealing with it' and 'the person experiencing it'. The ambiguity and synonymy of these descriptions point to the interchangeability of experiential positioning when discussing people who are ill and their family, carers or friends. People experience illness and people experience others' illness.

Because Alzheimer's is a degenerative disorder, nuanced access to a person's subjective experience of the illness is lost more and more as they progressively lose the ability to communicate that experience with those around them. At present, no one can live through the full progression of this type of illness and be able to report on it in a way that makes sense to more neurotypical people. Therefore, where some participants in chapter 4 were able to draw on their own experiences of the problems Katie was facing, in this instance they are unable to relate to Midge's actual experience of Alzheimer's on the basis of their own lived experiences. Instead, some of the participants draw on their own experiences of knowing people who lived with Alzheimer's or dementia.

A: the worst thing was . the worst thing was I knew exactly really what was going to happen because um . about a year ago . um my ... next door neighbours have lived next to me for like twenty years her dad had something called PSP

C: mhm

A: which is quite similar to Alzheimer's it's like a degenerative brain disease . so when I started reading it I was like **oh god**

<laughter>

A: oh god I know what's going to happen I know how this is going to end and I was like I'll be fine I dealt with this first first-hand [and then I was sat there]

C: [yeah this is]

A: like . [<sobs>]

[<laughter>]

C: yeah this is [the]

A: [nope]

C: first time where like I've had actual ... very explicit . parallel things you know my grandma got Alzheimer's

D: mm

C: and it was it was like reading it again and and I'd not thought about it and she died in 2009 or 10 or something I hadn't realised when I was reading this quite how I'd cordoned the whole

A: yeah

C: last six months off entirely . because it was yeah it was scene by scene everything [was like]

A: [def definitely]

B: mm

C: yeah

A: I completely forget the last four or five months when David was like . in a bed in his front room . and like everyone was having to do everything for him I'm like . that bit didn't exist <laughter> the bit <laughter> leading up to it where everything was still a bit like oh yeah it'll be fine ... fine

Reading about and talking about reading about Alzheimer's reminds the participants of relevant experiences. This resonates with and reinforces expectations where they are met by the content of the story. It resonates strongly with **A** and **C**'s experiences in particular, as both identify the progression of the story with their own experience of knowing somebody with a degenerative brain disease (**A**: 'I know how this is going to end'; **C**: 'it was scene by scene everything was like…'). Both suggest that reading this comic had the effect of bringing those experiences or associated emotions back to them, and **A** performatively presents themself as being opposed to this experience (**A**: nope). Even for those who had no personal experience relating to Alzheimer's the comic had a strong emotional impact on them:

E: apologies in advance I did actually throw this one

<laughter>

E: like pleased to have finished it and just like right . just threw it on the floor away from me 'cause just I can't

D: yeah

E: you know

D: I had to . I planned it so I could I got up early . read it . um . purposely didn't shower so I could shower afterwards and kind of be like <exhales> because I knew it was going to be ... so **heartbreaking**

E reports having had an extreme emotional reaction and having expressed this by throwing the book as a manifestation of no longer wanting to read it or even hold it (**E**: 'just threw it on the floor away from me 'cause just I can't'). **D** expresses its impact through having had to plan carefully around their expected response. As with **A** before, there is a sense that they were going into this reading with expectations both of what would happen, and how the book would make them feel.

This group discussion engages most significantly with the perspective of the storytelling in relation to Midge's experience of Alzheimer's, the experiences different participants have had with Alzheimer's and the extreme emotional impact that this comic had on them while reading. In the following sections, I will look at examples relating to these themes. I will start by looking at a moment in the story that prompted one reader to stop reading the comic altogether to explore how this emotional peak might be achieved on these pages, with particular focus on modulation of perspective. Then, I will look at a section where one of the readers relates the discussion to the discourse-world process of having to draw traumatic events. I will use this to examine how perspective in the comic relates to and is affected by discourse-world considerations.

5.4 Stopping reading: event structure and response

All of the readers reported finding *Tangles* upsetting to read. The extract in figure 5.1 relates to the point in the narrative at which Sarah and her father decide to move Midge into residential care. The extract directly precedes **A**'s previously quoted assertion that they 'knew exactly really what was going to happen', suggesting that, on the basis of their experience of a friend having dementia, their anticipation of what would happen resonated strongly with an unpleasant experience:

A: I am going to have to say right now that I couldn't get to the end because I was too upset and was like no I can't finish reading this

D: I had to stop . several times

E: yeah [~*indist*~]

A: [once] once her mum went into the care home I was like no can't read [this]

C: [yeah]

A: [it's too much]

C: [I think as F says] it doesn't . it just keeps going as well

[<laughter>]

C: [like] you know this couldn't get any sadder

D: yeah

A: yeah

C: oh no wait

[<laughter>]

C: [there's still like] twenty

A: yeah

C: pages to go

Taking **A**'s experience into account, the section can be understood as overwhelming in terms of the experience being retold, in terms of the gravity and the significance of the events in relation to the progression of Alzheimer's—especially for **A** and other readers with experience of knowing someone with Alzheimer's—and in terms of the accumulation of distressing events over the course of two

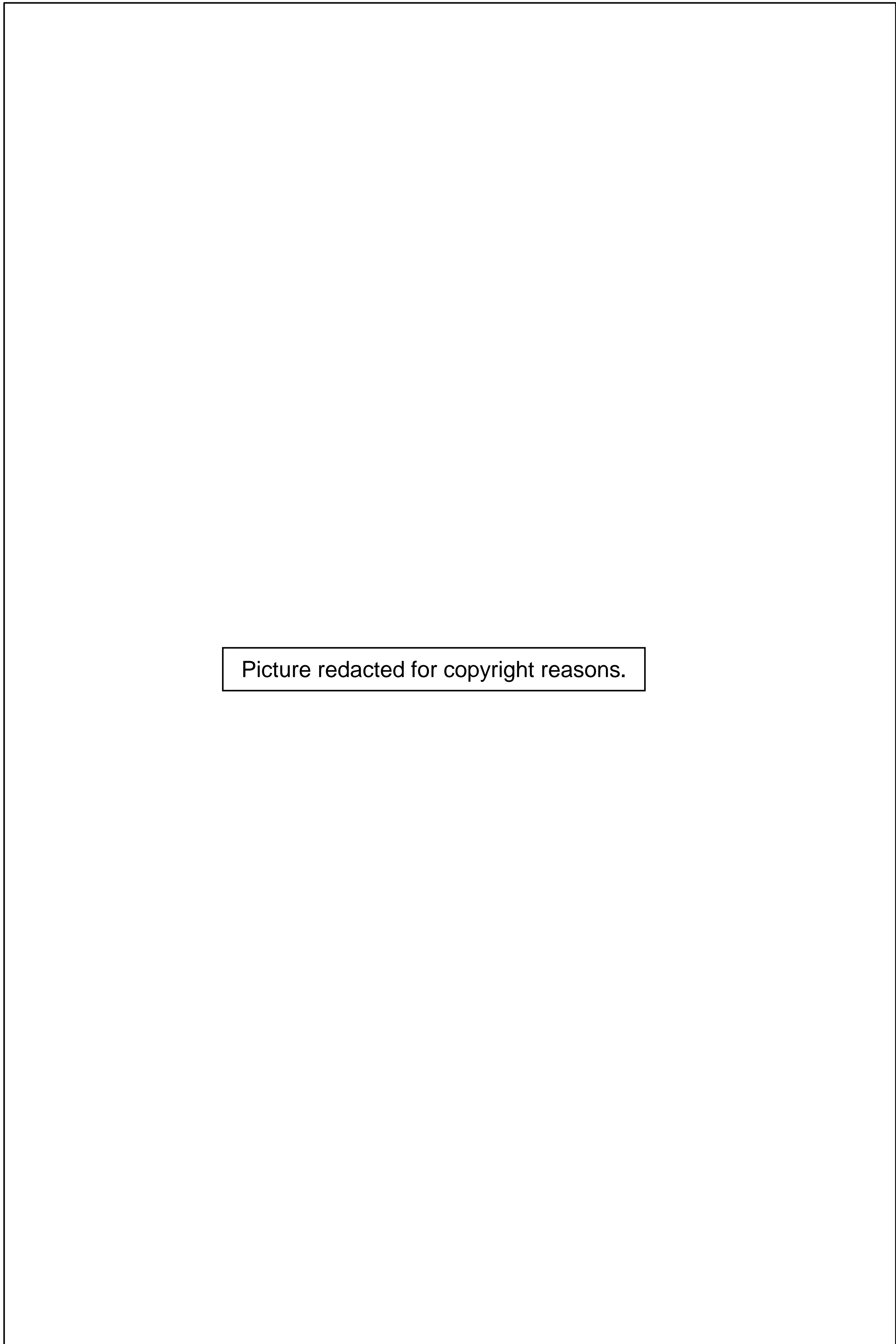


Figure 5.1: Leavitt (2011: 116–117)

pages (figure 5.1). Following on from the slower progression of the story to this point, Leavitt achieves this concentration by compressing multiple events into a relatively short section. As well as using panels on the same page to relate changes of state in relation to specific situations, Leavitt also uses panels to evoke her opinion as an isolated appraisal ('Neither of them could live like this'), and to relate both specific events ('In July', 'One day') and recurrent events ('Sometimes', 'She spent most of the day sleeping'). In addition to this, pages 116–7 cover a lot of different events: Sukie visiting, Rob sorting Midge's care, Midge and Rob falling and hurting themselves, Rob and Sarah discussing what to do, Rob starting the process of finding a home, Sarah and Rob coping with the process and Midge moving into a home. In my reading of the comic, this resulted in a sense of an accelerated progression of events which may account for this being the point at which **A** was no longer able to continue reading, especially because of how it resonated with their own expectations derived from lived experience of their friend's death. In the following section, I will look at how subjectivity is engaged with within this accelerated mode of storytelling.

5.4.1 Narrative and depictive perspective

As is common throughout the story, textual narration has a structuring function in this chapter. Leavitt makes frequent use of temporal deixis ('In July', 'Right before', 'A few weeks went by') to set out the order of events. In the first half of page 116, these markers punctuate periods of repeated or generic activity that culminate in specific critical events: Midge losing the ability to walk, and Midge and Rob falling and hurting themselves. As elsewhere in the comic, the depiction has an illustrative relationship with the narration (i.e., both modes engage with closely related conceptual content). This results in an oscillation between a proximal perspective in the depiction (in relation to the text-world) and distal perspective in the narration. The depiction captures immediate and specific reference points within the more general scope of the distal perspective framed by the past tense narration. For example, the finite narration of the phrase 'Dad called me and held the phone to Mom's mouth and she made noises' is made generic by the preceding adverb 'Sometimes', whereas it is specified as a single instance in the depiction. This adverb prompts a world-switch to a past-imperfective text-world suggesting that this happened on multiple occasions, while the simple past of 'Dad called and held', 'she made noises' and the perfective nature of the depiction create a focus on a simple exemplary instance where the repeated event is compressed into the single depicted event. The spatial world-switch in the depiction from Rob and Midge to Sarah shifts the focus of mind-modelling between the two locations.

In addition to this, the narration describes Sarah mind-modelling her mother. Sarah's uncertainty of her mother's intentions is captured textually through the doubly conditional phrasing of 'she made noises that could have been meant for me. Maybe'. This projects an epistemic modal-world in which Sarah attempts to mind model her mother, then a further shift ('Maybe') through which she expresses

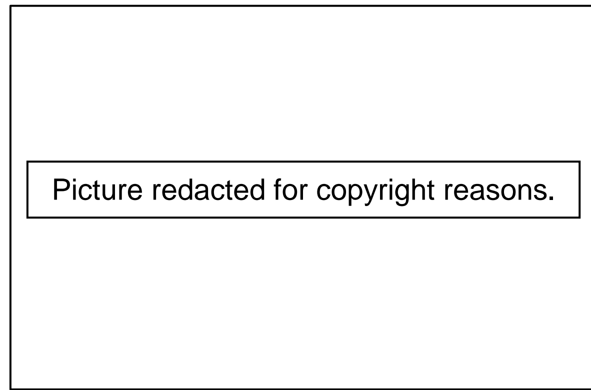


Figure 5.2: Agency in illustrative depiction: ‘Dad […] held the phone to Mom’s mouth’

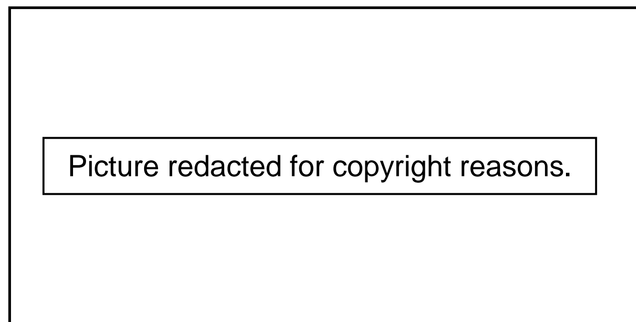


Figure 5.3: Midge’s intention direction away from telephone/Sarah

her uncertainty. As well as this uncertainty being communicated through linguistic modality, Sarah’s particular experience of these phone calls is again captured through the visual stream. Leavitt depicts and narrates Midge and Sarah’s engagement with phones, which should provide a means of connection and communication between people, in a way that exemplifies the breakdown in communication between the two. In both the visual and textual streams, Midge is primarily placed in a **patient** role: ‘[Dad] held the phone to Mom’s mouth’. As shown in figure 5.2, she is depicted to the right of the panel (*being held to*, ‘Pat’ in fig. 5.2) and Rob is to the left (*holding to*; ‘Ag’ in fig. 5.2), aligning with the conventional left-to-right, agent > patient natural path of depictive impetus which implicates the depicted and narrated phone in an **instrument** role that intervenes agent and patient roles (‘Ins’ in fig. 5.2). The specification of the phone being held to ‘her mouth’ shows the directional focus of the intended conversation between Midge and Sarah, i.e., it is intended that Midge will talk to Sarah. Midge’s lack of awareness and intentionality in relation to this communication is depicted through Midge facing away from the phone indicating a lack of attention in relation to the conversation (figure 5.3).

5.4.2 Depictive event structuring

There are multiple ways of construing this scene that are complicated by the depictive presentation. The visual structure places the phone, the instrument through which Midge is communicating, in a prototypically objective, patient position, implying that Sarah is actively *listening to* sounds rather

Figure 5.4: Sarah actively listening to Midge

than being *spoken to* (figure 5.4). Contextually, Midge's agency in this construal is curtailed by both the prior narration ('Dad called me and held the phone to Mom's mouth') and by the depiction which shows him holding the phone to her. While there is potential for these panels to be construed as Sarah passively experiencing her mother talking to her (figure 5.5), Midge's agency is further mitigated both by being implicit in the depiction of the second panel and by the wording of the narration in the previous panel describing her speech act less volitionally and vaguely as 'she made noises'. By depicting Sarah with closed eyes, folded arms and having the phone away from her on the table, Leavitt evokes an intentional avoidance of engagement on her part as well. This visually resonates with other incidents in the narrative where Sarah is either upset or avoiding engaging with an upsetting aspect of a situation (figure 5.6).

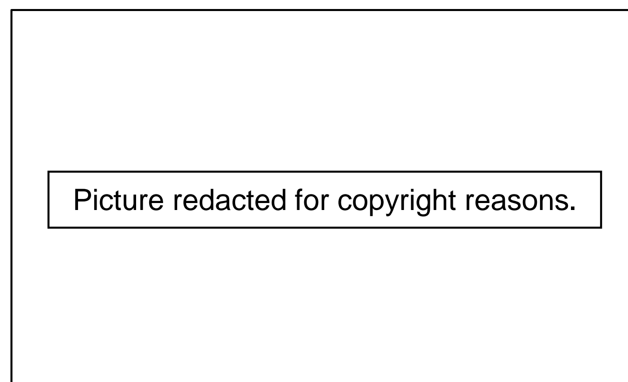


Figure 5.5: Midge as implicit agent, Sarah as passive experiencer

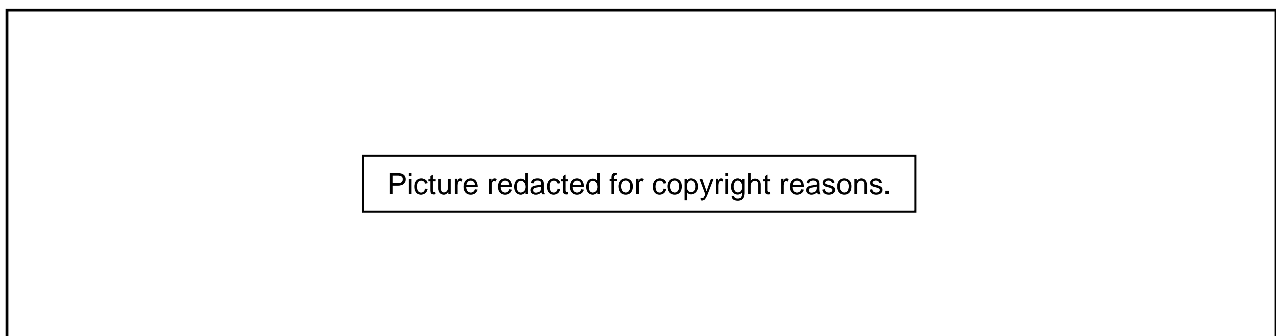


Figure 5.6: Examples of Sarah with eyes closed (Leavitt: 2011: 58, 60 and 102)

There is a further possible construal across these two panels whereby, though Midge's intentional focus is directed away from the instrument through which she might communicate with her daughter, between the panels it is possible to construe her intention as being directed towards Sarah in the adjacent panel (figure 5.7). Though this makes no sense within the spatio-temporal and communicative logic of the text-world, in the context of Midge's altered subjectivity there is potential to understand her experience of reality as being altered or elevated above normal constraints of communication and perception in such a way that there is a sense of her looking at her daughter across the divide of their divergent conscious states. Though definitely not explicit, there is still the potential here for a hopefully implied connection between Midge and Sarah across the divide of highly differentiated experiences of reality. Their subjectivities are further interrelated through the style of the text incorporation. Though the nonsense sounds 'Dee Da Ooo Mmmm' can be inferred as coming from the phone, and from Midge, they are presented in the same manner as Sarah's narration and Sarah's speech. This lack of stylistic differentiation between narration and speech results in a potential blending of Sarah's narration and Midge's reported voice, which captures the layered influence of Sarah's subjectivity at different levels of discourse (see El Refaie, 2012). The depictive structure, in combination with narrative modality, mind-modelling of (and by) enactors, and contextual expectations relating to the situation in these two panels creates a multifaceted scene that can be understood differently depending on which enactor is focused on at any particular time. Perspective shifts on the basis of how readers construe these events. The shifting focus between mind-modelling Rob, Midge and Sarah in the context of the many distressing events on these pages could again in part explain **A**'s experience of being overwhelmed at this point in the story.

Figure 5.7: Attention directed across world boundaries between panels

5.4.3 Experiencer roles

As with other instances in the first 3 strips of this page, the visual narration continues to frame specific events, while the textual narration points to these being examples of common occurrences or events that unfold over long periods of time. The prime difference between the visual and textual stream is that **experiencer** roles (see sections 2.4.3 and 4.4.3) are more explicitly and extensively assigned to the visual enactors of the characters. This role can be inferred for any human participant in a described process and this is apparent to greater and lesser degrees at different points in the textual

narration. For example, 'Mom slept for 36 hours', 'Debbie couldn't wake her up' or 'Dad spent hours scheduling help' imply but do not foreground an experiential role, while it is more prominent in 'Dad hurt his back', which points to his phenomenal experience. Contrastingly, all of the images in this section imply an experiential dimension by presenting depictions of enactors who, as well as other roles, can be understood as experiencers of the events they are living through. As discussed above, at more schematic levels of syntactic composition and related semantics, these visual depictions of characters fulfil clausal subject/object roles and agent/patient roles within energetic transactions. However, it is their experience that is foregrounded. In part, this is down to a generally objective presentation of enactors. From the perspective from which readers view them, they are placed 'onstage' (Langacker, 2008: 475) and in all instances, as described above, they are shown to be physically manifesting their emotional experience. For this series of events at least, the narration takes on a much more procedural function, while the depiction points more specifically to emotional experience of these events. Where there is a cross-over in conceptual content, 'He hurt his back', the highly schematic and stylised depiction of Rob and Midge on the floor in pain foregrounds this affective dimension even further by abstracting most distinguishing features and details, to an exaggerated depiction of tangled limbs and bodies in awkward positions (figure 5.8). It punctuates the accumulation of crises and difficulty that has been shown to be affecting both Rob and Midge generally with a depiction in which their experiences of pain and distress cannot be reliably individuated. This communicates a sense of shared pain and distress in this specific instance, which reflects the idea that they are both being severely affected by living in this way. The following entirely textual panel asserts Sarah's appraisal of these circumstances: 'Neither of them could live like this'.

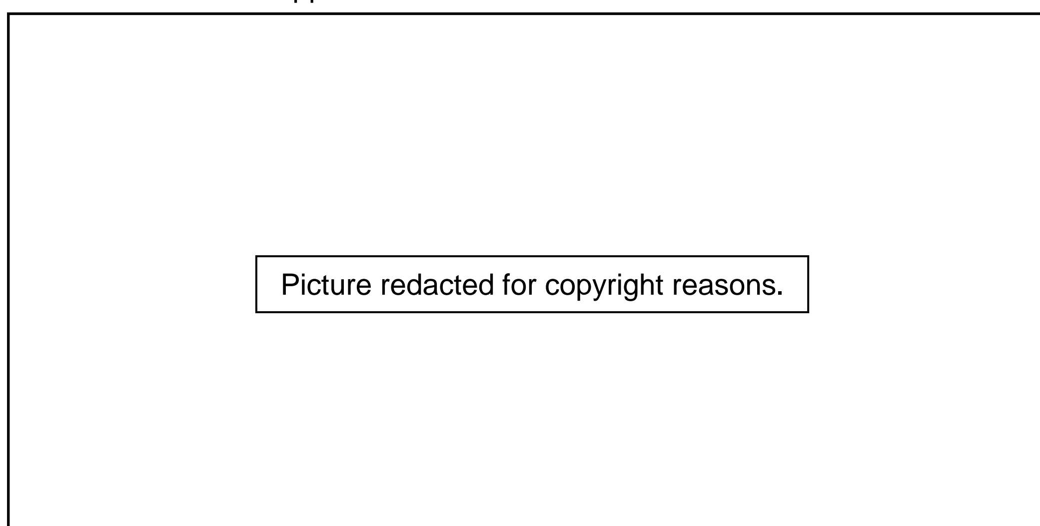

Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 5.8: Abstracted depiction foregrounding experience

5.4.4 Phone conversation: event focus

The most specifically depicted series of processes in this section is the telephone conversation between Sarah and Rob in which they make the decision to move Midge to a care home. Compared to the more generically presented events described above, this conversation is brought to

prominence through dynamic construal. While the other sections on this two-page spread oscillate between textual narration and relatively summary visual narration, the six panels depicting the conversation are presented much more sequentially and without temporally distal narrative mediation. Unlike what tends to be found in most other comics, as described in section 2.1.3, there are no formal intertextual or intratextual conventions for distinguishing narration, speech and thought, so deictic markers in the text and situational context are the features that establish the type of language use that is taking place. As with the explicit subjectivity flagged by the drawn line or handwritten lettering (or, as in this case, a pseudo-handwritten typeface) in autobiographical comics (El Refaie, 2012), this ambiguity reflects Sarah's subjective influence on the composition of all the language used in the book. Here, that includes Sarah's narration, her own speech and her father's speech. The fact that Sarah's speech and her father's speech are depicted in the same manner as her narration capture the fact that, although the depiction here engages readers directly in the unfolding of a conversation, the specifics of the language and visual configuration have been composed from a temporally and subjectively removed standpoint.

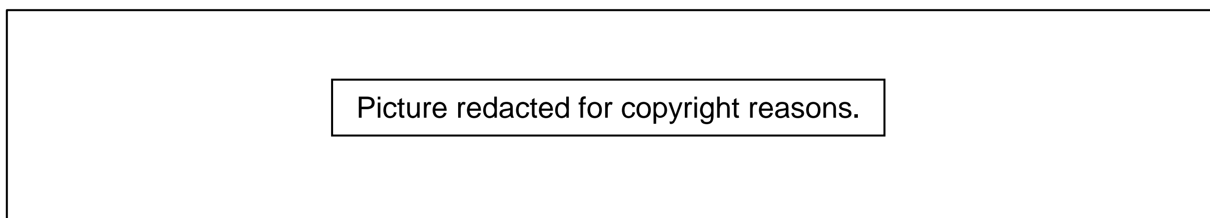


Figure 5.9: Agentive intentionality turning against depictive flow

The content of the conversation is periphrastic through the discursive omission of the referent of 'it' in 'it's completely up to you', 'I want you to be a part of it', and 'I think it's the right thing to do'. This discursive trait of avoidance is duplicated in the depiction of Sarah and Rob engaging in this conversation. Typically, in comics, there is an observable left-to-right (and to a lesser extent high-to-low) energetic flow of depiction that can be punctuated through placement of agents and the direction of their intentionality and/or action in relation to this flow (McCloud, 2007; see also sections 2.4.3 and 4.4.3). In line with this, agentive entities tend to be placed to the left of a panel and to act *into* it, either through direction of intention or through direction of interaction with the environment, both of which fall under the attentional, interactive and social aspects of intentional deixis (see section 4.3.3) As well as perceptual focus, these instances incorporate the direction of depictions of agentive, intentional action and how these interact through the depiction to establish the interactive development Rob and Sarah's shared experience. In panels 11–16 the profiled relationship in the depiction is the conversation between Rob and Sarah which takes place in different locations (figure 5.9). By toggling between these locations, the focus of the depiction is less on the relationship between conversational participants and more their relationship with the unfolding events they are discussing. Rob's initial agency and positive direction of intent (panel 12) switches to align with Sarah's direction of intent. Though they are discussing the resolution to put Midge into residential

care, I suggest that facing the characters in this direction contributes to generating a sense of reluctance that belies the overall positive assertions of the conversations.

Figure 5.10: Final four panels (Leavitt, 2012: 116)

In the final four panels of 116, Leavitt combines different degrees of textual and visual engagement to document her experience (figure 5.10). The first panel uses narration only and points to a range of unspecified processes involved, while generally explicating the implied content of the previously depicted conversation: ‘And so my father started the process for getting Mom into a nursing home’. Beyond the initial decision, Sarah (as narrator) does not describe herself as having been involved in these processes. She has no direct experience, so they are not specified here. As a bookend to an extensive period in which Rob has been Midge’s primary care giver, this textual formulation captures the asymmetry in this phase of their marriage for one final time, not only through the clause structure, in which Rob is typically agentive, but also in the social deixis of Sarah referring to him as ‘my father’ and to her mother as ‘Mom’. The latter reads as more personal because of the lack of a need for relational qualification, which also captures the fact that Rob is at this stage having to work away from the security and proximity of the family unit to put the proposed plan into action. In a very succinct way, this wording frames the division within the family as brought about by the three different participants’ engagement with the situation.

While Rob getting Midge into a home is only referred to in passing, these implied events are punctuated by depictions of diary entries, which frame the narration with Sarah’s first-hand reflections on her involvement in the decision. Depicting these entries within panels and interspersing them into the sequence draws Sarah’s act of keeping a diary to prominence, while embedding them within the sequence of events that they relate to. They provide a more direct engagement with Sarah’s emotional experience through their inclusion in the depiction, a shift into present tense, and extensive use of verbs of perception and epistemic modality. They are further differentiated from the textual narration by being depicted as cursive script, as opposed to the printed font used elsewhere. Again, this personalises the accounts and points more directly to the act of writing, which is further apparent in the first instance as the edge of the diary is also visible. Though distant from the procedural aspects of her mother and father’s life at this point, relationally and emotionally, she is very heavily engaged. The positive and negative dimensions of this decision are weighed either side

of a depiction of Sarah watching television looking tired and upset (heavy lines under eyes, upturned eyebrows). Without the perspective and fully articulated deictic precision of the textual narration, these verbal interventions capture a sense of confusion and guilt, largely because the ‘OK’ feeling she has in relation to her father is set in opposition to ‘mentally avoiding eye contact’ with her mother. The proposed explanation, a mitigated suggestion that she ‘feels a tiny bit of relief’, is implicitly conveyed as unacceptable through its association with her avoidance of thinking about her mother. Interspersing these bits of diary entry with a single panel of Sarah trying to watch television shows how her experience of trying to engage in mundane activities is overwhelmed by the emotional burden of reconciling the need for her mother to go into care with the guilt of not being able to do more to help her. As well as through the sequencing of diary entries, Sarah’s subjective experience is foregrounded through the visual perspective, which focuses readers’ attention on her (and her cat) objectively, and not on whatever it is she might be watching. This sequence also captures the potential inferential complexity of a single panel, as there are several parallel processes compressed in this image between the diary entries, which have the potential to be inferred by readers. Sarah is: sitting on a couch, holding her cat, eating ‘chips’ (i.e., crisps), watching television, as well as looking concerned, tired and upset. Because of the foregrounding of the subjective dimension of the narrative in the surrounding panels, Sarah looking upset is the most prominent of these depicted processes. The backgrounding or interruption of these other activities can be understood to be a consequence of her emotional confusion.

The analysis of the presentation of the event put forward by **A** as the moment in the story at which they had to stop reading suggests that the event itself was far from prominent in Leavitt’s storytelling. Instead, it is the emotional experience of Sarah and her father and their desire to avoid having to make this difficult decision that is most heavily foregrounded. This suggests that the prominent focus on the difficult and distressing emotions experienced by Midge’s immediate family and caregivers may contribute to the overall difficulty readers had, not just with this part of the narrative, but with the narrative as a whole. Because moving into a home is a way marker in the expected progression of Alzheimer’s, Leavitt is able use circumlocution in the dialogue to give weight and prominence to emotional experience over the event itself.

5.5 Depictive and narrative viewing arrangements

The previous section touched on how Leavitt draws attention to the subjective dimension of both the discourse-world and text-world within *Tangles*. In the discourse-world, this amounts to a flagging of the influence of Leavitt’s memory, documentation practices, and storytelling processes through the marked individuality of her drawing style, the use of a handwritten typeface, and the depiction of handwriting and drawing (El Refaie, 2010, 2012). In the text-world, it was the depicted enactors’ subjective experience that was made prominent, through the focus on experience in the depiction and through suggestive circumlocution in the narration. This foregrounding of character subjectivity

as a topic focus was achieved through objective construal of the depicted experiential processes. The perspective from which readers engage with these enactors places them firmly onstage in the conceptualisation prompted by the depiction. Readers are mostly looking *at* these depictions of characters rather than *with* them at something else. In this section, I will look in more detail at how perspective is framed in reader talk and in Leavitt's textual and visual narration.

Because of the autobiographical nature of *Tangles*, part of the reader discussion focuses on hypothesising Leavitt's discourse-world experiences of living through the end of her mother's life and having to draw and write up these experiences. In this extract from the discussion, **D** draws attention to a functional parallel between the feel of the drawings and how that indicates and encapsulates the difficulty of the depicted/narrated experience, the original experience this relates, and the experience of having to reproduce those experiences artistically.

D: it almost seems a bit like ... I'm not entirely sure but I'm just looking at . page eighty-nine . um . particularly the drawings in that one where sh she's she's started writing about her mum being ill and then she reads it to them

A: mm

D: and it all goes quite terribly ... like . the drawings are almost unfinished

C: mm

D: like

A: yeah

D: there's gaps between limbs and [fingers unfinished and she's um]

A: [yeah she's got no real legs properly]

D: a also it almost like seems like it was too hard to draw or .

A: mm

D: maybe it's kind of the stylistic thing to show her deterioration [and]

C: [she does look kind]

D: [everyone's kind of] . situation . [but]

C: [mm]

D: I mean it's ... more it's very obvious with the mum but it's also

A: yeah

D: with Sarah and her Dad as well ... um . like it must be . like to have to draw ... your mum struggling with incontinence because of Alzheimer's . I can't imagine how hard that must be ...

D engages with the style of depiction as a way of conceptualising the act of drawing the comic and mind-modelling Leavitt as a discourse-world participant who both intentionally stylises her illustration to communicative ends ('the stylistic thing to show her deterioration') and whose ability to communicate through depiction is limited by her emotional entanglement with the topic of her story ('the drawings are almost unfinished'). **D** explores their understanding of Leavitt's experience further by expressing sympathy through the difficulty of empathising: 'to have to draw ... your mum struggling with incontinence because of Alzheimer's. I can't imagine how hard that must be'. In the discussion, this amounts to a shift of focus between the text-world enactor of Sarah in the comic and enactors of Sarah in the text-world prompted by **D** that frame **D**'s understanding of Sarah's experiences as carer, daughter and author.

5.5.1 Surrogate grounding in reading

The overall discourse structure of reading is outlined in figure 5.11, which reflects a canonical speech event as posited by Langacker (2008), with 'author' and 'reader' occupying the 'speaker' and 'hearer' discourse participant roles.

