

Brian Richardson (ed.), *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Columbus, Oh.: Ohio State University Press, 2002, xi + 398 pp., pb. (Theory and Interpretation of Narrative Series)

This wide-ranging and remarkably comprehensive anthology, edited by one of the foremost contemporary narratologists, brings together no fewer than twenty-seven important essays on narrative theory and analysis, focussing on major facets of what the editor felicitously calls "narrative dynamics", i.e. the sequential representation of sequential events. The term is used "to refer to the movement of a narrative from its opening to its end. This includes the beginnings of both the story and the text, the temporality of the telling, the movement and shaping of the plot, and the functions of the ending" (1-2). The collection contains carefully chosen pieces, including many of the most widely discussed and cites essays on the topics mentioned in the subtitle. The collection is organized into five parts: narrative temporality (part I: Time), plot and emplotment (part II), narrative progressions and sequences (part III: Narrative Sequencing), openings and closure (part IV: Beginnings and Ends), and narrative frames and embeddings (part V).

The range of approaches, texts, and voices represented in this collection is remarkably wide. It includes selected texts from such pioneer critics and theorists as E.M. Forster (on story and plot), Vladimir Propp (on the morphology of the folktale), Northrop Frye (on "The Argument of Comedy"), and Mikhail Bakhtin (on the chronotope), from some of the most eminent narratologists (including e.g. Gérard Genette, James Phelan, Peter Brooks, and Marie-Laure Ryan, but not, for instance, Dorrit Cohn, Seymour Chatman or Franz K. Stanzel, for the simple reason that they have specialized in other areas of narrative theory, viz. the representation of consciousness in fiction, structure of narrative transmission, and

mediacy), from some of the 'grand theorists' like Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White and Jacques Derrida (whose piece "The Parergon" one – read: at least this reviewer, who would rather have liked to have seen one of Meir Sternberg's seminal pieces included – could well have done without) and from postcolonial (Edward Said) and feminist (Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Nancy K. Miller, Robyn Warhol) narrative theorists. But besides the 'usual suspects' there are also plenty of new voices. The latter include e.g. Susan Winnett on narrative and desire, Russell Reising on "Loose Ends: Aesthetic Closure and Social Crisis", and the editor's brilliant piece "Beyond Story and Discourse: Narrative Time in Postmodern and Nonmimetic Fiction", which should become compulsory reading in courses on postmodern fiction). The array of topics covered is quite astounding, and the ample coverage of almost all of the critical theories that have been employed in narrative theory and analysis leaves nothing to be desired, ranging as it does from (pre- oder low-)structuralist beginnings all the way through narratology, hermeneutics and deconstruction, psychoanalytic approaches, feminist and postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and artificial intelligence.

The editor has not only done a first-rate job in presenting such a variety of viewpoints, however, he also deserves ample praise for having provided the reader with excellent introductions. Over and above the very good selection of the essays and the wide coverage, another reason that this anthology is likely to have great appeal is the very instructive and cogently argued "General introduction" (1-7) and the equally well-informed introductions to each of the five sections. The latter are "intended to place each contribution within the larger body of work in each field, sketch relevant historical antecedents, and suggest the directions that contemporary discussions seem to be heading" (3). These illuminating 'para-' and 'metatexts' therefore not only

make for coherence, the editor also skillfully uses them to provide the student reader with useful background knowledge, thus enabling him or her to appreciate the following texts more fully and to set them in their respective historical and theoretical contexts. The editor prudently refrains, however, from imposing one particular 'plot' on the intricate history of narrative theory or on the complex material covered in this book.

In sum: Being designed as a "basic reader for graduate courses in narrative and critical theory" (blurb), this intelligently conceived, well organized and very useful anthology will definitely make life (read: the teaching, and attending, of courses on the theory and analysis of narrative fiction) a whole lot easier. One may safely predict that this excellent collection will soon be the classic anthology for all courses on the subject and that it will prove invaluable in introducing students to complex subjects and involved debates. The book will not only be a valuable addition to every university and seminar library, but it can also be safely and warmly recommended to teachers and students who want to read up on any (or all) of the subjects covered in it. Given the extent to which (postclassical) narratology has become "an inherently interdisciplinary project" (David Herman), one can only hope that a "companion volume" will (sooner or later) "be assembled with essays on narrative in philosophy, history, law, anthropology, psychology, politics, and popular culture" (3). The *Theory and Interpretation of Narrative Series*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, has for a long time been lively and stimulating, and one would hope that this superb anthology will whet many critics', teachers', and students' appetite for more such theoretically ambitious as well as practically useful collections, which would save students making lots of Xerox copies.

Ansgar Nünning, Gießen

Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht

35 (2002) 4-6