3 Metanarrative Signs*

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This extract from Prince's *Narratology*, published in 1982, represents a highly systematic approach to the analysis of narrative signs. Based on the work of Roman Jakobson, this analysis also derives from narratological structuralist ideas in the work of Roland Barthes, Wayne Booth, Jean Genette and Tzvetan Todorov. The importance of this essay in the present volume is the emphasis it gives to the idea that metanarrative signs are inherent features of narrative in general, and not merely characteristics of metafictional novels. Like Jakobson, Prince takes the view that metalingual aspects of language happily co-exist with other linguistic functions such as the referential, the emotive and the poetic. Thus we can assume that for Prince, as for Jakobson, a metafiction would be a fictional narrative in which the metanarrative function of signs dominate other such functions of the narrative. Prince understands metanarrative signs as glosses on parts of a text and its underlying codes: as a metanarrative commentary which builds into the text instructions on how to read. Like Scholes's idea of 'assimilated critical perspective', Prince's idea of metanarrative self-commentary is a way of indicating within a text how a reading might proceed and in what it should consist. But for Prince, metanarrative signs do not only tell us how we read – they also specify the distance between a text's self-commentary (as an appropriation of reading) and the reading process of a given reader, reminding us that a text can never fully appropriate reading.

In the context of structuralist approaches to the issue of fictional self-consciousness, another excellent analysis appears in the chapter 'Fictionality Declared' in Michael Riffaterre's recent work *Fictional Truth* (1990).

When the subject of a discourse is language, we sometimes say that the discourse is metalinguistic. Similarly, when the subject of a discourse is

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narrative, we may say that the discourse is meta-narrative. According to this very general definition of the term, there are many kinds of discourse which may be metanarrative: a philosophical essay on the ontology of narration, for instance, a history of the Russian novel, or the present study. Obviously, a verbal narrative itself may be metanarrative: a given tale may refer to other tales; it may comment on narrators and narratees; or it may discuss the act of narration. Just as obviously, a particular narrative may refer to itself and to those elements by which it is constituted and communicated. Consider the following, for example:

(47) There was in all this, as may have been observed, one personage concerned, of whom, notwithstanding his precarious position, we have appeared to take but very little notice; this personage in M. Bonacieux, the respectable martyr of the political and amorous intrigues which entangled themselves so nicely together at this gallant and chivalric period. Fortunately, the reader may remember, or may not remember, fortunately, that we promised not to lose sight of him.

(*Les Trois Mousquetaires*)

(48) Perhaps I shall eliminate the preceding chapter. Among other reasons, there is, in the last few lines, something that might be construed as an error on my part.

(*Epitaph of a Small Winner*)

(49) Thus, gentle reader, I have given thee a faithful history of my travels for sixteen years and above seven months: wherein I have not been so studious of ornament as of truth. I could, perhaps, like others, have astonished thee with strange improbable tales; but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact, in the simplest manner and style; because my principal design was to inform and not amuse thee.

(*Gulliver's Travels*)

These self-referential aspects of narrative have attracted quite a lot of attention recently and some theorists have successfully argued that many a narrative ultimately discusses itself and actually constitutes a metanarrative.[1]

There is another possible definition of the term metanarrative, a stricter and perhaps more meaningful one. In a famous statement on linguistics and poetics, Roman Jakobson presented a rapid survey of the constitutive factors in any act of verbal communication:

> The **addresser** sends **a message** to the **addressee**. To be operative the message requires a **context** referred to ('referent' in another somewhat

> ambiguous nomenclature), seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a **code** fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and decoder or the message); and, finally, a **contact**, a physical channel and psychological channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication.[2]

To each of these factors corresponds a different function of language. Should a verbal act be oriented mainly towards the referent or context, as in

(50) John is handsome and intelligent

it would have a primarily **referential** function. Should it be focused on the addresser and express his attitude towards what he is saying, as in

(51) I am getting bored talking about it

it would have an **emotive** function. Should it be centered on the addressee, as in

(52) Hey, you! Listen carefully!

it would have a **conative** function. A verbal act may also be aimed primarily towards the contact; it may be used, for instance, to check whether the channel works or to establish and prolong communication, as in

(53) Hello! Can you hear me?

or

(54) Do you know what I mean?

