

Manfred Jahn¹

Composing Drama

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If you happen to hit on this document by chance, let me tell you what it is not – **it is not a how-to of creative drama writing**. If that is what you are looking for, try somewhere else and have a good day. Otherwise read on.

Recent years have seen the publication of several narratology-inspired studies on drama, some focusing on drama as literature and some focusing on actual performances. Composing Drama situates itself at the interface of these approaches, looking more closely (and speculatively) at the compositional processes that create an actual or virtual audiovisual realization. Composing Drama introduces itself by (1) setting up a simple model of audiovisual components, (2) reconceptualizing the superordinate dramatic narrator as a Dramatic Composition Device, and (3) defining external and internal modes of focalization as elements of composition. In its further sections, the essay uses Possible Worlds Theory and stack logic for an approach to staged dreams, visions, and memories, offers a test case analysis of the introductory monologue of *Richard III*, and concludes by making an attempt to integrate the concept of mindsets into existing theories of perspective structure.²

1. Components of performance

Let us start off by drawing up a list of performance-related components of drama. Evidently, performance data reaches the audience via two channels, one visual and one auditory: we see the set, the actors and the action, and we hear the speeches, music and other sounds. Sounds may be modified by volume; visual data may be modified by lighting. This certainly is a coarse and minimalist phenomenology; nevertheless, let us consider it sufficient for the time being and arrange the items as in Figure 1.³

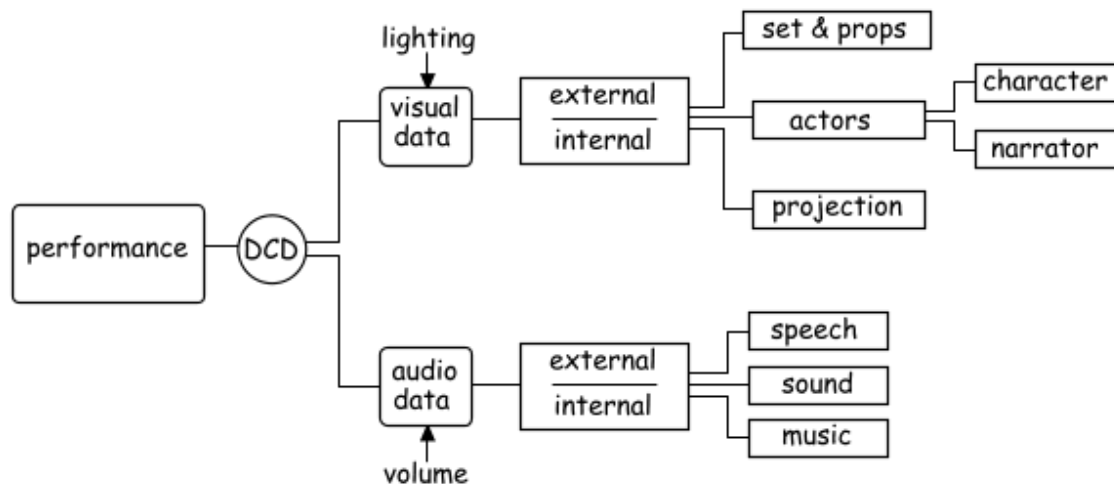


Fig. 1. Components of performance.

¹ Email; homepage www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/.

² See Korthals (2003), Munny (2008), and Weber (2017) for studies on drama as literature, and Horstmann (2018) for an exposition of 'theater narratology'. Arguments for the narrativity of drama have been presented in Richardson (1988), Jahn (2001), Nünning/Sommer (2008), Fludernik (2008), Weidle (2009), Brütsch (2017). Treating dreams and memories as possible worlds is indebted to Ryan (1991), Galbraith (1995), and McIntyre (2006). Accounts of perspective structure have been presented in Pfister (1974, 1988) and Nünning (2001).

³ See Burn (2013) for a more balanced and comprehensive inventory of film and drama components.

Most of the items in this model are self-explanatory except for maybe the following. A *projection* is the display of titles, graphics, slides, and film on a screen; *external visual data* is any visible physical object or action in the play's world; *internal visual data* is imaginary data, such as a character's dreams, visions, and memories. Similarly, *external sound* is any sound, speech or music coming from a physical source in the scene (a ringing telephone, an offstage battle); *internal sound* is any mentally heard sound (mood music, a character's heartbeat, an interior monologue).⁴ The DCD is the Dramatic Composition Device that collects and orchestrates all of that data.

The model primarily aims at capturing process-oriented units of performance and using these for small-scale (bottom-up) analyses. The smallest unit of analysis will be called a *slice*: a slice is the current configuration of audiovisual elements that exists unchanged over a relatively small period of time. Each time a change occurs – enter or exit character, sound on or off etc – a new slice is created. Logically, the performance as a whole is the sum or concatenation of its slices.

