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Graphological Deviation, Style Variation and Point of View in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* by Irvine Welsh*

Mick Short

Summary

This article examines the use of graphological deviation as an indicator of viewpoint in the opening of *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) by Irvine Welsh. A detailed interpretative summary of the novel is provided to help "place" the passage analysed and make clear the unusual narrative structure (three interweaved "levels" of narration, all produced by the same narrator). In this context, graphological deviation in the novel's opening is seen to be (i) a marker of style shifts which helps the reader "navigate" from one narrative level to another and, (ii) at the same time, constitutes a symbolic representation on the page of movements up and down from one level of narration to another. The patterns seen in detail in the opening to the novel are reflective of its main body. The paper also includes a brief, more general indicative discussion of the relationship between the stylistic markers of viewpoint and narratological concepts like focaliser and reflector.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die gebruik van grafologiese afwykings as 'n aanduiding van perspektief ("viewpoint") in die aanvangsgedeelte van *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) deur Irvine Welsh. 'n Uitgebreide interpretatiewe opsomming van die roman word gegee om die gedeelte wat ontleed word, te help "plaas" en om die ongewone narratiewe struktuur (drie ineengevlegte "vertelvlakke", wat al drie deur dieselfde verteller geproduseer word). In hierdie konteks word grafologiese afwyking in die roman se aanvangsgedeelte beskou as (i) 'n merker van stylverskuiwings wat die leser help om van een narratiewe vlak na 'n ander te "navigeer" en (ii) terselfdertyd stel dit op die bladsy 'n simboliese representasie daar van bewegings op en af van een vertelvlak na 'n ander. Die patrone wat in detail gesien word in die aanvangsgedeelte van die roman weerspieël dit wat in die res van die roman gebeur. Die artikel sluit ook 'n kort meer algemene bespreking in van die relasie tussen die stilistiese merkers van perspektief ("viewpoint") en narratologiese konsepte soos fokaliseerder en reflekteerder.

Keywords: deviation, graphological; focalisation; *Marabou Stork Nightmares*; point of view; reflector; style variation; symbolism, graphological; viewpoint; Irvine Welsh.

1 Introduction

In this article I want to provide an account of Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995), based mainly on a representative stylistic analysis of the opening of the novel. I have chosen to concentrate on this rather bizarre and disturbing novel because, in spite of its horrific qualities, I think it has considerable intrinsic artistic merit (something which I hope my analysis will begin to show). At the time I wrote the first draft of this article I could find no critical commentary on the novel with which to compare my views. Since then I have been shown one literary critical article which discusses this novel (Freeman 1996). In general terms, Freeman's account of the narrative structure and concerns of the novel is not unlike mine. However, he is more dismissive of the novel than I am. I do not have the space to discuss evaluative matters in any detail here, but this difference between Freeman and myself is, I suspect, due to the fact that Freeman's account is rather general and more concerned with issues to do with social realism than mine. For example, he argues that Welsh passes off "cultural stereotype as authenticity". I would want to argue that there is considerable invention and control in the way that Welsh uses the graphological devices I discuss to move between the narratives and mix them together, and that this can only be properly appreciated through careful analytical work of the sort I undertake in 3 below.

In the passage at the beginning of *Marabou Stork Nightmares* which I want to concentrate on, Welsh uses two unusual stylistic features to mark viewpoint shifts, namely graphological deviation and style variation. These features are normally mentioned only in passing, if at all, when the linguistic signals of viewpoint in fictional prose are discussed (cf. for example, Fowler [1986] 1996: Ch. 9; Leech & Short 1981: 173-185, 272-275; Short 1996: Ch. 9; and Simpson 1993). Although graphological effects can be seen occasionally in novels written in English, from *Tristram Shandy* onwards, deviant graphological effects are more commonly associated with poetry than prose fiction (cf. Van Peer 1993). Graphological deviation, associated graphological patterning and style variation (in particular indications of changes in dialect)[1] are important viewpoint markers not just in the passage quoted below, but in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* as a whole.

In 2 below I will give an interpretative summary of the novel, to which I will then link a stylistic commentary of its opening. But for those who have not already read the novel, it will be helpful to experience how the novel begins without such explanation (I have numbered the sentences for ease of reference in the analysis in 3 below):

(1) It.was.me.and.Jamieson.

(2) Just us.

(3) On this journey, this crazy high-speed journey through this strange land in this strange vehicle.

(4) Just me and Sandy Jamieson.

(5) But they were trying to disturb me, trying to wake me; the way they always did. (6) They willnae let this sleeping dog lie. (7) They always interfere. (8) When the cunts start this shite it makes things get aw distorted and I have to try to go deeper.

