REMEMBERING AND NARRATING IN BORGES’ “FUNES THE MEMORIOUS”

AND CAMUS’ THE STRANGER

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In *The Stranger*, a novel by Albert Camus, and in “Funes the Memorious,” a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, the homodiegetic narrators have a significant effect on the referential aspect of their personal experiences. Chronologically these remembered experiences are positioned before the moment when they are narrated. The act of remembering is thus a form of subsequent narration. In both texts, memory is a project rather than an object because it is recounted and not found. In the sense that it is told, memory is necessarily a creative act and thus not faultless because the story of an experience is not the experience itself. The memories in *The Stranger* and in “Funes the Memorious” are not reconstituted but narrated. The peculiarity of the two texts lies in the fact that the narrators take an external position when describing their own past, emphasizing the imperfect aspect of the narrators’ memory. With a narratological approach to the texts and a Sartrean interpretation of memory, I study the effects of focalization on the act of remembering. By explaining the relationship between focalization, memory and the narratee, I show that the act of remembering is not a repetition of past events or experiences but rather an inventive process that occurs always in the present. I argue that external focalization is a more authentic way to tell the story of a past experience because it emphasizes the fact that memory is always in the process of being made and therefore uncertain and incomplete even to the individual remembering.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ficciones (1944), a collection of short stories by Jorge Luis Borges, can reasonably and interestingly be compared to works from other countries or in other languages. This is evidenced by French theorists who have often been interested in the works by the Argentine author. Borges’s work frequently references texts written in several languages by authors from all around the world. In “Funes the Memorious” (1942), a Spanish-language short story, there are references to Nietzsche, ancient Latin texts, Locke, Babylon, London, New York, and ancient Egypt. Funes himself “had learned English, French, Portuguese, Latin” (115). The scope of his short stories makes them useful texts for comparative as well as interdisciplinary analysis.

The undisputed popularity of the novel The Stranger (1942) by Albert Camus, a French contemporary of Borges, makes it valuable for literary comparison. Therefore, in

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1 Trans. by Anthony Kerrigan [1963].
2 In the preface to The Order of Things Michel Foucault begins by noting that “this book first arose out of a passage in [Jorge Luis] Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other” (xv). He calls the “age” as well as the “geography” in the South American’s work something that is ours even though both the time and the place of Borges’s writing were clearly distinct from that of the French philosopher. Borges name can notably also be found in the bibliography of Narrative Discourse by Gérard Genette, the principal theoretical work of this analysis.
3 “Funes era un precursor a los superhombres, “un Zarathustra cimarrón y vernáculo”” (94).
4 The narrator loaned books in Latin to Funes (95).
5 “Locke, en el siglo XVII, postuló (y reprobó) un idioma imposible” (96).
6 Babilonia, Londres y Nueva York han abrumado con feroz esplendor la imaginación de los hombres” (96).
7 “[Funes] me pareció monumental como el bronce, más antiguo que Egipto, anterior a las profecías y a las pirámides” (96).
8 “Había aprendido sin esfuerzo el inglés, el francés, el portugués, el latín” (96).
9 Trans. by Stuart Gilbert [1954].
an effort to make a new link between both the particularity of the narration in Camus’s novel and the lucid commentary of the narrator in the Borgesian short story “Funes the Memorious,” the analysis of these texts is restricted to the aspects which pertain to the act of remembering as it presents itself in narrative form.

With a narratological approach to the texts and a phenomenological description of memory, I explain the effects of perspective on the act of recounting the past in “Funes the Memorious” and *The Stranger*. By working out the relationship between perspective, memory and the other, I show that the act of remembering is not a repetition of past events or experiences but rather an inventive process that occurs in the present.

“Funes the Memorious” is about a boy who remembers everything, that is to say that he has a perfect memory. He always knows the time because he remembers every second and every minute that has preceded the present. He has distinct memories of every time that he has remembered something. The narrator, however, does not have a perfect memory, even though he is telling the story of his interaction with someone who does. He is simply someone who had the opportunity to meet Funes. One cannot conclude from the text that the narrator knew him well, but he did meet him and thus has a past experience to recount.

The narrative begins with what the narrator “remembers,” introducing Funes as “a precursor to Zarathustra” (107).¹⁰ Then, he tells of his first encounter with Funes. He learnt of Funes’s ability after his cousin asked, “what’s the time, Ireneo?” to which

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¹⁰“Funes era un precursor de los superhombres, un Zarathustra cimarrón y vernáculo” (94).
Funes replied: “In ten minutes it will be eight o’clock” (108). All of this is the precursor to the main event of the story: a particular dialogue with Ireneo Funes. The narrator went to retrieve some Latin books he had lent to Funes. The scene takes place at Funes’ home. Recounting this part of the story is admittedly not easy for the narrator. He hypothesizes about how the memory of this nineteen-year-old must have worked. The narrative ends with a description of the face of Funes on that night and the realization that he will remember the conversation forever. The last sentence reads: “Ireneo Funes died in 1889, of a pulmonary congestion” (115).

The story serves as an example of the narrator presenting his memory in narrative form. So, the story of Funes is told subsequently by a narrator who was part of the story he is recounting. The narrator does not claim that his account of the events is exact. This contrast between the narrator and the central character highlights certain fundamental characteristics of recounting the past. The aspect of the story that is most relevant to this analysis lies not in the qualities of Funes and his perfect memory but rather in the fact that the narrative is told by another character that is distinctly different.

_The Stranger_ is divided into two parts. The first part contains six chapters. The first deals with the funeral of the narrator’s mother. By the end of the sixth chapter, Meursault, the main character and the narrator, has killed an Arab on a sunny beach. The chapters between these two deaths are about Meursault’s social interactions, mostly with his new girlfriend Marie and his new friend Raymond. The second part of the novel has five chapters, during all of which Meursault is in prison. In this part, the

11 “¿Qué hora son Ireneo? Sin consultar el cielo, sin detenerse, el otro respondió: Faltan cuatro minutos para las ocho” (95).
12 “Ireneo Funes murió en 1889, de una congestión pulmonar” (95).
story moves from preparing for the criminal defense to the trial itself and eventually the verdict at the end of chapter 4. In the fifth chapter, he reflects on the guilty verdict in his prison cell.

In The Stranger, several events in Meursault’s life are told in Part I and then referenced or retold in Part II in the context of criminal proceedings. Since the only way to relay past events to others is to tell them in narrative form, that is what happens in the courtroom. In the second part of The Stranger, Meursault is forced to listen to what other characters remember. They have their own versions of events that he also witnessed or of which he was directly a part. Even when he does not explicitly disagree with the accounts of others, they sometimes incite reactions in Meursault that are “strange” even to him. His reactions at the trial emphasize the possibility of variation and the potential for disagreement when recounting the past. The way in which these events are recounted is essential to how Meursault relates to his own past since he is the narrator. Events such as his mother’s funeral and a murder he committed are narrated by the same narrator as the accounts of other people at the trial. How does this narrator conceptualize himself vis-à-vis his own past? Meursault’s relationship to past events differs significantly from that of the others at the trial. It is exactly that which estranges him from the others.

The narrators in both texts are outside of the experience of the past itself. This

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13 When Marie is on the stand being questioned by the prosecution, she expresses her disagreement, but Meursault only indirectly narrates what she said: “He’d got it all wrong, she said; it wasn’t a bit like that really, he’d bullied her into saying the opposite of what she meant. She knew me very well, and she was sure I hadn’t done anything really wrong — and so on” (118). She was the one that was sure he hadn’t done anything. He does not take her side when narrating, even though the event of her defending him was in his interest.

14 It is the account of the director at the home where his mother was that makes Meursault feel as he “hadn’t for ages.” He continues, “I had a foolish desire to burst into tears. For the first time I realized how all these people loathed me” (112).
distance between the present act of recounting and the past act of experiencing emphasizes the present aspect of memory. Recounting one’s past from a perspective that accounts for the difference between present narrating self and past experiencing self might be seen as (or at least an attempt at) a more authentic way to relay the past to others. Such a perspective would emphasize the fact that memory is always in the process of being made and therefore uncertain and incomplete even to the individual doing the remembering. This would mean that a narrator remembering a past event, even if he was part of the story he is recounting, would have no intrinsic authority over what is being told. The story is told by a testimonial narrator leaving the narrative void of an internal perspective that might have explained what Funes’s personal experience of his perfect memory was like. He cannot, however, tell the most loyal version of what happened, the version that Funes would have been able to tell. By focusing on the textual features of the narrative about a character such as Funes instead of the fantastic aspect of such a character, a common link is made between “Funes the Memorious” and *The Stranger*, a commonality that is not hindered by geographic origin or linguistic barriers.
CHAPTER 2
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

2.1 “Funes the Memorious”

The first sentence of the short story “Funes the Memorious” begins without first situating the action. It does not set the scene of the story but rather introduces the present act of remembering:

I remember him (I scarcely have the right to use this ghostly verb; only one man on earth deserved the right, and he is dead), I remember him with a dark passionflower in his hand, looking at it as no one has ever looked at such a flower, though they might look from the twilight of day until the twilight of night, for a whole life long. I remember him, his face immobile and Indian-like, and singularly remote, behind his cigarette. I remember (I believe) the strong delicate fingers of the plainsman who can braid leather. I remember, near those hands, a vessel in which to make mate tea, bearing the arms of the Banda Oriental; I remember, in a window of the house, a yellow rush mat, and beyond, a vague marshy landscape. I remember clearly his voice, the deliberate, resentful nasal voice of the old Eastern Shore man, without the Italianate syllables of today. I did not see him more than three times; the last time, in 1887… That all those who knew him should write something about him seems to me a very felicitous idea; my testimony may perhaps be the briefest and without doubt the poorest, and it will not be the least impartial (107).15

Several repetitions of the phrase “I remember” emphasize the fact that the narrator did participate in the story that he is recounting and that he is aware of this in the present. Though he says that he remembers, the parenthetical statements that follow the repeated declaration imply that the narrator is not confident in his own claim. Nowhere in these opening lines does the narrative introduce who the narrator is remembering.

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15 “Lo recuerdo (yo no tengo derecho a pronunciar ese verbo sagrado, solo un hombre en la tierra tuvo derecho y ese hombre ha muerto) con una oscura pasionaria en la mano, viéndola como nadie la ha visto, aunque la mirara desde el crepúsculo del día hasta el de la noche, toda una vida entera. Lo recuerdo, la cara taciturna y aindiana y singularmente remota, detrás del cigarrillo. Recuerdo (creo) sus manos afiladas de trenzador. Recuerdo cerca de esas manos un mate, con las armas de la Banda Oriental; recuerdo en la ventana de la casa una estera amarilla, con un vago paisaje lacustre. Recuerdo claramente su voz; la voz pausada, resentida y nasal del orillero antiguo, sin los silbidos italianos de ahora. Más de tres veces no lo vi; la última, en 1887… Me parece muy feliz el proyecto de que todos aquellos que lo trataron escriban sobre él; mi testimonio será acaso el más breve sin duda el más pobre, pero no el menos imparcial del volumen que editarán ustedes” (94).
The theme is not the object of the narrator’s memory (the man he is remembering) so much as it is the act of remembering (the fact that he remembers now). The passage consists of two parts divided by a single sentence ending in ellipses. The first part introduces what the narrator remembers and is organized more or less in the form of a list. The second part explains the situation in which the narrator is participating. It does not further the scene to which the narrator is referring in the opening lines.

