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## Shuttling back and forth from "The Ebony Tower"

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How meaning evolves (in written communication) or is negotiated (in spoken) through the complex interaction of sender, receiver and context is a preoccupation both of linguists and of those concerned with literary studies. This article is an attempt to combine the insights provided by those involved in discourse analysis and those concerned with reception aesthetics. *The Ebony Tower* by John Fowles is considered in the light of the discourse categories: episode, sequence, turn, act. The story can be seen to be composed of two intermeshed episodes and a short terminal episode. The episodes vary in terms of actors, narrative devices and illocutionary intent. They also vary in extent of ambiguity and hence of reader involvement and aesthetic impact. It is suggested that since both reading and writing are everyday activities, competence in making sense of the structuring and transmission of meaning in speech may be one of the ways, beneath conscious control, in which readers realize significance in reading too.

### 1. Context of meaning

Meaning is never simply folded into a work (implicated) so that it can be unfolded (explicated) by the technician of language processes. Meaning is a continual shuttling back and forth between the language of the work and the network of contexts which are not in the work but are essential for its realization.

Robert Scholes's (1974, 147) perfectly adjusted metaphor captures the essence of the evolving creation of meaning which has become a central preoccupation in so many areas of the study of linguistic communication.

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<sup>1</sup> John Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*, 1974, All quotations come from the American Signet Book paperback edition, 1975.

John Dore (1978, 3) clothes the same idea in more "scientific" sounding form

Language is internally structured on several grammatical levels (Chomsky, 1965) and pragmatically organized at certain levels of communicative function (Searle 1969). But the interpretation of actual utterances is a situated accomplishment depending crucially on several kinds of context (Garfinkel 1967, Cicourel 1973, Hymes 1974, Voloisnov 1973). Given, then, that speech is both structured and situated, a central problem... is to determine how grammatical knowledge interacts with... interpretative procedures for arriving at mutual understanding.

Maureen Shields (1978, 143) makes a statement profoundly true for literature as well as for spoken interaction.

People speak to each other within a context which consists not only of a material environment which both of them can perceive, but also of an elaborate social world represented in the mind of each in a web of constructs and rules reflecting their individual pathways through it, a web which is constantly changing as the social process brings together persons in a series of interactive and communicative relationships... Conducting a dialogue is a complicated procedure which requires skills beyond those of linguistic competence — skills which include a grasp of human behaviour as well as a knowledge of the objective world, a pragmatics as well as a semantics and a syntax

Messages, written or spoken, literary or non-literary, are communicated through the full resources of the language within the varying intermeshed and only partially overlapping contexts of sender and receiver through which they gain meaning. A common preoccupation of all concerned with linguistic messages is how we make sense of, how we extract meaning from, the language we hear or read. With the spoken text we try to understand how meaning is mutually negotiated. With the written to understand how a reader absorbs meaning into his own existence so that the work comes to have significance for him personally.

In the spoken interchange of face-to-face interaction we can truly talk of the mutual creation of texts. All succeeding utterances after the first one (and initial utterances are themselves often of a special ritual kind) modify the utterances that follow and are themselves modified by those preceding them. Thus meaning, and finally significance, is constantly being intuited and negotiated and it is these intuitions and this negotiation that provide the need for and the basis of communication.

Even the most apparently random conversation can be seen as structured. Gordon Wells, (1978) concerned with

discourse and language development, has suggested calling the largest structural units in spoken discourse "sequences" and he defines sequences as

having unitary topic and purpose, with purposes being divided into five main types, according to the dominant goal that the sequence is designed to attain: *Control* of the present or future behaviour of one of the participants; *Expressive* the sharing of feeling or attitude; *Representational* the exchange of information; *Social* the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships; and *Tutorial* where one of the participants has a deliberately didactic purpose.

