



## ON FOCALIZATION ONCE AGAIN WHAT ABOUT THE READER?

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As I have recently detailed, *American Pastoral* revolves around a perspectival dance in which Nathan Zuckerman in tango-like fashion leads his partner, the Swede, so as to enhance his (narrative) performance [MASIERO 2011]. The tango metaphor is intended to transpose to the narrative situation the well-known fact that the better the male dancer, the less visible his performance and the more outstanding his partner's. Starting from the moment in which during the high-school reunion Zuckerman learns from the Swede's brother Jerry about the "bomb [that] detonated his life," Zuckerman's mind is caught in a writerly trap he will begin to respond to by immersing in his hero's perspective [ROTH 1997 : 69]. Narratologically speaking, this amounts to saying that the narrative situation slides toward figuralization: we are mimetically shown into the Swede's interiority while he is obsessively trying to come to terms with the unpredictable which has burst his life open and left it raw. On that earlier occasion, I focused my attention on the interplay between Zuckerman's authorial perspective and the Swede's restricted, internal one. I proposed that Zuckerman's "overt intrusions take the atypical shape of consonant reinforcements of the Swede's own take on things," presenting an exemplary instance of what Dorrit Cohn dubbed "stylistic contagion" according to which the linguistic markers conveying the figural character's "style" infect—so to speak—the narrator's own vocabulary [MASIERO 2011 : 186; COHN 1978 : 33]. The result of this contagion is the reduction of the distance between Zuckerman's authorial perception and the Swede's on the one hand, and the intensification of the reader's involvement in the Swede's existential predicament on the other.

For the sake of concision, I will take for granted the details of this narratological structure revolving around the blurring of the boundaries of the two perceptual selves at work in *American Pastoral*—Zuckerman's and the Swede's—and propose a possible direction to delve deeper into the dynamics of the reader's entanglement in the protagonist's plight, with an eye on Zuckerman's own involvement.

As the direction of my argument will lead me to consider the mirroring between the reader's involvement and Zuckerman's, it is paramount that we begin from the quote I deem foundational as far as the vocabulary of a figural situation is concerned:

But to wish oneself into another's glory, as boy or as man, is an impossibility, untenable on psychological grounds if you are not a writer, and on aesthetic grounds if you are. To embrace your hero in his destruction, however—to let your hero's life occur within you when everything is trying to diminish him, to imagine yourself into his bad luck, to implicate yourself [...] in the bewilderment of his tragic fall—well, that's worth thinking about. [ROTH 1997 : 88]

The verbs employed by Zuckerman to describe the kind of work he does as a writer are notable for their emotional import: both on the physical level—"embrace"—and on the cognitive level—"occur within," "imagine," "implicate"—the writer conveys his willingness to adjust to the existential frequency of his hero's tragic fall explicitly. As the repetition of the reflexive pronouns indicates, these verbs involve the writer's self directly: Zuckerman is as much at the center of his aesthetic endeavor as his hero. The writer is here describing a metaphorical embrace symbolizing the complete sharing of the same plunge into an obsessive, unrelenting, claustrophobic self-probing.

*American Pastoral* is the story of two internal dialogues, Zuckerman's and the Swede's, as they have *both* been "admitted into a mystery more bewildering [...] than Merry's stuttering" [93]. The writer tries to understand the Swede's existential mystery in his own way, namely, imagining what it must have felt like to be a man of "unequivocal success" who has generated a "little murderer [...] the monster Merry" [67]. On one level, *American Pastoral* is the result of empathy, or rather, of Zuckerman's empathetic calibration of his imaginative faculties on the Swede's existential predicament. On another level, *American Pastoral* is the reader's own empathetic adjustment to (Zuckerman's version of) the Swede's plight. One way or another, the book may be said to tell the story of a mesmerizing entrancement.

These considerations, which are, to knowledgeable readers of Roth's masterpiece, rather obvious, take on a new light once we consider the recent work of Vittorio Gallese, a neurophysiologist who teaches human physiology at the University of Parma. His work in the field of neurosciences has led him to be one of the discoverers of mirror neurons: using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging first in monkeys and then in humans, Gallese and his team have demonstrated that sensory-motor neurons set in motion by a given activity are triggered by the mere observation of that same activity perpetrated by someone else as well.