2. The Dramatic Composition Device

The lynchpin of the model presented in Figure 1 is the Dramatic Composition Device (DCD).⁵ The DCD is the creative intelligence that orchestrates a play's audiovisual elements for the purpose of generating an effective presentation. Targeting actual and possible audiences, the DCD can either be taken to be liberated from all historical and technical limitations, or bound by specific cultural and historical conditions. Hence the DCD is free to orchestrate an actual or hypothetical performance of a play by Shakespeare under any given condition, be it the historical Globe Theater in London or the current Globe Theatre in London, a theater in the round, a fully fitted picture-frame stage, or an entirely free-for-all brainstorm theater in the mind.⁶

The DCD is genderless and pronoun-friendly, but insofar as it is invested with intelligence and intention it must face the challenge of illicit anthropomorphization. However, intentionality is too important an aspect of dramatic composition to be let fall by the wayside. I am prepared to risk the anthropomorphism fallacy here in the hope that it has lost some of its original bite and reason, not unlike some other so-called fallacies.⁷ The intermittently popular *implied author* was never really bothered by it, nor was Pfister's *subject of the whole work* and his *authorially intended reception perspective*.⁸ More recently, there has been a tendency to reclaim intentionality in film studies, with at least one author going as far as to postulate a *narrative intelligence* and a *structuralizing intentionality* (Schweinitz 2007: 93). Let us follow this trend and explore the opportunities that it offers.

Right away there is this one: if the DCD is driven by intention and intelligence then we can treat it and the audience as communicating partners abiding by rules of pragmatic cooperation similar to those set down by Grice (1975) for conversational communication. The basic assumption of communicational cooperation is that the DCD and the audience share expectations about providing and receiving the right amount of relevant information. The DCD, in particular, expects us to know theatrical conventions, to suspend disbelief when encountering ghosts and speaking animals, and to be prepared to be amused by a comedy and moved by a tragedy. Generally, if the DCD provides us with all the information we need, when we need it, and in properly apportioned chunks, then intuitive comprehension is practically guaranteed even when we are flooded with massive amounts of multi-

⁴ The model emphasizes the perceptibility status of sound, temporarily sidelining the usual distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. This makes it easier to relate sound data to the perception model of focalization pursued here (section 3).

⁵ The DCD was actually anticipated by Fludernik (2008: 259) as an analogue of the FCD (Filmic Composition Device) introduced in my Guide to Narratological Film Analysis (now Jahn 2021b).

⁶ Lessing's 1769 concept of the *dramaturge* may be a remote forerunner of the DCD – a multitasking agent (in modern terms) entrusted with, among many other things, managing the arrangement of a theatrical performance.

⁷ Such as the New Critics' 'intentional' and 'affective' fallacies, the latter famously debunked by Stanley Fish (1970). Another candidate for reassessment is Barthes's proposition that fictional characters are nothing but "paper beings" (1966: 261).

⁸ The German terms are *Subjekt des Werkganzen* and *auktorial intendierte Rezeptionsperspektive*.

channel data. That said, effortless comprehension need not be the DCD's foremost concern, nor is it an absolute requirement on the part of the audience. We happily accept things like scrambled chronologies, fallible characters, unreliable narrators, and deceptive first impressions, all of which are staple techniques of dramatic composition. We can also rest assured that even a blatant exhibition of uncooperativeness will serve an overriding purpose, such as creating humor, suspense, surprise, and intellectual challenge. In film studies, theorists are now increasingly paying attention to what are called *mind-benders* and *perturbatory* films, and these epithets lend themselves to being applied to certain types of drama as well.⁹ Naturally, not anything goes (or does it?) – at any rate, it seems that while thresholds of acceptability are subject to change they continue to exist in one form or another.

A question of some narratological interest is whether the DCD could or should count as a play's primary narrative instance.¹⁰ My present inclination is to treat the DCD as a voiceless agency not *exclusively* defined as a narrating agent. On this basis, the performance is a compositional product rather than a kind of narrative discourse (the option favored by Fludernik 2008). That said, the DCD is also in manifest charge of selection and arrangement of narrative units, and it can deploy any number of speaking narrators, such as Gower in *Pericles* and Salieri in *Amadeus*. In other words, if a play's performance "tells a story" – as ordinary language folkloristically insists that it can – then it does so not by employing the DCD as a teller producing a narrative discourse but as an arranger and composer of narrative and non-narrative data.

3. Focalization

The following is an attempt to import the present author's theory of constructivist focalization into the project of Composing Drama. Two alternate definitions were originally envisaged in Genette's (1980, 1988) discussion of point of view in fiction, one based on modes of perception and the other on restrictions of information and knowledge. Constructivist focalization leans toward the perception-oriented variant and is indebted mainly to Bal's theory of focalizers and Nünning's constructivist take on perspective.¹¹

3.1. Key concepts

Focalization theory addresses the ways and means of presenting data from the point of view of *focalizers*. The general focalization question is *Who perceives what from which point of view*. Importantly, we allow the term perception to include *offline perception* (ie visions, dreams, and memories) in addition to *online perception* (ie ordinary perception).¹² A play's primary focalizer is the DCD: it sees and hears everything that unfolds in the here-and-now of the play's actual or virtual performance. At any point in time, the DCD can approximate, shift to, or adopt the vision or audition of two types of secondary focalizers: reflectors and narrators. A reflector is a character whose current perception affects the play's data; a *narrator-focalizer* is the teller of a narrative that is illustrated on stage. A play can only have one primary focalizer (one DCD), but the DCD can *delegate* focalization to any number of reflectors and narrator-focalizers. Normally, however, only one focalizer is functionally active at any one point in time.