In this case, it mainly has a **phatic** function. It may be focused on the message for its own sake and draw our attention to its sound patterns, diction, syntax, structure, etc., as in

(55) Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers;

it would then fulfill a so-called **poetic** function. Finally, it may be oriented towards the code and convey information about it, as in

(56) 'Flicks' means 'movies';

this would fulfill a **metalinguistic** function.[3]

Like any verbal act and, indeed, any signifying process, any narrative can be described in terms of similar factors. Thus, should certain parts of the narrative pertain to the narrator and his attitude towards what he is narrating ('With pain we record it, this first ecstasy was soon disturbed', *Notre-Dame de Paris*), we could say that they have an emotive function; should they concentrate on the narratee ('The reader has no doubt turned over the admirable works of Rembrandt', *Notre-Dame de Paris*), we would say that they have a conative function; and should they be focused on the code of the narrative, we could say that they primarily fulfill a metanarrative function. In other terms, the metanarrative component of a given narrative does not consist of any and all passages referring to that narrative or its constituent parts and should not be confused with the self-referential component. Rather, it is made up of those passages which explicitly refer to its code and which I call metanarrative signs.

Let us define a metanarrative sign more precisely by patterning our definition on that of a metalinguistic sign. Consider the following statements made up of linguistic signs:

(57) Destruction is terrible
(58) 'Destruction' is terrible
(59) Killing is bad
(60) 'Killing' is a present participle
(61) Freshmen are always nice
(62) 'Freshmen' means first-year students

(57), (59) and (61) tell us something about the world (a certain world); more particularly, **destruction, killing** and **freshmen** designate certain objects or actions in that world and they, as well as the terms predicated on them, refer us to that world. On the other hand, (58), (60) and (62) do not tell us very much about the world; rather, they tell us something about words, about signs in a language. Specifically, '**destruction**', '**killing**' and '**freshmen**' do not designate anything else but the word 'destruction', the word 'killing', the word 'freshmen', and the terms predicated on them merely refer us to these words as words, to these signs as signs. (58), (60), and (62) are metalinguistic statements and the predicates in them are metalinguistic signs. In other words, a sign is metalinguistic when it is predicated on a linguistic unit taken as an element in the linguistic code.[4]

In a given narrative, there are many elements – many series of signs – which tell us something about a certain world. But there may also be elements which explicitly comment on such and such another element *x* in

the narrative and which provide an answer to such questions as 'What does *x* mean in the (sub-) code according to which the narrative is developed?' or 'What is *x* in the (sub-) code used?', or again 'How does *x* function in the (sub-) code according to which the narrative can be read?' Each one of the commenting elements constitutes a metanarrative sign: each one is a sign predicated on a narrative unit considered as an element in the narrative code.[5]

Note that, according to this definition, a narrative passage like

(63) Shirley, who had always been very cheerful, was crying all the time.

contains no metanarrative signs (though it may suggest that there is a mystery to be solved and lead to a question such as 'How is it that Shirley is crying all the time?') On the other hand,

(64) Shirley, who had always been very cheerful, was crying all the time. This was a mystery.

does: **this was a mystery** explicitly tells us that Shirley's behavior is a unit in the hermeneutic code framing the narrative and that it must be taken as constituting an enigma.

Furthermore, note that there may be passages in a narrative which explicitly teach us something about the conventions of the world of the narrated but which are not metanarrative. For instance,

(65) It is the idea of duration – of earthly immortality – that gives such a mysterious interest to our own portraits. Walter and Elinor were not insensible to that feeling, and hastened to the painter's room.

('The Prophetic Pictures')

(66) Polder behaves as though he has been placed under eternal obligation by Rickett ... It is the same everywhere. The men who would not take the trouble to conceal from you that you are an incompetent ass ... will work themselves to the bone in your behalf if you fall sick or into serious trouble.