Another analyst of conversation, John Dore, (1978,a, 1) suggests the term "episode" for the largest structural unit reserving the terms "sequence", "conversational turn", and "speech act" for smaller units. Whatever terms are used, the analyst of conversation must "attempt to identify which of an often equivocal array of acts of the speaker the hearer is responding to" since senders and receivers use an enormous complexity of devices to cope with each other.

That any kind of interaction similar to what goes on in spoken interchange takes place between the text and the reader of a piece of literature, that literature too is "both structured and situated", and that its interpretation is a "situated accomplishment depending crucially on several kinds of context" and "demanding a linguistic pragmatics" an attempt to understand what language **does**, not what it **means**, has only recently become a central preoccupation of literary theory and criticism. However, its is one thing to recognize that a describable kind of sender-text-reader interaction takes place, and another to show how it takes place in the individual work. The aim of this paper is to suggest a reading of John Fowles's short novel *The Ebony Tower* by combining the insights into communication provided by those involved in discourse analysis, especially Dore (1978a, 1978b), Labov and Fanshel (1977), Shields (1978), Wells (1978) and those concerned with reception aesthetics, especially Wolfgang Iser (1978).

To do this we have adapted the terminology suggested by Dore and Wells. We have taken the largest structural unit of the novel to be the **episode**, and see an episode as having unitary topic and purpose. The purpose is provided by the dominant goal the episode is designed to achieve, what we might also call its overriding illocutionary function. Such goals may be any of the five that Wells suggests for what he

calls sequences. In a work of literature episodes will often be marked by a different combination of narrative techniques (as is the case in *The Ebony Tower*). Episodes break down into a number of **sequences** which provide varying perspectives of, or stages in, the main topic or purpose of the episode, and/or have a varying setting or constellation of characters. Sequences are composed of narrative **turns**. The discourse turns of face-to-face interaction coincide with the utterances of the speakers. Analogously the turns of the written literary work coincide with the voice of the narrator, now pure narration, now focalized through character, now free indirect speech, now mimetic in the guise of dialogue.<sup>2</sup> The smallest unit of communication, in written as in spoken discourse, is the **speech act**.

Considered in the light of these structural units *The Ebony Tower* can be seen as composed of two intermeshed episodes and one (very brief) terminal episode. The two main episodes are the Coëtminais (or C) episode and the beyond Coëtminais (or B) episode. They differ in dominant illocutionary intent (what the language is supposed to be *doing*), in actors involved and in narrative devices. As a result of the foregoing they differ also in extent of ambiguity and hence of reader involvement and aesthetic impact in the sense of aesthetic as "the realization accomplished by the reader".<sup>3</sup> (Iser, 1972, 279)

<sup>2</sup> We have adopted here a number of Gerard Genette's structural terms as given in the English translation of part of *Figures III*, 1972, *Narrative Discourse*, Cornell U.P. and Basil Blackwell, 1980. In particular we use his meaning for the following terms: **diegesis** which is "pure narrative" or "narrative of events", and **mimesis** which is "narrative of words", i.e. cast in the form of dialogue in the mouths of characters. As he puts it "The truth is that mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words. Other than that, all we have and can have is degrees of diegesis so we must distinguish between 'narrative of events' and 'narrative of words'" (p. 164); **free indirect speech** Genette calls "the alibis of the novelist imposing his truth under a somewhat hypocritical cover, beyond all the uncertainties of the hero and perhaps also of the narrator." (p. 203). We have also adopted Genette's notion of **prolepsis**, but see note 5.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth quoting the passage in which this comes more fully: "The phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text. Thus Roman Ingarden confronts the structure of the literary text with the ways in which it can be *konkretisiert* (realized — cf. Roman Ingarden), *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks*, Tübingen, 1968, pp. 49 ff.). The text as such offers different 'schematised views'... through which the subject matter of the work can come to light, but the actual bringing to light

## 2. Realization of a world of possibilities

David arrived at Coëtminais the afternoon after the one he had landed at Cherbourg and driven down to Avranches, where he had spent the intervening Tuesday night