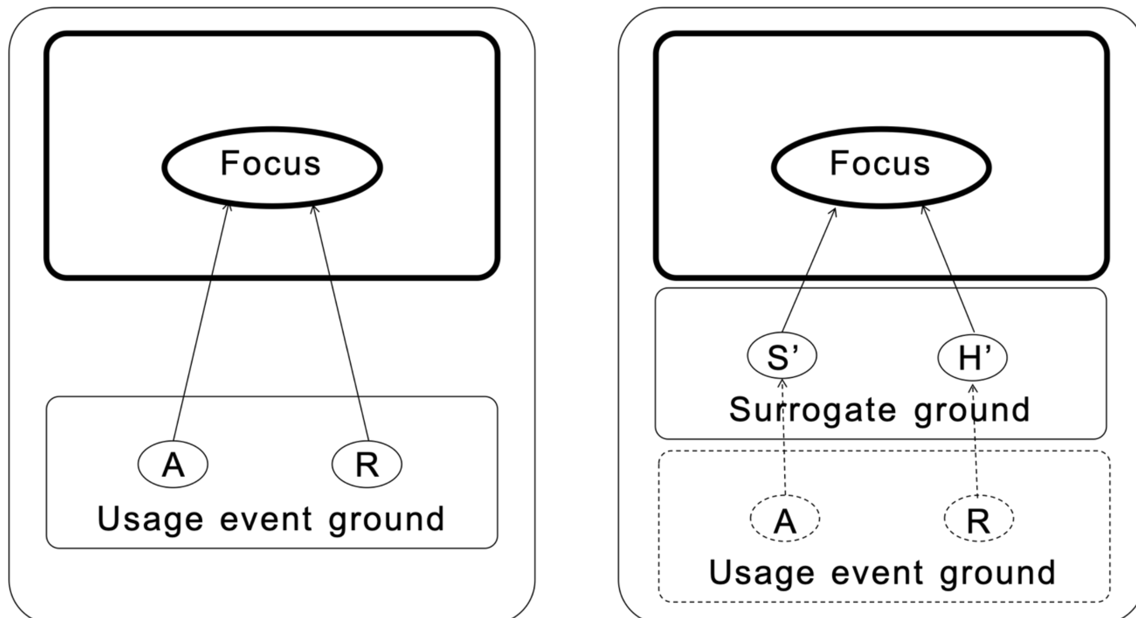


Figure 5.11: Canonical speech event and surrogate ground

Because storytelling engages with an imagined world that is grounded in relation to its own reality, this can be understood as a surrogate ground (Langacker, 1987; 1991; see also Finn, 2021). Where a quotative prompts mind-modelling of text-world enactors as imaginary discourse participants, a surrogate ground is prompted as a focal basis of grounding within that text-world. Typically, the focus

of discourse is away from (yet always related to) its ground. This shift of focus within the discourse distances the focus of grounding from the actual discourse participants, while always maintaining a thread of identity between participants in active and passive roles of storytelling and listening, watching or reading.

Narration and depiction prompt distinct surrogate grounds that are paradigmatically related to one another and syntagmatically related to usage event ground through projection. This is outlined in figure 5.12, which illustrates how the roles of author (A) and reader (R) project into the surrogate roles of narrator (N) and narratee (E) for narrative grounding, and depictor (D) and viewer (V) for depictive grounding. Because of the subject-object weighting of discursive grounding, the identities of N, E, D and V are less relevant than their objective focus. Because of this, the identity of the vantage points of both the narratee and the viewer is prototypically left open, encouraging reader projection into these roles (Lahey, 2003, 2005; Whiteley, 2011).

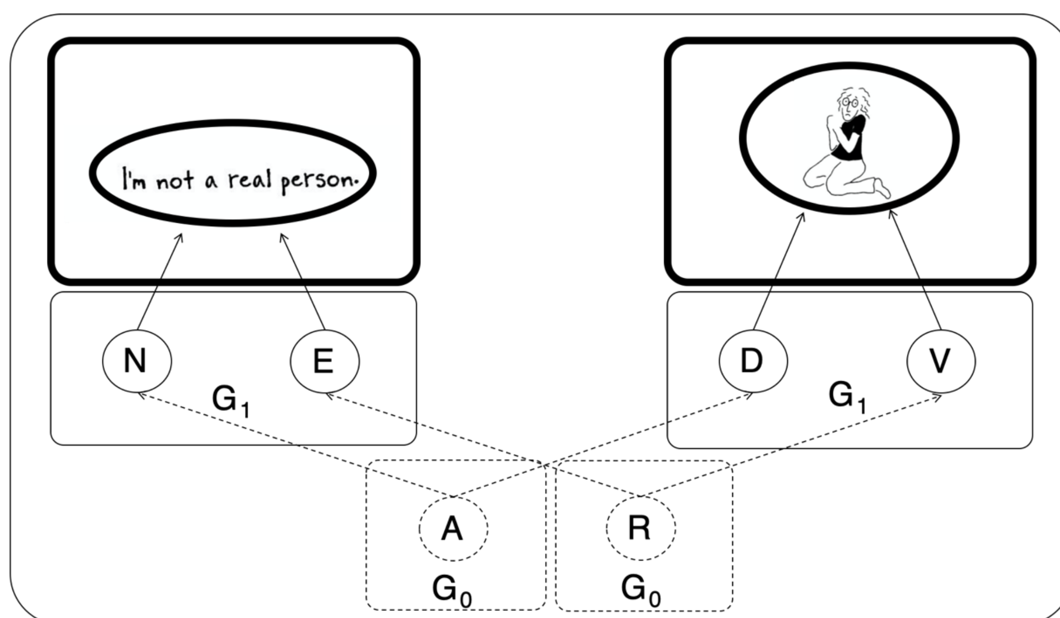


Figure 5.12: Discourse participants and text-world enactor correlates

In the discussion of page 89 (figure 5.13), **D** places the discourse structures outlined above onstage, prompting consideration of the relationships between participants and enactors across different levels of discourse-world and text-world. **D**'s focus is on the overall relationship between the author (A) and the content of the discourse. Figure 5.14 illustrates this as a mode of surrogate grounding where hearers (H) listening to **D** speak (S_D) are specifically prompted to mind-model the author (A) in relation to the focus of the author's experience of the discourse-world of the comic. Unlike the discourse structure of reading, where the subjectified nature of the discourse roles prompts projection onto analogous roles in surrogate grounds, in conversation, the processes of authoring and reading are placed onstage as the objects of focus. In **D**'s description of the authoring process as a means of reflecting on their own reading experience, the author and the comic (*Tangles*) are

focally construed as both trajector and landmark in relation to one another. Where described as 'the stylistic thing to show her deterioration', the author's influence over the comic is made prominent, while 'seems like it was hard to draw' construes the comic's influence on Leavitt as author, pointing to the emotional consequences of telling such an upsetting story. **D** sympathises with Leavitt as author by mind-modelling the experience of creating the comic. The hypothetical and negated worlds ('I can't imagine how hard that would be') prompt other participants to attempt to imagine the experience. While mind-modelling authors is an implicit dimension of the discourse structure outlined above, here, mind-modelling the author is made the discursive focus of the collaborative text-world of the group discussion (Whiteley, 2011, Peplow et al., 2015).

5.5.2 Grounding dynamics

The quotative 'I told Mom and Dad what I was doing' in panel 1 introduces the subsequent telephone conversation in panels 2–4 as a surrogate ground in relation to the (surrogate) ground of the narration. This marks a shift in focus onto the new text-world discourse event of the phone conversation, which places enactors of Sarah, Rob and Midge onstage as active discourse participants. By being initially surrogated through the narration (panel 1), the depiction of this discourse event prompts its own distinct, text-world immanent surrogate ground through the use of text-as-speech quotatives (panels 2–4). Though G1 establishes the deictic shift into G2, as figure 5.15 suggests, the shift of focus onto the depiction of panels 2–4 also marks a paradigmatic shift away from G1 as onstage surrogate ground. Awareness of the discursive hierarchy remains implicit as part of author (A) and reader (R)'s current discourse space, but once the focus has shifted onto a distinct surrogate ground, it is no longer immediately relevant, whereas the usage event grounding of the discourse-world always—and necessarily—remains as the basis of communication.

Unpacking the panel transition between panels 2 and 3 shows how Leavitt uses the vantage point of the depictor/viewer to shift focus onto different participants in distinct locations, while presenting them in sequence on the page to denote prominence. This is illustrated in figure 5.16, where the conceptual viewing frame is larger than the extent of each individual panel, allowing relationships to develop dynamically as the depiction progresses sequentially.

In the remaining panels on page 89, the focal dynamic shifts from Sarah and her father talking while her mother is present, to Sarah and her mother talking while her father is present. Unlike panels 2–4, the characters in panels 5–6 are now depicted in the same location. The spatiotemporal shift between these distinct scenes is specified through the deictic elements in the narration at the top of panel 5, 'So when I got there in the summer'. Shifting agency within this new conversational dynamic is captured through left-right placement of dialogue and depictive enactors, influencing the order of reading and the overall sense of energy transfer. The parallel dynamic across these panels, is illustrated in (i) and (ii):

i Panel 5: (Sarah) > ((Rob)Midge))

ii Panel 6: (Sarah) < ((Rob)Midge))

Sarah’s overall agentive prominence in the scene is reinforced by the alignment of her intention in relation to the depictive vantage point with the left-to-right reading path.

Figure 5.13: Page 89, as referenced by D

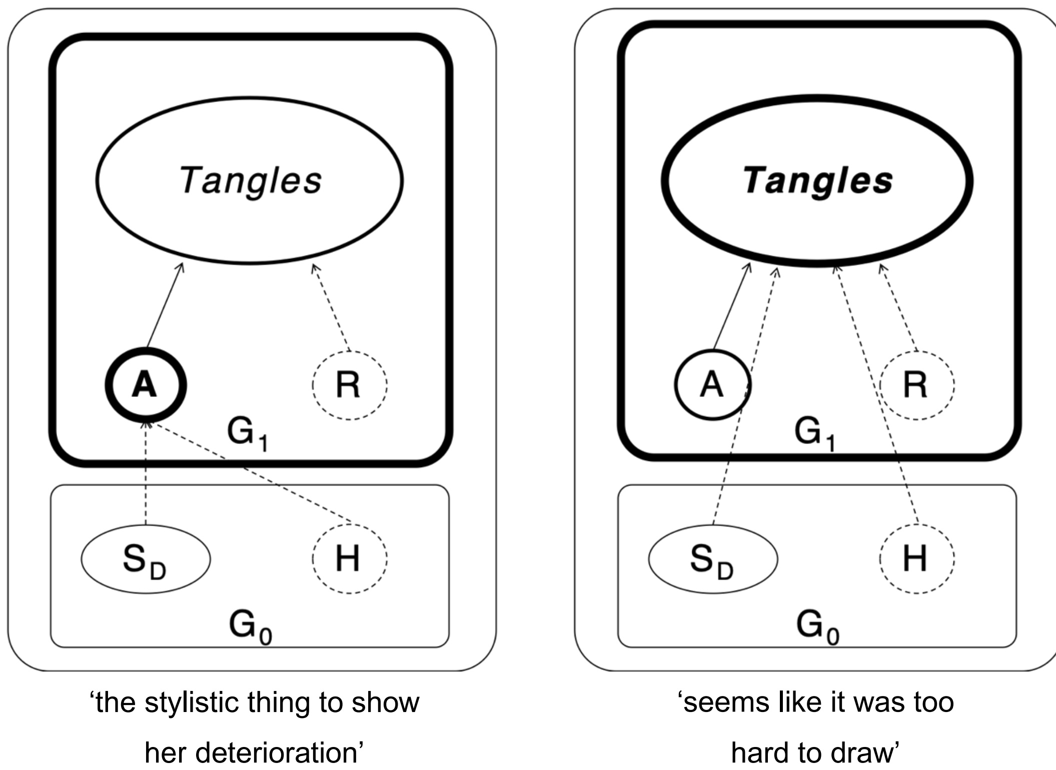


Figure 5.14: Topic focus on aspects of discourse situation

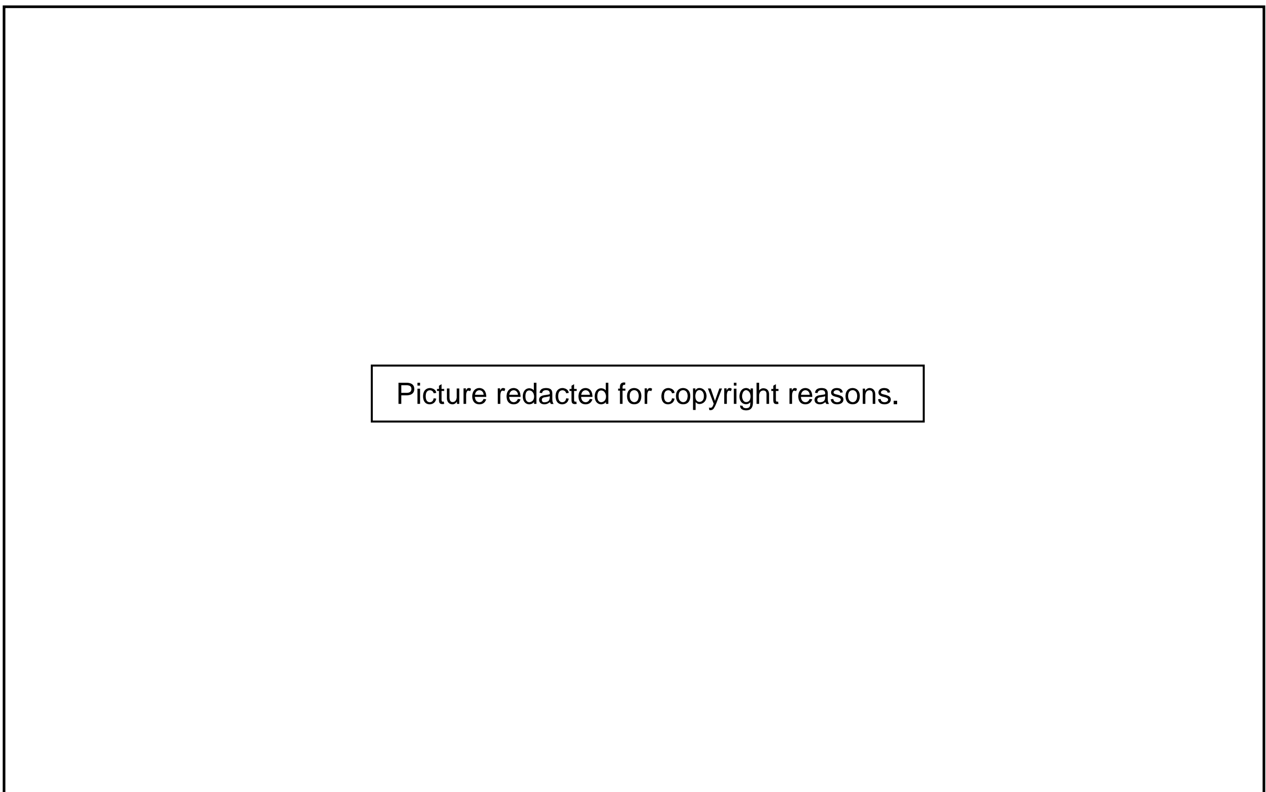


Figure 5.15: CDS progression

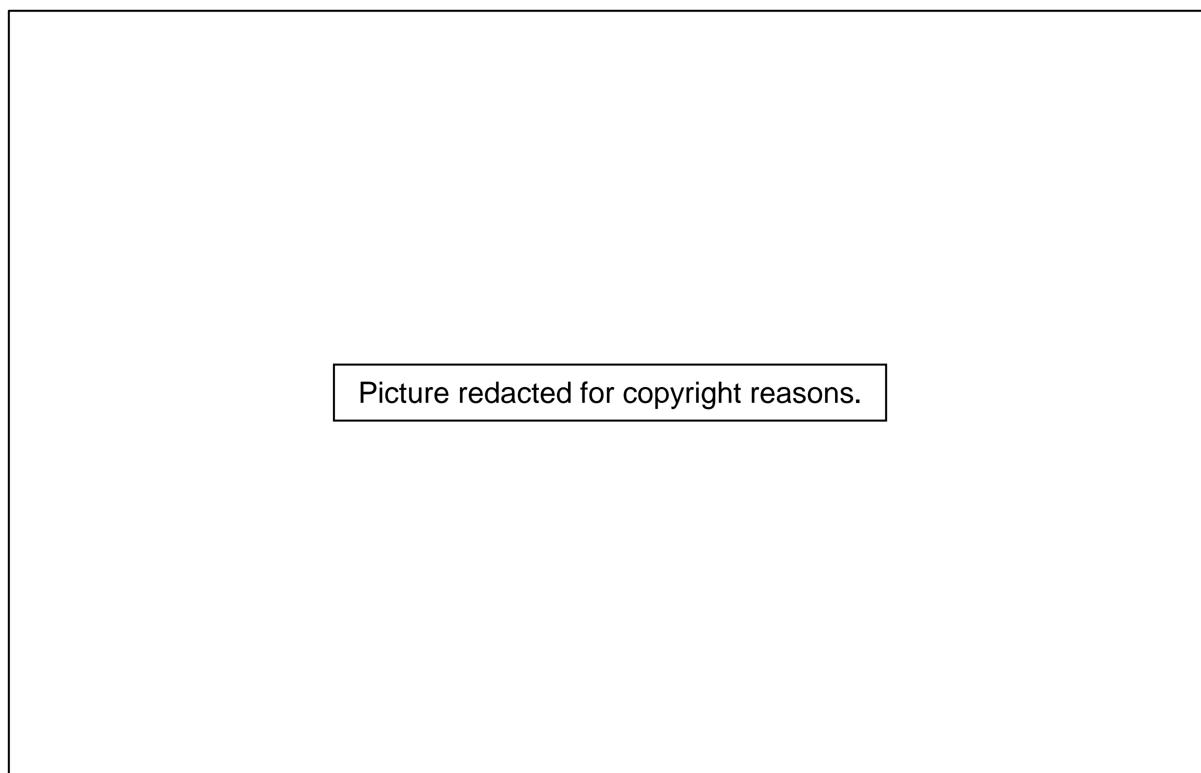


Figure 5.16: Focal shift across panels

For panels 7 and 8, the vantage point shifts, depicting Sarah and her dialogue as the objective points of focus. The text-world immanent discourse dynamic between Sarah and her parents established in the previous panels remains implicit here, but by moving Rob and Midge offstage, Leavitt specifically focuses on Sarah's experience of the conversation at this point, while aligning the visual vantage point with that of Rob and Midge. The focus on Sarah's emotional response is intensified across these panels by an increase in specificity in the depiction, which moves the vantage point closer to Sarah as she raises the document she will read from to her face, drawing attention to the 'unfinished' quality of Leavitt's illustration of her younger self, as identified in the discussion by **D.**

5.5.3 Focusing on Midge's experience

Panel 9 once again expands and shifts the vantage point to depict Sarah, Rob and Midge's reactions to Sarah's writing. On its own, the depiction retains the residual focal structure of (i) and (ii) in the depiction. Sarah's response is captured through her facial expression, her once again 'unfinished' limbs, and dropping her papers (all of which compress several processes into a single portion of an image). Midge's response is depicted through her body language (kneeling on the floor, clasping her hands in front of her, looking downwards, having a tear on her face) and the vocalisation 'OH!' which is made prominent through its bold and angled presentation. The narration in panel 9 prompts a broader shift in focus onto Midge's reaction. Sarah's act of reading is contained in an anterior clause ('After I'd read a page or two') which relates the context of Midge's more prominent actions ('Mom tried to stand and up and slid off the couch', 'She started to cry'). Her attempt to stand is mitigated

in the narration ('Mom tried to stand up and slid off the couch onto the floor') suggesting her agency is compromised by the overwhelming nature of what she's experiencing. Rather than an agent, she is more obviously a passive experiencer of these events and circumstances, which is again reinforced by her depictive positioning to the right of the panel.

Just as panels 7 and 8 focus specifically on Sarah's experience by shifting the depictive vantage point to objectively present her unique response, panel 10 repeatedly shifts the depictive vantage point to focus objectively on Midge from multiple perspectives. Beyond the first two (top left and top right), the order of these depictions is open to reader preference. For me, the presentation of these depictions of Midge has the potential to draw a reader into a feedback loop, as illustrated in figure 5.17. The proposed reading path here draws the reader back to the original image, capturing a sense of Midge's confusion and distress at the changes forced on her by her illness. This sense of being closed off parallels the closing off of Midge's arms, which are simplified at times into a continuous W-like shape in front of her, reflecting the difficulty she is having reaching beyond herself and connecting properly with her family.

This is further captured in the potential variability of the reading path in this panel. At times, I read d) as being the final image in this sequence owing to the logic of the dialogue and its visual prominence. Equally, this could be read [a) > b) > e) > d) > c)] or [a) > b) > e) > c) > d)]. Again, the potential for variability and confusion only helps to enrich the communication of Midge's sense of emotional and cognitive upset. This is achieved by presenting these images of Midge from multiple vantage points without the enforced structures of the panel borders used elsewhere.

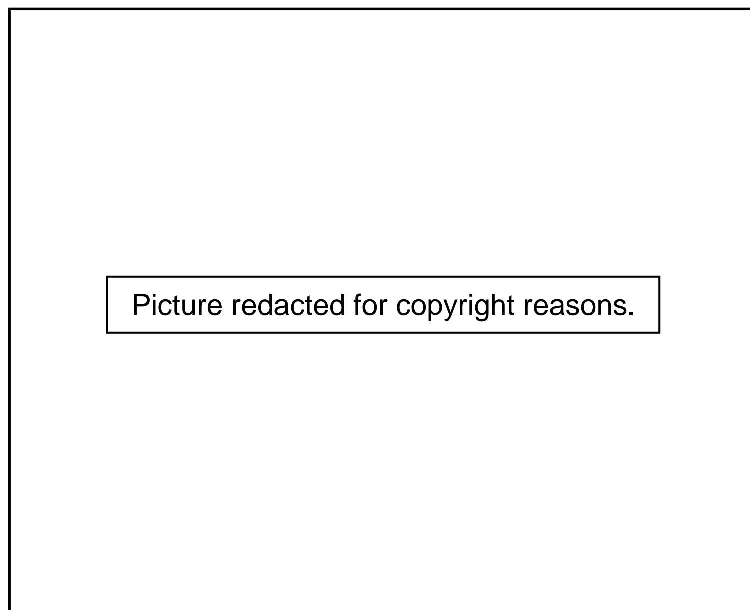


Figure 5.17: Potential reading path and feedback loop

Overall, in this panel, the angle of visual perspective, facial expression, syntax and topic are all inconsistent. Midge's dialogue oscillates between inexpressible things and obstructed relationships

between 'you', 'me', 'I' and 'things'. Everything in this and the previous panel contributes to the sense that this was a confusing and upsetting experience for all involved. Leavitt summarises and punctuates this in panel 11, where the inversion of colours reflects the inversion in intention between panels 1 and 11. It marks an abrupt tonal shift to conclude this vignette.

5.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I have looked at the nature of the participants' reported reading experiences and observed some parallels between the discussion of *Tangles* and the discussion of *Lighter than My Shadow*. In both instances, participants engage primarily with the first-person narrators' experiences either by recounting similar experiences from their own lives, or by postulating experiences of writing, caring for a loved one, and being ill. In relation to *Tangles*, this results in what **A** and **C** describe in 5.3 as an external perspective on the experience of Alzheimer's. They describe reading *Tangles* as experiencing 'mental illness from the position of spectator' and 'the person dealing with it', rather than 'the person experiencing it'. The objective focus on Alzheimer's that **A** and **C** remark in *Tangles* is also present in their own stories of being people 'dealing with it'. In all three instances, the Alzheimer's or dementia of the people narrated objectively take precedence over the subjective experience of the narrators as spectators. As a result, their own mental and emotional well-being in relation to these experiences is only indirectly expressed through Leavitt, **A** and **C**'s descriptions of their emotional responses and behaviours resulting from the prioritisation of others' well-being. This emotional impact resonates strongly with both the participants' reported reading experiences and their anticipated responses to reading (see 5.3). In this way, each participant demonstrated enough awareness of the nature of Alzheimer's for it to provide a pre-existing structure for how to engage with the social and emotional dynamics of Leavitt's storytelling.

Based on points in the reading group discussion relating to difficulty reading specific events, in 5.4 I focused on event structuring in depiction and narration. I explored how significance and prominence were brought to the specific event of Midge going into a care home through the anticipation and inference of readers and through depictive and narrative strategies of expressing avoidance, agency, and conflict (e.g., circumlocution, flow and counter flow of character intention and depictive progression). In 5.5 I examined the inferences made by **D** relating to the apparent experience of drawing based on Leavitt's evolving style. From this, I examined the discourse structures implied by **D**'s reflection and used the relevant section of the comic to explore how different aspects of the discourse-world and text-world of the comic (as well as the discussion) are related to each other to form a multifaceted conceptualisation of usage events including drawing, writing, and reading, as well as actual and fictive experiences that arise from them. The analysis led me to consider subjectivity and objectivity as experiential prototypes that influence conceptualisation in different ways at different levels of discourse.

In relation to reading, section 5.5 explores shifting experiencer focus in depiction and narration. In the conceptualisation of the discourse event, subjectivity relates to grounding in the discourse-world. Within the conceptualisation of the text-world, this is paralleled in relation to narrating and depicting enactors through surrogate grounding. The nature of the experiential prototypes of narration and depiction influence the type of experience they are able to simulate.

The prototype for narration (as I use the term) is verbal communication. The experiential prototypes of speaker and listener as participants in storytelling are well defined as is evident through the grammatical indication of these roles. Textual narration positions a reader in a receptive discursive role where they are addressed by a productive participant, whose identity is more or less foregrounded depending on how predications are grounded. In *Tangles*, the narrating enactor is related to Leavitt as author through the biographical framing of the comic and through first person pronouns. The psychological perspective within the narration is from Sarah (the narrator)'s subjective vantage points, while focusing objectively on Midge.

The act of simulating storytelling speech through writing creates a receptive vacuum that readers can fill to experience a sense of engagement. Whereas there is evidence to suggest that readers project into the roles left open in the text-world grounding of narration (Lahey, 2003, 2005; Whiteley, 2011), my analysis in section 5.5 suggests that the shifting vantage point of depiction in comics does not necessarily prompt a similarly interactive projection. The depictive vantage point in *Tangles* is much more variable than the narrative one, permitting focus on all character's actions, interactions and emotional responses to situations. For readers, the experiential analogue prompted by depiction is *viewing a scene*. This has to do with the nature of subjectivity and objectivity in the conceptualisation of discourse and, more generally, of experiential reality.

> The eyes are construed with maximal subjectivity, for they see but cannot themselves be seen. What they see, when examined up close and with full acuity, is construed with maximal objectivity. Construed with a lesser degree of objectivity is everything else currently visible, both onstage and offstage. The scope of awareness even includes parts of the viewer's own body, which is vaguely perceptible at the very margins of the visual field.
>
> Langacker, 2008: 261

Viewing from a certain perspective subjectifies the viewer and objectifies what is being looked at. The nature of observing something involves focusing away from the subjective *origo*.

Based on the preceding chapter, I suggest that while depiction does not posit obviously active roles, it still reflects a prototypical directed experience that is at least schematically similar to verbal storytelling and narration. In the tradition of Prince's (1971, 1985) personification of imagined, discursively prompted discourse participants, Groensteen (1999, 2011) posits a depictive '*monstrateur*' role (literally, 'shower', as in 'to show'), similar to that of a narrator. Groensteen's

depicting enactor falls somewhere between the discourse-world artist/illustrator and the text-world observer/vantage point. The interpersonal act of showing is implicit in the order of presentation of objects, how they relate to one another in fictive space, how they relate to the vantage point, the angle of perception, occlusion, foregrounding (literal and otherwise) and other factors of depictive composition. Whereas the simulated act of speech in narration posits an obviously active and intentional consciousness to engage with (through verbal grounding, function advancement or epistemic modality), the intent and activity in the act of showing is less demonstrable to the extent that it is less grammaticised than language use. Depiction in comics tends to lack comprehensive conventionalised means of communicating aspects of deixis or modality that are present in verbal communication. Indicators of relative proximity, identity and time are more likely to arise from either relativity in fictive time and space, and the established context of the discourse. Other than the lack of prominence, there is also no obvious distinction between a depictor and the vantage point that readers occupy aside from its tacit relation to the author/artist at point of production.

Because of this, the showing role of a depictor is less likely to figure prominently in the conceptualisation of storytelling than the role of a narrator, unless features that indicate deliberation on the part of a depictor are made part of the depiction (or of a contextualising discussion). When perspective changes between panels and pages in a comic, adept readers are unlikely to respond to this by questioning why and how they have changed position or whether they have been transported to a distinct subjective origo or experiencer in the text-world. This is because they have learnt that the meaning of these shifts tends to be conventional and grammatical (i.e., enforcing certain relationships between depicted entities through composition), rather than part of the objective content. Unlike text and speech, depiction simulates the less obviously intentional process of the directing of attention and visual focus. An artist may well figure in a reader's understanding of depiction, either through a predisposition to read in this manner, or through text-world or discourse-world foregrounding of this influence. Whereas textual narration requires an enactor who tells a story to us as readers, visual depiction more functionally collapses the gap between text-world and reader, so it is less likely that a directing, drawing or showing enactor will be part of how a reader conceptualises the narrative. However, grounding elements of narration and depiction all contain two levels of focus: origin and destination. 'You' points less to the speaker and more to the addressee. 'I' points both from and to the speaker, but there is still a conceptual distinction between the speaker's identity with the subjective, discourse-world referent of 'I' and with the objectively focused, text-world 'I'. The lack of personal or social deixis in most perspectival grounding in depiction means that this sense of involvement is further backgrounded in terms of discursive focus.

In section 5.4, I also looked at the influence of subjective experience as a conventionalised aspect of narration and depiction in comics storytelling and how the subjectivity of predicated experiencers is influenced by this. The status of text-world enactors depends on the variable construal imposed on a depiction by a reader, which is constrained by the situational context of reading and their

understanding of how to read a comics page. This is, in turn, constrained by compositional features including the order of presentation of enactors and other entities in relation to the left-to-right reading path and dynamic flow of the depicted narrative, as well as changes in focus between depicted and narrated entities.

Construal of subjective experience is influenced by variable assignment of subject and object roles to experiencing entities. This variability illustrates the conceptual bivalence of the experiencer archetype. Though the experiencer role is described as typically thematic in cognitive grammar (Langacker, 2008: 370), how an experiencer is focused within a predication 'imposes a particular perspective on the [predicated] process' (Langacker, 2008: 126). Langacker (2008: 392) characterises this as 'the ambivalence of experiencers with respect to the agent-theme opposition':

> On the one hand, experiencer (along with patient, mover, and zero) is a basic thematic role: *She was happy*; *He fainted*; *I ache all over*. But as the locus of mental activity, an experiencer is also conceived as the source of a mental path establishing mental contact with another entity: *I'm watching you*; *He imagined it*; *She remembers me*. In this latter guise it is readily construed as being agent-like, in the sense of being active, volitional, or responsible for initiating an interaction. We can thus distinguish between a passive (or thematic) experiencer and one that is active (or initiative). Their distribution tends to follow an ergative/absolutive pattern. That is, passive experiencers are normally coded by intransitive subjects and transitive objects (*I'm happy*; *That pleases me*), and active experiencers are coded by transitive subjects (*I like that*).
>
> Langacker, 2008: 392

This amounts to the difference between the manifestation of subjective experience at the phonological pole of meaning (i.e., grammatical subjects and objects), and the function of subjectivity at the semantic pole of meaning (i.e., experiencer roles). How experiencer and stimulus are related to one another linguistically determines whether they profile an experience as happening to an experiencer or as originating *from* an experiencer. Talmy similarly describes the interaction between these manifestations of subjectivity:

> Subjecthood, perhaps because of its frequent association with agency, may tend to confer on any semantic category expressed in it some initiatory or instigative characteristics. Accordingly, with Stimulus as subject, an external object or event (the stimulus) may be felt to act on an Experiencer so as to engender within him or her a particular mental event. Conversely, with Experiencer as subject, the mental event may be felt to arise autonomously and to direct itself outward toward a selected object.
>
> Talmy, 2000a: 101

The idea of intentional experience (i.e., experiencer as subject) can be understood in terms of 'fictive paths' of energy transfer (Talmy, 2000a: 115–125). These fictive paths reinforce the experiential validity of subjective intentionality in opposition to the reality of energy transfer in perception. For

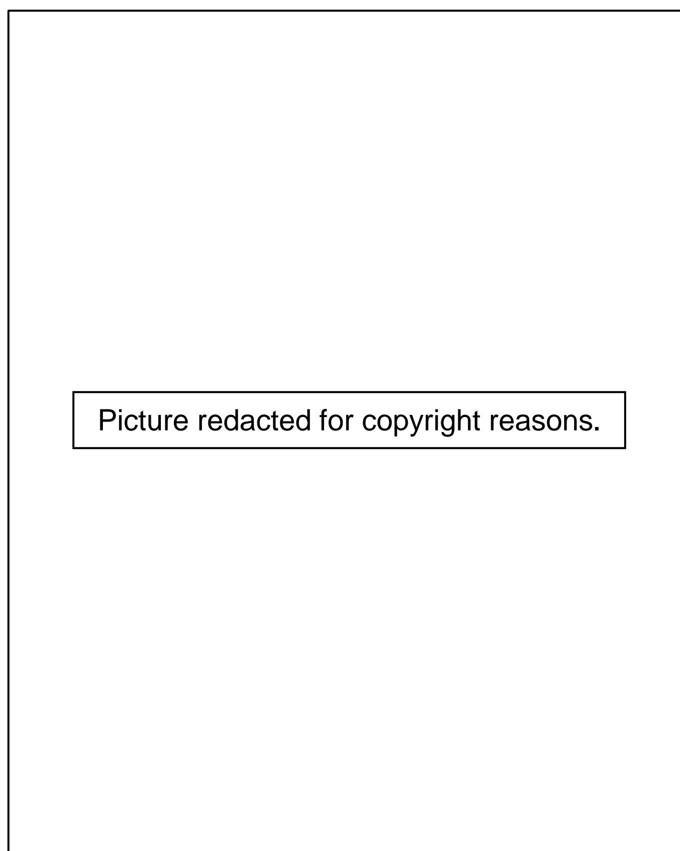
example, *I saw it* doesn't involve an actual energy transfer that aligns with the schematic structure of the clause S>V>O. Physically, the reverse is true: light hits the retina, soundwaves vibrate the eardrum, particles agitate olfactory receptors etc. However, as in a depiction of an experiencer with daggers emanating from their eyes to an experienced object (Talmy, 2000a: 125), intentional direction of energy transfer from experiencer to experienced arises from the idea of an experiencer as a zero-point of intentional engagement with the world.