The narrator repeats “I remember” seven times in the opening passage, but he does not himself agree that he should be using this verb at all since “only one man on Earth deserved the right and he is dead.” The narrative supports this argument with a sporadic list of objects that are not placed in time in relation to each other. The narrator did not perceive first the face, then the cigarette and finally the tea kettle. The memories are not sequentially ordered but are placed simultaneously in the same scene. This is equivalent to employing the imperfect tense to describe a setting without progressing the story, but the Spanish-language story does not employ the imperfect. Instead, the characteristics are listed, in nominal phrases without verbs, in such a way that positions them in space in comparison to one another: “his face immobile and Indian-like, and singularly remote, behind his cigarette”; “near those hands, a vessel in which to make mate tea”; “in a window of the house, a yellow rush mat, and beyond, a vague marshy landscape.” The smoking of a cigarette is the only action occurring in the remembered scene. While it is implied that the remembered man spoke since the narrator remembers “clearly his voice,” the action is not included in the opening passage.

The only event in the passage is that of remembering. The narrator does not remember in a consistent way. Whereas the voice is remembered “clearly,” the
landscape beyond is “vague.” This makes the narrative seem weak and inaccurate. The narrator is characterized as having fundamental limitations in his ability to tell what did happen in the past. This is supported by the sentence that divides the two parts of the introductory paragraph: “I did not see him more than three times; the last time, in 1887…” The narrator should thus not be expected to remember this man well since they only met on three occasions. However, this fact, as well as the function of this sentence in the structure of the paragraph, begs the question as to the situation of the narrator. Why is he narrating what he remembers about someone who he barely knew? He mentions the last time that they met, hinting that this may be the setting of the remembered story.

While the ellipses lead you to believe that an event that occurred in 1887 will make up the following part of the narrative, it does not. Instead, the narrator returns to the subject of his own narrative act. He explains in what context he is writing about this man: “that all those who knew him should write something about him.” In contrast to the lack of confidence conveyed by the narrative regarding what the narrator remembers, the fact that he is not the only one recounting a personal memory of the same man justifies his undertaking. It is also important to note that he is explicitly writing. The story is but one written account among several.

Though they might have only met three times, the narrator definitely belongs in the broad category of “all those who knew him.” He addresses his lack of rapport with the man in question, explaining that his “testimony may perhaps be the briefest.” This makes the narrator seem honest even though he may not be certain. He admits that he cannot be the ultimate source for information on the subject. His inabilities are
referenced again when he qualifies that his account is “without doubt the poorest, and it will not be the least impartial.” This eliminates the possibility of reading the narrative as an objective account narrated by a reputable source.

The opening passage does not defend the story against critiques of accuracy. The narrator may be justified in writing his account but, by his own admission, his narrative is potentially the least detailed. The tone is doubtful and ironic, the main function being to demonstrate ineptitude on the part of the narrator. According to him he should not say that he remembers, but he does anyway.

The potential inaccuracy introduced in the beginning of the short story is contradicted when the narrator tells of his first encounter with Funes. Here, he is more confident of what he remembers:

My first recollection of Funes is quite clear, I see him at dusk, sometime in March or February of the year ’84. That year, my father had taken me to spend the summer at Fray Bentos. I was on my way back from the farm at San Francisco with my cousin Bernardo Haedo. We came back singing, on horseback; and this last fact was not the only reason for my joy. After a sultry day, an enormous slate-gray storm had obscured the sky. It was driven on by a wind from the south; the trees were already tossing like madmen; and I had the apprehension (the secret hope) that the elemental downpour would catch us out in the open. We were running a kind of race with the tempest. We rode into a narrow lane which wound down between two enormously high brick footpaths. It had grown black of a sudden I now heard rapid almost secret steps above; I raised my eyes and saw a boy running along the narrow, cracked path as if he were running along a narrow, broken wall. I remember the loose trousers, tight at the bottom, the hemp sandals; I remember the cigarette in the hard visage, standing out against the by now limitless darkness. Bernardo unexpectedly yelled to him; “What’s the time, Ireneo?” Without looking up without stopping, Ireneo replied; “In ten minutes it will be eight o’clock, child Bernardo Juan Francisco.” The voice was sharp, mocking (108).16

16 “Mi primer recuerdo de Funes es muy perspicuo. Lo veo en un atardecer de marzo o febrero del año ochenta y cuatro. Mi padre, ese año, me había llevado a veranear a Fray Bentos. Yo volvía con mi primo Bernardo Haedo de la estancia de San Francisco. Volvíamos cantando, a caballo, y ésa no era la única circunstancia de mi felicidad. Después de un día bochornoso, una enorme tormenta color pizarra había escondido el cielo. La alentaba el viento del Sur, ya se enloquecían los árboles; yo tenía el temor (la esperanza) de que nos sorprendería en un descampado el agua elemental. Corrimos una especie de carrera con la tormenta. Entramos en un callejón que se ahondaba entre dos veredas altísimas de ladrillo.
Funes approaches with the storm. His presence is towering, “I now heard rapid almost secret steps above; I raised my eyes and saw a boy running along the narrow, cracked path.” His response is precise. He gives the exact time of day apparently without referring to his watch: “in ten minutes it will be eight o’clock.”

The theme of the excerpt is change. Not only is there a storm, but the sun is setting and the season is changing: “I see him at dusk, sometime in March or February.” There was a clear and noticeable change after the narrator first encountered Funes. He remembers this first meeting as an abrupt occurrence. Just as “it had grown black of a sudden” Funes arrived. By looking at the dichotomy of the passage, you can see that the subject matter changes. In the beginning, they are trying to outrun the storm. Then, they think that they have found shelter. Finally, instead of the storm above, the narrator sees a boy.

In addition to mentioning the sky, the wind, and the trees, the narrator says that they “were running a kind of race with the tempest.” Combine this race with the ironic joy, “apprehension (the secret hope)” and the fact that they were “between two enormously high brick footpaths” and the passage creates a fast tempo with a looming sense of suspense. This accelerated rhythm is countered by Funes’s presence. When Bernardo asks him the time, the pace stops due to the exactness of the reply as well as the “sharp, mocking” tone.

Funes was also a boy, but he belittles the narrator’s cousin by calling him “child Bernardo Juan Francisco.” In the passage, Funes is a kind of authority who stands over
the boys. The narrator was joyfully outrunning impending danger but was still left awestruck by the presence of another boy. Funes, on the other hand, was not reportedly concerned with them. He was distinct “standing out against the by now limitless darkness.”

The tone also changes along with Funes’s arrival. The proud tone with which the narrator announces the clarity of his first memory changes to wonder in order to show the idol that was Funes. The narrator and his cousin are made to feel small in comparison. This establishes the subject matter of the short story as something unapproachable. Funes became a legend to a boy who did not know his reputation, and now as an adult the narrator recalls how it happened.

Telling about someone as mythic as Funes is not easy, and the narrator does not take on the task passively. He knows his limitations and modifies his narrative strategy accordingly. He explains the inaccessibility of his past with Funes:

I come now to the most difficult point in my narrative. For the entire story has no other point (the reader might as well know it by now) than this dialogue of almost a half-century ago. I shall not attempt to reproduce his words, now irrecoverable. I prefer truthfully to make a résumé of the many things Ireneo [Funes] told me.

The indirect style is remote and weak; I know that I sacrifice the effectiveness of my narrative; but let my readers imagine the nebulous sentences which clouded that night (111).17

The vocabulary is related to difficulty and hopelessness. He says that his “style is remote and weak.” He admits that his narrative may not be as effective because of the indirect reproduction of the central dialogue in the story. Nevertheless, the theme of continuing even when faced with impossibility prevails. In fact, the narrator asks the

17 “Arribo, ahora, al más difícil punto de mi relato. Éste (bueno es que ya sepa el lector) no tiene otro argumento que ese diálogo de hace ya medio siglo. No trataré de reproducir sus palabras, irrecuperables ahora. Prefiero resumir con veracidad las muchas cosas que me dijo Ireneo. El estilo indirecto es remoto y débit; yo sé que sacrifico la eficacia de mi relato; que mis lectores se imaginen los entrecortados períodos que me abrumaron esa noche” (95).
readers to “imagine the nebulous sentences which clouded that night.”

The narrator, along with others, is writing about his particular recollection of Funes. This fact implies other readers. So, the reference to the “reader” is not necessarily directed outside of the story. It is possible that he is referring to others within the story who will inevitably read his account. However, the first time that he mentions the “reader” it is in parentheses and it is singular; the second time, it is part of the main text and “readers” is pluralized. This makes possible the interpretation that this parenthetical statement, and potentially the others included in the narrative, addresses an implied reader whereas “let my readers imagine” refers directly to the readers within the story. The narrator ensures that both a speculative reader and the fictional readers are acknowledged and made aware of the particular style employed in his narrative.

2.2 The Stranger

The opening paragraph of The Stranger introduces doubt. The uncertainty, however, is related to an event which is stereotypically tragic: the death of one’s mother. The first sentence plays on the cliché: “Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can’t be sure. The telegram from the Home says: “Your mother passed away. Funeral Tomorrow. Deep Sympathy.” Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday” (1). While the detail of when the narrator’s mother died is unclear, there is no doubt that she is now deceased nor that the event is recounted after the death. The vocabulary centers on death and sympathy, which are mentioned in the telegram, but also on “today” and “yesterday” which encircle the official announcement of his mother’s

death. The sympathy from the telegram is not acknowledged, nor does the narrative provide evidence of anything upsetting about the death itself. The narrator does not give any indication of his own personal reaction. First, he introduces the certainty of her passing and then qualifies it with the ironic statement “I can’t be sure.” This opening is followed by the quotation from the telegram and concluded with an echo of the possible timeframe of the event.

The first sentence is concise and sharp, but the second sentence contradicts it with “maybe.” The action is introduced as having happened “today” while the possibility does exist that it was yesterday. What characteristics of the discourse allow this to be so unclear? The narrator provides the message he received in order to explain how such confusion could arise. The timeframe in the message is more oriented toward the “funeral tomorrow” than the death itself. The narrative is situated after the death and the telegram but before the funeral. Past, present, and future are all three mentioned in only two lines. This overly broad timeframe is what “leaves the matter doubtful.”

While the text suggests doubt, it does so in a matter-of-fact way. This has the effect of making the narrator’s conclusions uncertain without risking his credibility as narrator. In fact, he gives the impression of being particularly astute since he pointed out such a minute point of contention in the telegram. However, this cleverness is countered by his lack of expressed sentiment regarding his mother’s passing. From the beginning of the novel, there is an unaffected attitude on the part of the narrator regarding his mother. That is to say that the narrative does not provide evidence of a change of sentiment caused by her death.

The absence of a troubled reaction to his mother's passing continues at the
nursing home when the keeper offers Meursault coffee:

He suggested I should go to the refectory for dinner, but I wasn’t hungry. Then he proposed bringing me a mug of café au lait I said, “Thanks,” and a few minutes later he came back with a tray. I drank the coffee, and then I wanted a cigarette. But I wasn’t sure if I should smoke, under the circumstances – in Mother’s presence. I thought it over; really, it didn’t seem to matter, so I offered the keeper a cigarette, and we both smoked (9).19

This interaction between two people is being recounted indirectly by only one of them. He does not quote directly what was said. Instead, he indirectly reports what was said: “he suggested I should go to the refectory for dinner” and “he proposed bringing me a mug of café au lait”. Obviously the employee said all of this to Meursault, but that is not what the text presents. None of the actions mentioned include talking or asking. This is also true when Meursault “offered the keeper a cigarette.” In analysis, the distinction needs to be made between asking whether he wants a cigarette, which implies a response of yes or no, and offering a cigarette, which elicits the action of smoking or not. Nothing explicitly indicates the particular response to the offering, but it was evidently affirmative since they “both smoked.”

