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Discourse Narratology: A Review of Patrick Colm Hogan's Narrative Discourse

- Patrick Colm Hogan, *Narrative Discourse: Authors and Narrators in Literature, Film, and Art*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press 2013. 301 p. [Price: USD 79.95]. ISBN: 978-0814212097.

In this very accessibly written book Patrick Colm Hogan tries to reconceptualize narratology from a discourse studies perspective (hence the title *Narrative Discourse*). He particularly concentrates on the questions of author and narrator, proposing partially new terminology and an extended diagram of narrative communication. The study distinguishes itself from many other narratological monographs by focusing on a fairly limited number of issues (rather than attempting a new typology, for instance), and by using painting as well as film for its material of analysis. Moreover, Hogan resorts to both postcolonial texts and the Indian tradition of aesthetic criticism, thus adding a multicultural perspective. Central to Hogan's approach are also his knowledge of cognitive studies and his interest in emotions (see his *Affective Narratology*, 2011).

The study is divided into an Introduction and six chapters plus an Afterword. The Introduction sets discourse narratology into a framework of discourse analysis, explaining that the focus of the book lies on discourse or communication and that it thus propounds »the continuity between literary narrative and other forms of narrative production and reception« (11). Hogan then goes on to enumerate the »purposes of reading«, which are thematic. He lists as, one, the represented, or plot; second, emotion on the level of story and empathy, but also on the level of discourse (curiosity, suspense); and, third, »any norm – particularly an ethical or political norm – that carries over from the narrative to the real world« (18). He then links narrative discourse analysis with interpretation and its »profile of ambiguity« (19–20)

Chapter 1, »Who is Speaking to Whom – The Communicative Discourse of Narrative Art«, concentrates on the author, the narrator and particularly the implied author, briefly mentioning focalization, and then turns to some new proposals. Hogan distinguishes between *personified* and *nonpersonified* narrators (40–41) and introduces the term *topicalization* to deal with the text's focus on a protagonist who is not the focalizer (*The Great Gatsby*). In elucidating his defense of the implied author, he resorts to the Sanskrit notion of *sahrdaya* – the reader's cognitive empathy with the author.

Chapter 2 concentrates on Rabindranath Tagore's paintings (rather than poetry or fiction) and reads these narratively. The choice of painting as a *pièce de résistance* for narratology is well taken (though there is more work on it than Hogan quotes). By way of metaphor (Sanskrit *dhvani*) and the emotional response (*rasa*) Hogan explicates a series of paintings which are, however, extremely ambiguous and difficult to interpret with any confidence. He then turns to filmic *auteurism* (asking how there can be an *author*, or implied author, for a film even though so many people are responsible for the final product). The subsequent discussion of Bimal Roy's film *Madhumati* (1958) foregrounds the transition between present and past (memory of a former incarnation), but does not clearly link to the author topic. The conclusion of the chapter proposes the existence of »cross-textual implied authorship« (109), which is constructed from recurring themes and »receptive, implied authorial intent« (110).

Chapter 3, »Authors, Implied and Implicated«, proposes that there can be several audiences for a narrative (Hogan bases his argument on an article by Brian Richardson from 2007, but does not mention Kubowitz's incisive analysis in *Style* 46.2 [2012] – probably in print when he completed his manuscript). This thesis is illustrated in two excellent readings, one of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and the other of Kabir Khan's film *New York* (2009). In order to distinguish a global implied author from a contradictory viewpoint in local passages in a text, Hogan coins the term *implicated author*. He moreover suggests that the author may introduce deliberate contradiction through what he calls *misdirection* by seeming to convey one message (which is politically acceptable) while actually wanting to propose the contradictory point of view also present in the film (*New York*). This strategy has of course been much discussed in Shakespeare criticism, and – particularly given Hogan's transmedial interests – it is odd that he does not resort to this literature.

Chapter 4 continues the concern with implied narrators by focusing on »narrative reliability«. Hogan acknowledges our propensity to trust nonpersonalized narrators since they are in a position of »authority« (155) and agrees with Ansgar Nünning's emphasis on the norms of the narrative and with Marie-Laure Ryan's »principle of minimal departure« and with Tamar Yacobi's work on naturalizing textual oddity. To this he adds a foray into cognitive studies, pointing to »default preference rules« (161–2) that determine readers' interpretative strategies. His example text is Margaret Atwood's 1972 novel *Surfacing*, in which the protagonist has repressed her abortion and only comes to recover the truth when she is diving and then surfaces from the water and from the lies that she has been telling.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on multiple narration. This includes »embedded, collective, and parallel« (183) narratives. Parallel narratives treat either the *same* facts (conjunctive) or different ones (disjunctive – 184). The chapter goes on to concentrate on »mentalist narration«, i.e. the representation of consciousness, distinguishing »*self-conscious* and *un-self-conscious* or *implicit* narration« (189), the latter in interior monologue. The example is William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), of which Hogan provides a very interesting reading, noting among other things that while Jason is motivated by his dread of being ridiculed and represses his personal responsibility for his failures completely, Quentin on the other hand exaggerates his own guilt for events. The second example is David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001), a film in which it cannot be determined whether the two narratives are embedded in one another and which of them is the primary narrative. In Chapter 6 the emphasis is on collective narration, with sections on we-narrative and on what Hogan calls »collective focalization« (presenting the world through the eyes of a group) in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and in the 1988 Namibian novel *Born of the Sun* by Joseph Diescho and Celeste Wallin. The chapter provides very interesting discussions of the two novels and significantly adds to narratological work on collectivity.

The Afterword extends the intergeneric analysis one more time by providing a highly sophisticated reading of a poem by the sixteenth-century Hindi poet Mirabai.