(The Phantom 'Rickshaw')

(67) Apartment dwellers always hate their neighbors and so John hated Peter.

tell us something about certain laws governing certain worlds and explain certain feelings and attitudes in terms of these laws; but no part of (65)–(67)

is predicated on a narrative unit taken merely as an element in the code. Instead of answering such questions as

(68) What is the meaning of unit *x* in the (linguistic, proairetic, hermeneutic ...) code framing the narrative?

or

(69) What is the function of unit *x* in the (linguistic, proairetic, hermeneutic ...) code framing the narrative?

parts of (65)–(67) answer something like 'Why *x*?' (Why did Walter and Elinor hasten to the painter's room? Why does Polder act as though he has been placed under eternal obligation by Rickett? Why did John hate Peter?) Similarly, as I have indicated earlier, there may be various passages which underline the organization of the narrated or the act of narration but which do not constitute metanarrative signs. In

(70) Our readers must have already perceived that D'Artagnan was not a common man.

(*Les Trois Mousquetaires*)

and

(71) We have just said that, on the day when the Egyptian and the archdeacon died, Quasimodo was not to be found in Notre-Dame.

(*Notre-Dame de Paris*)

there is no element which explicitly answers questions like (68) or (69).[6]

Note also that passages which implicitly or indirectly refer to and comment on the nature, meaning or function of other passages need not be considered metanarrative. After all, any sign in a system may be said to carry within itself an implicit comment on the meaning (or nature, or function) of all other signs in that system since it makes sense only in relation to them and vice versa. Indeed, the meaning of a particular element may be arrived at not by reference to the code but by reference to the context, by an examination of its connections with the other elements making up the sequence within which it appears. Consider, for example, the following passage from *The Sun Also Rises*:

(72) 'She took a telegram out of the leather wallet ... "Por ustedes?" I looked at it. The address was: "Barnes, Burgeute". Yes, it's for us.'

Yes, it's for us is obviously an answer to **Por ustedes**? and it can be concluded, therefore, that the latter expression means something like **Is it**

for you?. But **Yes, it's for us** cannot replace **Por ustedes**? in the linguistic code; it is not predicated on **Por ustedes**?; and it does not directly answer a question such as 'What does **Por ustedes**? mean in the linguistic code used?' The meaning of **Por ustedes**? is arrived at mainly through contextual operations.

Finally, note that it is not the shape of an element but its relation to another element which makes it metalinguistic or more generally, metanarrative. In

(73) Jogging is funny

and

(74) 'Jogging' is funny

we find the same predicate. But, in the former,

(75) is funny

is predicated of a certain event in a certain world and refers us to that world; whereas, in the latter, (75) is predicated of a linguistic sign and is, therefore, metalinguistic. In the same way, identical sets of elements may function differently in different narrative passages. Given

(76) John was handsome and he had reached adulthood

and

(77) John had his own house, which meant that he had reached adulthood.

(78) he had reached adulthood

functions metanarratively (metaculturally) in (77) only.

The most evident metanarrative signs – though not necessarily the most numerous or the most important – are probably those which comment on linguistic code units. A text may define an esoteric expression, a technical term, a regionalism, or even a perfectly ordinary phrase. In *Eugénie Grandet*, the narrator writes:

> In Anjou, the **frippe**, a colloquial word, designates what goes with bread, from butter spread on toast – the commonest kind – to peach preserve, the most distinguished of all the **frippes**:

and in *Le Père Goriot*, several terms belonging to the jargon of thieves are explained:

> **Sorbonne** and **tronche** are two energetic words of the thieves' vocabulary invented because these gentry were the first to feel the need of considering the human head from two standpoints. **Sorbonne** is the head of the living man, his intellect and wisdom. **Tronche** is a word of contempt, expressing the worthlessness of the head after it is cut off.

A narrator may also explain the meaning of an element in his lexicon because he is using it in a rather special way: fearing that his private diary – and, consequently, his aspirations to sainthood – may be discovered by his immediate family, the protagonist of *Journal de Salavin* decides to use 'tourist' and 'tourism' for 'saint' and 'sainthood' respectively and he informs us of his decision. Sometimes, it is a foreign word or idiom which is translated into the language of the text. In *The Sun Also Rises*, for instance, the narrator states 'A ficion means passion. An aficionado is one who is passionate about the bull-fights', and in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, the narrator gives the French equivalents to many of the Italian phrases scattered in his narration. Sometimes, it is the meaning of an abbreviation which the text provides: because he finds 'tourist' and 'tourism' ridiculous and inadequate, the hero of *Journal de Salavin* chooses to use 'S.' and 'St.' instead and he announces it in his diary; moreover, referring to his work, he explains:

> Since last November, I am fulfilling the functions of secretary for advertising in the offices of Icpom. This grotesque word means: Industrial Company of Pasteurized and Oxygenated Milks.