Further studies have shown that this vicarious activation holds true even when the action can be only inferred as it is actually hidden from view, in other words, when the action can be imagined. These initial results and the fruitful cross-fertilization with insights coming from psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice have led Gallese and his team to propose “an enlarged account of empathy”: mirror neurons are, accordingly, considered as the neural basis of emotional sharing and, more generally, of intersubjectivity [GALLESE 2006 : 48]. This is what Gallese says about the neural basis of emotional sharing:

When I see the facial expression of someone else, and this perception leads me to experience *that* expression as a particular affective state, I do not accomplish this type of understanding through an argument by analogy. The other’s emotion is constituted, experienced and therefore directly understood by means of an embodied simulation producing a shared body state. It is the activation of a neural mechanism shared by the observer and the observed to enable direct experiential understanding. [GALLESE 2006 : 50, emphasis in original]

As I have already pointed out, for mirror neurons to be activated in the correspondent cerebral area, a given activity does not need to be observed but may be just inferred; this crucial specification opens up the possibility to consider Gallese’s findings as bearing not only on the fruition of visual arts but also upon reading which revolves around the imaginative conjuring up of scenes, characters, events—in a word, of storyworlds. Given this necessary specification, let us return to the quote we have just read before moving on to what this may tell us about the entrancing quality of Roth’s masterpiece.

The understanding of someone else’s emotions depends upon “a shared body state” which is the result of an “embodied simulation.” This amounts to saying that we can penetrate the world of the other when we experientially simulate what it feels like to be in a certain (emotional) situation.

The internal reconstruction activated in the observer (be it actual or virtual) revolves around the creation of a shared world, what Gallese calls a “‘we-centric’ space” in which intentional tuning becomes possible according to an embodied “as if” [53]. It is worth stressing the fact that what Gallese is here proposing is *not* standard simulation, that is, “the result of a deliberate and conscious cognitive effort aimed at interpreting the intentions hidden in the overt behavior of others,” but rather a “mandatory, nonconscious and prereflexive mechanism” [GALLESE, EAGLE & MIGONE 2007 : 143]. The process of “understanding” is grafted on embodied “constitution” and

“experiencing”—these are the three highly significant terms Gallese employs.

The discoveries concerning mirror-neurons certainly provide neuroscientific evidence for insights as old as Plato and Aristotle and discussed profusely by, among others, Hume in his work *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740). As Suzanne Keen has aptly put it: “contemporary neuroscience has brought us much closer to [...] the mechanisms underlying empathy” [KEEN 2006 : 207]. And yet, in spite of this neuro-scientific insight, we are rather far from understanding whether there is an interconnection between specific narrative techniques and empathetic activation. Significantly, Keen’s article on narrative empathy ends with a host of unanswered questions and exhorts scholars not to favor any technique as intrinsically empathetic [224-225]. Empathy is probably the result of more than one narratological choice chorally contributing to an overall (empathetic) triggering. I would nonetheless suggest that the somewhat synergic effect that different techniques contribute to create does not exclude the desirability of deepening our understanding of single linguistic choices. I am confident that the comprehension of the workings of a single narrative component may enhance the overall awareness of the functioning of empathetic responses. More specifically, I would like to capitalize on the pivotal notion of embodiment as the concept which might provide a unified framework to access and explain both empathetic attunement and narrative immersion and understanding.

If, on the one hand, Nathan Zuckerman’s description of his spending months trying to “inhabit this person least like [himself]” [ROTH 1997 : 74] would seem to describe an instance of standard simulation—the writer demonstrates a “deliberate and conscious cognitive effort” [GALLESE, EAGLE & MIGONE 2007 : 143] to “think about the Swede for six, eight, sometimes ten hours at a stretch,” on the other hand, the heavy physicality of the terms he employs—“disappear into him,” “exchange my solitude for his,” “inhabit this person” [ROTH 1997 : 74]—indicates that the writer knows well the basic functioning of empathetic immersion, namely, experientially sharing a situation so as to be able to come as close as possible to understanding it. The verb “to inhabit” goes very close to the notion of “embodied simulation”: the writer lets his “hero’s life occur within [himself],” “imagine[s] [himself] in his bad luck,” and “implicate[s] [himself] in the bewilderment of his tragic fall”: the writer’s affective response is predicated upon activities eliciting self-other overlap [88]. As is explicitly recounted in

the book,<sup>1</sup> the result of the months spent in the Swede's shoes is a manuscript which we might assume to be *American Pastoral* authored by Nathan Zuckerman<sup>2</sup>: this is the thought Roth wants us to entertain. Precisely because of its revolving around an imaginative immersion, the fictional storyworld of *American Pastoral* becomes a very interesting and appropriate case study to address that very notion.

