

The Other Case

Michael Wood

Abstract: This essay explores the suggestion that many American narratives are supplementary, correcting narratives – alternatives to the main story on offer. The guiding thought is that of Henry James’s “possible other case,” and the chief example is Cormac McCarthy’s “No Country for Old Men,” in which one story after another fails to cope with the ongoing mystery it faces. The novel may imply, then, that narrative itself, rather than any individual report or fiction, is in crisis or has come to the end of its road. A coda to the essay proposes the option of nonnarrative understandings of the world in those extreme situations where storytelling is no longer the sense-making activity we so often take it to be.

“Only she dont mean that,” Quentin Compson thinks at the start of *Absalom, Absalom!* when Rosa Coldfield gives him her reasons for telling him her story: that he may become a writer someday, “as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now,” and that he will “perhaps . . . remember kindly then the old woman who . . . talked about people and events you were fortunate enough to escape yourself.” In Quentin’s intuitive understanding, Rosa is not thinking about a literature of the future, nor is she worried about her own life in his memory. “It’s because she wants it told,” he insists to himself.¹

There is a subtle critical question here. What is *it*, and what does it mean to want *it* told? What is the difference between the desired telling, on the one hand, and literature and memory, on the other? The two are not logically or conceptually opposed: literature and memory both deal in, among other matters, getting things told. So how can Rosa not mean what she says, or not mean *just* that?

Quentin may believe that she is treating him as a recording angel, a scribe who does not even have to write, only listen. *It* will be *told* when she has finished telling him whatever she has to say. This explanation must be a piece of the truth, but Rosa seems to have more in mind: not just a record but a filling

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out or correcting of the record – a record that will supplement or supplant other accounts. This possibility suggests a definition of *narrative* as it functions in the historical and cultural imagination: not just a story but a further story, a missing story.

National narratives of this kind would differ in what they found missing, not only in what they told but in what they wanted told. For example, what European narratives characteristically find missing (and therefore supply) is a sense of reality, while American narratives find reality itself to be missing something. This distinction is familiar in many ways – familiar enough, I think, to have become somewhat mysterious.

To remind ourselves of the first mode we have only to think of any great European novel, from *Don Quixote* to *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, or of W. B. Yeats's response to his reading of George Eliot: "I, who had not escaped the fascination of what I loathed, doubted while the book lay open whatsoever my instinct knew of splendour."² This is his way of saying that Eliot magisterially reminded him of the inescapability of reality's verdict on human chances. The second mode is identified with extraordinary grace and care by Henry James in his *Prefaces* to the New York edition of his works. In this essay, I pursue this task of identifying the missing, only this time in contemporary fiction, where it rewrites the American romance in a rather different register.

A large part of the interest of James's American mode is its reliance on irony. There is clearly some distance between what James is saying and what we think of as Romantic irony, although it may be that a more extended and informed consideration of the relation would close the gap quite a bit. For the moment, it will be enough to consider some of the implica-

tions of James's calling *irony* what others, and indeed James himself, have usually called *romance*. Michael Wood

James makes his argument in two different prefaces to the New York edition, becoming bolder and bolder as he goes. His first move is an implied distinction between verisimilitude and fidelity to the historical record. It is possible, he suggests, to produce an effect of truthfulness without any identifiable documentary warrant, and if one does not produce this effect, then all one's artistic efforts are wasted. This may seem a fairly uncontentious notion, but James is answering an extremely contentious claim from "a highly critical friend," namely, that the writers and artists in James's fiction "not only *hadn't* existed in the conditions I imputed to them but ... for the most part ... couldn't possibly have done so." They were "absolutely unthinkable in our actual encompassing air"; there was no "past or present producible counterfoil" for them; and "none of my eminent folk were recognisable." James is not disclosing irony as his defense at this point; he reaches for "tone" and "amusement," the playful possibility that such folk at least *might* exist. He acknowledges that such a link to reality could more properly be thought of as "only a link, and flimsy enough too, with the deepest depths of the artificial," and suggests that the practical test of such imaginings is the further work that can be done on them, the "test of further development which so exposes the wrong and so consecrates the right." Meanwhile, he has rather grandly anticipated the conclusion of his own later argument:

