

Literature and Narrative: Postclassical Perspectives and Analyses (An Introduction)

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The purpose of this thematic section is to highlight the complex relationships between literature and narrative from a contemporary narrative-theoretical perspective, thus contributing to an understanding of the diversity of postclassical narratology and its role in the context of current literary theory. The postclassical theory of narrative, as it has developed worldwide and in Slovenia especially in the last two decades, is characterized by a broad and inclusive attitude towards the understanding of narrative as conceived by Roland Barthes, which legitimizes its interdisciplinary and transmedia interests and approaches. Postclassical narratology is not, therefore, just a theory of literary narrative, although the latter still represents its original subject of study; it must also consider that literature is not necessarily narrative and that not all narratives are literary, so the aesthetic dimension and reflection on the literary nature of the narrative must also be taken into account. In view of the fact that its insights are transferable to other, traditionally non-narrative genres (e.g., lyric poetry, drama), media (film, fine arts) and non-literary fields (e.g., historiography, medicine, law, etc.), excessive rigidity in delimiting literature and narrative from non-literary contexts seems unproductive, as the latter can conversely shed light on many hitherto unnoticed features and relationships. It is still possible to compensate for the tolerance and indeterminacy, the syncretism or even the eclecticism of postclassical narratology by focusing on topics that are perhaps the most important and interesting for literary scholarship, such as the role of the recipients (readers, listeners or viewers) in making sense of, experiencing or sensing narrative, and the interplay of the theory, analysis and interpretation of narrative, not just at a metatheoretical level, but also in literary theory heuristics. Moreover, the pluralistic focus of the perspectives of classical and various “new”, postclassical narratologies on the chosen subject may offer more accurate analytical and interpretative results than those yielded by a single perspective.

Bart Keunen's contribution gets to the very core of postclassical narratological preoccupations with the reader's complex interactions with virtual narrative worlds in imagination-driven reading processes. His epistemological starting point is Peirce's semiotics and Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, as well as the analogy between the process of reading and the phenomenology of narrative imagination. Taking Baudelaire's poem in prose as a case study, Keunen demonstrates the use of semiotic analysis and introduces Peirce's triadic model consisting of an interpretant, a representamen and an object as elements of "worlding a story" used by the imaginator to "complete" the sign with his or her own experiential meaning. These elements can emphasize either their phenomenological or more epistemological nature, thus allowing them to be distinguished. Inspired by Peirce, Keunen then goes on to develop a matrix of nine different signs that correspond to nine distinct modes of imagination, reinforcing the latter by linking it to the five core codes in Barthes's analysis of Balzac's narrative in *S/Z*. In this way, he constructs an original heuristic device to describe the experience of the storyworld. In her contribution to the notion of atmosphere, which in the postclassical context has not yet received due attention, **Snežana Milosavljević Milić** also refers to phenomenology and new phenomenology. Despite its terminological instability and semantic ambiguity in the narratological discourses of Mieke Bal, Gerald Prince, Marie-Laura Ryan and Porter Abbott, the author is highly affirmative with regard to the notion of atmosphere, which, in her view, could develop its interpretative potential especially in the context of cognitive theories of intertextuality.

In her article on graphic narrative, **Leonora Flis** derives her specific narrative from the duality of verbal and visual storytelling. This duality must also be addressed by transgeneric and transmedial narratology in order to ascribe proper meaning to the sequential nature of images, the principles of frame editing, the composition of individual pages, the role of "gutters" or empty spaces between individual frames, and other structural features of storytelling, such as the temporal dimension, fragmentation of storytelling, etc. Using examples from graphic narratives (by Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco and Marjane Satrapi), she devotes special attention to investigating focalization, thus also drawing on the lessons of cognitive narratology. The functions of the face in close-up are explored by **Barbara Zorman** in her contribution to film narratology, first theoretically (Balázs, Deleuze, Barthes, Greco, Plantinga, etc.), then by providing an interesting case study analyzing Rok Biček's film *Razredni sovražnik* (*Class Enemy*, 2013), which is characterized by frequent

use of facial close-ups. In doing so, she paradoxically detects a kind of blind spot in the film's narrative as a result of the director's specific approach to large close-ups of the face: a wilful refusal to introduce readable meanings and emotions into the narrative. **Péter Hajdu's** article deals with comparisons between two genres: the historical novel and the television series with a historical theme. While in some series the relationship between fiction and non-fiction stories is balanced, others simply depict the lives of the elite, with historical events merely forming the backdrop for stories abounding in intrigue, violence and sex. In the end, television series that are devoid of political history or known historical figures (e.g., *Mad Man* and *The Knick*) are like a new kind of historical novel; they seem to portray the otherness of the past in ways inspired by some of the approaches of twentieth century historiography.

