

Narratee

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1 Definition

The term “narratee,” coined by Prince (1971) following the French term “narrataire” (Barthes 1966: 10), designates the addressee of the narrator, the fictive entity to which the narrator directs his narration. The alternative term, “fictive reader” (Schmid [1973] 1986: 28), should be replaced with “fictive addressee” (Schmid 2007: 175–80), since only the image of the addressee is meant rather than the listening or reading figure.

2 Explication

The narratee is to be divided into two entities which differ *functionally* or *intensionally*, even when they coincide *materially* or *extensionally*: the *addressee* and the *recipient*. The addressee is the narrator’s image of the one to whom the message is sent; the recipient is the factual receiver. The necessity of this distinction is clear: if, e.g., a letter is not read by the person who was the intended addressee, but by someone else into whose hands it happens to fall, misunderstanding and various unintended effects may ensue.

The narratee, just like the fictive narrator, can be represented in two ways: *explicitly* or *implicitly*.

Explicit representation occurs with the aid of pronouns and grammatical forms of the second person or with well-known forms of address such as “gentle reader,” etc. The image of the addressee created in this way can be characterized as having more or less concrete features.

Implicit representation is based on the narrative text’s symptoms or indexes operating with the same indexical signs as the representation of the narrator and equally based on the expressive function of language (sensu Bühler [1934] 1990). All the actions that constitute narration participate in the indexical representation both of the narrator and of his image of his addressee. In general, the representation of the narratee is built up on the representation of the narrator insofar as the former

is an attribute of the latter, similar to the way in which the image of the implied reader partakes of the characteristics of the implied author (Schmid → Implied Author [1]).

3 Aspects of the Concept and History of its Study

3.1 Fictive Addressee and Fictive Recipient

The fictive addressee of a secondary narrative (i.e., an inner or embedded story) may seem to coincide with one of the characters of the primary narrative (the frame story). For example, the sentimental narrator in Puškin's "The Stationmaster," to whom the abandoned title hero tells the story of his abducted daughter Dunja and who thus functions as a secondary fictive addressee, appears to coincide with the narrated self, that is, with the actor of the primary narrative. However, the equation *fictive addressee in the secondary narrative = character in the primary narrative*, an equation that forms the basis for many essays on this entity (cf. Genette [1972] 1980, [1983] 1988), simplifies the facts in an inadmissible way. The fictive addressee is nothing other than the schema of the narrator's expectations and presumptions and therefore cannot coincide *functionally* with the figure who, in the primary narrative, acts as the recipient of the secondary narrative and who, possibly, is concretized with particular features by the primary narrator. The addressee to whom Puškin's title hero narrates the story of his daughter does not coincide with the sentimental traveler who, as the narrated self, hears the story and, as the narrating self, reports it many years later. The addressee is a mere projection of the stationmaster, and the latter cannot know about his listener's weakness for sentimental stories or have any idea about sentimentalist literature. This is why it is hard to agree with the distinction, made by Jedličková (1993), between the "fictive" and "projected" addressee: any addressee of a fictive narrator is both projected and fictive.

To speak of a fictive reader or listener is meaningful only when a secondary narrator addresses a recipient who appears as a reader or listener in the primary narrative. However, the secondary fictive addressee coincides with this fictive recipient (the character in the primary narrative) only *materially* and not *functionally*, since being an addressee and being a recipient are separate functions. In Puškin's tale, the stationmaster's fictive recipient is endowed with completely different traits than he, the (secondary) narrator, can imagine in his addressee.

Prince (1973: 183) assumes that the distinction between the "narrataire virtuel" and the "narrataire réel," which he concedes could be made, would not be very fruitful.

In contrast, Schmid (2010: 84–88) suggests that such a distinction in the concept of the narratee, often neglected in communication models, ought to be made nonetheless. When a narrator engages in dialogue with his counterpart, it is important to determine whether his interlocutor is merely imagined or whether he exists as an independent, autonomous character in an overarching story. Only in the second case, when the counterpart possesses autonomy and alterity, is it a true dialogue. In the former instance, we are dealing with a *dialogic narrative monologue* which, e.g., organizes some of Dostoevskij's works.

3.1 Appeal and Orientation as Indexical Signs of the Narratee

The markedness of the narratee depends to a decisive degree on the markedness of the narrator: the more marked the narrator, the more likely it is that he will evoke an image of the counterpart he addresses. However, the presence of a marked narrator does not automatically imply the presence of an addressee manifest to the same degree.

In principle, every narrative creates a fictive addressee (just as every text creates an implied reader as assumed addressee or ideal recipient) (Schmid → Implied Reader [2]), since the indexical signs that point to his existence, no matter how weak they may be, can never disappear completely (Prince 1973: 178, 1985: 302).

Particularly relevant for the representation of the addressee are two indexical signs: *appeal* and *orientation* (Schmid [1973] 1986: 28).

Appeal is a cue, usually expressed implicitly, to adopt a particular position in relation to the narrator, his narrative, the narrated world, or some of its characters. In itself, appeal is a mode of expressing the presence of an addressee. From its contents emerge the attitudes and opinions which the narrator assumes in the addressee and those which he considers possible. In principle, the appeal function can never reach absolute zero, for it is present even in statements with a predominantly referential function, even when in a minimal form: "Know that ..." or "I just want you to know that ..."