According to the text, the keeper is the one who initially advocates pandering to the desires of a grieving man. First, he suggests dinner then some coffee. However, it is Meursault who continues this polite exchange by offering a cigarette. So, the passage begins with a polite gesture by the keeper and ends with an equivalent gesture by Meursault.

Food, coffee, and cigarettes are all potentially comforting to someone who has

experienced a loved one’s death. Recognizing the keeper’s intent to make him more at ease, Meursault thanks him, but coffee is not enough to quell his desire: “I drank the coffee, and then I wanted a cigarette.” The matter-of-fact tone and emphasis on seemingly unimportant events does not completely hide the narrator’s awareness of the social situation. He is aware that this may not be in good taste: “I wasn’t sure if I should smoke, under the circumstances – in Mother’s presence.” After a process of decision making, he concludes that “it didn’t seem to matter.” The employee offered something and the grieving son returned the favor. The text does not make clear whether or not the employee drank coffee, but both smoked cigarettes. Therefore, both men indulged in the presence of a corpse. If Meursault is guilty of being insensitive in the presence of his dead mother, the keeper should also be seen as guilty of pandering to an unfeeling man.

The French text reads more like a list of consecutive events than the English translation: he suggested dinner; he offered coffee; I accepted; I drank; I wanted to smoke; I hesitated; I reflected on the matter; I offered him a cigarette; we smoked. In order to maintain the concision of language and the successive aspect of the events, the translation would have to read, “I drank. I wanted a cigarette.” By separating the clauses with a period instead of a comma and by not including “then,” the original text more strictly maintains the matter-of-fact tone that characterizes the novel. The passage in the original text affirms that the events did happen in this order and nothing else. The style is to the point without details or dialogue.

The peculiarity of the narrative is apparent from the beginning when the narrator does not mention any grief for his mother’s passing. It is emphasized by the cold
exactness of the scene with the keeper from the nursing home. But it is made all the more evident by the murder scene on the beach. The last chapter of part one concludes:

I waited. The heat was beginning to scorch my cheeks; beads of sweat were gathering in my eyebrows. It was just the same sort of heat as at my mother's funeral, and I had the same disagreeable sensations – especially in my forehead, where all the veins seemed to be bursting through the skin. I couldn’t stand it any longer, and took another step forward. I knew it was a fool thing to do; I wouldn’t get out of the sun my moving on a yard or so. But I took that step, just one step forward. And then the Arab drew his knife and held it up toward me, athwart the sunlight. A shaft of light shot upward from the steel, and I felt as if a long, thin blade transfixed my forehead. At the same moment all the sweat that had accumulated in my eyebrows splashed down on my eyelids, covering them with a warm film of moisture. Beneath a veil of brine and tears my eyes were blinded; I was conscious only of the keen blade of light flashing up from the knife, scarring my eyelashes, and gouging into my eyeballs. Then everything began to reel before my eyes, a fiery gust came from the sea, while the sky cracked in two, from end to end, and a great sheet of flame poured down through the rift. Every nerve in my body was a steel spring, and my grip closed on the revolver. The trigger gave, and the smooth underbelly of the butt jogged my palm. And so, with that crisp, whipcrack sound, it all began. I shook off my sweat and the clinging veil of light. I knew I’d shattered the balance of the day, the spacious calm of this beach on which I had been happy. But I fired four shots more into the inert body, on which they left no visible trace. And each successive shot was another loud, fateful rap on the door of my undoing (75).20

The vocabulary in this passage centers around three themes: the light and heat of the

20 « J’ai attendu. La brûlure du soleil gagnait mes joues et j’ai senti des gouttes de sueur s’amasser dans mes sourcils. C’était le même soleil que le jour où j’avais enterré maman et, comme alors, le front surtout me faisait mal et toutes ses veines battaient ensemble sous la peau. A cause de cette brûlure que je ne pouvais plus supporter, j’ai fait un mouvement en avant. Je savais que c’était stupide, que je ne me débarrasserais pas du soleil en me déplaçant d’un pas. Mais j’ai fait un pas, un seul pas en avant. Et cette fois, sans se soulever, l’Arabe a tiré son couteau qu’il m’a présenté dans le soleil. La lumière a giclé sur l’acier et c’était comme une longue lame étincelante qui m’atteignait au front. Au même instant, la sueur amassée dans mes sourcils a coulé d’un coup sur les paupières et les recouvertes d’un voile tiède et épais. Mes yeux étaient aveuglés derrière ce rideau de larmes et de sel. Je ne sentais plus que les cymbales du soleil sur mon front et, indistinctement le glaive éclatant jailli du couteau toujours en face de moi. Cette épée brûlante rongeait mes cils et fouillait mes yeux douloureux. C’est alors que tout a vacillé. La mer a charrié un souffle épais et ardent. Il m’a semblé que le ciel s’ouvrait sur toute son étendue pour laisser pleuvrer du feu. Tout mon être s’est tendu et j’ai crispé ma main sur le revolver. La gâchette a cédé, j’ai touché le ventre poli de la crosse et c’est là, dans le bruit à la fois sec et assourdissant que tout a commencé. J’ai secoué la sueur et le soleil. J’ai compris que j’avais détruit l’équilibre du jour, le silence exceptionnel d’une plage où j’avais été heureux. Alors, j’ai tiré encore quatre fois sur un corps inerte où les balles s’enfonçaient sans qu’il y parût. Et c’était comme quatre coups brefs que je frappais sur la porte du malheur » (94-95).
sun, the knife and the gun, and the narrator’s body. The interrelation between these themes creates an atypical sequence of cause and effect. They are intertwined within the text in such a way as to ensure interdependence among seemingly unrelated phenomena. The effects of the sun are present on the body of the narrator: “the heat was beginning to scorch my cheeks; beads of sweat were gathering in my eyebrows.” But they are also present on the knife: “a shaft of light shot upward from the steel.” It is through the interaction between the sunlight and the metal of the weapon that both have an effect on the narrator’s body. He describes the experience as a “keen blade of light flashing up from the knife, scarring my eyelashes, and gouging into my eyeballs.” This same body closes its grip on the trigger and “the smooth underbelly of the butt jogged [its] palm.”

The text does not mention the reaction of the other person in the scene. Meursault’s physical relationship with the sun and the weapons differs from that of the Arab. He is not displaying the knife with the intent of blinding Meursault with reflected light, but that is the unintended effect. The Arab is apparently unaffected by the blinding light and the scorching heat. The weapons also do not have the same effect on the body of the Arab. According to the text, the four shots that Meursault fired into his dead body did not leave a mark.

The main events in the passage are related to the weapons. The Arab draws a knife, and Meursault kills him with a gun. The sun on the beach provides the setting. Its presence is a catalyst in the action. Meursault steps forward, seemingly because of the sun, though he says that he “knew it was a fool thing to do; I wouldn’t get out of the sun by moving on a yard or so.” Meursault’s body is the link between the weapons and the
sun. It relates the discomfort of the sun to the operation of the weapons. He feels the sun, especially in his forehead “where all the veins seemed to be bursting through the skin.” And he also feels the gun in his hand. His body involuntarily has effects on the pistol similarly to the way that the sun is inadvertently affecting him. This is how, through the peculiarity of the literal representation of the scene, the sun can be said to have caused the death of a man.

In the passage, there is no distinction between the stressful situation of defending oneself and the physically trying situation of being bombarded with bright, hot sunlight. On the contrary, the importance of defending himself is overshadowed by the effects of the sun on his body. He says, “I was conscious only of the cymbals of sun clashing on my skull, and, less distinctly, of the keen blade of light flashing up from the knife, scarring my eyelashes, and gouging into my eyeballs.” The fact that Meursault does defend himself is more a result of the sun on his body than the threat of personal danger presented by the Arab.

The third chapter of part II has an open-ended aspect. It introduces but does not conclude the central event of the second part of the novel: the trial. The proceedings begin but do not end until the following chapter when the jury arrives at a verdict. It is in this chapter, however, that other characters from Meursault’s past take the role of remembering-I in order to subsequently tell experiences they had with Meursault. First, it is important to note that none of the events recounted by the witnesses includes the
murder that occurred in chapter six of part I.\textsuperscript{21} It is clear that the content from the testimonies occurred in chapters 1-5. The director of the old persons’ home, the keeper at the home and his mother’s significant other (Thomas Pérez) all recount events that occurred in the first chapter. Marie’s testimony recounts events from chapter two in which their relationship began. The interest here lies in what Meursault did immediately after his mother’s funeral. So, the majority of the witnesses share stories pertaining to the death of Meursault’s mother, not the murder.

At the end of chapter three, Meursault’s situation is worsening. The subject matter of the trial is turning from the murder itself to the personal character of the defendant. In the penultimate paragraph, the prosecution brings the accusations against Meursault’s personality to a head by saying, “I accuse the prisoner of behaving at his mother’s funeral in a way that showed he was already a criminal at heart” (122).\textsuperscript{22} This is the conclusion that the prosecution develops throughout the first part of the trial and what Meursault’s lawyer wanted to avoid when he asked at their first meeting whether it could be said that he had controlled his natural emotions the day of his mother’s death.

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Ch. 1} & \textbf{Ch. 2} & \textbf{Ch. 3} & \textbf{Ch. 4} & \textbf{Ch. 5} \\
\hline
The director of the home &  &  &  &  \\
The keeper at the home &  &  &  &  \\
Thomas Pérez &  &  &  &  \\
 &  & Celeste (local café owner) &  &  \\
 & Marie &  &  &  \\
 & Salamano (neighbor) &  &  &  \\
 & Raymond (criminal friend) &  &  &  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{21}References to events in Part I:

\textsuperscript{22}“j’accuse cet homme d’avoir enterré une mère avec un cœur de criminel” (148).
funeral.\textsuperscript{23} Until the last paragraph it seems as though everything is going wrong for Meursault. Nevertheless, while not at all detached from his material situation, he finds himself at the end of the chapter ironically reminded of being happy:

Soon after this incident the court rose. As I was being taken from the courthouse to the prison van, I was conscious for a few brief moments of the once familiar feel of a summer evening out-of-doors. And, sitting in the darkness of my moving cell, I recognized, echoing in my tired brain, all the characteristic sounds of a town I’d loved, and of a certain hour of the day which I had always particularly enjoyed. The shouts of newspaper boys in the already languid air, the last calls of birds in the public garden, the cries of sandwich vendors, the screech of streetcars at the steep corners of the upper town, and that faint rustling overhead as darkness sifted down upon the harbor – all these sounds made my return to prison like a blind man’s journey along a route whose every inch he knows by heart. Yes, this was the evening hour when – how long ago it seemed! – I always felt so well content with life. Then, what awaited me was a night of easy, dreamless sleep. This was the same hour, but with a difference; I was returning to a cell, and what awaited me was a night haunted by forebodings of the coming day. And so I learned that familiar paths traced the dusk of summer evenings may lead as well to prisons as to innocent, untroubled sleep (122).\textsuperscript{24}

Similarly to the representation of the murder in part I, the narrative privileges the experience of objects in the external world over the thoughts of the narrator at the time of the event. The novel is full of sensual descriptions of the narrator’s experience as past character. The last paragraph of chapter three represents a material world full of objects that incite sensations for Meursault that supersede his legal situation.