It is a baseline axiom of constructivism that perception always involves *perceiving X as Y*.¹³ In this handy formula, X is some sensory input and Y is the interpretation of that input. Crucially, a focalizer's interpretation of X depends on his or her *mindset* – a set of mental dispositions including state of

⁹ The term *perturbatory film* is used in Schlickers/Toro (2018). Possible candidates for mind-bender plays include Caryl Churchill, *The Skriker*, Sarah Kane, *4.48: Psychosis*, Tim Etchells, *Club of No Regrets*, further examples are discussed in Fludernik (2008), Claycomb (2013) and Nünning/Schwanecke (2015).

¹⁰ I suggested such a ghostly super-narrator, not without misgivings, in Jahn (2001: 674).

¹¹ These are references to Bal (1991) and Nünning (2001). A more detailed exposition of constructivist focalization can be found in Jahn (2021a) and Jahn (2021b).

¹² The terms *online/offline perception* were coined by Bickerton (1995).

¹³ See Church (2000) on the philosophical underpinnings of "seeing-as".

mind, attitude, interest, attention, knowledge, preferences, norms and values, interpretive strategies, ideological orientation, and worldview.¹⁴ In order to understand, re-create, or mentally simulate somebody's seeing X as Y we need to have access to, or at least a theory of, the perceiver's mindset. Generally, if the focalizer is a reflector-character we are invited to co-experience his or her view of the world and assume an empathetical (though not necessarily uncritical) state of mind. This temporary adoption of somebody else's point of view is referred to as *transposition* or *recentering*.

On occasion, a single mindset may be attributed to a group of people, creating a case of *collective focalization* (classically, the chorus in Greek drama; see Palmer (2010) on the related concept of *social mind*). For embedded scenarios, such as plays within plays, terms like first-, second-, and n-order focalizers suggest themselves.

3.2. Shades of focalization

There are two basic types of focalization: *external* and *internal*. The initial definitions are straightforward: an external focalization restricts the presentation to things and events in the play's physical world, ie anything that might be visible or audible to a hypothetical camera plus audio recorder. Internal focalization, by contrast, looks into other people's minds, presents focalizers in acts of perceiving X as Y, or even stages the subjective perception of focalizers directly.¹⁵

On closer inspection, the two categories prove to be too rigid; as a matter of fact, it seems a better idea to draw up a continuous scale on which *externality* and *internality* are mapped as non-exclusive qualities.¹⁶ Various intermediate types may then be placed on a gradient of increasing internality reading from left to right (or increasing externality reading from right to left). Five types plus corresponding images are listed in Figure 2; many more cases are thinkable. Due to lack of resources, pictures 4 and 5 had to be borrowed from other media; nevertheless, I trust the examples serve to establish the overall rationale of the scale and to suggest some criterial features. For the moment, I will be focusing on visual data.

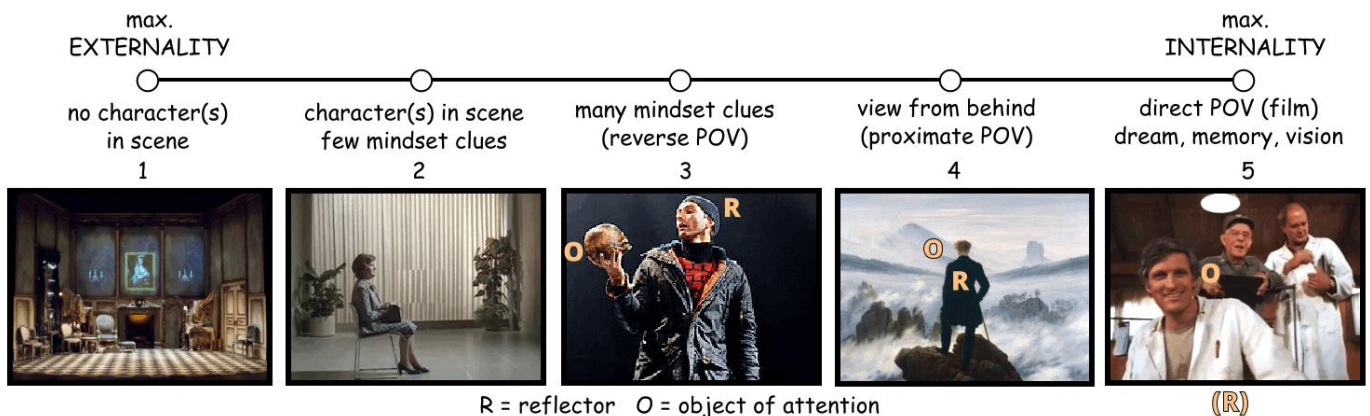


Fig. 2. A scale of visual focalizations.¹⁷

Picture 1, the view of the Victorian "dressing room" set, is a clear case of external focalization, which is plainly due to the fact that there are no characters in the scene that might serve as reflector figures or

