

Title: Postclassical narratology

Abstract: The seminar will start with an introduction into postclassical narratology focusing on the differences between structuralist, “classical” narratology and “postclassical narratologies” and a brief overview of the main directions in contemporary narrative theory. A more detailed presentation of four selected approaches (cognitive, rhetorical, feminist, and unnatural) will ensue, followed by a discussion of the assigned texts representing these four conceptions. The approaches will be compared and contrasted primarily with regard to the concepts of narrative and narration, author, narrator, and character.

Glossary

agency: At the level of the story, agency concerns characters’ ability to bring about deliberately initiated events, or actions, within a storyworld. But agency is also a pertinent concern at the level of storytelling or narration, affecting who gets to tell what kind of story in what contexts. Feminist narratology explores differences in the sorts of agency available to male versus female characters and narrators.

authorial audience: in rhetorical narratology, the hypothetical ideal audience for whom the author constructs the text and who understands it perfectly. The authorial audience of fiction, unlike the narrative audience (defined below), operates with the tacit knowledge that the characters and events are synthetic constructs rather than real people and historical happenings.

diegesis: (1) the narrative world, whether fictional or nonfictional; and (2) telling, as in summarizing or commenting, as opposed to showing via dialogue or performance. The first sense of the term provides the root for a family of terms: extradiegetic refers to situations that are not properly part of the main narrative world; a narrator who is not part of the action he or she narrates is an extradiegetic narrator. Intradiegetic refers to situations within that main narrative world; an intradiegetic narrator is one whose narration is framed by another narrator as Marlow is in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; that frame narrator is extradiegetic.

discourse: the set of devices for telling a story, including vision or focalization (who perceives?), voice (who speaks?), duration (how long it takes something to be told), frequency (whether something is told in singulative or iterative manner), and speed (how much story time is covered by a stretch of discourse). In structuralist narratology, discourse is regarded as the “how” of narrative, distinct from the “what” – character, event, and setting.

experiencing self, experiencing-I: In first-person (homodiegetic) narrative we distinguish between the function of the self as protagonist (experiencing self) and that of the (usually) retrospective narrator as the narrating self.

focalization: the answer to the question “who is perceiving?” in narrative discourse. Gérard Genette noted that the term “point of view” conflated two distinct aspects of narrative discourse: voice (the answer to the question “who is speaking?”) and vision or focalization. Since Genette’s identification of the concept, narratologists have been debating how best to describe it and account for its effects.

heterodiegetic: According to Genette, a narrative is heterodiegetic if the narrator is not a character or, as Stanzel puts it, the spheres of existence of narrator and characters are non-identical. Traditionally, heterodiegesis is equated with third-person narrative, but this form is only the most common example of it. Some you-narratives as well as they-narratives and one-narratives are also heterodiegetic.

homodiegetic: character narration, mostly in the first person. According to Genette, a narrative is homodiegetic if the narrator is the same person as a character on the story level (diegesis). If the narrator is the main protagonist, Genette calls this autodiegesis.

implied author: Introduced by Booth (1961) as that instance which guarantees the correct reading of a text when an unreliable narrator proposes a world view different from the intended meaning of the text; hence the repository of the text's moral stance. In rhetorical narratology, the version of the real author responsible for the choices that create the narrative text as "these words in this order" and that imbues the text with his or her values.

narratee: the audience directly addressed by the narrator; the degree to which this audience gets characterized varies widely.

narrating self, narrating-I: In retrospective first-person (homodiegetic) narration, the older, narrating self who tells about the situations and events experienced by the younger, experiencing self.

narrative audience: in rhetorical narratology, the observer role within the world of the fiction, taken on by the flesh and blood reader in that part of his or her consciousness which treats the fictional action as real.

narrativity: the formal and contextual qualities distinguishing narrative from non-narrative, or marking the degree of "narrativeness" in a discourse.

story: the what of narrative: character, events, and setting are elements of story; the events in chronological order constitute the story abstracted from the discourse

storyworld: in cognitive narratology, the world evoked by a narrative text or discourse; a global mental model of the situations and events being recounted. Reciprocally, narrative artefacts (texts, films, etc.) provide blueprints for the creation and modification of such mentally configured storyworlds.

voice: in traditional narratology the answer to the question "who is speaking?" in narrative discourse; more generally, the term refers to the way in which choices of diction and syntax convey values and thus a sense of a speaker. Studying the distribution (who gets to speak) and authority (how much weight does the speech have) of voice is one way to study the politics of narration.

Texts

Phelan, James, David Herman, Robyn R. Warhol, Brian Richardson and Peter J. Rabinowitz. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2012.

Assigned chapters:

1. Introduction: The Approaches
2. Authors, Narrators, Narration
5. Character

Bibliography:

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