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Frames and Coherence in Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love*

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This study in linguistic stylistics examines the coherence in Sam Shepard's play Fool for Love *by focussing on the relationship of speech exchanges to frames and the relationship of frames to one another. A frame, defined as the activity that the speakers are engaged in, consists of two types: (1) single-speaker frames, which involve only one speaker and an implied or passive listener, and (2) multi-speaker frames, which involve more than one speaker. The following paper, however, will examine only multi-speaker frames.*

Because frame analysis enables one to focus on units larger than those usually examined in linguistic stylistics, it can be seen to provide a clearer understanding of textual coherence in dramatic texts. Specifically, the study argues that both coherence in Shepard's play results when speech exchanges and frames are formed into patterns which the reader perceives as unified wholes, and that coherence may result when even discontinuous utterances are organized into a pattern which the reader can perceive as a unified whole. On a larger scale, it is shown that discontinous frames can themselves be arranged into a pattern which can be perceived as coherent by the reader, and that overall coherence depends not upon continuity between frames, but rather on the arrangement of discontinous or continuous frames into a coherent whole.

INTRODUCTION

Early studies in linguistic stylistics focused on minute elements such as cohesive devices as the primary units of analysis (Thorne, 1965; Halliday, 1970; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The chief drawback with such an approach is that a distanced, holistic view of the text in its entirety is hardly ever possible. Attention did gradually shift from this narrow focus to a slightly wider view. Speech exchanges (chunks of discourse consisting of a series of utterances between two speakers) became the primary unit of study (Burton, 1980; Noguchi, 1984). But the problem with these studies was that no clear limits were set within which the terms of discourse

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could be encased. Thus, gaining insight into what constituted the structural unity of a text was still quite elusive.

This study proposes that in order to see a text as a coherent whole, it is important to break it up into the largest, most clearly defined units of discourse possible. Attention can then be focused on the elements which make up these units as well as on the way in which they function within the play as a whole. More specifically, attention can be focused on three areas: (1) how the smaller elements (e.g., topic words and transitional phrases, both of which will be discussed later in the analysis) make up and sustain a speech exchange or a piece of conversation (i.e., a series of logical, relevant utterances between two speakers); (2) how utterances and speech exchanges are incorporated into larger units (frames); and (3) how frames themselves and the relationship between frames result in coherence. Such attention will be achieved by linguistically analyzing the principles governing coherence in Sam Shepard's (1984) play, *Fool for Love*.

Given the aims of the present study, Shepard's play (hereafter, *FFL*), can provide valuable data. The primary reason it was chosen for the examination of the principles of coherence in drama is that, as with many contemporary dramatists (e.g., Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter), Shepard essentially depicts talk or conversation as ends in themselves. Shepard's dialogues, therefore, lend themselves conveniently to an analysis which focuses mainly on language.

What makes Shepard's play *FFL* especially attractive for this study is its seeming disjointedness or lack of coherence. The play is characterized, for example, by sudden shifts in topics within speech exchanges and by the occasional lack of transitional phrases between one topic and another. However, this disjointedness may be illusory if utterances are seen as fitting within frames. That is, even though the utterances may be discontinous, a certain continuity may appear if these utterances are seen as parts of larger units. Similarly, while the sudden transition from one activity to another in the play creates a seeming disjointedness between frames, continuity between frames might become apparent if all these frames are seen as incorporated into a still larger frame. By continually seeing smaller, disjointed elements as parts of naturally occurring larger units, and by focusing on the relationship between those larger units, an approach which uses frame analysis may be able to establish continuity and coherence in *FFL*.

Since the field of linguistic stylistics (or linguistic criticism

as it is sometimes called) is by nature interdisciplinary, the present study will make use of research conducted not only in linguistics, but also in the associated areas of discourse analysis, sociology, cognitive science, and literature. More specifically, this examination of coherence will differ from traditional discourse studies of literature in that it will concentrate on frame analysis, an aspect of sociology and cognitive science which, to my knowledge, has thus far not been used to examine coherence in literary texts. The first section of this study lays out the theories of coherence and frames adopted for this study; the next section analyzes selections from Shepard's play in light of these theories; the final section draws conclusions from the analysis.

Linde's Theory of Coherence

Several experts in discourse analysis, anthropology, and stylistics (e.g., Tannen 1979, 1982, 1987; Linde, 1987; Lundquist, 1985; Giora, 1985) have proposed different definitions of coherence. This study adopts Linde's approach (1987).[1] Defining coherence very specifically, she says:

> Coherence is a property of texts; it is one set of relations by which we may analyze a text. Specifically, the coherence of a text consists of the relations that the parts of the text bear to one another. A text may be described as coherent if its parts, whether on the word level, phrase level, sentence level, semantic level, or level of larger units can be seen as being in a proper relation to one another and to the text as a whole.
> (p. 346)

This particular study shall concern itself with cohering devices at the word and phrase level (e.g., topic words, repetitions of words and phrases). It will also adopt Linde's terms of causality, continuity and discontinuity. Continuity and discontinuity will be established by closely studying the dialogues in the play, *FFL*, in terms of (a) whether or not utterances are related to each other, and (b) whether or not utterances are related to the topic. Causality will be established by isolating the causes of continuity or discontinuity between utterances.

Linde (1987) develops and illustrates her approach to coherence specifically in relation to the narration of life stories. She states that a life story, both linguistically and psychologically, must have the property of coherence, but this coherence is "not a property

of the life, but rather an achievement of the speaker in constructing the story" (p. 346).

One can, presumably, analyze coherence in drama along the same lines. That is, adapting Linde's view, coherence is not a property of the details of the story, but rather the result of the dramatist's ability to construct a story such that those details form a coherent whole. Going a step further, coherence is also the result of the reader being able to perceive and use frames as a way of making sense of that story. The analyst, like the dramatist, looks for causality and not connexity, for causality results from the *organization* and not the mere relatedness of details. This study will restrict itself to understanding coherence from the point of view of the reader.

One of the main objectives of this study is to show that coherence in speech exchanges, as they occur in drama, may result when discontinuous utterances are organized into a pattern which the reader can perceive as a unified whole. Similarly, it will be shown that discontinuous frames can also be arranged into patterns that reveal themselves when closely studied by the reader. This arrangement (and perception) of discontinuous elements into a coherent whole is explained by Linde (1987) as a form of "management of discontinuity" which she calls "discontinuity as continuity," a strategy by which a speaker "uses a series of discontinuous events to establish that discontinuity forms a continuity" (pp. 347-350).