¹⁴ See Pfister (1988: 58) and Nünning (2001: 211) for the concept of preconditioning systems, Jahn (2021b: 4.2.2) for a mental experiment on seeing X as Y. Various attempts have been made to isolate individual point-of-view categories based on epistemic, perceptual, ideological, and spatiotemporal facets (eg Schmid 2010: ch III.2). However, since these are all closely interconnected, no such categories will be used here.

¹⁵ Subjectivity will be treated as a close correlate of *internality*. Note that no external view is ever "objective" because the presentation is already conditioned by the DCD's focus of attention and mindset. Munny (2008: ch3.3.2) makes a similar point about a play's alleged "absoluteness".

¹⁶ Scales of this type were made popular by Stanzel (1984 [1979]) and Lanser (1981).

¹⁷ Sources: (1) *Great Expectations* (Neptune Theatre 2015); (2) Alan Bennett, *A Woman of No Importance* (1982); (3) David Tennant as Hamlet (RSC 2008); (4) Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818); (5) *MASH* episode 158 (1978).

narrators. Following our constructivist orientation, we associate external focalization with the DCD's perception, which it shares with the audience. Let us note, incidentally, that the stage is an arranged spatial frame which has inherent areas of central and peripheral focal attention.

Once there are characters present, as in pictures 2 to 5, we have to consider what is known about their mindsets and to what extent these mindsets might affect, color, or shape the presentation. On the face of it, picture 2 presents an external view of an elderly lady sitting in a waiting room. Yet, as we all know, a person's outward appearance can be indicative of a mindset. In this case, it is Miss Scofield's stiffly upright posture and her firm grip on her handbag that might indicate that she is a no-nonsense type of person to deal with. Of course, this is only a first and perhaps mistaken hypothesis – except that it happens to be fully confirmed in the later course of events and thus primes our expectations perfectly correctly. Theorizing other minds, error-prone as the process often is, is an important social competence in real life, and possibly even more so in drama where the DCD expects us to actively exercise it as part of the cooperative contract.¹⁸ In Miss Scofield's case, a small amount of character-based subjectivity can be seen to faintly color the externality of the scene. However, at this point we know too little about her mindset to be able to actually share her perception. Miss Scofield is not a reflector yet – as a matter of fact, she will assume the role of a narrator later.

However, Hamlet in scene 3 is a reflector. Looking at the former court jester's skull, he reflects on the transmutability of time and the meaninglessness of life. As viewers we see that he sees X (Yorick's skull) as Y (a symbol of transitoriness) and we are aware of the mood that makes him see it so. Knowing his state of mind, we can co-experience what it is like to be in his unenviable situation. The *reverse point of view* angle from which we are able to observe both him and the object of his attention makes it possible for us to simulate the experience even in witnessing it from the different position of our seats. Once we adopt the reflector's mindset the object of attention can be seen with virtually different eyes.

Picture 4 is Caspar David Friedrich's 1818 painting of a *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. If this were a scene in a play, the character would be a reflector shown from behind (a *Rückenfigur* in German). We see what he sees from an almost identical point of view (a *proximate* point of view, an over-the-shoulder shot in film theory). Can we also theorize the wanderer's mind? We absolutely can, and this is why this is much more than just an image of a figure in front of a fogscape. Indeed, the picture invites us to share not only the wanderer's view but also his romantic mindset – that elusive "natural piety" that the poet Wordsworth famously wanted his life to be ruled by. On the scale of internality, this scene is farther advanced than Richard's. Unfortunately, the stage potential of the *Rückenfigur* is limited because it denies us the view of the reflector's face.

Finally, in the filmic POV shot shown in picture 5, the reflector is a hospital patient listening to the doctor telling him that his operation was successful. We do not see the reflector because the camera is virtually located inside his head, but the film audience sees more or less exactly what he sees. POV shots like this cannot be easily replicated on the theatrical stage other than in the form of a filmic projection. However, what can be presented in the mode of direct internal focalization is a reflector's offline perception (vision or dream), a subject that I will take up in a section on "offline worlds".

3.4. External and internal audio

As far as perception parameters are concerned, audio and visual data are very similar. Sound is perceived from a point of audition, focused on an object of attention, and constructivist in nature because one hears X as Y. Like visual data, audio data can be externally or internally focalized in graded intensities. Sound is external as long as it is linked to a physical source in the scene; it becomes internal and subjective when we recognize it as playing in a character's head and inaudible to anyone else but the DCD and us.¹⁹ A typical example of internal audio would be a reflector's interior

¹⁸ See Zunshine (2006, 2012) on the theory now generally known as *Theory of Mind* (ToM).

¹⁹ The perceptibility condition is indebted to Bal's theory of perceptible and imperceptible focalizeds [sic] (Bal 1991: 97).

monologue or a persistently ringing tinnitus (medically defined as a sound without an external cause).²⁰

To assess the impact of internal audio data, reconsider the waiting-room scene in picture 2 of Figure 3. Suppose we can hear a voice-over recording of Miss Scofield rehearsing her shopping list. Because we can recognize this as something heard in her head we will now be prepared to see the whole scene as colored by her mindset.

For another test case reconsider scene 1 of Figure 3 and imagine it to be overlaid by a narratorial voice-over speaking the following text:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (Dickens, beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities*)

The speaker cites an array of dissonant worldviews without embracing any of them. Despite being immediately effaced, each mindset will exert a fleeting pull on the audience, with everybody tentatively trying to see X (the set) in light of mindset Y. In the final analysis it is the Dickensian narrator's own mindset that overrides and ridicules all quoted mindsets.

3.5. Offline worlds

Sitting in our seats in the theater auditorium we are ontologically (existentially) located in the here-and-now of what in Ryan's (1991) Possible Worlds Theory is referred to as the *actual world* (AW). When the curtain rises we see actors enacting a story that takes place in a separate here-and-now, the here-and-now of the play's story-world, which (slightly deviating from Ryan's terminology) we term a *possible actual world* (PAW).²¹ To the PAW several *alternate possible worlds* (APWs) may aggregate. Many types of APWs are listed in Ryan's system (including knowledge worlds, wish worlds etc) but here we are going to focus on those that lend themselves to being enacted on stage, namely dreams, memories, and visions.

A many-worlds setup can be modelled as a *stack* of elements (borrowing a technical term from computer science). A stack is either empty or contains any number of elements. Only two operations are allowed: a *push* adds an element to the top of the stack, and a *pop* removes the top element (for this reason stacks are also called LIFO – last in, first out – stacks). Despite their simple design, stacks have a number of most welcome properties – they are process-oriented (pushes and pops), they have an inbuilt focus (the topmost element), and they have a natural hierarchy (each element depends on the prior, underlying element). In computing, stacked data structures are widely used in picture editing programs (such as Photoshop) and geographic information systems (GIS), where *layers* of pictorial presentation allow modifiers such as blends, filters, and transparencies.²² In the following, we will use stacks to describe a viewer's task of keeping track of the ontological layers of a performance.²³ Basically, a new world becomes visible when it is pushed on the stack, and a prior world becomes visible (again) when the top world pops off the stack. If blending effects or filters are used several worlds may be visible or partly visible at the same time. At the beginning of a performance, the possible actual world of the play's action is pushed onto the stack, overlaying the actual world, as in

²⁰ If neither a reflector nor a narrator is present, a tinnitus sound could be attributed to a *hypothetical focalizer* (Herman 2002: 309-30), an *empty center* (Fludernik 1996: ch5.2), or even, intriguingly, the DCD.

²¹ This replaces Ryan's original *textual actual world* (TAW); the intention is to neutralize the original term's text-centeredness.

²² The current version of Photoshop permits 25 types of layer blending and 100 degrees of transparency; typical GIS maps have 8-12 layers.

²³ For the ontological stack model see Ryan (1991: ch9), Galbraith (1995), and McIntyre (2006: ch4.5).

the scenario shown as option A in Figure 3. At the end of the performance (or when it is interrupted for an interval) the fictional world layers pop off the stack, returning us to the level of our actual world.

Stacks come into their own when they are used to model the alternate possible worlds of dreams, visions, and memories. In Figure 3, each square represents a world. The actual world of our reality always constitutes the primary base layer, and a play's fictional worlds are pushed on top in ordered and hierarchical sequence. The general rule of stack visibility ensures that the top layer has the audience's focus of attention, but, as stated above, lower-level worlds may remain or become visible through transparency and/or blending.

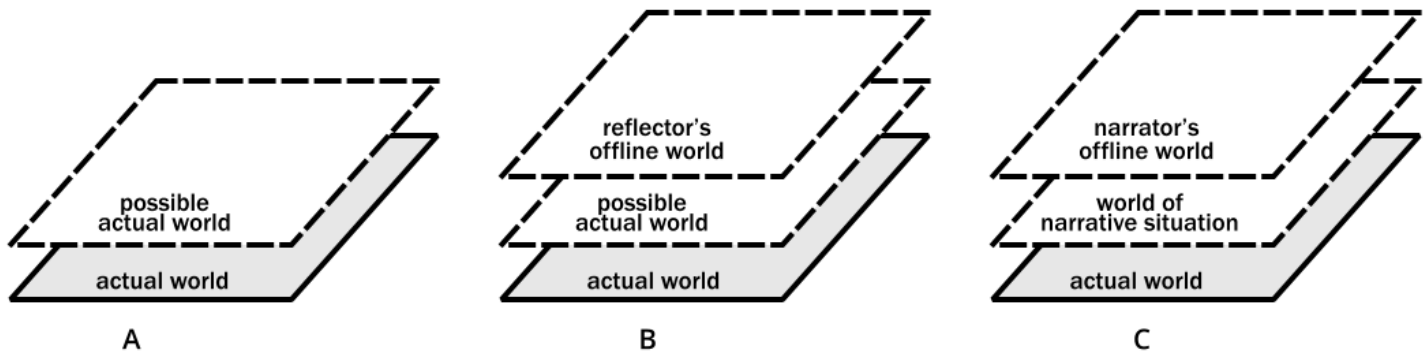


Fig. 3. Stacked worlds.

In Figure 3, stack A shows the standard two-worlds ontology that defines the large majority of plays. Once a possible actual world overlays the actual world it gets the viewers' primary attention, helped by the fact that the lights on the actual world of the auditorium are usually dimmed. Narrators and characters may freely *talk* about their memories and dreams, but as long as these are not enacted on stage, the stack retains its simple, two-worlds structure.

Stack B has a reflector's dreams, memories, and visions appear as observable alternate possible worlds. The following list includes some well-known cases.

- *Richard III* 5.1. Both Richard and Richmond fall asleep in their battle tents. In his dream, Richard is cursed by the ghosts of his victims; in Richmond's dream, they offer encouragement and promise victory.
- John Priestley, *Time and the Conways*. The whole of Act 2 is Kay's vision of the future downfall of the Conway family. The transition from the fictional actual world to the reflector's offline world is not clearly signaled until Act 3, which resumes the original story line. First-time viewers have to construe the stack retroactively, while second-time viewers will remember that Act 2 is Kay's offline world.
- Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*. Willy Loman's memories ("*scenes from the past*") and hallucinations ("*imaginings*") are presented as psychologically distorted offline worlds that blend with the events happening in the fictional actual world. Occasionally, Willy audibly responds to a hallucinatory conversation, to the consternation of his actual world interlocutors.
- Gerhart Hauptmann, *Hannele*. A dying girl's religious hallucinations blend with events taking place in the fictional actual world.

Let us turn to stack configuration C, which uses a narrator as a mediating agent. This narrator's narrative situation is located in the here-and-now of a possible actual world layer of its own, and the story world proper is created as an illustration of the narrator's offline vision. Most common is a first-person (homodiegetic) narrative situation with the offline world staging recalled episodes of the narrator's personal experience, as opposed to the *reflectorial* memory worlds that are used in stacks of

type B.²⁴ In the rarer case of a third-person (heterodiegetic) narrative situation (the *Pericles* example, below), the narrator is not present as a character of the offline world. Here are the usual suspects:

- Tennessee Williams, *Glass Menagerie*. At the beginning, Tom tells the audience that "the play is memory" and that he is "the narrator . . . and also a character in it" (actually, a concise definition of first-person narration). Interestingly, Tom was not always a direct witness to what happened in the past: for instance, the central "gentleman caller" scene of Act 2 seems to be an imaginary reconstruction.
- Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus*. Antonio Salieri tells the story of how he observed Mozart's Vienna career (1781-90) and finally managed to destroy ("assassinate") the musical genius ("the voice of God" in Salieri's terms). The play's scenes illustrate the narrator's narrative, at the end of which, returning to the current (1823) Vienna setting of the narrative situation, Salieri tries to commit suicide, but fails.
- Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*. Narrator Carr (unlike Tom and Salieri, above) is unaware of the audience, which indicates that the layer of his narrative situation fully occludes the underlying layer of the actual world. Carr creates various draft versions of a memoir narrative about his meetings with Joyce, Lenin, and Tzara in 1919, and the respective episodes are illustrated on stage despite being severely distorted by the narrator's faulty recollections and editorial revisions.
- Shakespeare, *Pericles*. Gower is a heterodiegetic narrator, that is, he has no active role in the play's PAW. Introducing setting and characters in a prologue, he intermittently resurfaces to pass a moral comment or a meta-theatrical reflection.²⁵ Conceivably, the play's story can be presented as Gower's offline vision (ie stack configuration C), or indeed as an independent PAW accompanied by his occasional interruptions.

The stack patterns of drama are not always as simple and clear-cut as shown in Figure 3. I will briefly mention some common complications.