The side of the narrative coin concerning the writer's writing about the Swede is what the reader gets at the beginning of *American Pastoral* up to the dance with Joy Helpert during the high-school reunion, then the plunge into the Swede's (imagined) perspective follows: the third-person pronoun which signals Zuckerman's lifting the Swede onto his stage and his coping with the occurrence of the most unexpected. The plunge, obviously enough, is both Zuckerman's and the reader's: but how does the writer—and I am here referring to Roth via his alter-ego Zuckerman—manage to trigger the same claustrophobic involvement in the reader?

Michael Toolan may help us to set the stage for a consideration of this question. In his seminal work on narrative progression in short fiction, Toolan addresses issues concerning the relationship between narratological choices and empathetic engagement. Using a software called Wmatrix, he charts lexical and semantic patterns to measure what he dubs HEI (high emotional intensity) in the attempt "to pinpoint the 'grammar' of highly emotive-immersive narrative passages" [TOOLAN 2012 : 213]. Here is what he writes about the core situation that (according to him) does the trick—that is, enables readers to experience what characters experience:

The kind of situation in which the reader seems most likely to develop an emotional engagement, I postulate, is one where a speaker or focalized character is presented (or can be inferred to be present) in a particularized imaginable situation (a "deictic" task for the writer) where in addition we readers learn explicitly or implicitly what *they* feel strongly about and are moved by (in the narrative present). This engagement is a drawing of the reader into empathy with a depicted character, achieved by furnishing the textual means with which the reader can "see into" or *see along with* that character's imagined consciousness. [213, emphasis in original]

*American Pastoral* would seem to be a perfect example of the kind of situation

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<sup>1</sup> "After I'd already written about his brother [...] just before I set about to alter names and disguise the most glaring marks of identification, I had the amateur's impulse to send Jerry a copy of the manuscript to ask what he thought" [74].

<sup>2</sup> For some reflections on the books written by Zuckerman in his whole career see MASIERO 2011b : 208-212.

Toolan speaks of.

The wording I would like to focus my attention on is “a particularized imaginable situation” and the ensuing parenthetical specification “a ‘deictic’ task for the writer.” To be imaginable, that is to say, to trigger the kind of embodied participative involvement that is the fertile ground for understanding, for seeing along with, a situation has to be particularized. I would argue that the power *American Pastoral* exercises on its readers derives from an unrelenting anchoring to a very specific particularized situation defined, contained and condensed in a strategic employment of deixis.

Deictics “are linguistic expressions whose prototypical function is to contribute to acts of definite reference” (HANKS 2005 : 99). Reference is possible because of the presence of temporal and spatial adverbials (“now,” “yesterday,” “ago” etc; “here,” “there”) and personal pronouns and demonstratives (“I,” “he,” “this,” “that”) that help the reader “to relate utterances to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates [...] of the act of utterance” (LYONS 1977 : 636). As its Greek etymology suggests (from the verb for “to show”), a deictic spells out and thus directs our attention to the defined, embodied perspective through which events and emotions are presented. It has actually been suggested that the deictic center—the place in which the narrative “who,” “where,” and “when” originate—is “the reader’s contribution to understanding the narrative” [RAPAPORT *et al.* 1989 : 3]. More about this later.

Literally ubiquitous and for this very reason the most invisible and unobtrusive of words, deictics, originating as they do from a defined (perceptual) center, are the first items one is invited to focus his attention on to decide on issues concerning focalization. According to Toolan’s take on the readers’ involvement, they seem to be the perfect place to start as they are the most obvious textual means with which readers can “see along with” fictional characters.

The quotes I turn to now show what happens in *American Pastoral* and, more specifically, in the internally focalized chapters, after Zuckerman sheds the first person pronoun and lifts the Swede onto the stage, as far as deixis is concerned:

Was he supposed to feel that way? It happened before he could think. She was only eleven. Momentarily it was frightening. This was nothing he had ever worried about for a second, this was a taboo that you didn’t even think of as a taboo, something you are prohibited from doing that felt absolutely natural not to do, you just proceed

effortlessly—and then, however momentary, *this*. [ROTH 1997 : 91, emphasis in original]

