

The English Novel: Interdisciplinary Approaches
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Lecture - 4
Rhetorical Narrative Theory

Hello student, I am Professor Smita Jha and I am here to discuss the Rhetorical Narrative Theory with 'The English Novel: Interdisciplinary Approaches'. In the last lecture of mine, I analyzed the classical theory basically with Aristotelian concept of Mimesis and Catharsis. Today, let us see the rhetorical narrative theory and how it implies while reading or analyzing English novel with a broader dimension or perspective. A rhetorical device is a use of language, we all know that, that is intended to have an effect on its audience. Repetition, figurative language and even rhetorical questions are all examples of rhetorical device like you hear me.

Rhetorical devices are common. I mean, I think that all the students of English literature must be aware of, such as saying 'language is a living beast'. That's a metaphor. One of the most common rhetorical devices; another is alliteration, like saying 'bees behave badly in Boston'.

Rhetorical devices go beyond the meaning of words to create effects that are creative and imaginative, adding literary quality to writing. And I think that making meaning out of the text, we should have sound knowledge of rhetorical devices. As with all fields of serious and complicated human endeavour that can be considered variously as an art, a science, a profession or hobby, there is a technical vocabulary associated with writing. Rhetoric is the name for the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion.

And though a writer doesn't need to know the specific labels for certain writing techniques in order to use them effectively, it is sometimes helpful to have a handy taxonomy for the ways in which words and ideas are arranged. This can help to discuss and isolate ideas that might otherwise become abstract and confusing. As with the word rhetoric itself, many of these rhetorical devices come from Greek. Narrative have many different components that make them rhetorically relevant.

They are reflections of an audience's values. A story is never just a story. They are about the people telling them about ways of envisioning the future or about the contemporary problems that those tellers are confronted with. Narratives are ways of shaping public

memory or retelling events that have happened in the past. They allow us to remember what has happened or to retell these moments as alternative futures.

They organize how we interpret public events that we encounter in our everyday lives. Many people have tried to make sense of COVID-19 pandemic by watching films like *Outbreak* or *Contagion*. Narrative also reflect a dominant ideology. Because they reflect the values not just of the people who create them but of the people who read and watch them, making them a part of their lives.

Narratives have an inside and outside layer. The inside is usually talked about as the 'diegesis' and the outside is usually talked about as the 'extra-diegesis'. In a written narrative, the element that occur in the timeline of the story form the digesis. Things that happen in the story but fall outside the scope of the story's events are extra-diegetic. For instance, a story may be about characters whose lives were changed by September 11, 2001.

The things that happen to these characters would be part of the diegesis. But if September 11, 2001 was not explicitly a part of the story, they would be extra-diegetic. If those events occurred before the story ever began. Narrative time describes the way that stories are ordered as a progression of events. Sometimes the orders in which the story is told is not identical to the linear progression of time.

Narrative may begin 'in medias res' where events are already happening or have already happened. They both happen step by step and as an overall arc that connects the beginning to the end. They happen as brief moments of surprise and opportunity and as the unfolding of deeply plotted event. Well, here I should mention 'Fabula' and 'Sjuzhet', and we should know about it when we talk about the characteristics of the narrative. Fabula describes the chronological sequence of events.

In a narrative, sometimes the stories are told from beginning to end without any detours. Not all stories are told linearly. However, many stories involve flashbacks or prolepsis, that is, a foreshadowing or flash forward. *Sherlock Holmes*, a detective fiction is a story that is famous for taking the reader through a chronological sequence of events only to route them to an earlier moment in time when the detective explains their detective reasoning.

The fabula is the timeline that we would construct if we were to untangle all of the events in the narrative, creating a timeline that puts them back in their linear order from beginning to end. The sequence of the fabula may or may not correspond with how the narrator

actually tells the story. Well, Sjuzheth, another important aspect, describes the representation of those events in whatever sequence the narrative presents them. In other words, if the events in the narrative occur in first, second, third order, then that is the Sjuzheth. If the narrative begins in the middle, return us to the past and takes us to the end, then that is Sjuzheth.

If the narrative is a collection of different stories that start and end in overlapping time, then that is the Sjuzheth. It is time in the narrative voice of the story as it is told. Now let us discuss a few rhetorical devices because these are the part of narrative rhetoric. 'Metonymy', which is a narrative trope described moment to moment slippage in a story. 'Anaphora', repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, clause, sentences or verses, especially for rhetorical or poetic effect. Metaphor we all know and we use very frequently as a narrative trope which describes the overall slippage of a story, its total narrative arc. And 'anaculothon' traces back to Greek *anaculothos* which means inconsistent. Well, a reader should know about these, you know, various rhetorical devices, 'kairos', a rhetorical term that signifies the opportune moment. To be aware of and use 'kairos' means that one has an awareness of their situation.