The skimming or inattentive reader may have to read this opening sentence over a second time. When we read "X arrived at Y" our expectation, conditioned by innumerable reading experiences, is that it will be followed by a statement linked by the paratactic *and* involving an ongoing time sequence "X arrived at Y and..." The opening construction of *The Ebony Tower* which places the time of the second event/statement earlier than the first, and in this case embeds the place Coëtminais within the action of David's journey to it subtly foreshadows the two enmeshed experiences of the novel and their relationship to each other — the Coëtminais episode, which lies at the heart of the novel, and the beyond Coëtminais episode which provides the background for C and gives it its full meaning.

It is with a long sequence from B that the novel begins and this is transmitted to the reader in a mixture of pure narration and of focalization through the consciousness of David. We are presented with the whole world from which David comes. To use Austin's terms the setting is given of conventions as valid for the recipient as for the speaker. If these conventions are not shared, or if the reader shares them but rejects them as a basis of aesthetic realization, then the exchange cannot take place. We travel with David through the last wooded remnants of Brittany in the quiet September sunshine, we share his sense of discovery and his slightly guilty feeling of freedom from ordinary self. He starts to be "placed" for us both socially and psychologically. We enter into his journey of discovery until the check of the padlocked gate, and the islanded separateness of Coëtminais. This first B sequence ends with a bridge passage as David enters the house and sees two naked girls asleep in the shade of a catalpa tree. Then the sequence is literally shattered by the jangling sound of the bell with which David announces his arrival.

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is an action of *Konkretisation*. If this is so then the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader."

The first short Coëtminais sequence now follows with its hint of enigma and mystery, of a world both physically and psychologically remote from that beyond Coëtminais from which David has come. Then, as David withdraws to his room, we are involved once more in B. A densely imagined repertoire is built up of the middle-class, middle-aged, middlingly successful, mildly happy European intellectual of the seventies. The world he inhabits is one in which people are still able to believe in life as guided by the "expectation of future advances being dependent on intellegent present choices", in which they feel in a large measure in control of their social, professional even their emotional lives. The narrator-supplied information presents us a young man born with artistic gifts which have had every encouragement, star choices", in which they feel, in a large measure, in control of honesty and tact" producing "passable substitutes for the painting of the trend setters of the day" pictures "that go well on walls". A man with a house in Blackheath, a successful two-child family, a wife liberated but not too liberated. This is the repertoire of B, the familiar territory within the text, reference to "the whole culture from which the text has emerged"<sup>4</sup> (Iser, 1978, 69)

In this second sequence of B we are also led to "place" Henry Breasley, who David has come to visit at his home Coëtminais, an artist like David himself, but from a time, of a stature and of strongly held social and artistic beliefs very far from David's mildly progressive liberalism. Breasley's was a world in which progressive liberals took violent sides over the rise of Fascism, over the Spanish Civil War, over abstract art and non-involvement.

The B sequence throughout is openly diegetic, that is, the turns are the various voices of the narrator sometimes pure narration, sometimes focalized through David, more rarely but tellingly, in the form of free indirect speech.

By the late 1950s (Breasley's) way of life had already become a quaintly historical thing. The rumours and realities of his unregenerate life stle, like his contempt for his homeland, became

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<sup>4</sup> For Iser *repertoire*, as for Austin *conventions* for speaker and recipient, is the basis on which communication can take place. A possible reader reaction to the repertoire of B would be to reject it as being set in the kind of world or about the kind of individual to which he, the reader, has built-in reactions of boredom or contempt or dislike. If he reads on and is disgusted this is still an aesthetic reaction, since it is a realization accomplished by him. Only if he totally rejects the reading can no communication take place.

amusing... and even pleasingly authentic to the vulgar mind *with its propensity for confusing serious creation with colourful biography, allowing Van Gogh's ear to obscure any attempt to regard art as the supreme sanity* (p. 11, italics S.B.)