In his article, **Vladimir Biti** reads Kafka's narratives parabolically through Foucault, Agamben and Coetzee, taking into account the historical and biographical background of the unfinished nature of the writer's oeuvre and the literary mapping of positional outsiders of new nation states onto the central characters, narrators and narrative authorities of his narratives. Biti notes that, under the circumstances of a constant state of exception, Kafka's narrative authority takes on an elusive form and exposes readers to the same fictional law that he himself was exposed to as an author by the lawgivers of his time. In his article on the rhetoric of memory in the literary-essay work of Joseph Roth, **Matjaž Birk** also deals with narrative strategies characterized by the personal experience of this Austrian-Jewish writer. He investigates the different modes (experiential, monumental, historicizing, antagonistic and reflexive) of the collective rhetoric of memory, as well as the literary means of expression used (style and genre; selection structure; intertextual, intermedial and interdiscursive characteristics; peculiarities of the narrator's intervention; and the literary configuration of characters and spaces), which contribute to the interpretation of the social and historical contexts and ethical issues of the collective culture of Roth's time.

Martin Löschnigg deals with the implications of technological warfare for war narratives, especially for the spatial and temporal orientation of such narratives. In discussing selected cases, he shows that cognitive narratology can be transposed into an analysis of aesthetic elements in war literature and of the ineffability of the experience or crisis of language that is characteristic of modern and postmodern literature. In the treatment of narrative characters in Andrej Blatnik's short stories, **Darja Pavlič** is another author to find a point of departure in cognitive narratology, exploring the connection of the notion of experientiality with

readers, literary figures and storytellers. A further important premise of her analysis is that, at the level of literary characters, experientiality can be identified with the consciousness of the characters, particularly when it is understood as the embodied mind. This premise is justified by the fact that Blatnik's stories are based on processes in the consciousness of the characters rather than on external events.

The fact that narratological perspectives can be productive for the analyses and interpretations of lyric cycle formation, albeit only for syntagmatic cycles, is demonstrated by **Vita Žerjal Pavlin**'s discussion based on the example of a three-poem cycle by Josip Murn. She relies on a methodology designed by scholars from the University of Hamburg for the narratological analysis of lyric poems. Another contributor dealing with lyric poetry in her paper is **Varja Balžalorsky Antić**, who re-adapts the concept of focalization for this purpose. Considering a number of cases, she shows how focalization can be expressed on individual levels in lyric poems and introduces – again supported with examples – an interesting typology of focalization in lyric discourse. Somewhat differently and with unconcealed ethical engagement, the focalization in the “animalist fiction” of Bulgarian classical realistic literature aimed at readers of all ages is addressed by **Kalina Zahova**. She, too, proposes a typology of focalization that fits the chosen material, advocating a sincere and appropriate, although inevitably anthropocentric, focalization as one that, with empathy for nonhuman animals, can resist violent anthropodomination.

The last two discussions focus on empathy and affect as relatively new dimensions of narrative worthy of attention in narratological approaches. **Alojzija Zupan Sosič**'s article analyzes the narrative empathy of two of Ivan Cankar's novels, *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* (*The Ward of Mary Help of Christians*) and *Križ na gori* (*The Cross on the Mountain*), dividing it into the author's and the reader's empathy. In analyzing empathizing techniques with regard to the author's empathy, she is interested in the autobiographical, the level of the author's empathy and the aesthetics of production; regarding the reader's empathy, she seeks identification with the character and the narrative situation. In an interesting way, the author interprets the reception of both texts upon their publication in terms of the discrepancies between the reader's and the author's empathy. The last article in the section is by **Alenka Koron**, who applies a syncretic model of narrative worldmaking developed by Claudia Breger to a short story by Suzana Tratnik, focusing primarily on the narrative role of shame and guilt as social affects.