If through our lean prime Western period no dim and charming ghost of an adventurous lyric genius might by a stretch of fancy flit, if the time was really too hard to "take," in the light form proposed, the elegant reflexion, then so much the worse for the time – it was all one could say!³

Fortunately, it was not all one could say, and James knew that such a way of winning the argument was also a way of losing it – hence his promise to return to the topic “in another hour.” In this second hour, James confesses that he cannot produce “chapter and verse” for the “super-subtle fry” of his fiction but sees, “on going over these things,” that his “postulates,” his “animating presences . . . were all . . . ironic.” And he offers his famous, far-reaching, and I want to say *American*, definition of irony:

When it’s not a campaign, of a sort, on behalf of the something better (better than the obnoxious, the provoking object) that blessedly, as is assumed, *might* be, it’s not worth speaking of. But this is exactly what we mean by operative irony. It implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain. (*Art of the Novel*, 222)

Here, the “possible other case” is the imaginable other case; imaginable and lacking, requiring our imagination because it is lacking. For James, irony is a matter of honor, and in giving us a sense of what he calls the “whole passion” of his retort, he strikes the national note:

What does your contention of non-existent conscious *exposures*, in the midst of all the stupidity and vulgarity and hypocrisy, imply but that we have been, nationally, so to speak, graced with no instance of recorded sensibility fine enough to react against these things? – an admission too distressing. What one would accordingly fain do is to baffle any such calamity, to *create* the record, in default of any other enjoyment of it; to imagine, in a word, the honourable, the producible case. (*Art of the Novel*, 222 – 223)

In the stern (or unimaginative) European tradition, and certainly in the eyes of James’s critical American friend, the honorable, producible, but as yet unrecorded

case must look romantic in the derogatory sense, a generous but helpless flourishing of illusion. Indeed, James’s own definition (in his preface to *The American*) allows for this reading. If “the romantic stands . . . for the things that . . . we never *can* directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire,” then we cannot directly or swiftly know how availing (or unavailing) the imagined case may be, even if we grant its hypothetical moral promise (*Art of the Novel*, 31–32). There are other difficulties, as Rosa Coldfield’s story-in-waiting reminds us. From Faulkner to Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and Toni Morrison, American writers have believed in the possible in a way their European counterparts have not; but the possible, producible case has included many different notions of what is honorable, and the honorable thing has often been to tell the truth in its darkest possible version, the honor lying in the refusal to be blinded by the darkness. In this sequence, James looks like a noble optimist, campaigning through irony for “the something better.” But the very word *irony* announces, or at least allows for, the darkness James does not name, because he knows quite well that the “possible other case” will not always be rich and edifying. He would not need the term *irony* if it were. The possible other case, by definition and in the longer term, includes all kinds of options, from the satirical guess that turns out to be the historical truth, as with Philip Roth’s *Our Gang*, to the imagined justification of child-murder in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and the nightmare scenario of Thomas Pynchon’s never-quite-arriving apocalypse in *Gravity’s Rainbow*.

But all these narratives are narratives, stories that are told or could be told, even if their telling is obstructed or long delayed. I now want to take the question of

American narrative to a slightly different and highly contemporary place: the place where narrative itself may give out, or become impossible. A privileged instance of such a location is Cormac McCarthy's novel *No Country for Old Men* (2005). Of course, the story that breaks down does itself reach us through a story, and McCarthy's work is not short on plot and adventures and deaths. But the worry about narrative is very visible, and urgently articulated. The question is both literary and historical, raising concerns that would have seemed strange to earlier novelists. To quote Henry James once again: "it seems probable that if we were never bewildered there would never be a story to tell about us" (*Art of the Novel*, 63). But then the story is the antidote to our bewilderment as well as the result of it, and what if the bewilderment were such that it put paid to the very idea of story? Could America's present difficulty – or one of its difficulties – be that it has somehow met the unnarratable?