In the italicized part of the above quotation the narrator steps out of his role of the pure recounting of past events to provide a general judgement about people's relationship to art. This is an important proleptic utterance.<sup>5</sup> The conviction that serious creation is a supreme form of sanity is a reader cue, given in B, the full effect of which only becomes apparent in C. It indicates a frame of reference of importance for decoding the significance of the novel as a whole.

Another proleptic utterance given in B but worked out in C comes when the narrator is commenting on the present fame of Breasley's art

with the recurrence of the forest motif, the enigmatic figures and confrontations (p. 12)

In this second case it is not an utterance important for decoding the meaning of the novel as a whole, but important for providing the repertoire of the C episode. For the enigmatic figures and the confrontations which take place between them in Coëtminais, secluded among the last forests of ancient Brittany provide the repertoire of C and of the separate, inner world of the novel.

Once more the B episode is abruptly broken into at the point of transfer to C. David is musing on Breasley's art. As he studies one of the great paintings of the mature period he wonders at the ability to produce anything so vital and suggestive in a man who, when it was painted, had been nearly seventy (and is now nearly eighty) when

suddenly, as if to solve the enigma, the living painter himself appeared from the garden door and came towards David.

"Williams, my dear fellow". (p. 18)

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<sup>5</sup> Genette defines **prolepsis** as "any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later" (40) The proleptic utterance italicized above is of especial relevance for reception aesthetics, for the "event" is not something that occurs in the novel, but something that takes place in the consciousness of the reader. Prolepsis and analepsis as used by Genette are analogous to the term used in applied linguistics of cataphoric (forward reference), anaphoric (back reference) and exophoric (reference to extralinguistic context) see M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan *Cohesion in English*, 1976. Both are concerned with textual cohesion, with creating chains of reference which are perceived by the reader as linking different moments of the textual experience.

Even visually the two episodes differ. B is composed of long slabs of prose, C largely broken up into short passages of dialogue. This apparently superficial purely visual difference is in fact the mark of a very considerable difference in narrative technique and of reader involvement. It is the mark of a change from diegetic to mimetic form of presentation.

we will have to mark the contrast between mimetic and diegetic by a formula such as: information + informer = C, which implies that the quantity of information and the presence of the informer are in inverse ratio, mimesis being defined by a maximum of information and a minimum of informer, diegesis by the opposite relationship. (Genette, 1980, 166)

that is, from narrating through the narrator in various guises to narrating through the simulation of direct speech in the mouths of characters.

The change from diegetic to mimetic also involves a change of dominant language function. In B the main language function is the provision of information, it is what Wells calls *representational*. C, by simulating the varied speech acts of authentic discourse creates in the reader the illusion of direct participation. The main language function is, in Wells's terms, *expressive*, the sharing of feeling and attitude. For this reason it is C that gives rise to the most varied readings of the novel. This is not to say that reception of B will be invariant in all readers. But varied actualization of a text that is dominantly informative is less crucial than varied actualization of mimetic sequences concerned with feeling and attitude.<sup>6</sup>

The Coëtminais episode has an enlarged constellation of actors. The pure narrator withdraws to the background. Most of the presentation is in the direct speech of Henry Breasley, the Mouse (Diana), the Freak (Anne) and David. David is also present here, as elsewhere, as point of focalization. He is a participant in every scene, other people's attitudes come to us as told to or intuited by him. In Coëtminais we are presented with a number of shifting perspectives each of which momentarily becomes our own. The episode is far richer in those moments which Iser (1978, 59) refers to as containing "implications which... necessitate interpretation" and "indeterminacies which need to be resolved". The four characters are paired and opposed, re-paired and differently opposed. Each has affinities with and profound differences

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<sup>6</sup> Varied readings of B (in so far as they are not a rejection of the whole repertoire, as already suggested) are largely focussed on the degree or not of irony felt in the presentation of David.