Because of this potential bivalence, the nature of experience communicated through narration and depiction can be modulated through order of presentation of experiencer and experienced objects. The alignment of fictive paths of intentional experience, physical and situated expectations of energy transfer, and manifestations of these experiential source domains in narrative and depictive conventions (e.g., order of presentation, reading path, or attentional direction) permit communication of different types of experience. Mind-modelling of enactors is affected by patterns, tendencies, and deviations in these modes of presentation. The construal dynamics of subjectivity are a matter of focus within the domain of experience.

The thing that makes subjectivity useful as a conceptual basis for communication is also the thing that complicates engaging with it objectively. Subjectivity is both a slippery experiential prototype and a complicated objective focus of discourse precisely *because* of its characteristic object-focus. Subjectivity within discourse either proffers an experience to observe, or a subjective viewpoint in relation to a text-world. The artificial nature of these subjectivities limits absolute empathy, projection or experience of others' subjectivity as it places an inevitable buffer of conceptualisation between discourse participant and enactor subjectivity. When people think about experience, it becomes an object of experience distanced from its actual source. This infinite deferral marks the boundary of our ability to communicate and even to understand experience.

Leavitt subtitles *Tangles* with 'Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me'. The way this is presented in terms of the perspective, grounding, surrogate grounding and shifting focus between enactors of Leavitt, her mother (and other people to a lesser extent), is itself a tangle of difficult to express emotions and confusing experiences, all of which are caused by Midge's progressing Alzheimer's or people's response to it. Unlike *Lighter than My Shadow* in the previous chapter, Alzheimer's—though objectified in the title—is not depicted as a distinct interactive entity. Instead, it is a quality that inflects Sarah's interactions with her mother in difficult and upsetting, but also occasionally sweet and funny ways.

6 The Nao of Brown: Being and The Nothing-ness



Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

Gregory quoting Herman Hesse (1951; Dillon, 2012: 71)

6.1 Introduction

In 1972, Justin Green published *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, telling the story of Binky's struggles with Catholicism, guilt, shame, neurosis and compulsive behaviours. The symptoms, experiences and behaviours set out in that comic would, according to current psychiatric criteria (e.g., DSM-5), fall under the rubric of **obsessive-compulsive disorder**. The comic demonstrates extensive parallels between the formal practice of Catholic repentance and the compulsive actions or ways of thinking developed as disordered coping mechanisms for dealing with disturbing intrusive thoughts and obsessions. *Binky Brown* was foundational in allowing me to come to terms with my own long-standing mental health problems, unhelpful ways of thinking, and disordered behaviours that I developed as ways of coping with the loss of certainty and security that resulted from my own lapses of both practice and faith. It was the thematic link to this comic—a focus on OCD rather than specifically Catholic neuroses—that first called my attention to Glyn Dillon's comic *The Nao of Brown*.

The Nao of Brown is a fictional comic about the titular character, Nao, and her experience of learning to understand and live with her obsessions, intrusive thoughts and coping mechanisms. The comic includes a parallel fictional story, *ichi*, which is an anime and manga series that Nao is a fan of. In Japanese, 'ichi' or 'いち' means 'one', while 'the Nothing' is an apparent antagonist in the series.

Engaging the themes of unity and nothingness, the comic presents the following account of the character Gregory experiencing a stroke:

> I lay there in a silent mind… my 'I' did not exist anymore, instead I had the overwhelming feeling that I was all that is… I was everything and yet simultaneously nothing. I had lost all perception of the boundaries of my body, I no longer felt fat at all… I felt enormous! At one with the vastness of the universe… yet at the same time, Nao's shouting was so loud and the light was too bright, and my head throbbed with a punishing, unbearable pressure.
>
> *The Nao of Brown* (Dillon, 2012: 192)

There are parallel experiential dimensions outlined in Gregory's (fictional) written account of having a stroke. His storytelling posits conscious experience of Gregory's sense of self diverging into an experience of vast connection and non-existence occurring in tandem with acute and personal experiences of pain. In text, these experiences have to be concatenated according to the order of their presentation and integrated adverbially ('simultaneously', 'at the same time'). In this chapter I will look at the ways in which depiction and narration are combined to explore the different ways in which they achieve similar conceptual integration of characters' subjective realities based on what is made objectively observable to readers. Broadly speaking, *The Nao of Brown* does this by layering acute experience (depiction), appraisal and context (thought presentation), and recalling/retelling/re-experiencing (narration). It is through co-presentation of these features that they integrate to propose the complexities of the focal character Nao's experience of living with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

I will begin by providing a written précis of the content of the comic before reintroducing the reading group and exploring some of the ways in which the participants engaged with the comic. From this starting point, I will then look in detail at the ways in which the comic depicts and narrates aspects of Nao's experience that might be construed as internal to her subjective experience, and that can only be communicated through report. Finally, I will focus on a specific situation in the comic and how it presents Nao's subjective experience as part of the objective content, allowing readers to engage with the complexities of her experience of OCD and the emotional and psychological consequences of **intrusive thoughts**—vivid, unbidden and often unpleasant thoughts that can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, fear or self-loathing.

6.2 The Nao of Brown: overview

The dust jacket of *The Nao of Brown* carries an image of the main character Nao, with a washing machine in place of her head. The cover is embossed with an impression of a painted circle or *enso*, which is explained later to be the Japanese word for circle and a zen symbol for 'enlightenment, the universe… the void… […] an expression of the "moment"' (Dillon, 2012: 28). A foreword by Jessica Hynes explains her friendship with Glyn Dillon and his wife Siobhan. Hynes also recounts her

experience of Dillon writing the comic and provides an appraisal of her own reading experience, ending with the epigraph:

> The restless mind will make you believe that it is you, that *you* are it.
>
> *You* are not.

A dedication reads 'For Siobhan' and is located in the centre of a larger *enso* symbol that extends beyond the borders of the two-page spread.

The first two-page spread of the comic introduces the character of Nao through a photograph of her as a child and an image of her riding a bike in the rain as an adult. She is introduced in the narration as 'half English, half Japanese…' as well as 'a fucking mental case' (Dillon, 2012: 8). Nao also alludes to the t-shirt she is wearing, a 'Binky Brown T-shirt that Mum made'. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this is an allusion to *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*, a 1972 comic by Justin Green which deals in depth with the semi-autobiographical titular character's experience of OCD. The bike image extends into a longer scene that depicts Nao cycling along a towpath in the rain, while the narration introduces her mother and father. She then narrates coming home from a trip to her father's home in Japan. The depiction focuses on details of a 'stop' button on a toilet, as well as details of a taxi, before converging to suggest that Nao snapped the driver's neck, which is accompanied by a blank panel with the caption '…8 out of 10'.

Nao gets a plane home during which she struggles with sitting next to the emergency exit because she is struck by the idea of opening the door with the plane in flight ('…9 out of 10'). before focusing on the lock-cum-light-switch on the inside of the plane's toilet door. To show how Nao copes with unhelpful thoughts arising from the plane journey, an image of Nao's mother is overlaid with the repeated thought '…Mum loves me…'.

After getting off the plane, Nao runs into her friend Steve in a café, and they discuss her trip and work. Steve then offers her a job at his shop, suggesting they 'might even have some "ichi" stuff' (Dillon, 2012: 18). The comic then shifts abruptly to a series of panels resembling the title sequence of a TV series titled *ichi* or いち.

The depiction shifts into a more illustrative style (i.e., extensive mutual reference in depiction and narration) showing an anthropomorphic conker-headed child beneath an uprooted tree, bordered with snakes, horse-chestnut leaves, magpies and an onion. The narration shifts into a much more episodic, third-person omniscient form, telling the story of a boy called Pictor and how a character referred to as the Nothing turned Pictor's family into a horse-chestnut tree, and Pictor into a half-boy half-tree who must find love to change himself and his family back.

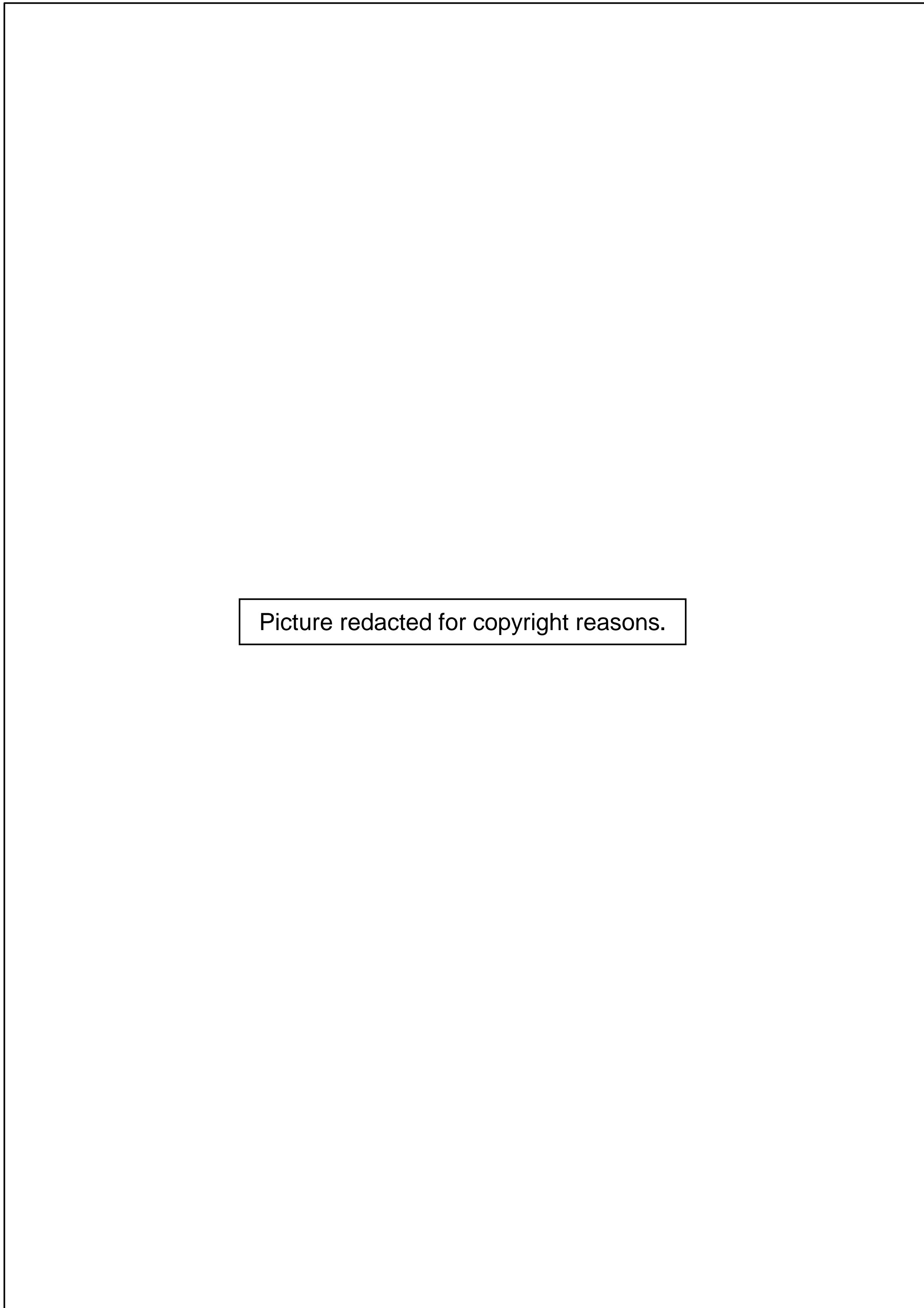

Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 6.1: Nao as Binky Brown (Dillon, 2012: 8)

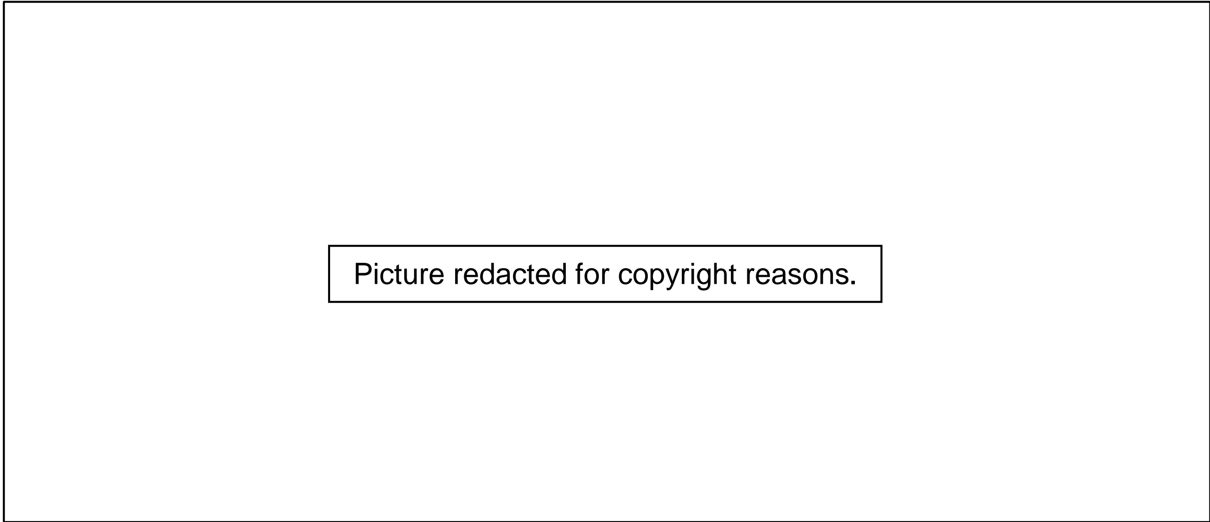


Figure 6.2: Nao snapping the driver’s neck (Dillon, 2012: 11)

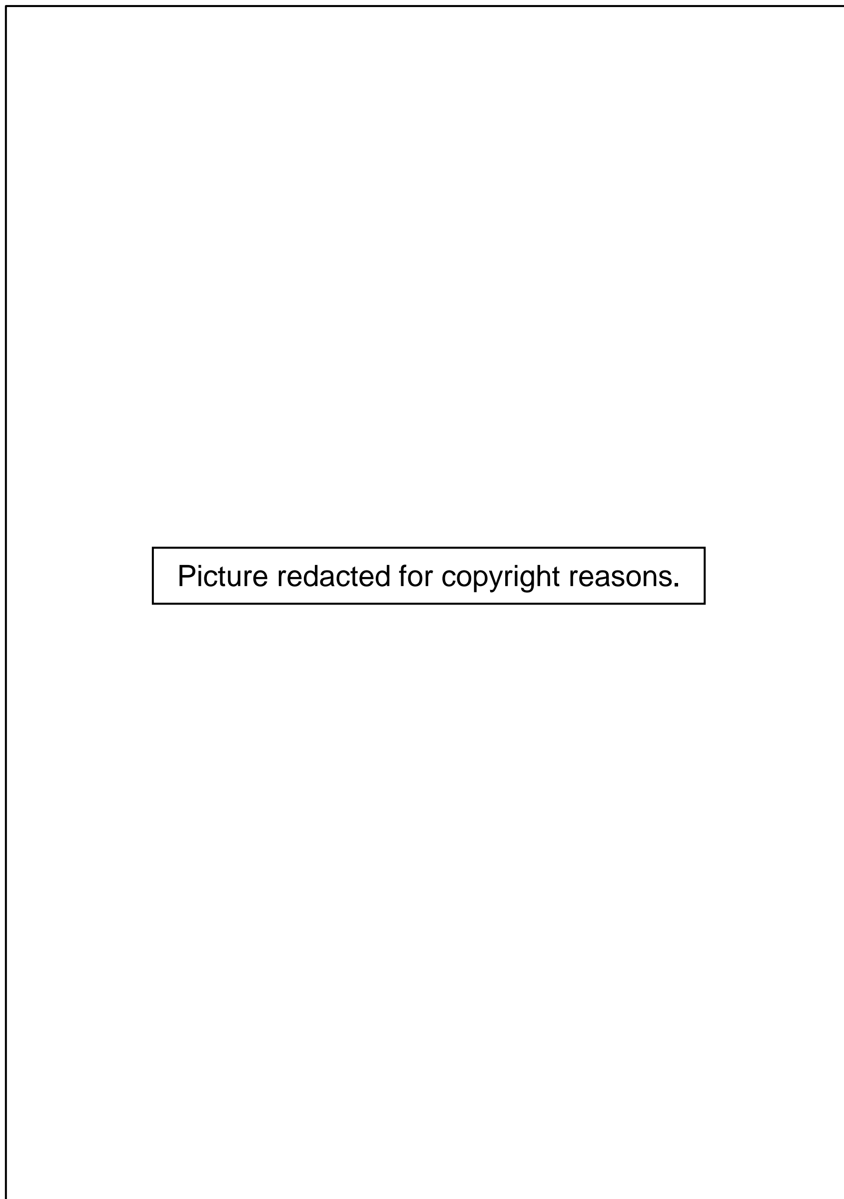


Figure 6.3: *ichi* title sequence (Dillon, 2012: 19)

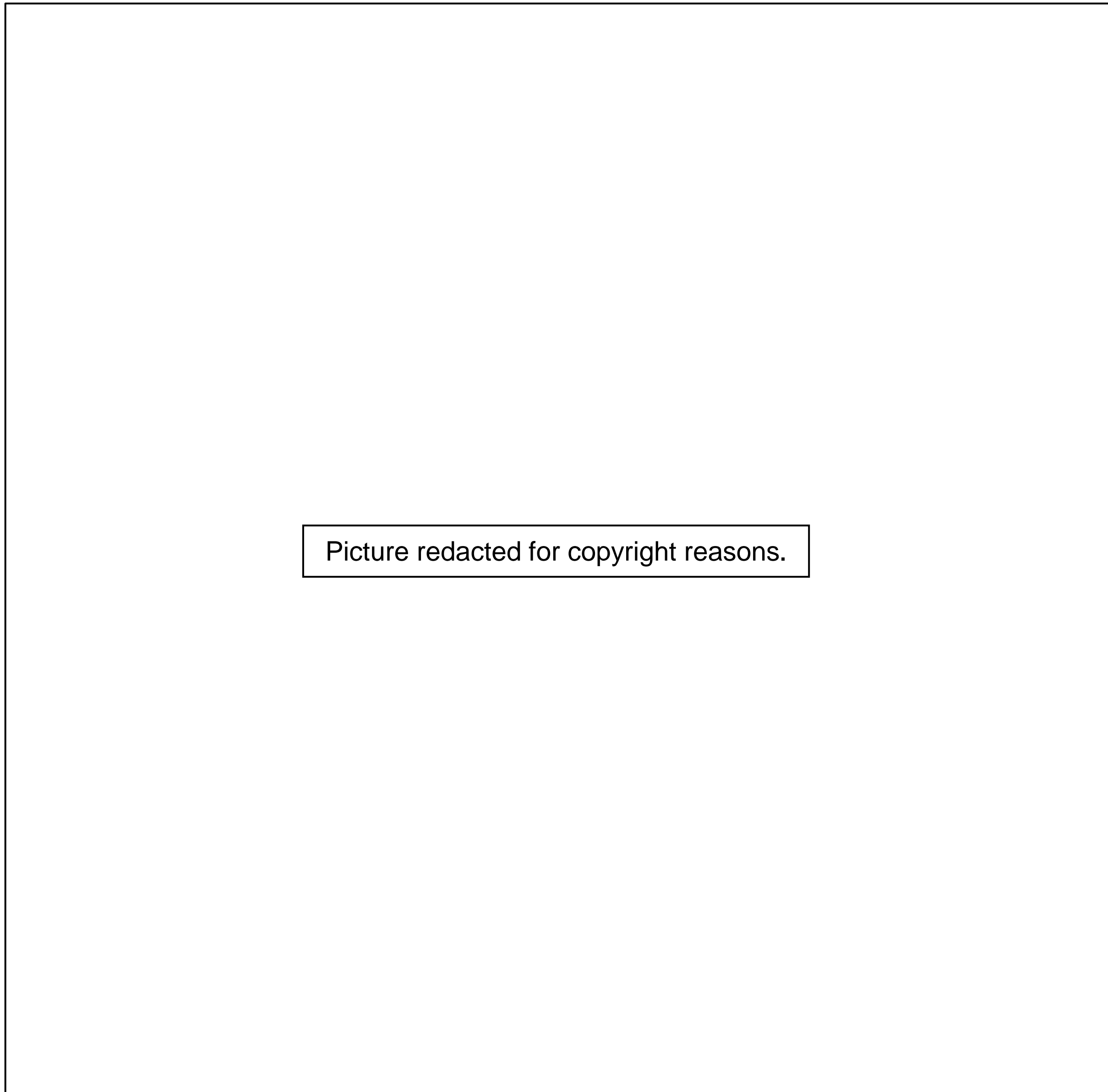


Figure 6.4: Pictor riding a sheep (Dillon, 2012: 21)

On the next page, Nao struggles on the tube ('…9 out of 10… again') and is shown to have maybe pushed a person in front of an arriving train before the same person is then shown to be on the train with her. She returns home then cycles out in the rain to a local Buddhist centre. She narrates her relationships with different members of the community. Ray, one of the *mitras*, explains to a group about the *enso* symbol, which Nao self-consciously attempts to reproduce. Another *mitra*, Nagarjuna, later leads the group in meditation, but irritated by the smell of incense and after noticing Nagarjuna's penis poking out of his shorts, Nao is shown stabbing him in the neck with a pen before getting up to leave (Dillon, 2012: 30). On the following page, Nagarjuna is shown to be fine and calls after her as she apologises and leaves ('9 out of 10'). While cycling home ('10 out of 10'), Nao admonishes herself, and imagines deliberately cycling into a child playing football in the street, before reassuring herself 'it's not me' (Dillon, 2012: 33). She gets home and talks with her housemate Tara.

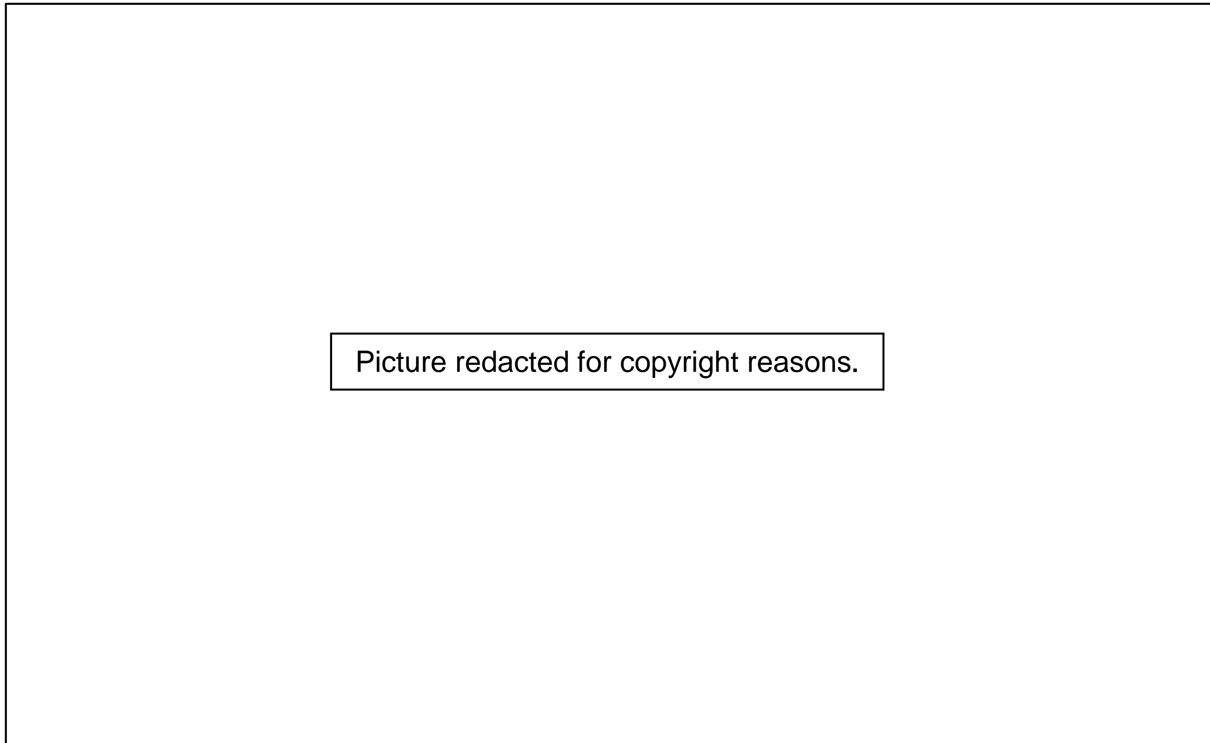


Figure 6.5: Nao stabbing Nagarjuna with a pen (Dillon, 2012: 30)

Figure 6.6: Nao (not) running over a child (Dillon, 2012: 33)

Between days working at Steve's store 'Peoploids', Nao illustrates the violent intrusive thoughts she experienced earlier in the story. They both reminisce about a gig that Nao played, and she recalls being struck by an intrusive thought while playing and it throwing her off for the rest of the gig. Back at home, Tara and Nao find mouse-droppings in their flat. At work, Nao imagines slamming Steve's face into the front desk before breaking his finger, causing her to have to leave the room. Later, a sad person in a hoody comes into the shop looking for Steve before leaving, then a balding bearded man comes into the shop trying to get upstairs. Later, she excitedly tells Steve that 'the Nothing' had been in the shop, because the man resembles the character from *ichi* introduced in the previous narrated interlude about Pictor. Pictor's story is taken up again, and he helps an army captain find

his garrison in exchange for the promise of the captain's daughter's hand in marriage. Upon learning his wife is pregnant, the captain reassures her that he will renege on his deal with Pictor.

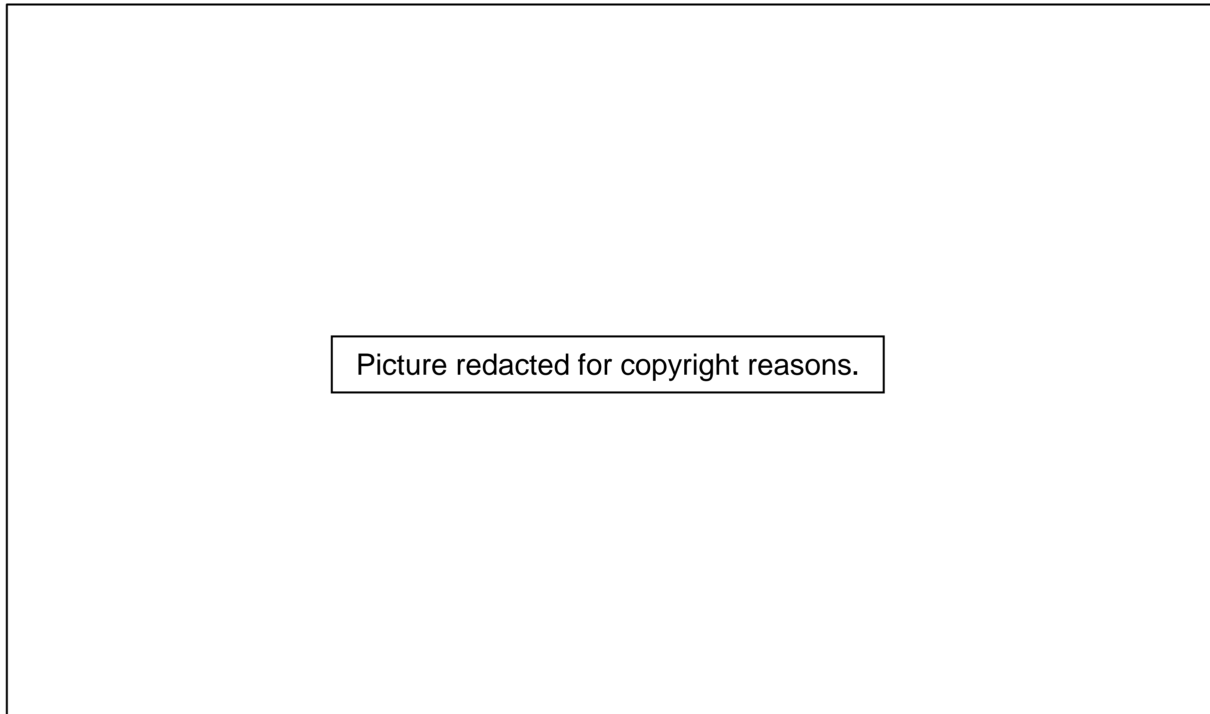


Figure 6.7: Nao slams Steve's face into the counter and breaks his finger (Dillon, 2012: 53)

Knowing from his van that the man resembling the Nothing was a washing machine repair person, Nao sabotages her and Tara's washing machine and arranges for him to come and fix it. She learns from his mother, who also works for the repair company, that his name is Gregory. When he arrives, she discusses *ichi* with him, describing it as 'a weird animated Japanese TV show', before explaining Gregory's resemblance to the Nothing and showing him all of the iconography of the Nothing she has collected. He identifies *ensos* that Nao has taped to her wall and suggests that he has also had experience with zen Buddhism. Before Gregory leaves, they arrange to go for a drink. They then have an awkward time at the pub, argue about Hello Kitty and Gregory gets drunk to hide his nervousness.

At work, Nao struggles with intrusive thoughts about her and Gregory and spends half an hour unable to work trying to control her thoughts ('8 out of 10'). She uses a Binky Brown toy and a mental image of Gregory to help her feel better. Nao reflects that the photograph of her mother she previously used to control her intrusive thoughts 'isn't good enough on its own anymore' (Dillon, 2012: 87). She then tells Steve that she's had a 'dicky tummy' and is feeling 'low'. They discuss a new *ichi* trailer.

Pictor is tending his flock when another lost Captain asks Pictor to help him and his men find their fort. The captain agrees to offer his daughter's hand in marriage giving Pictor a written contract. Pictor leads them back to their fort and the Captain and his daughter agree to honour the agreement

whenever Pictor comes back. Pictor returns to his old family home. The tree is still there and does not notice him.

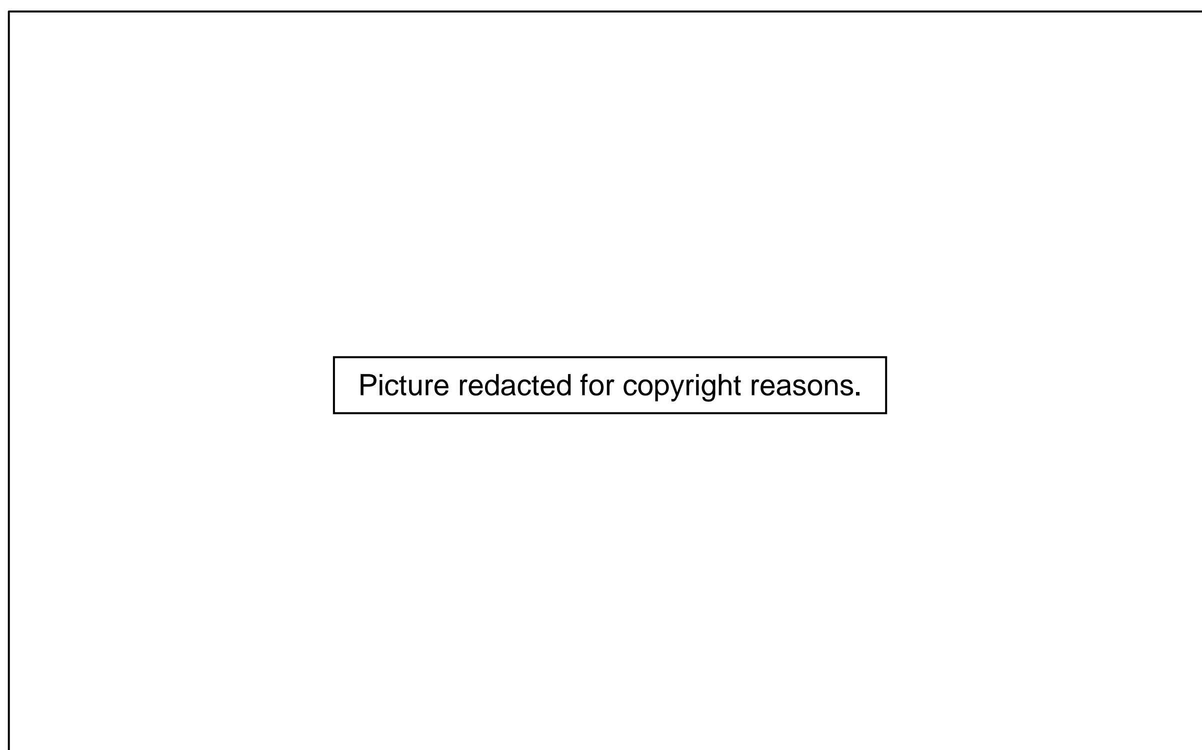


Figure 6.8 Nao struggles with intrusive thoughts at the hairdressers (Dillon, 2012: 91)

Nao goes for a haircut and struggles with the hairdresser leaving scissors in front of her ('7 out of 10'). She thinks about the photo of her mum and Ray's long ears. Nao goes to the Buddhist centre and Ray teaches her about 'Thangkas'. She struggles with the idea of 'Palden Llamo… a Dharmapaia of Vajrayana Buddhism' who is said to have murdered her son. Nao struggles to accept that people might think of Palden Llamo as good even though she was a murderer, and she misses fifteen minutes of the lesson ('8 out of 10'). At home, Nao avoids doing her homework and Gregory calls her while drunk to say he wrote a poem about her and then lost it.