I begin with a quote from the very first pages of Zuckerman's dive into the Swede's perspective—that is, the first scene he conjures up to map the Swede's obsessive search “for the origins of their suffering”: father and eleven-year-old Merry spend a summer day at their seaside cottage in Deal New Jersey and the Swede kisses his daughter's stammering mouth [92]. The episode is exemplary as it inaugurates the ways in which Zuckerman intends to represent his hero's consciousness: narratorial commentaries (quoted monologue and/or thought-report) and Free Indirect Discourse (hereafter FID) dance on the fictional stage and the reader is presented with stifling close-ups—when FID gets center stage—and more sweeping, almost universal considerations about thoughts, emotions and feelings—when the narrator contemplates the Swede's situation against the backdrop of broader considerations concerning the individual's relationship with history and the senselessness of human fate. This as far as a narratological explanation of what happens is concerned. I would, however, pursue a less theoretical direction and address the employment of deixis taking the ordinary reader's point of view. Bluntly put, the common reader is unlikely to know the notion of FID at all; an attentive one, however, in spite of his possible lack of an appropriate vocabulary, certainly perceives that there is a shift, a change in emotional gear which both allows and invites one to tune in on the Swede's predicament.

In her interesting work on the readers' caring about literary characters, Blake Vermeule maintains that narratives slide into free indirect discourse when “emotionally labile material” is touched [VERMEULE 2010 : 78]. I would broaden this notion by calling this sliding “emotional spilling” and argue that the consequent affective response is particularly contagious because of the proximity deictics offer. Through the reinstatement<sup>3</sup> of deictic elements typical of direct discourse, FID passages become the vehicle through which readers are offered embodied positions to inhabit. The demonstrative “this”—as opposed to “that”—is more readily imaginable because it pertains to the (same) place the reader inhabits, or to put it more precisely, “this” is the name the reader would use to refer to what surrounds him. The movement from “Was he supposed to feel *that* way?” to “*this* was nothing he

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth stressing that in fiction, the very notion of “reinstatement” is purely hypothetical as in it “there is no direct ‘original’ prior to or behind an instance of ID [Indirect Discourse] or FID; the supposedly ‘derived’ utterances are not versions of anything, but themselves the ‘originals’ in that they give as much as the reader will ever learn of ‘what was really said’” [MCHALE 1978 : 256].

had ever worried about” announces a shift of perspective: from a certain evaluative distance that poses the issue in terms of somewhat abstract terms to a closer, specific and specified inner dilemma. The demonstrative bespeaking proximity—“this”—transforms an elsewhere relating to somebody else’s positioning—be it in time and space or both—and his perception of what is remote and what is close at hand, into an object, event, thought, emotion entering our “peripersonal space” [RIZZOLATTI & SINIGAGLIA 2006]. The peripersonal as opposed to the extra-personal space is the area surrounding us including all the objects we can reach by extending our hands. Our bodies are the measure which allow us to build the very notion of space and the interrelated concept of intimacy (or lack of). As Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia demonstrate, the activation of certain neurons (F4-VIP) “does not simply signal the position of the stimulus within a purely visual area [...] but reflects the evocation of a potential motor activity directed toward that stimulus capable of localizing it as *a possible action* independently from its actual performance” [RIZZOLATTI & SINIGAGLIA 2006: 65, emphasis in original, my translation]. This means that once an object enters—imaginatively or actually—our peripersonal space, our immediate, embodied comprehension of the emotional state of someone else is triggered. A sharing at the visceral-motor level is the necessary condition for our empathetic involvement. Once the readers’ first-person singular is implicated, it becomes possible for them to imagine from within—in other words, to shift from a cognitive to an emotional response. The interior monologue that the passage we started with presents, capitalizes on this response thanks to the employment of another deictic element: the personal pronoun “you.” The spelling out of the second-person personal pronoun works—at least— on two levels. On the one hand, it renders the Swede’s interior reasoning audible, indicating its haunting quality: the protagonist somehow doubles his own self to objectify and thus universalize his “natural”—which here functions as a synonym for “normal”—take on things.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it automatically evokes the presence of the first-person singular pronoun which thus comes out from its hiding behind the third-person “he.” The common result is implicating the reader in positions easier to inhabit—I take easiness to be conjugated in terms of relevance and availability to our peripersonal space, both physically and metaphorically.