from the others. On the emotional and sexual level we have the varying involvements or possibilities of involvement, between the Mouse and Henry, the Mouse and David, David and the Freak, the Freak and Henry. Thus the reader is constantly enmeshed in interweaving perspectives, and comprehension of them is affected by an amalgam of personal reaction and what has been absorbed from a reading of the text. This is what Iser (1978, 96 ff.) refers to as the structure of theme and horizon, "the background-foreground relation underlying all textual strategies". He makes the point that (Iser 1978, 97)

it is not possible for the reader to embrace all perspectives at once, and so the view he is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him, the 'theme'; but this, however, is itself foregrounded on the other perspectives in which he was involved

The same relationships, according to varying perspective, are seen as compassionate and as daft, as perverse and as gentle, as cowardice and as reticence, as refusal of experience and as seeking some different level of experience.

One more important level of interaction lies below those of inter-personal relations, and that is the relationship of each character towards self. Cues for this are scattered throughout the novel, the proleptic utterance already quoted being one of the most overt. Art and the artist motif are important here. All four characters, even in her own way the Freak, are artists, and their art, of whatever kind, is a result of the hard-won, lonely power of the creative self. This inner relationship of each character to her or his own potential might be realized as the core of the novel. It is made more possible in the separate world of Coët, and the question posed at different moments by all four, explicitly or implicitly, is to what extent the inner self is different in the world of Coët and in the world beyond Coët.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For reader reaction to these intra- and inter-personal relations a small amount of rather haphazardly collected information suggests that sex, age and personal creative impulse, in that order, play most part in the reader's context of reception (as in other novels moral or political belief, literary sophistication, class, colour, nationality, might be more decisive elements of reader context). Off-the-cuff judgements run from "the best thing he has ever written" (38 year old woman) through "something of a self-indulgence" (23 year old man) to "trash of the most pretentious kind" (73 year old man), all three university teachers of literature. Even in the most superficial discussions the points of which people differ most are moments made manifest in C.

The C sequence, in simulating spoken interaction, simulates all dimensions of such interaction where the words uttered carry only part of the message, since paralinguistic and extralinguistic dimensions are equally important in transmitting messages. Labov in his work on therapeutic discourse has this to say of paralinguistic cues

There are many forms of indirection used in conversation. More attention has been paid to indirect modes of expression than to any other form of indirection; particular attention has been paid to points where the paralinguistic cues run counter to the meaning of the text. De Groot has pointed out that whenever paralinguistic cues contradict the text, the meaning that is understood as primary is that of the cues (Labov, 1977, 48)

All the sequence of the Coëtminais episode are drenched in paralinguistic and extralinguistic information, but this is especially true of the central sequence, the emotionally rich encounters between David and Diana first in her room later in the orchard. Although this sequence may seem to be equally divided between the two participants this is not really so. The narrative voice takes varying turns: there is the dialogue exchange between him and her; then there is the voice of the pure narrator providing much of the context that is common to both, the light effects in the room, the sounds and smells of the garden. But most of what would be extra- and paralinguistic information in any real encounter comes to the reader as experienced by (focalized through) David. Here as elsewhere we are given more information about his emotional involvement than hers. The reader must do much more imaginative work on Diana's involvement — of what her relationship is towards David, towards Henry and towards herself. The reader of literary sophistication will find special significance in her names with their contradictory implications but the less specialist reader is likely to intuit many of the undertones the names imply.

Obviously the sequence is too long to quote in full. One of the difficulties of illustrating the potentially crucial moments for affective aesthetics is that the triggering devices are so much woven into the whole flow of the reading process that to quote them not only may fail to make the point, but makes the very quotations part of another context of situation, another reading process, that of the reading of a critical article. Such reading too has its own moments of significant meaning, its own affective devices, but they are considerably different from those of novel reading.

In the mimetic sequences of C we may more fully consider the functioning of the discourse levels of turn and act, and also the handling of the paralinguistic and extralinguistic dimensions which are differently present in the written text and which, though implicit in spoken exchanges, have traditionally been made explicit by novelists in the classical realistic novel.