Nao tries to kill a fly at work while Steve talks about teenagers obsessing over her. She tells a story about a time her house was filled with flies and how she became obsessed with trying to kill them all.

Nao and Gregory go to the pub again. He gets drunk again and tells her about a dream. While he buys a drink, she reflects on why she likes him. Gregory continues to tell Nao about his dream, and she starts to feel uneasy ('3 out of 10'). She imagines smashing Gregory's glass into his face ('8 out of 10'). Nao hides in the toilet, struggling with anxiety at the thought she might harm Gregory like that. She thinks about the photo of her mum and Rays ears. When she gets out, Gregory has left.

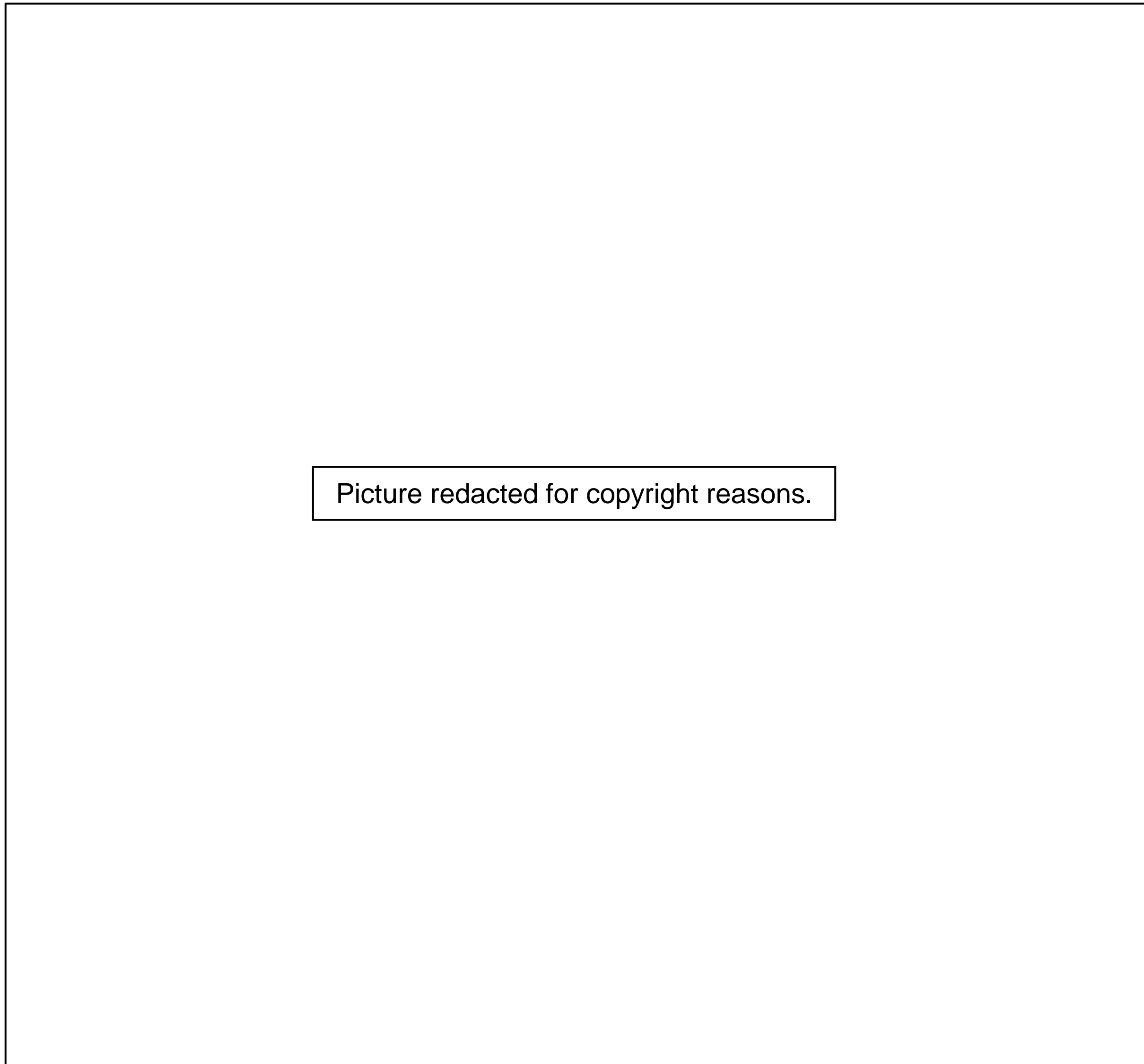


Figure 6.9: Nao smashes a glass into Gregory's face (Dillon, 2012: 110)

At work, Steve gives Nao a present for her birthday, then leaves her alone in the shop with a child and his pregnant mother ('7 out of 10'). She puts all of the pens on the front counter in a bag ('8 out of 10'). She has to leave work when Steve gets back. He finds his birthday card to her, but can't find any pens.

Pictor is conscripted into an army called 'the League' where he flies planes until he is too wounded to fly and instead fights on the Eastern front killing many men.

Nao does her homework, drawing and writing about wanting to stab the pregnant woman. She and Tara talk about this. Nao and Steve then go for a drink, and he tells Nao a story about soiling himself after a date. Nao goes home and talks to Tara about Steve, then remembers a time in Brighton when she and Steve almost held hands. Gregory comes to the shop to see how Nao is doing and meets Steve. Gregory takes Nao to lunch and Steve seems annoyed about this.

Pictor returns home having served his duty. He returns home and slaughters his flock. He visits the first Captain's garrison and asks for his daughter as promised, threatening him and his daughter with death if they do not comply. The Captain sends his daughter with Pictor, but she is pricked by his barbs. He sends her home.

Three months later, Nao and Gregory go to Brighton to visit Nao's mum. They argue about Gregory drinking and Nao agrees to pick up a parcel for his mother. Back in London, Nao calls Steve and asks him about a mixtape he made her in college. Nao goes to collect the parcel but leaves the slip at home. When she gets back she worries for about two and a half hours that something awful has happened to Gregory ('10 out of 10'). She is shown with a purulent mobius strip of flesh instead of a head, with ink leaking out of pustules into the room. She thinks of herself as a monster. When Gregory gets home, they argue about her forgetting the parcel and then Nao loses control and starts saying her various mental safeguards out loud. She tries to cut her hand off until Gregory stops her. She finds him crying upstairs and she tries to explain her OCD.

Pictor visits the fort of the second Captain and is welcomed and married to his daughter. Pictor sets fire to his head and orders a soldier to chop it off with a reed and bury it. His body is brought back to the fort. By morning, his head is once again on his shoulders but black and burned. The captain's daughter applies a balm and eventually Pictor's face is shown to be 'pink and warm', which she finds handsome and she falls in love with him. The next day they marry again with Pictor now fully human. On returning home, Pictor's family tree is dead. He chops it down and burns his uniform.

Nao wakes up with a dead arm, googles the word 'Abraxas' and makes some tea. Gregory has a strange look on his face and Nao imagines smothering him. She then calls Tara who thinks he has had a stroke. They call an ambulance, and he is taken to hospital. At hospital, Nao finds a pen in her pocket and imagines stabbing Gregory in the chest ('8 out of 10'). She feels overwhelmed and has to leave the hospital ('10 out of 10'). Outside, she is hit by a car.

There is an image of a battle from the war Pictor fought in above an explanation of the word 'Abraxas'.

Nao is shown unconscious with a dog next to her.

When Pictor's son is born, the nothing comes and sings for him of a soldier who was killed.

Four years later, Nao is reading *How Now Brown Cow*, a book by Gregory with cover art by Nao. In an extract from the book, Gregory recounts a traumatic experience with a sexually abusive and manipulative Buddhist teacher when he was younger. Nao describes her recovery and continued attendance at the Buddhist centre. Nao now has a son and explains that she is coping with her

condition. She paints with her son and talks to Steve on the phone who is unpacking models that Nao has designed. The final panel shows Nao's son under a tree with sunglasses on.

6.3 Introduction to discussion group

As for previous chapters, the reading group met and discussed the comic for forty-five minutes in a University of Sheffield seminar room. The conversation was unguided and allowed to unfold naturally. Of the six participants, **A**, **B**, **C**, **D** and **E** were present. The reading group discussion engages extensively with the nature of OCD and of mental illness more generally.

As in previous discussions, positive and negative appraisal and negotiation of these evaluations frames the initial discussion. Within this topic, **D**'s identity as a reader is brought into focus by **E** who points out that **D**'s opinion of the book is at odds with the overall consensus of the group:

E: D didn't like it …

C: you didn't like the book at all

D: it just … didn't work for me

C: okay

D: I don't know whether it's because … I'm not . **deep enough** for it

<laughter>

D: I didn't [get the main story I didn't]

C: [it's like . you're not psychotic enough]

D: connect with it . it's beautiful like

Potentially because of this disparity, **D** self-effacingly directs blame at themself, suggesting that it is a deficiency in their practices and capabilities as a reader that disables them from enjoying the comic ('I'm not . deep enough for it'). The validity of **D**'s identity as a comics reader then leads into a discussion of personal experience of obsession and how different experiences relate to OCD as a diagnosis. Here, **A** questions the categorical boundaries between the basic concept of obsession as a feature of human behaviour and 'being obsessive-compulsive':

A: it's such a weirdly defined

C: mm

A: thing like where do you draw the line between ... h having [an obsession]

D: [do you have mm]

A: and ... being obsessive-compulsive

From here, the conversation continues to point to the openness of both the comic's presentation and the participants' experience and awareness of OCD both as a clinical diagnosis and as a related means of understanding certain experiences. In this extract, participants test the boundaries of the definition of obsession introduced by **A** above:

A: like I can't play video-games unless I have time ... to [play video-games]

D: [to yeah]

A: because I can't just go . **I'm going to dip into this for an hour** like a TV [series]

D: [one one of the] reasons I can't I've never got into comics or video games before is because I <laughs> know I won't get out

A: yeah

D: and and I particularly if I'm doing a PhD because it's selective with the amount of time I'm doing I won't do it

A: mm

D: I won't 'cause I'll just be like oh I can read more comics oh I can play more video games

C: yeah

D: it's [really bad]

B: [I'm kind of like that] with food . like like I'll I dunno . I'll get to a ce- certain I I'll eat something and I'm like oh I have to eat it all the time

A: yeah

B: so like every every week I'll have that same thing [and]

C: [mm]

B: I'll get boring after a while and move onto something else

A: yeah

B: but I'll have like . a food fixation all the time

A: mm

C: yeah

~indist~

<laughter>

A: everybody's got obsessive tendencies

A, **B** and **D** all offer evidence of their own obsessive tendencies and how they impact behaviours in their lives. **B**'s experience with food is formally different from **A** and **D**'s experiences with media in that they describe a food fixation that limits their experience rather than the observed tendency towards fixation that leads both **A** and **D** to avoid overindulging in video games and comics respectively. These general discussions provide the groundwork for **A** to offer what she describes as a 'personal' explication of her own experience of OCD and how the *Nao of Brown* relates to this:

A: I mean yeah . to get . like . a little bit personal … it's always … like it's a type of o- obsessive-compulsive . and I've had something very similar and it was really difficult to explain to people … like because you say obsessive-compulsive and people think you want everything in straight lines and

D: [you have to wash your hands]

A: [mine's like the reverse of] that … but it's also like it's a thought disorder … so . I never had . like violent thoughts but I would obsessively think about like people dying

C: mm

A: like . I would be sat there happy as Larry and then all of a sudden … I'd be sitting there looking at a person I'm talking to thinking you're going to die what happens when you die you're gonna die and that and I would get like hinged on this one . and if you don't . like . snap yourself out of it you just ... completely fall into like this weird cycle . and it was it's so difficult to explain to people ... what cause everyone's just like well don't don't think about death then . and you're like well . I c I can't

<laughter>

A: it's it's an obsessive-compulsive thought disorder like I haven't got a choice

B: yeah

A: and like you know you'll be lying there like oh i've had a really lovely day about to go to sleep and then your brain will just go <kh> . everyone's gonna die everyone

you love's gonna die what are you gonna do when that person's gonna die and you just freak [completely]

C: [mm]

A: and and I could never explain it to someone and this . just captured . like . not in an upsetting way it sh . it should be upsetting

B: mm

A: because . it was upsetting going through it and it's upsetting reading about something else but then at the same time it was just like that moment of . **oh my god this is** .

B: mm

A: next time I'm just going to hand someone this book and be like .

B: [<laughs>]

C: [mm]

A: this is it

B: the bible of [OCD]

A: [yeah] this is what it's like this is what happens and like ... she doesn't it's not like . **oh this is how it started and this is how she gets it under control** ... but like at the end there is that kind of sense of ... like you know . she's all right now ... there's a bit of a thing about like well maybe her son will be the same but it's and you know like when she talks about not wanting to have children and stuff like that I was like . **oh god that's exactly the same thought process I had**

C: mm

A: but it ends on that kind of like what's gonna happen is gonna happen and you can't ... control it so you just have to like move with it ... and I dunno it's like it was really dark and really disturbing at points but at the same time . I think because I related to it so much I was like oh it's actually quite ... positive for me .

As well as suggesting that *The Nao of Brown* resonates with **A**'s own experience of OCD, these extended conversational turns also suggest that the process of reading the comic led them to reflect on those experiences. On the basis of their own personal experience, **A** suggests that reading the comic provided a much more effective means of communicating their experiences than their previous attempts to describe living with the obsessional dimension of OCD. In the following section, I will look at how the reading group frames Nao's experience as presented in the comic. From there, I will outline the depictive and narrative techniques through which Dillon marks out levels of discourse and

experience within the text-world of the comic. Finally, I will focus on a specific incident in the story to see how these elements are brought together to create a sense of someone experiencing possible side-effects of OCD.

6.4 Imagined events

As in previous chapters, the reading group continue to discuss illness on the basis of their own lived experiences and reading experiences. Here, they frame their understanding in terms of the basic dichotomies of physical/mental and internal/external:

D: that kind of thing that's the only physical ailment I could ...

A: and you do see this really clearly in this because she's obviously strug- and she struggles more at points she's fine when she's actually flying and stuff but because she's . vulnerable at that point in time she's having worse experiences but she wouldn't know ... to look at it like ... she gets out of the taxi and she sees her friend and goes hey um and all those people . she's quite chirpy to her friend and you know she he like offers her a job and ... it all seems fine and she's excited but then inside ... she's having really violent

C: mm

A: compulsive thoughts but you can't see that outside but then later when she has that whole situation with um . it's Gregory isn't it . it it fully kicks in doesn't it and

C: mm

A: she she she can't say anything . also when she she like

B: go on ...

A: that whole sequence where they're all dressed in red and everything's going <laughs> graphic

C: mm

B: I was like . people don't . people don't care and people don't notice unless it's a physical manifestation

D: mm

B: if it's all in your head obviously there's stuff people can't see it or hear it ... people are never going to know so it's not it's not that they're being mean by not caring

A: mm

B: it's the fact that they don't know what's going on because nobody knows

A also appraises their experience in terms of 'good' and 'bad' and how this relates to what's going on 'inside' and what might be evident to people observing them ('you can't see that outside'). **B** relates this back to the broader topic introduced by **D** (visibility of 'physical ailment') making generic statements about social evaluation and awareness of non-physically manifest problems ('people don't . people don't care and people don't notice unless it's a physical manifestation). **B** then develops their idea by dividing culpability for this between observers and experiencers of psychological distress (my emphases in italics):

B: if it's *all in your head* obviously there's stuff people can't see it or hear it ... people are never going to know so it's not it's not that they're being mean by not caring

A: mm

B: it's the fact that they don't know what's going on *because nobody knows*

Beyond visibility, **B** introduces audibility as a further practical limitation on communication of psychological distress in line with an expectation of how people understand mental illness. **B** asserts the difficulty of trying to verbalise or otherwise audibly communicate something that you do not—and potentially cannot—understand yourself. In this way, **B** travels through the roles and potentials of observers and experiencers of mental illness before locating these roles in the more generic idea that, because the communicative basis and expectations relating to mental illness are limited, 'nobody knows'.

Reading *The Nao of Brown* involves learning which depicted and narrated events happen in a way that would be observable to other text-world experiencers and which events are uniquely experienced by Nao as intrusive thoughts. This involves categorisation of the 'reality' of events in a way that captures the extent of their influence on Nao's experience, and the experience of those around her. The participants discuss the violent events in the comic as imaginary ('violent fantasies', 'violent […] compulsive thoughts'). By the end of reading the comic, these events have been understood by all readers to have not taken place, yet they remain an important and consequential part of the comic and of the discussion. This is illustrated in this exchange between **C** and **A** referring to pushing someone in front of a train:

C: I really liked it I've I'm I'm relieved that . other people have such violent fantasies …

<laughter>

A: don't know how to respond to that

[<laughter>]

A: [everybody just moves . slowly away from **C**]

C: like the bit in the . I can't go in the tube without thinking …

<laughter>

Because describing these events as 'fantasies' suggests a potential to derive pleasure from shoving a stranger in front of a train, the group laughs, and **A** expresses uncertainty directly and through a humorous performative expression of fear (Langacker, 2008: 159). By relating this reaction to 'everybody', **A** tests the acceptability of **C** sharing Nao's thoughts. This illustrates the fact that, regardless of its status in relation to various conceptions of reality, events such as the depiction of Nao pushing a man in front of a train are socially and personally consequential regardless of whether they take place in or outside of someone's head. Though the consequences are different, shoving someone and imagining shoving someone are both real events that impact on people's experience of reality and how they will consequently behave towards and around others. In this section, I will look at the extract introduced by **C** to explore how Langacker describes **reality** as a component of experience and conceptualisation, and what this means for the consequentiality and status of the things going on 'in your head'.

6.4.1 Stylistic strategies for differentiating levels of reality

The reader discussion outlined above shows collective understanding of which events did and did not 'actually' happen in the comic. In part, this arises from having read the text in its entirety and having learned to reclassify depictions of Nao committing acts of violence as being intrusive thoughts. This arises in part as a result of immediate consequences of violence repeatedly not arising in the depiction or narration. This understanding is further guided by depictive and narrative features that, over time, help to establish the fictive nature of Nao's intrusive thoughts. These features are all present in the sequence of events where Nao imagines smashing a pint glass into Gregory's face (Dillon, 2012: 109–11). Initially, there is an uncertain narrative description of how Nao was feeling at that point in time: 'I had a feeling something wasn't right, it was over my shoulder and inching up on me…' (Dillon, 2012: 109). Like in *Lighter than My Shadow*, Nao's sense of uneasiness is construed here as a distinct entity interacting with her in a way that makes her feel uneasy. This provides context for the accompanying depiction, in which Nao has been coloured completely red, while her surroundings (including Gregory) remain naturalistically coloured. This progresses on the following page to Nao being completely drained of colour relative to her surroundings (fig 6.10).

The combination of the narration and depiction serve to differentiate Nao without specifying exactly *what* is 'inching up' on her. Though the colour red has some established symbolic associations with concepts such as DANGER, ANGER, and STOP, its relevance is not specified here. In addition to this, there is a further caption to the bottom right of this panel which reads '"3 out of 10"'. The quotation marks in this caption marks it as distinct from unmarked narrative captions. Where quotation marks like this occur elsewhere in the text it establishes a connection with the focal enactor of Nao (i.e., the

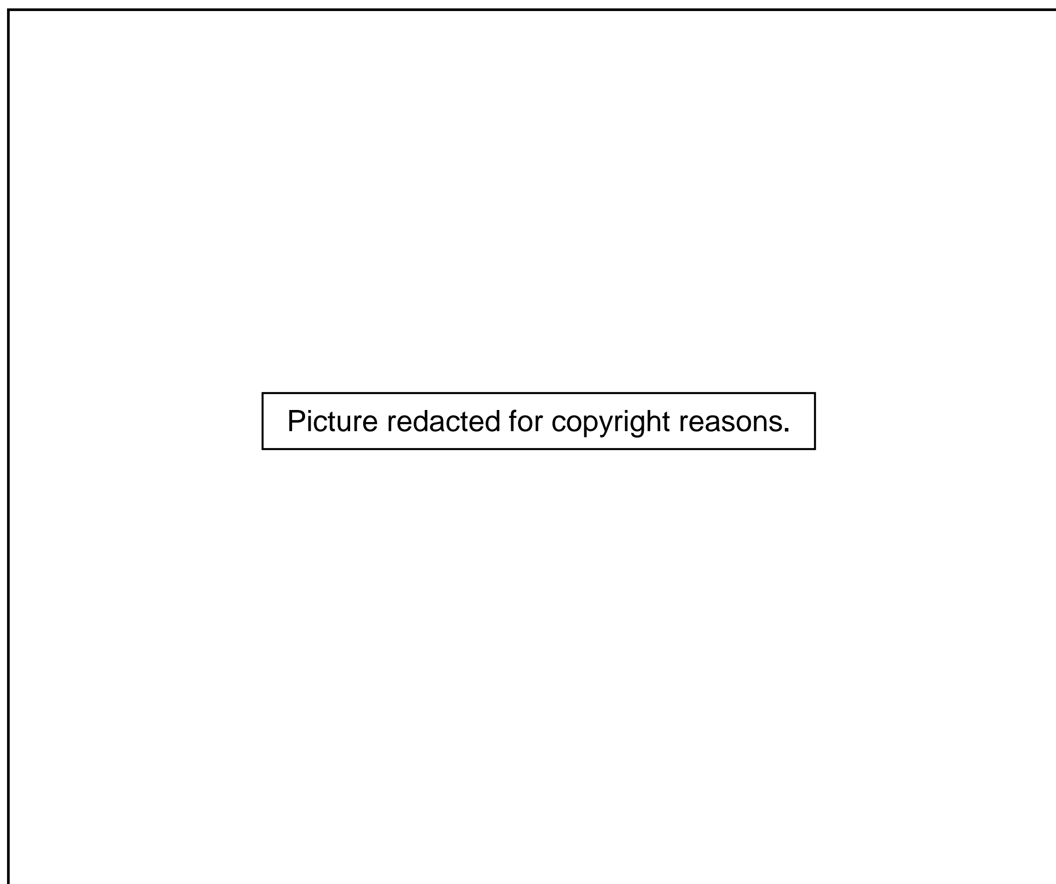


Figure 6.10: Nao depicted as red, '3 out of 10', then white (Dillon, 2012: 109-10)

Nao who is onstage in both the narration and depiction), signifying that this convention is being used to mark thought presentation. This is reinforced throughout the comic by shifts in temporal deixis from perfective forms in the narration to imperfective, present- or generic-oriented forms in Nao's captioned thought, e.g., 'was', 'I had had' and 'didn't *feel right*' in the narrative captions and 'am I' and 'I should' in the thought captions in figure 6.11.

As with the use of colour, the function of this enumeration is not specified. It is only through the repeated context of Nao using the form of scoring out of ten in figure 6.10, that it becomes apparent that it occurs most frequently when she is struggling to keep intrusive thoughts at bay. So, while three out of ten is relatively low, in combination with the metaphorical 'inching' of a feeling and her recolouring, readers are led to understand that something is about to happen.

On the following page, the intrusive thought of smashing a pint glass into Gregory's face is recoloured as completely grey. This marks the whole situation as qualitatively distinct from the previously depicted situation without specifying how (figure 6.12). The lack of inverted commas marks the

captions as narration rather than direct thought, yet they are written in a present historic which combines both the immediacy of Nao's thoughts at the time, with the enduring vividness and immediacy of this thought to Nao the narrator. This uncertain grounding helps to reinforce the extent to which this takes place both within Nao's imagination and in an epistemic modal-world adjacent to the modal-worlds of narration and narrated experience. The following panel confirms the imaginary nature of the glass smashing by showing Gregory's glass and face to be completely unaffected. Colour is also restored to everything in the depiction, apart from Nao. Once again, she is marked as feeling out of place in her own experience through differential colour saturation. This time she is coloured white illustrating a transition in colour space between her previous and current experience, again without specifying what these states are. The bottom right caption numerically characterises this shift as an escalation, which is specified on the following page as relating to anxiety.

Throughout the comic, these techniques are deployed at different moments to indicate the dynamics of Nao's experience of intrusive thoughts (colour) and how she attempts to deal with them (ranking her experiences out of ten). The more these events are shown not to have broader consequences and to feature idiosyncratic depictive and narrative characteristics, the more familiar the event structure becomes to readers. However, earlier in the narrative, the depiction of Nao's intrusive thoughts only marks their virtuality through a lack of consequences. I will now explore how, without established knowledge of Nao's tendency to experience intrusive thoughts, the imaginary status of the train shoving incident from the group discussion requires reconceptualization.

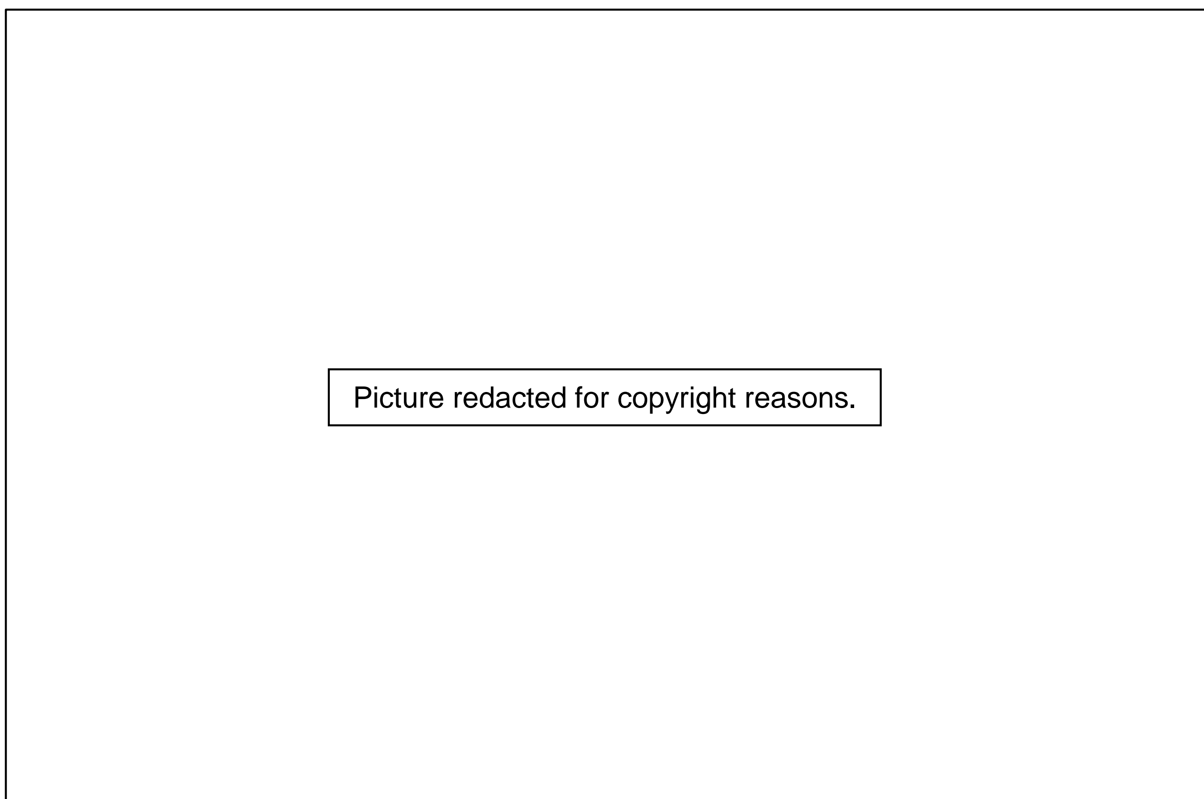


Figure 6.11: Thought and narration captions (Dillon, 2012: 13)

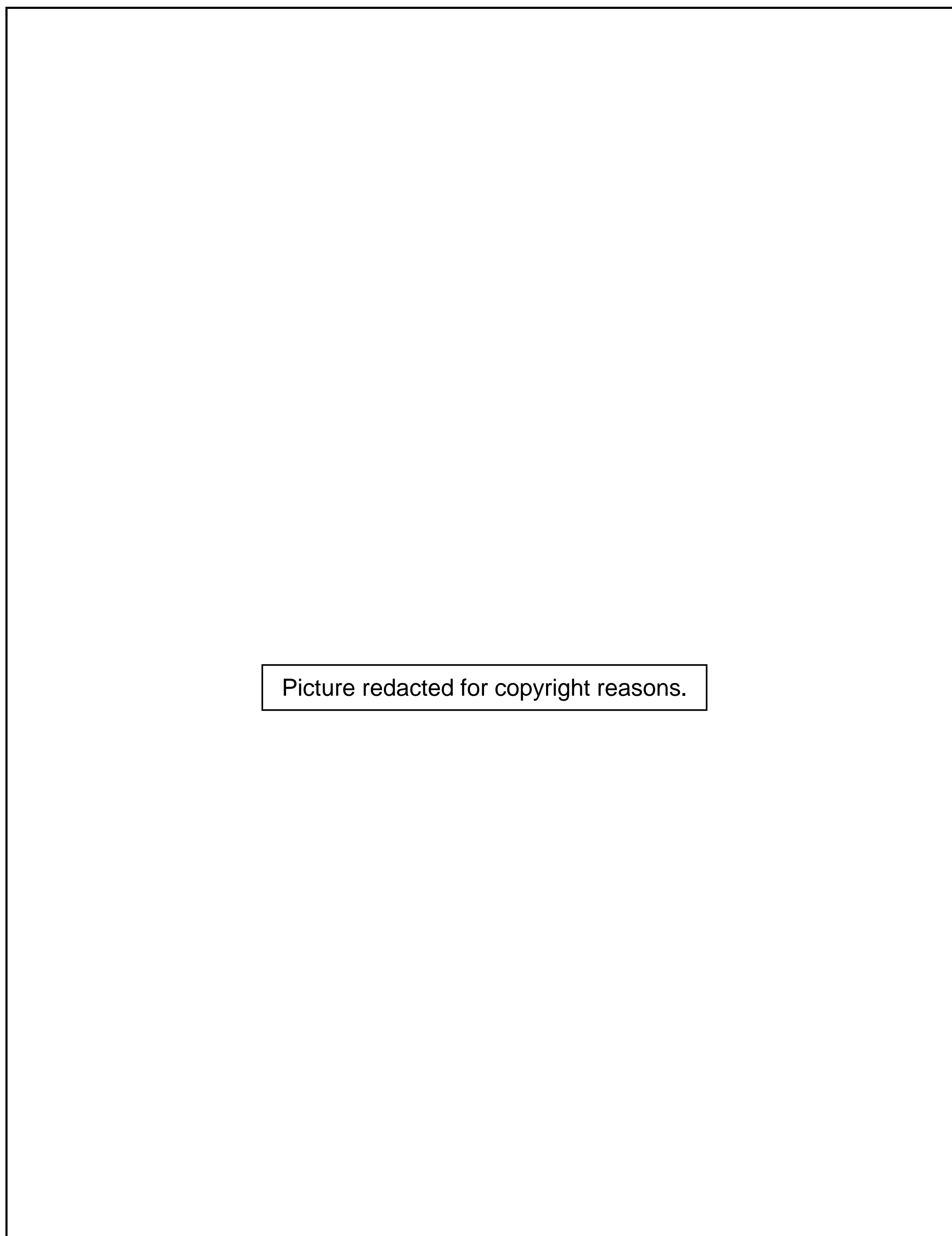


Figure 6.12: Colouring used to differentiate levels of reality (Dillon, 2012: 110)

6.4.2 Integration of real and imagined event structures

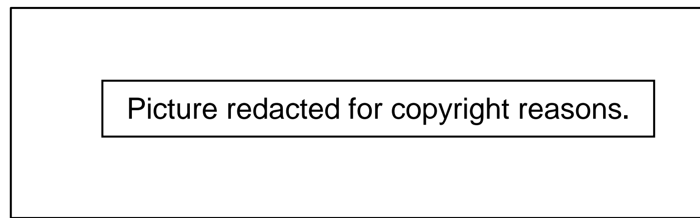


Figure 6.13: Panel 1 (Dillon, 2012: 22)

Figure 6.14: Panels 2,3 and 4 abstracted (Dillon, 2012: 22)

On page 22 of *Nao of Brown*, an evolving situation on the London Underground is presented as a train arrives at a platform and Nao boards it. The first panel (fig. 6.13) profiles Nao's experience through a close-up on her face. This is accompanied by narrative captions that provide context for how she is feeling and where she is ('jetlag', 'empty stomach', the 'challenging' nature of the 'underground'). The sense of location is reinforced by the background tiled wall and 'help point', which underground or other public transport users may recognise. The final three panels, which I will look at in depth, are abstracted in figure 6.14. For the purposes of this type of analysis, it helps to think of comics panels as being situations with variable points of engagement in terms of modality and time. That is, a panel is not an event state or a time-slice in the sense of, for example, a cell of film. Multiple events and constituent processes and relationships are compressed into and can be conceptualised within, across and outside of the objective content of narration and depiction in panels.