Finally, a text may define the various proper names appearing in it. In fact, this kind of definition is common even when the narrator is not particularly inclined to give explanations. Within a few pages of Flaubert's 'Un Coeur simple,' for example, we find: 'Robelin, the farmer of Geffosses ... Liébard, the farmer of Toucques ... the Marquis de Gremanville, one of her uncles ... M. Bourais, a former lawyer ... Guyot, a poor devil employed at the town hall ...' Note that in a passage such as

(79) John got up and left

there is no metalinguistic definition since the predicates refer to the person named John; however, in

(80) John, the shoemaker, got up and left

the *shoemaker* may be said to have a metalinguistic function since it is predicated on the sign 'John' and indicates something like

(81) John is the name of the shoemaker

or

(82) 'John' means 'the shoemaker'

In many narratives, one may also find various passages referring to the non-linguistic codes subsumed under the narrative code. In such cases, the text does not comment on what a sentence, for instance, means in the linguistic system adopted; it informs us about the meanings which the signified of this sentence has in (some of) the other codes framing the narrative. If I read

(83) Fabrice was so shaken up that he answered in Italian: L'ho comprato poco fa (I just bought it now)
(*La Chartreuse de Parme*)

it is the meaning of the Italian sentence in terms of a linguistic code which is given to me. But if I read

(84) She had a rifle of her own, which meant that she had fought in the war

or

(85) She was carrying a red umbrella, which meant that she was a Communist

in neither case does the text answer any questions about the linguistic nature or significance of any of the words and sentences constituting it. Rather, in both cases, the text indicates explicitly the meaning of the state of things presented in terms of a sociocultural code; in other words, it specifically answers such questions as

(86) She had a rifle of her own. What did it mean according to the relevant sociocultural code?

and

(87) She was carrying a red umbrella. What did it mean according to the relevant sociocultural code?

Similarly, in 'Sarrasine,' when I read after the detailed description of a hideous old man accompanied by a ravishing young woman

(88) 'Ah! it was death and lifer indeed!'

it is not a linguistic meaning which is revealed to me but the meaning of the couple in a symbolic system. Given any narrative passage, metanarrative signs can thus indicate its functioning in a series of codes. They can explain its linguistic, sociocultural, or symbolic meaning. They can point out that a certain behavior or a certain state of things represents an enigma or a solution to that enigma: during the *petite madeleine* episode of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Marcel underlines several times the mysterious nature of the extraordinary sensations he has; and in *Le Temps retrouvé* a great many passages are explicitly presented as the definitive solutions to this mystery. Metanarrative signs can also show that a series of events belong to the same proairetic sequence and they can name the sequence: think of chapter and section titles which indicate at least one of the meanings of a set of activities in a narrative; or else, consider the many demonstrative + noun groups which summarize a series of sentences or paragraphs, as in

(89) John punched Jim, then Jim kicked John, then they threw bottles at each other. This fight lasted a few seconds only

In short, metanarrative signs can illuminate any aspect of the constituent signs of a narrative.

Whether they mostly appear in the main body of a text (*Le Père Goriot*, *Eugénie Grandet*) or in the footnotes (*Les Bestiaires*) whether they are ostensibly introduced by a narrator or by a character (in the course of a dialogue, for instance, or in a letter sent by one character to another); whether they precede the signs they explain ('Fear, I said, that's what *miedo* means') or, as is usually the case, follow them

(I had taken six seats for all the fights. Three of them were barreras, the first row at the ring-side, and three were sobrepuertas, seats with wooden backs, half-way up the amphitheatre. *The Sun Also Rises*);

whether they are detailed and precise or, on the contrary, general and vague; whether they refer to linguistic units, hermeneutic units, or cultural ones; and whether they comment on the shape, the meaning, or the appropriateness of a given unit, metanarrative signs may fulfill several functions.