One could actually argue that reading the passage above does not work as I maintain, that there is nothing special in that “this” and that the “you” does not trigger any particular involvement as I claim it should. I would certainly

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<sup>4</sup> It is needless to stress the fact that, thematically speaking, this is one of the main trajectories of the protagonist’s coping with what has happened.



agree that the passage I chose does not strike in itself any exceptional note, which, on its own, is capable of causing the emotional attunement I speak of. I would nonetheless claim that this first figural scene inaugurates a vocabulary—typical of narrative situations predicated upon restricted focalization—that causes the desired effect *cumulatively*. Starting from here, in fact, the reader is repeatedly presented with a deictic field—invariably the same, page after page—that gradually erodes the very possibility of a detached perspective. In this respect, the reader becomes mesmerized as Zuckerman himself has previously been mesmerized. Deictics work their way into the reader’s embodied experience as they are the skeleton around which the Swede’s existential situation is presented and becomes imaginatively reproducible—not in abstract, but in experiential terms.

Let us consider another example:

Oh, the pitying way he is looking at me and my pathetic explanation. Superior bastard. Cold, heartless bastard. *Stupid* bastard. That’s the worst of it—the stupidity. And all of it is because he looks the way he looks and I look the way I look and Dawn looks the way she looks and ... [ROTH 1997 : 97, emphasis in original]

Merry’s speech therapist is the target of the Swede’s angered thoughts. A page earlier, the very same tonality associated with the first-person pronoun—“he hates me”—was presented by Zuckerman with the explanatory, reader-friendly, typically narratorial, “thought the Swede” [96]. In the passage just quoted, the shift to the “I” is unfiltered by the narrator’s intervention and thus it reaches the reader in all its raw immediacy. From this moment on, the pronoun “I” surfaces over and over again, at times suddenly and unexpectedly,<sup>5</sup> at times as the emotionally logical outcome of a deeper immersion in the Swede’s interiority, as is the case with the almost three-page-long textual portion in which the Swede reminisces about the significance being a Marine had for him. The long stretch in the first-person singular about Marines, America, and the Swede’s love for the former as representing quintessentially the latter ends as follows:

Got to marry a beautiful girl named Dwyer. Got to run a business my father built, a man whose own father couldn’t speak English. Got to live in the prettiest spot in the world. Hate America? Why, he lived in

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<sup>5</sup> “All she had to do was wait. If only she could have waited. That was Merry’s story in a nutshell. She was impatient. She was always impatient. Maybe it was the stuttering that made her impatient, *I don’t know*. But whatever it was she was passionate about, she was passionate for a year [...]” [ROTH 1997: 160, emphasis mine].

America as he lived in his own skin. All the pleasures, all the success and happiness had been American [...]. Yes, everything that gave meaning to his accomplishments had been American. Everything he loved was here. [213]

Here we are facing again the interplay between the dual-voiced tonality typical of figural situations: the reader's almost overhearing the Swede's talking to himself and the narrator's comments that position his hero's feelings on a wider—both historical and cultural—arena. The two perspectives merge in the deictic "here" which pertains both to the narrator's and the character's world (not to mention the further possible turn of the screw crossing the diegetic boundary to include the author, himself, adumbrated and doubled in Zuckerman). "Here," however, belongs in another dimension, the reader's, in which it simply names where the reader's body is.

Let us take a step back. One of the most obvious naturalizing moves a reader automatically makes when he reads is postulating a subjectivity.<sup>6</sup> It actually seems that this positing is the default situation the reader's activity of recreating a storyworld hinges upon; if so—and I think this indication captures our common experience as readers—it follows that we need to give that subjectivity a place and time to inhabit. As Csordas deftly summarizes: "the very possibility of individuation [...] has as its condition of possibility a particular mode of inhabiting the world as a bodily being" [CSORDAS 1999 : 144]. Along these same lines, we may say that the readerly re-creation of the individual that we understand as possessing a body (more or less) like our own (read: a character) is all the more successful as we manage to gain access to the very same existential coordinates representing his/her *particular*, that is, unique, mode of inhabiting his/her world (read: fictional world). The transportation<sup>7</sup> into a given storyworld—my argument goes—may depend heavily on deictics that provide the anchoring for this ascription, which is a consequence of our own experientially embodied mode of understanding and coming to terms with reality. The deictic center originating in the "who," "where," and "when" concerning the Swede's life is mirrored in the deictic center revolving around the "who," "where," and

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<sup>6</sup> In this context, naturalization refers to the default, that is cognitively automatic, ascription of an appropriate (read natural) context to a given utterance. This notion is at the basis of Monica Fludernik's rethinking of narratology starting from conversational storytelling and experientiality in her seminal book *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*.