Following the location establishment of panel one, panel two depicts more of the situation from a more distant vantage point, showing Nao standing behind a person (to the right on the page) who is nearer the edge of the platform. Both experiencers (Nao and the unnamed person) can also be construed as having zero roles in the depiction, as they are part of, but do not exert significant influence on the situation or undergo significant change (Langacker, 2008: 302; 370-1; 1987: 288). To the left of the panel is a tunnel with two lights which, in the established context, suggests that a train is approaching. While this is the only predictable process depicted in the panel (train ->

platform), Nao's experience is held in focus from the depiction in the previous panel through the narrative caption 'I felt really on edge'.

The transition from panel two to three reinforces and brings to prominence the approach of the train, which is depicted in greater detail, almost filling the panel. In addition to this, the previously non-processual relationship between Nao and the person is potentially made processual—albeit a summarised process—through the narration ('All it takes is a little shove…') and the depiction, which shows the silhouette of a person in front of the train. In combination, this suggests that Nao has shoved the person in front of the train. The severity of this act is ironically lessened in the narration through diminution ('little') and through **summary scanning** of the process of shoving as the nominal 'shove'. 'Summary scanning' in this sense refers to the dynamicity of a particular construal, ranging from compression of a process into a summary scan to extension of a process through more granular **sequential scanning** (Harrison, 2017: 21; Langacker, 1987: 248). In addition to this, the shove is presented in absolute terms rather than in its entirety through attentional gapping of the agent or 'shover' in both depiction and narration (Harrison, 2017: 100–10; Talmy, 2000: 257).

Nao and the person are depicted in the following panel sitting inside a tube carriage, suggesting that the previously depicted interaction did not take place. This offers two potential realities for readers to follow as having actual status in the text-world. On the one hand, Nao has seemingly pushed someone in front of a train. On the other hand, there seem to be no consequences relating to this in subsequent panels (the person is on the train with her, she has boarded and is sitting normally, there is no service disruption and so on). The depicted act of shoving and the related narrative allusions have a contested status vis à vis the reality of the text-world as understood by a reader. This engages the ideas raised in the reading group relating to Nao's experience of reality, their access to this experience, and the lack of access available to other participants. By the end of reading the comic, such events are understood by the readers as 'violent fantasies' and 'violent compulsive thoughts', which **B** describes as being 'all in your head' such that they are not directly perceptible to observers. In these instances, the contested status of reality for readers has to be resolved into a reality that incorporates the reality of the imagined events to the extent that they happened, but only in the sense that they were really imagined by Nao. To explore this layering of experiential realities in greater detail, I will unpack this particular instance using Langacker's (1991: 253–4) description of reality as a conceptual domain that is invoked in communication to reflect the relative status of events in relation to both internal and external discourse participants.

6.5 Back to life, back to reality

Langacker's description of reality involves the related concepts of **irreality**, **known reality**, **unknown reality**, and **non-reality** (Langacker, 1991: 253–4). Irreality comprises everything that a

conceptualiser does not accept as a part of reality. This basic dichotomy only exists in relation to personal conceptions of reality:

> A situation does not belong to reality or irreality on the basis of how the world has actually evolved, but depends instead on whether the conceptualizer knows and accepts it as being part of that evolutionary sequence.
>
> Langacker, 1991: 254

This derives from what Langacker (1991: 254) dubs an **elaborated epistemic model**, which 'adds the conceptualizer's realization that reality as [they know] it is not exhaustive of the world and its evolutionary history'. This can be conceptualised according to the dichotomy of 'known reality' and 'unknown reality' (Langacker, 1991: 254). Known reality includes everything a **conceptualiser** ('C', a CG label roughly equivalent to 'discourse participant' in TWT) rightly or wrongly accepts as having actually happened in the past and up to the present. Unknown reality is significantly larger in scope, incorporating situations 'whose reality C suspects or contemplates but does not accept as having been established and those of which [they are] entirely ignorant'. Because of this, unknown reality is incorporated into the superordinate category of irreality, of which the remainder constitutes non-reality. In relation to a conceptualiser, non-reality is everything that is outside of a person's potential understanding or consideration owing to experiential circumstances. This elaborated model of reality conception is outlined in figure 6.15, where 'C' marks a conceptualiser experiencing reality as a phenomenon grounded in the past and probabilistically projected into the future along a unidirectional axis of time, as indicated by the central arrow.

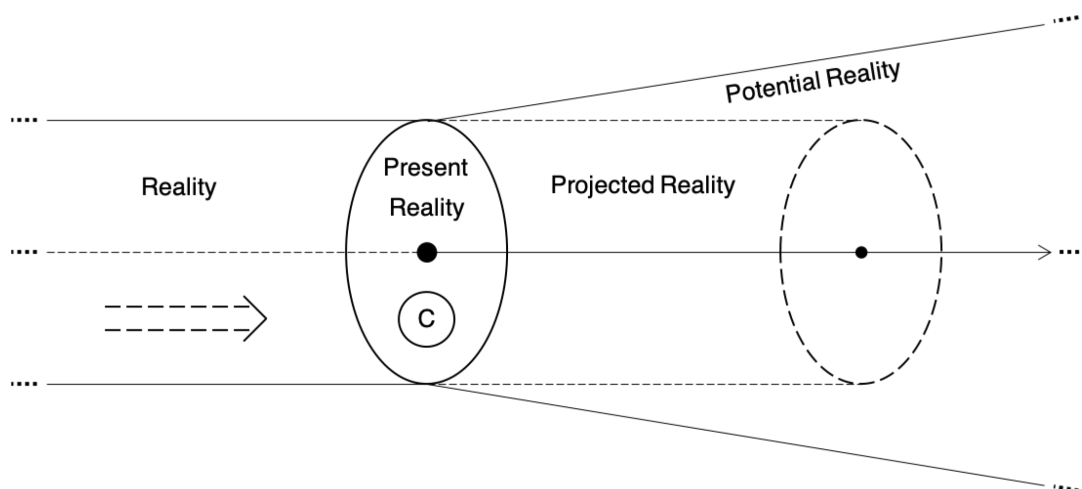


Figure 6.15: Elaborated epistemic model of reality (Langacker, 1991: 277)

Projected reality is the reality that people expect to occur according to their understanding of present reality. Potential reality falls into the same portion of irreality as this, as both are outside of observable reality, yet potential reality accounts for all possibilities that a conceptualiser can

conceive of occurring on the basis of present reality. The further these possibilities project away from present reality, the less likely they are to be expected to occur and as such they are practically less likely to come into consideration.

Comics feature multiple conceptualising enactors in a variety of surrogate discursive roles, who all engage with reality in these complex and multifaceted ways. This results in multiple reality conceptions unfolding within the text-world of a comic. In turn, comics as discursive artefacts are the product of artists' and readers' conception of reality (see 5.5.1–2 for how this relates to the idea of surrogate grounding). In considering the train-shoving example, there are conceptions of reality deriving from Nao's experience at different points in the timeline of the text-world, as well as for the reader both in relation to conceptualisation of the text-world and in relation to conceptualisation of reality *per se*. Part of a reader understanding a story, then, involves aligning their conception of the reality of the text-world with that of narrators, characters, authors and any other enactors or participants made relevant within either the discourse or discourse-world and testing the proposed realities against each other, as well as against their own expectations.

6.5.1 Levels of reality in *Nao of Brown*

From Nao's perspective, the man shoved in front of the train is a virtual entity participating in a virtual process. Therefore, the process itself is a part of her irreality as a potential projection of her current reality. However, her experience of *imagining* this is *actual* and experienced in tandem with her perceiving the arrival of the train as part of her present reality. In terms of her conceptualisation of events, there is an overlap between the trajectory of the virtual event and the actual event, which is captured in the depiction.

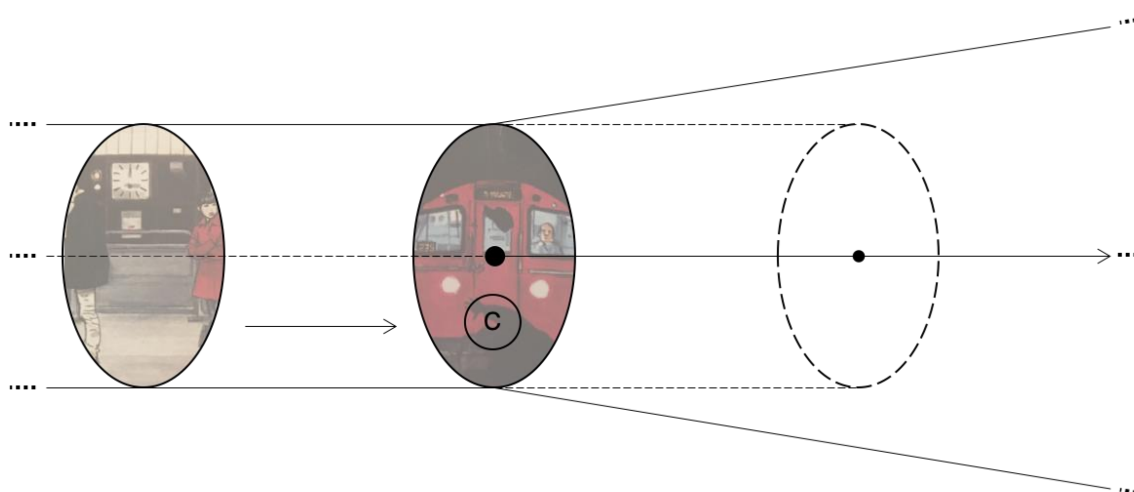


Figure 6.16: Nao's subjective conception of train shove

Figure 6.16 shows how these overlapping reality conceptions are part of Nao's present reality as depicted experiencing enactor. This is how the depiction captures the momentary occurrence, yet

enduring impact of intrusive thoughts. The projected reality and potential projections prompted by this situation are likely to be extremely negative, complex and upsetting. This is reflected as part of **C**'s reading experience later in the comic, when, as they describe it, Nao is dealing with intrusive thoughts relating to the catatonic state of her partner Gregory (Dillon, 2012: 150–1; 177–8):

C: when er Gregory . doesn't wake up . her immediate reaction was have I got an alibi

D: [<laughs>]

C: [and I was already there I was already thinking god has she got an alibi]

<laughter>

C: yeah ...

E: ~*indist*~ ...

C: oh wow

This brief retelling of **C**'s reading experience conflates two distinct events in the comic. The reference to Nao wondering if she has an alibi actually happens when she is assuming that Gregory has been murdered when he is late coming to visit her (Dillon, 2012: 150–1). Gregory not waking up happens on the following day (Dillon, 2012: 176). However, this conflation of **C**'s reading experiences captures the impact the patterns of depicting and narrating intrusive thoughts have had on how **C** projects from the present reality of the comic as understood from the perspective of Nao's experience. The same kind of projected fear identified with an imagined murder and a misremembered assumed murder is likely to be implicit in readings of the train-shoving and other violent incidents. These potentialities are made to seem more possible for Nao as a result of to the nature of her illness. The fact that she is struck by the thought of harming people informs her belief that she is capable of doing so.

6.5.2 Reading reality

From a reader's perspective, Nao's experience forms part of the objective content of (reader) conceptualisation. The way events are conceptualised differs because Nao's complex subjectivity has to be deduced from what is presented. Because of this experiential distance, to readers, the virtuality of the shoved person is not apparent from the way he is portrayed in this panel. The person is unmarked in the depiction which yields the potential for the shoving depicted across the first two panels to read as an actual event. It is only through the established patterns of the text as a whole that this comes to be disproved allowing the status of such incidents to be reappraised, and once readers adjust to the text and form expectations specific to the discourse event(s) of reading *The*

Nao of Brown, they will apprehend them as imagined events while maintaining an awareness that they are nonetheless still part of Nao's experience.

As figure 6.17 suggests, this is a reality conception as seen objectively from a distinct subjective viewpoint. Where in Nao's conception of her reality she is the really present conceptualiser (C), in terms of the actual discourse situation she is an onstage experiencer (Exp) as conceptualised by a reader (C) who is conceptualising their own reality, within which Nao's reality conception is embedded (Zunshine, 2006).

The result of the third panel in this sequence is immediate negation of the readerly predication that the person has been pushed in front of the train as they are depicted sitting on the tube next to Nao

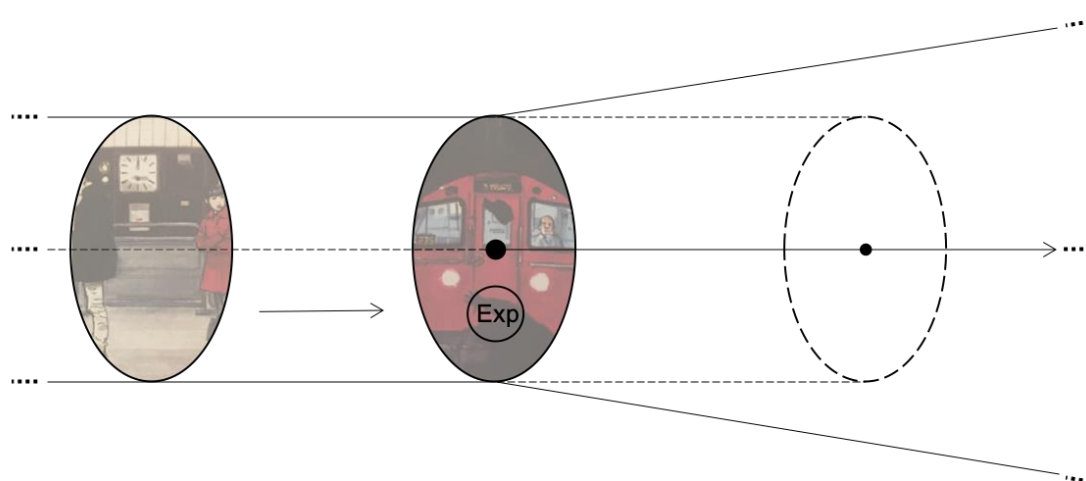


Figure 6.17: Reader's objective conception of train shove

with both hat and body intact. The person being on the train prompts backtracking and reconceptualization of the events depicted in the previous panel (see Langacker, 2008: 80–2, Harrison, 2017: 20). Specifically, readers are prompted to reconceptualize the man in front of the train (and by extension, his flying hat) as virtual participants in an imagined event, which is likely to be attributed to Nao (Exp) as the prominent experiencer of this situation and the story more generally.

As figure 6.18 shows, through backtracking, the shoved person (and by extension their dislodged hat) are reconceptualized as part of Nao's unreality. Part of the reappraisal that takes place here involves reassigning meaning to these unreal aspects of the depiction and how that relates to Nao's experience. While for readers, the shove did not happen, the conceptual integration of these two events (e.g., Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) depicts Nao's actual experience: the train approached the platform and she imagined shoving the man in front of it. The potential reality projected from the imagined shoving influences Nao's experience of the immediate aftermath, remaining close to, but not quite interceding with her actual projected and potential reality. Though the shoving did not actually occur in the past, Nao's imagination of it did. Any past hypothetical projections remain

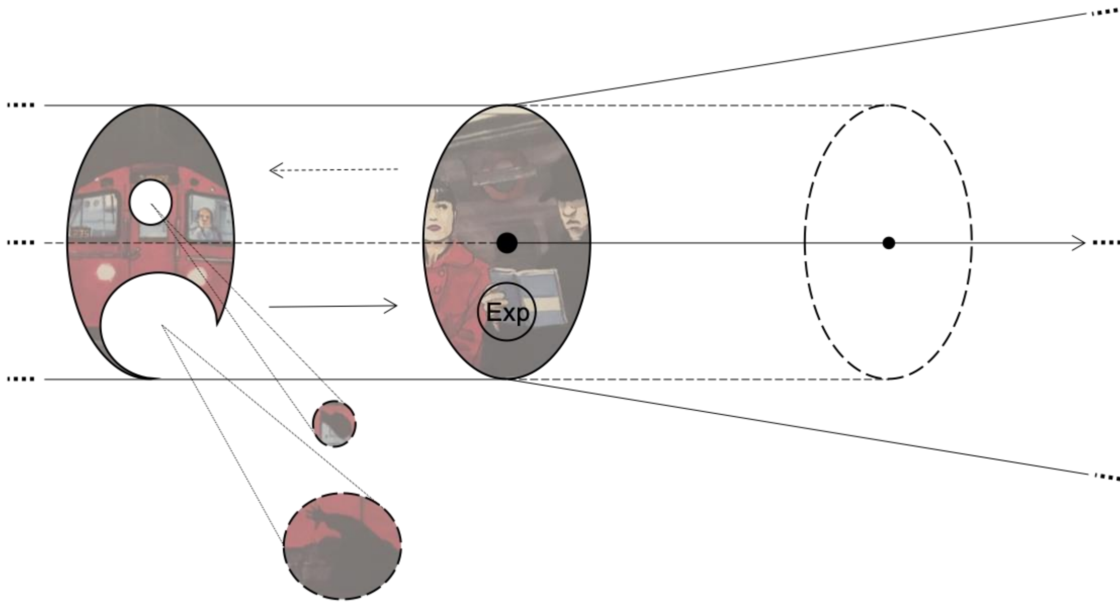


Figure 6.18: Backtracking and reconceptualization

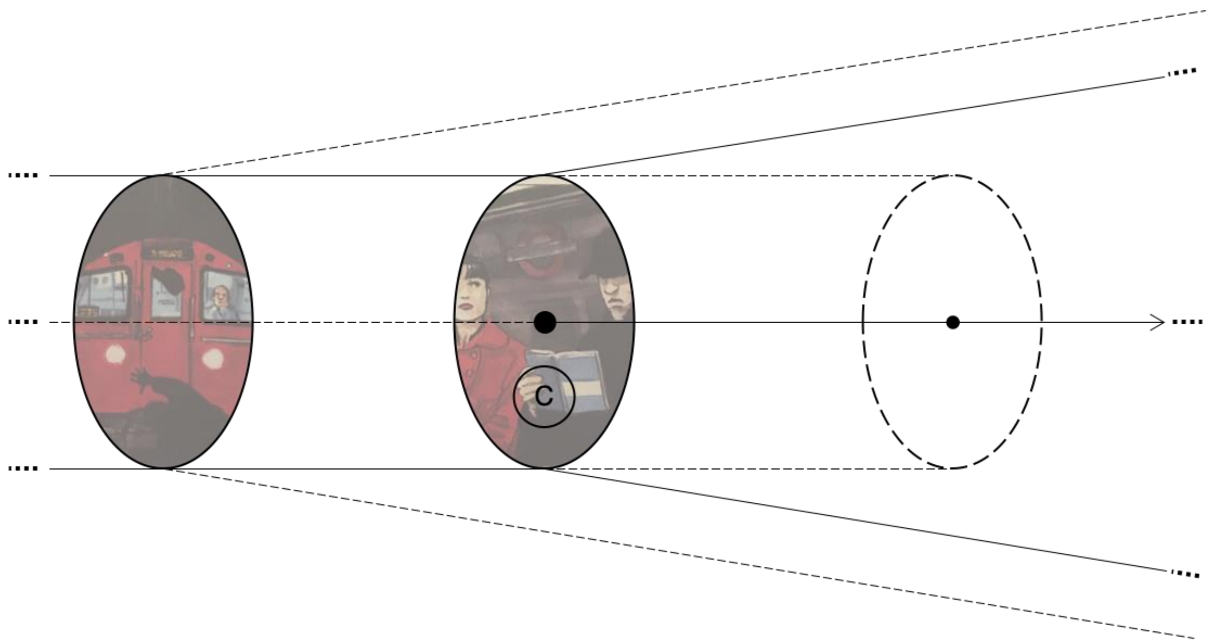


Figure 6.19: Influence of Nao's past projections

accessible via the integrated past situations of *imagining shoving* and *train arriving* as reference points. This is illustrated by the dotted lines emanating from the past reality in figure 6.19. The hypothetical projection from the previous situation results in a conceptual integration of divergent past hypothesis, present reality, and their integration as part of Nao's ongoing subjective reality and projected reality.

Though virtual in its realisation, the idea that Nao could shove a person in front of a train is a belief state that is prompted by the initial intrusive thought. A conceptual integration of this belief state into Nao's ongoing experience of reality is outlined in figure 6.20. The two discourse frames here represent the processes and relationships in panels 2 and 3. The objective scene that can be understood as Nao's reality is outlined in the first discourse frame. Overall, this is a complex situation that requires tracking and reconceptualization of multiple processes: the train approaching the platform, someone shoving someone else in front of the train as it arrives, Nao and the person sitting on the tube. In panels 2 and 3 the depictive focus is on the train. There is no actual energetic interaction between Nao and the other person (the non-processual relationship described above) meaning their roles are **zero**, or stative. Across the first two panels the train displays the properties of a **mover** which functions as trajector to the landmark of the remainder of the established situation (tunnel, platform, Nao, person and so on). Through the reconceptualized reading of these panels and their subsequent negation in panel 4, the intrusive thought and subsequent belief that Nao could shove the person in front of her onto the tracks can be reintegrated into a reader's objective conceptualisation of her reality. Though removed into the unreality of the objective scene through backtracking, the narrative qualification that Nao is 'on edge' and the generic introduction of the idea of 'a little shove' prompt readers to integrate the explicit and implicit processes in the depiction and narration. This conceptualisation is enriched by the resonance of the narrative describing Nao as 'on edge' while she has been depicted near the edge of the platform, reinforcing the connection between the levels of experience and reality. As shown in figure 6.20, the belief in her own violence is based on the starting point of the non-processual relationship between her and the other person. The outcome of this belief and the imagined process are then integrated with the reality of Nao's experience of the approaching train as shown in the discourse frame to the right of figure 6.20, which outlines the updated discourse structure based on the understanding of the fictive status of the shoved individual (and hat). The idea of shoving introduced by the narrative and the spatial configuration of Nao and the other person combine to produce the offstage energetic interaction between the two, which, though backgrounded in the depiction, is made prominent in a reader's overall conception of Nao's experience because of the influence of the intrusive thought and related belief. Readers can therefore observe the immediacy of the reality of this belief and intrusive thought and how they integrate with the parts of Nao's experience that are 'externally' observable to other experiencers participating in the situation.

Taking Nao's experience of reality as the objective content of these panels, there are two relevant processes which are integrated to form the overall sense of the scene either through backtracking or contextual discourse expectation: Nao is perceiving and imagining, both of which are *actual* aspects of her reality. Even though the content of her imagination is fictive, the process of imagining remains real and consequential. The order in which these modal appraisals and reappraisals of the depicted and narrated situation occur is likely to be variable depending on how different readers

engage with the text. This depends on the extent to which they engage with some of the already established context of inconsequential violence in the depiction and narration as well as how they join up the potential modal projections from the evolving situation which can be read both externally and internally in relation to Nao's experience. The potentially variable reading of these panels underlines the significance of the impact of the depicted event that happened 'in her head'. The fact that it is presented as actual and unmarked reinforces the sense of the actual consequences of having such thoughts, as well as the nature of being hit by such thoughts in a way that is more psychologically vivid and impactful than the actual event (the man not being shoved). This potential

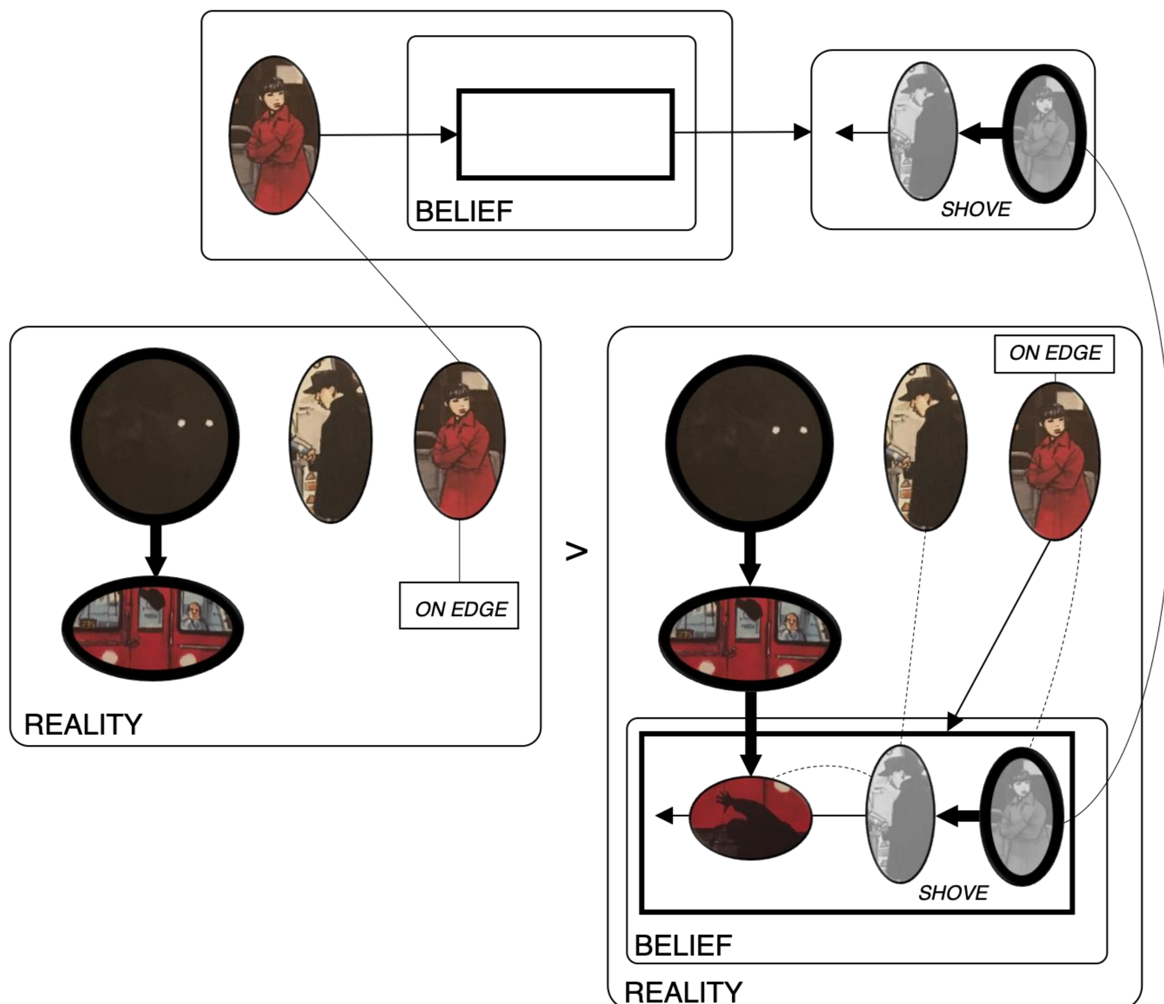


Figure 6.20: Integration of belief state into Nao's conception of reality

for confusion provides a context for readers to understand the experience of having intrusive thoughts and processing the subsequent beliefs and emotions.

6.6 Conclusions

At the start of this chapter, I alluded to the fact that this comic and others like it engage with issues relevant to some of my own experiences of mental illness. It does not offer a set of rules or practices for defining or dealing with intrusive thoughts or obsessions. However, it does offer a means of observing these aspects of experience from the relative safety of fictional objectivity. In this chapter, I started by providing some background to how I came across this text and of its significance to me. I then gave an overview of the reading group discussion of the comic, identifying enjoyment, appraisal, identity as readers, validity of opinions and experiences of different types of obsession as prominent topics. I used the reader discussion of the conceptualisation of mental illness as predominantly internal and hard to communicate as a springboard for in depth analysis of depictive and narrative techniques for communicating Nao's subjective experience of OCD. These included use of numerical scales as a way of tracking levels of distress, compulsively repeated assertions (e.g., ‘mum thinks I’m good’), changes of tense, use of colour and some abstract and visual metaphors.

Most pervasively, Nao’s ‘internal’ intrusive thoughts are depicted with initially equal status to ‘external’ narrative events. I looked at how summary scanning, sequential scanning, absolute construal and agentive gapping are used to inflect the relative presentation of intrusive thoughts and text-world actual events. Part of the conclusion drawn from this analysis was the fact that both types of event—i.e., both enactor-imagined and enactor-perceived—really happen, the difference is in the nature of their impact on Nao and, by extension, those around her.

I finished the chapter by looking at these imagined events in terms of Langacker’s description of reality and related concepts as aspects of conceptualisation for conceptualisers (or discourse participants) that are also mind-modelled by readers when engaging with conceptualising enactors in text-worlds.

As has been demonstrated in different ways in previous chapters, *The Nao of Brown* once again involves the embedding of enactor subjectivity in the discursive parallax of someone telling a story about themself. As a fictional story, *The Nao of Brown* lacks the discourse-world identification of the autobiographies in previous chapters, which focuses reading to a greater extent on enactors in different spaces in the fictional text-world, including Nao as offstage textual narrator, and Nao as onstage depictive and textual experiencer. What it gains in this focus and freedom, it loses in the real-world grounding and evaluative dimensions of authenticity or honesty in relation to the experience of a real person.

As the preceding analysis demonstrates, irreality in the depiction of *The Nao of Brown* is either unmarked or explained in terms of domains that map in conceptually limiting (numerical scale) or relatively open (colour space) ways. The style of storytelling is at times both conceptually open-

ended and oblique, which invites everything from strong identification in the case of **A**, to **D**'s dislike of and confusion about the way the comic engages with the topic of mental illness. Peplow et al. (2015: 88) show how characterising identity as a reader is important in the collaborative endeavours of developing a shared understanding of both a text and a group of readers. In reading group discussion 'aspects of reader identity are incremented into the discourse-world of reading group talk to perform particular interpersonal and interactional functions' (Peplow et al., 2015: 88). The interpersonal and interactional functions that were most prominent in the discussion of *The Nao of Brown* were the evaluation of the book on the basis of differing styles of reading and reader self-identification, and the establishment of a hierarchy of levels of identification with the content of the comic, ranging from **D**'s alienation, through **C** and **B**'s recognition of similar ways of thinking and behaving, to **A**'s identification with the entire experience of living with OCD.

By the end of the group's discussion, **D** reflects on how they read the book in the context of previous books the group had discussed and how this had affected their expectations:

D: I think of the . as much as I didn't connect with it that much one of the things ... I ... I think it's what I didn't like about the book to start with and now I realise ... is good about it .

A: hm

D: I think because I was comparing it to the other two because they're the only two frames of reference I've got . the other two were obviously stories of how a person dealt with their mental illness and from .

A: hm

D: kind of diagnosis through to . seeking therapy and all that kind of stuff . whereas this was just . a story where one of the characters' features was that she was having these . compulsions

C: hm .

D: um which is good because it normalises it more

A: yeah

D: it's . that's that I realised later on . that I think maybe the reason I wasn't connecting with it is because it wasn't done in that way but I realise that's good because it was just kind of ... there was no explanation there was no

A: mm

D: did it mention where how it got triggered I can't really remember

A: [mm]

D: [um]

A: not in great detail

D: not in great detail

C: there's some clues isn't there

A: yeah [you . yeah]

C: [it invites you] to make your own conclusions

A: yeah

D: it's not explicit

The trajectory of **D**'s appraisal of the comic in the context of the discussion revolves around a loosening of the idea of 'getting it' and allowing for open-ended conclusions and meanings. This illustrates the potential value of this type of storytelling, in that it offers an opportunity to learn about other ways of experiencing the world in a way that is messy and potentially frustrating, but that also includes the potential to shed light on oblique experiences. However, **D**'s initial assertion that they 'don't get it' also manifests a general cultural limitation in the practice and expectations of consuming and discussing cultural artefacts. The evaluative elements of literary education are such that certain ways of reading and reporting are rewarded as being more interesting and valid than others. Unlike some of the other participants, **D** reports an interest in popular culture in general, but a lack of experience of reading comics and a disinclination to engage with oblique storytelling techniques. As a result, they are less confident in their opinion and the validity of their reading experience when held up against the experiences and opinions of other participants, some of whom have studied literature at postgraduate level. This contextualises their explanation for their dislike of the comic by suggesting that they might not be 'deep enough' (see section 6.3) and perhaps also why they ultimately try to merge their own opinion with that of the rest of the group. The tyranny of the expectation of 'getting' a text in relation to some poorly defined hierarchy of literary expertise results in a potential undermining of confidence that leads to readers not being able to trust their own experiences of reading enough to assert things they actually felt and thought. **D** was as right to dislike the comic at the time of reading it as the others were to declare it their favourite.

For me, I am now too close to the detail of the comic and the related group discussion to have any ability to experience reading it outside of the context of intensive analysis, which feels apt for a comic that in many ways is about *nothing*. 'The Nothing' is a character from the fictional anime *ichi* that Nao is obsessed with, who, based on Nao's discussion of the lore of *ichi,* was originally called 'Nobodaddyo' (Dillon, 2012: 72). 'The Nothing', as a proper noun, is inherently ironic, as the act of naming something, regardless of the meaning of the name, instantiates it within reality (e.g.,

Langacker, 1991: 53, 2008). The definite article in its name also belies its thingness, while Nao's relationship with The Nothing is one that is very much fixated on making it *something*. Nao has patches and mugs and toys and stickers and clothing all with representations of The Nothing. Based on all of this, Nobodaddyo might be seen as something that tried to become nothing but achieved this in name only. As an obsessional focus for Nao, it functions as a kind of distraction and displacement of obsessive energies in a way that parallels the pursuit of nothingness inherent in Nao's Buddhist practice. In the story this is also reflected in Nao's repeated reproduction of *ensos*, which roughly form a figure-0 with single brush strokes of black ink. Again, these are things created in pursuit of nothingness that undermine the concept through their inherent thingness. This is resolved to some extent in the *enso* that Nao produces at the end of the comic (fig. 21). This *enso*, while referential and still very much a thing, is grounded in an ideal of immersion in the 'now' of experience, as opposed to obsessively poring over past and future experiences. It reflects an acceptance of the way things are rather than the displacement or disavowal inherent in pursuing an ideal of nothingness or in obsessing over 'nothing' as a thing.

