

Narratology I: Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (after Gérard Genette)

1. Focalisation and Narration

1.1. FOCALISATION: WHO SEES?

Position of the focaliser relative to the story:

- External focalisation vs. Internal focalisation
- View of the focalised from outside vs. from within

1.2. NARRATION: WHO SPEAKS?

Temporal relations between narration and story:

- 'ulterior narration' [after the events]
- 'anterior narration' [before the events]
- 'simultaneous narration' [during the events]
- 'intercalated narration' [narration and events alternate, e.g. in epistolary novels]

Narrative Levels:

- extradiegetic level: The level "immediately superior to the first narrative and concerned with its narration".
- diegetic level: "the events themselves" [diegesis = story]
- hypodiegetic level: "stories told by fictional characters [...] a second degree narrative"

"The diegetic level is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator, the hypodiegetic level by a diegetic (intradiegetic) one" (p. 92)

Functions of hypodiegetic narratives:

- Actional function: the hypodiegetic narrative contributes to the development of the plot
- Explicative function: the hypodiegetic level offers an explanation of the diegetic level
- Thematic function: the hypodiegetic narrative is in analogy to main narrative

1.3. A TYPOLOGY OF NARRATORS

Narrators may be distinguished in the following respects:

By Narrative Level: extradiegetic narrators, intradiegetic narrators, hypo- and hypohypodiegetic narrators.

By the Extent of Participation in the Story: Homodiegetic narrators are involved in the story, heterodiegetic narrators are not.

By their Degree of Perceptibility:

- Description of setting.
- Identification of characters.
- Temporal summary.
- Definition of character.
- Reports of what characters did not think or say.
- Commentary.

By Reliability: Signs of unreliability are:

- the narrator has limited knowledge;
- is personally involved;
- represents a problematic value-scheme.

2. Characterisation

[= the modes by which information about individual characters is conveyed]

2.1. Direct definition of character

- Who defines? (narrator, characters, about self or others?)
- In what situation is the definition stated?

2.2. Indirect presentation

- Actions (commission / omission / contemplated action)
- Characteristics of Speech
- External appearance
- Environment
 - physical: room, house, street, town.
 - human: family, social connections.

2.3. Reinforcement of Characterisation by Analogy

- Names (telling names, symbolic names, etc.)
- Landscape.
- Contrasts and similarities between characters.

Source: Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. *Narrative Fiction. Contemporary Poetics*. London, New York: Routledge. 1994 [1983]. 59–70.

Narratology II: Franz K. Stanzel

1. First-person narration (Ich-Erzählsituation)

- first-person narrator: the narrator is part of the world of the characters
- tendency towards subjective / unreliable presentation
- narrating self (erzählendes Ich) vs. experiencing self (erlebendes Ich)
- narrator-as-protagonist vs. narrator-as-witness
- typical genres: diaries, letters, essays, (fictional) autobiographies

Example: I shook my head at this unpleasant surprise, for indeed I should have anticipated it. I had it coming. It was always the same.

2. Authorial narration (Auktoriale Erzählsituation)

- third-person narrator: the narrator is not part of the world of the characters
- tendency towards objective / 'reliable' presentation
- 'omniscience'
- omnipresence
- 'telling' rather than 'showing': intrusive comments

Example: The paranoid shook his head at the unpleasant surprise – the way that whiny people always do - and he thought: "I had it coming."

3. Figural narrative situation (Personale Erzählsituation)

- third-person narrator assuming the perspective of a character: perceptions, emotions, thoughts, vocabulary are the character's, not the narrator's
- tendency towards subjective / immediate presentation
- 'showing' rather than 'telling': no intrusive comments

Example: The paranoid shook his head at the unpleasant surprise. Why on earth was it always him? Why him? Again and again! He had it coming!

Source: Franz Stanzel. *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman*. Wien, Stuttgart: Braumüller, 1955.