\textsuperscript{23} “When I suggested that Mother’s death had no connection with the charge against me, he merely replied that this remark showed I’d never had any dealings with the law” (81). « Je lui ai fait remarquer que cette histoire n’avait pas de rapport avec mon affaire, mais il m’a répondu seulement qu’il était visible que je n’avais jamais eu de rapports avec la justice » (103).

\textsuperscript{24} « L’audience a été levée. En sortant du palais de justice pour monter dans la voiture, j’ai reconnu un court instant l’odeur et la couleur du soir d’été. Dans l’obscurité de ma prison roulante, j’ai retrouvé un à un, comme du fond de ma fatigue, tous les bruits familiers d’une ville que j’aimais et d’une certaine heure où il m’arrêtait de me sentir content. Le cri des vendeurs de journaux dans l’air déjà détendu, les derniers oiseaux dans le square, l’appel des marchands de sandwichs, la plainte des tramways dans les hauts tournants de la nuit bascule sur le port, tout cela recomposait pour moi un itinéraire d’aveugle, que je connaissais bien avant d’entrer en prison. Oui, c’était l’heure où, il y avait bien longtemps, je me sentais content. Ce qui m’attendait alors, c’était toujours un sommeil léger et sans rêves. Et pourtant quelque chose était changé puisque, avec l’attente du lendemain, c’est ma cellule que j’ai retrouvée. Comme si les chemins familiers tracés dans les ciels d’été pouvaient mener aussi bien aux prisons qu’aux sommeils innocents » (148).
First, with a short precise sentence that reifies the people in the courtroom, the narrator emphasizes objects and their movement: “the court rose” (122). Then, while leaving the courthouse, he experiences the unexplained recollection of the “feel of a summer evening out-of-doors.” The way in which this instant is unjustifiably positioned after Meursault “had a feeling things weren’t going well” creates an effect that imitates the shock that such an involuntary sensation had on Meursault the character. Though he does not always mention his own understanding of what is happening around him, this particular experience, which is itself a synthesis of olfactory and visual sensations, inspires an absurd acceptance of the situation. By listing objects, the narrator emphasizes how the significance of his situation was and is related to the phenomena that he encounters, not the status of the trial. This is how Meursault was able to recognize his happiness when leaving the courtroom and how he is able to consider himself happy at the time of the narration.

25 “L’audience a été levée” (148).
26 “[…] l’odeur et la couleur du soir d’été” (149).
27 “[…] j’ai compris que les choses n’allaient pas bien pour moi” (148).
28 This is at least true in the original French. The English translation combines smells and colors into a single “feeling.”
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 The Subsequent Act of Remembering

In *The Stranger* and in “Funes the Memorious” the events of the past are not presented again. They are represented subsequently. Representations of remembered experiences, such as the remembered encounter with Funes or the testimonies at Meursault’s trial, are projects not objects because they are linked to the subsequent act of telling. Remembering is thus an act in the present, a project for the remembering-I to undertake. In the sense that it is told, a recounted memory has many features in common with narrative discourse. Literature provides instances of remembered experiences recounted by narrators who were characters in the remembered past. Since telling about the past involves an event-story that is clearly not the past itself, certain aspects of the act of recollection within a story can be explained more precisely by employing theoretical distinctions from the field of narratology.

The narrators in “Funes the Memorious” and in *The Stranger* take a particular stance vis-à-vis the act of telling the past. In the short story by Borges, the narrator does not remember everything but he recounts the story nonetheless, emphasizing the impossibility of recovering a past that is already completed. He is cautious about presenting what he remembers: “It *seems* to me that I did not see his face until dawn. I *seem* to recall the momentary glow of the cigarette” (111).29 The narrator in the novel by Camus remembers in a way that has the effect of making him seem guilty because of his past identity:

29 “Me parece que no le vi la cara hasta el alba; creo rememorar el ascua momentánea del cigarrillo” (95).
Quite often, interested as I was in what they had to say, I was tempted to put in a word, myself. But my lawyer had advised me not to. “You won’t do your case any good by talking,” he warned me. In fact, there seemed to be a conspiracy to exclude me from the proceedings; I wasn’t to have any say and my fate was to be decided out of hand (124). In addition to not aiding in his own defense, Meursault is not enthused about the subject of himself: “It was quite an effort at times for me to refrain from cutting them all short […] However, on second thoughts, I found I had nothing to say. In any case, I must admit that hearing oneself talked about loses its interest very soon” (124). Unlike the others, Meursault is not interested in the attempt to accurately represent his past self. He has “nothing to say” about himself as character in the story of the past.

Studies, such as the one by Enrique Anderson Imbert, that attempt to categorize the works of Borges tend to over-generalize about the texts and have the problem of focusing too much on the author and not enough on the narrative. Even when discussing the different narrators found in Borges’s opus, Anderson Imbert employs methodology that ignores aspects that narratology can help explain. Antiquated terminology is not capable of scrutinizing the subtleties of the narrative. In “Funes the Memorious” the inability of outdated terminology is made more evident by the complicated narrative situation. The narrator of the story is presenting events from

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30 « Malgré mes préoccupations, j’étais parfois tenté d’intervenir et mon avocat me disait alors : « Taissez-vous, cela vaut mieux pour votre affaire. » En quelque sorte, on avait l’air de traiter cette affaire en dehors de moi. Tout se déroulait sans mon intervention » (151).

31 « De temps en temps, j’avais envie d’interrompre tout le monde […] Mais réflexion faite je n’avais rien à dire. D’ailleurs, je dois reconnaître que l’intérêt qu’on trouve à occuper les gens ne dure pas longtemps » (152).

32 In « El punto de vista en Borges » [1976] Anderson Imbert claims that Borges used the point of view of a first-person narrator/protagonist in 24 stories and that of a first-person narrator/observer in 40 stories, including “Funes the Memorious.” Despite being published after Discours du récit [1972], Genette’s contemporary considers traditional terminology to be adequate for explaining nontraditional texts.

33 The narrative situation is a combination of factors that make up “the mediating process through which the narrated is presented. […] Genette defines narrative situation according to person (homodiegetic or
the past at a later point in time, relating his identity to the character observing Funes in
the past and to the character remembering him in the present. Anderson Imbert’s
analysis which involves “modes of using point of view” (219)\(^{34}\) cannot take into account
all of the important aspects of the perspective established by the narrative.

In part II of Camus’s novel, certain events from the past are repeated by other
characters; the short story is more of a summary. The difference between repetition and
summary is important not only because the narratives in both texts recount events in
which the narrators did participate but also because they are telling about these past
experiences from a perspective that can be discerned temporally and spatially from the
original experience. Chronologically, experiences that are remembered occurred before
the moment when they are recounted. Spatially, since a narrator does not participate in
the story which he recounts, he does not occupy the same space as a character. A
narrator is not a feature of the fictional space the way that characters are. A
homodiegetic narrator is removed from the direct act of experiencing as well as the
subsequent act of remembering because the narrative act is precisely not part of the
story.

The narrative act in “Funes the Memorious,” like those who tell their own versions
of the past at Meursault’s trial, is related to remembering the past for others. The act of
narrating the past equates to finalizing it in language to communicate to others. There is
however a difference in narrative level between the Borgesian narrator and the
characters who share their own narratives at the trial in The Stranger. Meursault’s

\(^{34}\) « modos de usar los puntos de vista ».  

account is the primary narrative level of the novel, and the testimonies of other characters are events in the story. The text is Meursault's narrative of accounts given by others. The testimonies are at the intradiegetic level. They are distinct from the extradiegetic act of narrating. This is true for all events recounted within a narrative.\(^3^{5}\)

Therefore, while the narrative content is attributed to other characters, there is only one narrator in the novel. In the Borges's story, the narrator's account is part of a collection along with others' accounts of Funes. So, the story has only one narrator, but he is participating in a group endeavor to compile narratives about Funes, something that he explicitly supports: “That all those who knew him should write something about him seems to me a very felicitous idea” (107).\(^3^{6}\)

In order for the past to enter the court in the present, someone has to take the role of storyteller. Because the prosecution of criminals occurs after the crimes, the judicial system is dependent on narratives of the past in order to determine guilt in the present. Courts of law rely on one person sharing her account at a time. However, every representation of the past or the present is an effect of the narrative. The meaning is determined when the jury decides the guilt of the defendant. The interpretation of the narrative occurs in the present. Nevertheless, like the narrator in “Funes,” the witnesses in *The Stranger* access the past indirectly. Since the witnesses are recounting the events in which Meursault was the central character, their accounts are not autodiegetic. They would not be expected to have direct access to the past experience itself since the events pertain more to Meursault. The witnesses depend on the act of remembering in

\(^3^5\) “Tout événement raconté par un récit est à un niveau diégétique immédiatement supérieur à celui où se situe l’acte narratif producteur de ce récit” (*DR* 238).

\(^3^6\) “Me parece muy feliz el proyecto de que todos aquellos que lo trataron escriban sobre él” (94).
order to mention the past in the present. The meaning that is being applied to the account of the past is more directly targeted at the narrative because the judge and jury were not present at the time of the original event. This is the main distinction between witness and judge. The former was there and can recount a story. The latter was not there and relies on the representation of events in a story in order to know what happened. However, the testimonies at the trial are heterodiegetic. None of the intradiegetic narrators was part of the event in question: the murder.

At a trial, speaking is a way of representing the past in the context of the present. Trials are structured around the action of speaking. There are multiple testimonies, meaning multiple narratives of the past, often of a single event. The presentation of the events in question (the crime, for example)\(^{37}\) is multifaceted. The event-story that is developed at a trial, like the diegesis of a theatrical work, is characterized by the structure of its representation of the past. The fact that the trial itself does not have to be organized coherently or chronologically means that the structure can be ordered in a way that conveys a particular meaning to the jury. Innocence and guilt are effects of the structure of the stories told at a trial, but they are also affected by the order in which the various accounts are presented (Vanhaesebrouck 5). Legally proving guilt requires persuasion of the other. Therefore, criminal proceedings depend on acknowledgment of the other. Through the structure of the testimonies, lawyers aim to influence the judgment of other people.

The trial in The Stranger is narrated by Meursault, the central character. The novel is an individual account, but it includes the event of storytelling, both by him and

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\(^{37}\) In The Stranger, the events in question are not directly related to the crime itself. They include his behavior surrounding his mother's death and his willingness to help a pimp with his legal problems.
Meursault’s account of the trial is the main narrative within which the individual testimonies are presented. In the novel, different characters share orally their narratives of the events in question, but it is the extradiegetic narrative act which mentions these accounts. So, at the trial, though several characters present their own subsequent accounts of the past, their narrative acts and situations are very different from that of the main narrative which is not part of the story. Narrating orally differs from narrating textually. Witnesses and defendants are limited to oral discourse in order to tell of the past, but a novel is obviously not an oral narrative. This means that while the story contains the event of oral transmission of past events, this event is conveyed extradiegetically by the narrator of a text not by characters in the recounted scene.