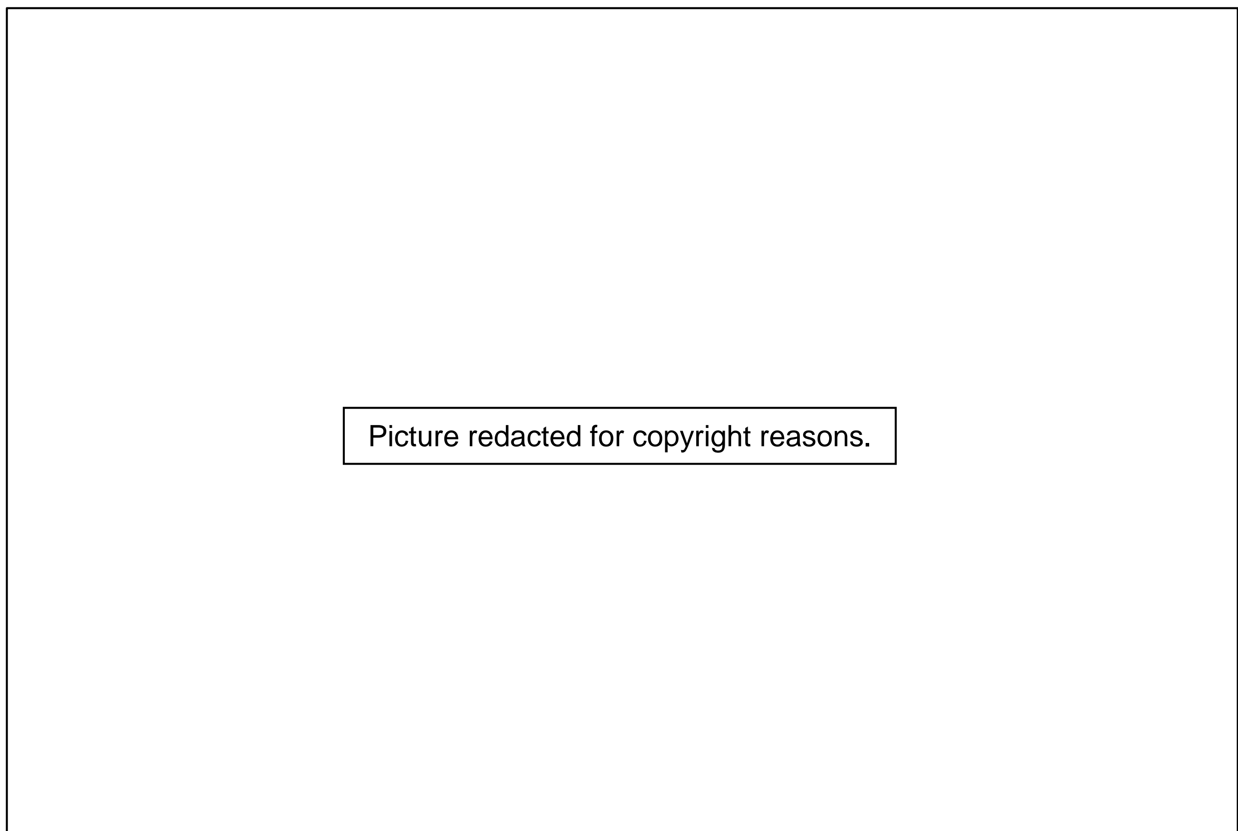


Figure 6.21: Nao's 'Now' enso (Dillon, 2012: 201)

7 Endings

Picture redacted for copyright reasons.

7.1 Overview

In this thesis, I have used concepts from cognitive linguistics to investigate how comics represent subjective experience of mental illness. I used data gathered from reading group discussions to guide my detailed analyses of three comics about mental illness: *Lighter than My Shadow* by Katie Green, *Tangles* by Sarah Leavitt, and *The Nao of Brown* by Glyn Dillon. In the introductory chapter, I narrated my own experiences with drawing, storytelling, art and literature to sketch out the dimensions of my own subjectivity and to provide context for the project and for my later analyses and discussions. I outlined my earliest memories of drawing, painting and telling stories and charted my experience of the diminution of the importance of drawing, painting and illustration in lieu of the scholastic primacy of the written word. I also examined how my engagement with visual art evolved to favour both an ability to produce representationally accurate images and fine art more generally, as opposed to popular visual media. Alongside this, I discussed how my interest in subjectivity developed throughout my school and university education, and how I came to value comics as disposable and indulgent, and literature as serious and respectable.

In section 1.2, I identified mental illness as an aspect of subjective experience that presents peculiar communicative challenges to storytellers and gave an account of how my understanding and experiences of mental illness have developed throughout my life. This included a summary of the cultural influences that shaped my early understandings of my own subjectivity and of the concept of mental illness, focusing on the influence of Catholicism and the capitalistic individualism of growing up in the cultural and economic ruins of Thatcherism, which broadly resulted in an understanding of mental illness as a personal failing and of shame and guilt as private problems to be resolved in isolation from other people. I also touched on how my latent social conservatism and bigotry worked in tandem with these beliefs resulting in a constant internal monologue of self-criticism and a state of chronic low self-esteem. I listed some of the symptoms of mental illness that I have experienced at different points in my life and discussed the potential importance of diagnosis as a way of authorising illness and allowing personal need for help. I examined the potential limitations of diagnosis and the benefits of focusing on holistic improvements, based on my own experiences. I covered some of the personal and clinical interventions that have been available to me including medication and talking therapy. Finally, I touched on the importance of acceptance and of support ensuring secure access to basic requirements such as healthcare, income, and shelter. These personal reflections helped to frame the subsequent research as a product of the limitations and influences of my own subjective experiences of my research topics.

In section 1.3, I introduced different perspectives on subjective experience, outlining positions on emotion, cognition and consciousness from different scientific and psychological traditions. Based on the personal and often mundane nature of storytelling and reading, I suggested that while I would draw on these perspectives where relevant, it would be more suitable to my research to continue to

focus on personal and consensual understandings of aspects of subjectivity and mental illness as these are how most people really engage with their own and others' existence. I treated the issue of mental illness similarly, by introducing a range of ways of understanding mental illness according to shifting cultural norms and competing formulations of what it means to be mentally ill in contemporary society. Again, I resolved to use the comics, participant discussion and my own experience to guide discussion of mental illness throughout the remainder of the thesis.

In the final section of the chapter (1.4), I described the development and contemporary cultural status of comics to provide an introductory overview of comics culture. I began by outlining the history of their development, from early European satirical cartoons through mass production, superheroes, commercialism, censorship and divergence of mainstream and alternative publications. I identified this split as of particular significance to my research, as it gave rise to confessional comics, first in the underground comix of the 1960s and 1970s, then in more contemporary small press, online and independent publications like those I looked at in this thesis. I reflected on the contemporary cultural context in which factors such as the franchising of comics' intellectual property and the presumed ease of reading comics can lead to misconceptions as to the inherent quality of comics as a means of communicating or telling stories. Finally, in section 1.5, I gave an overview of comics about mental illness and introduced some specific titles that focus on mental illness.

I began the second chapter by reviewing existing approaches to researching comics, starting with broadly semiotic approaches that seek to describe and define comics according to common features of text and image presentation. This involved an examination of abstract comics and the observation that they can only be considered as comics because more conventional comics already exist. Related to this, I introduced Molotiu's (2011) concept of sequential dynamism that involves the idea of comics artists putting the eye into motion through use of graphic paths, speed of scanning and graphic rhythms to enliven the aesthetics of the reading experience.

I then reviewed theorisations of comics grounded in definitions of what people engage with in comics both as readers and as researchers. This involved discussion of Cohn's (2007, 2013) assertion that comics should not be thought of as a medium and that they are written in a 'visual language' that varies from culture to culture. Similarly, I looked at how Chute (2008) and Chute and DeKoeven (2006) use the term 'graphic narrative' to focus on storytelling through comics as multimodal objects by separating the communicative function of comics from the sociocultural object.

Following this, I reviewed existing literature on conventions and components common to comics, starting from an overview of the concept of emergent multimodal literacy (e.g., El Refaie, 2009; El Refaie and Hörschelmann, 2010) and comics reading competency (e.g., Cohn, 2020), as well as competencies potentially derived from other media such as tracking spatial positions in relation to a shifting point of view. I then looked at research that focuses on specific functional units in comics,

often drawing on Peirce's (1931) description of icon (representational images in comics), index (tails of speech bubbles, lines used to indicate motion) and symbol to describe the semiotics of comics. I also looked at Miodrag's research (2010, 2011), which argues in favour of focused stylistic analysis of text in comics, which ultimately led me to the conclusion that all the above facets of the semiotics of comics would have to be brought together in my own analysis (where relevant) to reflect the rich, complicated and varied nature of actual reading. On the basis of this section, I asserted a functional distinction between depiction and narration, while acknowledging the fact that they are also integrated both through composition, and through the act of reading.

In section 2.2, I focused on cognitive linguistic approaches to understanding comics. I began by introducing cognitive linguistics as being grounded in real usage and observable psychological phenomena. I organised this section according to types of conceptualisation, beginning with conceptualisation of entities. Through this, I considered the dual nature of attention in relation to comics, as they involve both readerly attention and attentional preselection (i.e., construal) through artist and writer composition. I looked at research that engages with the involvement of memory and prediction in fleshing out impoverished stimuli and considered the metonymic nature of comics depiction and conceptualisation, as well as situated extension of entities through conceptualisation of them in specific contexts (e.g., Barsalou, 2003). From here, I proceeded to look at conceptualising processes through depiction in comics, reviewing theorisations of panels in comics as mapping between time and space, as moments, and as depictions of event states. I looked at how different researchers describe interrelation of panels, including Groensteen's (1999) concept of braiding, where ideas are connected across whole texts and Cohn's (2012; 2013) idea of hierarchical organisation of panels according to narrative function. My review suggested a need to engage with event structures within panels as well as between them, which led me to McCloud's (1993) idea of 'closure' as a kind of inferential tracking of processes between panels. I critiqued theorisations of the gutter (the gap, border or threshold between panels) that attribute too much functional value to it as a prompt for inference, and posited that its function is rather, conventionally, as a part of a comics page that is not attended to and that marks the boundary of attentional resources of individual panels. I concluded by theorising that comics panels involve compressions of entities, relations and processes that are unpacked through reading. Finally, in line with Davies (2019: 221), I introduced Text World Theory as a frame for considering comics production and reading as a discursive interaction. As well as being able to accommodate the theoretical conceptualisation set out in the previous sections, TWT considers the context of reading and, through the concepts of discourse participants and enactors, provides a productive means of engaging with the interface between authors, characters, and readers.

Section 2.3 engaged with subjectivity in storytelling and reading, focusing initially on the idea that reading can be understood as a form of mindreading or mind-modelling that can be mediated through multiple imagined subjectivities (Zunshine, 2006; Palmer, 2004; Stockwell, 2009). In relation to

comics, I examined literature that engaged with the idea of tracking levels of subjectivity across narration and depiction in comics, including Kukkonen's (2013) analysis of character intention and cues for character inference in comics.

In looking at research touching on physical response and metaphor, I started by suggesting that it is wrong to generalise that comics either simplify or amplify emotion in depictions of emotional response, and that emotions are encoded differently. From here I examined the use of visual metaphor and metonymy, observing a range of conventions shared within particular comics cultures and subcultures, as well as intratextually established conventions in individual texts (e.g., Abbott and Forceville, 2012). I suggested a reduction of visual metaphors to basic image schemas as a way of engaging with their conceptual bases.

I then looked at types of thought in comics including direct thought, which is often presented through thought bubbles or captions. I identified this textual-pictorial presentation of as metaphoric or sometimes metonymic in relation to speech (i.e., thought is presented as propositional writing). Beyond this, I considered everything not addressed by propositional thought or explicated through character speech as action and unconscious thought, which are largely predictive and inferential because of their inaccessible nature (relative to direct presentation). Finally, I looked at focalisation in comics and how Genette's (1980; 1988) types of focalisation relate to character consciousness. I described focalisation as important in terms of considering which enactors are engaged in the conceptualisation of a scene at any given time, while, in relation to the shifting vantage point of contemporary comics, I observed that engaging with visual media *without* reflecting on 'who sees' is often a core competency.

In section 2.4, I introduced some principles of cognitive grammar to provide additional means of engaging with subjectivity in comics. I began by reiterating the cognitive linguistic commitment to psychological realism, which makes CG well suited to describing actual usage events. I outlined how CG has previously been used to analyse comics (Herman, 2009; 2011; Pleyer and Schneider, 2014; Finn, 2021) and identified CG as a good fit for describing comics because its own theoretical description of language is grounded in visual analogy as well as common cognitive processes. Beyond the basic principles of CG, I outlined elements of construal, viewing events, attentional frames, current discourse space, viewing frames and intonation units. Within this, I noted the relevance of Langacker's (2008: 78) concept of temporal iconicity to the dynamic flow of comics depiction.

Having established a broad theoretical approach in the previous chapters, chapter 3 focused on reviewing and outlining my research methods. Having reviewed experimental and naturalistic studies, I stated a preference for more naturalistic feedback over targeted experimental methods, as my intention has been to address broader qualitative questions with a view to theory and hypothesis

generation as opposed to focused testing of specific hypotheses. I stressed the value of reader response in adding another dimension to stylistic analysis by using reflective discussion and retellings of reading experience to enrich my own perspective on the experience of reading comics. For the remainder of the chapter, I outlined my research protocols detailing how I selected the comics for the study, ethical considerations in my research design, data collection and protection, transcription conventions, and the analysis and synthesis of the discussion and comics data.

Chapter 4 engaged with reader responses to Katie Green's *Lighter than My Shadow* as a means of understanding how readers conceptualise mental illness through Green's comics storytelling. The reading group identified autobiography, authenticity, personal experience, and formal expectations as prominent factors that framed their reading experience. In my analysis, I focused on story events and features that were specified in the group discussion. These broadly fell into two categories—looking at the discourse structure of reading an autobiographical comic, and visual abstraction of subjective experience—that I explored in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

In 4.3 I made use of Text World Theory to describe reading a comic as an interactive discourse event involving multiple participants. Having described the makeup of the discourse-world of the comic, I extended the text-world analysis into a description of depictive world-building in 4.3.1. I built on this in 4.3.2 by using the Text World Theory concept of enactors, as a personified entities within a text-world, to describe how multiple versions of the character of Katie were implicated in the conceptualisation of Green's storytelling. In 4.3.3 I used the concept of modal-worlds to track how comics storytelling invites a reader to toggle between the distinct worlds prompted by enactors who are related to different levels of textual narration, depiction and modality. Within this, I looked at how focusing on particular entities in relation to others can affect which world-switches are prompted at which time. In addition to this, I also considered the idea of intentional deixis as an aspect of depiction that draws on concepts of fictive motion and emanation from a conceptualising entity (or character), that serves as a prompt for mind-modelling attention, focus and engagement.

At the end of the section, I began to engage with the abstract scribbled entity that features prominently both in the comic and in the group discussion. At the end of 4.3.3, I look at how the scribble functions as a depictive abstraction of trauma that communicates emotion through the gestures involved in creating it being accessible to imaginative recreation through its form—the nature of the gesture of forcefully scribbling, implicit in a scribble on a page, communicates the sorts of emotion that might go into such an act (e.g., frustration, confusion, anger and so on).

Section 4.4 engages more specifically with the scribble as being a dynamic entity at threshold of enactor accessibility. While perceptible, present and interacting with characters as a dimension of Katie's past experiences, its depiction as an abstracted entity was shown to have multiple ways of explicating aspects of Katie's subjectivity. It operates as a conventional 'upfix' (Cohn, 2013c)

capturing a momentary emotional and psychological state. By enduring, recurring and morphing throughout the comic, the scribble is established as a distinct entity within the logic of the story with mutable agency and interaction with Katie. The reader discussion illustrated the ambiguity of the composition, which permitted active and passive construals of both Katie and the scribble in the same situations. At the end of 4.4.1, I introduce the use image schemas as a way of describing the physical basis of these interactions, which provides a conceptual framework for analysing abstract depiction of subjective experience.

I introduced chapter 5 by telling the story of my own experience of losing a loved one to Alzheimer's. I then gave a general introduction to *Tangles* and the reading group discussion, before providing an overview of the plot of the comic.

In section 5.3, noting that the experience Alzheimer's is singularly difficult to conceptualise owing to the nature of the disease, I engaged with the problem by considering how Leavitt used different methods in the depiction and narration of the comic to modulate perspective on her mother's experience and on her own experience. The difference of access was mostly notable through paratextual and textual features, as for the most part, the experiences of enactors of Sarah and Midge were depicted very similarly in the pictorial stream. This was prompted by reader observations about the fact that this was the first comic to engage with mental illness from the position of 'spectator'. In this discussion, there was ambiguity in the sense of who 'deals with' mental illness, with both the unwell person and their loved ones being construed as 'dealing with' at different points. Because of the nature of Alzheimer's, participants were less able to directly draw on their own experiences, but both **A** and **C** had direct experience of losing loved ones to Alzheimer's and told stories about these experiences as part of their discussion of how the text had brought back memories and made them relive some of the emotions of those experiences.

Section 5.4 engaged with **A** and **E**'s reported problems with finishing the comic. Both had found that it was emotionally overwhelming as the gravity and severity of Leavitt and her family's experience inexorably and predictably worsened. A particular point of crisis for readers was identified with an acceleration of events around the moment Midge moved into a hospice, especially when compared with the perceived slower pace of storytelling elsewhere in the comic. I explored how this was achieved through different uses of panels and text for punctuating narrative text, presenting single events as well as specifically depicting instances of events that were described generically as recurring events in the narration. My analysis confirmed the readers' intuition that a lot of disparate and upsetting events accumulated over the course of two pages in the lead up to the crisis point of Midge moving into the hospice.

In 5.4.1 I showed how textual narration has a prominent structuring function in *Tangles*, especially through temporal, spatial and social deixis. I posited a distinction between the proximal nature of the

depiction and the relatively distal nature of the narration in relation to the events being told, which can be understood as a difference between generally imperfective narration and more discrete and perfective depiction. I showed how Sarah's distance from her mother and inability to engage with her experience was expressed through conditional epistemic narration as she recounted trying to mind-model her mother. I reintroduce the concept of depictive impetus and explore how it aligns with Midge's positioning in patient roles, as well as directing her attention away from the interactive exchanges with Sarah. I developed this further in 5.4.2 by exploring the parallel between how Leavitt depicted herself in an active position when listening to her mother, reinforcing the sense that Midge was not managing to talk to her. I also showed how Midge's agency is curtailed by being implicit in the depiction and through passive and non-specific description of her pseudo-speech acts. I look at how Sarah's depicted body language demonstrated a sense of avoidance through her role as a passive experiencer. I posited a potential connection between Sarah and Midge taking place outside of the normal spatiotemporal logic of the comics page, whereby Midge is looking directly at Sarah across panel borders, reflecting the fact that she was still engaging with her family but within a completely different subjective frame of reference. In addition to this, I suggested that the identical presentation of narration, verbal thought and reported speech creates a blend of Sarah's and Midge's voice, suggesting the pervasive influence of Sarah's subjectivity as a storyteller, as well as the influence of Midge on her daughter. Finally, I explored how experiencer roles in the comic were more implicit in the narration and explicit in the depiction, while experiencing enactors placed onstage through depiction can be ambiguous in terms of agent/patient and subject/object roles.

In 5.4.4, I looked in detail at the event structuring and pacing of a phone conversation, showing how it shifts from oscillating between textual narration and summary depiction to more sequential structuring in depiction and narration of specific events. After this shift, the events are depicted without the temporally distal mediation of narration, giving them a greater sense of immediacy and specificity. I again suggested that the lack of formal distinction between modes of narration, speech and verbal thought all demonstrate the pervasive influence of Sarah's subjectivity. I noted how Sarah and Rob are aligned against the flow of depictive impetus, reflecting the extent to which they don't want to make the decision to put Midge into the hospice. I finally posited that the prominent onstage focus on difficult and distressing emotions experienced by characters, in combination with formal reluctance in the face of the unrelenting progression of Midge's illness might account for why readers struggled with this section.

In section 5.5 I looked at depictive and narrative viewing arrangements in relation to a passage brought up by **D** when they were describing their understanding of Sarah's experience at that point in the comic. I built on the idea of a CG canonical event model within a Text World Theory discursive framework to investigate the function of surrogate grounding in reading, which accounts for the fact that storytelling involves an imagined world, grounded in relation to its own reality. I posited that narration and depiction prompt distinct surrogate grounds that are paradigmatically related, and, in

line with the competency of discounting the identity of depictive vantage points in comics, that the identities of grounded enactors are less relevant than the onstage focus. In relation this, I remarked how reader discussion often places authoring and reading onstage, where—apart from in instances of metatextuality or to a lesser extent in autobiography—they normally remain implicit (i.e., grounded) in the experience of reading. Otherwise, these levels of surrogation are only significant at the point of transition and where reference is made to different levels of discourse.

In 5.5.2, I also looked how focusing and prominence interact with perspective, such as when focus is used in *Tangles* to draw attention onto Sarah both as a focally prominent entity for readers, and as the focus of her parents' attention. In such instances of character interaction, vantage point can be used to alternately share the vantage point of either the agentive or patient participants depending on the intended focus of the storytelling. Again, this can be modulated by narration, speech and thought presentation.

Section 5.5.3 examined how perspective and focus combine in the depiction to communicate Midge's experience. I showed how, when she is put onstage as the depictive focus of attention in the expected role of active interlocutor, her difficulty speaking results in her functioning more as a passive experiencer of her inhibited ability to communicate. I also observed how Leavitt used a shifting vantage point on multiple images of Midge without panel borders to capture her sense of distress and confusion.

Overall, in chapter 5, I found that readers once again drew extensively on personal experience in discussing the comic and were influenced heavily by their anticipation of events in the comics, both in terms of knowing what would likely happen, and in terms of anticipating how they were likely to respond to reading those events. I covered the impact of grounding and surrogate grounding in terms of shifting experiencer focus and how instances of this in the comic related to reported reading experiences. Through examining the viewing arrangement of the discourse situation of reading comics in relation to both the narration and depiction, I suggested a difference between the discourse structures of the two modes based on the relative lack of cues to prompt reader identification with the less prominent and less deictically indexed role of viewing something (depictee) that has been shown (depictor). These roles are more notional and less important than those of narratee and narrator because of the core comics reading competency of adopting a free-moving vantage point without necessarily assigning a viewing and showing conceptualiser or discourse participant to account for the changing visual perspective. A showing role is involved in the selection, ordering and construing of objects and events. However, it is less evident than the role of a narrator as depiction lacks the extensive formal grounding elements that prompt conceptual participation in a discourse event. It is not altogether absent in depiction, but—being grounded through nuances of artistic style such as line, colour, verisimilitude and dynamism—it is not as formally pronounced as in textual narration. Through this, depiction closes the gap between text-world and reader without necessarily

prompting conceptualisation of onstage (or, grounded just offstage) showing and viewing enactors in the same way that narration prompts conceptualisation of a narrating conceptualiser and an implicit narratee.

In concluding chapter 5, I also touched on the idea that subjective experience is a conventional aspect of storytelling in all modes that is dynamically modulated through shifting focus and flow between different enactors in different modes and at different levels of discourse. In relation to this, I discussed the bivalence of the experiencer role archetype and how experiences can either happen to or (virtually) emanate from an experiencer.

In chapter 6 I analysed extracts from *The Nao of Brown* by Glyn Dillon, once again using reader discussion to guide my topic focus. I began by introducing the personal significance of the comic and its spiritual predecessor *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* before introducing the comic and providing an overview of the plot. I gave a general introduction to the reading group discussion, which once again drew heavily on relevant personal experience, with a specific focus on obsession both as a facet of fandom and as a disordered coping strategy. In addition to this, I covered the fact that there was negotiation of each participant's status as a reader in relation to their varying appraisals and reading experiences.

The first topic I focused on was the status of imagined events within the comic, specifically instances of Nao processing intrusive thoughts of harming other people as part of her day-to-day existence. This was prompted by reader discussion of the internal and invisible nature of some aspects of mental illness as opposed to more external and physical aspects of illness in general. The discussion hinged on the fact that regardless of whether an event is imaginary or not, the act of imagining is itself a real event with real consequences for the imaginer and for people around them. I examined the ways in which such events were incorporated into the depiction and narration of *The Nao of Brown* including changes in colour and changes in tense in the narrative and thought captions.

In section 6.4.2 I looked in depth at a specific example raised by **C** in the group discussion where Nao imagines pushing someone in front of a train. In this analysis, I noted how extensive and dynamic content incorporating multiple processes can be conceptualised on the basis of individual panels, which can incorporate multiple processes through summary scanning. In the case of Nao's intrusive thoughts, the impactful interruption of a single panel of violence diverging from the otherwise mundane sequential depiction gave a strong sense of the nature of Nao's intrusive thoughts, and how, as she describes later in the comic, they '*hit* me like a *fucking hammer* to my head' (Dillon, 2012: 165). In addition to summary scanning, I also outlined how the use of absolute construal and agentive gapping served to diminish the idea of the reality of the shove, suggesting the unbidden nature of the intrusive thought. For readers, this results in a repeatedly contested status of reality for these generally single panel insertions that have to be resolved into a text-world reality

that incorporates the reality of the imagined events in that they happened, but only in the sense that they were imagined.

I built on this in the following section by applying Langacker's concepts of reality, irreality, elaborated epistemic model, known reality, unknown reality, non-reality and projected reality to the same extract. In summation, these different aspects of reality account for an individual conceptualiser's experience of reality in terms of what they do and do not know or believe. In terms of describing the process of mind-modelling a character, it provides a structured way to categorise aspects of epistemic modality relating to different characters and different enactors of those characters within a story. I described how comics, like all forms of storytelling, involve multiple conceptualising enactors who engage with their own reality in these complex ways. Part of the task of reading a story, then, is to track all of these aspects of each character (and each enactor of a character)'s epistemology and how they are inflected in relation to one another. In addition, the same set of reality conceptions form part of how readers read, how they engage with authors as discourse participants, and how, in the case of a reading group, they engage with each other.

In section 6.5.1, I looked at how overlapping reality conceptions are presented in the depiction resulting in enduring impacts from momentary occurrences and how the embedded reality conceptions of Nao thinking about herself in the past, present and the projected (or imagined) future combine to create an overall sense of her experience of OCD. In terms of reading, the lack of apparent consequences for the imagined acts of violence generates a kind of depictive negation, which in the first instance would require a degree of backtracking, reconceptualising and reappraisal. The overall sense of Nao's experience requires conceptual integration of divergent past, present and projected realities.

7.2 Summary of findings

I will now provide a brief synthesis of how my analysis has addressed each of the research questions outlined in section 3.1.

7.2.1 How do comics depict experiences of mental illness?

Each comic presented distinct ways of depicting experiences of mental illness, with some commonalities across all three. All three comics used some form of visual metaphor ranging from the abstract scribbles of *Lighter than My Shadow* to the surreal monstrosity of the central crisis point of *The Nao of Brown* (fig. 7.1). *LTMS* and *Tangles* both make creative use of what Cohn (2013c) describes as 'upfixes', that is, non-representational entities depicted above the heads of characters to indicate an emotional response, state, or frame of mind. *LTMS* made extensive use of this feature, while developing it beyond the expected function into more extended metaphors for subjective experience of mental illness.

The compositional aspect of depiction was deployed to varying effects in each comic. The order of presentation of entities, the summary or sequential presentation of processes within and across panels, and size pacing and scope of panels were all used in combination with the natural paths of both the depicted situations (e.g., fictive paths of intention, inferable processes and occluded content) and of those derived from conventions of comics composition and reading (e.g., reading paths, text inclusion).

In all three, the depiction worked in tandem with narration to frame perspective on the experience of mental illness from multiple perspectives. Mind-modelling of characters based on their depicted physical and facial responses to situations was inflected by narration of the same situation from the relatively distal, but more objective perspective of narrating enactors. ‘Objective’, in this instance, reflects the fact that the narrator is able to consider past subjective experience as onstage objective content relative to the subjective moment of narration. These perspectives were further modulated by prefatory contextualisation of the authors’ relationship with the story they were telling.

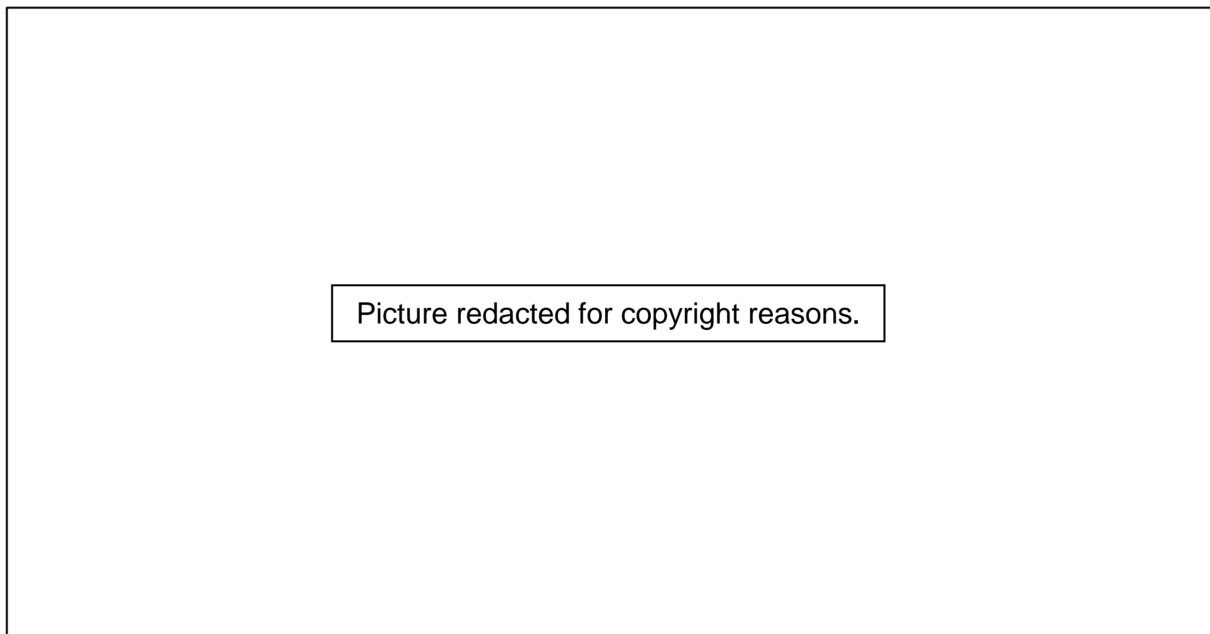


Figure 7.1: Nao as ink-spewing monster (Dillon, 2012: 152)

For Dillon, this was a personal connection to the topic of OCD through his wife’s experiences. For Green and Leavitt, the prefatory material, subtitles and other paratextual features highlighted the autobiographical nature of the comics which established identity between author and all enactors representing them within the comics. The perspective of *Tangles* was modulated further still by being told from the perspective of someone living with and caring for a loved one.

As well as through visual metaphor and narration, mind-modelling was prompted by verbalised thought in all three comics, each having its own means of differentiating narration from verbalised thought. While all three comics demonstrated privileged levels of psychological access to their first-person narrators—inflected with the benefit of hindsight inherent to the act of retelling (fictive or

otherwise)—engagement with Leavitt's mother Midge was pointedly limited by Sarah's gradually diminishing ability to access her mother's state of mind either through Midge's ability to report or through Sarah's own ability to intuit what her mother might have been going through. The limitations of reported speech were further reified by stylised depictions of her mother physically turning away from her and of closing her hands, demonstrating a similar intratextually established motif to 'handloss' in *Azumanga Daioh*, as described by Abbott and Forceville (2012).

In line with El Refaie (2010, 2012), both *Tangles* and *Lighter than My Shadow* made use of elements of handwriting, personally idiomatic drawing styles, and expressive lines to communicate emotion in relation to depicted and narrated events, as well as marking the autobiographical authors' subjectivity as an ongoing aspect of the reading process.

More generally, rather than framing mental illness using external point of reference and expert discourses, each comic dealt with mental illness in relation to people's lived experiences with relevant aspects, such as treatments, side effects, behaviours and so on, arising naturally as part of the storytelling. For example, Nao's 'homework' and her coping strategies such as scoring her distress out of 10, are introduced without explanation. This approach helps preserve a sense of ownership over the experiences that might otherwise be undermined by extensive explication in relation to psychiatric or other medical discourse.

7.2.2 How do people discuss experiences of reading comics?

Above all else, it must be stated that the sample size of participants that I worked with was too limited to be able to draw definitive conclusions about the way people discuss their experiences of reading comics. However, the trends that arose across the three discussions reported in this thesis point to possible trends and avenues for further, more focused research, as well as resonating with other studies of comics reading (e.g., El Refaie, 2012).

