A Theory of Narrative

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By

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READING GUIDE

> In thousands of languages, in the most diverse climes, from century to century, beginning with the very old stories told around the hearth in the huts of our remote ancestors down to the works of modern storytellers which are appearing at this moment in the publishing houses of the great cities of the world, it is the story of the human condition that is being spun and that men never weary of telling to one another. The manner of telling and the form of the story vary according to periods and circumstances, but the taste for telling and retelling a story remains the same: the narrative flows endlessly and never runs dry. Thus, at times, one might almost believe that from the first dawn of consciousness throughout the ages, mankind has constantly been telling itself the same story, though with infinite variations, to the rhythm of its breath and pulse.

In 1961, Ivo Andrić (Andrić, 1961), in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, summed up our narrative capacity and need very succinctly and, with a great deal of foresight, predicted their further development at the very time of the birth of narratology. Human beings may belong to different groups: we are black and white, athletic and non-athletic, empathetic and egotistical, but what we all have in common is that we are storytellers. Even when we explain at home what we saw in the neighbours' house, or apologise at work for being late for a meeting, we have told a story, and when we turn on our phone, computer or TV in the morning, we already come across narratives. The path from the usual reports, apologies, and notices to the grand narratives of the world's treasury may be short or long – depending on our perspective, and is the path I have always wanted to take. And when I noticed that this path, which stretches from ancient huts to the great publishing houses of the world – as Andrić describes it in an epic sweep in the passage above – was also of interest to others, I wanted to examine it theoretically and shed light on it in a way that would make the reflection on its laws relevant to different readers, researchers and storytellers. It was not only students who asked me various questions (for which I am very grateful), but also colleagues, writers and teachers who encouraged me to

bring almost twenty years of systematic study of narrative texts together in the book you hold in your hands. Its aim is to help us understand narrative, its structure and extra-textual factors, starting from the awareness that narrative is not only present in art but also in everyday life. And although almost the entire text is devoted to narrative in literature, its attitude towards narrative is based on the assumption that narrative is universal, which is explained in more detail in the chapter Narration as a human universality.

Because of the different circles to which this book is addressed, I designed *A Theory of Narrative* as a hybrid between a scientific monograph and a specialist textbook. How should it be read and used, since its syncretic nature makes it slightly different from the usual theories of literature? It is simple to use, because I designed it as a hybrid to make it user-friendly for as wide a range of readers as possible, but also contemporary, as I have modelled the structure on similar books around the world. While the character of a scholarly monograph is given by the complete and in-depth chapters on a given topic, based on the latest international literary scholarship, the profile of a specialist handbook makes it focus on usage, especially with its clearly linked subject areas (as indicated by the bracketed indicators), concise and sometimes simplified explanations, and concrete examples, including literary excerpts.

The structure of the book is not complicated, as the table of contents already informs us: the individual fields are divided into parts (1–3) and chapters (1–12), whose links are indicated by bracketed indicators (e.g. →more about this in the section Literary Characters). The Index of Authors will also contribute to clarity.

I have been careful when using scientific methods for text analysis or illustrative descriptions, as I am aware of the fact that narrative theory is not a single theory, but an interplay of different theories. I list my approaches to analysis, synthesis or illustration in the book not only from a pragmatic position, but above all from an ethical one, as it seems fair to me that a scholar reveal his or her tools: in addition to the interpretive–analytical and comparative methods, I have also taken into account the approaches of (Post)Structuralism, Deconstruction and Literary Semiotics, and, of the Post-Classical approaches, the views of Feminist Narratology, Gender Narratology, and the cognitive, cultural and rhetorical theories of narrative. The projection and application of theoretical knowledge onto literary texts,

or conversely, the assertion of new knowledge from the studied material, seems to me to be necessary, even when it is not just about narratives, since the construction of hermetically sealed theoretical models is an "art for art's sake" academic enterprise. Like Grdešić (Grdešić, 2015, 7), I believe that analyses of narrative texts should be grounded in textual, narratological or other analysis – the method of analysing selected examples and literary passages seems to me to be justified even for academic analysis of narrative texts (although it is often accused of being too much like school work because of such passages), in which formal and contextual analysis should be connected, just as the form and content of the texts themselves are inextricably intertwined. This is also the main reason why narrative theory cannot be exhausted. It may be replaced by a new textual theory, but even if that happens, we will still need terms such as narrator, literary character, narrative techniques, and so on. In fact, the opposite is happening today: narrative texts are being studied not only as aesthetic objects, but as battlegrounds of conflict and power struggles between dominant and subordinate social groups.