In the setting of a court case, narratological terminology introduced by Genette can explain aspects of the relationship between the person giving a testimony, the actual events from the past, and the act of recounting said events. Since particular memories of what happened do not exist materially for other people, but testimonies of what happened do, a trial requires the interpretation of stories. Witnesses tell stories. The prosecution and the defense tell stories. Throughout a trial, a story is established that is based on stories told by others. This story centers on an event from the past that was not personally experienced by the jury. However, a trial, like the endeavor of telling about Funes, is futile if it attempts to recover the past since the testimony is inherently not the crime. The narrative of the past is not consistent from one narrator to another. Nor is a testimony consistent from one instance to another because of the subsequently changed perspective of the person remembering. The act of remembering always occurs in the present, while recounted memories can only refer to the past.
In a courtroom, the time of testimony is subsequent to the crime. The prosecution, just like the defense, employs narratives in a process of telling and retelling again and again, as if to edit the past itself in a way that proves guilt or innocence respectively. Prepping for a trial consists of developing a concrete narrative that presents the past in a way that either accuses or defends. The final draft of what happened is destined to be retold a final time at the trial. This is the case with Meursault in *The Stranger*. Throughout the first chapter of the second part of novel, he refuses to refine his account of what happened. When talking with the magistrate, Meursault recognizes that “there was only one point that badly needed clearing up – the fact that I’d waited before firing a second time” (85). However, before that realization, he had been uncooperative with his lawyer regarding helpful ways of responding to questions from the prosecution. He refuses to participate in the particular subsequent act that could prove his innocence.

3.2 The Narrator and the Narrated

The term *memory* in English refers to two distinctly separate concepts in French. *Mémoire* is the mental faculty (memory in a general sense), and *souvenir* is the content (a memory). But both the single term in English and the dual terms in French ignore a third aspect of remembering which is the act of recollection, the action that is reminiscence. Gérard Genette employs three similar divisions in *Narrative Discourse*, the foundational text of narratology. He defines the narrative itself, the narrated story/event, and the act of narrating as three distinct aspects of a narrative:

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38 « […] à son avis il n’y avait qu’un point d’obscur dans ma confession, le fait d’avoir attendu pour tirer mon second coup de revolver » (107).
I propose, without insisting on the obvious choice of terms, to use the word _story_ for the signified or narrative content (even if this content turns out, in a given case, to be low in dramatic intensity or fullness of incident), to use the word _narrative_ for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word narrating for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place.³⁹

By separating these terms, Genette develops a methodology that allows for more explicit analysis of textual elements instead of thematic or metaphoric aspects of a text. This three-sided distinction can be used to relate narratological analysis to the analysis of memory. Genette’s narratology, when applied to the study of recollection in a text, differentiates between the act of remembering, the memory, and the remembered event.

Nevertheless, James Phelan accuses theorists such as Gerald Prince of relying too heavily on the story/discourse distinction introduced by Genette. He says that, because the line between story and narrative is so strictly separated, Genette and Prince do not adequately account for “what narrators can do” because “even when narrators remain clearly in discourse space, they perform acts of perception that ought to be called “focalization’”’ (52). This is related to what Edward Casey calls _body memories_ ⁴⁰ which “are not just memories of the body but instances of remembering places, events, and people _with and in_ the lived body” (xi). In applying what Phelan proposes, the narratological analysis of a homodiegetic narrative would take into account the lived body of the narrator, in which case, absence of focalization would be seen as intentional negation, by the narrator, of his present perspective. That is also to

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³⁹ « Je propose, sans insister sur les raisons d’ailleurs évidentes du choix des termes, de nommer _histoire_ le signifié ou contenu narratif (même si ce contenu se trouve être, en l’occurrence, d’une faible intensité dramatique ou teneur événementielle), _récit_ proprement dit le signifiant, énoncé, discours ou texte narratif lui-même, et _narration_ l’acte narratif producteur et, par extension, l’ensemble de la situation réelle ou fictive dans laquelle il prend place » (DR 15).

⁴⁰ Body memory along with place memory and commemoration are three instances of remembering that are not “mentalistic, representational, or recollective.” Casey argues that these kinds of memories are not tied to the act of recollection (xi).
say that homodiegetic narrators necessarily perceive because they exist within the story world and therefore occupy fictional bodies. The problem with Phelan’s argument lies in the fact that narrators are effects of the text not participants in the story. In fact they do not occupy bodies because they do not occupy space, not even fictionally. The difference between past character and subsequent narrator is a conceptual difference as well as a temporal one.

For Gerard Genette “the chief temporal determination of the narrating instance is obviously its position relative to the story” (216). He explains how literary theory has tended to ignore this fact:

[…] with almost all novels [the fictional narrating of that narrative] is considered to have no duration; or more exactly, everything takes place as if the question of its duration had no relevance. One of the fictions of literary narrating – perhaps the most powerful one, because it passes unnoticed, so to speak – is that narrating involves an instantaneous action, without a temporal dimension (222).

Neiderhoff reminds contemporary narratologists that “a major point in Genette’s theory is his rigorous separation between focalization and the narrator (referred to with the grammatical metaphor of “voice”)" (10). In the Dictionary of Narratology, Prince refers to Genette’s theory when explaining narrative voice as “the set of signs characterizing the narrator and, more generally, the narrating instance, and governing the relations between narrating and narrative text as well as between narrating and narrated.” He continues, “though often amalgamated or confused with point of view, [voice] should be distinguished from it […]” (104) since analyzing narrative voice consists of who “speaks”

41 « La principal détermination temporelle de l’instance narrative est évidemment sa position relative par rapport à l’histoire » (DR 224)
42 « […] dans presque tous les romans du monde [la narration fictive] est censée n’avoir aucune durée, ou plus exactement tout se passe comme si la question de sa durée n’avait aucune pertinence : une des fictions de la narration littéraire, la plus puissante peut-être, parce qu’elle passe pour ainsi dire inaperçue, est qu’il s’agit d’un acte instantané, sans dimension temporelle » (DR 231).
and not who “sees.”43 This reiterates Genette’s point that “I can very well tell a story without specifying the place where it happens and whether this place is more or less distant from the place where I am telling it; nevertheless, it is almost impossible for me not to locate the story in time with respect to my narrating act” (215).44

By using the example of the epistolary novel in which “the letter is at the same time both a medium of the narrative and an element in the plot” (217),45 Genette argues that the act of narrating can serve as an event within the story in addition to having an enunciative function. He explains this double function of the act of narrating without abandoning the important distinction between past and present perspectives:

Here, the narrator is at one and the same time still the hero and already someone else; the events of the day are already in the past, and the “point of view” may have been modified since then; the feelings of the evening or the next day are fully of the present, and here focalization through the narrator is at the same time focalization through the hero (218).46

He continues with the example of a homodiegetic narrator47 who is narrating subsequently what she experienced in the near past:

the [character] of yesterday, very near and already far off is seen and spoken of by the [character] of today. We have here two successive heroines, (only) the second of whom is (also) the narrator and gives her point of view, the point of view – displaced just enough to create dissonance – of the immediate post-event

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43 Genette makes clear that focalization is not based on visual perception but “seeing” is still frequently used in order to distinguish perspective of the narrative (mode) from characteristics of the narrator (voice) (DR 194).

44 « […] je peux fort bien raconter une histoire sans préciser le lieu où elle se passe, et si ce lieu est plus ou moins éloigné du lieu d’où je la raconte, tandis qu’il m’est presque impossible de ne pas la situer dans le temps par rapport à mon acte narratif puisque je dois nécessairement la raconter à un temps du présent, du passé ou du futur » (DR 223).

45 « [dans un roman épistolaire] la lettre est à la fois médium du récit et élément de l’intrigue » (DR 225).

46 « Ici, le narrateur est tout à la fois encore héros et déjà quelqu’un d’autre : les événements de la journée sont déjà du passé, et le « point de vue » peut s’être modifié depuis ; les sentiments du soir ou du lendemain sont pleinement du présent, et ici la focalisation sur le narrateur est en même temps focalisation sur le héros » (DR 226).

47 “A narrator who is part of the diegesis (diégèse) s/he presents; a narrator who is a character in the situations and events s/he recounts” (Dictionary 40).
future (218).\textsuperscript{48}

So, in the case of a narrator recounting his own past, the remembering-I and the remembered-I are developed simultaneously in the narrative and are therefore indistinguishable. However, the remembering-I is necessarily one level removed from the action which he remembers. The narrator is only a theoretical marker of the narrative, not a parallel participant in the story.

A phenomenological description of the act of remembering\textsuperscript{49} serves better to discern between what happens in the story and what happens in the narrative when a narrator recounts his own past. The three-sided system employed by Genette parallels the three parts of the phenomenological description in which a targeter is targeting a target. In phenomenology, the targeter is the one targeting the target; in narratology, the narrator is the one narrating a narrative. As a phenomenon, the past can also be seen as a target, that is to say the object of an act committed by a subject. So, remembering is targeting the past through an intentional act of retention. The recounted past is an example of a remembering-I (in a subsequent setting) targeting a remembered-I (in a past setting). In such a scenario, the act is characterized by the temporal distance of the subject from the object as well as the difference between the original events and the recounted events. When remembering, both the subject and the object were part of the past and are part of the present. Therefore, only the act of remembering is entirely characterized by the present, since it is precisely one level removed from the remembered events.

\textsuperscript{48} « La Cécile d’hier, toute proche et déjà lointaine, est vue et dite par la Cécile d’aujourd’hui. Nous avons ici deux héroïnes successives, dont la seconde (seulement) est (aussi) narratrice, et impose son point de vue, qui est celui, juste assez décalé pour faire dissonance, de l’immédiat après coup » (DR 226).

\textsuperscript{49} See Remembering A phenomenological Study by Edward Casey as well as Phenomenology of Memory by Erwin Straus.
Remembering is not equivalent to encountering the past directly, which would be an act of perception equivalent to that of the original experience. Recollection differs from perception in that objects from the past are not re-perceived. Perception implies a more passive subject/object interaction compared to recollection. This might be seen as a more involuntary reminiscence as opposed to the intentional act of remembering. The intentional act differs from the involuntary one by making explicit a certain conceptualization of past events. Recounted memories are the contention of what happened in the past, not the past itself. While not all narratives are textual examples of memory, remembering is narrating in so far as it puts forth a thetic argument, in the present, of what happened.

Recalling the past does not consist of experiencing it again as if it were a current event. A second experience of what happened in the past would be a repetition not a subsequent event. This agrees with Prince who says that narrating is strictly an act of discourse because an articulated memory necessarily exists in narrative form. However, unlike an object from the past which can only be accessed through the act of recollection, a narrative is something to encounter perceptually in the present either visually in the form of a text or audibly in the form of oral storytelling. By allowing the narrative of what happened to take the place of the object from the past, the remembering-I presents an object that others can encounter directly in the present. This is what happens when the Borgesian narrator targets the story his cousin told him and Meursault targets the past instances of narrating the murder scene.

The Borges story does not include many events. The action of remembering serves as an implicit and repetitive event. There is not always a clear distinction
between one instance of remembering and another. This highlights characteristics of
the act of remembering in general. Funes has “more memories within [himself] alone
than all men have had since the world was a world” (112), but the narrator on the
other hand has to narrate in order to remember. One has to tell or be told of the past in
order to know it. The Borgesian narrator depends on the stories of others to give him
something more current to target, “I am so absentminded that the dialogue which I have
just cited would not have penetrated my attention if it had not been repeated by my
cousin” (108). Not only would he have forgotten this fact had he not been reminded of
it, his cousin’s story of what happened also serves as a phenomenon for the narrator to
encounter. He does not have to remember the original event but only the subsequent
telling of that event. Here, remembering a narrative of a past event is equivalent to
remembering the past event itself.