Generally, discussion focused on topics relating to appraisal, personal experience, the processes of reading and authoring, intertextuality and content. In line with Peplow et al. (2015), all these ways of discussing the comics were ventured and engaged with on a collaborative basis, with evidence of reported evaluations and understandings changing over the course of discussions. The discussions demonstrated the importance of personal experience as a means of engaging with understanding experiences of mental illness, with less relatable experiences resulting in less reader engagement. For example, as part of the project, I ran reading groups where participants discussed *Marbles* by Ellen Forney, which looks at her experience of bipolar disorder, and *Swallow Me Whole* by Nate Powell, which looks at two characters' experience of growing up with schizophrenia and psychosis. In these discussions, the reported engagement and understanding was diminished by the relative impenetrability of aspects of the experiences reported in the two comics. *Swallow Me Whole*

engages with aspects of human experience that are significantly less relatable than other mood or cognitive disorders, which potentially points towards a cultural deficit that needs to be addressed.

Where participants had extensive lived experience of similar experiences to those narrated and depicted in the comics, they tended towards more positive appraisal of their reading experiences. However, the anticipation of what happens to people suffering from Alzheimer's led to some readers expressing difficulty when reading *Tangles*. Similarly, the anticipated progression from wellness to illness and back to wellness via a well-defined pathology came up in the discussion as something that readers were anticipating as part of the storytelling in the comics, and that they were pleasantly surprised to find was not apparent in any of the stories. This ties into expectations of honesty and authenticity that featured in the discussion, especially with regards to the autobiographical aspects of the comics. Overall, this suggests a latent sense of 'where we (think we) are' as a culture being behind the reality of what people are starting to be able to produce to start to change discussions and understandings.

7.2.3 How effectively can cognitive poetic methods be adapted to comics?

Comics are just there. People make them, edit them, publish them and read them with or without the kind of descriptive framework proposed in this and other works. The linguistic undertaking of devising a metalanguage and frame of reference and applying it to human communication and interaction is intended to describe communication and interaction in ways that shed new light on how they function. The process of devising these metalanguages and frames of reference is necessary coloured and inflected by the inclinations, cultural heritage and research aims of the linguist. In line with this, and to reiterate an earlier point, what I outline in this thesis is only one way of describing how comics function. Cognitive linguistics, Text World Theory and cognitive grammar all offer ways of reducing the complexity of comics storytelling into basic concepts grounded in observable aspects of cognitive processing. In addition to developing the application of construal to comics, as proposed by Herman (2009) and Pleyer and Schneider (2013), I have shown how some of the basic principles of cognitive grammar can be applied to the analysis of comics. The conceptual rudiments of communicating through language, beginning with the prototypical categories of things, relations and processes, provides a schematic starting point for analysing the complexity of comics depiction in a way that can be integrated with the analysis of language in comics (speech, verbal thought, paratext and narration). Through the lens of the Text World Theory concept of world-building, I demonstrated how depicted enactors can be grounded and contextualised either through adjacent text, or through a process of cross referencing with one another to establish a best-fit appraisal of the depicted text world. In this way, highly schematic images can combine with one another to produce a sense of what they are.

Subjectivity, by its very nature, is hard to look at. Between cognitive poetics, Text World Theory and cognitive grammar, I have demonstrated ways of describing subjectivity that engage with its implicit nature, and with its implication in all engagements with other fictive or actual conceptualisers. Subjectivity, as an aspect of communication, is understood in cognitive grammar through subjective experience: the unseen 'I' behind seeing eyes. In line with Finn (2021), I demonstrate how the concept of surrogate grounding, in combination with Langacker's description of viewing arrangements, can be used to track mind-modelling across parallel levels of discourse in both depiction and narration. In addition, the Text World Theory concepts of enactors and discourse participants help in tracking modulations of these subjectivities throughout the process of reading a comic, as well as in relation to comics reading as a discursive interaction with authors, artists, writers, colourers, letterers and so on. As part of mind-modelling depicted enactors of characters, I introduced the notion of intentional deixis, combining mind-modelling with Talmy's (2000a: 105–6; 125–6) description of fictive emanation (and its inverse) as a means of conceptualising perception and attention. I also examined the influence of depictive flow and the natural path of reading, and how they can be used to achieve a range of stylistic effects.

Elsewhere, I suggested a means of analysing visual metaphor in terms of schematic conceptual conceptions of depicted interactions through image schemas, which allows for a detailed analysis of abstract visual metaphors. In relation to this, and drawing on Pignocchi (2010), I suggested a metonymic aspect of drawing style whereby the nature of marks on a page indicates the nature of the gestures that went into making them, providing an additional means of stylistic expression of emotion through depiction.

I made extensive use of the CG concept of role archetypes to describe ways in which depicted entities and enactors might be construed. In addition to this, I demonstrated the importance of allowing for multiple construals of single panels or images based on the observation that individual panels, while not necessarily speaking a thousand words, can feasibly communicate the equivalent of multiple propositions and prompt conceptualisation of multiple processes, construals and conceptual relationships. Finally, I drew on Langacker's (1991: 253–4) description of subjective epistemology to describe the tension between the status of things that happen in someone's head (so to speak) and the impact those things have on their lived experience.

Overall, cognitive grammar provides a rich set of psychologically grounded principles for describing the ways in which people make meaning through drawing, writing, reading and discussing comics. Through my inclusion of other elements of cognitive linguistics, I hope also to have demonstrated the extent to which CG can work with and be integrated into other analytical and descriptive frameworks, with potential for it to be applied to media beyond text and illustration.

7.3 Final thoughts and future directions

The focus of this project originated from the idea that many aspects of my own mental illness (especially y neuroses) started as words said by me and others about me and others. Through repeated use and observation, these words became thoughts. Over time, those thoughts became beliefs about myself and other people. Ultimately these became lived truths that I enact and reify in my day-to-day existence to the extent that they are the ramparts propping up the imperceptible walls that enclose my experience of reality. The self-examination involved in engaging with subjective experience of mental illness has led, not as I hubristically anticipated to a greater a sense of control over my own life but rather, to a burgeoning awareness and acceptance of my limitations.

In relation to this, I saw depiction as an alternative means of expression and communication that, while not bypassing these extant understandings, might offer new ways of thinking and working around them. While, as demonstrated above, there are expressive affordances specific to depiction and comics more generally, they are not, in and of themselves, solutions to personal or public health problems.

The continually accumulating irony of this thesis, is that I have relied so heavily on the written word to discuss the communicative potential of illustration and comics. In line with researchers and artists such as McCloud (1993, 2007) or Sousanis (2015), I intend to use comics in future projects not only as the object, but also as the means of carrying out and communicating my research.

To test the applicability of cognitive grammar to comics of all types, future research could also focus on atypical comics such as wordless comics, imageless or highly schematic comics and abstract comics. Such analyses would provide opportunities for experimenting with tagging comics using CG categories and principles, with a view to generating an electronically analysable corpus of tagged comics, as well as interactive resources that would allow users to engage with how comics function according to CG.

Further research using empirical methods to engage with comics authors' intentions and how these relate to the interpretations put forward by readers would open up a dimension of research that is cut off from the project presented above. Using empirical methods to engage directly with authors would help to fill out understanding of the authorial roles and author adjacent enactors in the comics discourse situations outlined in sections 2.2.3, 2.4.4, 4.4.2, 5.5. This approach would also provide scope for investigating how authors relate to and understand their own works. Elsewhere, there are hypotheses that can be postulated on the basis of those theories, such as the energetic flow of depiction, how readers might attend to entities, how readers might scan processes or describe abstract elements of depiction.

Behind the interwoven experiences of conducting and failing to conduct the reading, writing and research necessary for this project, I hold a long-standing sense of guilt and shame relating to the idea that I am squandering opportunities that I have only been afforded because of tremendous privilege. This includes, among many other things, access to higher education and access to healthcare. The extent to which a person is able to access help is mitigated by stigma and inequalities associated with ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, class, and gender (Ciftci et al., 2012; Grzanka and Miles, 2016; Hallett, 2015; Oexle and Corrigan, 2018). This impediment to access can be exacerbated through cultural and institutional practices that have evolved over time and have been designed around patriarchal social structures (Banks and Kohn-Wood, 2002; Kelly, 2009). When human misery arises from intersecting institutional oppressors, it should be considered as dysfunctional and disordered not because a miserable person does not fit in with culturally accepted ideas of regularity, but because limitations placed on their existence by different institutions are beyond the miserable person's ability to influence or change. Because of this, mental health is better conceived of as part of a broader project of social education and welfare rather than a matter of simply identifying, categorising and treating illness on an individual and private basis. For this to function, consideration of the intersection of institutional and cultural forces that limit people's well-being needs to be at the core of the conceptualisation of mental illness and mental health more generally. In any future work I carry out, especially in relation to experience of mental illness, I will endeavour to make these considerations central to my research design and overall ethos.

All the comics in this study engage with mental illness through the interrelation of different levels of experience, memory, recollection, retelling and resolution. Rather than necessarily providing definitive ways of living with specific mental health problems or mental illnesses, they all provide similar models of how to engage with trauma and complex experience by framing it as onstage objective content. The ability to do so by drawing and writing a comic is not available to everyone, but the principle of self-expression and understanding through telling stories about ourselves, and the idea that this is a lifelong project that will always present new challenges are both key lessons that I will take with me from all of the books I have read, the discussions I have analysed, all of the talking therapy I have completed and all of the other ways in which I have tried to storytell my way out of various problems in my life. From these stories and the discussions about them, I will take with me the resolution to accept my circumstances for whatever they may be, and to treat my past, present and future selves with compassion rather than disdain.

Coda

It's half past six in the morning on the seventeenth of December twenty twenty-two. I have just and finally finished the final edit on this work, incorporating the judicious corrections and suggestions of my generous and brilliant examiners, mentors and supervisors. The low sun is rising, barely, over an unthawed Sheffield quilted in a light freezing fog and still frosted with last week's snow. The city yawns with the agonal murmur of another terrible year on the wane. I can finally feel beyond the aimlessly duty-bound horizons of the dysfunctional self-flagellant that I and my long, slow education made of me. The vast golden warmth of a shrouded winter sky compresses the beauty of the day into a brief and glorious rupture, then kindly and greyly suggests: “go home, that'll do.”

Enough of all this. I'll end with an affirmation I found floating serenely among the digital detritus of this decade of torpor and toil:

You exist.

You deserve to exist.

You are not the paths you have worn in the dirt,

nor the dirt that has stained you.

Notice the sky.

Salute crows.

Breathe.

List of references

Abbott, M and C Forceville (2012) Visual representations of emotion in manga: loss of control is loss of hands in *Azumanga Daioh* volume 4. *Language and Literature* 20(2): 91–112.

Ahktar, Z (2020) Shortbox https://www.shortbox.co.uk/ retrieved 7/12/2020.

Aldama, FL (2009) *Your Brain on Latino Comics*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Allington, D (2011) 'It actually painted a picture of the village and the sea and the bottom of the sea': Reading groups, cultural legitimacy, and description in narrative (with particular reference to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*). *Language and Literature* 20(4): 317–32.

Allington, D and J Swann (2009) Researching Literary Reading as Social Practice. *Language and Literature* 18(3): 219–30.

Alzheimer's Research UK (2022) *Symptoms*. https://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/dementia-information/types-of-dementia/alzheimers-disease/symptoms/ retrieved 18/1/2022.

American Psychiatric Association (2013) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed). Arlington, VA: APA.

Baars, B (1993) *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baars, B and N Gage (2007) *Cognition, Brain, and Consciousness: Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience*. Paris: Elsevier.

Baetens, J (2001) *The Graphic Novel*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Baetens, J and H Frey (2014) *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bailey, A (2006) Zombies, Epiphenomenalism, and Physicalist Theories of Consciousness. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 36: 481–509.

Baker, LR (1999) What is This Thing Called 'Commonsense Psychology'? *Philosophical Explorations* 2: 3–19.

Bal, M (1977) *Narratologie : Essais sur la signification narrative dans quatre romans modernes*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Barsalou, L (2003) Situated simulation in the human conceptual system. *Language and Cognitive Processes* 18(5): 513–62.

Barsalou, L (2009) Simulation, situated conceptualization, and prediction. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 364: 1281–9.

Beaty, B (2008) Autobiography as Authenticity. J Heer (ed) *A Comics Studies Reader*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Beaty, B (2012) *Comics versus Art*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Bechdel, A (2007) *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Bedei, C (2016) The mental health zines filling the gap that therapy doesn't. http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/32004/1/the-mental-health-zines-filling-the-gap-that-therapy-doesn-t retrieved 20/2/2018.

Bell, A (2019) A reader response method nor just for 'you'. *Language and Literature*, 28(3): 241–62.

Bell, A (2021). 'It All Feels Too Real': Digital Storyworlds and Ontological Resonance. *Style (DeKalb)* 55(3): 430–52.

Bell, A, A Ensslin, I Van Der Bom and J Smith (2019) A reader response method not just for 'you'. *Language and Literature* 28(3): 241–62.

Belmonte MK (2008) Does the Experimental Scientist Have a 'Theory of Mind'? *Review of General Psychology* 12(2): 192–204.

Benning T (2013) Western and indigenous conceptualizations of self, depression, and its healing. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 17: 129–37.

Benning, T (2016) No such thing as mental illness? Critical reflections on the major ideas and legacy of Thomas Szasz. *BJPsych Bulletin* 40(6): 292–95.

Benwell, B (2009) 'A pathetic and racist and awful character': ethnomethodological approaches to the reception of diasporic fiction. *Language and Literature* 18(3): 300–15.

Beresford, P and J Russo (2016) Supporting the sustainability of Mad Studies and preventing its co-option. *Disability & Society* 31(2).

Beresford, P, M Nettle and R Perring (2010) *Towards a social model of madness and distress? Exploring what service users say.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Bergen, B (2005) Mental simulation in literal and figurative language. S Coulson and B Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (eds) *The literal and nonliteral in language and thought*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Bhui, K and S Dinos (2008) Health Beliefs and Culture: Essential Considerations for Outcome Measurement. *Disease Management and Health Outcomes* 16(6): 411–9.

Blanco-Carrión, O, A Barcelona, and R Pannain (2018) Introduction: The complex task of studying metonymy. O Blanco-Carrión, A Barcelona and R Pannain (eds) *Conceptual Metonymy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Block, N (2011) Perceptual consciousness overflows cognitive access. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 15: 567–75.

Block, N (2012) Response to Kouider et al: Which view is better supported by the evidence? *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience* 16(3): 141–2.

Bolton D (2013) Overdiagnosis problems in the *DSM-IV* and the new *DSM-5*: can they be resolved by the distress–impairment criterion? *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 58(11): 612–7.

Bolton, D (2008) *What is Mental Disorder? An Essay in Philosophy, Science, and Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bongco, M (2000) *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books*. London: Routledge.

Booth, WC (1983 [1961]) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ Press.

Booth, WC (1974). *A rhetoric of irony*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ Press.

Bortolussi, M (2011) Response to Alan Palmer's ‘Social minds’. *Style* 45: 283–7.

Bortolussi, M and P Dixon (2003) *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response*. Cambridge: CUP.

Bramlett, F (2012) *Linguistics and the Study of Comics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bray J (2007) The ‘dual voice’ of free indirect discourse: a reading experiment. *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, 16(1): 37–52.

Breeding J (2014) Practicing Szasz: a psychologist reports on Thomas Szasz's influence on his work. *Sage Open* Oct–Dec.

Briggs, R (1973) *Father Christmas*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Briggs, R (1973) *Fungus the Bogeyman*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Briggs, R (1975) *Father Christmas Goes on Holiday*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Brooks, R and A Meltzoff (2014) Gaze following: a mechanism for building social connections between infants and adults. M Mikulincer and P Shaver (eds) Mechanisms of Social Connection. From Brain to Group. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 167–83.

Brosh, A (2011) *Hyperbole and a Half*. http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com/ retrieved 12/12/2015.

Browse, S (2018) *The Cognitive Poetics of Political Discourse*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Bryant, C (2008) *Frankenstein: The Graphic Novel*. Litchborough: Classical Comics.

Burke, M (2011) *Literary Reading, Cognition and Emotion*. London: Routledge.

Burke, M and E Troscianko (2013) Mind, brain, and literature: A dialogue on what the humanities might offer the cognitive sciences. *Journal of Literary Semantics* 42(2): 141–8.

Burkitt, I (1997) Social Relationships and Emotions. *Sociology* 31(1): 37–55.

Carter, R (2002) *Consciousness*. London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson.

Carter, R and P Stockwell (2008) *The Language and Literature Reader.* London: Routledge.

Cavanagh, P (2011) Visual Cognition. *Vision Research*, 51: 1538–51.

CCI (2020) https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself retrieved 2/7/2020.

Chabris, C, A Weinberger, M Fontaine and D Simons (2011) You do not talk about Fight Club if you do not notice Fight Club: Inattentional blindness for a simulated real-world assault. *Perception* 2(2): 150–3.

Chafe, W (1994) *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Chalmers, D (1995) Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(3): 200–19.

Chaney, MA (2011) *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. Wisconsin, MI: Wisconsin University Press.

Childers, P, and Lowry, M (2005) Connecting visuals to written text and written text to visuals in science. *Across the Disciplines* 3(1): 97–102.

Childers, P, E Hobson, and J Mullin (1998) *ARTiculating: Teaching writing in a visual world*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Chute, H (2008) Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123(2): 452–65.

Chute, H and M DeKoeven (2006) Introduction: Graphic Narrative. *Modern Fiction Studies* 52(4): 767–78.

Ciftci, A, N Jones and PW Corrigan (2012) Mental Health Stigma in the Muslim Community. *Stigma* 7(1).

Clark, A (2008) *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*. Oxford University Press.

Clark, H (1996) *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Classical Comics (2013) http://www.classicalcomics retrieved 12/7/2013.

Coderre, EL, N Cohn, SK Slipher, M Chernenok, K Ledoux, and B Gordon (2018) Visual and linguistic narrative comprehension in autism spectrum disorders: Neural evidence for modality-independent impairments. *Brain and Language* 186: 44–59.

Cohen, M and D Dennett (2011) Consciousness cannot be separated from function. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 15: 358–64.

Cohn, D (1978) *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cohn, D (2000) Discordant narration. *Style* 34(2): 307–16.

Cohn, N (2007) A Visual Lexicon. *Public Journal of Semiotics* 1, 1-27.

Cohn, N (2008) Review: *The System of Comics* by Thierry Groensteen. http://www.emaki.net/blog/2008/09/review-system-of-comics-by-thierry.html retrieved 29/9/2013.

Cohn, N (2010) The limits of time and transitions: challenges to theories of sequential image comprehension. *Studies in Comics* 1(1): 127–47.

Cohn, N (2010a) Extra! Extra! Semantics in comics!: The conceptual structure of *Chicago Tribune* advertisements. *Journal of Pragmatics* 42(11): 3138–46.

Cohn, N (2012) Comics, linguistics, and visual language: The past and future of a field. F Bramlett (ed) *Linguistics and the Study of Comics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 92–118.

Cohn, N (2012a) Explaining 'I Can't Draw': Parallels between the Structure and Development of Language and Drawing. *Human Development* 55(4): 167–92.

Cohn, N (2013) Navigating comics: An empirical and theoretical approach to strategies of reading comic page layouts. *Frontiers in Cognitive Science* 4: 1–15.

Cohn, N (2013a) Visual narrative structure. *Cognitive Science* 37(3): 413–52.

Cohn, N (2013b) Beyond speech balloons and thought bubbles: The integration of text and image. *Semiotica* 197: 35–63.

Cohn, N (2013c) *The Visual Language of Comics*. London: Bloomsbury.

Cohn, N (2014) Framing 'I can't draw': The influence of cultural frames on the development of drawing. *Culture & Psychology* 20(1): 102–17.

Cohn, N (2016) Sequential images are not universal, or Caveats for using visual narratives in experimental tasks. A Papafragou, D Grodner, D Mirman, and JC Trueswell (eds) *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*. Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

Cohn, N (2020) 'Comic' expertise measures: The Visual Language Fluency Index http://www.visuallanguagelab.com/resources.html retrieved 12/03/2020.

Cohn, N and H Campbell (2014) Navigating Comics II: Constraints on the Reading Order of Comic Page Layouts. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 29(2).

Cohn, N and M Kutas (2015) Getting a cue before getting a clue: Event-related potentials to inference in visual narrative comprehension. *Neuropsychologia* 77: 267–78.

Cohn, N and M Kutas (2017) What's your neural function, visual narrative conjunction? Grammar, meaning, and fluency in sequential image processing. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications* 2(27): 1–13.

Cohn, N and M Paczynski (2013) Prediction, events, and the advantage of Agents: The processing of semantic roles in visual narrative. *Cognitive Psychology* 67(3): 73–97.

Cohn, N, M Paczynski and M Kutas (2017) Not so secret agents: Event-related potentials to semantic roles in visual event comprehension. *Brain and Cognition* 119: 1–9.

Cohn, N, M Paczynski, R Jackendoff, P Holcomb and G Kuperberg (2012) (Pea)nuts and bolts of visual narrative: Structure and meaning in sequential image comprehension. *Cognitive Psychology* 65: 1–38.

Coleman, M (2006) Conscious Fiction. *Philosophy and Literature* 30(1): 299–309.

Cook, G (1994) *Discourse and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cooper RV (2013) Avoiding false positives: zones of rarity, the threshold problem, and the *DSM* clinical significance criterion. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 58(11): 606–11.

Cox, MV and A Rowlands (2000) The effect of three different educational approaches on children's drawing ability: Steiner, Montessori and traditional. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 70: 485–503.

Cox, MV, J Perara and F Xu (1998) Children's drawing ability in the UK and China. *Psychologia* 41: 171–82.

Creswell M (2008) Szasz and his interlocutors: reconsidering Thomas Szasz's 'myth of mental illness' thesis. *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour* 38: 23–44.

Croft, W (1991) *Syntactic categories and grammatical relations: The cognitive organization of information*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Croft, W (1998) The structure of events and the structure of language. M Tomasello (ed) *The new psychology of language: cognitive and functional approaches to language structure*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 67–92.

Croft, W and DA Cruse (2004) *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, J (2002) A cognitive stylistic approach to characterization. E Semino, and J Culpeper (eds) *Cognitive stylistics: language and cognition in text analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 251–77.

Culpeper, J (2009) Reflections on a cognitive stylistic approach to characterisation. J Vandaele and G Brône (eds) *Cognitive Poetics.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 125–59.

Cunningham, D (2010) *Psychiatric Tales*. London: Blank Slate Books.

Currie, G (2010) *Narratives and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories*. Oxford: OUP.

Damasio, A (1994) *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, New York, NY: Putnam.

Damasio, A (1999) *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York, NY: Harcourt Press.

Damasio, A (2003) *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Darras, B (2000) Repertoires of imagery and the production of visual signs. A semi-cognitive approach and case study. L Lindstrom and B Darras (eds) *The Cultural context: Comparative studies of art education and children's drawings*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 22–45.

Davies, PF (2019) *Comics as Communication: A Functional Approach*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dawson, M (2013) *Mind, Body, World: Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Edmonton, AB: Athabasca University Press.

DeForge, M (2015) *First Year Healthy*. Montreal, QC: Drawn and Quarterly.

Dennett, D (1991) *Consciousness Explained*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company.

Dennett, D (1992) The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity. F Kessel, P Cole and D Johnson, (eds) *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dennett, D (2003) Explaining the ‘Magic’ of Consciousness. *Journal of Cultural and Evolutionary Psychology* 1(1): 7–19.

Diamond Comics (2016) Industry statistics https://www.diamondcomics.com/Home/1/1/3/237 retrieved 21/2/2016.

Dillon, G (2012) *The Nao of Brown*. London: Self Made Hero.

Doll Hospital (2015) *Doll Hospital Journal*. https://www.dollhospitaljournal.com/ retrieved 12/12/2016.

Dowty, D (1991) Thematic proto-roles and argument selection. *Language* 67: 547–619.

Duncan R & M Smith (2011) *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*. London: Routledge.

Duncan, R and M Smith (2010) *The Power of Comics: History, Form, Culture*. London: Continuum.

Duran E and B Duran (1995) *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Eerden, B (2009) Anger in Asterix: The Metaphorical Representation of Anger in Comics and Animated Films. C Forceville and E Urios-Aparisi (eds) *Multimodal Metaphor*. New York, NY: Mouton De Gruyter, 243–64.

Eisner, W (1985) *Comics and Sequential Art*. London: WW Norton and Company.

Eisner, W (2008) *Expressive Anatomy for Comics and Narrative*. London: WW Norton and Company.

El Refaie, E (2003) Understanding visual metaphor: The example of newspaper cartoons. *Visual Communication* 2(1): 75–95.

El Refaie, E (2009) Multiliteracies: How readers interpret political cartoons. Visual Communication 8(2): 181–205.

El Refaie, E (2010) Subjective Time in David B's Graphic Memoir *Epileptic*. *Studies in Comics* 1(2): 281–99.

El Refaie, E (2012) *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

El Refaie, E (2019) *Visual metaphor and embodiment in graphic illness narratives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

El Refaie, E and K Hörschelmann (2010) Young people's readings of a political cartoon and the concept of multimodal literacy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 31(2): 195–207.

Emmott, C (1997) *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Emmott, C (2002) 'Split selves' in fiction and in medical 'life stories': From cognitive linguistic theory to stylistic practice. E Semino and J Culpeper (eds) *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 153–81.

Emmott, C (2003) Reading for pleasure: a cognitive poetic analysis of ‘twists in the tale’ and other plot reversals in narrative texts. J Gavins and G Steen (eds) *Cognitive Poetics in Practice.* London: Routledge,145–59.

Enns, JT (2003) Gestalt Principles of Perception. L Nadel (ed) *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*. London: Nature Publishing Group.

Evans-Lacko, S, M Knapp, P McCrone, G Thornicroft and R Mojtabai (2013) The mental health consequences of the recession: economic hardship and employment of people with mental health problems in 27 European countries. *PloS one* 8(7).

Evans, V and M Green (2006) *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Fabrega H (2009) History of Mental Illness in India: A Cultural Psychiatry Retrospective. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Fabris, E (2013) What could go wrong when psychiatry employs us as peers? BA LeFrancois, G Reaume and RJ Menzies (eds) *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 130–40.

Fauconnier, G (1994) *Mental Spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fauconnier, G (1997) *Mappings in Thought and Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fauconnier, G and M Turner (2002) *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Fawcett, C and S Kohm (2020) Carceral violence at the intersection of madness and crime in *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Batman: Arkham City*. *Crime, media, culture* 16(2): 265–85.

Felkins, S (2019) The Weight I Carry: Intersections of Fatphobia, Gender, and Capitalism. *Frontiers* 40(3): 180–5.

Fernandez Quintanilla, C (2020) Textual and reader factors in narrative empathy: An empirical reader response study using focus groups. *Language and Literature*, 29(2), 124–46.

Fies, B (2004) *Mom’s Cancer*. https://www.momscancer.com/ retrieved 12/3/2019.

Fillmore, C (1982) Towards a descriptive framework for spatial deixis. R Jarvella and W Klein (eds) *Speech, Place, and Action. Studies in Deixis and Related Topics*. Chichester: Wiley, 31–60.

Fine, M (2012) Troubling calls for evidence: A critical race, class and gender analysis of whose evidence counts. *Feminism & Psychology* 22(1): 3–19.

Fink, M (2013) 'People Who Look Like Things': Representations of Disability in *The Simpsons*. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 7(3): 255–70.

Finn, R (2021) Subject, Object and the Nature of Reality in *Are You My Mother?*. M Giovanelli, C Harrison and L Nuttall (eds) *New Directions in Cognitive Grammar and Style*. London: Bloomsbury.

First MB, and JC Wakefield (2013) Diagnostic criteria as dysfunction indicators: bridging the chasm between the definition of mental disorder and diagnostic criteria for specific disorders. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 58(12): 663–9.

Fisher, M (2009) Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? London: Zero Books.

Fletcher, G (1995) *The Scientific Credibility of Folk Psychology*. Hilsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Flom, R, K Lee, and D Muir (2007) *Gaze-Following. Its Development and Significance*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

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

Forceville, C (1999) Educating the eye? Kress and Van Leeuwen's *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. *Language and Literature* 8(2): 163–78.

Forceville, C (2005) Visual representations of the Idealized Cognitive Model of anger in the *Asterix* album *La Zizanie*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 37: 69–88.

Forceville, C (2016) Mixing in pictorial and multimodal metaphors? RW Gibbs (ed) *Mixing Metaphor*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 223–39.

Forceville, C, T Veale and K Feyaerts (2010) Balloonics: The Visuals of Balloons in Comics. J Goggin and D Hassler Forest (eds) *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Forney, E (2012) *Marbles*. New York, NY: Robinson.

Foulsham, T and N Cohn (2020) Zooming in on visual narrative comprehension. *Memory & Cognition* 49(3): 451–66.

Francis A (2013) *Saving Normal: An Insider's Revolt Against Out-Of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis,* DSM-5*, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Freeman, J (2013) Ten Questions: *Lighter Than My Shadow* creator Katie Green. https://downthetubes.net/ten-questions-lighter-than-my-shadow-creator-katie-green/ retrieved 12/2/2014.

Fulford KWM and M Jackson (1997) Spiritual experience and psychopathology. *Philosophy Psychiatry Psychology* 4: 41–65.

Gallagher, S (2009) Delusional realities. M Broom and L Bortolotti (eds) *Psychiatry as Cognitive Neuroscience*. Oxford: OUP, 245–66.

Gardner, J (2008) Autography's biography, 1972–2007. *Biography*. 31(1): 1–26.

Gavaler, C (2016) What It Really Takes to Get from Here to There (Analyzing Comics 101: Closure). http://www.hoodedutilitarian.com/2016/01/what-it-really-takes-to-get-from-here-to-there-analyzing-comics-101-closure/ retrieved 15/11/2016.

Gavins, J (2007) *Text World Theory: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gavins, J (2013) *Reading the Absurd*. Edingburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gavins, J and G Steen (2003) *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Gavins, J and P Stockwell (2012) About the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often. *Language and Literature* 21(1): 33–50.

Genette, G ([1972] 1980) *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Genette, G ([1983] 1988) *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

Gernsbacher, MA and M Yergeau (2019) Empirical Failures of the Claim That Autistic People Lack a Theory of Mind. *Archives of Scientific Psychology* 7(1): 102–18.

Ghaemi SN (2007) Feeling and time: the phenomenology of mood disorders, depressive realism, and existential psychotherapy. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 33(1): 122–30.

Gibbons, A (2012) Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature. London: Routledge.

Gibbons, A (2017) Reading *S* across media: transmedia storyworlds, multimodal fiction, and real readers. *Narrative*, 25(3): 321–41.

Gibbs, R (2005) *Embodiment and the Cognitive Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gibbs, R (2008) Metaphor and gesture: Some implications for psychology. *Gesture Studies* 3: 291–301.

Gibson, M (2012) Sick Fictions: Contamination, Infection and Addiction in Accounts of Young Peoples' Reading of Comics J Lee (ed) *Cultures of Addiction*. New York, NY: Cambria Press, 199–240.

Giovanelli, M and C Harrison (2018) *Cognitive Grammar in Stylistics*. London: Bloomsbury.

Giovanelli, M and J Mason (2018) Reading, Readers and English. *English in Education*, 52(1): 2–4.

Giovanelli, M, C Harrison and L Nuttall (2021) *New Directions in Cognitive Grammar and Style*. London: Bloomsbury.

Giovanelli, M (2022) Cognitive grammar and readers' perceived sense of closeness: A study of responses to Mary Borden's 'Belgium'. *Language and Literature*, 31(3): 407–427.

Glass, A (2004) Preface. *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern 13*. San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's.

Glenberg, AM (2011) How reading comprehension is embodied and why that matters. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(1): 5–18.

Goggin, J and D Hassler Forest (2010) *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co.

Goldenweiser, AA (1912) Folk-psychology. *Psychological Bulletin* 9(10): 373–80.

Golomb, C (1992) *The child's creation of a pictorial world*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Goretzki M, MA Thalbourne and L Storm (2009) The questionnaire measurement of spiritual emergency. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 41: 81–97.

Gorman, R (2013) Thinking through race, class and mad identity politics. BA LeFrancois, G Reaume and RJ Menzies (eds) *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press, 269-80.

Gottlieb, C (2014) Disordered eating or eating disorder: What's the difference? *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/contemporary-psychoanalysis-in-action/201402/disordered-eating-or-eating-disorder-what-s-the retrieved 15/10/2021.

Graham, DJ and M Meng (2011) Artistic representations: Clues to efficient coding in human vision. *Visual Neuroscience* 28(4).

Gran, M (2016) *Octopus Pie*. www.octopuspie.com retrieved 21/2/2016.

Granö, P (2000) Remembered drawings the artists childhood images in context. L Lindstrom and B Darras (eds) *The cultural context: Comparative studies of art education and children's drawings*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press.

Gravett, P (2013) Glyn Dillon: *The Nao of Brown*. http://www.paulgravett.com/ retrieved 12/07/2013.

Green, J (1972) *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*. San Francisco, CA: Last Gasp.

Green, J (2009) Afterword. *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*. San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's.

Green, K (2013) *Lighter than My Shadow*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Grisot, J (2020) Who's afraid of Virginia Wolf? Readers' responses to experimental techniques of speech, thought and consciousness presentation in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway*. *Language and Literature*, 29(2) : 103–23.