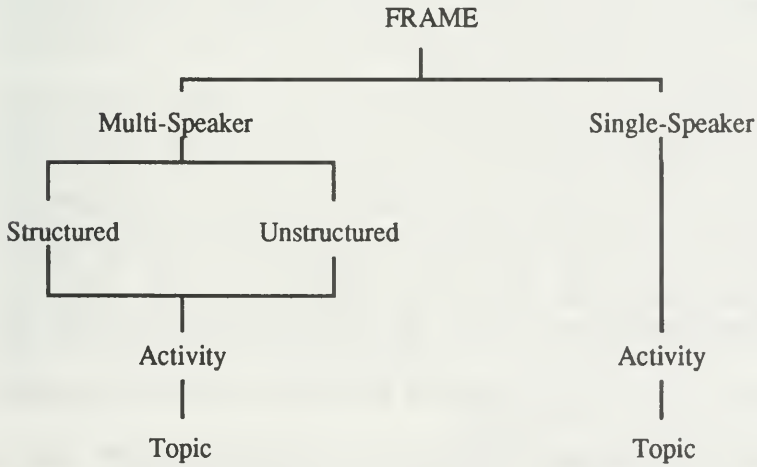
Defining Frames

Linde's work on causality, continuity, and discontinuity provides this study with adequate terms and definitions which may be applied to an analysis of spoken discourse in drama. The definition of frame, developed in and adopted for this study, however, is a synthesis of the work of several theorists in various related fields. The concept of frame has its roots in cognitive science (Minsky, 1980; Agar & Hobbs, 1985), and it has been adopted by many associated fields. For the purposes of this study, I will define a frame as *the activity the speakers are engaged in*. Defined in this way a frame can be seen as a unit of discourse larger than the units previously described by discourse analysts. Secondly, partly for the sake of convenience and partly because this study is an examination of discourse in drama, frame is deliberately limited to an activity involving *speakers*, rather than speakers and

hearers or speakers and listeners, though hearers and listeners are not completely ignored. Participants in a conversation normally consist of speakers *and* listeners or hearers, and insofar as a hearer can also be a speaker and a speaker a hearer, the term *speakers* will be used to refer to both types of participants regardless of their roles at any particular moment. Further, there are occasions and conventions in drama which call for frames involving *only* a speaker, or a speaker and a listener who does not contribute to the conversation (e.g., a bystander). In such cases (e.g., soliloquies, asides), the term *speaker* is a more appropriate term than speaker-hearer.

A frame and its related parts is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Types of Frames



As can be seen in Figure 1, there are essentially two types of frames: one built around the activity that engages more than one speaker (a multi-speaker frame), the other involving just one speaker (a single-speaker frame). A multi-speaker frame, which this study examines, includes two kinds of relationships, referred to by this study as the *structured relationship* and the *unstructured relationship*. It is argued that the kind of relationship existing between speakers determines to a large extent the activities they will engage in and the topics that can be discussed. A single-speaker frame, on the other hand, normally takes the form of an extended narrative, the telling of a life story, a soliloquy, or the like. While a life story or extended narrative implies the presence of a listener, it is important to note

that the listener in these cases is often or largely passive, contributing little or nothing to the interaction. Thus, such activities can be seen as centering around just one speaker.

Not only does the activity the speakers engage in determine the nature of the topics they will talk about, topics, to some extent, also govern what speakers will say to each other. Continuity or discontinuity in a sequence of utterances can thus largely be determined by examining these utterances in relation to each other, to the topic, and to the activity of the speakers.

Figure 1 also indicates that the kind of relationship between speakers will determine, to a large extent, the activity and topic of the talk. A structured relationship is bound by definite restrictions which can be observed by the speakers as well as by outsiders. This is a conventionalized relationship whose restrictions are those of propriety, activity, and topic. An unstructured relationship, on the other hand, is one in which these restrictions are not quite as clear and may be lacking altogether.

Both structured and unstructured relationships are difficult to illustrate by examples which cut across time and location, since historical and cultural forces determine conventions. A structured relationship can, perhaps, be suggested by the teacher-student relationship. In Western societies, or at least in contemporary American universities, such a relationship is bound by certain conventions and restrictions. Any utterance in which a student overstepped one of these restrictions would be recognized by the teacher as unexpected or discontinuous. Moreover, this discontinuity would be recognized by observers familiar with the conventions of the relationship.

An unstructured relationship is somewhat easier than a structured relationship to illustrate in the abstract. Perhaps the clearest illustration of an unstructured relationship is that between a husband and wife or between two lovers. If two lovers got together, say, to discuss finances, either could introduce topics at will, and even a complete change of topic might not amount to a violation of the boundaries of the relationship. It is important to remember that in an unstructured relationship the speakers have a past history and a shared knowledge to refer to. An utterance perceived as discontinuous by an observer might thus seem so only because the observer is not privy to the knowledge shared by the speakers.

Continuity or discontinuity of utterances within a speech exchange is thus dependent in large part on the relationship that exists between the speakers. Since it is easier to break the

restrictions of a structured relationship, an utterance which does so can be perceived to be discontinuous not only by the speakers (or at least one of them) but by outsiders as well. In contrast, it is harder to break the restrictions of an unstructured relationship because only the speakers know and maintain those restrictions and because speakers in an unstructured relationship can fall back on a considerably greater amount of shared knowledge. In such a case, what is perceived by particular speakers to be continuous (or at least what is allowed to be continuous), then, can be perceived by an observer to be discontinuous.

To sum up at this point, the kind of relationship existing between speakers will determine, or at least limit, the kinds of activities they can engage in. A structured relationship will permit a narrower range of activities between speakers than an unstructured relationship. Continuity and discontinuity, then, within speech exchanges, is largely determined by the relationship between the speakers. Temporal connections between utterances, existing in the speech exchanges of both structured and unstructured relationships, might be a sufficient cause of continuity between utterances. While in an unstructured relationship such a temporal ordering might not exist, the utterances could still be continuous, depending upon the degree of shared knowledge the speakers were willing to rely on. Similarly, activities between speakers may be continuous or discontinuous, depending on the implied or stated topic or on the kinds of activities permitted by the relationship of the speakers.

Patterns in Multi-Speaker Frames

Thus far, this study has discussed the theory and definition of frames and suggested an analysis of principles governing structural unity and coherence of literary texts. The present section will analyze Shepard's *Fool for Love* in terms of frames in an effort to illustrate structured and unstructured relationships in multi-speaker frames. By exemplifying the main activities of the speakers and the central themes of the play, the passages chosen for analysis will provide key data in establishing the principles and patterns of continuity, discontinuity, and coherence within and between multi-speaker frames.

Unstructured Relationships in Multi-Speaker Frames

The first passage for analysis, Example 1, illustrates not only a pattern formed by discontinuous utterances within a frame but also a pattern repeated throughout the play. This pattern, characteristic of the relationship between Eddie and May, is one of approach-avoidance or attraction-rejection and is revealed here in the activities of PLACATING and QUARRELING, which form two separate subframes (activities) but which, as will be shown, may be taken as one unit. *Quarreling* is here defined as a conversational interaction involving overt verbal conflict, such as that between Eddie and May throughout much of the play. *Placating* is defined as actions on the part of one participant to calm or appease another, such as in Eddie's continual efforts to quiet and soothe May's anger.