So, while a narrative is not focalized on the narrator, the fact that he is narrating
does not temporarily take away his role as a character in the present. Telling takes time
but not in the recounted story. A homodiegetic narrator’s discourse is an event but not
in the diegesis. The same can be said for the act of remembering. It takes time but not
in the remembered past. Meursault encounters this aspect of remembering while in
prison. He tells of how he used the time it takes to remember as a way to overcome the
ennui of prison, “the whole problem was: how to kill time. After a while, however, once
I’d learned the trick of remembering things, I never had a moment’s boredom” (98).

50 “Más recuerdos […] que los que habrán tenido todos los hombres desde que el mundo es mundo” (96).
51 “Yo soy tan distraído que el diálogo que acabo de referir no me hubiera llamado la atención si no lo
hubiera recalcado mi primo” (95).
52 “Toute la question, encore une fois, était de tuer le temps. J’ai fini par ne plus m’ennuyer du tout à
partir de l’instant où j’ai appris à me souvenir” (122).
This also illustrates how one can infinitely remove oneself from the remembered content, or inversely objectify oneself in the past. This is an instance of subsequent narration focalized on a remembering-I (in prison after the murder) who was the remembered-I (outside of prison before the murder).

Like the remembering-I in “Funes the Memorious” who is reminded of what he remembers by what his cousin tells him, Meursault remembers his past in an increasingly more detailed way by modifying the process of recollecting:

Sometimes I would exercise my memory on my bedroom and, starting from a corner, make the round, noting every object I saw on the way. At first it was over in a minute or two. But each time I repeated the experience, it took a little longer. I made a point of visualizing every piece of furniture, and each article up or in it, and then every detail of each article, and finally the details of the details, so to speak: a tiny dent or incrustation, or a chipped edge, and the exact grain and color of the woodwork. At the same time I forced myself to keep my inventory in mind from start to finish, in the right order and omitting no item. With the result that, after a few weeks, I could spend hours merely in listing the objects in my bedroom. I found that the more I thought, the more details, half-forgotten or malobserved, floated up from my memory. There seemed no end to them (98).

The remembered content does not become more accurate but more refined. The target of his remembering is not entirely of the past. By subsequently targeting an object through the habitual act of remembering, Meursault becomes well accustomed with phenomena from the past as well as phenomena from the subsequent present. Every time that he tells himself about his memory it occupies more time, “at first it was over in a minute or two. But each time I repeated the experience, it took a little longer” (98). As one can do with any action, Meursault intentionally develops the content of his memory in a way that the process of recollecting takes so long that there is little time left in his day, “there remained only six hours to fill – with meals, relieving nature, my memories”
Meursault uses the increased time it takes to remember as a way of relieving ennui. This is similar to Funes’s experience of memory. However, while Meursault has a more progressively accomplishing experience elaborating his memories as compared to the narrator in the Borges story, the details of his memory never become so insistent as to trouble him. The Borgesian narrator finds remembering details difficult, and Funes remembers them to the point of experiencing negative consequences. So, Meursault’s experience of the act of (re)remembering lies in between the two extremes presented in “Funes the Memorious.”

The time between a certain event in a story and a subsequent act is undoubtedly occupied with other events that are not necessarily included in the narrative. A homodiegetic narrator, when telling the past, cannot prevent the presence of subsequently encountered phenomena. Meursault can recount the murder on the beach over and over, but the narrative perspective is affected by the experience of previously narrated versions of the remembered event. Because Meursault relates to his past through the act of recollection, the present act of narrating is influenced by each preceding instance of narrating the same events. In the Borgesian story, the privileged knowledge possessed by the narrator is contrasted with his inability to access a point-of-view within the story. Since he is aware that his memory is imperfect, the narrative perspective is characterized by an internal point-of-view that the narrator did experience but that he currently knows only through discourse about which he is not confident. This distinguishes the remembering-I from the remembered-I, characterizing the narrator’s

53 “Il me restait alors six heures de tuer avec les repas, les besoins naturels, mes souvenirs” (124).
54 “[No one] has felt the heat and pressure of a reality as indefatigable as that which day and night converged upon the unfortunate Ireneo” (114). “[Nadie] ha sentido el calor y la presión de una realidad tan infatigable como la que día y noche convergía sobre el infeliz Ireneo” (96).
deficient knowledge of the past and the text's deficient representation of it.

In narratology, perspective is not a metaphor for something that happens in the story. Narrative perspective is a characteristic of the narrative and therefore an effect of the narrative act. Since a narrator orients a narrative, the act of narrating establishes a perspective. Genette explains:

However, to my mind most theoretical works on the subject (which are mainly classifications) suffer from the regrettable confusion between what I call here mood and voice, a confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective and the very different question who is the narrator?55

The narrator is the same whether the narrative is focalized on the remembered-I (the narrator as protagonist in the past event) or on the remembering-I (the narrator as protagonist in the act of remembering the past event). Focalization on the remembered-I makes the narrative act posterior. The events in the past are remembered after the fact and therefore narrated subsequently. In the case of focalization on the remembering-I, the narrative act is characterized as simultaneous. Though the act of narrating is subsequent to the event remembered in the past, it is simultaneous in regard to the act of remembering the event. Focalization on the remembering-I blurs the distinction between narrating-I and remembering-I since the narrative is not subsequent to the event in which the protagonist is participating.

Neiderhoff argues that the most important part of the debate of narratological perspective has to do with whether the term refers to information or perception. In order to clearly distinguish both aspects of the more general term perspective, it must be

55 « Toutes fois, la plupart des travaux théoriques sur ce sujet (qui sont essentiellement des classifications) souffre à mon sens d’une fâcheuse confusion entre ce que j’appelle ici mode et voix, c’est-à-dire entre la question quel est le personnage dont le point de vue oriente la perspective narrative ? et cette question tout autre : qui est le narrateur ? » (DR 190).
defined in a way that considers both perception (visual or otherwise) as well as knowledge presented by a text. Evidence of both information and perception must exist textually. In the context of recounted memory, the question becomes whether the event-story is portrayed from the perspective of a character that is experiencing the events in the diegetic present or from a subsequent perspective. A narrator/character remembering the past has a different perspective than he had during the past events.

So, it remains to be determined in “Funes the Memorious” and The Stranger if the knowledge presented in the context of remembering should be interpreted as being oriented around the remembered-I. However, one might still argue that focalization could still be present in the form of conceptual objectification. Is there textual evidence that the homodiegetic narrators access perspectives possessed in the past, and is that prior orientation characterized by perception or information?

Neiderhoff places Gérard Genette on the side of the information-based model of narrative perspective because his theory considers focalization a matter of knowledge (8). Prince also defends the information-based model of narrative focalization. Primary narrators do not exist as characters within the story, only within the narrative discourse. A narrative cannot convey visual perception by a narrator since he is a textual feature. He can narrate the story world but he cannot see it in a literal sense. Therefore, there is no act of perception associated with the act of narrating since the act is characterized by the narrative discourse not by the story. Narrative voice is an aspect of discourse. Prince associates memory with narration and distinguishes the act of remembering from

56 Genette specifically uses the term focalization in order to avoid using a term, like point of view, that would be overly dependent on the visual aspect of the “focus of narration.” « Pour éviter ce que les termes de vision, de champ, et de point de vue ont de trop spécifiquement visuel, je reprendrai ici le terme un peu plus abstrait de focalisation, qui répond d’ailleurs à l’expression de Brooks et Warren : « focus of narration » » (DR 194).
the act of direct perception. Phelan criticizes this view as a limitation. He explains how a homodiegetic narrator differs from a heterodiegetic one:

The heterodiegetic narrator never saw the events because he/she/it never occupied the story world. The homodiegetic or first-person narrator did see the events and objects at an earlier moment in the story, but his recountal is after the fact and thus a matter of memory, not of perception (55).

According to Genette’s theory, aspects pertaining to the extradiegetic act of narrating raise questions of narrative level not of focalization. Phelan’s theory blurs the most fundamental narratological distinctions. He argues that the uncompromising distinction between the act of narrating and the events in the story means that a narrator who was a character within the story does not really differ from a narrator who exists outside of the story which he is recounting. This argument is also a misunderstanding of the act of remembering since the remembering-I cannot be the remembered-I.

Despite conflicting definitions of focalization, Prince and Phelan agree that perception does not have to be a physical experience. The verb broadly defined can refer to apprehension in the mind in addition to sensation in the body. According to Prince “what is perceived may be abstract or concrete, tangible or intangible – sights, sounds, smells, or thoughts, feelings, dreams, and so on” (44). He adds that “it is only in a general way that a given narrative may be said to be or not to be focalized, or to adopt one mode of focalization or another” (45). In an attempt to account for the perspective of a narrator who is strictly telling and not perceiving, without contradicting his broad definition of perception, Prince explains:

This in no way means that the narrator does not have a “point of view” a certain (individualized or anthropomorphic) attitude, outlook, or vision of things, a slant (to speak like Chatman [1990]), a more or less specific “take” on what transpires

57 « La qualité d’extradiégétique est un fait de niveau » (NDR 55).
diegetically [...]. Furthermore, this is not so much because the situations and events narrated are always (significantly) past with regard to the narrator or even because the latter cannot perceive them physically (cf. Chatman, [1986: 194]) (46).

Prince is right that narrators cannot perceive because narrating is strictly an act of discourse, or more precisely because narrative voice is only the “signs characterizing the narrator and, more generally, the narrating instance.” The act of narrating is not necessarily an event in the story though the action may be implied by the presence of a homodiegetic narrator.

In “Funes the Memorious” the narrator cannot reconcile the fact that the memory of something perceived does not have any innate privilege to call itself perception because he knew someone for whom remembering was equivalent to perceiving. He explains that Funes’s “perception and his memory were infallible” (112),\(^{58}\) linking accurate memory to accurate perception. However, this accuracy is attributed to a character not to the narrator. The character’s subsequent perception of memory still differs from his present perception. The narrator explains how Funes’s present perception was consequently affected by his ability to subsequently perceive the past:

We, in a glance, perceive three wine glasses on the table; Funes saw all the shoots, clusters, and grapes of the vine. [...] He remembered the shapes of the clouds in the south at dawn on the 30\(^{th}\) of April of 1882, and he could compare them in his recollection with the marbled grain in the design of a leather-bound book which he had seen only once, and with the lines in the spray which an oar raised in the Río Negro on the eve of the battle of the Quebracho. These recollections were not simple; each visual image was linked to muscular sensations, thermal sensations, etc. (112).\(^{59}\)

\(^{58}\) “Ahora su percepción y su memoria eran infalibles” (95).