They may, for example, contribute to the rhythm of a narrative by regularly slowing the pace at which new events are presented: it is

obvious that they do not so much bring new information on the narrated as they constitute an interpretation of old information. They may work as a characterization device: a character who states the symbolic meaning of an event or explains a foreign locution clearly differs from characters who never perform similar actions. They may also help define a narrator, his narratee and their relationship. In the first place, the number, the kind and the complexity of a narrator's metanarrative comments can contribute to masking him pompous or unassuming, modest or conceited, cunning or straightforward, and so on and so forth. Second, the mere presence of such comments may constitute precious information on the very identity of the narratee and ultimately underline an important dimension of the narrative. In *Journal de Salavin*, the numerous metanarrative signs peppering the protagonist's diary ('Mme Baratti, the concierge ... M. Mayer, the director of personnel, M. Amigorena, the deputy chief accountant ...,' etc.) indicate that, far from writing for himself only, as he asserts again and again, Salavin may be writing for other readers who, he hopes, will understand him and sympathize with his plight: why else would he explain terms which he knows perfectly well? Rather than a mere private diary, it is perhaps a kind of tale which Salavin composes, a tale in which he can play the part of the hero and thanks to which the most trivial incidents in his daily life acquire importance. *Journal de Salavin* may therefore represent not only the itinerary of an unhappy consciousness in the modern world but also a meditation on the magic of telling about oneself, of narrating one's life; and it is the metanarrative components of the novel which brings this forward. Finally, metanarrative signs tend to reveal how a given narrator views the knowledge and sophistication of the audience he is addressing: the metanarrative explanations which he feels obliged to provide and the degree of tact which he manifests in providing them show what he thinks of his narratee, whether he respects him, is well disposed towards him, or considers himself to be infinitely superior; and the distribution of these explanations may point to a change in the relationship between the two: if the narrator stops making metalinguistic statements, for instance, it may be because he has understood that his narratee can do without them.[7]

But their most obvious and most important function is probably an organizational and interpretative one. Above all, metanarrative signs are glosses on various parts of a text and on the codes underlying them. To some extent at least, they point out the set of norms and constraints according to which the text deploys itself and makes sense; they present a model for its decipherment; they put forward a program for its decoding. In other words, they partially show how a given text could be understood, how it should be understood, how it wants to be understood. As I have indicated earlier, reading a narrative, understanding it, implies organizing it and interpreting it in terms of several codes. Metanarrative signs do part

of this work for us. In their absence, it is up to us to determine the various connotations of a given passage, the symbolic dimensions of a given event, the hermeneutic function of a given situation, and so on. Metanarrative signs provide us with some specific connotations; they make some symbolic dimensions explicit; they define the hermeneutic status of some situations. On the one hand, then, metanarrative signs help us understand a narrative in a certain way; on the other hand, they force us (try to force us) to understand it in this way and not another. They thus constitute the answer of a text to the question: 'How should we interpret you?'

Note that this is always a partial answer. We do not know of any narrative which makes the code framing it entirely and perfectly explicit, and for a very good reason: how would anyone compose a narrative in which every element or sequence of elements is accompanied by its definition and function in a variety of codes? Note too that the partial answer is not necessarily enlightening. Metanarrative signs may not come when we expect them most or they may come when we don't expect them anymore; they may never appear in passages which are quite complex, and on the contrary, they may abound in passages which seem to present no particular difficulties. Indeed, the explanations they supply may be trivial, redundant or tautological. In this case, their ultimate role is not so much to clarify the meaning of the specific elements they comment on but rather to underline their importance (or to minimize the significance of other elements which are not glossed). In Breton's *Nadja*, for example, there is a veritable profusion of metanarrative signs. However, they do not have a strongly explicative dimension. When the narrator writes that the word **haunt** 'says much more than it means,' when he states that the term **incantation** 'must be taken literally,' when he uses the expression **perverse objects** and adds that it must be understood 'the way I understand it and like it,' he does not really explain this word, this term, this expression. Rather, he provides a commentary which makes them more, not less, impenetrable. Similarly, when the narrator identifies an event as mysterious without even suggesting why, or when he reformulates one enigma – 'Who am I?' – into another one which is surely more bizarre – 'Whom do I haunt?' – he tends to obscure rather than illuminate the various hermeneutic terms along which his narrative is moving. Finally, when he names 'strange adventure' an explicitly strange sequence of events, he is being, at the very best, banal and redundant. Breton's metanarrative interventions do not increase our understanding of the signs to which they refer; but they certainly draw our attention to them and insist on their sign value, their sign nature. Instead of making a passage transparent, metanarrative signs in *Nadja* increase its opacity. They emphasize the sign rather than its meaning: Breton's novel, like life according to the surrealist, is full of signs and, like life, it takes on the appearance of a cryptogram.