The recounted story of *No Country for Old Men* involves a shoot out between drug-running gangs in the Texas desert: eight corpses, a truckload of heroin, a document case full of dollar bills. A hunter who happens on the scene makes off with the money and is pursued and murdered, as are a number of other people who get in the way of chief killer Anton Chigurh. We know both very little about Chigurh – he is "dark complected"⁴ but probably not Mexican; he works for one of the cartels – and at the same time, we know quite a lot, since he constantly philosophizes, as characters in McCarthy's novels often do. The difference here is that Chigurh's philosophy makes him eerily coherent but also impenetrable – as distinct from Judge Holden in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1992), for example, who is endlessly eloquent but insane in a clinically familiar way. Is Chigurh a "psy-

chopathic killer," as one character calls him? Yes, but the description just renames the bewilderment he causes. Even the character who uses the phrase sets no store by it. "So what?" he says. "There's plenty of them around" (*No Country*, 141). Is Chigurh "a goddamned homicidal lunatic," as a man who is on his trail says? The novel's thinking man, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, says yes to the homicidal element but hesitates about the noun: "I dont think he's a lunatic though." "Well, what would you call him?" "I dont know" (*No Country*, 192). Chigurh is twice called a ghost – "You wouldnt think it would be possible to just come and go thataway" (*No Country*, 248) – the second time only to plunge Bell into a deep philosophical quandary. Bell says, "He's pretty much a ghost," which sparks the following conversation:

Is he pretty much or is he one?

No, he's out there. I wish he wasnt. But he is.

I guess if he was a ghost you wouldnt have to worry about him.

Bell continues, "I said that was right, but ... when you've said that it's real and not just in your head I'm not all that sure what it is you have said" (*No Country*, 299). The reality of the killer is neither a consolation nor an aggravation of the threat. He is as spectral and unearthly as any ghost, as lethal as any worldly agency can be. He is the incarnation of what defeats every idea of adequacy – clinical, forensic, and moral – or as Bell puts it in his homemade but accurate way, "when you encounter certain things in the world, the evidence for certain things, you realize that you have come upon somethin that you may very well not be equal to" (*No Country*, 299). This failure to be equal to what we come upon creates, among other things, a sort of death threat to narrative. One could be equal to defeat or even disaster,

Michael
Wood

The Other Case for instance, but scarcely to sheer unraveling incomprehension.

This theme is raised at the start of the novel, in a context that only later acquires its relevance to the figure of Chigurh. Bell recalls the execution of a nineteen-year-old man and his meetings with the young man before he died:

He told me that he had been plannin to kill somebody for about as long as he could remember. Said that if they turned him out he'd do it again. Said he knew he was goin to hell. Told it to me out of his own mouth. I dont know what to make of that. I surely dont. I thought I'd never seen a person like that and it got me to wonderin if maybe he was some new kind. (*No Country*, 3)

The notion of a “new kind” of person – or event or conjuncture – recurs in the book. A colleague of Bell’s says, “I just have the feeling we’re looking at something we really aint never seen before” (*No Country*, 46). Another colleague says, “Who the hell are these people?” Bell replies:

I dont know. I used to say they were the same ones we’ve always had to deal with. . . . Back then they was rustlin cattle. Now they’re runnin dope. But I dont know as that’s true no more. I’m like you. I aint sure we’ve seen these people before. Their kind. (*No Country*, 79)

The action of the novel takes place in 1980 – we are told that a coin minted in 1958 is twenty-two years old – but the mood of these remarks seems to belong to a much later era, closer to the century’s end and even after. The significance of Bell’s words lies not in their historical analysis – many changes of degree feel like changes of kind – but in their pinpointing of a fear, a new shape of consciousness to go with what may be a new shape of crime. “I still keep thinking maybe it is somethin about the country,” Bell says, a reflection of America’s “strange kind of

history” (*No Country*, 284) – a history that all the old narratives domesticated in one way or another, we might say, but that now seems merely strange in a raw, unmanageable sense.

Some of the old narratives are still in play in the book, but their main effect is to reveal their helplessness. The unrepentant young killer is said to have “no soul” (*No Country*, 4). Satan is said to have invented narcotics in order to “just bring the human race to its knees” (*No Country*, 218). At other times the old categories permit a stark, dry humor, as when Bell distinguishes between an execution, that is, a cold-blooded cleaning up of a mess among criminals, and death from “natural causes,” where criminals have killed each other out of greed and dissension – causes “natural to [their] line of work” (*No Country*, 76). But these are all stories about the time, about where America is “now,” responses to a whole set of instances of rising violence and unheard-of mentalities. “Here the other day,” Bell says, “they was a woman put her baby in a trash compactor. Who would think of such a thing? My wife wont read the papers no more. She’s probably right” (*No Country*, 40). Chigurh, one of McCarthy’s most brilliant inventions, is a phantom of reason, what the world’s accidental horrors would look like if they had a mind; he is the crazed but logical theory of what resists theory.

Another killer who works for the cartel tries to explain to the hunter who took the money how dangerous Chigurh is. The hunter is full of desperate and misplaced bravado. “What is he supposed to be, the ultimate bad-ass?” The killer responds, “I dont think that’s how I would describe him.” He then says, in quick succession, “I guess I’d say he doesnt have a sense of humor. . . . You cant make a deal with him. . . . He’s a peculiar man. You could even say he has principles” (*No Country*, 153). This characterization is oblique and hard to fol-

low, and the doomed hunter certainly does not understand. But the reader's repeated encounters with Chigurh confirm the diagnosis in every respect: principles, peculiarity, no sense of humor, no deals. Here, for example, is Chigurh talking to a high-up in the cartel after he has killed the hunter and recovered the money:

Chigurh smiled. We have a lot to talk about, he said. We'll be dealing with new people now. There wont be any more problems.

What happened to the old people?

They've moved on to other things. Not everyone is suited to this line of work. The prospect of outsize profits leads people to exaggerate their own capabilities. . . . And it is always one's stance upon uncertain ground that invites the attentions of one's enemies. Or discourages it.

And you? What about your enemies?

I have no enemies. I dont permit such a thing. (*No Country*, 253)

We note (within the fiction) the accidental repetition of Bell's phrase "line of work" and register that Chigurh is picking up the other killer's diagnosis in another respect. "The people he meets tend to have very short futures," the man had said. "Non-existent, in fact" (*No Country*, 150).

There are two set pieces in the novel where we see Chigurh's philosophy, his travesty of reason, at work in some detail. Each case involves the toss of a coin, an impersonation of destiny in the form of absolute chance. The logical contradiction itself is part of what this man represents – we might call it the authority of the incomprehensible. The first case is a kind of game, the closest Chigurh gets to humor, and the drastic nature of the stakes makes it hard to see the fun. Mildly irritated by the owner of a gas station, Chigurh gets into a teasing conversation with the man, then asks him, "What's the

most you ever saw lost on a coin toss?" *Michael Wood*
The man says he doesn't know. Chigurh spins a quarter, slaps it onto the back of his forearm, and the man fails to grasp what we understand immediately: that Chigurh is asking this man to bet on his life. "Well, I need to know what it is we're callin here," the man says. Then, "I dont know what it is I stand to win." Chigurh says, "You stand to win everything. Everything." The man calls heads, and Chigurh says "Well done" before giving the man the coin. Chigurh leaves, and the man appears, finally, to understand something of what has happened: "He put both hands on the counter and just stood there with his head bowed" (*No Country*, 55 – 58).

This highly stylized, haunting episode is a portrait of something like the killer's day off: the point is not that he may not have to kill someone but that he gives himself the fifty-fifty chance of not doing it. But in this case, he does not even have to give himself the chance: there was no killing on the table or in the offing until Chigurh started the game in which he got to play God's agent. The novel's other set piece is the exact mirror image of this scene: the victim does not escape, and the toss of the coin is not a gratuitously produced threat but the sudden and surprising introduction of a chance of reprieve – only a chance, to be sure, a "possible other case" – and when the call is wrong, no longer a possible case at all. Before he kills the hunter, Chigurh asks him for the money and threatens to go after the hunter's wife if he does not hand it over. ("Otherwise she's accountable. The same as you. I dont know if you care about that" [*No Country*, 184]). The hunter offers a stupid threat in return, and very soon is killed. Chigurh sets off to get the wife because he said he would. You could even say he has principles. Before he kills her, indeed before he tosses the coin, which is his bizarre manner not so much of allowing her

The Other Case a break as permitting himself the half-option of changing his mind (“I have only one way to live. It doesn’t allow for special cases. A coin toss perhaps” [*No Country*, 259]), a strange conversation takes place:

You got no cause to hurt me, she said.