(9) DEEPER. (10) Things get dis

up - - - -
coming
start
I

(12) - We're just going to take your temperature, Roy. (13) Have you got the bedpan, Nurse Norton? (14) Number Twos now Roy, time for Number Twos.

(11) I lose control when they interfere - - - and

(15) - Yes, he's looking brighter this morning, isn't he, Nurse Devine? (16) You're brighter this morning, Roy lovey.

(17) Aye right ye are, take your fuckin hand oot me fuckin erse.

(18) DEEPER

(19) DEEPER - - -

2 An Interpretative Summary of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*

Welsh is probably best-known for *Trainspotting*, a novel about the drugs culture in Britain, which was also made into a highly successful film. In *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, drug-taking is a minor theme, but the subject-matter of the novel is also extremely distasteful. Indeed, the quotations on the back cover of the paperback version of the book[2] include a description of Irvine, quoted from *The Guardian*, as "the Scottish Céline of the 1990s". The I-narrator is a young Edinburgh Scot who is lying in hospital in a coma, caused, as we discover towards the end of the novel (on p. 255 of a novel which ends on p. 264), by a failed suicide attempt. He had tried to kill himself - while watching a video of his favourite football team (the Edinburgh side, Hibernian FC, or "Hibs") - using the painkiller, paracetemol, and a plastic bag over the head, as recommended in a book he had read called *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying*.

If the passage in 1 above was your first experience of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, you may have found it initially difficult. This is because the events of the story are presented out of chronological sequence, and in an apparently piecemeal and disorganised fashion by an unconscious narrator who is in a vegetative state. At the outset of the novel he is fantasising about himself and an imaginary friend, Sandy Jamieson, who are supposedly in South Africa on an extraordinary "quest" to kill the Marabou Stork.[3] To make matters even more difficult for the reader, there are three distinct "levels" of narration in the novel, through which the I-narrator, Roy Strang, is continually shifting/being shifted by external intervention. The deepest level is the South African fantasy narration concerning his hunt for the Marabou Stork, and the highest is one where the narrator is aware of what is going on around him in the Edinburgh hospital as he drifts towards consciousness (something which is never fully achieved, but which he gets closer to as the novel proceeds). The middle level is a rather jumbled, and sometimes contradictory, account of Roy Strang's life leading up to his attempted suicide, his resulting vegetative state (which he has been in for two years) and his eventual death at the end of the novel.

It could be argued that the novel has three distinct narrations, where the same narrator tells three stories at the same time, but I prefer to call them three *levels* of narration because (a) they all have the same narrator and the same "default" narratee (the reader), (b) as the novel proceeds, the narrative levels "interact" and reflect one another more and more and (c) there is textual evidence (cf. 3 below) to suggest that we are meant to see the three narrations as a series of connected levels. The top level and the middle level are, in any case, part of the same general fictional world (what Ryan 1991 would call the "text-actual

world"), the top level coinciding with what appears to be the narrator's coding time ("what is happening to the I-narrator in his fictional now") and the middle level (being what happened to the I-narrator/what the I-narrator did in his fictional past). The deepest level of narration is distinct from the other two in that it is a fantasy (what Ryan 1991: 119 calls a "fantasy-universe"). But the connections and correspondences between it and the two levels of the text-actual world are so many that they begin to interpenetrate, and become "explanations of one another", as we will see below.

The movements from one level of narration to another, sometimes forced by external stimuli and sometimes by connections made within the mind of the narrator, are clearly meant to be representative of a mind drifting towards, and away from, consciousness. Our major tasks as readers, then, are (a) to work out when we are in which narrative level, and why, (b) to construct a characterisation and narrative structure for the text which explains how Roy Strang came to be in a coma and (c) to make sense of the connections which become apparent among the different levels of narration, many of which do not become clear until the last few pages of the novel. For example, on p. 255, when the suicide attempt is being described, the footballer on the video, who is gesticulating at the referee, is called Jimmy Sandison, allowing us to see that Sandy Jamieson, Roy's friend in the Marabou Stork fantasy, is an imaginative metathetic creation derived from the footballer's name, something we have been prepared for by the fact that on occasion the I-narrator "misrefers" to Sandy as "Jimmy" (e.g. p. 169). In Ryan's terms, then, Roy Strang's fantasy universe is clearly prompted by the text-actual world in which he lives.