Note also that metanarrative signs may lead us by indirection to a valid reading of a particular text. For it may happen that, instead of acting as aids to a proper decoding they constitute an obstacle to it. Put forward by an ill-informed (or ill-intentioned) narrator, or by an ignorant character, the explanations provided are sometimes incomplete – while being given as entirely satisfactory – and set the decoder on the wrong track. Sometimes also, they contradict other metanarrative comments and thus augment the difficulties of decipherment. Often, they provide totally wrong information which, if accepted, can only lead to faulty conclusions. In such cases, the reading ostensibly proposed by the text is a poor one and only by realizing it can we reach more satisfactory results.

Note finally that, if metanarrative signs guide our reading, they also help us understand better the stance taken by a narrative with regards to its own communicability and legibility as well as to the activity of reading in general. Their very presence in a text emphasizes the fact that portions of it, at least, are legible in certain ways. Their appearance is similar to that of a (fragmentary) text in the text, representing a language that is **other** in the language of the text and establishing some of the interpersonal coordinates of a communicative situation. Since they operate as decipherments of various passages and, as such, act as partial replacements for them, they help specify the assumptions of the text and the decoding contracts endorsed by it. In other words, they clarify the premises of textual communicability (if you read me according to the hermeneutic code, you will see how everything will fall into place; if you interpret me in terms of a symbolic code, you will understand that I am saying much more than I seem to; I will summarize for you this sequence of events and that one, but you will have to summarize the others). Furthermore, if reading a narrative means adding to it a metanarrative commentary, not only do they indicate what such a commentary may consist in and how it may intervene but they help specify the distance between a text's own metacommentary and the metacommentary of a given reader. After all, both the text and the individual reader can interpret certain passages in terms of the same (sub-)codes and reach the same conclusions; but it can also happen that the text summarizes a set of activities in one way and the reader in another; or that the text finds a certain event mysterious whereas the reader does not; or that the text indicates only one symbolic aspect of a situation while the reader thinks of several others. In short, metanarrative signs tell us how we read.

Notes

1. See, for instance, ROLAND BARTHES, *S/Z*: 219; WILLIAM GASS, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: 1970), pp. 24–5; TZVETAN TODOROV, *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: 1971), pp. 66–91.

2. ROMAN JAKOBSON, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', in *Style and Language*, THOMAS SEBEOK (ed.), (Cambridge, Mass.: 1960), p. 353. Some scholars prefer to speak of seven factors: DELL HYMES, for example, divides *context* into *topic and setting*. See 'The Ethnography of Speaking', in *Readings in the Sociology of Language*, JOSHUA A. FISHMAN (ed.), (The Hague: 1970), pp. 110–13.
3. Cf. Roman Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', pp. 353–7. Of course, a verbal act may have more than one major function.
4. For a good discussion of metalinguistic statements and signs, see JOSETTE REY-DEBOVE, *Etude linguistique et sémiotique des dictionnaires français contemporains* (The Hague and Paris: 1971), pp. 43–52.
5. For a similar definition, see GERALD PRINCE. 'Remarques sur les signes métanarratifs', *Degrés*, 11–12 (1977), e1–e10. See also PHILIPPE HAMON, 'Texte littéraire et métalangage', *Poétique*, 31 (1977), 261–284 and PIERRE VAN DEN HEUVEL, 'Le narrateur narrataire ou le narrateur lecteur de son propre discours', *Agorà*, 14–15 (1977), 53–77.
6. In other words, a narrator's intrusion or an explanation does not necessarily constitute a metanarrative sign.
7. Note that all of the explanations by the narrator (including non-metanarrative ones) similarly function as indications on his relationship with his narratee. More generally, all of the explanations in any text (including non-narrative texts) provide information on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee.