Involvement as Dialogue

Linguistic Theory and the Relation between Conversational and Literary Discourse

Dialogue and critical discourse, ed. by Michael Macovski. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Since the rise of transformational grammar as the dominant paradigm in linguistics, literary theorists have tended to look to it as the primary if not only available model of linguistic theory.[1] At the same time there has developed among literary scholars, as it has among scholars in a range of other disciplines, a growing and spreading interest in the theoretical framework of Mikhail Bakhtin. The coincidence of these two strands of theoretical interest among literary theorists is in a sense ironic, since, as elucidated by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in their book *Mikhail Bakhtin* (1990), Bakhtin positioned himself in opposition to linguistic theory, about which he was loudly skeptical. For Bakhtin, linguistic theory referred primarily to "the work of Saussure and those influenced by him: the Formalists, structuralists, and, later, the semioticians" (Morson and Emerson 1990, 123). Many of the Saussurian foundations of the linguistics of his time that Bakhtin challenges are also fundamental to contemporary structural and generative linguistics: the separation of language into an idealized *langue* and a vulgarized *parole* (in the Chomskyan paradigm, "competence" and "performance"), its reduction to rules, the formal representation of a monolithic conception of language, and focus on the speakers' production of language to the exclusion of interactive context and listeners' (or readers') inextricable influence and participation.

There are, however, vibrant strains of linguistic theory that are far more congenial to Bakhtinian theory, even parallel to it, but which have not, so far as I know, been taken up by literary scholars. In this chapter I offer a brief indication of some

of these alternative linguistic theories, mention some ways they are similar to Bakhtin's view of language, and then turn to my own work in this linguistic tradition. Specifically, I investigate the relationship between conversational and literary discourse in terms of a theoretical framework I have been developing which I call "involvement in discourse." Involvement, I argue, is a reflection of the interactive nature of language, the aspect of language that is fundamental to Bakhtin's notion of dialogue. Indeed, the very concern with the relationship between conversational and literary discourse is central to Bakhtin's writing, especially "The Problem of Speech Genres" (1986). On the basis of analysis of conversational and fictional versions of the same material by the same author, I will argue for what I call the poetic nature of spontaneous conversational discourse. I will also claim that literary dialogue does not literally represent spoken dialogue, but rather gives the impression of representing it by a process of synecdoche.

Overview of the Chapter

In what follows, I begin by describing the work of a number of linguists whose theoretical approaches to language differ from those of practitioners of transformational grammar. I briefly indicate some ways that their work is congenial to Bakhtin's theoretical framework as it is summarized by Morson and Emerson (1990) and as Bakhtin (1986) presents it in "The Problem of Speech Genres." I then present a brief sketch of my own recent work in this linguistic tradition, in which I propose a theory of literary discourse as an artful reworking of strategies that are spontaneous in conversational discourse. In this regard, my argument is similar to what Morson and Emerson call Bakhtin's "prosaics": his claim that ordinary speech is not simply "practical" but contains within it the "speech genres" that are elaborated in literary discourse. The main analytical portion of this chapter is then devoted to a comparison of conversational and novelistic presentations of the same material by a modern Greek novelist, Lilika Nakos. I show that Nakos's conversational rendering of her experience is more "involving" (in a sense, I argue, more "poetic") than the fictional rendering of the same events in her novels; in contrast, the fictional representations may be considered more "literary." This analysis demonstrates the quality I call "involvement" in discourse at the same time that it elucidates the relationship between conversational and literary discourse.

Alternative Linguistic Theories

"Prosaics" is a term coined by Morson and Emerson (1990) to reflect two aspects of Bakhtin's linguistic philosophy. One sense in which they use this term is to reflect Bakhtin's belief in "the importance of the everyday, the ordinary" (15). In this, Bakhtin's philosophy parallels a developing interest in the language of everyday conversation, in contrast with the mainstream focus of linguistic theory on sentence-based transformational grammars. Prominent among these developments has been the rise of interest in interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, branches of linguistic   cerned with the language of everyday conversation.

Paul Friedrich (1986) claims that the poetic dimension of language is its most important dimension, and that all language is relatively poetic, if poetry is seen as "integrating or organically fusing the music of language with the nuance of myth" (3) and as "all parts of a language system that exemplify a figure" such as "metaphorlike relations in grammar" and structures or speech that "may evince analogical freshness or ambiguity" (24). Friedrich also observes that linguistics has been characterized by a rage for order and a consequent ignoring of the ways that language is not ordered but chaotic. "Many of us have overemphasized," he argues, "the discreteness of units, the depth of structures, the strictness of rule ordering, freedom from context, and the linearity of messages in single-track communication . . ." (147–48).[2] Compare this perspective to Bakhtin, as paraphrased by Morson and Emerson: "For Bakhtin, the attempt to explain away messiness by postulating still more systems and the higher order of a system of systems is at best like adding epicycles to a Ptolemaic astronomy and at worst a wholly unjustified leap of theoretist faith" (1990, 144).

A. L. Becker's (1984b) notion of "prior text" is analogous to Bakhtin's "speech genres." First, Bakhtin: "When we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no means always take them from the system of language in their neutral, *dictionary* form. We usually take them from *other utterances*, and mainly from utterances that are kindred to ours in genre, that is, in theme, composition, or style" (1986, 87). Now Becker: "The actual a-priori of any language event—the real deep structure—is an accumulation of remembered prior texts" (1984b, 435). Consequently, "our real language competence is access, via memory, to this accumulation of prior text." Here and elsewhere (1982a, 1982b, 1984a, 1988a, 1988b, 1995) Becker argues for a linguistics of particularity, for a conception of language as languaging, that is, as active rather than static, and for a nonreductionist linguistics.