As the novel proceeds, we gradually piece together a life-history for Roy Strang, a rather clever boy in a poor and dysfunctional Edinburgh family. The normal indications of family love are entirely absent in this family, and its members are all abnormal in some way. Roy's father is excessively violent, his mother intemperately hates Japanese, and his eldest half-brother and baby sister are both extremely promiscuous sexually and eventually commit incest together. The most normal of Roy's siblings is his other brother, a homosexual whom he, like the rest of the family, despises, but with whom he eventually manages some sort of reconciliation. Roy is "taught" by his father to fight viciously, and to "stand up for himself". At school he always responds savagely, but also ingeniously, when bullied by others. When eight years old, he is viciously attacked by the family dog, Winston Two. The result is a permanently damaged leg, something for which he exacts revenge when he is a young man, by tricking the dog into injuring itself with a bone through which he has driven some nails. The bone becomes attached to the family pet by one of the nails, in turn causing it to be attacked and severely damaged by a pack of stray dogs. Finally, a few

days later, he brutally executes the injured Winston Two with a set of fireworks. This pattern of vicious action towards Roy and his even more vicious (but sometimes delayed) reaction continues and increases in scale as the novel proceeds.

When Roy is ten, the family emigrates to South Africa. Roy's father, John Strang, hopes to be able to get a job with, and sponge off, his brother, Gordon, a successful businessman and extreme right-wing racist, who had emigrated to South Africa some years before. Gordon's friends are all Afrikaners with extreme views, and he equates P. W. Botha (who "sold out our people in Rhodesia") with Margaret Thatcher, whom he characterises as a "fucking treacherous fucking stupid communist fucking whore!" (p. 82).

But the dream of a new life for the family in South Africa is not realised. John Strang is jailed for attacking a taxi-driver when drunk, and the rest of the family returns to Edinburgh a year and a half after they had emigrated. For Roy, who, in spite of his experience with Winston Two, has his father's love for nature, and for wild animals in particular, the South African period was a very mixed experience. His uncle, a paedophile, secretly abuses him, forcing him into both oral and anal sex, but at the same time showers him with presents, including wonderful trips to safari parks to see the animals.

As a young man, Roy has a good job working for an insurance company as an IT specialist, but in his spare time he satisfies his now ingrained thirst for violence as a member of a "casuals" football gang who fight other such gangs. It is this activity which results in his eventual downfall. He and his pals gang-rape a young woman called Kirsty, also forcing her to have anal and oral sex with them. These activities are reminiscent of what Roy's uncle forced him to do in South Africa, and, in his fantasy universe, of (a) what he "sees" his girlfriend doing with his fantasy friend, Sandy Jamieson, near the beginning of the novel (p. 5) and (b) the various distasteful activities of a businessman in the fantasy, called Lochart Dawson, a figure who resembles Roy's uncle Gordon in a number of ways. Ironically, it later transpires that, unbeknown to Roy, Kirsty was romantically attracted to him at the time he raped her.

The gang is arrested, but at their trial they are all acquitted through the adversarial skills of an experienced lawyer who, at the same time is clearly very unsympathetic to the young men. Roy's initial account of the rape depicts him as an unwilling participant, something which later appears not to be true, but which helps to suggest his growing sense of guilt. There is, apparently, a "nice young man" somewhere inside this violent dysfunctional youth. Indeed, when he goes to live in Manchester after the trial, Roy develops a reasonably normal relationship with a young woman called Dorie. But his sense of guilt over the rape results in a depression which splits him and Dorie apart, and in turn leads

to his suicide attempt.

In the last few pages of the novel, Kirsty secretly visits Roy in hospital. Her experience of the rape and the humiliation of the trial makes her want to take systematic revenge on those who raped her. She has already killed one of the gang, and now she proceeds to kill Roy by stabbing him with a pair of scissors, after first removing his eyelids, and then cutting off his genitalia and stuffing them into his mouth. This process parallels both her own rape and the other events referred to above, in the text-actual world and Roy's fantasy universe, which I have already said are reminiscent of that rape.