<sup>7</sup> "Transportation can be thought of as a melding of an integrative attention, imagery, and emotion, focused on story events" [MAZZOCCO *et al.* 2010: 361].

“when” concerning the reader’s life. “The reader’s contribution to understanding the narrative” turns thus out to be the reader’s providing his own embodied self as the stage to experience what (focalizing) characters live and understand [RAPAPORT *et al.* 1989 : 3].

He had allowed her to talk, he had allowed himself to listen, only because he wanted to know; if something had gone wrong, of course he wanted to know. What *is* the grudge? What *is* the grievance? That was the central mystery: how did Merry get to be who she is? But none of this explained anything. This could not be what it was all about. This could not be what lay behind the blowing up of the building. [...] This whole exchange had been a ridiculous mistake. To expect this kid to talk to him truthfully. [...] *Here* was the hater—this insurrectionist child! [ROTH 1997 : 138, emphasis in original]

This passage presents, together with the ingredients we have already met, “this” and “here”—whose repeated appearance guarantees the cumulative effect I have spoken of earlier—a further element which goes in the same direction: the shift to the present tense. This change in verbal tense is certainly not a deictic; it, however, contains an intrinsic one—“now.” As with the other deictics, the potentiality for empathetic involvement is very high in this case too, as the present tense—that is, the “now”—is the temporal counterpart of the “here”: both spell out the existential coordinates of the reader’s embodied presence in the world.

How could he bring Dawn here? Driving Dawn down McCarter Highway, turning off McCarter and into this street, the warehouses, the rubble, the garbage, the debris [...] Dawn seeing this room, her hands touching the walls of this room, let alone the unwashed flesh, the brutally cropped, bedraggled hair [...] [239]

He had done it by kissing her. But that couldn’t be. *None of this could possibly be.* Yet it was. Here we are. Here *she* is, imprisoned in this rat hole with these “vows.” [241, emphasis in original]

So *this* was why she was always losing her patience with Orcutt—to put me off the track! [335, emphasis in original]

Tonight the imagining would not let him be. [359]

Yes, the breach had been pounded in their fortification, even out here in secure Rimrock, and now that it was open it would not be closed again. They will never recover. Everything is against them, everything that does not like their life. [423]

These excerpts present some more examples taken from different moments in the development of the story *American Pastoral* tells: they are some of the very numerous instances in which we zoom in on the Swede’s thoughts as

he thinks them. It may actually be argued that this is the very narrative stuff the whole book is made of. The incessant focus on the Swede *while* he copes with Rita, with newly-found Merry, with his family and friends during the dinner on 1 September 1973, gives the book its typical claustrophobic quality. This is an obvious consequence of the massive employment of Free Indirect Discourse and quoted-monologue structuring Zuckerman's (imaginative) reconstruction of the self-absorption that has devastated the Swede's life ever since the bombing of the local postal office up to 1 September 1973. And yet, it must be noted that not all the instances of "now" instead of "then," "this" instead of "that," the present tense instead of the past tense, the first-person instead of the third person, here and in many other passages of the book, are strictly required by FID or quoted-monologue. We should not forget that the story is governed by retrospection, and thus, inherently by the past tense: as such it typically revolves around a spatial—to be associated with temporal—elsewhere.

The point I am here trying to make is that *American Pastoral* succeeds at involving readers because it is built on the linguistic blocks which allow an automatic, immediate, embodied experience of a given moment—these linguistic blocs are the deictics "here," "now," "this," "I." The Swede's existential situation begins to feel more real for the reader because of the massive employment of these blocs. If, as Gallese suggests, "the body is the main source of semantic content," the spatio-temporal coordinates which permit the imaginative leap are the only ones our bodies directly experience [GALLESE 2006 : 54]. Our bodies are in the present tense, in the here and now of the space they occupy, rooted in the restricted perception of our limited first-person singular. The past, the future, the elsewhere, are cognitively filtered and thus displaced states which require an intellectual intermediation, an abstraction. *American Pastoral* turns its readers into resonating chambers—the chambers being their own bodies which are emotionally (that is physiologically) set into motion by seeing imaginatively what the Swede goes through in the very moment he does it. And once readers become aware of the continual presence of the writer himself who has become a resonating chamber/body in the first place, they may experience the inebriating condition of the impersonating writer himself, who cannot but write in the here and now of writing, who cannot but experience the here and now of his characters inhabiting his own embodied world.

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