According to Bakhtin, "Nineteenth-century linguistics, beginning with Wilhelm von Humboldt, while not denying the communicative function of language, tried to place it in the background as something secondary. What it foregrounded was the function of thought emerging *independently of communication*" (1986b, 67). Bakhtin's own discussion of the importance of communicative context is reminiscent of the large body of work in the subfield of linguistics that is sometimes referred to as sociolinguistics. For example, Dell Hymes (1974, 1981) has argued repeatedly for a focus on communicative competence, as distinguished from Chomsky's notion of competence, which is strictly grammatical. Here belongs as well the lifelong work of John Gumperz (1982), who argues against the separation of language into "core" and "marginal" features. Quite the contrary, in his theory of conversational inference, a primary role is played by "contextualization cues," which are primarily prosodic and paralinguistic features that would have been relegated to "marginal" status by Saussurian linguistics. Finally, Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) long-term investigation of language use in three communities emphasizes the inextricable relationship between language use and other cultural patterns. Morson and Emerson note Bakhtin's conviction that "native speakers do not apply rules, they enter the stream of communication" (1990, 145). This could as easily be describing

the work of numerous contemporary linguists who question the transformational grammarians' conception of language as generated according to rules. A linguist who resisted the transformational model from its inception and stalwartly continued to do so until his death,[3] Dwight Bolinger argued for a view of language as "an organism" rather than "an Erector set." He observed that "our language does not expect us to build everything starting with lumber, nails, and blueprint, but provides us with an incredibly large number of prefabs, which have the magical property of persisting even when we knock some of them apart and put them together in unpredictable ways" (1961, 1). How similar Bolinger's view of language is to Bakhtin's: "If speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible" (1986, 79).

Bolinger's conception of linguistic "prefabs" is related to Bakhtin's notion of "speech genres," which he defines as "the typical forms of utterances" (1986, 79). Indeed, there is a small but significant and growing body of theoretical work on the linguistics of formulaicity, or the relative prepatternedness of language. In addition to Bolinger, Wallace Chafe (1968, 1970) and Adam Makkai (1972) were linguists who early explored the significance of idioms in linguistic theory. Paul Hopper (1988a, 1988b) argues for a conception of grammar as emergent, in order to take into account the prior history of collocations. My own work (Tannen 1987, 1989) surveys the prior literature and argues for the fundamental role of formulaicity in language use. I show that repetition, the basis for all linguistic structure and meaning, can be understood as a kind of spontaneous formulaicity.

Another facet of Bakhtin's objection to the linguistic theory of his time is that it regards language "from the speaker's standpoint as if there were only *one* speaker who does not have any *necessary* relation to *other* participants in speech communication" (1986, 67). This criticism calls to mind a group of anthropological linguists who have created a significant literature arguing for the inextricability of speaking and listening, for a conception of conversation as a "joint production" (Erickson 1982), for "audience participation in sensemaking" (Tannen 1989). A special issue of the journal *Text*, edited by Alessandro Duranti and Donald Brenneis (1986), is devoted to "the audience as co-author." (In the introduction to that volume Duranti provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of this perspective.) The lifelong work of Frederick Erickson (for example, Erickson and Shultz 1982) has been devoted to the study of listener behavior and its effect on speaking. In an article entitled "Listening and Speaking," Erickson (1986, 316) claims that speaking is like climbing a tree that climbs back. Kochman (1986) proposes the concept of "strategic ambiguity" by which speakers of vernacular black English intentionally leave it to hearers to determine the "meaning" of an utterance. Scollon and Scollon (1981) show that the structure of Athabaskan speakers' discourse is a reflection of the participation of their listeners (see also Scollon and Scollon 1981). Finally, the inextricability of interaction between speaker and hearer is fundamental to my own conception of involvement in discourse (Tannen 1989).

In this section I summarize the theoretical framework developed in my own recent work that grows directly out of the strains of linguistic theory described in the preceding section.

In *Talking Voices* (1989), I claim that ordinary conversation provides the source for linguistic strategies that are artfully developed in literary discourse.[4] This claim is analogous to Bakhtin's conception of ordinary conversation as made up of primary genres that are "absorbed" and "digested" by "secondary speech genres" such as novels and drama (1986, 62). More precisely, I argue that

> ordinary conversation is made up of linguistic strategies that have been thought quintessentially literary. These strategies, which are shaped and elaborated in literary discourse, are pervasive, spontaneous, and functional in ordinary conversation. I call them "involvement strategies" because, I argue, they reflect and simultaneously create interpersonal involvement. (1989, 1)

Involvement strategies drive both conversational and literary discourse by means of patterns of sound and sense. Sound patterns — the musical level of language, including rhythm and prosody — involve the audience with the speaker or writer and the discourse by sweeping them up in what Scollon (1982) calls rhythmic ensemble, much as one is swept up by music and finds oneself moving in its rhythm. At the same time, involvement is created through what I call audience participation in sensemaking: by doing some of the work of making meaning, hearers or readers become participants in the creation of the discourse.

I suggest, moreover, that these two types of involvement are necessary for communication, and that they work in part by creating emotional involvement. People understand information better — perhaps only — if they have discovered it for themselves rather than being told it. Listeners and readers not only understand information better but care more about it — understand it *because* they care about it — if they have worked to make its meaning.

The involvement strategies I identify in conversation are also those which literary analysts have independently identified as important in literary discourse. The three I have examined in depth are repetition, what I call "constructed dialogue," and details. *Repetition* establishes rhythm and also meaning by patterns of constants and contrasts. *Dialogue*, the representation of voices in discourse (what has been called, erroneously I argue, "reported speech"), creates rhythm and musical cadence as well as setting up a dramalike scene in which characters interact with each other and engage in culturally recognizable activities. *Details* provide seed from which listeners sprout characters, emotions, and meanings.