In any case, the important point is that narrative theory is not a single theory, but an amalgam of different theories. Since there are many of these theories (I have presented them in the part entitled Classical and Post-Classical Theories of Narrative), I have deliberately avoided, because of the nature of my book, a history of the individual theories and an interpretation of the terms I have introduced or expounded, and have concentrated more on the basic concepts and their use in reflection and analysis. In doing so, I note – with a significant degree of self-criticism – that, for all its scientific objectivity, the fairly consistent set of terms and concepts that have proved compatible in my analytical practice is still the result of my theoretical and reading choices, and I therefore do not offer perfect models for the analysis of narrative texts. Fortunately, literary texts are much richer than any theoretical and analytical concepts, which again does not mean that narratological concepts are useless or even unnecessary, but that they have to adapt to narrative texts, not the other way around. Interpretation as a process of explanation is very important in this respect.

Attentive readers will soon realise that most of what they are reading can be traced back to my earlier published works, which makes perfect sense, since I have been working systematically in the field of narrative

theory for almost two decades. I have based the foundations of my scholarly or professional theses on previously published[1] papers, listed in full in the References. This book would probably not have been written if I had not taught courses such as The Narrative Text, The Contemporary Slovenian Novel, Literary Interpretation, and Gender and Slovenian Literature at the Department of Slovenian Studies of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and tried to understand the students' questions and discern from an analysis of the issues raised in their papers what is most theoretically relevant and useful for (young) researchers or readers of narrative. I am aware that I have performed a pioneering and thus slightly daring act with this work – narrative theory is an extremely diverse field that is still flourishing, so this book cannot be a finished project. I see it as a motivation for further books that will revisit certain areas, synthesise them in their own way and thus complete the first theory of this kind in Slovenia. *A Theory of Narrative* would have been born a year or so earlier if I had followed some of the established procedures in Slovenia and abroad, for it would have been easiest and quickest for me to use traditional examples or simply repeat the canonised names of certain fields. In contrast to some well established works, which privileged male authors even when giving examples, but failed to highlight this imbalance, I have tried to draw as much as possible from the treasury of ignored genders, social classes and nationalities. So, even when citing examples, I wanted to follow contemporary narratological, not least ethical, principles, and so took into account the narratives of women (e.g. Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Berta Bojetu-Boeta, Maruša Krese), gender minorities (e.g. Djuna Barnes, Manuel Puig, Suzana Tratnik), representatives of "small" (e.g. Bulgarian, Croatian, Serbian) and non-European literatures (e.g. Cuban, Brazilian, African), because I wanted to transcend the "Western canon", which is still defined by the acronym DWEM (dead white European males).

[1] In order not to break the scientific thread too much, I have not gone overboard with citation of my own work – since almost the entire book is based on already published papers, I only refer to them in highlighted places. Completely new areas on which I have not yet published a paper are: mimeticism, lyricisation, the narratee, characterisation, the reception of literary characters, literary events, literary time and space, the author, the implied author, the implied reader. Let me add to these general remarks: "The research programme No. P6-0265 was co-financed from the national budget by the Slovenian Research Agency."

To this innovation I have added a number of original scientific solutions. I have first researched the situation in Slovenia and abroad, and then tried to transpose new terms or less established fields of scholarship into our academic environment. To name but a few: I have replaced the term fictional agreement with the broader term literary agreement, I have synthesised the knowledge of the lesser-known field of the unreliable narrator and added a new possibility, i.e. the unreliable reader. I have introduced three new categories among the types of narrator, which in the past were reserved only for the unreliable narrator – the reporter, the interpreter and the evaluator. I have divided narration and narrative according to narrower and broader understandings. When talking about description, I have drawn attention to the (so far less explained) enigmatic description. I have also introduced a new (third) mode of wording – speech representation – which takes into account speech and thought as intertwined (rather than separate) domains, I have justified the substitution of the synonyms for the well-established terms narrated monologue and free indirect speech, I have proposed a new term for digression in narrative – i.e. scriptisation – and I have also discussed the connection between two narrative elements that have not yet been systematically investigated in Slovenia, i.e. the beginning and the ending of a narrative.