And what of the Marabou Stork? As the novel proceeds, the leader of the Marabou Storks which Roy is hunting in his fantasy universe accrues more and more connections with Roy himself in his remembered text-actual world. In that world, he sees the Marabou Stork for the first time, with his father, when his uncle Gordon, who has already systematically abused Roy sexually, takes the family to the Kruger National Park. Roy sees the Storks destroy and eat some pink flamingos, and that night he has his "first Marabou Stork nightmare" (p. 74). As a young boy, then, he is a victim, the equivalent of the flamingos, and uncle Gordon is the oppressor, the equivalent of the Marabou Stork. But when Roy describes Kirsty immediately after the rape (p. 190), he does so in terms which resemble the damaged flamingos, and by extension he has also changed status from flamingo to Marabou Stork.[4] After the rape he has more nightmares in which he clearly associates Kirsty with the flamingos, and himself and his friends with the Storks (pp. 221, 233). Roy's pursuit of his personal Marabou Stork in his fantasy universe thus appears to be a subconscious attempt to come to terms with, and defeat, his own evil. But he never destroys the Stork, never really catches up with it. And indeed, at the moment of his death, when his fantasy universe and the text-actual world finally coincide on the last page of the novel, he clearly sees himself as the Marabou Stork: "Captain Beaky, they used to call me at school ... I spread my large black wings ..." (p. 264). This co-incidence of narrative levels means that he dies at the same time in both his fantasy universe and the text-actual world. This is indicated by the fact that people and objects from the fantasy universe and the text-actual world are now represented as if they were in the same textual world. He is both stabbed by Kirsty in the Edinburgh hospital and shot by his erstwhile fantasy friend in "South Africa", and his nurse can do nothing to help:

> I can move my lidless eyes, I can see my cock dangling from my mouth and I

can see the scissors sticking out from my neck .... Patricia runs to get help but she's too late because Jamieson's facing me and he's pointing the gun and I hear it going off And it's all just one big



(Welsh 1995: 264)

The novel thus ends with a final marked graphological device using a letter which is conventionally associated with sleep, and hence, by extension, death. However, the normal comfortable associations for sleep are minimised here as a consequence of the fact that in the previous twenty-three pages (i.e. from p. 241 onwards) graphologically marked forms of this letter have systematically been associated with the "Z" of the posters in the Zero Tolerance campaign against rape and sexual oppression. In real life, this campaign has had a considerable impact in Edinburgh in recent years and, in the fictional world of the novel, Roy's exposure to the posters is partly responsible for his increasing feelings of guilt. Whether, as the blurb on the back cover of the paperback suggests, these feelings of guilt and Kirsty's final treatment of him amount to a final "redemption" is, however, not so clear.

2.1 Narratology and the Stylistics of Viewpoint

One of the comments which I received from the editors on the first draft of this article was that what I was really talking about was *focalisation*, and that I needed to relate what I was saying to this concept. I had hoped to avoid this matter, firstly because a discussion of the issues involved would take up considerably more space than I have available in an already over-long article, and secondly because I am not convinced that I fully understand the complex relationship between the stylistics of viewpoint and narratological concepts like "reflector" (Stanzel 1981, 1984) and "focaliser" (Bal 1997: 142-161). In other words, by restricting myself to the use of the traditional terms (i) "narrator" (but for arguments concerning even this apparently simple concept, see, for example, Fowler 1996: Ch. 9; Simpson 1993: 55-83), (ii) "character" and (iii) "point of view" (and its "elegant" variant "viewpoint"), I had hoped to avoid "buying into" one or other of the competing narratological accounts (cf. Fludernik 1993,

passim, for commentary on all of the above notions), and so make what I say as theory-neutral as possible in narratological terms. However, some general remarks may be helpful for the reader to understand why I take this rather "reserved" position.

The reason I want to avoid such commitment is because I suspect that concepts like Bal's "focaliser", Stanzel's "reflector", and the narrator-categorisations like type-A and type-B narrators which Fowler and Simpson propose may be useful heuristic critical notions which turn out to be theoretically unnecessary, and which have arisen because of the tendency of narratologists, critics and stylisticians to concentrate almost entirely on narrative fiction to the exclusion of so-called "non-literary" language.

Viewpoint is a factor in any use of language (and indeed, as the narratologists have often pointed out, in various forms of nonlinguistic communication). And narrative viewpoint, to be properly understood needs, in my view, to be situated within a broader account of viewpoint in language and communication. This is why, in my own work, I have tended to restrict myself when discussing viewpoint in prose fiction to examining the pragmatic interpretation of small-scale linguistic viewpoint-marking features within the framework of the general communicative "discourse architecture" of a particular work (e.g. Short 1996: Ch. 9).

If we imagine an ordinary conversation between two people, A and B, who take turns in the roles of addresser and addressee, it can easily be seen that they each express a viewpoint when they talk, and that at the same time they take the other person's viewpoint into account in their production of their own language (for example I am likely to be more careful in my use of gender-marked pronouns when talking to a feminist who I know has strong views on "gendered language" than when I talk to women who may have strong views about the role of women in society but who are not convinced that language choice is a strong factor). Similarly, when B interprets what A says, he or she will do that interpreting from a particular viewpoint but will also take A's viewpoint into account (indeed the influential Gricean maxims in linguistic pragmatics assume this implicitly - for example, giving the right amount of information for your hearer (the maxim of quantity) or being relevant (the maxim of relation) assume a fairly elaborated understanding of your hearer's communicative needs).