An analysis of the dialogue in Example 1 will show that the two subframes, QUARRELING and PLACATING, are subsumed under a still larger frame, namely, VACILLATING. Vacillation may be defined as the irresolute movement between two or more choices and can be seen in Eddie and May's continual hesitation over whether or not they will stay together. As will be shown, this indecisiveness is not only apparent both in their utterances and activities, it is present in and mirrored by the pattern of discontinuity existing within and between subframes.

The opening scene[2] of Shepard's *Fool for Love* introduces the reader to the argumentative and vacillating nature of Eddie and May's relationship. Eddie tosses his glove on the table and begins to assure May he will never leave her.

Example 1: VACILLATING

	Eddie:	(*seated, tossing glove on the table. Short pause*) May, look, May? I'm not **goin'** anywhere. See? I'm right here. I'm not **gone**. Look. (*she won't*) I don't know why you won't	1
A1		just look at me. You know it's me. Who else do you think it is. (*pause*) You want some water or somethin'? Huh? (*he gets up slowly, goes cautiously to her, strokes her head softly, she stays still*) May? Come on. You can't just sit around here like this. How long you been	10
		sittin' here anyway? You want me to go outside and get you something? Some potato chips or something? (*she suddenly grabs his closest leg with both arms and holds tight burying her head between his knees*) I'm not gonna' **leave**. Don't	

worry. I'm not gonna **leave**. I'm stayin' right here. I already told ya' that. (*she squeezes tighter to his leg, he just stands there, strokes her head softly*) May? Let go, okay? Honey? I'll put you back in bed. Okay? (*she grabs his other leg and holds on tight to both*) Come on. I'll put you in bed and make you some hot tea or somethin'. You want some tea? (*she shakes her head violently, keeps holding on*) With lemon? Some Ovaltine? May, you gotta' let go of me now, okay? (*pause, then she pushes him away and returns to her original position*) Now just lay back and try to relax. (*he starts*
B1 *to try to push her back gently on the bed as he pulls back the blankets. She erupts furiously, leaping off bed and lashing out at him with her fists. He backs off. She returns to bed and stares at him wild-eyed and angry, faces him squarely*)

Eddie: (*after pause*) You want me to **go**? (*She shakes her head.*)

May: No!

Eddie: Well, what do you want then?

May: You **smell**.

Eddie: I **smell**.

May: You do.

Eddie: I been drivin' for days.

May: Your fingers smell.

Eddie: Horses.

May: Pussy.

Eddie: Come on, May.

May: They **smell** like metal.

Eddie: I'm not gonna' start this shit.

May: Rich pussy. Very clean.

Eddie: Yeah, sure.

May: You know it's true.

A2 Eddie: I came to see if you were all right.

B2 May: I don't need you!

Eddie: Okay. (***turns to go***, *collects his glove and bucking strap*) Fine.

May: **Don't go**!

Eddie: **I'm goin'**. (*He exits stage-left door, slamming it behind him; the door booms.*)

May: (*agonized scream*) **Don't go**!!!

(Shepard, 1984, pp. 21-22)

Keeping in mind that a frame is the activity the speakers are engaged in, the passage above may be seen as one overall frame of VACILLATING. A1 and A2 may be seen as components of the subframe PLACATING, and B1 and B2 as components of the subframe QUARRELING. In A1, Eddie promises May he will never leave, strokes her head, tries to put her to bed, and offers her potato chips and Ovaltine. May allows herself to be somewhat placated in this frame and "squeezes tighter to his leg" (ll. 17-18). At B1, however, May suddenly "erupts furiously" and lashes out at Eddie "with her fists" (ll. 30-32). Clearly, the activity the speakers were engaged in has changed from PLACATING to QUARRELING. They fight bitterly, with May facing Eddie "squarely" and accusing him of being unfaithful. A2 and B2 represent sudden shifts in subframes. At A2, Eddie attempts once again to PLACATE May ("I came to see if you were all right" l. 52). But at B2, May attacks Eddie ("I don't need you" l. 53). The shift from PLACATING (A2, l. 51) to QUARRELING (B2, l. 52) is a repetition of the shift which occurred from PLACATING (A1, l. 5) to PLACATING (B1, l. 29). The later shift, however, is sudden in comparison with the earlier, more gradual shift. The shift from PLACATING to QUARRELING at A2 and B2 takes place within one line; the shift from A1 to B1 occurs over the space of some 29 lines. The passage ends as Eddie slams the door and May pleads "Don't go!!!" (l. 60).

The dramatized conversation in Example 1, in which Eddie vacillates about whether he will stay or go, and May vacillates about whether she wants him to stay or go can be summarized and categorized by the word **go**. If repetition is one way of determining topic, then the word "go" identifies the topic insofar as it (or one of its variants such as "goin'," "gone," "leave,") is repeated nine times in the passage.

Yet, this passage also shows several abrupt changes of topics and subframes. At B1, the topic suddenly changes from Eddie's leaving or staying, summarized by the word **go**, to Eddie's infidelity, summarized and categorized by the word **smell**. The repetition of the word "smell" 4 times in 12 lines reflects this shift. In A2, Eddie again attempts to PLACATE May by assuring her he doesn't want to **leave** ("I came to see if you were all right," l. 52), reverting obliquely back to his original topic. At B2, May again lashes out at Eddie ("I don't need you," l. 53), continuing to QUARREL with him.

Eddie and May's exchanges in Example 1 exemplify how topics, utterances, and frames interrelate and influence one another. As mentioned earlier, Eddie and May cannot make up their minds whether they will stay together or part. Their indecisiveness is reflected in the movement between PLACATING and QUARRELING, and the constant shifting back and forth between these frames is caused by and results in utterances which often seem illogical and irrelevant to the preceding utterance. For instance, May's utterance in line 39 ("You smell") is not an answer, or at least, a direct answer, to Eddie's question in line 38 ("Well, what do you want then"). Nor is Eddie's placating gesture in line 52 ("I came to see if you were all right") directly related to May's insistence in line 51 that Eddie has been unfaithful ("You know it's true").