My notion of involvement is analogous to Bakhtin's notion of dialogue; it grows out of a view of language as fundamentally interactive and grounded in context; of meaning as the result of interplay between novelty and fixity; and of meaning as created by listeners as well as speakers in response to prior text. Furthermore, like Bakhtin, I have been concerned with the comparison of conversational and literary discourse. I have argued that listeners to and readers of discourse can "compre-

hend" what they hear or read only by reference to recognizable scenes composed of people engaged in meaningful activities. They create these scenes in their minds in response to the details, dialogue, and other clues provided by the discourse. This process of mutual participation in sensemaking gives rise to what I call *involvement*. In fictional dialogue, a similar process is at work. The fictional dialogue represents visually recognizable elements of conversation which provide the basis for the listener's re-creation of a complete conversation, standing in for a meaningful relationship. Fictional dialogue seems "real" by a process of synecdoche and involvement: the suggestion of remembered conversations. Put another way, Bakhtin claims that every conversation echoes other conversations, by the speakers and by others. In the same way, literary conversations echo both other literary conversations and remembered conversations from real life.

Conversational and Literary Discourse: Lilika Nakos

I turn now to analysis of conversational discourse, and a comparison of conversational and literary representations of the same events. I will show that there are more "involvement strategies" in the spontaneous conversational discourse than in the literary representation. I show, too, that the conversational discourse is more "poetic" in Friedrich's sense; that is, the involvement strategies result in discourse that is more "figured," more rhythmic, more elliptical, and, ultimately, more moving. In fact, my notion of involvement strategies constitutes a proposed account of what it means for a discourse to be "moving." On the basis of this analysis, I will conclude with a theory of the relationship between conversational and literary discourse.

The discourse I analyze was produced by a modern Greek novelist, Lilika Nakos.[5] While researching a book about her work (Tannen 1983), I interviewed Nakos over a period of eight months in 1975 and 1976 at her winter and summer homes outside Athens. In the course of those interviews I asked her about the circumstances surrounding the creation of her novels. In her answers to my questions, Nakos recounted some events that she had also represented in the novels. Thus I had the opportunity to compare Nakos's literary and conversational re-creations of the same events.

Lilika Nakos (1899–1989) was a member of a group of Greek writers known as "The Generation of the Thirties" who forged the novel form in modern Greek. One of the first women to write prose fiction in Greek, Nakos was known for her lyrical use of the demotic, or spoken language.[6] A contemporary critic, commenting on Nakos's early writing, complained that she wrote "not literature, but conversation." He perceived her writing to be so conversational in tone that he could not see it as literature at all. This is precisely the view taken by the Russian Formalists in their approach to the language of the novel, and, according to Morson and Emerson, it is a basis for Bakhtin's opposition: "They [the Formalists] equate the 'artistic' with the 'poetic'; they consequently equate prose with nonliterary discourse; nonliterary discourse, in turn, is characterized as 'practical' or (in other cases) habitual . . ." (1990, 21). Morson and Emerson suggest that the term "prosaics" represents Bakhtin's insistence on the artistic nature of the language of the novel, in contrast

to the Formalists' view that it merely apes the language of everyday speech, which they claimed was used automatically without attention to the language itself (attention to the language being the hallmark of poetry).

Comparing Nakos's conversation with her fiction provides the basis for making observations about the linguistic strategies used in these two forms of discourse. I will argue that the conversational versions of events are more "poetic" than the excerpts from the novel, if "poetic" is understood in terms of linguistic strategies that create involvement, such as ellipsis, rhythmic repetition, tropes, and figures of speech. The novel, however, is more "literary" in the sense of using elaborated metaphors and developed scenes. (Thus my claim that Nakos's conversation is more "poetic" in the sense of "more involving" does not undercut the literary inventiveness of the novel, and consequently in no way disagrees with Bakhtin's evaluation of the novel form as a kind of literary "hero," in Morson and Emerson's [1990, 308] terms.)

In the next section, I examine three examples of Nakos's discourse, then discuss the implications of my analysis for a theory of dialogue in literature.

Poetic Elements in Nakos's Conversational Discourse

I begin with an excerpt of Nakos's conversational discourse alone, in order to show what I am calling its "poetic" nature, that is, the workings of what I call involvement strategies. The first example is taken from a conversation in which Nakos is telling me about the circumstances that led her to write one of her novels.

EXAMPLE 1: "What, humorous?"

Lilika Nakos wrote her most commercially successful novel, *Mrs. Doremi* (*I Kyria Ntoremi*)[7] in 1947 for a French-language magazine in Switzerland. She subsequently rewrote it in Greek, and it was published in Athens in 1955 and serialized on television in the 1980s. These are the circumstances leading up to the writing of that novel.

During the devastating German occupation of Greece during World War II, Nakos starved, froze, was beaten, and lost most of the people she was close to; her mother died shortly after the war as a result of hardships she suffered during it. The death of her mother, who had been her only family and her main companion and responsibility, freed Nakos to leave Greece, which was then embroiled in a civil war as devastating as the world war upon whose heels it followed. In 1947 she returned to Switzerland, where she had grown up from the age of twelve, where she had written her first work in French, and where she had developed a reputation as a writer before she returned to her homeland, Greece, at the age of thirty-one.

The following excerpt is from a conversation in which Nakos was telling me about how she came to write the novel *Mrs. Doremi*, her only comic novel. As she described the setting, she had just arrived in Switzerland and was sitting in the train station, destitute and aimless. An acquaintance from her earlier time in Geneva approached and told her that a magazine editor had heard about her arrival and wanted to commission a humorous novella. She remarked, "What, humorous?"

She wasn't feeling humorous at all because, as she explained,

Den eicha tipota.	I didn't have anything.
Oute na koimitho,	Neither to sleep,
Oute na fao,	neither to eat,
oute domatio,	neither a room,
oute tipota.	neither anything.