Having given readers a sense of the range of issues and texts covered in Hogan's study, I turn to a discussion of his narratological proposals, a discussion which can be titled 'The Problems with Hogan's Discourse Analysis Approach to Narrative'. There are three major problems that beset this book. The first of these is audience-related. The book reads like an introduction to narratology, systematically discussing narrative instances and levels of narrative engagement. It sets out its theses, taking issue with some of the existing narratological criticism (the bibliography is fairly slim and fails to mention much pertinent criticism), but nowhere addresses the central question it raises in every narratologist's mind when reading this study: Why are his revisions of narratological terminology and concepts necessary, what is their advantage over

previous narratologies? Hogan seems to address a student audience, but then he provides such extensive discussion of minute distinctions, assuming for instance that every reader knows what Prince's »un-narrated« refers to (170), that a real student would become entirely confused. Yet for the full-scale narratologist he provides too much basic information and then skips over or skimps on the discussion of why his revisions should be preferable to well-known narratological work. There is, therefore, a failure here to conceptualize exactly what audience(s) will be reading this study, or Hogan has become so enamored of multiple implicated readers that he wishes to sacrifice argumentative consistency over broad appeal.

The second problem with this book lies in its narrator/IMPLIED/implicated author model with its set of analogical personae on the reception side. Rather like Genette, Hogan extends the pool of terminological distinctions by adding a considerable number of new terms to the narratological lexicon. However, unlike Genette, whose procedure is a model of clarity and persuasiveness, Hogan's book is often both unclear and not entirely convincing in its multiplication of terminology. Right at the outset, for instance, in the Introduction, the relationship between linguistic discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and narrative discourse analysis remains obscure since in fact linguistic discourse analysis *includes* narrative discourse analysis or overlaps with it. The entire alignment of narratology with discourse analysis can be argued to be quite spurious, since all it really seems to foreground is the underlining of a communication model as fundamental to narratology, renamed narrative discourse analysis. In fact, Hogan's politics of communication closely resembles Roger Sell's plea for a communicative take on narrative in his book *Literature as Communication: The Foundations of Mediating Criticism* (2000), which Hogan does not cite.

There are several diagrams in Hogan's book with increasingly baroque embeddings of the communicational levels. Thus, on page 63, he proposes the following model for the »communicative part of discourse«:

Real Author [Implied Author, guided by partially »autonomous« imagined agents [Nonpersonified Narrator {Personified Narrator {Focalizer {Topicalizer}} Personified Narratee} Nonpersonified Narratee] Implied Reader/Sahrdaya] Real Reader/Critic.

Even if one were in agreement regarding the existence of an implied author as a communicative agent (which I am not), the embedding of focalizers and (non)personalized narrators makes little sense, much less with a topicalizer and implicated authors and readers thrown in for good measure in Chapter 3. Besides defaulting on the values of Occam's razor so signally ignored by Hogan (see, for instance, his distinctions between »rhetorical embedding« vs. »idealized embedded narration« – 223–4; the invention of an »implicit subtextual template« – 225), these many distinctions are not sufficiently clearly presented and strike the reader as a gratuitous expansion of Genettean terminology.

What I personally found most troubling in Hogan's study was the recurring suggestion that implied narrative instances communicate, even speak, whereas – as Hogan himself says at the outset – they are only constructed images of the author function or of the reception process. For instance, on page 115 Hogan claims that in »authorial intrusion[s]«, »the voice of the author and the voice of the narrator are (temporarily) conflated«. Surely, it cannot be the actual author, but only what we reconstruct as the views of the author and hence the *implied* author (since he has one) whose views may be imposed on the narrator (if that narrator has a different world view elsewhere). Problematically, on page 192 »the implied author chooses a *fully idealized verbalization* in stream-of-consciousness writing«. Not only does Hogan imply that interior monologues have narrators; to have the lexical choices of the text *originate* in an *implied author* goes against the entire tradition of narratology. In Hogan's analysis of the Mirabai poem in the

Afterword he says that »the poem presents a personified narrator who is not distinguished from the nonpersonified narrator, who is in turn not distinguished from the implied author« (253). This is a poem with a speaker; I am certain that very few narratologists would see this poem as *narrative* in any consensual sense of that term. At the end of the reading, Hogan even speculates about a »marital relationship between the implied reader and the narratee« (258). The proliferation of reader and narrator roles in this interpretation is stunning and creates a large number of theoretical conundrums, whereas a reading that simply noted that the poem is addressed to Krishna, but that other possible addressees might conceivably be hinted at, avoids much unnecessary terminology and the personification of speculative communicational instances.

Similar problems arise when in Chapter 6 a »focalized narrator may infer a state or may present the state as if he or she had direct access to it« (238). This is part of a discussion of theory of mind, but one wonders whether this should have been a *focalizing* narrator. Curiously, the »non-personified narrator« of *Born of the Sun*, who *focalizes* on the character Muronga, is said to have »some general knowledge of several languages unknown to Muronga« (241). Who ever believed a covert narrator needs to completely avoid narratorial language even if there is consistent internal focalization? In fact, if the peculiarities of the narrator stick out, he cannot be nonpersonified. (Incidentally, the distinction between personified and nonpersonified narrator has been in use since Franz Karl Stanzel's model for decades under the shape of the »personalized narrator«.) The oddity here also seems to connect with Hogan's definition of the focalizer, who »is located more squarely within the storyworld. Moreover, the focalizer does not directly communicate story representations with anyone« (26). Since we have a nonpersonalized narrator in this novel, where exactly do we locate the story-internal focalizer?

As my comments suggest, Hogan's study ultimately raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, as initially indicated, some of the distinctions and issues introduced in this book are worth integrating into narratological discussions. One would not want to throw these babies out with the bathwater.

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