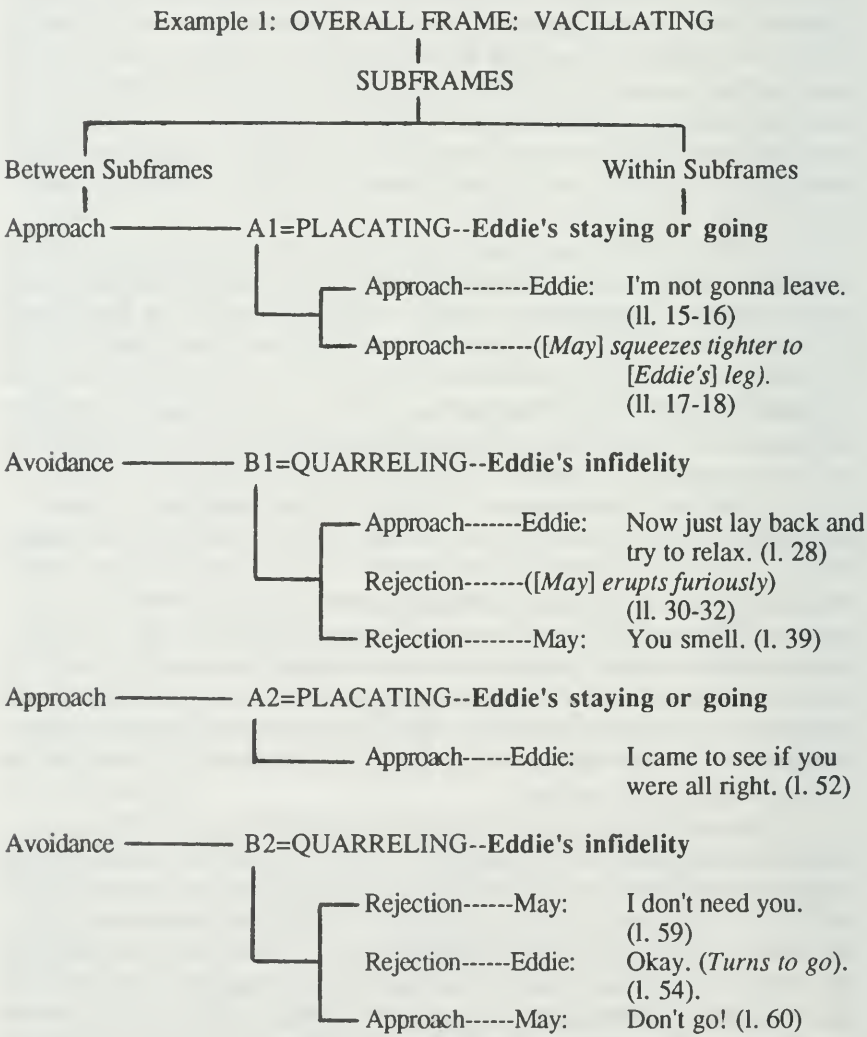
In both cases, the seemingly irrelevant and discontinuous responses result from the speaker's deliberate attempt to change the topic (and thereby also the frame). In line 39, when May changes the topic from Eddie's staying or leaving (**go**) to the topic of his infidelity (**smell**), the frame changes from PLACATING to QUARRELING. Eddie's utterance in line 52 indicates *his* attempt to change the conversational topic from his infidelity to his staying, and to change the frame from QUARRELING to PLACATING.

Although utterances between Eddie and May form a discontinuous set, their speech exchanges within the designated frames are not necessarily incoherent. In the first place, their relationship is an intimate one, and hence, basically unstructured. As was discussed earlier, in an unstructured relationship, not only do the speakers have a certain amount of shared knowledge and past history to rely on, they alone are truly aware of the boundaries and restrictions of their relationship, and so what seems discontinuous to an outsider (i.e., the reader of the play) may not seem discontinuous to the speakers themselves.

Secondly, the utterances between Eddie and May form a characteristic pattern. This pattern is one of approach- avoidance or attraction-rejection, resulting from and reinforcing the speakers' habitual vacillation. The repetition of this pattern allows the formation of coherent speech exchanges. These speech exchanges then can be seen as activities the speakers are engaged in, and the activities themselves can be seen as coherent units of discourse identified as subframes. Finally, the subframes of PLACATING and QUARRELING are themselves subsumed under the larger frame of VACILLATING. Thus, the pattern formed by seemingly

discontinuous sets of utterances within the individual speech exchanges is representative of and mirrored by the pattern formed by discontinuous activities or subframes. This pattern may be represented in Figure 2:

Figure 2



The above diagram of a VACILLATING frame shows (1) the pattern formed by utterances or by activities described in stage

directions within subframes, (2) the relationship of those utterances or activities to each other and to the topic of the subframe, and (3) the pattern formed between the subframes themselves. For instance, within subframe A1 (PLACATING), Eddie's utterance ("I'm not gonna leave," ll. 15-16) and May's response (*she squeezes tighter to his leg*, ll. 17-18) indicate the characters' attempts to be close to one another. Hence, the pattern formed by the utterances and the activities given in stage directions may be called approach-approach. The subframe takes its name from Eddie's efforts to calm May (PLACATING), and the topic of the subframe is **Eddie's staying or going**. Within subframe B1 (QUARRELING), Eddie's utterance ("Now just lay back and try to relax," l. 28) may be seen as another attempt to be close to May, but May's response (*she erupts furiously*, l. 30) and her utterance ("You smell," l. 30) are a rejection of Eddie. Hence, the pattern formed by the utterances and the activities given in stage directions may be called approach-avoidance or approach-rejection. The subframe takes its name from the overt verbal conflict (QUARRELING), and the topic of the subframe is **Eddie's infidelity**.

Similarly, since subframe A2 contains an utterance suggesting approach on Eddie's part ("I came to see if you were all right," l. 52), the subframe takes its name from Eddie's continued effort to calm May (PLACATING). The topic is **Eddie's staying or going**. Within subframe B2, however, May's utterance indicating rejection ("I don't need you," l. 53) is met by Eddie's rejecting utterance and rejecting action ("Okay." {*Turns to go*}), which in turn elicits May's utterance indicating approach ("Don't go!," l. 56). Hence, the pattern formed by the utterances and activities in B2 may be called rejection-rejection-approach. The topic is a reversion back to **Eddie's infidelity**. The frame takes its name from the overt verbal conflict (QUARRELING). The suddenness of the shift in frames between A2 and B2 is due in part to the rapid change in topics and in part to the swift juxtaposition of the activities PLACATING and QUARRELING.

It can be seen, then, that within subframes A1 and A2 the utterances and activities given in stage directions form a pattern of approach-approach and that within subframes B1 and B2 the utterances and activities given in stage directions form a pattern of approach-avoidance. This pattern is also repeated on the larger scale of the frames themselves, for it can be seen that as A1 moves into B1 and as A2 moves into B2 the pattern of approach-avoidance is repeated: Eddie and May attempt to be close to each other (A1, A2)

but soon begin to fight (B1, B2). In this way, the pattern formed between utterances and activities given in stage directions *within* subframes is duplicated by the pattern formed *by* the subframes themselves. That is, the pattern which is characteristic of Eddie and May's individual utterances is characteristic as well of the larger activities (frames) which are made up of those utterances. In this way utterances may be seen as parts of larger units, or frames, and frames--activities--as units of conversational interaction. Frames themselves can even be subframes when incorporated into larger units, the designation frame or subframe indicating merely a difference in degree, not in kind.

The activities (subframes) of PLACATING and QUARRELING may also be seen to be parts of a larger unit which is subsumed under the larger activity (frame) of VACILLATING. As shown in Figure 2, Eddie and May never seem to be able to make up their minds as to whether they will stay together or split up. In A1 (ll. 15-16), Eddie assures May he will never leave. In B2 (ll. 54), Eddie walks out. In A1 (ll. 17-18), May holds tight to Eddie. In B1 (ll. 39), she accuses him of infidelity, in B2 (ll. 53), she tells him she doesn't need his solicitation, and in B2 (ll. 56), she begs him not to leave. Of course, the activity or frame of VACILLATING need not necessarily consist of the two activities or subframes of PLACATING and QUARRELING. People can vacillate about any decision, and the possible activities which can make up a vacillating relationship are almost endless. In the play, Shepard chooses to show the particular relationship between Eddie and May as one in which both characters hesitate and vacillate about whether they will stay together or part. The topics of their conversations are particular to their own lives; their activities are a result of their life situation. Their inability to decide whether to stay together or split up in effect defines their relationship.