I have laid out the transcription of Nakos's conversation in lines, not to suggest that it is poetry, but to reflect the rhythmic "chunking" that is created in speaking by intonation and prosody. It is hard to render a sense of the Greek in English translation because Greek, by virtue of its grammar as well as its conventional use, is far more elliptical than English. Structures that are natural and grammatical in Greek sound truncated and ungrammatical in English.[8]

The first line contains two negatives:

Den eicha tipota.
Neg. (I) had nothing

One could render this in English as "I didn't have anything," or "I had nothing," but in either case the double negative is lost. (The more literal translation, "I didn't have nothing," sounds either ungrammatical or extremely colloquial in English.) This negative statement is then illustrated with three specific lacks, three things she did not have, also expressed in elliptical form:

Den eicha tipota—	I had nothing—
oute na koimitho	nowhere to sleep
oute na fao	nothing to eat
oute domatio	no room
oute tipota.	no nothing.

The first thing one may notice about this set of lines is that they are framed by the word *tipota*, "nothing," which ends both the first and the last intonation units. This is a figure that Quinn (1982) calls epanalepsis—the repetition of a beginning at the end. This figure is equally evident in the original Greek and the English translation.[9] Looking at the Greek in the left column, however, one can see that it contains more parallelism than the English in the right column: the word *oute* was spoken four times, each time beginning a new "intonation unit" or burst of speech bounded by a coherent intonational contour.[10] In addition, the negative particle *Den* that begins the first line patterns with the negative particle *oute* that begins the next four lines. In order to allow the reader to perceive more directly the rhythm of the Greek, I present a word-by-word gloss:

Oute na koimitho
Neither to sleep

oute na fao
neither to eat

oute domatio
neither room

oute tipota.
neither nothing.

Part of the impact of this segment in Greek derives from its iconicity. The elliptical grammatical expression in Greek reinforces the impression of scarcity that Nakos is describing. Furthermore, the rhythm established by the parallelism ("not to sleep, not to eat, no room, no nothing") creates a listing intonation that implies a longer, perhaps even an endless, series of which only three items are specified. At the same time, this rhythmic pattern involves the hearer in the world created by the discourse, with its sense of isolation and deprivation.

Against this background, Nakos describes why (and, elliptically, how) she complied with the request for a comic novel:

kai mou edose pentakosia fragka.	And he gave me five hundred francs.
Piga,	I went,
pira domatio,	took a room,
efaga,	ate,
kai archisa na to grafo.	and began to write it.

The three statements of what she did not have are now matched rhythmically by three statements of what she was able to get with the five-hundred-franc advance. Again, to give a sense of the elliptical nature of the Greek expressions, I present a word-by-word gloss:

Piga,
went

pira domatio,
took room

efaga
ate

kai archisa na to grapso.
and began to it write

I have omitted the grammatically requisite pronouns in English to represent the sparsity of the Greek; one must try to "hear" it, though, as perfectly grammatical, and to sense the first person as included in the verb.

One may wonder why Nakos included the first line, "Piga," since semantically the word does not add anything to the story. I suggest that this line is there mostly to supply a third element to balance the list of three items she lacked: "nowhere to sleep, nothing to eat, no room." One may also wonder why, in the first case, "nowhere to sleep" and "no room" were both present since they are essentially synonymous. Here, too, the rhythmic realization of three is crucial to create a listing intonation, where the list effect suggests that there are more items that could have been listed than are actually named. At least three items are needed to give the sense of a list. The parallel rhythm is completed with the final line, which varies from the preceding three: "and I started to write it," much as the last line of the preceding "verse" ends with a change in syntax ("No nothing") and intonation (the last item has falling rather than rising intonation).

This brief example shows what I am calling the "poetic" nature of ordinary conversation, by which I mean its creation of involvement through audience participation in sensemaking and rhythmic ensemble. In particular, I have focused on repetition and ellipsis. The work of the listener in filling in elided meaning is suggestive of what Bakhtin calls "actively responsive understanding" (1986, 68), the participation of the listener that is an inextricable element in any utterance.

The following two examples contrast Nakos's conversational presentation of a story with her fictional representation of the same material.

Comparison of Conversation and Fiction

The next two examples compare conversational and fictional accounts of the same events in order to show that the conversational discourse is more "involving" than the fictional.

EXAMPLE 2: "To the kitchen!"

Toward a New Life (*Yia Mia Kainouryia Zoi*) is another of Nakos's major novels. It was written before World War II but was first published in 1960. It too was serialized for Greek television in the 1980s. Partly autobiographical, the novel is about a young woman, Barbara, who lives with her mother in Athens during the period of the repressive Metaxas dictatorship immediately before the entry of Greece into World War II. During one of our many conversations, Nakos told me about her experiences in the 1930s as the first—and for a significant period of time the only—woman journalist in Greece:

> Ego egrafa stin *Akropoli*
> kai olo mou legan
> "Stin kouzina! Stin Kouzina!"
> Nai, mia mera thimosa k'ego
> sto diefthindi.
> "Ma i kouzina thelei fayi,
> a ma pios tha ergastei?"
>
> I was writing for the *Acropolis*
> and they kept saying to me,
> "To the kitchen! To the kitchen!"
> Yeah, one day I got mad
> at the director.
> "But the kitchen needs food,
> so who's going to work?"

In the novel, this interchange is expanded and elaborated. Barbara's director says:

> "De thelo ego ginekes mesa sta grafia," xefonize. "I gineka einai ftiagmeni yia tin kouzina kai to kravati."
> I Varvara tote den vastaxe ke apantise: "Ma i kouzines, stratige, chriazonte simera pola chrimata yia na yiomisoune trofima. Ego doulevo kai i mitera mou magirevi."

> "I don't want women in the offices," he yelled. "A woman is made for the kitchen and the bed."
> Barbara then couldn't take it anymore and answered, "But kitchens, general, require a lot of money nowadays to fill them with food. I work and my mother cooks."

I will explore now why I claim that the conversational version of the story is more "involving." Nakos told me she was taunted,

> "Stin kouzina! Stin kouzina!"

> "To the kitchen! To the kitchen!"