Once we imagine more complex situations, the number of viewpoints to be taken into account is increased. So, if A is talking to B in a situation where they know they are being overheard, the third party's viewpoint will also be taken into account in what is said. This explains why, in radio interviews, for example, the interviewer often tells the interviewee what he or she must already know (e.g. "Mr Brown, you are the manager of a large pharmaceuticals firm"). It is this

ability to take multiple viewpoints into account which allows us to narrate stories, oral or written, where a narrator, looking back on what happened, may take on the viewpoint of him- or herself at the time the events took place (event time) as well as the later time of the telling (coding time), or, indeed, the viewpoints of some other person who was involved in the events described, and of the person listening or reading the story. Similarly, our ability to take the viewpoints of others into account helps us to characterise accurately the interrelation between levels of discourse embedded one within another (and hence the different viewpoint consequences of homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, for example). If what I have said is right so far, then terms like "focaliser" and "reflector" are theoretically unnecessary (although they may well be heuristically useful). They merely reflect what turns out to be the viewpoint which is most consistently represented in some narration. Moreover, there is a danger in saying things like "X is the focaliser/reflector in Part 2 of the novel" as such pronouncements can easily lead us to assume that the whole of that part of the text is told representing that one viewpoint or viewpoint complex, even when, if we look closer at the linguistic detail of the text, we discover that the viewpoint is continually shifting from sentence to sentence and even within sentences (as the work on speech, thought and writing presentation has amply demonstrated over the years). Heuristic notions have the danger, then, unless we are extremely circumspect, of helping us to miss significant aspects of texts by "covering them over" conceptually.

The reader of this article can, of course, easily recast what I say in detailed linguistic terms in relation to a preformed notion of, say, a focaliser, and that may turn out to be a sensible thing to do. But although it is clear that the language features I point to are instantiations of viewpoint in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, I personally am too unsure of the theoretical status of narratological concepts like focaliser and reflector to want to assume unthinkingly that when I perform viewpoint-related stylistic analysis on a prose narrative extract I am "really dealing with an aspect of focalisation".

3 A Stylistic Commentary of the Opening Passage in Relation to the Rest of the Novel

It will be apparent from the discussion in 2 above that *Marabou Stork Nightmares* has an extremely distasteful subject matter, which could deter some from reading it. But it is also an extremely interesting novel. In particular, it is sophisticated narratologically, and this complex narratological structuring has well-worked-out interpretative consequences. This narratological innovation is,

in turn, signalled/controlled through considerable linguistic invention, which we can now explore through a detailed examination of the novel's opening.[5]

The novel opens with what in the twentieth century has become a fairly standard *in medias res* device, presenting what must be new information to the reader as if it were given information, to draw the reader into seeing events from the narrator's viewpoint and with his ideological assumptions. However, the technique is taken to quite an extreme here. In the first four sentences we are not told who the narrating "I" is, who Sandy Jamieson is, where the characters are, or what exactly they are doing. And in spite of the repeated use of the quasi-deictic natural spoken narrative use of "this" in sentence (3), we do not know what journey they are on, or why it is crazy, which land they are in, or why it is strange, and what vehicle they are in, and why that vehicle is strange. These matters become a bit more clear in sentences (20)-(26), but Africa is not narrowed to South Africa until p. 13 of the novel, when it can be deduced from a small child offering sexual services "for rand". We are thus made to struggle hard for coherence. The issue of the identity of the vehicle mentioned in (3) is even more problematic. It is referred to as a jeep on p. 2, and this assumption holds for a while, but by p. 8 it has apparently become some sort of aircraft, probably a helicopter. It is this sort of changing and contradictory characterisation which leads the reader to assume that we are being presented with some sort of fantasy universe.

In addition to the oddities of the given-new structure, the first few sentences of the text are characterised by syntactic and graphological oddity. Sentences (2)-(4) are minor sentences grammatically and are also separated from one another by line-spaces. Sentence (1) is grammatically complete, and has the standard narrative past tense, which leads us to assume this tense as a background default for the next three minor sentences. But sentence (1) is also very deviant orthographically, full stops separating the words instead of spaces. Indeed, this oddity caused a problem for me when I numbered the sentences for ease of presentation. Should what I have labelled as sentence (1) really be represented as five separate sentences? I decided not to do this because the first five words form a grammatically normal English sentence and only the sentence-initial word and the final word, a proper name, begin with upper case letters.[6]

These features need explanation, although it would be impossible for a reader to find a satisfactory one from the first few sentences alone. In content terms, they are, of course, sentences describing the narrator's fantasy universe which I outlined in 2 above, and once we have deduced that the narrator must be in a coma, we can relate the minor sentence construction, the stops among the words in the first sentence and the line spaces among the other sentences as being together indicative of a mind having some difficulty in getting going at the

beginning of the narration: they thus represent mental disjunctions, which, like the deviant given-new information structure, can be put down to a mind struggling to cope.

3.1 Graphological Deviation and Style Variation

In spite of the minor sentence syntax, the first four sentences would appear to be reasonably characterised as Standard English.[7] However, there is a switch in sentences (6)-(8), within the first orthographically normal paragraph, to the representation of a nonstandard Scots dialect. Later on in the novel, when we know where the narrator comes from, we will be able to characterise this dialect as working-class Edinburgh Scots. The orthographic indicators of a Scots dialect are "willnae" for "won't", "shite" for "shit" and "aw" for "all". This indication of a pronunciation change also corresponds with the introduction of a rude scatological vocabulary ("shite, "cunts").

This marked style shift also needs explanation, of course. What appears to happen is that the real Roy Strang, as yet unnamed, begins to appear in these sentences, where, note, the tense has also changed from past to present. When Roy "speaks" in his fantasy narration, however, he uses a Standard English which is at the same time marked as belonging to a kind of upper-class between-the-wars RAF Biggles-speak, which is parodic of what might be called the "English of Empire".[8] The only clear indicators of this style in the passage quoted in 1 above are the narrator's reference to his friend by last name only, and the word "blighter" in sentence (26). But in the following page of text the word "blighter" appears again, along with "Wizard!" (meaning "great!"), "Yuk!", "yukky" and "a cunning but somewhat morally deficient native fellow". This pattern of "Biggles-speak" for the fantasy-universe narration and Edinburgh Scots for the text-actual world narrations is used consistently throughout the novel and helps to contrast brutal reality with a wish-world (cf. Ryan 1991: 117-118) which the narrator appears to be struggling towards but does not properly achieve mentally, let alone physically.

So far I have studiously avoided discussion of sentence (5), which begins the paragraph I have been discussing. Its tense is consistent with that of the first four sentences, and there are no orthographic indications of Edinburgh Scots. But it is orthographically connected to the Edinburgh Scots narration, and the unanchored, given-information use of "they" also coheres better with the "they" of sentences (6)-(7) and "the cunts" of (8) than with sentences (1)-(4). Indeed, in the fantasy-universe narration, sentences (1)-(2) appear to rule out the possibility of reference to individuals other than the narrator and Jamieson. Sentence (5) thus appears to be a transition sentence which moves the reader

from one level of narration to the next. It also indicates something which is true throughout the novel, namely that it is not possible to associate particular tenses exactly with particular levels of narration. Although the text-actual world in the narrator's "coding-time fictional present" is usually accorded the present tense, and the fantasy-universe narration and the narration of the text-actual world in the narrator's past are mainly in the past tense, there are "janus-faced" sentences like (5) from time to time, and there are also some other textually strategic tense shifts within the default tense for a particular narrative level.

3.2 Graphological Deviation and Visually Symbolic Effects

The narrator's response to what he sees as interference by the as yet nonspecific outsiders is to "try to go deeper". This phraseology is then used as the trigger for the first of a series of "graphology-symbolic"[9] representations which can be found throughout the novel, and which provide textual evidence for the notion, which I introduced in 2 above, that the different narrations are best seen as levels of the same narration. As I said in 2, the narrator represents the unfolding of his fantasy universe as the deepest level of narration, and that of his presently experienced coding time as the highest. In the opening to the novel which I am concentrating on, there is no clear representative of the middle level, the narrator's past in the text-actual world (although, interestingly, the narratorially ambivalent sentence (5) could be seen as relating to this middle level as well as to the other two). A clear characterisation of this middle level in relation to the other two can be seen on pp. 48-49, for example.

The first "graphology-symbolic" movement between the narratorial levels of the novel (sentences (9)-(19) of the passage) is complex, as a result of the fact that it contains an upward movement embedded inside a downward one. Elsewhere, in more simple cases, when the narrator moves down a level, this is usually represented symbolically by the word "DEEPER" in capitals repeated on three successive lines. A series of dashes of varying length occur after the final "DEEPER", apparently representing the size of the mental pause between the effort to go deeper and the resumption of the lower (in this case fantasy-universe) narration. Sometimes, as here, the instances of "DEEPER" are directly under one another. On other occasions they are "raked" rightwards down across the page as in:

DEEPER
DEEPER
DEEPER

Although the normal representation involves a three-fold repetition of the word, larger or smaller repetitive sequences sometimes occur, appearing to indicate the amount of effort needed to move between levels. For example, the narrator needs a sequence of nine raked repetitions of "DEEPER" on p. 40 to stop thinking about the attractive Nurse Devine (a play on "divine") and get back to his fantasy.