Example 1, then, illustrates that coherence may be present despite seeming discontinuity, in accordance with Linde's fundamental notion of "discontinuity as continuity." The conversational interaction in Example 1 shows that, first, utterances within a subframe, though they form discontinuous sets, achieve continuity because they are related to specific topics. Second, topics, although superficially discontinuous, achieve an underlying continuity because they are related to a specific activity which the speakers engage in. Third, activities the speakers are engaged in (frames), although discontinuous, achieve continuity because they are related to a central activity involving all the characters (here

Eddie and May). Thus, in Example 1, apparently discontinuous elements--e.g., Eddie's trying to placate May, May's partial submission and sudden lashing out at Eddie, May's accusing Eddie of infidelity and his trying to change the topic, May's refusal to allow herself to be soothed and her telling Eddie to go, Eddie's threatening to go and May's begging him to stay, Eddie's slamming of the door and May's pleas of "Don't go"--present the reader with the first manifestation of the frame VACILLATING, which subsumes and, ultimately, unites the discontinuities found in the play. The utterances, topics, and subframes may seem discontinuous, but they are not necessarily incoherent. If vacillating implies irresolute action, that irresolution is evident in the shifts not only in utterances and topics but also in frames. As Linde indicates, coherence is not a property of the details of a story, but rather an achievement of the artist in the construction of his story.

Although QUARRELING and PLACATING are the chief activities Eddie and May engage in, the two characters have some brief nonconflictive, even tender moments. But even when they do, one can discern the VACILLATING which characterizes the central activity of the play. This is evident in Example 2, in which the instability of Eddie and May's relationship is reflected even in a frame involving LOVEMAKING. Lovemaking may be defined as actions involving wooing or courting in order to seek favor or affection, and may be seen to differ from placating in terms of motive (the former seeks primarily to gain affection, the latter primarily to quiet or calm) and in terms of cause (placating presumes a grievance, lovemaking does not).

Example 2, like Example 1, demonstrates how discontinuous sets of utterances can form coherent wholes as subframes and how discontinuous subframes can form coherent wholes as parts of larger frames. The overall frame in Example 2 is VACILLATING; the subframes are QUARRELING and LOVEMAKING.

Example 2: VACILLATING

C1	Eddie:	You know how many miles I went outa' my way just to come here and see you? You got any idea?	1
	May:	Nobody asked you to come.	
	Eddie:	Two thousand, four hundred and eighty.	
	May:	Yeah? Where were you, Katmandu or something?	
	Eddie:	Two thousand, four hundred and eighty	

		miles.	
	May:	So what!	10
		more than anything **I** ever **missed** in my whole life. **I** kept thinkin' about **you** the whole time **I** was driving. Kept seeing **you**. Sometimes just a part of **you**.	
	May:	Which part?	
	Eddie:	Your **neck**.	
	May:	My **neck**?	
	Eddie:	Yeah.	20
	May:	You **missed** my **neck**?	
	Eddie:	**I missed** all of **you** but your **neck** kept coming up for some reason. I kept **crying** about your **neck**.	
	May:	**Crying**?	
	Eddie:	[. . .] Yeah. **Weeping**. Like a little baby. Uncontrollable. **It** would just start up and stop and then start up all over again. For miles. I couldn't stop **it**. Cars would pass me on the road. People would stare at me. My face was all twisted up. I couldn't stop my face.	30
C2	May:	Was this before or after your little **fling with the Countess**?	
	Eddie:	[. . .] There wasn't any **fling with** any **Countess**!	
	May:	You're a liar.	

(Shepard, 1984, pp. 23-24)

Lines 1-10 represent the QUARRELING subframe (C1), lines 11-33 the LOVEMAKING subframe (D1), and lines 34-38 a return to QUARRELING (C2). An examination of Example 2 reveals that the utterances of Eddie and May are more continuous within the LOVEMAKING subframe (ll. 11-33) than those which occur at the start of subframe C2 (ll. 34-35). All the utterances within subframe D1 (ll. 11-33) seem logically relevant to each other and to the three topics in this subframe: **Eddie's missing of May**, **May's neck**, and **Eddie's crying**. These topics are indicated by the repetition of key words: "missed" is repeated 5 times in 9 moves, "neck" is repeated 5 times, and "crying" ("weeping," "it") is repeated 5 times. **Crying,** introduced as a topic with **neck** in lines 24 and 25, becomes the topic for the rest of the subframe (ll. 25-33).

These moments of LOVEMAKING, however, are brief, and soon give way to further QUARRELING. This abrupt shift of subframes, from LOVEMAKING to QUARRELING, occurs at lines 33-35. May's response to Eddie's attempts to tell May how much he missed her also represents a sudden shift in topics from **Eddie's missing of May** to **Eddie's infidelity**. May's response ("Was this before or after your little fling with the Countess?", ll. 34-35) is discontinuous to Eddie's previous utterance ("My face was all twisted up. I couldn't stop my face," ll. 31-33). The topic in subframe C2 is thus **fling with Countess**, and, as can be seen, is a resumption of the earlier quarrel about Eddie's infidelity.

Coherence, more apparent in subframe D1 (LOVEMAKING) than in the subframes subsumed under Example 1, is a result of continuity or relevance between utterances. The topics--**Eddie's missing of May** and **May's neck**--are related as Eddie tells May that at times he **missed** "just a **part**" of her (ll. 11-16), and when to her question "Which **part**?" (l. 17) he answers "Your **neck**" (l. 18). The topics--**May's neck** and **Eddie's crying**--are related as Eddie tells May that he couldn't stop **crying** about her **neck** (l. 24).

But no such continuity or relevance connects the subframes C1, D1, and C2; yet, they can be seen to form a coherent whole under the overall frame of VACILLATING. Coherence in Example 2 thus results from the organization of discontinuous elements into the pattern of approach-avoidance or attraction-rejection, which was similarly seen in Example 1. Here, as QUARRELING leads to LOVEMAKING and returns to QUARRELING, the VACILLATING pattern so characteristic of Eddie and May's unstructured relationship provides one with a coherent view of the central activity which will engage all the characters of the play.

As in Example 1, the pattern formed by discontinuous sets of utterances within the individual speech exchanges in Example 2 is representative of and mirrored by the pattern formed by discontinuous activities or subframes. This pattern formed by the conversational interaction in Example 2 may be represented by Figure 3.