This taunt, which is ambiguously attributed ("they kept saying to me"), is, first of all, elliptical. "To the kitchen" is a short way of saying, "Go to the kitchen," which in itself is a figurative representation of, "You should be in the kitchen." That she should be there because she is a woman is implied. All these implications are lexicalized and elaborated in the novel and attributed to the director (the person who in our day might be called the managing editor) of the newspaper:

> "I don't want women in the offices," he yelled
> "A woman is made for the kitchen and the bed."

Nakos's response, as she reported it to me, is similarly elliptical:

> "But the kitchen needs food [*thelei fayi*],
> so who's going to work?"

The rhetorical question "who's going to work?" is an elliptical way of saying that Nakos herself had to work; "the kitchen needs food" is figurative in that the kitchen is anthropomorphized (Kakava 1988). The assumptions underlying this statement are spelled out in the novel:

> "But kitchens, general, require today a lot of money to fill them with food [*chriazontai trofima*]. I work and my mother cooks."

It is worth noting that Nakos employed a more formal register in the fictional version. In our conversation she used the demotic or vernacular term *fayi*, but in the novel she used the formal register, or puristic form, *trofima*. The verbs, too, are different: in speaking, she said *thelei* ("needs") food, whereas in the novel she wrote *chriazontai* ("requires") food. This is particularly noteworthy in light of the criticism that she wrote "conversation, not literature." Clearly, her literature is not the same as her conversation. Her conversation is, paradoxically, more "poetic," in the sense of creating involvement through the use of ellipses and repetition. In Bakhtin's framework, one might say it is more "dialogic" in making less meaning explicit and requiring more participation from the listener. But the novel is more elaborated and written in a more formal or literary register. Most important for Bakhtin's notion of speech genres is that the novel conforms to expectations established by other novels.

I am not suggesting that the conversational version is in any sense the real one, what really happened or what was actually said. Quite the contrary, I have argued in detail elsewhere (Tannen 1989) that any occurrence of discourse is a creation;

in other words, there is no such thing, literally, as reported speech: even if a speaker re-creates the exact words that were said, the fact of creating them in a new context constitutes an original utterance. As Bakhtin has shown and emphasized, every utterance is new, even as it is patterned on previous utterances, or prior text.

EXAMPLE 3: "I am a little ant"

In the next and last example I again juxtapose two versions of the same events, one as spoken by Nakos in conversation with me and the other as she wrote it in her novel *Toward a New Life*. The conversation took place as Nakos and I were sitting on the porch in front of her summer house in Ekali, a suburb of Athens. The house, which was later razed to make way for an apartment building, had been built by Nakos's father. (Nakos had hidden Communists there during the Metaxas dictatorship.) In telling me the circumstances surrounding her writing of this novel (she said she wanted it to stand as a protest against the repressive Metaxas regime), Nakos told me about a woman who became a character in the novel: a young Communist whose real name was also the name of the character in the book, Chrysa (literally, Gold.) Nakos told me that Chrysa, who had been her friend and a frequent visitor to her home, was arrested and imprisoned in Athens. When Nakos went to visit her in prison, she discovered that Chrysa had been tortured.[11] Following are juxtaposed excerpts from one conversation on the left and from the novel on the right, first in Greek and then in a free translation into English.

Conversation	*Fiction*
Piga sti filaki	"Ela pio konta," tis eipe.
m'ena mantili	Kai koitaxe yiro tis
etsi palia dimena os ergatria.	san na fovotan
	na min tin akousi kanenas.
Kai ti ferane.	"Den boro na milo dinata
Kai ti na do?	kai den kanei.
Ti ferane etsi dyo nosokomes.	Kai an sou po ti mou kanan
Kathise sta kagela	den einai yiati
kai mou leei,	zito tin symponia kanenos.
"Lilika	Mono tora kai si kratas mia pena
an se zitisa	kai prepei na xereis ti yinete
den einai na sou po	ston topo mas.
ti travixa ego,	Prepei na xereis tous dimious.
yia na matheis omos ti travaei	Ma de sta leo afta, Varvarva,
o Ellinikos laos.	yia na kles.
Ego 'me ena mirmigaki.	Ma yia na xereis
Afto to mirmigaki na foundosei	ti travaei o kosmakis
yia n'alaxei i zoi	kai poii einai oi stavriotides tou.
ton anthropon pou ergazontai.	Eisai nea...
Leei, "Min kles, min kles.	tha ziseis

Ego," leei, "einai ena mirmigaki.
Kai esi," leei, "na se fonaxa
yiati, epei-epeidi grafeis.
Echete kathikon eseis oi grafiades."
Etsi milouse, "oi grafiades."
"Na xerete ti travaei
o Ellinikos laos."

kai prepei na xereis
ti felana oi diktatories...
Yia mena den beirazei...
Ti einai allo para ena halikaki,
ston kosmo pou chtizetai,
ston kosmo pou erchete.

Conversation	*Fiction*
I went to the prison	"Come closer," she said to her.
with a kerchief	And she looked around her
like that, poorly dressed,	as if she was afraid
like a worker.	someone might hear.
	"I can't speak loudly,
	and I shouldn't.
And they brought her.	And if I tell you what they did to me,
And what do I see?	it isn't because I'm looking for
They brought her like this,	anyone's sympathy.
two nurses.	It's only that now you hold a pen,
She sat by the bars	and you should know what's happening
and she says to me:	in our country.
"Lilika, if I asked for you	You should know the executioners.
It's not to tell you	
what I went through,	But I don't tell you this, Barbara,
but for you to learn	to make you cry.
what the Greek people go through.	But for you to know
I am a little ant.	what the people go through,
This little ant will expand	and who their crucifiers are.
to change the life of working people."	You are young...
She says, "Don't cry, don't cry.	You will live,
I," she says, "am a little ant.	and you should know what dictatorships
And you," she says, "I called you	are good for.
because, si-since you write.	For me, it doesn't matter.
You have a responsibility,	What am I, but a little stone,
you scribblers.	in the world that is being built,
(That's how she talked, "scribblers")	in the world that is coming."
to know	
what the Greek people go through.	