\(^{59}\) “Nosotros, de un vistazo, percibimos tres copas en una mesa; Funes, todos los vástagos y racimos y frutos que comprende una parra. Sabía las formas de las nubes australes del amanecer del terinta de abril de mil ochocientos ochenta y dos y podía compararlas en el recuerdo con las vetas de un libro en pasta española que sólo había mirado una vez y con las líneas de la espuma que un remo levantó en el Río Negro la víspera de la acción del Quebracho. Esos recuerdos no eran simples; cada imagen visual estaba ligada a sensaciones musculares, térmicas, etc.” (96).
First, the narrator does not recount his own perception of the glasses because it would not be as perfect as Funes’s perception of the glasses. Since his own memory is admittedly not exact, it is not inherently truer than any other narrated account. The speculation of someone else’s perception is necessarily hypothetical. So, the narrator hypothesizes about how Funes’s perception might have functioned in the remembered scenario. As he considers what exactly Funes might have perceived, the initial object of perception is lost from the narrative just as it would have been lost from Funes’s experience of it. Since his perception of the past is infallible, it would interfere with his experience of the present. The narrative mimics this effect by moving from the subject of the glasses, which Funes currently perceives in the story, to minute details of other perceptions seemingly unrelated to his current diegetic situation. Finally, the narrator hints at a biological explanation for how the superiority of Funes’s body influenced his ability to perceive the past. If perceiving the past were the same as perceiving objects in the present, the same physical sensations would have to reoccur in the body. What is remembered is different from the act of remembering because of the subsequent nature of memory. If a memory is experienced in the present, it should not be confused with an experience in the past. It needs to be distinguished from perception of the material world. This is why Funes found that “the present was almost intolerable” (112).  

Despite the fact that the narrator in the Borges story has trouble remembering certain things, he says his “first recollection of Funes is quite clear, I see him at dusk, sometime in March or February of the year ‘84” (108). Though he says it is clear, the

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60 “el presente era casi inttolerable” (95).
61 “Mi primer recuerdo de Funes es muy perspicuo. Lo veo en un atardecer de marzo o febrero del año ochenta y cuatro” (94).
sentence contains conflicting information, such as the uncertainty of the month which is emphasized by the unordered mention of March followed by February. Though most of the story is situated in the past, when recalling his first encounter with Funes the narrator sees him in the present, just like he remembers him in the present. However, this is not an example of focalization on the narrator since he cannot focalize a narrative on himself. He is not physically living in the same fictional space as the characters in the story and therefore has no intradiegetic position (perceptual or conceptual) from which he can establish a perspective. The excerpt is only focalized on the narrator as the character who occupied the physical space with a lived body. The narrative is focalized on the remembering-I who is still within the narrated content. As character, the remembering-I is distinct from the remembered-I, though both make up the story.

Phelan is willing to accept a definition of focalization that does not depend entirely on the distinction between dramatic content and textual presence. He wants to convince narratologists that this distinction is a “heuristic construct rather than a natural law, something we’ve invented to aid our understanding of narrative, not an intractable phenomenon establishing impermeable boundaries between narrative commentary and characters’ actions” (51). Like the difference between time of the narration and the perspective of the narrative, the difference between story and narrative is theoretical. These two elements, while distinguished for the sake of analysis, are inseparable aspects of a single text. Phelan summarizes the stance of Gerald Prince regarding focalization as an effort “to offer a restrictive definition that will increase the clarity and economy of narratology” (51). Prince counters that this “restrictive definition has the advantage of placing focalization squarely in the domain of the narrated story”
While this is ideal in the field of narratology, according to Phelan, it would be at the expense of being able to describe what the act of narrating is, at least for homodiegetic narrators. “In the Prince view, narrators cannot perceive the story world but can only report on it” (51). The question is whether it is important to theoretically permit a homodiegetic narrator recounting the past to be conceived both as a textual feature and a fictional character. Phelan is in favor of the concept of focalization on narrators as if they were characters. However, this is because he argues that in some cases they are. This has already been demonstrated to not be the case. The narrator is not a participant in the recounted story because the primary narrative act is not an event in that story. Therefore, Prince is right that (textually) they never abandon their roles as narrators and therefore never occupy the story during the narrative act itself. Prince, in accordance with Genette, reminds narratologists that one cannot blur distinctions between the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic levels of a narrative. This is the only way to ensure an analysis of the text instead of the content of the story.

When a narrator declares “I remember” he is both mentioning the subsequent event of remembering and telling the past event that is remembered and was experienced. The narrator in “Funes the Memorious” does this several times in the first paragraph, often including parenthetical statements that highlight the fact that this event is occurring in the subsequent present. He begins his story, “I remember him (I scarcely have the right to use this ghostly verb […]”) then reiterates, “I remember (I believe)” (107). Meursault emphasizes the present aspect of remembering by employing the passé composé instead of the preterit. This has the effect of melding the past with the

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62 “Lo recuerdo (yo no tengo derecho a pronunciar ese verbo sagrado […]” (94).
63 “Recuerdo (creo)” (94).
present by representing the remembering-I as now someone that “has done” something.

When telling about Marie’s visit to prison, Meursault lists individual completed actions as he becomes accustomed to other characters in the visiting room:

When I came into the room the babel of voices echoing on the bare walls, and the sunlight streaming in, flooding everything in a harsh white glare, made me feel quite dizzy. After the relative darkness and the silence of my cell it took me some moments to get used to these conditions. After a bit, however, I came to see each face quite clearly, lit up as if a spotlight played on it.64

In the French text, the actions are narrated in the passé composé except for the action of making Meursault feel dizzy which is presented in the preterit. This illustrates the difference between what Meursault continues to associate with his present self and what he considers entirely of the past. He is someone who “has become” used to the conditions as well as someone who “has come” to see the faces of others. The English translation cannot make the same distinction of tense. Though the present perfect exists in English, stylistically it would have a different connotation than the original French. In the English translation, in order to maintain the effect of mixing the present with the past, the phrase “I remember” is used to blend the remembering-I of the present with the remembered-I: “I remember Marie describing to me her work, with that set smile always on her face” (93).65 This maintains an interpretation of the text that emphasizes the subsequently present aspect of what did happen in the past. The translation might have more succinctly read, “(I remember now that then) Marie described to me her work.” In fact, that parenthetical clause could be put before most sentences in the novel,

64 « Quand je suis entré, le bruit des voix qui rebondissaient contre les grands murs nus de la salle, la lumière crue qui coulait du ciel sur les vitres et rejaillissait dans la salle, me causèrent une sorte d’étourdissement. Ma cellule était plus calme et plus sombre. Il m’a fallu quelques secondes pour m’adapter. Pourtant, j’ai fini par voir chaque visage avec netteté, détaché dans le plein jour » (115).

65 This differs from the original text in which the present tense characteristic of the past action is implied. Marie’s actions are stated in the passé compose rather than alluded to by the present act of remembering. « Marie m’a parlé de son travail et elle souriait sans arrêt » (118).
as a way of conveying the meaning of the passé composé.

In the first chapter of the second part of *The Stranger*, the magistrate explicitly invites Meursault to narrate what happened: “he asked me to give him an account of what I’d done that day” (82). This happens several times, and Meursault the character eventually becomes accustomed to the regular examinations. He recognizes his role as the creator of his remembered content. As remembering-I in the present, he has experienced all of the instances of telling about the murder on the beach. Therefore, as narrator-character, Meursault is not only encountering the murder itself as a past event but the recounting of the murder as well. He is aware that he has already mentioned these events in the same context: “As a matter of fact, I had already told him at our first interview […] I was tired of repeating the same story” (83).

Since Meursault is becoming accustomed to retelling the past, his present identity as narrator/character depends on conceptualizing himself in the present as the one who has killed an Arab on the beach at sunset and as the one who has already told the magistrate about it. He has to remember the Meursault who is a past character in the story which includes previous instances of telling about the murder as well as the event itself. At the primary narrative level, which is the novel, Meursault is not part of the story, however the character who told these events in the past is.

3.3 Personal Identity, Narrative Choice and the Other

In *The Stranger*, Meursault’s story of what happened serves as something for

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66 « Il m’a pressé de lui retracer ma journée » (105).
67 « Je lui ai retracé ce que déjà je lui avais raconté [...] Moi, j’étais lassé ainsi de répéter la même histoire » (105).
others to associate with his identity, not only because he has committed the murder but also because he is free to recount the story however he wants. The responses to questions show that Meursault is aware of his own freedom regarding the representation of the past. When asked by his lawyer if he could say that he kept his feelings under control the day of his mother’s funeral, Meursault does not agree because “that wouldn’t be true” (80). He does not have to tell the true story, but he wants to, emphasizing the freedom that he presently has in relating himself to events that have already happened.

When recounting the past, Meursault is choosing to report certain aspects of what happened at the expense of others. This is evidenced by the inclusion of certain objects instead of others. By mentioning the sun in the account of the murder, he is choosing not to bring attention to the sand. So, his version of the murder scene is also characterized by what is not included. He does not give reasons for what he did; instead he presents phenomena which may have influenced his actions. For example, he mentions the feel of the gun but not his feelings about the gun. Within the story, the ramifications of such a choice are explicitly related to what kind of a person Meursault must be. The magistrate in particular uses his account of the crime and his responses to questions as indicators of his personality, that is to say his intrinsic identity. The judicial system makes no distinction between personal identity and the story of the past. The magistrate states clearly: “What really interests me is – you!” (82). Meursault is his account of the past. He also knows the aspect of his narrative that the magistrate does not like:

68 « Non, parce que c’est faux » (102).
69 « Ce qui m’intéresse, c’est vous » (104).
I gathered that there was only one point in my confession that needed clearing up – the fact that I’d waited before firing a second time. All the rest was, so to speak, quite in order; that completely baffled him. I started to tell him that he was wrong in insisting on this; the point was of quite minor importance (85).

Phelan mistakenly agrees with associating narratives of the past with narrators’ identities. He is wrong in saying that “in homodiegetic […] narration because we have only the narrator-character as the explicit agent for the construction of the narrative, one can almost always argue that the narrator is in self-conscious control of the narrative” (61). While this may apply to the remembering-I and the control he exercises over the act of remembering, it does not hold true for the narrating-I who is outside of the remembered content as well as the act of remembering it. Just as the narrative act occurs outside of the story, the self-conscious actions of the character-I does not include the act of narrating.

Since the particular account of the past is the product of decisions made by the one remembering, representation of the past can be seen as a matter of choice. The narrator of the story about Funes recognizes this when he says, “I prefer truthfully to make a summary of the many things Ireneo told me. The indirect style is remote and weak; I know that I sacrifice the effectiveness of my narrative” (111). This implies choosing one way of telling the past over another. The narrator is thus accepting his freedom to affect the past by how he recounts it, in spite of the inaccuracy that this freedom ensures.

In the introduction to the English translation of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*,

70 « J’ai à peu près compris qu’à son avis il n’y avait qu’un point d’obscur dans ma confession, le fait d’avoir attendu pour tirer mon second coup de revolver. Pour le reste, c’était très bien, mais cela, il ne le comprenait pas. J’allais lui dire qu’il avait tort de s’obstiner : ce dernier point n’avait pas tellement d’importance » (107).

71 “Prefiero resumir con veracidad las muchas cosas que me dijo Ireneo. El estilo indirecto es remoto y débil; yo sé que sacrifico la eficacia de mi relato” (95).
Hazel Barnes explains that “the very nature of consciousness is such [...] that for it to be and to know itself are one and the same.” Consciousness of an object is consciousness of being conscious of an object. Thus by nature all consciousness is self-consciousness, but by this Sartre does not mean that the self is necessarily posited as an object” (xi). In the Borges story, it is an encounter with Funes that serves as the object of recollection. Though the narrator is bound by the discourse space which he occupies, certain textual aspects indicate characteristics of what can be called a character’s consciousness. There is evidence in the story of consciousness of Funes, of the past, of the present, and of the act of narrating. However, these features of the narrative are more accurately associated with the consciousness of the remembering-I and not of the narrating-I. In “Funes the Memorious” this is easily confused due to the remembering-I’s awareness of his particular retrospection. But this is not awareness of the narrative situation. It is focalization on the remembering-I who is a character.