'Analepsisa' is a literary technique that involves interruption of the chronological sequence of events. 'Chronos', again, a rhetorical device, describe the deep time in which events unfold, while alliteration, we all are aware, repetition of the consonant sound in two or more neighbouring words or syllables. Narratives also have formal and aesthetic elements, and that we discussed, you know, in the previous lecture also. Formal elements are those that structure the narrative. Aesthetic elements are those that occur in narrative because of the cultural context of the story.

For example, the plot is a formal narrative element because it places the characters on a path that will eventually lead to some kind of resolution. A very important rhetorical device is 'zeugma', that is the use of word to modify or govern two or more words. usually in such a manner that it applies to each in a different sense or makes sense with only one. Again, 'antiphrasis', usually ironic and humorous use of word in senses opposite to the generally accepted meaning. 'Synecdoche', a very, very common rhetoric device, a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole, used very frequently in poetry. Then, 'syllepsis', 'litotes', 'meiosis', these are all important part of rhetoric. 'Oxymoron', 'onomatopoeia', 'pleonasm', that is use of more words than those necessary to denote more sense, that is redundancy. So narratives are also categorized and reshaped by genre or convention that allow stories to be widely recognizable and appreciated by wide audiences. Genres create

a pattern of expectation such that some of the best stories make us question our expectation of what the characters will do or make us jump with a twist ending.

Both form and genre refer to ways of organizing narrative. So what is the difference? Form and genre are two important ways of describing the recognizable recognition of narrative. Forms are akin to the building blocks of narrative. They are durable, repeatable elements that may appear as features within many different narratives.

Within narratives, forms are small-scale ways of arranging action and organizing language, giving these a recognizable logical order. It can also be understood as a repeatable sequence or as figures of speech. Genres are name for categories of narrative and that I discussed in the previous lecture of mine in a very detailed manner. Narrative frames are also very important when we talk of narrative theory. And these are the ways that public events are constructed through a narrative frame.

Two critical communication theories used frame to describe narrative. Kenneth Burke and Shanto Iyengar. 'Comic' and 'tragic frame'. The tragic frame is a viewpoint that would have you see others as evil rather than mistaken, as calculating or as deliberately as deceitful. The comic frame is a viewpoint and that would have you see others as mistaken rather than evil.

'Episodic' and 'thematic frames'. Santo Angar's 'media frames' account for how news stories are repeated and told in a political context. And that is true. Frame within the frame. It is traditionally understood in terms of the way that news stories are organized.

The episodic frame depicts public issues in concrete instances or public events. The episodic makes for good picture. Its key characteristic is the snapshot or close-up. It is about isolated events disconnected from a greater context. The thematic frame places public issue in same general context.

We should also know about the 'narrative paradigm'. 'Narrative paradigm' is Walter Fisher's theory of narrative. The section is about defining the narrative paradigm and will contrast this framework with the rational world paradigm. Then when we think about what makes a narrative persuasive. Rhetorically, we all draw upon two key concepts, narrative coherence and narrative fidelity.

A paradigm is a conceptual framework and we should know about it. A universal model that calls people to view events as an interpretive lens for events around them. A paradigm is like magnifying glass. Different magnification levels might lead you to see a similar

phenomenon in different ways. Walter Fisher developed the narrative paradigm where he refers to humans as storytelling animals.

And the idea of storytelling animals really just says that storytelling is so foundational what it means to be humans that it might as well be as if we were barking dogs. So first, what are the components of a story? Key concepts of coherence and fidelity And I think these are very important for storytelling. Narrative rationality describes how to evaluate the worth of a story based upon standards of coherence and fidelity.

‘Coherence’ is how a story hangs together. ‘Fidelity’ is how, whether and for whom a story rings true. So narrative coherence is the internal consistency with characters acting reliably. The story and the plot itself hang together and make sense. Even narrative fidelity is where we have consistency or coherence between values embedded in a message that the listener holds.

So there are several criterias. First, the value themselves have to be present in the story. Second, there must be a connection between the value and the story. Third, the outcomes a person may experience if they adhere to those values. Fourth, the consistency of an audience's values to narrative value. While fifth, how the values of a story align with larger public morals.

The problem of speaking for others. And I think that we should discuss this particular aspect also. An essay by Linda Alcoff questions whether some circumstances warrant a person to speak on someone else's behalf. She begins her essay by acknowledging that at the current moment speaking for other is arrogant, vain, unethical and politically illegitimate. People speak from specific positions of class, race, gender, culture and ability and a person's position cannot be assumed in advance. Well, while we discuss this, there can be two premises here. First, ‘positionality’ and ‘context’ are always relevant to a message. While premise two, certain contexts which are always unpredictable in some way or another, ally themselves with operation or resistance to operation thus perpetuating inequality.

