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# DECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVE BEING THROUGH NARRATING BEING

Panajoti, Armela and Marija Krivokapić (eds.), *Narrative Being Vs. Narrating Being*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

## General Description

This is a collection of fifteen articles, all written by eminent scholars, who reflect on their experience in facing different aspects of deconstructing narrative being through narrating being. Pointing out “the intention to inspire challenging perspectives that would move us towards considering modernism in the instances in which it transcends itself” and aiming at observing “being in creation, [...] being and creation, the relation between being and narrative, the situation of being in narrative time and space” (1), the papers set about exploring the relationship between authority and narrative and the possible authority over narrative from an interdisciplinary perspective. Drawing extensively on the interaction between narrative and the Other, authority of the Other over and within the narrative, and inter-reference pertaining to text and author, the authors of papers develop one eclectic fusion. Not surprisingly, the book reaches towards a wide audience of recipients whose theoretical and practical aspirations are driven by interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. Nevertheless, the collection can be read with interest by those specialists who are inspired by the postmodernist self-irony. The papers are very varied in both content and approach. In addition to this, the papers address different text types, and the contributors approach their subject in diverse ways. For those interested in literary theory and literary criticism, the collection of papers is a rich and remarkable source of fresh ideas and inspiration,

provided by closely argued commentary on the explored topics.

## Summary

The book opens with an introduction provided by Professor Armela Panajoti and Professor Marija Krivokapić (1–10). The editors sketch out challenging perspectives while considering the paths of transcending modernism. Additionally, Armela Panajoti and Marija Krivokapić state the objectives of this collection. The book ends with Notes on Contributors (253–257) and an index (258–263), which is particularly useful for readers wishing to draw together the diverse comments on a particular issue that are scattered through the collection of these wonderfully edited papers. The rest of the book is organized into two parts.

## Part I: Towards High Modernism

This section contains nine chapters. Chapter 1, “Being in Creation, Creation in Being in *Lord Jim*” (12–24), written by Professor Armela Panajoti, defines the research perspective. Starting with an instance of “the variety of definitions applying to initiation stories”, the author goes on to discuss “two elements commonly found in all initiation stories” (12) relating them, by way of illustration, to Conrad’s intention in Jim’s case. Furthermore, Professor Panajoti sheds light on many aspects of Conrad’s idiosyncratic style. She underscores the influence of experience in the context of an initiation story, while dismissing the artificial method. Rather than analyze *Lord*

*Jim* as an instance of an initiation story, Panajoti subscribes to the idea of the narrative structure involvement. This chapter closes with a clear statement in which the author concludes that Jim's failure "stems from his inability to live and tell his own story and as such he fails to find the equilibrium in the narrative being and narrating being continuum" (23).

In Chapter 2, "D. H. Lawrence's Authorial Dilemmas: In Exile around the Great War" (25–53), Professor Marija Krivokapić explains complex relations between author and narrative, protagonist/s and narrative, protagonist/s and the author, author and narrator, narrator and the author, author and his author-function. Professor Krivokapić conducts a superb and refined research the focus of which is on "[...] Lawrence's ideas on what being is and what processes it goes through in the narrative" (25). She reassesses Lawrence's unremitting grudge against industrial civilization, and then scrutinizes Lawrence's rapturous involvement in verbalizing the importance of a new literary form. Professor Krivokapić also explores the metafictional resentful voice in Lawrence's post-war writings, while highlighting the argument of Edward Said, according to whom, the authority of writing is nomadic.

Chapter 3, true to its title "The 'Idea' of the Self: Narrated Identities in D. H. Lawrence's (Short) Fiction" (54–72), is a refreshing reminder of the narration phenomenon, thoroughly observed by Martin Štefl. The author takes into account diverse narrative-identity theories thereby relying on a roughly stable and fixed definition of the Self. The focus is then shifted to the discussion "[...] based on a genuinely Lawrentian concept of the 'Self'" (56). In concluding part, Štefl posits Lawrence into one line of thought, which connects the Nietzschean accounts of human conduct with more recent relativistic notions of self-identity. In Chapter 4, "How Can We Know The Dancer From The Dance?": Authorial Self-(Re)Production in Joyce's Narratives" (73–92), Vanja Vukićević Garić challenges the notion of authorial death by contemplating modernist narrative impersonality paradigms. In chapter 5, "Joyce's Religious Being and His Narrative" (93–108), Sandra Josipović scrutinizes different ap-

proaches pertaining to the influence of religion on Joyce and his literary output.

Chapter 6, "Network Theory Approach to *Mrs. Dalloway*" (109–120), sheds new light on quantitative analyses in literary studies. More specifically, Professor Petar Penda supports the idea of the occurrence of one definitive set of items that may be dubbed either vertices or nodes. Elaborating on Newman's complex networks, Professor Penda demonstrates how this analysis may lead to better understanding of the social stratification. He concludes that "the ideology lying behind this is that networks need to be obliterated or integrated with a single network so that the differences are less obvious and the centre strengthened" (119). In Chapter 7, "Ernest Hemingway's (In)Articulate Silence and the Modernist Suspicion of Words" (121–139), Aleksandra Žeželj Kocić explores the plausibility of genuine communication in the context of Hemingway's fiction, while highlighting the author's dramatic dialogue and iceberg theory, both of which ultimately create solely a peculiar medium of verbal Modernist silence. In Chapter 8, "Aldous Huxley's *Island*: A Study on a Resurrected Being" (140–150), Gordana Kustudić subscribes to the idea that in this output Huxley actually shared his most valuable intellectual experience thereby facilitating the process of humanizing the circumstances in which modern men live.