1. Complexity and decay. As Ryan points out, any possible world can provide the base ground for embedded worlds. Stacks can grow to any size, and unlimited recursion (*mise en abyme*) is equally possible. Typical scenarios include plays within plays (*Hamlet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*) or one can just imagine a reflector telling a story in which the identical story is quoted. Cognitively, these stacks may only remain manageable because the top layer tends to occlude the lower layers (except when transparency or blending is used). If the top layer world is maintained for any length of time, there is a tendency for the lower layers to "decay" and gradually fade from the viewers' awareness until "re-instantiated" by a pop or a transparency effect.²⁶
2. Fragments and extrapolations. Some offline reflector worlds are fragmentary and brief snapshots, while others are more extended extrapolations. Offline worlds often appear more detailed than is plausible given the focalizer's limitations, and may allow a distanced analysis even though they are categorized as imaginary products only. Salieri's memory world, for instance, is illustrated faithfully in the presentation of the past scenes, not least because Salieri claims full directorial control over the presentation. Nevertheless, it is not at all difficult to recognize the narrator's unreliability.²⁷
3. Dreams. Reflector-based dreams are offline perceptions as illustrated by stack pattern B. But note that what is categorized as offline perception by the viewer is experienced as online perception by the dreamer, a difference in awareness that stands in the way of perfect recentering. A more

²⁴ Regarding memory worlds, note that *narrating-I* and *experiencing-I* (in the case of first-person narration), and *present Self* and *past Self* (in the case of reflectorial recollection) may work on markedly different mindsets. See Jahn (2021a: 3.2.29) for a discussion of similar scenarios in fiction.

²⁵ See Richardson (1988: 198), Jahn (2001: 571), Nünning/Sommer (2008: 342), Weidle (2009: 228-30) for comments on Gower's narratorial functions.

²⁶ See McIntyre (2006: 4.5.4).

²⁷ See Nünning/Schwanecke (2015) for an analysis of unreliability in drama.

difficult complication arises if neither a reflector nor a narrator is available as the subject of a scenically enacted dream. Would the dream world have to be attributed to the DCD as the sole remaining focalizer? I am not sure, but examples that come to mind are Strindberg's *Dream Play*, surrealist and expressionist plays, and some Theater of the Absurd (Jarry, *King Ubu*; Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*).

4. A test case: *Richard III*

For a practical exercise, let us take a look at the beginning of *Richard III* and see how it might lend itself to being complemented by further auditory and visual data.

Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by this son of York,
 And all the clouds that loured upon our house
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
 5 Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
 Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
 Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
 Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
 Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front;
 10 And now, instead of mounting barbèd steeds
 To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
 He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
 To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
 But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
 15 Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
 I, that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
 I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 20 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them –
 Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
 25 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to see my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity.
 And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 30 I am determinèd to prove a villain

Of course, it has to be stressed that there is no actual need for embellishing this slice of the play because the speech can be rendered wholly effectively all on its own, and has been so rendered for hundreds of years. For the sake of experiment, let us try some composition options anyway and see where they take us.

First of all, we need to decide whether we want Richard to be aware of the audience, and whether his speech is to be presented as a physically perceptible event, ie as externally focalized by the DCD. Even if focalized in this manner, Richard literally speaks his mind, lays open his innermost thoughts, reveals the central norms and values of his mindset, complete with secret plans and future goals. Presumably, his mental states and processes are also mirrored in his face and body, so even if we, along with the DCD, perceive Richard's speech externally, the scene is already loaded with a high degree of internality. Nevertheless, we could markedly increase this slice's degree of internal focalization by allowing Richard to utter the theatrical equivalent of an interior monologue. Even if spoken out loud by convention, an interior monologue is not a physical event of the possible actual world but a physically *imperceptible* expression of the character's mind. With Richard assuming the role of a reflector the

focalization becomes proximately internal – proximately because Richard's face and body can still be seen and analyzed as physical objects. What we gain in pursuing a more pronounced internality option is the audience's close attachment to, possibly even empathy with, Richard's warped mind; what we might lose is the text's possible addressee-oriented rhetoric.

Suppose Richard is indeed talking to himself, reminding himself of the victory that has reinstated Edward IV ("this son of York" 2) and of the exuberant spirit that now rules the court. Conceivably, Richard could be observing actual festivities taking place somewhere upstage, a friendly social gathering perhaps, or a dance, as hinted at in his allusion to "merry meetings" and "delightful measures" (7-8). A view-from-behind would support this, except for the downside mentioned – we would be unable to read the expression on his face, and the actor would be robbed of the chance of making the most of it. Instead, then, that dance in the background could be something that Richard sees in his mind's eye, an offline perception. To realize this, the dance could be choreographed and lighted so as to suggest not a real but an imagined scene. The dancers could act like puppets guided by the reflector's recall and description, not too far-fetched an idea because it would relate to Richard's incipient role as a master manipulator. The music, too, could sound subjectively filtered.

Whichever subjectivity effect is employed, everything must clearly be handled extremely subtly. Care must also be taken to support the text's marked progression. Most striking, of course, is the reversal introduced by Richard's *but* in line 14, but, actually, the transition from festive communal mood to addled personal worldview is a gradual modulation that starts slightly earlier, with the text's allusion to War's *capering* in "a lady's chamber/To the lascivious pleasing of a lute" (12-13), a progression that could be mimicked both choreographically and musically.