Turns are perhaps the most predictable elements in discourse for a discourse turn is the same as an utterance, that is, all that one speaker says before another speaker begins. In the mimetic sequences of fiction we have to deal not only with the turns put in the mouths of characters, but also with the turns of the narrator in his various guises of pure narration, narration through the consciousness of a character and free indirect speech. The most commonly occurring turns are initiation (with its subcategories of re-initiation, counter-initiation and sub-initiation) and response. An important element in the transmission of meaning that is largely expressed through turn is who is doing the initiating and who the responding. In the passage that we shall examine in more detail below David is in the initiating role. This is not true throughout the novel. In the dinner sequence it is Breasley who is the initiator. Changes in the roles of initiator and respondent make for differences in the control of the discourse, the initiator appearing to be in command at any given moment. The continual role of interpretative sub-initiator played by Diana throughout the abrasive dinner sequence puts her in a special role-relationship of commitment neither to Henry nor to David.

It is within turns that speech acts are realized, those "basic or minimal units of communication". It is worth quoting more fully the passage in Searle (Searle, 1969, 16) in which this well known definition of a speech act originally came

The reason for concentrating on the study of speech acts is simply this: all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol, word or sentence in the performance of the speech act... More precisely, the production or issuance of a sentence token under certain conditions is a speech act, and speech acts... are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication

Both the speaking and the writing of language consists in the performing of speech acts (Searle, 1975, 21) and it is through

the long flow or the swift interchange of speech acts that meaning becomes manifest.<sup>8</sup>

Although turns, both in the spoken and the written mode, coincide with the contributions of individual speakers, a single turn may consist of more than one speech act. Within a single turn a respondent may both acknowledge the request of another and add to it some act of stating, questioning, promising apologizing, ordering etc. of his own. Sometimes, in authentic discourse, such an act may be performed by words alone, sometimes purely paralinguistically. In the next turn the speaker must then decide which of the acts he will respond to. Sometimes he may respond to one immediately and to the other later, and delayed and multiple response to speech acts thickens discourse. The following example from *The Ebony Tower* is of two turns with more than two minimal units of communication. David is trying to find out something about the artistic influences on Breasley's art and Breasley mentions Foxe, upon which David remarks "Foxe escapes me" thus, by use of what is grammatically a statement he admits a gap in his past experience and implies a request for information. It is the implication that Breasley takes up

*Book of Martyrs*. Woodcuts. Old copy at home. Terrified me. Aged, six, seven. Far worse than the real thing. Spain. (p. 72)

Breasley supplies not only the requested information but goes on to a further act of proffering information about Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, about the effect produced by that book on him and a comparison of the terror produced by pictures on the imagination of a child and the less intense terror of

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<sup>8</sup> There is no single, firm taxonomy of speech acts. Austin (1962) in his original classification of illocutionary acts suggested five basic categories: verdictive, expositive, exercitive, behabitive, commissive. Searle (1976) modified these into the today more generally accepted: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) in their pioneering work on authentic discourse required 25 speech acts for the functions of classroom discourse, some of them being classroom specific. Much work in linguistic philosophy and applied linguistics of recent years has been concerned with description and classification of speech acts. Which acts actually occur in any given discourse is the result of an amalgam of context, topic, role-relations and intentions of participants. For the description of the speech acts of free conversation we have found the most useful basis to be that given by Gordon Wells et. al. (1979) in their "Adult-child discourse: outline of a model of analysis" and that has been used here, although only a limited number of their acts are present in the fragment analysed.

the Spanish reality of his manhood. This is a simple example, but it is similar to what happens to the ordinary person at all moments of the day when he is engaged in spoken interchange with others. He is constantly involved in linguistic exchanges in which utterances are multi-functional and often seem to imply more than one meaning. Some participants are more sensitive to multiple meanings than others, some are so sensitive to the possible meanings of a single or a cluster of speech acts with their accompanying paralinguistic cues that they are able to discern more meanings than the sender may have intended. One of the skills that we bring to novel reading is our skill in understanding both *the words* and *the functions* of the linguistic acts of spoken discourse, and it is this that Maureen Shields has in mind when she writes that "conducting a dialogue is a complicated procedure which requires skills beyond those of linguistic competence skills which include a grasp of human behaviour as well as a knowledge of the objective world, a pragmatics as well as a semantics and a syntax."