One type of appeal is the *impression*. The narrator uses it to present himself to his counterpart in a particular way, to elicit a reaction that can take on either a positive form, such as admiration, or a negative one, such as contempt. (An intentional negative impression is characteristic of Dostoevskij's paradoxical monologists, as in *Notes from the Underground*.)

What is meant by *orientation* is the alignment of the narrator with the addressee, without which no comprehensible communication can occur. Clearly, orientation

toward the addressee can be reconstructed only to the extent that it is bound to the mode of representation.

Orientation refers, firstly, to the *codes* and *norms* it is presumed the addressee shares, which can be linguistic, epistemological, ethical and social. Conversely, the narrator need not share the norms assumed in the addressee, but he cannot but use language comprehensible to the addressee and must take into account the presumed scope of his knowledge. It is to this extent that every narrative contains implicit information about the image that the narrator has of the abilities and norms of his addressee.

Second, the orientation can consist in the anticipation of the imagined addressee's *behavior*. The narrator can imagine the addressee as a passive listener and obedient executor of his appeals or, alternatively, as an active interlocutor who independently judges what is narrated, poses questions, expresses doubts and raises objections.

For no other author of Russian literature (and perhaps of any literature) does the narratee play so active a role as for Dostoevskij. In *Notes from the Underground*, in the novel *A Raw Youth*, and in the tale "A Gentle Spirit," the narrator speaks literally every word "with a sidelong glance" (Baxtin [1929] 1984: 195-98), i.e. aligned on the fictive listener or hearer. The narrator, who wants to win his addressee's admiration, leaves in the text traces of his appeal and of his orientation: he wants to present himself in a positive or negative way to the reader or listener (impression), pays attention to his counterpart's reaction (orientation), guesses his critical replies (orientation), anticipates them (impression), attempts to rebut them (impression), and clearly recognizes (orientation) that he does not succeed in doing so (cf. Schmid 2010: 84-88). This type of narrative, where the addressee is imagined as an active interlocutor, is assigned by Baxtin, in his "metalinguistic" typology of discourse (181-204), to the type "active double-voiced word" (or "word with orientation toward someone else's discourse"), i.e. a word in which two contradictory evaluative positions can be recognized simultaneously: that of the speaker and that of the anticipated evaluative position of the addressee. In contrast to the "passive variety of the double-voiced word," where "the other person's discourse is a completely passive tool in the hands of the speaker wielding it," in the active variety "the other's words actively influence the speaker's speech, forcing it to alter itself accordingly under their influence" (197).

3.2 History of the Concept and its Study

After the implicit discovery of the narratee in Baxtin's ([1929] 1984) "metalinguistic" model of voices, and before the advent of French structuralism, the notion was

described in Polish narratology. Starting from German “Erzählforschung” (particularly Kayser 1956) and based on Polish phenomenological philosophy (Ingarden [1931] 1973), Jasińska (1965: 215–51) distinguished between the “real” reader and the “epic” reader, the latter corresponding to the narratee. The distinction between implied reader and fictive addressee was anticipated by Głowiński ([1967] 1975) when he contrasted a “recipient in the wider sense” with a “recipient in the narrow sense.” In her five-level model of roles in literary communication, Okopień-Sławińska ([1971] 1975: 125) associates the “author” with the “concrete reader,” the “transmitter of the work” with the “recipient of the work” (identified with the “ideal reader”), and the narrator with the “addressee of the narrative.”

The true narratological career of the narratee starts with Prince (1971), when it takes on an English name. Shortly after this, the narratee appears in its French appellation in Genette ([1972] 1980), who refers to Barthes’ “narrataire” (1966) and to Greimas’ “destinataire” ([1966] 1983) as his sources. In his influential article, Prince (1973) discusses the “signaux du narrataire” insofar as these signals go beyond the “degré zéro du narrataire.” This zero status was the object of such fierce criticism by Pratt (1982) (cf. Prince 1985) that Prince (1982) eventually renounced it. On the other hand, Prince (1985: 300) dismisses as “trivial” another valid argument, notably that the supposed “signaux du narrataire” could just as well be seen as the “characteristics of the narrator” (Pratt 1982: 212). Most important in Prince (1973: 192–96) is the examination of the narratee’s functions: the narratee constitutes a “relay station” between narrator and reader, helps determine the frame of the narration, serves as a means to characterize the narrator, highlights certain themes, advances the plot and becomes the spokesman of the work’s moral. In his *Narratology*, Prince (1982: 16–26) examines the “signs of the ‘You’” and the “narratee-character,” discusses varying forms of the narratee’s “knowledge,” its representation as a group, and the “hierarchy of narratees” in narratives in which there is more than one narratee.

4 Topics for Further Research

Particularly interesting are active narratees whose real or imagined presence exerts an influence on the narrator, leading to a double-voiced narration in Baxtin’s sense. It would be tempting to trace existing influence lines in the genre of dialogic narrative monologue (similar to the one examined by Głowiński {[1963] 1973} from Dostoevskij to Camus’ *La Chute* and from there to Polish postwar prose). It may be worthwhile to observe the relationship of those narratees with the philosophies of their authors, cultures, and epochs. Another topic for further research would be the genre-specific manifestations of narratees in poetry or in dramatic monologue.

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6.3 Further Reading

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