(*The image of Chrysa as a little ant appears elsewhere in the novel.*)

Kai i Chrysa ystera skeftiki eipe,
"Ach! ki ego etsi thelo na einai.
Ena anonimo mirmigaki
na kouvalao,

petradaki me petradaki
yia na chtisti
enas kosmos kainouryios.

And then Chrysa, thoughtful, said:
"Ach! And I want to be like that.
An anonymous little ant
to drag
pebble after pebble
to build a new world.

I have been intrigued, in all the years since this conversation took place, and am constantly struck anew when reading the transcript, that the story as Nakos told it to me is more moving than the one that appears in the novel. I can hardly read the words "Don't cry, don't cry," without feeling the urge to cry. What is it about the spoken version that has this effect? Again, I think, it is the combination of musical rhythm created by the alternation of small bursts of speech and pauses plus the repetition that together create involvement. Furthermore, the elliptical expression makes the listener fill in meaning and therefore have strong feelings for what is filled in. Finally, visual details create images that lead the listener to reconstruct a scene. All these are ways that, as Bakhtin puts it, "the listener becomes the speaker" (1986, 68).

First is the detail that leads the hearer to create an image of how Nakos was dressed, "with a kerchief," "like a worker." Next, the scene is set with a repetition that is lost in the English translation:

Kai ti ferane.	And they brought her.
Kai ti na do?	And what do I see?
Ti ferane etsi dyo nosokomes.	They brought her like this, two nurses.

The repetition of *kai ti* (pronounced keh-tee) in the first two lines is lost in English because the Greek word *ti* is actually two different words, homonyms. In the first line,

kai ti ferane
and her brought

"and they brought her"

ti means "her," spelled in Greek with the vowel η (*eta*). In the second line,

kai ti na do.
and what to see.

"and what do I see?"

ti means "what," spelled in Greek with the vowel ι (*iota*). When the third line picks up the phrase *ti ferane* (they brought her), in Greek it is continuing a thread that has woven through the three lines, rather than resuming a thread that has been lost in the English.

In both languages, however, the interjection "What do I see?" creates a pause as the reader waits to see what Chrysa looks like, just as Nakos, or Barbara, waited to see her friend. This iconically creates suspense.

Part of the rhythm of the spoken Greek is created by the repetition of the word *leei* "(she) says," which is uttered four times, three of them in three consecutive lines during the part of the greatest emotional intensity, when Chrysa tells Nakos not to cry. Elliptically, by representing Chrysa as telling her not to cry, Nakos informed me that she was crying. The repetition, "Don't cry, don't cry," is similar to the repetition in the earlier example, "To the kitchen, to the kitchen." The repetition creates a sense of repeated action.

In this section, the word *leei* is used to introduce the dialogue and then is interjected between subject and verb, an unlikely but not ungrammatical placement in English. In the following, I present the English with the phrase "she says" rendered in Greek because the single word suggests the rhythm better than do the two words required in English. (*Leei* is a "falling diphthong," pronounced "lay-ee" with slight emphasis on the first syllable.)

Leei "Don't cry, don't cry.
I," *leei*, "am a little ant.
And you," *leei*,
"I called you because,
si-since you write."

The repetition of *leei* creates a thread through the discourse that has a hypnotic rhythmic effect; it also reminds the hearer of Chrysa's presence and her voice at each repetition.

Contrast the direct address, "Don't cry, don't cry," with the wording of the novel:

Ma de   sta   leo afta,   Varvara, yia na kles.
But neg. you say these Barbara for to cry.

"But I don't tell you this, Barbara, to make you cry."

The repetition in "Don't cry, don't cry" iconically creates the impression that Barbara was crying continually. Also, the line of dialogue prompts the hearer to imagine a scene in which Nakos is crying and Chrysa is comforting her. In other words, the very sparsity of the dialogue prompts the hearer to do more work and create a more complete scene. In contrast, the line of dialogue in the novel does not create the image of Barbara crying—at least not as surely or as dramatically. It does not prompt the reader to imagine as vivid a scene as does the spoken discourse.

We are reminded of Chrysa again when Nakos interjects,

Etsi milouse,   "oi grafiades"
Thus (she) spoke, the writers

"That's how she talked, 'scribblers.'"

The Greek word *grafo*, "to write," yields the noun *grafiades* in the demotic vernacular. I use the term "scribblers" to suggest the vernacular tone. The more standard

"puristic" term would be *syngrafeis*, a term that Nakos does not use in the novel either. There she uses metonymy instead: "You hold a pen" (Kakava 1988).

Repetition is also crucial in the central metaphor of the conversational version, which is also used in the novel but in another section: that Chrysa is a little ant who is doing her part to build a new world. From the conversation:

"Ego 'me ena mirmigaki.
I   am a   little-ant

Afto to mirmigaki na   foundosei
This   little-ant   will expand

yia   n'alaxi   i   zoi
in order to change the life

ton   anthropon pou ergazontai."
of the people   who work.

Leei,   "Min kles, min kles.
(She) says, Don't cry, don't cry.

Ego," leei,   "einai ena mirmigaki."
I,   (she) says, am   a   little-ant.

The Greek word that must be represented in English by "little ant" is a single word, *mirmigaki*. It is a word that has an iconic effect in itself. The "i" sound (as in English "bee") is one of the few phonological linguistic universals: in all languages, it represents something small.[12] The onomatopoetic /i/ sound, which occurs three times in *mirmigaki* (meermeengakee), is echoed as well in the verb *eimai* (pronounced ee-may), "I am." The word *mirmigaki* is also semantically marked for smallness by virtue of the diminutive ending *-aki*. This is the sort of sound play whose pervasiveness in language leads Friedrich (1986) to regard all language as "poetic."