Finally, let me explain one dominant feature in this book which perhaps does not even need any further explanation – the choice of examples from the literature. I have been careful to quote as much as possible from the treasury of the forgotten and ignored, balancing the share of Slovenian and world traditions, and I have arranged the examples in several ways. Most often, I describe a phenomenon with an example for the sake of greater explanatory power, but I often also quote literary passages by way of illustration. These are most noticeable at the beginning of chapters, when, presented in a box, they announce the chapter from the perspective of the essayist or writer, while in the text itself they appear in places with a special emphasis, and are separated from the context by their smaller font. They are least visible in the footnotes, which of course does not mean that they are any less important: I have placed them in the footnotes mainly to avoid overly frequent interruptions of the line of discussion. Literary passages are featured in the book not only as illustrative material, but also as a starting point for various analyses. My hidden wish is for them not only to help the

understanding of the monograph, which of course is their central role, but also to tempt the readers with their own narrative world and invite them to read the proposed narrative texts in their entirety.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The English translation joins the Croatian translation of the book (Zupan Sosič, Alojzija. 2021. *Teorija pripovijesti*, *I. dio.* Translated by Ksenija Premur. Zagreb: Lara). Since the original book, *Teorija pripovedi,* published in 2017 by the Slovenian publishing house Litera in Maribor, is a bulky work of 451 pages, we decided not to translate the entire book into English, but about half of it, i.e. those chapters that form the core of the narratological problematics. You are now looking at *A Theory of Narrative,* which concludes with the chapter Narrative space and story space. In the next book, which we hope to have translated in the near future, you will be able to read about the following topics: the literariness and triviality of narrative, the genres of the novel (genre, travel, crime and dystopian novels), the author and the reader, reading and interpretation, and narrative emotions (emotions, emotional intelligence, identification, empathy, affective fallacy, narrative empathy). The next volume will also provide a translation of the final and most comprehensive and concise part of the original book – the Glossary of Narrative Terms – a 100-page alphabetical list with explanations of the most important areas, themes and terms of contemporary narrative theory.

Introduction or Overview of the Field of Research: Theory, Narratology, Prose, Theories of Narrative, Narrative Theory, Narrative, Narrative Turn

The title of the book*, A Theory of Narrative,* did not require any particular inspiration, since a huge number of monographs with similar titles have dealt with narrative in various ways since the middle of the last century, ever since the birth of narratology. This does not mean that I liked this title from the very beginning of my work on this project – I decided on it only after thoroughly considering various titles of foreign literary studies books on narrative and after answering a few key questions. I could have titled the book Narrative Theory, Narratology, Introduction to Narratology, Theories of Narrative, Theory of Prose, Theory of Narrative Prose, Narrative, Narrative Text and so on. In addition to comparing the different titles, I had to answer a number of questions. To raise just three: Why put the term theory in the title at all? Is it better to use the term narratology or narrative theory? Why a theory of narrative and not a theory of prose? When, after much consideration, I realised that almost all the questions revolved around the fundamental axis – whether to call the book narratology or theory of narrative – I decided to use the more modern term theory of narrative, which also has broader connotations. In doing so, I did not question the established term narrative. I had more trouble with the term theory, which is an extension of another scholarly discomfort. The question about the meaningfulness of the term theory is really a question about the justification of literary theory in general, which I can only answer by outlining the position of literary theory below. At this point let me just add that I find the reason for the title useful as an introductory approach to the book. The title is like a door, which I explain in more detail in the section The Beginnings

and Endings of Narratives, through which we enter the narrative or discussion world. Let me clarify this at the outset by highlighting the role and position of literary theory in general, and open up the discussion a little by comparing the synonymous possibilities, i.e. narratology and narrative theory, by placing the central term narrative in the context of other terms, including prose, and by qualifying the possibility of naming this book *A Theory of Narrative*.