I know. But I gave my word.

Your word?

Yes. We’re at the mercy of the dead here. In this case your husband.

That dont make no sense.

I’m afraid it does.

I dont have the money. You know I aint got it.

I know.

You give your word to my husband to kill me?

Yes.

He’s dead. My husband is dead.

Yes. But I’m not.

You dont owe nothin to dead people.

Chigurh cocked his head slightly. No? he said.

How can you?

How can you not? (*No Country*, 255)

After the coin toss – it’s important we understand that if the woman had called it right she would have been spared, that for Chigurh fate can swerve but not be tampered with, and before he spins the coin he holds it up “for her to see the justice of it” (*No Country*, 258) – Chigurh says he is sorry, and the woman responds, “You make it like it was the coin. But you’re the one.” And a moment later, “You wouldnt of let me off noway.” He answers with the following ghastly sermon:

I had no say in the matter. Every moment in your life is a turning and every one a choosing. Somewhere you made a choice. All followed to this. The accounting is scrupulous. The shape is drawn. No line can be erased.

I had no belief in your ability to move a coin to your bidding. (*No Country*, 259)

This sententious argument helps us see why Bell does not want to call this man a lunatic. Only his premises are crazy. Even his indifference to human distress seems unexceptional, since lawyers, politicians, and statesmen have high arguments for the same numbness. His line of thought is impeccable in its way: not wrong, just tautologous, and applicable to too many cases. It is true that the woman could not make the coin show the face she had called, also true that Chigurh himself had no say in the result of the toss. But he had a say in whether he should toss the coin and whether he should kill the woman, whatever the coin said; everything he claims would also have remained true if he had spared her. The turning, choosing, accounting, shape, and line would all necessarily have led to a different necessary outcome: not because they had to but because they did. This is the flaw in all fatalisms: a confusion of the irrevocable with the inevitable.

But if Chigurh justifies his life by a logic that can seem to justify anything (or can seem to justify everything), then we have clearly abandoned narrative for theory or principle, inadequate as both are in this case. McCarthy has established a fading sequence of evasions: the uncontrollable madness of the contemporary world is concentrated in the figure of the enigmatic but all-too-lucid killer; the killer himself has an argument instead of a story; and the argument has no purchase on events. This progression is made desperately clear to us just after Chigurh concludes his sermon and shoots the girl. “Most people dont believe that there can be such a person,” he says, meaning a person such as himself, unremittingly faithful to the logic he has chosen. “You can see what a problem that must be for them. How to prevail over that which you

refuse to acknowledge the existence of.” “Of course things could have been another way,” he adds. “But what does that mean? They are not some other way. They are this way” (*No Country*, 260). But “this way” includes Chigurh’s getting hit by a runaway car soon after (in narrative time) and in the very next paragraph (in book space). There is a chance for a rescue of narrative here, and in the film version of the novel, directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, it hovers tangibly in the cinema air, perhaps because we expect comeuppance and closure in this medium more than we do in others. Providence will have dealt with the monster even if the law cannot: he will have been killed as he deserves to be. But in the film, as in the novel, the chance vanishes. Chigurh is badly hurt but stumbles off, never to be heard of again in this story, except as a memory; therefore, he is perpetually alive, the killer-philosopher, the incomprehensible other made worse rather than better by clarity of thought and diction, not a “new kind” of person but a person who destroys the concept of kinds.

Until recently, the “possible other case” in American narrative was always another story, the story that was lacking. It may be that this sense of narrative is still the dominant one, and I hope it is. But McCarthy’s disturbing proposition deserves our careful attention. If what is lacking is not another, untold story but the very possibility of story, a great many perspectives on the world will need to change. However, even if this were true, our condition would not be quite as desperate as it might at first seem, and by way of a coda I should like to glance at the possibility that narrative is not our only way of making sense of things, so that its loss, while dire, would not leave us entirely bereft of intelligibility.