Not surprisingly, when the narrator moves upwards between narrative levels, the words go up the page, sometimes vertically, as in the passage we are discussing, and sometimes raked from left to right. In the passage under discussion the reader needs to go down five lines from the uncompleted word "dis" to "I lose control ..." in order to read up and then down again through the block of nurse-talk on the right-hand side of the page. Note also here the effect of sentence (10) ending in the middle of a word as Roy struggles unsuccessfully to stay in his fantasy universe. In context it would appear that the uncompleted word is "disturbed" or "disrupted", and so "dis" is itself graphology-symbolic (note the lack of a final hyphen, as in "dis-" , which would normally be used in writing to indicate an interrupted item).

A further graphology-symbolic effect can be seen in (9)-(19) which relates to typesize. Sentences (12)-(16) are in considerably smaller type than those surrounding them. These sentences, with their stereotypical euphemisms and friendly vocatives, clearly represent a conversation between two nurses, Nurse Norton and Nurse Devine who also "interact" with Roy as they care for him. This conversation is important for us in beginning to make sense of the movements among narrative levels in the novel, and we also glean the name of the narrator from their conversation. The change in type size is thus an appropriate foregrounding device for the reader. But it also appears that the particular size (smaller than the surrounding type) can be seen as representative of Roy's viewpoint in relation to what they say. They interrupt his fantasy-universe thoughts, causing him to rise up through the narrative levels, but at the same time they appear to be less important or less vivid for him than what he "hears" inside his head. This symbolic use of type size and related features like capitalisation is a feature to be found throughout the novel. For example, on p. 15, when his parents are leaving after a visit, their farewells ("CHEERIO SON! CHEERIO ROY!") are in capitalised small print to represent an increase in volume and pitch variation compared to the rest of their speech (cf. also the exclamation marks). But the fact that even the capitalised words are still in the smaller type size indicates their lack of interest from Roy's perspective.

In the novel's opening passage, Roy "responds" to what the nurses say with his most dialectally marked sentence in the passage ((17) "Aye right ye are, take your fuckin hand oot me fuckin erse."). Six of the twelve words are non-

standard in some way, and three of them are also taboo words. When Roy uses "fucking" in his fantasy universe it is spelled normally, but here the spelling indicating a dialect pronunciation omits the final "g" and does not even signal its omission by the conventional apostrophe. But in spite of the anger of Roy's response, there is no indication that the nurses hear him. There is no indication that those in the hospital hear him anywhere else in the novel either, so we must assume that (17), and sentences like it, must be Direct Thought, not Direct Speech (cf. Short 1996: Ch. 10).

Elsewhere in the novel, graphological foregrounding devices like capitalisation, italicisation, unusual spellings and so on are also often used within this Direct Thought mode to indicate simultaneously Roy's dialect and the strength of his attitude:

> - Awright son!
> AW FUCK! *THIR* HERE.
>
> (p. 10)

In this section, although my analysis has not been exhaustive by any means,[10] I hope to have shown that graphological deviation and patterning and style variation are important factors in how viewpoint shifts, and in particular movements among the levels of narration, are controlled in the opening to *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. Indeed, the use of graphological deviation to signal viewpoint occurs in a number of his works, and so can be seen as part of Welsh's overall style. Moreover, the features seen in the opening passage of *Marabou Stork Nightmares* are representative of, and also explained by, what happens in the rest of the novel. Perhaps one final point to note is that sentence (23), ("However, as my memory is practically non-existent, this could have been a few days ago or since the beginning of time itself.") is one of a number of clear indications in the novel, both in its direct statement and the accompanying hyperbole, that the narrator is unreliable. This correlates with the extraordinary movements we have seen in the rest of the passage, and with the fact that the narrator does not always face reality direct in the rest of the novel. For example, as I have already pointed out, he first characterises his role in the rape of Kirsty as less bad than it really is, and nowhere in the novel does he appear to be able to confront his own evil directly, having to resort instead to the symbolic quest to kill the Marabou Stork in his fantasy universe.

4 Concluding Remarks

Marabou Stork Nightmares is an extraordinary novel. Its extremely distasteful subject-matter and the attitudes of the characters portrayed will be enough to dissuade many from reading it at all. But I hope to have shown that it also has considerable artistic interest in general narratological terms, its linguistic detail and the interrelations between this linguistic detail and the larger-scale narratological structuring.