In the 20th century, theory in literature was associated with two types of interpretation. The first involved broadly understood ways of interpreting the essence of literature and introducing order to this interpretation, while the second referred to processes of over-formalisation that were only considered with a fair degree of reluctance. If the former was based on the belief that theory expands our knowledge of the construction of a literary work, the author and interpretation, the latter generally avoided theory because of the belief that literature can be read and understood without theoretical knowledge (Burzyńska, Markowski 2009, 15–17). This resistance to theory was even linked to the belief that theory creates another language (discourse) with which to describe other languages, e.g. the language of the literary work and the language of interpretation or literary criticism, which significantly increases the accumulation of language and its layers, thus causing a distancing from what is most important, from literature itself. Although literary theory has always been a controversial discipline, it has still developed very fruitfully, despite its aporias and ambivalences, since it is the 20th century that is marked by the greatest number of theoretical trends, schools and movements. Paradoxically, it is this period (especially the late 20th century) that provoked the greatest interest in theoretical issues, and the strong wave of publications following the proclamation of the end of its traditional form has created the need to reform the theory (Barry, 1995). The end of its traditional form is encapsulated in the very concept of Postmodernism (Jameson, 1998, 3), the concept of the thinning of the former categories of genre and discourse, as today's mode of writing is simply called “theory” and represents all or nothing of “traditional theory”.

Fredric Jameson (Jameson, 1998, 85) argues for the relevance and pervasiveness of theory in postmodernity with the help of Hegel's assumption of the dissolution of art into philosophy. Jameson relativises this

assumption by hypothesising that while there has been a turn in art, it has not been towards philosophy, but towards theory and aesthetics. In this turn, theory is to be understood as a new form of lucidity, which, in contrast to the old philosophical systems, is ready to make room for praxis itself. Literary theory, and thus its component, narrative theory, is a corpus of thinking and writing, the scope of which is extremely difficult to define. In very general terms, theory could be identified with knowledge (Burzyńska, Markowski, 2009, 18), which explains, or at least tries to explain, something by means of mental speculations or general notions, definitions, concepts and systematisation of rules closely related to the general laws of literature. The philosopher Richard Rorty (Culler, 1997, 3) defines theory as a new mixed genre, which began in the 19th century, as follows: "Beginning in the days of Goethe and Macaulay and Carlyle and Emerson, a new kind of writing has developed which is neither the evaluation of the relative merits of literary productions, nor intellectual history, nor moral philosophy, nor social prophecy, but all of these things mingled together in a new genre." This simple explanation may seem unsatisfactory as a definition, but the term theory includes everything that happens in and outside literary studies, and since the 1960s literary scholars have begun to include areas outside literary studies in literary theory.

The departure from the traditional definition of theory and the acceptance of its all-encompassing and eclectic nature, and thus of theory as a new genre, one composed of different theories, sometimes balanced, but most often very contradictory tendencies, principles, trends and schools, favours the term theory, but this does not mean the term narratology is inappropriate in the context of this general relevance of theory. Of course, the term narratology is still appropriate and most often even synonymous, but the double meaning of the term narratology, both narrow and broad, makes the more general term theory of narrative more appropriate. Narratology can be understood in a narrower sense when it is narrowed down to a method that has developed out of structural poetics and Semiotics. However, if it is interpreted as narrative theory in general, in a broader sense, it is understood as one of the branches of literary theory devoted to the analysis of narrative, its types and forms (Baldick, 1996, 146; Wilpert, 1989, 606). The designation theory of narrative also seems to be preferred because narratology itself – due to the different theoretical orientations –

was divided at the end of the last century into classical and post-classical narrative theory, whereas the term narratology, before the split, alluded only to the method of (Post-)Structuralism, as I have already mentioned.