In Chapter 9, "Death vs. Eternity in Aldous Huxley's Novel *After Many a Summer*" (151–167), Professor Janko Andrijašević concurs with the idea that the main problem underlying the analyzed novel pertains to the question of the difference between survival and eternity. Moreover, Professor Andrijašević accentuates that "*After Many a Summer* is pervaded by a completely different kind of sensibility" (152), while observing the occurrence of diverse character types, which are differentiated according to specific degree of spiritual development. This chapter closes with the concluding remarks that lend credence to the author's finding. More specifically, the author of this chapter states that "in comparison with the previous books [Huxley] showed a higher degree of assuredness in spiritual matters

and, at the same time, a lesser degree of tolerance” (166).

## Part II: After Modernism

This section contains six chapters. In Chapter 1, “Briony’s Polylogue” (170–181), Sonja Vitanova-Strezova explores the instances of assessing McEwan’s fiction as a sort of stand-alone discourse. Furthermore, she investigates “the problems of narrative discourse, narrating being and narrative being in *Atonement* drawing on Genette and Kristeva” (170), while addressing “the questions of narrative discourse, narrating being and narrative being in the first three parts of the novel” (171). The research intention of Vitanova-Strezova is based on the assumption that internal multiple focalization places the accent on the storytelling “[...] whereby the same event is reprocessed and filtered in two different ways or from two different points of view” (174). Chapter 2, “Unreliable Memoirist: The Tim O’Brien’s of *The Things They Carried*” (182–191), gives a general introduction to the phenomenon of emotional engagement with the history of the Vietnam War, focusing then on a particular war memoir as subjective, anecdotal or even statistically unrepresentative. The author of this paper, Ginger Jones, investigates vignettes about the army experience of O’Brien. In Chapter 3, “Narrative Strategies in Contemporary American Women Writers” (192–208), Aleksandra Izgarjan illustrates the transformation of the American society in the course of the twentieth century. Pointing out “the narrative strategies of contemporary American women writers” and “the transition from the position of isolation to repositioning ethnic identity”, she analyzes American women writers that employ a range of narrative strategies reflecting “a polyvocality which blurs the lines between narration and history” (205).

In Chapter 4, “The Manipulation of the Narrative in the Hands of Toni Morrison” (209–218), Professor Mirjana Daničić touches upon a broad range of splendidly observed issues. More specifically, backed by her first reading recognition analysis, Professor Daničić confirms that the narrative in Morrison’s novels provides opportu-

nities for contemplating restriction and suffering of the black people in America. It has become obvious that the narrative engages in a discourse on historical, social, political, or universal values, thus being used for the rewriting of history and construction of African-American identity. Furthermore, Daničić argues that Toni Morrison’s text is a tool of manipulation. Namely, Morrison’s discourse seems to illustrate the manipulation of the narrative through discarding the conventional. Moreover, this text type provides irresistible narrative threads to the readers, while simultaneously providing endless meanings the author wants to explore. Many examples are explained in detail, with evaluations of what has been achieved by certain narrative thread. For example, the violation of traditional literary forms combined together with the limitless utilization of fragmented narrative has been treated as Morrison’s attempt to revise the existing narrative forms. Professor Mirjana Daničić concludes that “postmodern, asymmetric usage of the genre is an instrument to resist the conventional Western narrative forms and to introduce a different discourse in which characters interact, regardless of whether they are the living, or incarnated spirits of the dead” (128).

In Chapter 5, “*Disgrace*: J. M. Coetzee Turning Political Being into Body Narrative” (219–229), Marina Ragachewskaya discusses the ways J. M. Coetzee explores postcolonial existence, traumatic consciousness and the language of the body in his Booker Prize winning novel *Disgrace*. This part of the book closes with Chapter 6, “Life versus Fiction: Narration in Julian Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot*” (230–252), in which Dijana Tica points out that the problem of discovering the narrator’s identity has become particularly complex with the advent of the post-modern novel.

## Evaluation

This collection of papers is a mixture of the inspirational and the practical, and the interdisciplinary nature of the subject makes this book an excellent reference to narrative/narrating being perspectives. Furthermore, the reader partici-

pates in the feelings experienced in the contributors' struggle to deal with complex aspects of literary criticism, literary theory and practice. The organization of the book and its chapters is clear, consistent and painstaking. The sections, and chapters within, flow smoothly according to the layout given in the introduction. The plan for the stated goal of Professor Armela Panajoti and Professor Marija Krivokapić has been achieved, i.e. "highlight[ing] intention to inspire challenging perspectives that would move us towards considering modernism in the instances in which it transcends itself, moving, more broadly speaking, towards postmodernist self-irony" (1), and "contribut[ing] to the ongoing discussion of the ambiguities inherent in the concepts of authorship, narrative, and being" thereby "provid[ing] scholars and students of literature with new challenging readings" (10).

A reader with a background in literary criticism will find chapters 1, 2, 6 and 9 particularly stimulating and thought-provoking in their de-

scriptive presentation and challenging discussion. Chapter 4 in the second part of the book offers more than interesting analysis of the violation of traditional literary forms combined with the limitless exploitation of fragmented narrative. Equally commendable is Mirjana Daničić's rich attempt to revise the existing narrative forms thereby revising the values of conventional narrating.

All texts abound with coherent and explicit discourse type. The argumentation the authors utilize is more than convincing and is supported with their refined literary analyses, making the overall value of the book high. Ultimately, the collection of texts seems well named, for above all it is the deconstruction of narrative being through narrating being which shines through these accounts, which illuminate diverse aspects of the interaction of the narrative and the Other. Further broadening of the subject still remains to be done, but this book is a good starting point.

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