The relationship between the little ant and the new world is explicit in the novel; indeed, it is one of the novel's central metaphors and also lends it its optimistic title. In the conversation, Chrysa says simply that she is a little ant and the little ant will grow to change the life of working people. In the novel, in the section quoted first, the metaphor of a stone is used:

What am I but a little stone in the world that is being built, in the world that is coming.

In the later section the figure of the ant is elaborated, now as a simile rather than a metaphor:

I want to be like that. An anonymous little ant, to drag little-stone after little-stone, in order to build a new world.

In the novel there is also more elaborate condemnation of the dictators who have tortured Chrysa, in fancier terms:

Prepei na xereis tous dimious.

. . . .

Ma yia na xereis ti travaei o kosmakis
kai poii einai oi stavriotides tou.

. . . .

Kai prepei na xereis ti felana oi diktatories.

And you should know the executioners.

. . . .

But to know what the people go through
and who their crucifiers are.

. . . .

And you must know what dictatorships are good for.

Thus, the discourse of the conversations in which Nakos told me about her novels is more "poetic" than the fictional discourse in which she wrote about the same events. I am defining "poetic" as making use of what I have called "involvement strategies": rhythmic repetition, ellipsis, and figurative language that both sweep hearers along and require them to participate in sensemaking by imagining scenes suggested by the discourse. The fictional discourse, however, is artful as well, only in a more elaborated, "literary" way.

Summary: The Relation between Conversation and Fiction

In the first part of this chapter I briefly summarized the work of a number of linguists whose theories of language are more congenial, even parallel, to those of Bakhtin than are the theories of generative grammar that dominate the field and that have attracted the attention of literary theorists. I then summarized briefly my own theory of conversational involvement, which is in the tradition of these alternative linguistic theories. Finally, I devoted the major portion of this chapter to comparing conversational and literary versions of the same events, as told and written by the same author. I found that the conversational versions of events were more "involving," and in my experience more "moving," than the literary versions. I demonstrated that this resulted from a pattern of rhythmic repetition and ellipsis that worked together to sweep the hearer along and to force the hearer to fill in meaning. "Involvement," in my schema, is comparable to Bakhtin's notion of dialogism (although I developed my framework before reading Bakhtin), in that meaning is created jointly in conversation by hearers and readers along with speakers and writers. Finally, I suggested that literary discourse works by a similar process. That is, by a process of synecdoche, the representation of recognizable conversational parts triggers in the reader the re-creation of a conversation like those that have been experienced.

my research assistant Christina Kakava. She helped transcribe my taped conversations with Nakos and identified the passages in the books that corresponded to them. She also provided her own commentary on the comparison in her master's research paper (Kakava 1988). The analysis presented here is mine, but I have drawn upon Kakava's observations about Nakos's lexical choices.

Notes

1. See, for example, Traugott and Pratt (1980). Another branch of the field, pragmatics, has led to some interest in speech-act theory as a resource for literary theory (Lanser 1981; Pratt 1977).

2. For further discussion of chaos in language, see Friedrich (1988).

3. Bolinger died in July 1992. See also Bolinger (1976) for discussion of what I am calling formulaicity: the relative fixity of language.

4. This section is based directly on *Talking Voices* (Tannen 1989). There, in addition to discussing this theoretical framework in detail, I explore in depth three involvement strategies: repetition, dialogue, and detail.

5. In writing the book, I confronted the dilemma of choosing a form for the subject's name. Her surname in Greek is *Nakou* (pronounced nah-koo), but her father's surname is *Nakos*. In Greek, a woman's last name is in the genitive case: literally, she is the Lilika belonging to Nakos. Greek women usually, but not always, adapt their names in English and European languages to reflect the same form as their husband's or father's. This is what Lilika Nakos did when publishing in French (though it was occasionally spelled "Nacos"), and her few works published in English in the United States (translated from French) were published under that name as well. That is why I opted for the name "Nakos," even though I knew her as "Lilika Nakou," and that is how she is known to Greek audiences.

6. The "language question" in Greece is a complex and highly politicized issue with a long and much-remarked history. After Greece achieved liberation from four hundred years of Turkish occupation, there was a movement to return to the use of classical Greek in order to purge the Greek language of Turkish influence just as Greeks had purged their land of Turkish rule. As a compromise between those who wished to revive classical Greek and those who wished to retain the form of Greek that had developed naturally over the years ("demotic"), an expatriate Greek scholar named Koraïs developed a synthetic form of the language that was purified of Turkish influence and reintroduced many grammatical aspects of classical Greek that had been lost to natural processes of linguistic change. This form of Greek, called "puristic" (*katharevousa*), was legally imposed as the official language of public discourse, with the result that fiction writers found themselves forbidden to represent the language of spoken discourse in print. For a brief summary of the influence of the language question on the development of modern Greek literature and Nakos's place in this history, see Tannen (1983). For a detailed discussion of the language question and Greek literature, see Bien (1972).

7. The title *Mrs. Doremi* refers to the first three notes of the musical scale, "do-re-mi." It comes from the nickname given to Nakos by the students to whom she taught music in a high school in Rethymnon, Crete, in 1933. Following her father's death, Nakos had been obliged to go to work to support herself and her mother, and to repay the debts her father had left. Having been raised in the upper-class Athenian district of Plaka and the cosmopolitan European city, Geneva, she spent a harrowing year as a high school teacher on the still-wild island of Crete before locating a position as a high school teacher in Athens.

Herzfeld (1991), in an ethnographic study of the Cretan town of Rethymnon, discusses older townspeople's recollections of Nakos's year spent in their midst as well as their responses to the serialization of her novel on television in the 1980s.