Almost all of the novel's characters are deformed, and do dreadful things to others; but reading the novel helps us to understand how it is that people can treat others so appallingly. In spite of the fact that we normally want to sympathise with an I-narrator, and in spite of the fact that he appears to be struggling to throw off the worst aspects of his character, Roy Strang does too many dreadful things for us to be able to sympathise completely with him or condone what he does. But the same is also true of Kirsty, his victim, when she kills Roy at the end of the novel. She has plenty of reason to want revenge, but although we can see why she undertakes her "quest" to kill her attackers, it is not possible to condone her actions either. They are also immoral, and we have come too far in understanding how Roy came to be the person he is not to sympathise with him to some extent in his dreadful death.

What we see again and again in the novel is a cycle of dreadful things done to one person which in turn either motivate appalling direct responses (cf. Kirsty's horrific killing of Roy or Roy's treatment of Winston Two) or lead to the abuse of others (cf. the way in which Gordon's mistreatment of Roy appears to lead to his rape of Kirsty). This cycle is, of course, well known in social work circles: the abused becomes the abuser.

We cannot condone the actions of Roy and others, but we can try to understand how they come to behave as they do, and indeed have to, in order to establish a coherent reading for the novel. In reflecting on *Marabou Stork Nightmares* for this article, I even came to wonder what might have happened to more minor characters (e.g. Gordon or John Strang) in their childhood to make them the deformed adults they became.

There is no point in trying to construct detailed answers to such questions, of course. That way "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" lies (cf. Knights 1946). But justification for the view that Welsh really was striving not just to shock, but also to engender in his readers a felt need to understand how people come to damage themselves and others, can be seen (via Grice's 1975 maxim of relation) in the ironic use of one of the epigraphs at the beginning of the book, a quotation from John Major, the British Prime Minister who succeeded Mrs Thatcher:

We should condemn more and understand less.
(John Major, quoted by Welsh 1995: epigraph; p. xiii)

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Notes

1. In this article I am using the term "style variation" in a very general way, so that it covers any sort of style-related textual change, including dialect shifts.

2. All page references in this article are to this paperback edition.

3. Throughout the novel, both the words in "Marabou Stork" have initial capitals, an obvious foregrounding device. I follow Welsh's textual practice in this article.

4. The mechanisms by which readers decide that "parallel characters" both "are" and "are not" the same as one another is something which, as far as I am aware, neither stylistics nor narrative theory has examined in any detail. An interesting approach could well be in the light of the mechanisms for character tracking which Emmott (1998: Ch. 6) describes in more standard cases, combined with work on the discoursal properties of symbolism.

5. This article concentrates on particular linguistic features in relation to narrative shifts in this one novel. But there is a more general issue here, which linguists and stylisticians are beginning to explore, of how it is, when they read texts, that readers construct the fictional worlds "behind" those texts. Semino (1997) is an account, based on deixis, schema theory and possible world theory, of how readers construct fictional worlds when they read poems and other texts. Werth (1999) is a wide-ranging account of how conceptual space is represented in discourse.

6. Note that I have also accorded sentence status to four sentences which do not have a closing full stop - (10), (11), (18) and (19). Sentence (10) is clearly unfinished, (11) appears grammatically complete, and is also marked off from the succeeding sentence by graphological features, and (18) and (19) are textually parallel with (9) as well as having graphological features (a line-space and a series of continuation dashes) marking them off from succeeding sentences.

7. Although some prescriptivists might well argue that "me and Jamieson" in (1) should be "Jamieson and I" or "Jamieson and me", this usage is not at all un-

common among speakers of Standard English.

8. It also helps to explain the title of the first chapter, "Another Lost Empire".

9. I have constructed this phrase by analogy with the concept of "sound symbolism" - see also Epstein (1978: 25-37), Knowles (1987: 38-42) and Short (1996: 54-56, 114-115). There is also a clear connection between many of these graphology-symbolic items and what Lakoff and Johnson (1980: Ch. 4) have called "orientational metaphors". Some of the orientational metaphors are used conventionally (for example, CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN), but other aspects of the narrator's orientation metaphorising is nonconventional, or personal. For example, the conventional GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN relation is inverted for the narrator; he clearly prefers the lowest, subconscious, fantasy-universe to the other narrative levels. For a discussion of the relation between conventional and personal metaphors in fiction, see Semino and Swindlehurst (1996).

10. A complete account would, for example, need to account more precisely for the linguistic details in (20)-(26), for example the tense shifts and the effect of deictic constructions like "down here" in (20).

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