If today's theory of narrative is a name for narratology in a broader sense, narratology deserves a broader understanding only if it has abandoned its traditional mission to a polyvalent theory of narrative, shifting its focus from the study of prose to the study of narrative. This has enabled it to extend its object of study from exclusively written texts to oral narrative forms and non-literary (scientific and philosophical) texts, since it has also recognised in these texts the narrative basis as the organising principle of the linguistic and universal human attitude towards the world. This modernisation in the sense of expansion therefore favours the term narrative (over prose), which I have taken into account in the title. The term prose has thus been replaced by the more general and useful term narrative in what is called the "narrative turn". I write about this turn in the second half of the 20th century below, and here I will refer to this process, in which narrative became the central literary genre, and its techniques and forms even crossed the boundaries of literary studies, with two more related terms – the blooming of narratology and the renaissance of narrative theory. More specifically, the replacement of the term prose by the more general term narrative took place during the development of (mainly Structuralist) narratology, which Tzvetan Todorov ambitiously defined as "the science of the narrative text". Immediately at the birth of narratology, the earlier "elite" term (artistic) prose was replaced by the more neutral and encompassing term narrative text, which no longer recognises the boundaries between myth and novel, scientific and literary narrative, everyday story and novella. Since the term narrative has overtaken the term prose in favour of a broader and more contemporary view of the field of narrative since the birth of narratology, the answer to the previous question (Why a theory of narrative and not a theory of prose?) lies precisely in the very development of the new discipline.

Given the diversity of its development, some researchers[2] use plural – narrative theories – to emphasise the multiplicity of theories. But the plural

[2] Given that most researchers still use the singular form (e.g. Herman, Fludernik, Rimmon-Kenan, Sommer, Abbott) and few the plural (e.g. Nünning), and that such an update would also require parallel changes in other fields (e.g. reception aesthetic

label of narrative theory is not an appropriate solution, as it does nothing to make the term precise and understandable, when it is very clear that science today is dominated by eclecticism[3], the interconnectedness and intertwining of theories and approaches, and the term theory, in its very abstractness, already implies an infinity of theories. Narrative theory has not only expanded its research tools and semantic fields over the course of its development – after all, it has even split into classical and post-classical narrative theories – but also its fields of research, as it deals with different types of narratives: from oral to written, from ancient to contemporary, and from literary to non-literary narratives. I will reinforce the appropriateness of the term theory of narrative, which I have just explained, with a brief look at the origins of narratology itself. I will explain the reasons for the emergence of narratology, as well as for its split, and I will discuss the different strands of narrative theory in more detail in Part I, Classical and Post-Classical Theories of Narrative.

Narrating, narrative, narratable, narrativity, tellability, narrative text and story are established terms that only entered the contemporary semantic relations in the second half of the 20th century, with the origins of narratology. At that time, the prevailing view in the theory of prose was that narrative[4] was a ubiquitous phenomenon, as it was not confined to narrative genres. This broad conception led to a saturation of terminology in narrative theory; narrative became the central literary genre, and its narrative techniques and forms migrated across the boundaries of literary studies. Narrative thus became a ubiquitous phenomenon in the narrative turn in the

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and feminist theory should be called reception aesthetics and feminist theories...), I propose to keep the "old" singular name narrative theory.

[3] Contemporary research in literature is intertwined with theory, which is understood as an interdisciplinary field. The work of the various humanities is oriented towards the study of the social and ideological production of meaning, or in other words: these disciplines are concerned with questions of ideology, politics, ethics, ethnicity, race, class/status, gender, etc., which is close to what is termed the politicisation of theory. In this sense, the notion of theory cannot be just traditionally equated with the notion of a theory of literature as a demonstration of analytical methods and the nature of literature.

[4] The forerunner of such a belief is Roland Barthes, whose famous statement "There are countless forms of narrative in the world" in *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* (1966) became the basis for extending the boundaries of narrative.

humanities, which led to some unexpected complications and questions that addressed the boundary between narrative and other discursive phenomena, and the looseness of analytical approaches. It was at this point of uncertainty that the idea of the need for a new scientific discipline – narratology – was born.[5] Since its birth in the 1960s, narratology has flourished to the extent that, by the end of the 1990s, it had been divided into classical and post-classical theories of narrative, which added new questions and areas of research to the early ones. In the last three decades, scholarly interest in narrative and its theory has increased even further. This is noticeable in the interdisciplinarity of the texts studied and in the contemporary understanding of the theory, which often focuses on questions of the relation of narration to particular identity groups (divided by gender, race, nationality) or to a particular type of discourse. The internationalisation and interdisciplinarisation of the study and teaching of narratology has, in turn, influenced the popularity of narratology, which has been called a renaissance of narrative theory and analysis (Richardson, 2000; Nünning, 2002). This interconnectedness has allowed narratology not only to prosper, but to flourish in the 21st century (Fludernik, 2009, 12), while the development of different approaches, methods and directions at the end of the last century has influenced the division of narratology into classical and post-classical.