Figure 3

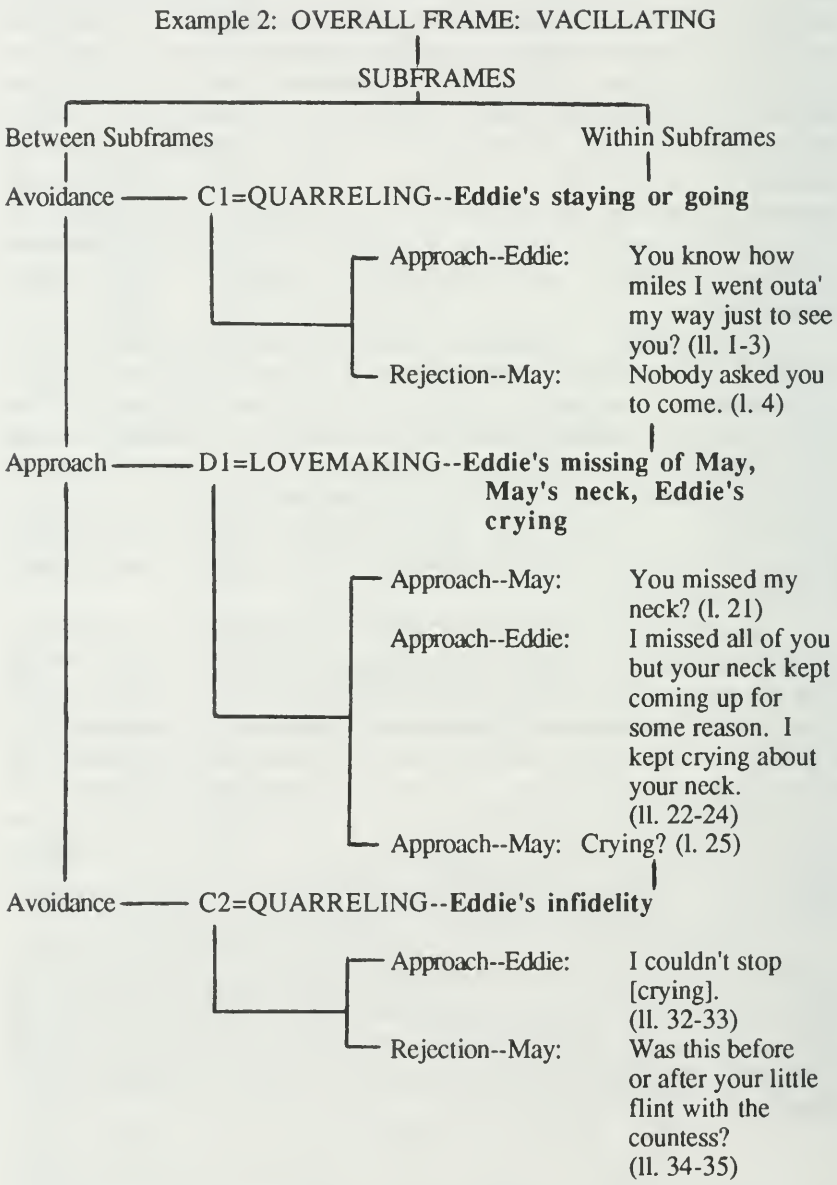


Figure 3, a VACILLATING frame like that in Example 1, shows the pattern formed by utterances within subframes, the relationship of those utterances to each other and to the topic of the

subframe, and the pattern formed between the subframes themselves. Within subframe C1 (QUARRELING), Eddie's utterance "You know how many miles I went outa' my way just to see you?" (ll. 1-3), an attempt to approach May, is met with her rejection ("Nobody asked you to come," l. 4). This is the same pattern of approach-avoidance evidenced in QUARRELING frame B1 in Example 1. In Subframe C1 of Example 2, Eddie and May can be seen to be quarreling about the topic of **Eddie's staying or going**, and the subframe (as in Example 1) takes its name from the overt verbal conflict between Eddie and May.

Within subframe D1 (LOVEMAKING), May's utterance "You missed my neck?" (l. 21), Eddie's response ("I missed all of you but your neck kept coming up for some reason. I kept crying about your neck?" ll. 21-24), and May's response ("Crying?" l. 25), indicate the characters' attempts to be close to one another. The pattern here is the same as the pattern which occurred in the PLACATING subframe A1 in Example 1--approach-approach. In Example 2, however, the subframe takes its name from the mutual activity of LOVEMAKING, in which the topics are **Eddie's missing of May**, **May's neck**, and **Eddie's crying**.

Within subframe C2 (QUARRELING), Eddie's utterance ("I couldn't stop [crying]," ll. 29-30) represents an approach towards May. Her response ("Was this before or after your little fling with the countess?" ll. 34-35), however, is a rejection of Eddie. Hence, the utterances in this subframe, like the utterances in C1 of Example 2 and B1 of Example 1, form a pattern of approach-avoidance. This subframe also takes its name from the overt verbal conflict apparent in the conversational interaction between Eddie and May, whose topic is **Eddie's infidelity**.

It should be noted that in Example 2, while the utterances within subframe D1 (LOVEMAKING) are continuous with each other, the utterances within subframes C1 and C2 (QUARRELING) form discontinuous sets. One might conclude that the reason for the discontinuity lies in the activity of QUARRELING itself; that when an utterance indicating approach is met by a rejecting utterance, discontinuity results. As a corollary, one may reason that when an utterance indicating approach is met by acceptance, continuity will result. However, the discontinuous sets of utterances in C1 and C2 can be seen to form a unified whole as a subframe or activity of QUARRELING, just as the continuous sets of utterances in D1 form a unified whole as a subframe or activity of LOVEMAKING. In this way, discontinuous elements can be made to form a

continuity.

The subframes themselves reflect the same pattern of approach-avoidance as C1 moves into D1 then to C2. C1 (QUARRELING) is an activity characterized by avoidance, D1 (LOVEMAKING) is an activity characterized by approach, C2 (QUARRELING) an activity characterized by avoidance. The overall pattern, thus, may be seen as avoidance-approach-avoidance. These discontinuous elements, like the discontinuous elements within the subframes C1 and C2, can be seen to form a coherent whole under the general frame or activity VACILLATING. Again, this pattern shows how discontinuous elements can, by careful arrangement, be made to form a continuity which, in each case, reveals itself as a frame or subframe of activities the characters are engaged in.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the VACILLATING in this frame consists of the activities or subframes of QUARRELING and LOVEMAKING, rather than the activities or subframes of QUARRELING and PLACATING as in Example 1. People can vacillate about any decision, and while the form the vacillation takes will always exhibit itself as an irresolute movement, the activities which compose that indecision can encompass a wide range of possibilities. In Example 1, Eddie and May cannot decide whether to stay together or part. In Example 2, they cannot decide whether to fight or make love. In either case, it is vacillation which seems to define their relationship.

Structured Relationships in Multi-Speaker Frames

The analysis of *Fool for Love* has so far focused on frames and subframes built around two speakers sharing an unstructured relationship. Furthermore, the analysis has looked at frames in two ways: by examining the relationship between subframes and frames, and by looking at the smaller elements within frames (e.g., speech exchanges, continuous and discontinuous utterances, topics, and the ways topics are determined). In contrast, what follows is an analysis of a frame built around two speakers who share a structured relationship: that between Eddie and Martin, May's supposed new lover.

