



UNIVERSITÀ DEL PIEMONTE ORIENTALE

THE NARRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF 'THE REAL'. THE FACTUAL NARRATIVE IN DIFFERENT SOCIO-DISCURSIVE FIELDS: FROM JOURNALISM AND HISTORY TO MEDICINE AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES.

Type of activity: seminar

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Date: March 13th, 14th and 15th 2024

Number of hours: 12 h

Modality: Presential, at UPO, Vercelli, Italia.

SEMINAR RATIONALE

Narration stands as a foundational pillar in the organization of discourse and thought. Its significance lies not in simplicity, but in its fundamental role *vis-à-vis* other textual forms like explanation or argumentation. It serves as a bedrock, shaping the terrain upon which these other modes can operate. It's not uncommon, therefore, to find ourselves compelled to craft a narrative framework –constructing a script or story– when attempting to elucidate or defend a point, even if only within the confines of our own minds. Through this narrative reconstruction, a sequence of events gains an initial internal coherence, setting the stage for deeper understanding and analysis.

When studying the way in which narrative texts are constructed and interpreted (myths, legends, stories, novels, historical sources, historiographical texts, journalistic news, chronicles, autobiographies, anecdotes, gossip, films, documentaries, biblical parables, confessions, political discourses, illness narratives and a long etcetera), it becomes imperative to ground our examination in a nuanced understanding of the interplay between factual and fictional discourse. This conceptual boundary, foundational to classical studies in narratology and literary theory, evolved into a distinct theoretical framework over time, bearing significant repercussions.

Interest in studying factual narrative has emerged more recently compared to the longstanding focus on fictional narrative, which has traditionally been privileged in the realms of narratology and literary studies. The advent of the *linguistic turn* in the late 1960s, particularly within historiography and journalism, marked an initial acknowledgment of the significance of narrative textuality beyond purely literary contexts. Notably, Hayden White's theory of *emplotment*, elucidated in works like *Metahistory* (1973), and the advent of "New Journalism," as conceptualized by Tom Wolfe in his seminal piece "The New Journalism" (also 1973), stand as pivotal milestones

in recognizing the central role of narrative. These contributions continue to ignite fervent debates and discussions within academic circles.

In the field of literary theory, in 1990 Gérard Genette introduced the notion of "factual narrative" (*récit factuel*) and distinguished it from that of "fictional narrative", largely on the basis of the reading pact that is established in each case between producer and receiver. Furthermore, he sought to show to what extent the categories of *time*, *mode* and *voice*, developed by himself in the 1970s, were or were not appropriate for factual texts from the point of view of narratological analysis. Recent theoretical developments, such as those brought together by Christian Klein and Matías Martínez (*Wirklichkeitserzählungen*, "Narratives about reality", 2009) and those compiled by Monica Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (*Narrative factuality. A Handbook*, 2020), have taken up Genette's initiative but to go much further, in the context of the rise and enormous expansion of post-classical narratology.

The aim of this seminar is to offer an introductory overview of narration in factual contexts. The proposal consists in unfolding a trajectory through the uses and functions of factual narration in a wide variety of social domains of discursive production. Emphasizing the synthesis of theory and practice, our approach will facilitate a critical engagement with narratological tools, enabling participants to effectively analyze a range of textual materials. Due to the condensed timeframe (12 hours), our focus will be primarily on the examination of the "time" category and its multifaceted dimensions. The seminar will draw upon a corpus of textual excerpts sourced from Argentina and Latin America, reflecting both historical and contemporary realities within the region.

OBJETIVES

General objective:

The general objective of this seminar is to familiarize students with the realm of factual narratives and to stimulate a reflection on its main challenges and dimensions, encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects.

Specific Objectives:

1. To provide a historical and critical understanding of narrative texts and the concept of "*narrativity*".
2. To offer a toolkit for analyzing factual narratives, blending theoretical insights with practical application across diverse texts.
3. To explore the category of "time" and to account for its specificity in factual settings, weighing up the scope and limitations that classical narratological approaches pose for its analysis.
4. To analyse factual narratives in terms of the modalities they assume within different realms of social life.
5. To account for some historical and contemporary aspects of the political, social, media, medical, legal and everyday reality of the Argentine and Latin American geographical space.