There are various reasons for the rise of narrative theories, but I will only mention the most well-known ones, which are summed up by the term narrative turn. One of them, epistemological, is linked to the "decisive feature" of the human being as a thinking being, for whom story and narrative are a central way of making sense of the world and putting it into words. The second reason is of a narrower nature and touches upon the essential determinants of Postmodernism, the abolition of the boundaries between history and narrative, the distrust of rational/scientific discourse, and the narrative principle of many fields and disciplines. The second reason

[5] The term narratology was "introduced" by Tzvetan Todorov in his book *Grammaire du Décaméron* (*Grammar of the Decameron)* (1969) to denote the systematic study of narrative structures, and was explained as the science of narrative text. Its field of research, however, has been problematic precisely because of the unresolved basic question: what is narrative or narrative text, and is the object of narratology narrativity or the narrative as such?

for the flourishing of narrative theory is related to the literarisation[6] of theory and the theorisation of literature, which leads theory to establish intertextual relations with literature – in Postmodernism, for example, in the form of metafiction. The third reason explains the narrative renaissance or narrative turn by the growing[7] theoretical interest in general issues of narrative and the establishment of narrative as a subject of research in many branches and disciplines. The final justification for the renaissance of narratology is linked to the fact that narrative theory was able to offer literary studies and other disciplines a well-structured, systematic theoretical approach and an elaborate set of analytical categories and models for describing narrative phenomena, roles and effects.

Sommer's claim (Koron, 2014, 13) about how narratology can act as a useful theoretical interface between narrative structures and interpretive approaches has turned out to be true. Although narrative theory has elaborated concepts relevant to the interpretation of literary texts, some see it as a purely theoretical discipline, others as an auxiliary discipline of interpretation, and still others emphasise its heuristic value and the applicability of its concepts and models to different interpretive approaches (Fludernik in Koron, 2014, 125). The breadth of research in narrative theory also includes the analysis of narratives, both literary and non-literary, and the interpretation of narrative texts, which are sometimes difficult to delineate from one another, since narratology was born out of dealing with very concrete texts, and so the best solution seems to me to be a syncretism of narratology, analysis, and interpretation, or some field in between. In this sense, narrative texts are not only studied as aesthetic objects, but also as a

[6] The coexistence of literature and theory was already introduced by early German Romanticism, and was further established by Nietzsche's 'gay science', Heidegger's 'thinking of being' and the essayisation of the modern novel.

[7] The number of volumes, monographs and other publications in the field of literary theory research is growing, while at the same time established works are being reprinted. Currently, the well-established collections are Studies in Narrative (John Benjamins), Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Ohio State University Press), Frontiers of Narrative (University of Nebraska Press) and Narratologia (Walter de Gryter). The extensive interdisciplinary, educational and conference activities in Europe and the USA are reflected in numerous websites, e.g. http//www.thenarrativesociety.org; http//www.narratology.net; http///www.humaniora.sdu.dk

battlefield (Grdešić, 2015, 13) or a central point of struggle between dominant and subordinate social groups.

Depending on the different approaches to understanding and studying the narrative text, narratology can be divided into several[8] narratologies, though in general mainly classical and post-classical narratology. For some time now, the text has no longer been interpreted in terms of the idea of immanence, according to which textual characteristics and qualities derive from the text itself (Doloughan, 2011, 15–17). In what is called the narrative turn in the humanities, the text has been associated with questions of the universality or relativity of ways of storifying or narrating human experience, and of the consideration of narrative as a kind of intermediate plane between the content and sources of narrative and its formal and thematic realisation, in the sense of the distinction between story and discourse. The questions of universality and relativity are joined by the central question of theory of narrative, the question of the demarcation between literary and non-literary narratives. The precise distinction is both difficult and less useful, since in post-classical narratology research on literary and non-literary narratives is constantly intertwining and integrating, although despite the widening of research interest, most studies are still concerned with literary narrative. Given the many differences between literary and non-literary narrative, it is important to note in particular their common feature – narrativity – which narratologists have identified as the primary goal of narrative research (and which I discuss in detail in the chapter Narration as a fundamental mode of wording in a narrative, together with the related term tellability). Undoubtedly, the findings of both theories of narrative – classical and post-classical – are needed for contemporary reflection and analysis of narrative works, which is why I have included them in this book. Taken together, they provide a satisfactory answer to the main question (Why a theory of narrative?), which