Before Martin actually appears, he is alluded to in a frame in which Eddie and May once again are QUARRELING about whether Eddie will stay or leave. This frame, represented by Example 3, shows Eddie as jealous and threatening:

Example 3: QUARRELING

Eddie: (*standing slowly*) I'll **go**. 1
May: You better.
Eddie: Why?
May: You just better.
Eddie: I thought you wanted me to **stay**.
May: I got **somebody** coming to get me.
Eddie: (*short pause, on his feet*) Here?
May: Yeah, here. Where else?
Eddie: (*makes a move toward her upstage*) You been **seeing somebody**! 10
May: (*she moves quickly downleft, crosses right*) When was the last time we were together, Eddie? Huh? Can you remember that far back?
Eddie: **Who**'ve you been **seeing**? (*He moves violently toward her.*)
May: Don't you touch me! Don't you even think about it.
Eddie: How long have you been **seeing him**!
May: What difference does it make! 20
(*Short pause. He stares at her, then turns suddenly and exits out the stage-left door and slams it behind him. Door booms.*)
May: Eddie! **Where are you going**? Eddie!

(Shepard, 1984, p. 28)

The activity of the whole passage is QUARRELING. From lines 1-5, the topic is **go/stay**. In line 6, the topic changes to **somebody** (the reason May now wants Eddie to leave), and then quickly to **seeing somebody** (the reason for Eddie's jealousy). In lines 6-19, the word "somebody" ("who," "him") is repeated 4 times in 9 moves, the word "seeing" 3 times. This frame and the topic **go/stay** are concluded by Eddie's exit and May's utterance in line 24. After this sequence, Eddie continues acting like a jealous lover until the appearance of Martin (Shepard, p. 41), a behavior pattern which prepares the reader for a meeting between antagonists. Indeed it is this hostility between the jealous lover and the "new guy" which is part of the structured nature of a relationship, and the boundaries and conditions imposed by that hostility would tend to rule out attempts at understanding, friendliness, humor, compassion, or familiarity. Any utterance which tries to bridge the gap between the two speakers in such a relationship may thus be

considered a crossing of the line drawn between two opponents, a line perceivable both to the involved participants as well as an outsider.

The meeting scene, however, runs counter to such expectations insofar as it explicitly (and comically) violates the boundaries of Eddie and Martin's relationship. Instead of the expected face-to-face encounter, the two men meet as Martin crashes through the door and stands over Eddie, ready to slug him. That they carry on a conversation for several lines with Eddie lying on the floor underscores the structured nature of their relationship even as it undermines it.

Yet, of all the activities involving Eddie and Martin, the frame built around the activity of INFORMING is most important, not only in establishing coherence in the interactions of Eddie and Martin, but also in establishing the overall coherence of the play. Informing can be defined as imparting knowledge of a fact or circumstance and can be seen in Eddie's imparting certain facts about his relationship with May to Martin. In the following frame, represented by Example 4, Eddie and Martin (with the Old Man as a non-participant observer) provide information to each other but also inform the reader about Eddie and May's relationship. As the frame begins, Eddie pours Martin a drink, and they begin to talk about May:

Example 4: INFORMING

Martin:	What exactly's the matter with her anyway?	1
Eddie:	She's in a state a' shock. (*The Old Man chuckles to himself. Drinks.*)	
Martin:	Shock? How come?	
Eddie:	Well, we haven't seen each other in a long time. I mean--me and her, we go back quite a ways, see. High School.	
Martin:	Oh. I didn't know that.	
Eddie:	Yeah. Lotta' miles.	10
Martin:	And you're not really cousins?	
Eddie:	No. Not really. No.	
Martin:	You're--her husband?	
Eddie:	No. She's my sister. (*he and The Old Man look at each other, then he turns back to Martin*) (*Pause. Eddie and The Old Man drink.*)	
Martin:	Your sister?	
Eddie:	Yeah.	

Martin:	Oh. So--you knew each other even before high school then, huh?	20
Eddie:	No, see, I never even knew I had a sister until it was too late.	
Martin:	How do you mean?	
Eddie:	Well, by the time I found out we'd already--you know--fooled around. (*The Old Man shakes his head, drinks. Long pause. Martin just stares at Eddie.*)	
Eddie:	(*grins*) Whatsa' matter, Martin?	
Martin:	You fooled around?	30
Eddie:	Yeah.	
Martin:	Well-um--that's illegal, isn't it?	
Eddie:	I suppose so.	
The Old Man:	(to Eddie) Who is this guy?	
Martin:	I mean--is that true? She's really your sister?	
Eddie:	Half. Only half.	37

(Shepard, 1984, pp. 47-48)

In this example, the topic of the frame, **the relationship between Eddie and May**, is established not through the repetition of key words, but through a series of questions in which Martin seeks to confirm the truth of what he has heard. Martin's "checking up" on the information is apparent in line 13 ("You're--her husband?"); in line 18 ("Your sister?"); in lines 20-21 ("Oh--so you knew each other even before high school then, huh?"); in line 30 ("You fooled around?"); and in lines 35-36 ("I mean--is that true? She's really your sister?").

This series of questions asked by Martin serves two functions. First, because he gets answers, his questions provide continuity between utterances. Second, by violating the boundaries or expectations of his and Eddie's relationship, the questions underscore its structured nature. The questions are rather personal, suggesting an interest not entirely proper between antagonists. For example, Martin's response to Eddie's utterance that he and May "go back quite a ways, see..." (ll. 7-8) is "Oh. I didn't know that" (l. 9), an utterance which could indicate a distanced reserve neither friendly nor unfriendly. But his subsequent questions, "And you're not really cousins?" (l. 11), "You're--her husband?" (l. 13), "Your sister?" (l. 18), "Oh. So--you knew each other even before high school then, huh?" (ll. 20-21), "You fooled around?" (l. 30), "I mean--is that true? She's really your sister?" (ll. 35-36), belie a growing interest in the events as Eddie tells them, which seems to

