

THE ENGLISH NOVEL: INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

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Lecture 03

Classical Narrative Theory

Hello students, I'm Professor Smita Jha and I'm doing The English Novel: Interdisciplinary Approaches. Now, today's topic is Classical narrative theory, which I suppose, is a very important part of literary exploration, also for understanding a literary piece. So let us see what are the factors that take us to this classical narrative theory, making English novel or any literary text an interdisciplinary subject. Well, in the context of interdisciplinary approach to the development of the text, understanding problem, the provision on text as a discourse event is taken into consideration, which is why emphasis is made on the interaction within the text of the speaker, that is author and reader, literary text, in a way trainer and trainee, that is educational text. For the successful interaction, communicants should master the extra linguistic and inter linguistic presuppositions. Extra linguistic presuppositions facilitate the actualization of the socio-cultural context.

Because today's topic is classical narrative theory and we have to discuss this under the banner of interdisciplinary approach, when we talk of interdisciplinary approach, this is the aspect like the socio-cultural aspects. Very, very important to explore the real meaning of the text. Narrative theories emerge from enquiries just as surely as do historical investigations. Therefore, understanding a particular theory requires that we attend to the questions it puts to narrative.

Now expressed another way, we cannot fully appreciate the terms of a narrative theory unless we also appreciate its purpose. Very true! That is why, today I am going to discuss in detail, the various theories, because the last time I discussed various genre related to the art theory. Today I'm going to explore, explain the various theories while talking of literary text. So, the most prominent question is, what is narrative? What do we mean by narrative? Well, we need to draw a line between a narrative and a story. According to narrative theory, a story refers to all the building blocks you start out with. You have got a bunch of events, people and places. The thing is, you can put this stuff together in all kinds of different ways.

That's where narrative stays in. So, this is the difference between a Narrative and a Story. It is how you as a reader weave the story material together and give it shape.

Narrative is about organizing the story material and making choices about how to put it together. It is important to tell the difference between narrative and story. That is why I tried to highlight this point. So what is a story? A sequence of event, known correctly as the 'Plot' and narrative, the way those events are put together to be presented to an audience. Therefore, when analysing a narrative, we analyse the construction of the story i.e. the way it has been put together, not the story itself. It's not just about organisation, though, narratives are also about being creative.

When an author writes a novel, for example, there are all sorts of ways he or she can choose to tell their story. You are probably familiar with "Happily Ever After", Disney style narrative, but as you all see, there is boatload of different forms that narratives can take. Not all narratives follow the usual beginning, middle, end template. In fact, writers can choose to play around with narrative to deliberate effect, keeping us guessing and challenging our expectation. Think of it. Two writers could start off with the same story, but turn it into two completely different narrative. Just think of all those movies, plots made from a single novel title, you know, like Dracula or Anna Karenina.

If they were all identical, then things would get pretty boring and, you know, same. Am I right? But the thing is, they are all different. And you have got narrative to thank for that.

Why should Readers care?

Because in all process, readers are very important. Narrative is like second nature for us. We barely even notice that it is there most of the time. It's not until we read a book or watch a movie that deliberately messes with narrative. Think of something like Pulp Fiction that we sit up and take notice. But it is narratives that shape our experience and make it possible for us to make sense of both literature and the wider world. Narrative theory helps us to understand how texts work and it gets us thinking about the choices that the author has made. After all, there is always more than one way of telling a story. It's by taking a look at narrative that we can get a handle on how the story is told. And that makes it possible for us to weigh in on what the story is all about. And come up with our own opinions and interpretations based on that.

Why should Theorists care?

This is also one of the important aspects. There are lots of different angles you can take when you are analysing a text. But when it comes right down to it, what you have got in front of you is a good of narrative structure. 'Structure' is the key term here. Since narratology is totally a spin-off of structuralism, what structuralism and narratology have in common? It is an obsession with the nuts and bolts of how things like novels and movies and even entire cultures are put together. Exploring narrative help us understand and describe how texts work. How they create their effects, and how they relate to other texts in the same field.

The narrative mode of world representation and world building is omnipresent and far exceeds the domain of literature. Since literature is not necessarily narrative, and narrative not necessarily literary. The study of narrative in a literary context must confront narrative and literature in a dual way. How does the presence of narrative affect literature? And how does literariness affect narrative? The basic terminology needs to be clarified by comparing English with the vocabulary of other natural language. The entire history of poetics shows that before the middle of 28th century, little attention was paid to the narrative, components of literary text, core narrative, that is in so far as the same narrative could equally be found in non-aesthetized uses of verbal and non-verbal languages. It's very important to know about Aristotle's poetics. So, Aristotelian poetics based on the mimesis of human action keeps its grip on narrative theory.

The post-Aristotelian tried to separate more sharply the lyric from the epic and dramatic genres. But modern narrative theories, mostly based on the study of folktales and the novel, have still failed to unify the field of literary narrative, or have done it artificially, dissolving narrative discourse into undifferentiated experience of human life in linear time. The rise of novel in the regular sense of the term and its worldwide expansion turned the question of fiction, not that of narratively into the main focus of narrative studies. Later, the emergence of formalism and semiotics and the linguistic turn of the social sciences pushed the narrative analysis of literary text in the opposite direction, with all of its efforts bearing on minimal supposedly deeper units and simple concentration.

The permanent unresolved conflicts between an analytical and constructivist view grounded in individual events and a holistic view concerned. With story worlds and storytelling leaves mostly unattended such fundamental questions as how narrative is used by literature and literature by narrative for their own ends. And the entire discussion of today that is the classical literary theory depends on this. Literary narrativity must be thoroughly reconsidered. A critical transdisciplinary theory should submit to both logical

and empirical trial on a large number of varied samples and narrative analysis that would take into account the following concepts used to forge methodological tools like discrimination between the function of discourse genre and between pragmatic roles in literary communication. Combination rule whether linear or not.

Levels as a spatial placing as interdependence and hierarchical authority, scale and spatio-temporal framing and backgrounding, especially the dominant time concepts in particular cultural context. The preconditions for analysis begin by investigating the relation between aesthetic emotions and narrative in other cultural domains than the West and the English-speaking world. Literary narrativity and social values concur to link the rhetorical manipulation of narrative with its aestheticization. The pleasure and fear of cognition combine with strategies of delusion to either acquiesce to the effects of time and violence or resist them. Routine and rupture are alternatively foregrounded according to needs.

If we can agree on the common transculture intuition, that literature is another name for verbal art, we all also readily accept that many and indeed most other channels of communication, expression and information can and do tell stories or at least contain fragments of narrative discourse. The visual art and instrumental music also often use their non-verbal means to convey narrative meaning, beside the symbolic value or emotional significance brought about by formal features. Verbal art may be considered as another anthropological universal but rhymes, puns, chanting, rhythms are not narrative acts. They can indirectly, through symbolism and sensorial association evoke, announce or recall a narrative without formulating one any more than the hand imprints of the prehistoric 'Cuba de las Mano'.

We could even say that they may run counter to the narrative potential of the text like the recurring couplets of a ballet or an insistent leitmotif in narrative, i.e. program music. Repetition establishes constants. It can smother events, lyric, argumentative discourse, critical commentaries, the questioning, a speculative discourse of the essay, can be implicitly or explicitly motivated by subjacent or projected narrative.

They can be interposed with narrative utterances and even sequences without conveying any properly narrative meaning by themselves. The foundation of disconnection of narrative and literature is often not recognized by Western theorists, mainly because the novel became the dominant genre there between the 17th century and the 19th century and has conquered the rest of the world in the last 150 years. The disconnection makes it an obligation to deneutralize, investigate, describe and sometime question the workings of

narrative in literature and the role of aestheticization in narratives like those of historiography, cosmology or biology that do not a priori require an aesthetic supplement to fulfill their cognitive, social, political and ethical purposes. The word poetics rather than theory is preferred; Poetic, subjective.

First of all, narrative meaning and resonance are held to be the result of a making, a collaborative fabrication, not a given of a text as it stands in its own space as early textual structuralism saw it, or a ready-made code or pattern that would reside in the minds of both receiver and the sender and could be called upon, activated at, well without undergoing important modifications as some cognitivist views like those popularised by Jonathan Gottschall would have it. Aristotle's poetic remains after 24 centuries by far the single most influential treatise of its type in the West and by colonial extension worldwide. What were the motivation of such a persistent impact in spite of the Judeo-Christian revelation and revolution?

What a very different attitude to the book was now carried by three monotheism when divine authorship and its truth value imposed a unique, linear master narrative of the history of mankind always already pre-written by God. The enlightenment, the destabilizing, iconoclastic, avant-garde, the formalist, structuralist, pragmatist, cognitivist and deconstructionist perturbations of the basic. Aristotelian tenets have also proven unable to uproot them.

Whether the inexpugnable resistance is due to an ever-renewed tragic vision of life that neither eschatological monotheism nor radical skepticism could seriously alter or whether it was propitiated by the foundational character of the poetics by an incompleteness that gave rise to a number of equally plausible interpretations or on the contrary by the often-schematic pronouncements, it makes prefiguring a culture of manifestos. Its system is still at the heart of contemporary narrative theories that do not refer to it at all.

Imitation is natural to man from childhood. One of his advantages over the lower animals begin this that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation. It is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. If man is a born imitator, If this is one of his key defining features, his dignity and his limit, he can imitate good or evil and his innate imitation skill must be guided. The main function of art itself, imitative, qua human, will be to guide, Initiate imitative behaviour by the receiver. The objects, the imitator represents our actions with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad.

Action, that is classics or actions, human affairs (pragmata) are at the core of Aristotelian poetics.

The mimesis of human action is for Aristotle at once the shared and the sole determinant feature and primary purpose of all the art considered themselves of all levels as making or practicing a technique to pursue a goal regarding narrative. The choice has wide ranging philosophical implications and hermeneutic consequences that will always complicate and sometimes hamper the task of contemporary narrative theory. On the one hand, it potentially unifies all the art under the common denominator of narrative, allowing and even encouraging inter-artistic and trans-medial comparison, on the other hand, it excludes from artistic domains and aesthetic enjoyment in an unjustifiable way according to our modern view and practice.

Any act of expression or imitation that is either conceptual or merely descriptive or yet refers to natural non-human events. Second, but very important, if non-human events such as meteors, geological, astronomical, physical events at large or the life events of animals and plants are not valid objects of representation by literary language unless they serve as metaphors of human action as in small parallel and allegories.

A radical dichotomy is maintained between human nature and culture on one side and nature, what there is or what might be, without mankind or discounting man's action on it, on the other. Perseverance of man from the rest of the universe is not constitutive of the tragic condition that motivates for Aristotle the highest form of genre or poetry. Catharsis would serve as the fantasized healing of the repressed but active subconscious separation.

Now, here I conclude this part of the discussion. I would start again with the same and also rhetorical part in the next lecture of mine.

Thank you very much!