8. An example of the elliptical nature of Greek syntax and discourse is the expression that I have used to name Example 1: "What, humorous?" This is a direct translation of the Greek *Ti, asteia?* which Nakos told me she had responded with when someone informed her that a Swiss editor wanted her to write a humorous novel about her experiences on Crete (*Thelei ena- mia istoria yia tin Kriti asteia*). The expression, *Ti, X?* ("What, X?") is a recurrent Greek "figure" (Becker 1979) or sentence frame that is conventionalized in Greek discourse. To get a sense of the meaning, it would be necessary to say in English, "Humorous? What are you talking about?" or, "Humorous? Are you kidding?"

9. I owe this observation to Paul Fallon, who credits Christina Kakava with identifying the figure of speech and its source.

10. The term "intonation unit," like the term "chunking," was developed by Chafe (1980) and his collaborators (of whom I was one) in conjunction with a study of the verbalization of past experience.

11. As I recount elsewhere (Tannen 1983), Nakos said that Chrysa was suspended upside down and beaten, with her slip stuffed into her mouth to muffle her screams. Then a woman burned her genitalia with a match.

12. The universality of the association of what linguists call the high front vowel, /i/, with smallness is observed by Sapir (1929), Jespersen (1933), and Jakobson and Waugh (1979).

Works Cited

Bakhtin, M. M. "The Problem of Speech Genres." In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, translated by Vern W. McGee and edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Becker, A. L. "Attunement: An Essay in Philology and Logophilia." In *On the Ethnography of Communication: The Legacy of Sapir. Essays in Honor of Harry Hoijer 1984*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity. Los Angeles: Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988a.

———. *Beyond Translation: Essays toward a Modern Philology*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

———. "Beyond Translation: Esthetics and Language Description." In *Contemporary Perceptions of Language: Interdisciplinary Dimensions. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1982*, edited by Heidi Byrnes. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982a.

———. "Biography of a Sentence: A Burmese Proverb." In *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, edited by Edward M. Bruner. Washington, D.C.: American Ethnological Society, 1984a.

———. "On Emerson on Language." In *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1981*, edited by Deborah Tannen. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982b.

———. "The figure a sentence makes." In: Talmy Givon (ed.), *Discourse and Syntax*, pp. 243–259. New York: Academic Press, 1979.

———. "Language in Particular: A Lecture." In *Linguistics in Context: Connecting Observation and Understanding. Lectures from the 1985 LSA/TESOL Institute*, edited by Deborah Tannen. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1988b.

——. "The Linguistics of Particularity: Interpreting Superordination in a Javanese Text." In *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. Berkeley, Calif.: Linguistics Department, University of California, Berkeley, 1984b.

Bien, Peter. *Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Bolinger, Dwight. "Meaning and Memory." *Forum Linguisticum* 1, no.1 (1976): 1–14.

——. "Syntactic Blends and Other Matters." *Language* 37, no.3 (1961): 366–81.

Chafe, Wallace L. "Idiomaticity as an Anomaly in the Chomskyan Paradigm." *Foundations of Language* 4 (1968): 109–25.

——. *Meaning and the Structure of Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

——, ed. *The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980.

Duranti, Alessandro, and Donald Brenneis, eds. *The Audience as Co-Author. Text* 6, no.3 (1986). (Special issue)

Erickson, Frederick. "Listening and Speaking." In *Languages and Linguistics: The Interdependence of Theory, Data, and Application. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1985*, edited by Deborah Tannen and James E. Alatis. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986.

——. "Money Tree, Lasagna Bush, Salt and Pepper: Social Construction of Topical Cohesion in a Conversation among Italian-Americans." In *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1981*, edited by Deborah Tannen. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982.

Erickson, Frederick, and Jeffrey Shultz. *The Counselor as Gatekeeper: Social Interaction in Interviews*. New York: Academic Press, 1982.

Friedrich, Paul. "Eerie Chaos and Eerier Order." Review of James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science. Journal of Anthropological Research* 44, no.4 (1988): 435–44.

——. *The Language Parallax: Linguistic Relativism and Poetic Indeterminacy*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Gumperz, John J. *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Herzfeld, Michael. *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Hopper, Paul J. "Discourse Analysis: Grammar and Critical Theory in the 1980's." *Profession 88* (1988): 18–23.

——. "Emergent Grammar and the A Priori Grammar Postulate." In *Linguistics in Context: Connecting Observation and Understanding. Lectures from the 1985 LSA/TESOL Institute*, edited by Deborah Tannen and James E. Alatis. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1988.

Hymes, Dell. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974.

——. *"In vain I tried to tell you": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

Jakobson, Roman, and Linda R. Waugh. *The Sound Shape of Language*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Jespersen, Otto. "Symbolic Value of the Vowel *i*." In *Linguistica: Selected Papers in English, French, and German*. Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1933.

Kakava, Christina. "Metaphor and Other Figures of Speech in the Discourse of Lilika Nakou." M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 1988.

Kochman, Thomas. "Strategic Ambiguity in Black Speech Genres: Cross-Cultural Interference in Participant-Observation Research." *Text* 6, no.2 (1986): 153–70.

Lanser, Susan Sniader. *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Makkai, Adam. *Idiom Structure in English*. The Hague: Mouton, 1972.

Morson, Gary Saul, and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.

Quinn, Arthur. *Figures of Speech*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1982.

Sapir, Edward. "A Study in Phonetic Symbolism." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 12 (1929): 225–39.

Scollon, Ron. "The Rhythmic Integration of Ordinary Talk." In *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1981*, edited by Deborah Tannen. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982.

Scollon, Ron, and Suzanne B. K. Scollon. "Cooking It Up and Boiling It Down: Abstracts in Athabaskan Children's Story Retellings." In *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse*, edited by Deborah Tannen. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1984.

——. *Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1981.

Tannen, Deborah. *Lilika Nakos*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983.

——. "Repetition in Conversation as Spontaneous Formulaicity." *Text* 7, no.3 (1987): 215–43.

——. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, and Mary Louise Pratt. *Linguistics for Students of Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.