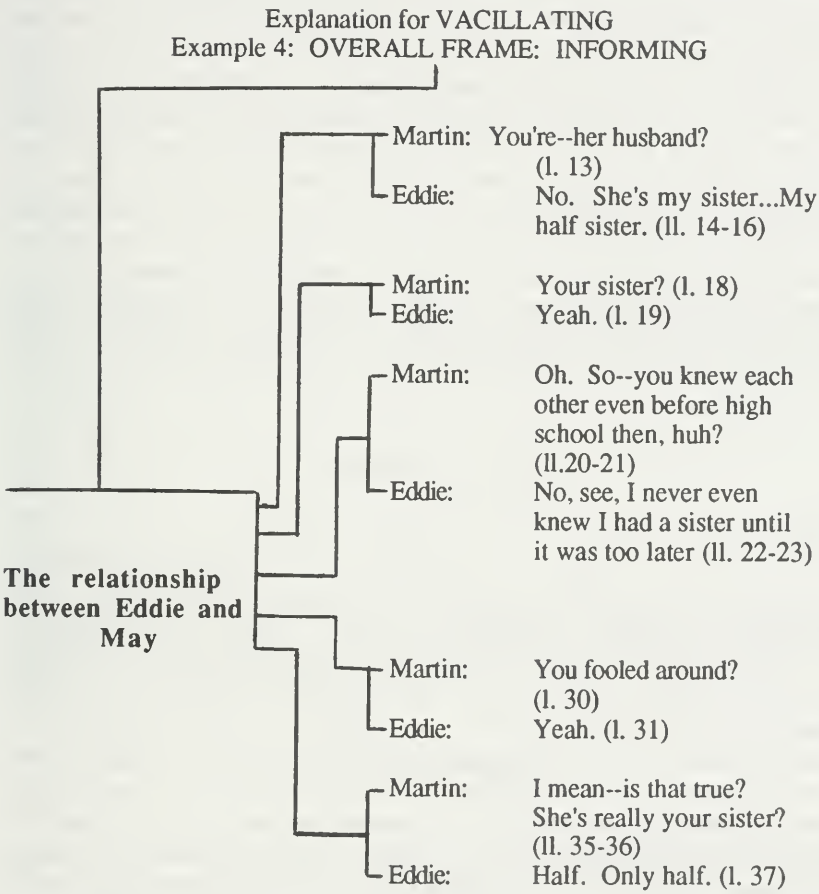
override antagonism.

But Eddie himself has offered revelations of a personal nature in a kidding, humorous way and so he, too, has violated the boundaries or expectations of an antagonistic relationship. For example, Eddie's utterances--that he and May have between them a "Lotta' miles" (l. 10); that before he found out that May was his sister they had "already--you know--fooled around" (ll. 25-26); his question, "Whatsa' matter, Martin?" (l. 29), delivered as he "grins"; his off-hand reply of "I suppose so" (l. 33) to Martin's naive question, "Well--um--that's illegal, isn't it?" (l. 32)--seem to indicate an ease and familiarity not wholly expected between antagonists

By revealing unexpected familiarity, friendliness, ease, humor, and personal interest, Eddie's and Martin's utterances thus violate yet at the same time underscore the structured nature of their relationship. The pattern formed by the conversational interaction in Example 4 may be represented by Figure 4, an INFORMING frame which reveals a different pattern from those seen in Examples 1-3. The explanation for this difference is that the frame represented by Example 4 has, within the play itself, a function different from those of the frames and subframes represented by Examples 1-3. The earlier examples established patterns of attraction-rejection or approach-avoidance which are characteristic of two characters continually vacillating about whether they want to stay together or part, or whether they want to fight or make love. The function of the frames and subframes in Examples 1-3 was to render the characters in action. The function of the frame represented by Example 4, however, is to provide information. In literary terms such a frame would be called "expository." Since its function is to provide information, the frame takes shape as a series of questions and answers. Questions and answers are not the only way to provide information, but since they are appropriate between speakers in a structured relationship, they provide a convenient frame for Martin and Eddie.

Within this overall frame of INFORMING, the utterances of Eddie and Martin are paired. As can be seen in Figure 4, every question elicits an immediate answer. Yet all these questions and answers are related to the larger topic of the frame, **the relationship between Eddie and May**. While the frame takes its name from its characteristic activity, INFORMING, it in part also explains the reason for Eddie and May's constant VACILLATING.

Figure 4



Indeed, by revealing for the first time the incestuous nature of the relationship between Eddie and May, this INFORMING frame gives the first indication of why Eddie and May, so drawn to each other, might be reluctant to stay together. The pattern of attraction-rejection or approach-avoidance which characterized the earlier utterances and activities of Eddie and May can now be seen in a larger context, partially explaining the ambiguous, vacillating nature of their relationship. From this point of view, one can understand how this frame--INFORMING--fits into the overall frame of VACILLATING. Functioning as an explanation of why Eddie and May vacillate, it sheds light on the earlier frames and

subframes represented in Examples 1-3.

By way of summary, the analysis of Examples 1-4, which focused on multi-speaker frames in Shepard's *Fool for Love*, has shown that patterns formed by the speakers' utterances in both structured and unstructured relationships reveal that seemingly discontinuous utterances really form continuous wholes which can be classified as frames or subframes, in accordance with Linde's model of discontinuity as continuity. Moreover, these frames or subframes, which take their names from the characteristic activity of the speakers, themselves form patterns mirroring and repeating the patterns formed by individual utterances within the frames. Finally, the analysis has posited that subframes and frames are essentially the same kind of wholes, consisting of conversational interaction which differs only in degree but not in kind.

CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of this study was to determine whether continuity within a speech exchange or between speech exchanges ensured coherence within a frame, and whether continuity between frames ensured overall text coherence. It was shown that coherence in speech exchanges, as they occur in Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love,* does not depend on the continuity of utterances but rather on the arrangement of utterances; it was shown that coherence may result when even discontinuous utterances are organized into a pattern which the reader can perceive as a unified whole. On a larger scale, it was argued that discontinuous frames could be arranged into a pattern which could be perceived as coherent by a reader; it was also argued that overall text coherence depends not upon continuity between frames but rather on the arrangement of discontinuous or continuous frames into a coherent whole.

The approach adopted in this study was felt to be necessary because it deals with issues usually ignored in more traditional types of literary criticism, which often overlooks the sociological aspects of a text by limiting the study of unity and coherence in language to an analysis of unifying themes or images. The present study differs since it attempts to show how speakers' utterances are governed and shaped by their relationships and the activities in which they are engaged. This study can also be seen to contribute to text analysis

because it attempts to establish that overall coherence (of a text) can be established if the text is broken up into the largest, most clearly defined units of discourse as possible. Coherence, then, even in a fictional play with apparent discontinuities, can, in light of Linde's theory, be established by relating the language used by speakers to the pragmatic circumstances of their lives.

NOTES

[1] Lundquist (1985), for instance, seeks to establish coherence by closely examining semantic roles within a sentence, in terms of *agent*, *time*, and *location*. While such an approach focusing on subsentential elements may be sufficient to establish "connexity" within a sentence, the drawback is that a holistic view of the text is ignored. Giora (1985) proposes a model of coherence based on linear cohesion. She argues that coherence between sentences depends on "discourse Topics" (DTs). She does not, however, specify what exactly constitutes or determines a DT. This same criticism can be applied to Tannen (1984) as well who defines coherence as the "underlying organizing structure making the words and sentences into a unified discourse" (p. xiv) but does not specify how one organizes words and sentences to form a "unified discourse." Linde's definition (1987), in contrast, is more explicit and comprehensive.

[2] In this and all other passages quoted for analysis, topics will be identified by **boldface type**, stage directions will be indicated by *italics*, and frames and subframes will be identified by CAPITAL LETTERS. Stage directions not crucial to the analysis are omitted and indicated by [. . .].

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