CONTENTS/THEMATIC UNITS

Unit 1: Narrative and Narrativity: An Introduction

The elementary character of narrative. The anthropological matrix of narrative in the context of structuralist definitions. The narrative text in the perspective of text linguistics. Minimal narrative and story. The remembrance function of narration. Description and narration. Explanation and narration. Gérard Genette's definition of narrative and its limitations. Monika Fludernik's "experientiality" approach. David Rudrum's pragmatic proposal. The "degrees of narrativity" of a story, according to M.-L. Ryan. Matías Martínez's proposal: necessary and optional features of narrative.

Unit 2: The Factual Narrative

Factual narrative and its relation to fictional narrative. Terminological distinctions: factic, factual, non-fictional. Semantic, syntactic and pragmatic definitions of factual/fictional. Factual as a gradation: texts with "strong" and "weak" factuality. Socio-discursive spheres, genres and regimes of truth. Possible hybridisations between the factual and the fictional. Factual narratives and interdisciplinarity. The diachronic variability of conceptions and practices of narrative factuality. The rise of studies on factual narrative since the last quarter of the 20th century.

Unit 3: Time and the factual narrative

The basic structure of narrative: story and discourse. The problem of time in narrative. Narrated time and narrative time. The order. A typology of alterations in narrative order: analepsis and prolepsis. The duration or rhythm of the narrative: scene, expansion, summary, ellipsis and pause. Duration in judicial narration and in journalistic accounts of self-improvement (case analysis). Frequency: singulative, repetitive and iterative narratives. Frequency and types of past reconstruction in illness narratives. Interpretation of the temporal twists of factual narratives in the medical field from a rhetorical perspective (James Phelan).

METODOLOGY

Each of the three planned classes will be divided into two parts: a theoretical-expository part and a practical exercise part. During the first one, we will discuss the bibliography, which we recommend students to read beforehand in order to facilitate active participation. In the second segment of the class, students will work with a module of factual texts produced in diverse environments and with very heterogeneous themes (although referring to the Argentine and Latin American reality), in order to analyse them on the basis of the insights acquired in the theoretical part.

Schedule

	Date	Contents / Activities
1	<u>Wednesday 13th March</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Presentation / Unit 1

2	<u>Thursday 14th March</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Unit 2
3	<u>Friday 15th March</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Unit 3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unit 1

- Fludernik, M. (2009 [2006]). 1. Narrative and Narrating. In *An Introduction to Narratology* (p. 1-12). Nueva York: Routledge.
- Genette, G. (1991). Fiction and Diction. In *Fiction & Diction* (p. 1-29). Ithaca/Londres: Cornell U. Press.
- Martínez, M. (2011). Was ist Erzählen? In Martínez, M. (Ed.), *Handbuch Erzählliteratur* (p. 1-12). Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Ryan, M.-L. (2007). Toward a Definition of Narrative. In Herman, D. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (p. 22-35). Cambridge U. Press.

Unit 2

- Fludernik, M. / Ryan, M.-L. (2020). Factual Narration in Narratology. In Fludernik, M. / Ryan, M.-L., *Narrative Factuality. A Handbook* (p. 51-74). Berlin / New York: De Gruyter.
- Fludernik, M. / Ryan, M.-L. (2020). Introduction. In Fludernik, M. y Ryan, M.-L., *Narrative Factuality. A Handbook* (p. 1-26). Berlin / New York: De Gruyter.
- Genette, G. (1990). Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative. *Poetics Today* 11, 4, p. 755-774.
- Schaeffer, J.-M. (2009). Fictional vs. Factual Narration. In Hühn, P. et al. (Eds.). *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (p. 98-113). Hamburg U. Press.

Unit 3

- Genette, G. (1972). Discours du récit. In *Figures III*. (only p. 77-182). París: Éditions du Seuil, 1972.
- Phelan, J. (2023). 7. Time. In *Narrative Medicine. A Rhetorical Rx* (p. 103-119). New York: Routledge.
- Vanoost, M. (2013). Defining Narrative Journalism Through the Concept of Plot. *Diegesis* 2.2, p. 77-97.