Referring to his remembered content as a “narrative” adds to this confusion: “I come now to the most difficult point in my narrative. For the entire story has no other point (the reader might as well know it by now) than this dialogue of almost a century ago” (111). The remembering-I’s consciousness is necessarily but not entirely of himself. Such lucidity creates the effect of self-consciousness which would allow him to overtly accept the limitations inherent in the act of recounting the past. Nevertheless,

72 « La conscience préréflexive est conscience (de) soi » (Sartre 112).
73 Here, the Spanish term “relato” is associated with the French term “récit” which is translated as “narrative” in Narrative Discours. The term’s particular importance in Genette’s theory is evidenced by its inclusion in the title. While other translations are possible, the English “narrative” remains consistent with Genette’s use of the term. This is also how Kerrigan has translates the word.
74 “Arribo, ahora, al más difícil punto de mi relato. Éste (bueno es que ya lo sepa el lector) no tiene otro argumento que ese diálogo de hace ya medio siglo” (95).
the narrative must be focalized on the remembering-I, who is a character, in order to emphasize the impossibility of retrieving a past experience because it is a character in the story who experienced the fallibility of remembering. It is not the narrator.

Not only does the Borgesian narrator explicitly refer to the account as a “narrative” and the conversation with Funes as a dialogue, but he also qualifies his narrative act as discourse by addressing the fictional reader. He is aware that his discourse has a recipient. His narrative acknowledges the other’s existence. He continues: “I will not attempt to reproduce [Funes’s] words, now irrecoverable” (111).75 His account is “indirect” because the past is “irrecoverable.” This amounts to internal focalization on a character that is consciously addressing someone other than himself. He accesses his remembered content indirectly because Funes’s words are impossible for him to remember exactly.

Remembering is a conscious act. This does not mean that the act of recollection is necessarily intentional but rather that it does necessarily imply consciousness of the remembered content. The act of recounting a remembered event also implies consciousness of the event. This means that consciousness can be attributed to the one recounting the past. When recounting a memory, the one remembering is not a character in what is remembered. So, the act of recollection makes a clear distinction between the subject who is recollecting and the object that is recollected. The subject only exists because the memory is not the original event. If this were not the case, the event would have been experienced initially as a memory. The act of remembering objectifies the past identity by distinguishing the present perspective from the past one.

75 “No trataré de reproducir sus palabras, irrecuperables ahora” (95).
For Funes, the act of remembering would not have worked the same. He had trouble sleeping because “to sleep is to be abstracted from the world; Funes, on his back in his cot, in the shadows, imagined every crevice and every molding of the various houses which surrounded him” (115). He is overwhelmed by the static presence of the content of his memory. His “certain incurable limitations” are all related to the way in which he encounters the past. In order for it to be encountered exactly as it was originally experienced, it would take him the exact same amount of time to remember the past as it did to experience it initially. So, Funes does not summarize because a summary uses less narrative space to tell about the same duration of story time. This limitation means that remembering would not be a concise and efficient process that would lend itself to the present situation. Instead, for Funes, remembering is time consuming and unrelated to the present, except in the sense that it distracts from or even takes the place of it. His experience of what happened is not affected by the present act of remembering.

In addition, Funes is limited in the present by the fact that his identity as a character in a remembered story was already established in the past. The remembered character (Funes as subject in the past) is unaffected by the subsequent character (Funes as remembering-I). By not distinguishing the original experience from the act of remembering it, Funes’s memory does not permit him to change his relationship to his past. In that way, he has a more perfect memory than others but exercises no freedom when remembering.

According to Sartrean ontology, it is the look of another person that makes one

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76 “Le era muy difícil dormir. Dormir es distraerse del mundo; Funes, de espaldas en el catre, en la sombra, se figuraba cada grieta y cada moldura de la casas precisas que lo rodeaban” (96).
conscious of oneself. It is the consciousness of the other’s existence that makes a
person conscious of her own existence. In the context of remembering, there is not
necessarily an explicit other. The past may be recounted to oneself. So, what
establishes the existence of the other if the subject and object are the same person? In
order to encounter oneself in the past, one must position the present self as the other
who looks at the past self. When remembering oneself in the past, the remembering-I is
the subject who objectifies the remembered-I.

When remembering, Funes experiences the past again as if his present self did
not exist. His memory consists of sensual experiences of material phenomena but only
as the subject of those experiences. He is never the object of his own memory because
the remembered content exists exactly as it was experienced. Since his memory is
directly related to his perceptual experience of the past, when he remembers he does
not encounter himself. He does not see his past self as the other who is experiencing
past events. He is never the remembering-I because he is always the remembered-I.
He remains the subject in his memories instead of becoming the subject in the act of
remembering.

The ramifications of such limitations are not only related to self-expression but
also to one’s ability to change over time. Funes does not experience the fundamental
contradiction of calling a character in a remembered account himself while in the
present not being that self. His past selves are clearly defined one from another
because he can chronologically distinguish all of the individual characteristics of himself
at one moment from himself at another. His past does not permeate his present; it is
distinctly separate. Similarly, he cannot affect his past, even intentionally, in order to
relate it more to the present. Funes’s present consists of maintaining the past rather than changing a past experience into a present remembered one. He does not interpret the past; it is a matter of fact.

Unlike Funes, for whom memories exist as they originally were, the narrator’s remembered content has to be brought into existence. His memories are not cumulative because they constitute acts in the present. All that can be quantified about his remembered content is the temporal distance between what he remembers and when he remembers it. The narrativerepresents an instance of when he remembered an event, and what he remembers is having met, on a few occasions, a certain person. So, a narratological analysis of the intradiegetic event of remembering can explain how this particular homodiegetic narrator is textually related to a past experience. An analysis of the text can divulge details about the perspective from which the narrative of the past is oriented.

Contrary to Funes but similarly to the narrator of the short story, remembering is a project for Meursault. The magistrate wants him to explain the motive for the murder, but as creator of the account of his past, Meursault is faced with the fact that his remembered content does not exist as a static thing for him to find. So, the reason is not simply there for Meursault to encounter as an object: “But why, why did you go on firing at a prostrate man?” Again I found no reply” (84). The reply to the question does not exist before the act of recounting the past. It has to be invented. Meursault doesn’t know why any more than the magistrate does because he also depends on interpreting the past in the present. The fact that remembering is a project occurring in the present is

77 « « Pourquoi, pourquoi avez-vous tiré sur un corps à terre ? » Là encore, je n’ai pas su répondre » (106).
also evidenced by what Meursault usually includes in his remembered accounts: “of recent years I’d rather lost the habit of noting my feelings, and hardly knew what to answer”(80). He is not accustomed to telling himself about the past in the way that the magistrate wants. This is exactly his problem throughout the second part of the novel, both before and during the trial. It is eventually this conflicting way of recounting the past that leads to the guilty verdict.

78 « J’ai répondu cependant j’avais un peu perdu l’habitude de m’interroger et qu’il m’était difficile de le renseigner » (102).
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In *The Stranger*, “Meursault” signifies several things. It refers to the character who, in the first part of the novel, went to his mother’s funeral and then to see a comedic film with a new girlfriend the following day. That same character wrote a letter to help his dubious friend Raymond stay out of prison and killed an Arab on the beach with a gun Raymond had given him. In part II, “Meursault” is still that character, now in prison. But, in the second part of the novel, Meursault is also the remembered-I from part I. During the process of legal questioning and the act of reflecting in his prison cell, Meursault (the intradiegetic character) remembers himself (Meursault the remembered character). Of course, Meursault is also the narrator. Focalization on Meursault in prison or at the trial, that is to say on the remembering-I, has the effect of blurring the difference between the character who is on trial and the extradiegetic narrator who is narrating the trial.

Phelan confuses the narrating-I and the remembering-I when describing homodiegetic narrators. His point of contention lies in the way in which the act of remembering changes the relationship a homodiegetic narrator has with past events: “In re-perceiving the events, in mingling his perspective now with his perspective then and in thinking about what he is saying about how he is affecting an audience [the narrator] develops […] a new relationship to those events” (62). He means to say that in focalizing on a character that is re-perceiving and intermingling the past with the present, a narrator can emphasize new relationships with past events. The new relationship is an effect of the narrative, not content within the story itself.
Phelan, in departing from the distinctions made by Genette and supported by Prince, blurs the lines between intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrative levels. If a narrator’s perception were to be present in the story, his narrative act would be intradiegetic. There would, therefore, have to be another narrator outside of that story in order for it to be narrated. For example, the narrator in “Funes the Memorious” is constructing a narrative to share with others, but his narrative act is an event at the primary narrative level. The extradiegetic narrative act is the one that mentions both the character as narrator remembering the past as well as the remembered character. So, the homodiegetic narrating-I is outside of the story he recounts, but he is a character in the story in various and conflicting ways. He is a character as remembered-I who met Funes, as remembering-I who recalls the encounter and as intradiegetic narrating-I who recounts this meeting to other characters in the story. This is a more similar narrative situation to Meursault, as character, recounting his past to the magistrate. The narrative is not focalized on the narrator but rather on the remembering-I who is experiencing the self-examination involved in the act of recollection. It is the remembering-I who, in the context of the story, can reflect on the situation in which he is both a present-I and a past-I.

In both texts, the first person signifier “I” creates confusion of narrative levels as well as temporal distance. The extradiegetic narrating-I narrates the content of the primary narrative. The intradiegetic narrating-I narrates the content of the remembered past (to another character in the story). The remembering-I furnishes the focal point within the narrated story that emphasizes the act of recollection. The remembered-I is the target of all the succeeding-I’s. He is the hero of the remembered event as well as
the event narrated intradiegetically. However, the hero of the primary narrative is both
the remembering-I and the remembered-I since both actions are intradiegetic in relation
to the extradiegetic narrative which recounts them. The narrative act is subsequent in
comparison to the remembered-I, but it is simultaneous in regards to the remembering-I.
The intermingling of the two perspectives combined with the act of recounting the past
to others creates a narrative that realistically represents the relationship between the
project of remembering the past and the project of telling the remembered content to
someone else.

By distinguishing between narrative level (intradiegetic/extradiegetic) and mode
(focalization), narratology is able to explain the phenomenon of a homodiegetic
narrative in which the singularity highlighted by the first person narrator is multifaceted.
This is particularly important in the context of remembering since the first person
character is also multifaceted. In addition, by comparing the homodiegetic first person
narrator/character in “Funes the Memorious” with the first person narrator/character in
the homodiegetic narrative *The Stranger*, one can hypothesize about what aspects of
the act of remembering would have been different for Funes. This adds to the
understanding of the phenomenological situation facing a remembering-I. Whether the
one remembering was also the hero of the remembered event or not, he is necessarily
engaged in a project that involves aspects of the present. The act of remembering is not
a return of a past experience. Instead, it is a present experience of a present act, the
target of which occurred in the past. So, when a homodiegetic narrator recounts his own
past, the aspects related to the act of remembering should be attributed to the character
that remembers, and the aspects related to the remembered events should be
associated with the character that is remembered. Nothing pertaining to the act of remembering should be attributed to the narrator since he is precisely narrating and not engaging in the act of recollection.
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