An analysis of part of one of the central sequences of Coëtminais may make this clearer. The fictional context of the exchange is that David, Diana and Anne have withdrawn after dinner to Diana's room so that David can examine her paintings. In earlier scenes Anne has told David of her disquiet at the relationship between Diana and Breasley which seems to her preposterous and totally unnatural. While they are sitting in the growing darkness of Diana's room Anne, rather too suddenly and obviously, blows the other two a goodnight kiss and leaves them alone. The following exchange comes immediately after Anne's exit. Dialogue is set out in one column, paralinguistic cues and extralinguistic information supplied by the narrator in a parallel column. Utterances/turns are numbered and letters used when there is more than one speech act in an utterance, i.e. when an utterance has more than one function. The dialogue is initiated by David (p. 81)

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | Are you tired?  |  |
| 2a | Not unless you are  | There was an awkward moment. She murmured, |
|    | b Henry gets nightmares. One of us always sleeps in his room. | He relaxed back in his chair.              |
| 3  | How on earth did he survive before you came?                  |  |

4 His last lady friend left  
him two years ago . . .  
He never talks about it.  
Mathilde says money.

5 So he managed on his  
own for a bit?

She took his point and  
answered it with a faint  
smile.

6a He didn't paint much  
last year.

b He really does need  
help in the studio now.

7 And I gather he's  
going to go on  
getting it?

It was more a statement  
than a question.  
She looked down.

8 Anne's been talking

Utterance 1 and 2a are grammatically question and answer, but in terms of discourse function, the opening utterances of an intimate exchange, their function is phatic, the creation of emotional contact through the use of neutral formulations. This discourse function is underlined by the awkward pause that follows, and because discourse does not tolerate long pauses Diana goes on (2b) to proffer information which has not been elicited but which is a kind of excuse for Anne's abrupt departure and also a reason for the extra bed in Henry's room. David marks a temporary withdrawal from a more intimate relationship by relaxing back into his chair and utterances 4 and 5 are a simple question and answer in grammatical terms, or in functional terms a request for and giving of information. They are the only single-function exchange in this small fragment. David's "So he managed on his own for a bit?" (5) is cast in the form of a question, but functionally, as the paralinguistic cue "she took his point" underlines, she takes it as more than a question and as referring to Henry's need of a woman, itself bound up now with his need of her. She answers the question "He didn't paint much last year" (6a), and goes on to partly answer and partly evade the implications about her presence with "He really does need help in the studio now" (6b). David's next utterance also has a double function one given by grammatical

form the other paralinguistically, tightly interwoven in speech but here made explicit (7) "And I gather he's going to go on getting it?" It was more a statement than a question. She looked down" Diana's response to this is not to answer it as a question but to counter it with a statement which shows that she recognizes that they are talking about her relations with Henry. Her last utterance given here "Anne's been talking" is a statement which would clearly be paralinguistically emotionally charged, and which does not answer the question but parries its implication.

In the above as in many other mimetic sequences exchange is going on at more than one level, in the requesting and giving of information and the making of statements but also as the negotiation of underlying propositions. Propositions are defined by Labov (1977, 51, 52) as recurrent communitions which "serve more than anything else to build the fabric of conversational interaction", they "represent the cognitive component . . . in one sense they may be defined as "what we are talking about" or "what is really being talked about". The underlying proposition being negotiated here concerns in the first place Diana's relationship to Henry. Later in the same sequence are concerned with Diana's relationship to herself and her possible relationship to David.