Groensteen, T (1999) *Systéme de la bande dessinée*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Groensteen, T (2006) *Un objet culturel non identifié*. Angoulême: Éditions de l'An 2.

Groensteen, T (2007) *La Bande dessinée: mode d'emploi*. Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles.

Groensteen, T (2011) *Bande dessinée et narration: Système de la bande dessinée II*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Grzanka, PR, and JR Miles (2016) The Problem with the Phrase 'Intersecting Identities': LGBT Affirmative Therapy, Intersectionality, and Neoliberalism. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 13: 371–89.

Hallam, J, M Das Gupta and H Lee (2008) An exploration of primary school teachers' understanding of art and the place of art in the primary school curriculum. *Curriculum Journal* 19(4): 269–83.

Hallam, J, M Das Gupta and H Lee (2011) Shaping children's artwork in English primary classes: insights from teacher–child interaction during art activities. *International Journal of Early Years Education* 19:3: 193–205.

Hampe, B (2005) *From perception to meaning: Image schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hansen, PK (2007) Reconsidering the unreliable narrator. *Semiotica* 165(1/4), 227–46.

Harder, P (1996) *Functional Semantics: A Theory of Meaning, Structure and Tense in English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Harrison, C (2017) *Cognitive Grammar in Contemporary Fiction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Harrison, C (2017a) Finding Elizabeth: Construing memory in *Elizabeth Is Missing* by Emma Healey. *Journal of Literary Semantics*. 46(2): 131–51.

Harrison, C, L Nuttall, P Stockwell and W Yuan (2014) *Cognitive Grammar in Literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Harvey, R (1994) *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Hatfield, C (2005) *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Hatfield, C (2010) Indiscipline, or, The Condition of Comics Studies. *Transatlantica* 1: 1–12.

Hatfield, E, JT Cacioppo, and RL Rapson (1993) Emotional Contagion. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2(3): 96–9.

Hausendorf, H (2003). Deixis and speech situation revisited. The mechanism of perceived perception. F Lenz (ed) *Deictic Conceptualisation of Space, Time and Person*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 249–69.

Haxby, J, E Hoffman, and M Gobbini (2000) The distributed human neural system for face perception. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4: 223–33.

Healy D (2012) *Pharmageddon*. Berkley, CA: California University Press.

Herman, D (2004) *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Herman, D (2007) Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind: Cognitive Narratology, Discursive Psychology, and Narratives in Face-to-Face Interaction. *Narrative* 15(3): 306–34.

Herman, D (2009) Beyond voice and vision: Cognitive grammar and focalization theory. P Hühn, W Schmid and J Schönert (eds) *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 119–42.

Herman, D (2011) *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Herman, D (2011a) Storyworld/Umwelt: Nonhuman Experiences in Graphic Narratives. *SubStance* 40(1): 156–68.

Herman, D (2013) *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Herne, S (2000) Breadth and Balance? The Impact of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies on Art in the Primary School. *Journal of Art and Design Education* 19(2): 217–23.

Hesse, H (1951 [1922]) *Siddartha*. New York, NY: New Directions.

Hidalgo Downing, L (2000) *Negation, Text Worlds and Discourse: The Pragmatics of Fiction*. Stanford, CA: Ablex.

Hogan, P (2012) *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Holt, E (2007) 'I'm eyeing up your chop mind': Reporting and enacting. E Holt and R Clift (eds) *Reporting talk: Reported speech in interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 47–80.

Holt, E and R Clift (2007) *Reporting talk: Reported speech in interaction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hornschemeier, P (2009) *Mother Come Home*. Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics.

Horowitz, AV (2002) *Creating mental illness*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Horowitz, AV and JC Wakefield (2007) The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow Into Depressive Disorder. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horsman, Y (2014) Infancy of art: comics, childhood and picture books. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 5(3): 323–35.

Horstkotte, S (2013) Zooming in and out: Panels, frames, sequences, and the building of graphic storyworlds. D. Stein and J.N. Thon (eds) *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels:*

Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 27–48.

Horstkotte, S and N Pedri (2011) Focalization in Graphic Narrative. *Narrative* 19(3): 330–57.

Hrenko, K (2014) The intersection of indigenous cultures, visual arts, and creative writing. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue* 16(1): 9–20.

Hughes, L (2015) Peer Support Workers in Mental Health: Is the NHS Ready for This? *The Mental Elf*. http://www.nationalelfservice.net/publication-types/systematic-review/peer-support-workers-in-mental-health-is-the-nhs-ready-for-this/ retrieved 12/12/2016.

Hyman, SE (2010) The diagnosis of mental disorders: the problem of reification. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 6: 155–79.

Ingulsrud, J and K Allen (2009) *Reading Japan Cool: Patterns of Manga Literacy and Discourse.* Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Iser, W (1974) *The implied reader*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ito, J (2018) *Frankenstein*. San Francisco, CA: Viz Media.

J Vandaele & G Brone (eds) *Cognitive poetics: goals, gains and gaps*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 125–59.

Jackson, S (1993) Even Sociologists Fall in Love: An Exploration in the Sociology of emotions. *Sociology* 27(2): 201–20.

Jacques, J (2016) *Questionable Content*. www.questionablecontent.net retrieved 21/2/2016.

Jahn, M (1996) Windows of Focalization: Deconstructing and Reconstructing a Narratological Concept. *Style* 30(2): 241–67.

Jakendoff, R (1990) *Semantic Structures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakendoff, R (2002) *Foundations of Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jeffries, L (2001) Schema affirmation and White Asparagus: cultural multilingualism among readers of texts. *Language and Literature* 10(4): 325–43.

Jeffries, L and D MacIntyre *Stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, M (1987) *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Johnson, M (2007) *The Meaning of the Body: The Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jolley, RP (2010) *Children and pictures: Drawing and understanding*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

K Hudson-Banks and PL Kohn-Wood (2002) Gender, Ethnicity and Depression: Intersectionality in Mental Health Research with African American Women. *Scholarship* 6.

Kaplan, A (2008) *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society.

Keen, S (2006) A theory of narrative empathy. *Narrative* 14(6): 207–36.

Keen, S (2011) Fast Tracks to Narrative Empathy: Anthropomorphism and Dehumanization in Graphic Narratives. *SubStance* 40(1): 135–55.

Kelly, U (2009) Integrating Intersectionality and Biomedicine in Health Disparities Research. *Advances in Nursing Science* 32(2): E42–E56.

Kendell RE (2004) The myth of mental illness. JA Schaler (ed) *Szasz Under Fire: The Psychiatric Abolitionist Faces his Critics*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 29–55.

Kertész, A, C Rákosi and P Csatár. (2012) Data, problems, heuristics and results in cognitive metaphor research. *Language Sciences* 34: 651–5.

Kilner, JM and RN Lemon (2013) What We Know Currently about Mirror Neurons. *Current Biology* 23: 1057–62.

Kosslyn, SM (1980) *Image and Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kouider, S, J Sackur and V Gardelle (2012) Do we still need phenomenal consciousness? Comment on Block. *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience* 16(3): 140–1.

Kövecses, Z (1986) *Metaphors of anger, pride and love*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Kövecses, Z (2000) *Metaphor and emotion: Language, culture, and body in human feeling*. Cambridge: CUP.

Kövecses, Z (2002) Cognitive-linguistic comments on metaphor identification. *Language and Literature* 11(1): 74–8.

Kövecses, Z (2010) *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kövecses, Z, V Szelid, N Eszter, and O Blanco (2015) Anger Metaphors across Languages: A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective. R Heredia & AB Cieślicka (eds) *Bilingual Figurative Language Processing*. Cambridge: CUP, 341–67.

Kress G and T Van Leeuwen (2001) *Multimodal Discourse. The Modes of Media and Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.

Kress, G (2010) *Multimodality*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G and T Van Leeuwen (2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kristina Hallett (2015) Intersectionality and Serious Mental Illness—A Case Study and Recommendations for Practice. *Women & Therapy* 38(1): 156–74.

Krueger, RA (1994) *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kuiken, D, D Miall and S Sikora (2004) Forms of self-implication in literary reading. *Poetics Today* 25(2): 171–203.

Kukkonen, K (2008) Beyond Language: Metaphor and Metonymy in Comics Storytelling. *English Language Notes*, 46(2): 89–98.

Kukkonen, K (2013) *Contemporary Comics Storytelling*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Kukkonen, K. (2013a) Subjectivity and style in graphic narratives. D Stein and JN Thon (eds) *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels. Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Kunzle, D (1974) *The Early Comic Strip*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Lahey, E (2003) Seeing the forest for the trees in Al Purdy's 'trees at the arctic circle'. *BELL: Belgian Journal of language and literatures* 1: 73–83.

Lahey, E (2005) *Text-world landscapes and English Canadian national identity in the poetry of Al Purdy, Milton Acorn and Alden Nowlan*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, UK.

Lakoff, G (1987) *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, G and M Johnson (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G and M Johnson (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Lakoff, G and M Turner (1989) *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Langacker, R (1987) *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar Vol. I: Theoretical prerequisites*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Langacker, R (1991) *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar Vol. II: Descriptive Application*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Langacker, R (1993) Reference-point constructions. *Cognitive Linguistics* 4(1): 1–38.

Langacker, R (1999) *Grammar and Conceptualisation*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Langacker, R (2001) Discourse in cognitive grammar. *Cognitive Linguistics* 12(2): 143–88.

Langacker, R (2002) *Concept, Image, Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Langacker, R (2008) *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

Lazarus RS (1984) On the primacy of cognition. *American Psychologist* 39: 124–9.

Lazarus RS (1991) Cognition and motivation in emotion. *The American Psychologist* 46: 352–67.

Leavitt, S (2011) *Tangles*. London: Jonathan Cape.

LeDoux, JE (2012) Rethinking the emotional brain. *Neuron* 73(4): 653–76.

LeDoux, JE (1996) *The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinnings of emotional life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Leech, G and M Short (2007) *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose. 2nd ed*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education.

Lefèvre, P (2011) Formal Analysis. Mise en scène and framing in Lone Wolf and Cub. R Duncan & M Smith (eds) *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods.* London: Routledge.

LeFrancois, BA, G Reaume, and RJ Menzies (2013) *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar’s Press.

Lieberman EJ (2004) Pharmacracy or phantom. *Szasz Under Fire: The Psychiatric Abolitionist Faces his Critics*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 225–41.

Litosseliti, L (2003) *Using Focus Groups in Research*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Lob, J and JC Forest (1986) Entretien avec Jacques Lob et Jean-Claude Forest. *Autour du scenario : Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, 1–2: 104.

Luo, Y and R Baillargeon (2005) Can a Self-Propelled Box Have a Goal? Psychological Reasoning in 5-Month-Old Infants. *Psychological science* 16: 601–8.

MacDonald, J and N Lavie (2011) Visual perceptual load induces inattentional deafness. *Attention, Perception, and Psychophysics*, 10.

Magliano, JP, J Miller and R Zwaan (2001) Indexing space and time in film understanding. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 15(5): 533–45.

Magnussen, A (2000) The Semiotics of C.S. Peirce as a Theoretical Framework for the Understanding of Comics. A Magnussen and HC Christiansen (eds) *Comics and Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*. Copenhagen: Museum of Tusculanum Press, 193–207.

Magritte, R (1929) *La Trahison des Images*. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Margolin, U (1989) Structuralist approaches to character in narrative. The state of the art. *Semiotica* 75: 1–24.

Margolin, U (2003) Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative. D Herman (ed) *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 271–94.

Marr, D (1982) Vision: *A Computational Investigation into the Human Representation and Processing of Visual Information*. New York, NY: WH Freeman and Company.

Mason, J (2019) *Intertextuality in practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Mason, J & M Giovanelli (2017). 'What do you think?' Let me tell you: discourse about texts and the literature classroom. *Changing English* 24(1): 318–29.

McCloud, S (1993) *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. London: Harper Collins.

McCloud, S (2007) *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics*. London: Harper Collins.

McHale, B (2012) Transparent Minds Revisited. *Narrative*, 20(1): 115–24.

McHurst, K (2016) *I Do Not Have an Eating Disorder*. https://khalemchurstcomics.tumblr.com/post/144945092095/i-do-not-have-an-eating-disorder-comics-directory retrieved 21/1/2016.

McLuhan, M (1964) *Understanding Media*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

McNeill, D (2000) *Language and Gesture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McWade, B (2016) Researching Mad Pride: The Stigma and Violence of Knowledge Production. https://thestigmadoctrine.wordpress.com/2016/02/03/researching-mad-pride-the-stigma-and-violence-of-knowledge-production/ retrieved 10/3/2020.

Meskin, A (2007) Defining Comics? *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65: 369–79.

Miall, D (1988) Affect and Narrative: A Model of Response to Stories. *Poetics* 17: 259–72.

Miall, D (1990) Readers' responses to narrative: Evaluating, relating, anticipating. *Poetics* 19: 323–39.

Miall, D (2005) Beyond interpretation: the cognitive significance of reading. H Veivo, B Pettersson and M Polvinen (eds) *Cognition and Literary Interpretation in Practice.* Yliopistopaino: Helsinki University Press, 129–55.

Miall, D and D Kuiken (2002) A feeling for fiction: becoming what we behold. *Poetics* 30, 221-41.

Mikkonen, K (2008) Presenting Minds in Graphic Narratives. *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6(2): 301–21.

Mind (2013) Mental health. www.mind.org.uk/mental_health retrieved 20/09/2013.

Miodrag, H (2010) Fragmented Text. *International Journal of Comic Art* 12(2), 319–27.

Miodrag, H (2011) Language versus Narrative: Redefining 'Comics-as-Literature'. *Studies in Comics* 2.2.

Molotiu, A (2009) *Abstract Comics: The Anthology* Seattle: Fantagraphics Books.

Molotiu, A (2011) Abstract Form: Sequential Dynamism and Iconostasis in Abstract Comics and in Steve Ditko's Amazing Spider-Man. In M Smith and R Duncan (eds) *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*. London: Routledge.

Mondada, L (2005) La constitution de l’origo déictique comme travail interactionnel des participants: une approche praxéologique de la spatialité. *Intellectica* 41: 75–100.

Mondada, L (2012) Deixis: an integrated interactional multimodal analysis. P Bergmann and J Brenning (eds) *Interaction and Usage-Based Grammar Theories. What about Prosody and Visual Signals?*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 173–206.

Moore, A & D Gibbons (1987) *Watchmen*. New York: Warner Books.

Moreton, S (2014) *Better Drawn*. https://betterdrawn.tumblr.com retrieved 12/12/2015.

Morewedge, CK, J Preston, and DM Wegner (2007) Timescale bias in the attribution of mind. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93(1): 1–11.

Murphy ST, and RB Zajonc (1993) Affect, cognition, and awareness: Affective priming with optimal and suboptimal stimulus exposures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 64: 723–39.

Nagel, T (1974) What Is It Like to Be a Bat? *The Philosophical Review* 83(4): 435–50.

Nakazawa, J (2004) Manga (comic) literacy skills as determinant factors of manga story comprehension. *Manga Studies* 5: 7–25.

Nakazawa, J (2005) Development of manga (comic book) literacy in children. D Schwalb, J Nakazawa and BJ Schwalb (eds) *Applied Developmental Psychology: Theory, Practice, and Research from Japan*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 23–42.

Nakazawa, J (2016) Manga literacy and manga comprehension in Japanese children. N Cohn (ed), *The Visual Narrative Reader*. London: Bloomsbury, 157–84.

Nel, P (2012) Same Genus, Different Species? Comics and Picture Books. *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*. 37(4): 445–53.

Niederhoff, B (2011) Focalization. https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/18.html#Genette1988 retrieved 23/08/2014.

Noë, A (2004) *Action in perception*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Noë, A (2006) Experience without the head. TS Gendler and J Hawthorne (eds) *Perceptual experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Norledge, J (2019) Immersive Reading and the Unnatural Text-Worlds of 'Dead Fish'. B Neurohr and L Stewart-Shaw (eds) *Experiencing Fictional Worlds.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 157–75.

Nuttall, L (2014) Constructing a text-world for *The Handmaid's Tale*. C Harrison, L Nuttall, P Stockwell and W Yuan (eds). *Cognitive Grammar in Literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 83–100.

Nuttall, L (2015) Attributing minds to vampires in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. *Language and Literature* 24(1): 23–39.

Nutall, L (2017) Online readers between the camps: A Text World Theory analysis of ethical positioning in *We Need to Talk About Kevin*. *Language and Literature*, 26(2): 153–71.

O'Halloran, K (2010) Investigating Argumentation in Reading Groups: Combining Manual Qualitative Coding and Automated Corpus Analysis Tools. *Applied Linguistics* 32: 172–96.

O'Hara, L (2015) *Designing Out Suicide*. https://designingoutsuicide.com/ retrieved 12/12/2015.

O'Malley, BL (2010) *Scott Pilgrim's Finest Hour*. Portland, OR: Oni Press.

Oatley, K (1994) A taxonomy of the emotions of literary response and a theory of identification in fictional narrative. *Poetics* 23, 53–74.

Oatley, K (2003) Writingandreading: the future of cognitive poetics. J Gavins and G Steen (eds) *Cognitive Poetics in Practice.* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 161–73.

Oatley, K and PN Johnson-Laird (1986) Towards a Cognitive Theory of Emotions. *Cognition and Emotion* 1(1): 29–50.

Oexle, N and P Corrigan (2018) Understanding Mental Illness Stigma Toward Persons With Multiple Stigmatized Conditions: Implications of Intersectionality Theory. *Psychiatric Services* 69(5): 587–9.

Office for National Statistics (2016) Internet access households and individuals, Great Britain http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2016 retrieved 23/11/2016.

Okello ES and S Musisi (2006) Depression as a clan illness (eByekika): an indigenous model of psychotic depression among the Baganda of Uganda. *World Cultural Psychiatry Research Review* 1: 60–73.

Omori, T (2004) Eye catchers in comics: Controlling eye movements in reading pictorial and textual media. *International Journal of Psychology* 39(5).

Ouellet, M, A Román and J Santiago (2012) A multisensory interaction effect in the conceptual realm of time. *Experimental Psychology* 59(4), 236–42.

Palmer, A (2004) *Fictional Minds*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Palmer, A (2010) *Social Minds in the Novel*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

Palmer, SE (1999) *Vision Science: Photons to Phenomenology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Parkinson B and G Simons (2012) Worry spreads: interpersonal transfer of problem-related anxiety. *Cognition and Emotion*, 26: 462–79.

Parkinson, B (1995) *Ideas and Realities of Emotion*. London: Routledge.

Parkinson, B (2011) Emotions are Social. *British Journal of Psychology* 87(4): 663–83.

Pashler, H (1998) *The Psychology of Attention*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pedri, N (2013) Graphic memoir: Neither fact nor fiction. *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels. Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*. D Stein and JN Thon (eds) Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 127–53.

Peeters, B (1991) *Case, planche, récit* : *lire la bande dessinée.* Paris: Casterman.

Peirce, C (1931) Division of Signs. C Hartshorne and P Weiss (eds) *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce: Volume 2: Elements of Logic.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 134–73.

Peñalba, M (2015) Writing the Self, Drawing the Self: Identity and Self-Reflexivity in Craig Thompson's Graphic Memoir *Blankets*. *Culture, Language and Representation*. 14: 155–80.

Peplow D, J Swann, P Trimarco and S Whiteley (2015) *The Discourse of Reading Groups: Integrating Cognitive and Sociocultural Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Peplow, D (2011) 'Oh, I've known a lot of Irish people': Reading Groups and the Negotiation of Literary Interpretation. *Language and Literature*. 20(4): 295–315.

Peplow, D (2016) Transforming readings: reading and interpreting in book groups. M Burke, O Fialho, and S Zygnier (eds) *Scientific Approaches to Literature in Learning Environments*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Peplow, D and R Carter (2014) Stylistics and Real Readers. Michael Burke (ed), *The Routledge handbook of stylistics* [electronic resource]. London: Routledge.

Peplow, D and S Whiteley (2021) Interpretation in interaction: on the dialogic nature of response. A Bell, S Browse, A Gibbons and D Peplow (eds) *Style and Response: Mind, Media, Methods*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Perret, M (2001) And Suit the Action to the Word: How a Comics Panel can Speak Shakespeare. R Varnum and C Gibbons (eds.) *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 123–44.

Perry, P and J Graat (2010) *Couch Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Phelan, J (2001) Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers—and Why It Matters. W van Peer and S. Chatman (eds) *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 51–64.

Pignocchi, A (2010) How the intentions of the draftsman shape perception of a drawing. *Consciousness and Cognition* 19: 887–98.

Pleyer, M and C Schneider (2014) Construal, Cognition, and Comics: Analysing the multimodal construction of a Gothic autobiography in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. C Harrison, L Nuttall, P Stockwell and W Yuan (eds) *Cognitive Grammar in Literature*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Posner, M (1989) *Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press.

Powell, N (2008) *Swallow Me Whole.* Marietta, GA: Top Shelf.

Premack, D and AJ Premack (1997) Infants Attribute Value± to the Goal-Directed Actions of Self-propelled Objects. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 9(6): 848–56.

Prince, G (1971) Notes toward a Characterization of Fictional Narratees. *Genre* 4: 100–5.

Prince, G (1985) The Narratee Revisited. *Style* 19: 299–303.

Prinz, J (2003) Emotion, Psychosemantics and Embodied Appraisals. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 52: 69–86.

Pumphrey, GH (1952) *Comics and Your Children*. London: Comics Campaign Council.

Ratcliffe, M (2009) Existential feeling and psychopathology. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology,* 16(2): 179–94.

Read J, L Mosher and R Bentall (2004) *Models of Madness: Psychological, Social and Biological Approaches to Schizophrenia.* London: Routledge.

Reagan, JK, R Rensink and J Clark (1999) Change Blindness as a result of mudsplashes. *Nature* 398: 34.

Reddy, MJ (1979) The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language. A Ortony (ed) *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 284–310.

Reznek, L (1991) *The philosophical defence of psychiatry*. London: Routledge.

Rhoades, S (2008) *Comic Books: How the Industry Works*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Rossano, F (2013) Gaze in interaction. J Sidnell and T Stivers (eds) *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 308–29.

Russo, J, and P Beresford (2015) Between Exclusion and Colonisation: Seeking a Place for Mad People's Knowledge in Academia. *Disability & Society* 30(1): 153–7.

Ryan, ML (2011) Kinds of Minds: On Alan Palmer's 'Social Minds'. *Style* 45(4): 654–9.

Sabin, R (1993) *Adult Comics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Samson, J and B Peeters (2010) *Chris Ware : La Bande Dessinée Réinventé.* Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles.

Sanford, A and C Emmott (2012) *Mind, Brain and Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saraceni, M (2003) *The Language of Comics*. London: Routledge.

Sarti, G (2011) *Shit's Fucked*. Portland, OR: Antiquated Future.

Schank, R and R Abelson (1977) *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures.* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Scheff, T (1974) The Labeling Theory of Mental Illness. *American Sociological Review* 39: 444–52

Scheff, T (1975) *Labeling Madness*. London: Prentice-Hall.

Semino, E (1995) Schema theory and the analysis of text worlds in poetry. *Language and Literature* 4(1): 77-108.

Semino, E (1997) *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts*. London: Longman.

Semino, E (2008) *Metaphor in Discourse.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Semino, E (2010) Descriptions of pain, metaphor and embodied simulation. *Metaphor and Symbol* 25(4): 205–26.

Semino, E (2011) Deixis and fictional minds. *Style* 45(3): 418–40.

Semino, E and J Culpeper (2002) *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Semino, E, Z Demjen and V Koller (2014) 'Good' and 'bad' deaths: narratives and professional identities in interviews with hospice managers. *Discourse Studies*. 16(5): 667–85.

Sharp, C (1990) *Developing the Arts in Primary School: Good Practice in Teacher Education*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Short, M (1989) *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature*. London: Longman.

Short, M and W Van Peer (1989) Accident! stylisticians evaluate: aims and methods of stylistic analysis. M Short (ed) *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature*. London: Longman, 22–71.

Short, T (2007) *Peirce's Theory of Signs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shorter E (2011) Still tilting at windmills: Commentary on the myth of mental illness. *Psychiatric Bulletin* 35: 183–4.

Siebert A (1999) Brain disease hypothesis for schizophrenia disconfirmed by all evidence. *Ethical Human Sciences and Services* 1: 179–89.

Simons, D J and C F Chabris (1999) Gorillas in our midst: sustained inattentional blindness for dynamic events. *Perception* 28(9): 1059–74.

Small, D (2009) *Stitches: A Memoir*. New York, NY: WW Norton.

Sousanis, N (2015) *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sperber, D and D Wilson (2008 [1986]) *Relevance, Communication and Cognition*. Malden: Blackwell.

Spiegelman, A (1980-1991) *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Spiegelman, A (2009) Introduction. *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*. San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's.

Squire, LR, AS van der Horst, S McDuff, JC Frascino, RO Hopkins and KN Mauldin (2010) Role of the hippocampus in remembering the past and imagining the future. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107(44) 19044–8.

Stanzel, FK (1981) Teller characters and reflector characters in narrative theory. *Poetics Today* 2(2).

Stanzel, FK (1984) *A Theory of Narrative*. Cambridge: CUP.

Steen, G (1991) The Empirical Study of Literary Reading: Methods of Data Collection. *Poetics* 20(5), 559–75.

Stein, DJ (2013) What is a mental disorder? A perspective from cognitive-affective science. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 58(12): 656–62.

Stockwell, P (2002) *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Stockwell, P (2009) *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Stockwell, P (2014) War, Worlds and Cognitive Grammar. C. Harrison, L. Nuttall, P. Stockwell and W. Yuan (eds) *Cognitive Grammar in Literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Stoll, LC (2019) Fat Is a Social Justice Issue, Too. *Humanity and Society* 43(4): 421–41.

Stukenbrock A (2020) Deixis, Meta-Perceptive Gaze Practices, and the Interactional Achievement of Joint Attention. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11: 1779.

Styles, E (2006) *The Psychology of Attention*. Hove: Taylor and Francis.

Swann, J and D Allington (2009) Reading groups and the language of literary texts: a case study in social reading. *Language and Literature* 18(3): 247-64.

Sweetser, EE (1990) *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Szasz TS (1962) *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*. New York, NY: Secker & Warburg.

Szasz TS (1963) *Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry: An Inquiry into the Social Uses of Mental Health Practices*. New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Szasz TS (1970) *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1970.

Szasz TS (1984) *The Therapeutic State*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Szasz TS (2004) Reply to Slovenko. JA Schaler (ed) *Szasz Under Fire: The Psychiatric Abolitionist Faces his Critics*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 159–78.

Szasz TS (2007) *The Medicalization of Everyday Life*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Szasz TS (2009) *Antipsychiatry: Quackery Squared*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Talbot, M and B Talbot (2012) *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Talmy, L (2000) *Towards a Cognitive Semantics, Volume 1*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Talmy, L (2000a) *Towards a Cognitive Semantics, Volume 2*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Tarbox, GA (2013) Beaucoup de Femmes, Un Artiste: Focalization Cues in the Graphic Novels of Bastien Vivès. *Comics Forum*. http://comicsforum.org/2013/ retrieved: 7/2/2013.

Tavormina MG, G Tavormina, E Nemoianni, F Franza, I d'Errico, MG Spurio, R Tavormina, N Zdanowicz, S De Mesmaeker, J Harangozó, A Nyulászi, T Bulyáki, I Urlic, A Russo, M Agius (2016) Thinking of psychiatric disorders as 'normal' illness. Data from a questionnaire on social stigma: a multicenter study. *Psychiatria Danubia*. 28(1):125–31.

Teuton J, R Bentall, and C Dowrick (2007) Conceptualizing psychosis in Uganda: the perspective of indigenous and religious healers. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 44: 79–114.

Thomas, E (2013) Taking Issue with Glyn Dillon's *The Nao of Brown*. *The Hooded Utilitarian*. https://www.hoodedutilitarian.com/2013/11/one-out-of-ten-taking-issue-with-glyn-dillons-the-nao-of-brown/ retrieved 23/4/2014.

Trevarthan, C (1993) The Self born of intersubjectivity: The psychology of an infant communicating. U Neisser (ed) *The Perceived Self: Ecological and Interpersonal Sources of Knowledge*. Cambridge: CUP, 121–73.

Turner, M (2006) Compression and representation. *Language and Literature* 15(1): 17–27.

Turner, M (2010) Conceptual Blending. PC Hogan (ed) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 194–7.

Turner, M (2011) The Embodied Mind and the Origins of Human Culture. A Margarida Abrantes and P Hanenberg (eds) *Cognition and Culture: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, Berlin: Peter Lang, 13-27.

Una (2015) *Becoming/Unbecoming*. London: Myriad Editions.

Ungerer, F and HJ Schmid (2006) *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis.

Vaccarella, M (2013) Exploring graphic pathographies in the medical humanities. *Journal of Medical Humanities* 39: 70–1.

Van Dijk, TA, and W Kintsch (1983) *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension*. New York: Academic Press.

van Peer, W and H Pander Maat (2001) Narrative Perspective and the Interpretation of Characters' Motives. *Language and Literature* 10(3): 229–41.

Van Peer, W, J Hakemulder, and S Zyngier (2007) *Muses and Measures: Empirical Research Methods for the Humanities.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Varela, FJ, E Rosch and E Thompson (1991) *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Varnum, R and C Gibbons (2001) *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 123–44.

Veivo, H, B Pettersson and M Polvinen (2005) *Cognition and Literary Interpretation in Practice.* Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 129–55.

Versaci, R (2007) How Comic Books Can Change the Way Our Students See Literature: One Teacher's Perspective. *English Journal* 91(2): 61-71.

Voice, M & S Whiteley (2019) 'Y'all don't wanna hear me, you just wanna dance': A cognitive approach to listener attention in OutKast's 'Hey Ya!'. *Language and Literature*, 28(1): 7-22.

Wakefield, JC and MB First (2013) Clarifying the boundary between normality and disorder: a fundamental conceptual challenge for psychiatry. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 58(11): 603–5.

Wakefield, JC and MB First (2013) The importance and limits of harm in identifying mental disorder. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 58(11): 618–21.

Wales, K (1989) *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. London: Longman.

Ware, C (2003) *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*. New York (NY): Pantheon Books.

Ware, C (2004) Introduction. *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern: Issue 13*. San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's.

Watson, J (2008) Autographic Disclosures and Genealogies of Desire in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. *Biography* 31: 27–58.

Werth, P (1995) 'World enough and time': Deictic space and the interpretation of prose. P Verdonk and JJ Weber (eds) *Twentieth Century Fiction: From Text to Context*. London: Roudedge, 181–205.

Werth, P (1999) *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. London: Longman.

Wertham, F (1954) *The Seduction of the Innocent*. New York, NY: Rinehart.

Whitaker R (2010) *Anatomy of An Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America.* New York, NY: Broadway Books.

White-Schwoch, Y and DN Rapp (2011) Comprehending Comics and Graphic Novels: *Watchmen* as a Case for Cognition. *SANE* 1(2): 1–16.

Whiteley S (2011) Talking about 'An Accommodation': The implications of discussion group data for community engagement and pedagogy. *Language and Literature,* 20(3): 236–56.

Whiteley S (2011a) Text World theory, real readers and emotional responses to the remains of the day. *Language and Literature*, 20(1): 23–42.

Whiteley, S (2010) *Text World Theory and the Emotional Experience of Literary Discourse*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Sheffield.

Whiteley, S (2014) Text World Theory, real readers and emotional responses to *The Remains of the Day*. *Language and Literature* 20(1): 23–42.

Whiteley, S (2019) Manipulating metaphors: Interactions between readers and 'Upon Opening the Chest Freezer'. Sorlin, S (ed) *Stylistic Manipulation of the Reader in Contemporary Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury, 172–92.

Whiteley, S and P. Canning (2017) Reader response research in stylistics. *Language and Literature*, 26(2): 71–87.

Whitlock, G (2006) Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of the Comics. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 52(4): 965–79.

Whitlock, G and GA Poletti (2008) Self-Regarding Art. *Biography*, 31: v–xxiii.

Williams AR and AL Caplan (2012) Thomas Szasz: rebel with a questionable cause. *Lancet* 380: 1378–9.

Williams, I (2011) Autography as Auto-Therapy: Psychic Pain and the Graphic Memoir. *Journal of Medical Humanities* 32: 353–66.

Williams, I (2012) Graphic Medicine: comics as medical narrative. *Journal of Medical Humanities* 38: 21–7.

Witek, J (1989) *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Witek, J (2012) Comics Modes: Caricature and Illustration in the Crumb Family's *Dirty Laundry*. MJ Smith and R Duncan (eds) *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theory and Methods*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis.

Wittgenstein, L (1953 [2001]) *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wolk, D (2007) Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Books.

Worden, D (2006) The Shameful Art: McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, Comics, and the Politics of Affect. *Modern Fiction Studies* 52(4).

Zalta, E (2018) Mental Illness. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. E Zalta (ed) https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/mental-illness/ retrieved 11/10/2018.

Zunshine, L (2003) Theory of Mind and Experimental Representations of Fictional Consciousness. *Narrative* 11(3): 270–91.

Zunshine, L (2006) *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

Zunshine, L (2008) Theory of Mind and Fictions of Embodied Transparency. *Narrative* 16(1): 6–92.

Zwaan, R (1996) Processing narrative time shifts. Journal of Experimental Psychology: *Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 22: 1196–207.

Zwaan, R, M Langston, & A Graesser (1995) The construction of situation models in narrative comprehension: an event-indexing model. *Psychological Science* 6: 292–7.