[8] Depending on its methodological foundations and narratological models, narrative theory could be divided into the Pre-Structuralist (until 1960), Structuralist (1960–1980) and the Post-Structuralist periods, which takes into account a range of narratologies other than Post-Structuralism and deconstruction. More recently, the term 'classical narratology' has been adopted as a synonym for the Structuralist phase, and 'post-classical narratology' for the latter period (Herman, 1999; Nünning, 2002; Sommer, 2004; Koron, 2009).

can be summarised as follows: the very development of literary theory, which flourished in the second half of the 20th century, demonstrates the legitimacy of the term theory, and the birth and development of theory of narrative justifies the term narrative itself, which will be defined in more detail in the next chapter.

However, despite the different approaches that have been adopted the knowledge of narrativity and narratability that is available, i.e. the common features of literary and non-literary narrative, does not suffice to explain the fundamental characteristics of narrative on their own. This can only be done by drawing parallels and analysing related phenomena such as fabula and syuzhet, story and discourse, story and narrative discourse, story and narrative, story and narrative text, and story–narrative–narration, which will be discussed in more detail in the part on narrative elements, in the section Story and Narrative. There, the fundamental tasks of a theory of narrative will be better identified if we recognise its ramifications and diversity while reviewing classical and post-classical narrative theories. Despite the many differences between these, Ansgar Nünning[9] has published a table of similarities and differences between classical and post-classical narratologies, which I summarise in terms of listing their distinguishing features. Nünning cites the ahistoricity, synchronicity and text-centricity of classical narratology, and the historicity, diachronicity and contextual orientation of post-classical narratology as the central differences between the two, which specifically define their focal points. The former focuses on closed systems and static products with binarism and hierarchical gradation, while the latter focuses on open and dynamic processes with holistic cultural interpretation and dense descriptions. While the former avoids ethical issues and the production of meaning, the latter is receptive to ethical issues and the dialogical mediation of meanings. With the formalist and descriptive paradigm, classical narratology conceived a narrative grammar and a poetics of fiction, seeking to identify the universal traits of all narratives, while with the interpretive and value paradigm, post-classical narratology turned towards the interpretive use of analytical instruments to investigate the specific forms and effects of individual narratives. Let me finally

[9] In what follows, I summarise the distinguishing features of the two narratologies in Nünning's table, following the outline of general features in Koron (Koron, 2014, 114–116).

summarise their difference as follows: classical narratology sought to develop a set of tools that could explain primarily the production side of narratives, their "real" meaning and thus the anticipated reader response, while contemporary narratology is more concerned with the reading of the story and the question of how it was received.

I

CLASSICAL AND POST-CLASSICAL THEORIES OF NARRATIVE

CHAPTER 1

CLASSICAL THEORY OF NARRATIVE

Russian Formalism and Structuralism

In the following overview, I shall not endeavour to present the historical development involving the exponents of classical theory of narrative or the fundamental dilemmas within certain trends, nor will I rank individual exponents according to their importance, I will simply summarise the essential contributions to the development of the understanding of narrative over a time span of approximately a century. The real beginning, if we ignore the earliest appearance[10] of narrative theory in ancient poetics, can be found in Russian Formalism, which can be qualified as the precursor of Structuralism (which is why it is treated together with Structuralism) and thus also of classical narratology. It emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, when the centre of the theory of poetics shifted from the "West" to Russia. The Formalists (Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, Jakubinsky, Jakobson, Tynianov, Tomashevsky and others) renounced biographicalism, historicism and sociologisation in the study of literature, and turned their attention to the emergence of the literary form, or to artistic processes. They set themselves a new task for literary science, at the scientific level – to explore the essence of literature, or literariness. This was defined as the sum of devices that distinguish literary language from ordinary, non-literary language. In addition to literariness, the most important concepts of this school were defamiliarisation and self-referentiality, the signals of literariness, which are also the basic functions of poetic or prose language. The main merit of Russian Formalism was its criticism of the traditional

[10] The ancient Greek incipient theory of narrative is represented by Aristotle's *Poetics*.

duality of artistic content and form, which Shklovsky replaced in his study of prose with the fabula–syuzhet formula.