All the mimetic sequences of the novel are similarly skilful simulations of authentic discourse, and meaning is extracted from them through an exercise of readers' everyday understanding of how language functions in such discourse, and the ways in which certain speech acts with certain linguistic and paralinguistic forms in certain situations are ambivalent or are likely to mean one thing as much as or more than another. In the scenes between David and Diana that follow Fowles indicates the way such intimate exchanges take place through speech interspersed with silences and based on varying intentions. The exchanges of the two are compared to "the way hidden birds sing, spasmodically, secretly shifting position between utterances" (85). This spasmodic quality, this feeling for position, this conveying of only partly explicit meaning is a feature of all intimate conversation and to it we bring all our powers of elucidation. Yet it is not purely subjective, the discourse of the novel is as firmly founded upon normal discourse patterns and the way language functions in discourse as it is in the grammatical patterns of the language.

The penultimate sequence of the novel is another long passage from B as David leave Coëtminais to return to the world beyond (p. 99)

By midday, when he had driven a third or so of the two hundred and fifty miles to Paris, he had still not recovered. All but the automation who drove down the endless miles of *route nationale* remained at Coët

This opening passage of the last B sequence has echoes of the first announcement of David's arrival at Coëtminais. Once more place is embedded in action, but this time it is place and experience that have gone, not that are to come, and this time the repertoire of B, "the familiar... reference to the whole culture from which the text has emerged" is suffused by the intervening experience of Coëtminais. The long drive back to the familiar world, with the cryptic running over of the weasel on the way, is shot through and through with the experience of Coët.

The novel ends with the announcement of a third episode. It is very short and has its own tense which is consciously used to mark the ending of the experience of the novel, the ending of the reading, the breaking of the immediate text-reader interaction. The episode is announced "with the relentless face of the present tense" and a knowledge of survival. This final, brief episode, filling only half a page in fact leaves the reading experience open ended. An equivocal finish is typical of Flower's novels. It too is a deliberate provocation of reader involvement, and of varied response.

Reading, says Michal Glowinski (1979, 76)

is, in a sense, an everyday activity, consciously controlled only to rather a small degree, and in this respect it is very much like everyday speech which, though rule governed, does not require that these rules be brought to consciousness in daily linguistic practice, rather that they remain unconscious.

If indeed these two everyday activities do have affinities then competence in making sense of the structuring and transmission of meaning in the speech situation may well be one of the ways, beneath conscious control, in which readers extract significance from literature too. Indeed such competence is probably the most important element in that first convergence of the structure of the work and the structure of the interpretation of the work, of that first, fresh, vivid concretization which will always lie at the base of later concretizations.



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## RAZMATRANJA O "THE EBONY TOWER" JOHNA FOWLESA

Kako nastaje značenje u pisanom izrazu i u govoru, odnosno kako se odvija u složenoj interakciji između odašiljačelja, primaoca i konteksta, pitanje je koje zanima i lingviste i one koji proučavaju književnost. Ovaj članak nastoji povezati spoznaje do kojih su došli oni koji se bave analizom diskursa i oni koje zanima estetika recepcije. *The Ebony Tower* Johna Fowlesa razmatra se u svjetlu kategorija diskursa: epizode, sekvencije, izmjene i čina. Može se smatrati da je pripovijetka sastavljena od dviju međusobno isprepletenih epizoda i jedne kratke završne epizode. Epizode se uvelike razlikuju s obzirom na osobe, pripovjedačku tehniku i namjere "ilokucije". Razlikuju se također po mogućnosti dvosmislenosti pa prema tome i koliko zaokupljaju čitaoca i kakav im je estetski učinak. Budući da su i čitanje i pisanje svakodnevne djelatnosti, smatramo da sposobnost primanja strukture i prijenosa značenja u govoru može biti i jedan od načina kojim čitaoci nesvjesno shvaćaju značenje i pisanog teksta.