There is a strong tradition, especially in the twentieth century, of assuming that a narrative is the only way to make sense of

a life. We all have stories, and we all need stories. Sartre says as much, and so do many other authorities in many fields. Psychoanalytic success, in one of Freud’s major versions, is the piecing together of broken narratives into a whole; stories, Walter Benjamin asserts, have counsel for us. This tradition is so forceful that responses to any questions about it are likely to be extremely radical and simple. Either it states an obvious truth, or it represents an extreme bias. My sense is that it states a partial truth, and that the missing part, the story that is not a story, is important. I want also to put in a bid for the lyric sensibility, the accretion of images, of snatches of poem and song, in our understanding of ourselves. But I shall conclude by evoking the only really fierce and sustained antinarrative argument I know. This appears in philosopher Galen Strawson’s essay “Against Narrativity,” published in 2004, a year before *No Country for Old Men*. It is an accident, but a welcome one, that Strawson at one point resorts to the tone and diction of Henry James. If Heideggerians think narrative is essential to any idea of authenticity, Strawson writes, “so much the worse for their notion of authenticity.”⁵ Citing philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair MacIntyre, as well as a number of psychologists, Strawson conjures up what he calls a “psychological Narrativity thesis” (“there is widespread agreement that human beings typically see or live or experience their lives as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories”) and “an ethical Narrativity thesis” (“a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood”). The uppercase *N* indicates that Strawson uses the word to signify “a . . . property or outlook,” not just all the things it ordinarily means (“Narrativity,” 428). His quotations certainly show the extraordinary health of

Michael
Wood

the two theses. Taylor says we occupy “a space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer”; Ricoeur wonders how anyone “could . . . give an ethical character to his or her own life taken as a whole . . . if not . . . in the form of a narrative?” (“Narrativity,” 436).

Strawson does not think such assertions and inferences are true in the form in which they so often appear. They are true for those who feel them to be true, but not for others. There are what Strawson calls Diachronic personalities, who often go in for narrative, and there are Episodics, who usually do not. “The strongly Episodic life is one normal, non-pathological form of life for human beings, and indeed one good form of life for human beings, one way to flourish” (“Narrativity,” 432–433).

Toward the end of his essay, Strawson lets loose with a fine provocative onslaught:

The aspiration to explicit Narrative self-articulation is natural for some – for some, perhaps, it may even be helpful – but in others is it highly unnatural and ruinous. My guess is that it almost always does more harm than good – that the Narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence in one’s life is, in general, a gross hindrance to self-understanding. (“Narrativity,” 447)

This is not a plea for the unexamined life – although Strawson is far from convinced that “the examined life . . . is always a good thing” (“Narrativity,” 448) – but a

reminder of the many modes of examination open to us. He does not say much about these modes, but insists that “form-finding” can take place without narrative, and that “the business of living well, for many, is a completely non-Narrative project” (“Narrativity,” 443, 448).

We may still have our doubts, and my own guess, if I were guessing, would be the opposite of Strawson’s: that narrative self-articulation usually does more good than harm. But we could believe this and still allow for the virtues of the other, Episodic mode. Strawson addresses the concern directly: “Some may still think that the Episodic must be deprived in some way, but truly happy-go-lucky, somewhat-comes-along lives are among the best there are, vivid, blessed, profound” (“Narrativity,” 449).

We will not find answers to McCarthy’s dark questions among the “see what comes along” crowd; we have seen what comes along, and we need to do something about it, to find a form for it, in Strawson’s terms. But what if we accept the enacted defeat of story in *No Country for Old Men*? What if we take it as an invitation to look for the “possible other case” in riddle or paradox or song, or in any mode that proposes a nonnarrative relation to historical and other time? Indeed, McCarthy’s later novel *The Road* (2006) might be read in just this way: as an American narrative where time and story have stopped.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936; New York: Modern Library, 1993), 4.
- ² W. B. Yeats, *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1916; New York: General Books, 2010), 104.
- ³ Henry James, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* (1934; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 166–169. Subsequent citations are noted parenthetically within the text.
- ⁴ Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men* (2005; London: Picador, 2010), 210. Subsequent citations are noted parenthetically within the text.
- ⁵ Galen Strawson, “Against Narrativity,” *Ratio* (new series) 17 (4) (December 2004): 431. Subsequent citations are noted parenthetically within the text.