The basic idea of Russian Formalism – to study the essence of literature or the structure – was continued in French Structuralism, the successor of Russian Formalism and the Prague Linguistic Circle. In addition to Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson, the emergence of French Structuralism was influenced by the state of linguistics and philosophy at the time, especially Existentialism. Literary Structuralism was initially very ahistorical. Uninterested in the interpretation of a single text, it focused instead on the construction of a grammar of literary production, i.e. the systems and rules of literary creativity. Narratology is closely linked to Structuralism, as it represents the most consistent realisation of Structuralist ideas in literary studies, the manifesto of which is the treatise by the Structuralist and Semiotician Roland Barthes, *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*. In it, the sentence is established as the basic model for the structural analysis of narrative: the narrative text must be studied as a large sentence, since it also has sentence units, rules, "grammar", verb predicates and subjects. While Barthes sought to explain various cultural phenomena (e.g. advertisements, photography, exhibition, wrestling), Gérard Genette, Algirdas Julien Greimas and Tzvetan Todorov[11] considered individual stories as individual "narrative messages" (Herman in Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, 2008, 571), embedded in a common semiotic system whose constituents and combinatory principles should be the subject of narratological analysis. In addition to story and discourse, this kind of Structuralist narratology also focused on the following concepts: actant, anachronym, focalisation, homodiegetic narrator, iterative narrative and metalepsis. Although the basic aim of Structuralist narratology was transcultural and trans-genre, i.e. the study of different kinds of stories, narratologists put the novel at the centre of their attention, with this form receiving such scholarly attention for the first time in its development. In the study of different kinds of stories, the basic driving force has been Barthes's belief that a general or implicit model of what is narrated can

[11] Tzvetan Todorov linked the grammar of narrative not only to language, but to all the semantic structures of life. *In Grammaire du Décaméron (Grammar of the Decameron)* (1969), he treats texts in a very grammatical way: narrative persons as nouns or proper names, their properties as adjectives, and actions as verbs.

explain narrative competence, i.e. the human capacity to recognise or explain different kinds of stories (Herman in Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, 2008, 572).

Post-Structuralism

Literary Structuralism has often been criticised as being excessively formalistic, since it explored texts as closed systems, removed from their social and historical context. As the central Structuralist premises came into question, especially its starting point of structure, French Structuralism slowly began to turn to Post-Structuralism. As the term itself suggests, this trend reinterpreted some of the essential features of Structuralism, including, for example, the binary oppositions of Structuralist thought. In their place, it introduced a non-hierarchical plurality, a free play of meanings, with an emphasis on the limitlessness of the text. The term became established in the 1970s to refer to the various ideas of thinkers who did not call themselves Post-Structuralists (Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, Julia Kristeva, etc.). Despite the diversity of their ideas, their common denominator is their critique of the Structuralist elements of language, sign, structure, composition, subject, communication, context, reading and the metaphysics of presence, as well as of logocentrism and phallocentrism (Biti, 1997, 286–287). Post-Structuralists, in contrast to Structuralists, argued for absence, otherness and marginality. How Post-Structuralism is a subversive continuation of Structuralism with built-in contradictions can be demonstrated by the example of Roland Barthes, one of the most influential Structuralists, Post-Structuralists and Semioticians, and how his own assumptions evolved. Thus, in his Structuralist phase Barthes argued for a model of language as a system, while in his Post-Structuralist phase he argued that the linguistic system was an incarnation of power, and therefore needed to be dismantled and perceived beyond the power of the system. One of the key concepts thus became the discourse, which in Post-Structuralism was applied not only to conversational fragments, but also to “writing” (Abrams, 1999, 241), or to all verbal constructions. The representation of reality in narrative was defined as an effect of the act of narration, and it was necessary to explain how this effect