Interestingly, the text's development is directly related to contrary impulses inherent in Richard's mindset. There are two conflicting components informing perception as well as language depending on which one gets the upper hand. On the rare occasion of his social consciousness coming forward, Richard is able to appreciate his family's good fortune and accept the courtly celebrations as natural and "delightful". In the still eminently practical terms of Transactional Analysis (TA) (Berne 1973; Harris 1975), the 'life position' of his public Self is I'M OK – YOU'RE OK: we have won a battle; times are good; let's celebrate. In contrast, his secret and stronger life position is I'M NOT OK – YOU'RE NOT OK: I am physically and mentally deformed; nobody loves me; you and your celebrations are morally despicable. Many variations on these themes can be detected not only in the passage in hand but also in the play's overall development. Richard's Parent and Child egos (again employing the terms of TA) have contaminated the rational, and responsible Adult ego that should by rights be in control, but isn't. Eventually, the contrary impulses of Richard's Parent and Child come to a head in V.3 with Richard exclaiming:

Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
Oh, no. Alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.

Virtually none of the tentative audiovisual orchestration suggested above is *implied* by the text, in any strict sense of the word – there is no implied author telling us how to compose the scene. There is only one sensible principle ruling the relation between text and audiovisual arrangement – that the latter must be consistent and compatible with the former. The positive contention is that Composing Drama, in both virtual and actual practice, is likely to open new pathways to insight and meaning.

5. Mindsets and perspective structure

In drama, as in real life, we often find ourselves in a position of having to compare perceptions and assess degrees of difference or convergence. Comparing the percepts of two observers watching the same scene, a comparative judgment can range from perfect consonance to total dissonance. In the case of consonance, a thing, person or event X is perceived identically (or near identically) by two observers, both seeing X as Y. In the case of dissonance, a thing, person or event X is perceived

differently by two observers, one seeing X as Y and the other seeing X as Z. Obviously, congruence may be *partial* only, percepts may *count as* identical or non-identical given a certain level of abstraction, differences may be small or big, relevant or irrelevant to a question in hand. In order to judge a focalizer's perception we need to compare it to another agent's perception of, preferably, the same thing, including our own and the DCD's. Even if the "same thing" has not happened yet we may be able to predict how somebody will perceive X if we have a passable grasp of the person's mindset

The players in the game of dramatic focalization are the DCD, the audience, the narrators (if any), and the reflectors. In the unlikely case of maximal consonance, all players have an identical mindset and see X as Y. In the maximally dissonant case all players have different mindsets and see X differently. Specifically, the play may juxtapose DCD vs narrator, DCD vs character, narrator vs character, and character vs character. Adding the audience to the equation, we can also anticipate scenarios where the play pitches the audience vs the DCD. Although the principle of cooperation makes it natural to expect a high degree of consonance between these two communicants, it is nevertheless prudent to treat the viewers as free agents and allow them their own interpretation of what they are seeing, or have seen. Of course, the always crucial question is whether one's seeing-as interpretation of the world, fictional or real, is correct or distorted, whether it gets one through in life, and whether it agrees with other people's perceptions and rules of behavior. It is a common experience to come across views that strike one as unusual or even pathological at first glance, only to turn out valid and enlightening in the long run or given special circumstances. In plays, in particular, we often enough find ourselves confronted by strange worldviews that we can try on for size by transposing to a focalizer's point of view, on the speculative notion that it might open our minds to something new and worthwhile. It may be our only chance to learn how a murderer's and a genius's minds tick. And naturally we can struggle with a focalizer's worldview and ultimately decide to reject it, following what we believe to be more valid preferences of our own.

In the long run, mindsets may prove right, wrong, or undecidable. For a global analysis of a play's mindsets, Pfister's theory of *perspective structure* provides the logical point of departure (Pfister 1974, 1988: ch3.5). His detailed study of perspective structures in Jacobean and Elizabethan comedies has been taken up and expanded in several more recent accounts, such as Nünning (2001), Eder (2008: ch12), Hartner (2012), and Böhm (2016). Above all, it is the contrasts, correspondences, and strategies of consolidation that prove to be of persistent interest. For instance, a play's perspectives may all be maximally consonant as described above or boil down to a more or less rhetorical question of true or false, good or evil, fallible or trustworthy, all in the service of producing a *closed* perspectival system (Pfister cites *Twelfth Night* and *Tartuffe*; to which we can add the category of political or ideological propaganda play). If, on the other hand, the perspectives cancel each other out, or remain equally valid or invalid, then the resulting state of affairs is likely to be one of *open polyperspectivity* (as in *The Tempest* and, presumably, many modern plays). Analyses along these lines could be complemented by linking them to the dynamic mindset setups explored in this essay. A detailed investigation of progressive mindset construction, revision, and refinement would seem to outline a rather promising project. Why don't we put it on the to-do list.

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