The first premise requires that the speaker's ethical obligation is to know the person with whom they are speaking to the best of their ability. No amount of research reveals someone else's context. The second premise describes the hierarchy of power. It deals with rituals of speaking which are politically constituted by power, relations of domination, exploitation and subordination. Now, when we talk of various types of reading and rhetoric, well, some theories which are very important, and one of them, ‘intersectionality’, which

refers to a framework developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, to understand the ways that structural forces such as legal institutions, schools and the healthcare system create multiple and overlapping forms of social operation, specifically against black girls and women. And it is related to narrative because it suggests that telling one's story may be more complex by the many structural factors contributing to their experience. So the degree of narrativity of a given narrative depends partly on to the extent to which that narrative fulfills a receiver's desire by representing oriented temporal holes. Discourses can be called narrative when they manifest their participants' minds, desire or acceptance of a worldview according to which existence is subject to change at one or several points of a linear temporal continuum.

Now, when a narrative is judged, to be well formed, its emplotment, the progression of action, the spacing and collocation of incidents, that is, events, correspond to certain narrative patterns. That recall, canonical/patrimonial, literary, historical, sacred or mythical narratives is stored in the collective cultural memory of a civilization and a natural language. This aesthetic judgment bears specifically on literary narrative as narrative. Even after successive or narratives, foundational fiction, master narrative and grand historical narratives all started to crumble under the combined fire of the science, each with its own field restrictions and limited purpose, the defeat of utopias, the experience of disaster and the rebellion of the masses, a global narrative vision of the world, in the sense trying to read it as a single, coherent story keeps creeping back recalling all the losses suffered with the death of the king the death of God and death of Empire from the beginning of the 20th century. Reactions to this state of affair have been very diverse they are all manifested in dominant narrative theories with the steady production of mainstream literary narrative and the prosification of the lyric. Early structure and formalist narratologies dealt preferentially with simple, popular, traditional types of narrative or with the short story. French structuralism in its softer, more flexible version with Genette's narrative discourse after Roland Barthes's multiplied grids and codes to deal with the underlying structures of complex and ambiguous works.

It is striking that the choice by Genette of Proust's magnum opus to nourish, develop and test his reading grids applies to a monument with a 'good shape', beginning with the evocation of preterit habit and ending with salvation. Other major and massive narrative fiction of the first half of the 20th century such as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities* were not favored by classical structural narratology because they did not fulfill the conditions of a successful account imposed by its method. The outline of

Ulysses purports to reproduce that of *Odyssey*, but it shockingly combines the complex narrational, level and episodic elements of the epic of Nostos with the unities of time and place of classical tragedy, the end-product having to be read consequently as a critical deconstructive parody of the elements of demands of classical narrative aesthetic. Theorists were bound to leave most so-called postmodern and postcolonial literary narratives out of their field of inquiry, labelling them anti-narrative, if not non-narrative, or they tried rather obscurely to design a specific dissident narrative theories in order to accommodate the new dissident narrative aesthetic and parallel oppositional tradition. Well, on which the new narrative drew heavily to try and secure a place in the canon while at the same time finding in it room for maneuver. Dissident narrative aesthetics follows many different strategies for estrangement, disturbance and renewal. For grounding banality or accident, blurring the ontological statutory difference between objects and event, minimalism, maximalism, self-reflexibility, abstraction, fragmentation, rejection of the principle of non-contradiction, open choice between universe of reference, straining, distortion or cutting up linear time, warped frames, relative or irreversible spaces and alike.

These strategies can operate at all levels or at any step of narrative. To narrative communication, one of them can be hegemonic or they can subtly complement each other to alter and rethink the values borne by well-formed, readily straightforward, easily recognizable narratives.

So a different non-Western aesthetic, can we talk about that? Of course, yes. *Rasa*, *Katha*, narrative emotions, very much popular in storytelling beyond implicitly recalling the principle of anthropological unity, hardcore structural semantics has little to bring to the narrative comprehension of the world increasingly divided by its push for globalization and its resistance to it. In particular, any narratology that fails to take into account the different and often complex sets of time concepts that prevail in any one culture or its current and historical system of universes of reference is bound to err grossly, even at the elementary level of definition and identification of narrative discourse and what it stands for. So, I conclude by analyzing Indian aesthetics and poetics can be located at a safe and miserable but obvious distance from the Western i.e. Aristotelian tradition with which it shares Indo-European linguistic structure and and the centrality of the dramatic and epic modes of representation but not the same hierarchy of emotions or time concept. At first sight, the combination of *rasa* i.e. flavor, emotion, mood and *dhvani* (suggestion), that appears to be prevailing in long era of Indian aesthetic thought in the past, although with marked variations of status and has made a forceful comeback since the middle of the 20th

century, is much more closely associated with music, dance and the performing art, especially a stage drama, than it is with verbal narrative or narrative qua narrative. Well, with these words, I will just try to wrap up the whole discussion, though the corpus is very, very vast and we need to discuss a lot.

But I think that the two important aspects, that is the Western narrative, that is Aristotelian and along with Indian aesthetic, very useful to discuss while narrating the classical theory of English novel or storytelling in general.