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# *Historical Phases of Narrative Strategies[1]*

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## *Abstract*

Strategic differences in any area of activity are generated by differences in initial conditions, as well as by differences in potential goals. The purpose of narration relates to the communicative event that is an interaction between consciousness, and this, too, can be strategically different. When it comes to the initial conditions of narration, the determinative factor is the narrative picture of the world "which provides the scale for determining what constitutes and event" (Lotman). Such pictures are phasic in their genesis, and each takes shape in narrative practices at a certain level in the development of human consciousness. They can later be actualised in historically cultural context. This paper will successively consider the precedent, imperative, adventurous and probabilistic pictures of the world, seeking to clarify the specifics of the narrative points of view which they manifest.

## *Keywords*

narrative strategy, image of the world, ethos of narration, point of view, Russian literature, myth, parable, anecdote, novel

# 1  Introduction

## 1.1  Definition

Narrative strategies replace interactive concepts in the system of narratological categories. All other characteristics of the narrative are drawn toward this concept in one way or another.

Narrative strategies are sometimes and unreasonably reduced to narrative techniques. This is, in particular, a popular understanding of this category, as formulated by Prince: narrative strategy is "a set of narrative procedures followed or narrative devices used to achieve some specific goal" [1, p. 64]. In this definition, strategy is substituted for tactics. The concept of strategy comes from military science, and it correctly serves to characterise the most fundamental attitudes of activity. In a similar vein, Roussin discusses the "suppositions" of storytelling [2]. The fundamental distinction between strate-

by the difference of the initial conditions and the difference of target settings.

## 1.2  Explication

**Picture of the world.** Initial conditions are determined by a picture of the world "which provides the scale for determining what constitutes an event" [4, p. 234]. "Picture of the world" is a common term used to describe a multitude of systems of the representation of life: linguistic, ethnic, scientific, religious, artistic, professional, age-based, gender-based, etc., images of the world. Each of these versions has a set of initial assumptions about the most general preconditions for the presence of human beings.

**Ethos of narration**. The target settings can also be fundamentally different, and this will be determined by the ethos of narration. According to Ricoeur, there are no ethically neutral narratives, because "the anticipation of ethical

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gic and tactical competence is fundamentally important when applied to narrative practices, because this prevents the misidentification of the author and the narrator. The strategic position of the author ensures the unity of the basic principles of narration and the communicative goal, and the speech acts of one or more narrators lead. The author's position can be homogeneous with the position of the narrator, or it can be detached or ironic.

Bakhtin argues that there are "two events – the event that is narrated in the word and the event of narration itself" [3, p. 225]. The dual-events nature of a narrative also requires a two-dimensional approach when defining the relevant narrative strategy. In any field of activity, for that matter, the different strategies are determined

considerations [is] implied in the very structure of the act of narrating" [5, p. 148]. Booth has described a comparison of "the encounters of a storyteller's ethos with that of the reader of listener" [6, p. 8].

Narrative ethos is a rhetorical category which actively enters the realm of non-classical narratological concepts [7, p. 20]. Bakhtin argues that the ethos corresponds to the "typical model of addressee" [8, p. 200] of discourse. When discussing the philosophy of language, Levinas has considered a mental attitude that is implicit in the intersubjective space of communication. Ethos is not subjective as a moral attitude; it is an intersubjective "magnetic field" in which the subject finds itself, according to Foucault, "sustaining discourse."

The ethos of narrative discourse presupposes the addressee's readiness to move toward the value horizon of the narrator. The category of ethos in narratology signifies the position of value, and this means that the subject's perception of history is called to take while remaining as a participant in the communicative event. Of course, if we reread the same text, we can always assume a position of analytical distance, but at this point we would disrupt the intersubjective relationship between the narrator and the addressee.

**Point of view**. These conditions and target settings are directly expressed in a narrative via the relationship between the narrator's point of view and that of the character in their relation to the reader (the addressee of the narrative). These are basic perspectives which form a kind of framework for any narrative discourse.

The point of view is the position which a narrator takes vis-à-vis the story world. The term "point of view" is similar to the concepts of "perspective" and "focalisation." These

On the basis of work by Lanser [10, p. 13], Niederhoff has argued correctly that a point of view represents "a relation between a viewing subject and a viewed object. Narratologists have occasionally succumbed to the temptation of simplifying things by reducing the relation to one of the elements that is connected by it" [11]. When shifting the emphasis toward the object, in turn, scholars are more likely to use the term "focalisation," although they prefer the term "point of view" or "perspective" to draw attention to the subject. In our opinion, point of view is a generic concept in relation to focalisation and to a point of view in a narrower sense (the point at which the story world is viewed).

Schmid considers point of view to be a basic and mandatory component of the narrative in that it determines its "optics" and the selection of translated information about the story world. Choosing a point of view is the first step in generating a narrative. The given object becomes part of the story when it is in the field of the subject's vision. In other words, a narrative simply cannot exist without a point of

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three concepts are often used synonymously, but there are a few differences among them. Perspective is usually understood as the subjective worldview of a character or narrator (if the latter is personified). Under the framework of a constructive approach toward a narrative, the term speaks to the specifics of reader activity. The recipient inevitably transfers his ideas about the person and the human mind to the hero, thus building up his "perspective" so that his existence is conceived as being pseudo-real [9, 424]. Classical narratology, however, does not imply a strict distinction between perspective and point of view.

view [12, p. 195]. Narratologists who interpret the concept of point of view more narrowly, by contrast, do not agree with this idea. "If we think of the concept in spatio-visual terms," then a lack of a point of view is acceptable: "One can tell a story without a fixed viewpoint in the literal sense, just as one can paint a landscape without perspective" [11].

This paper accepts Schmid's typology of the point of view. According to this, a narrator can tell a story from his own perspective or from the perspective of one or more characters [12, p. 105].

## 2 The typology of narrative strategies

### 2.1 The imitative strategy

The formation of narrative strategies is an historical process of a phasic nature. The first step in forming such a strategy involves a mastery related to verbal storytelling that is free of any paralinguistic means of representation. Narrative replaces the more primitive communicative practice of syncretic display. The most archaic narrative practices (tales about mythical heroes and fairy tales) have inherited the mythological picture of the world. This suggests that everything in the world has already existed and will exist again, as is the case with changing seasons. This is a precedential picture of the world in which only that which is supposed to happen happens. According to Eliade, this is a person who "refuses to grant value [...] to the unusual events" [13, p. 85]. In contrast to myths, narrative discourse confers eventfulness on singular incidents. By inheriting what Freudenburg describes as "the inventory of myth" [14, p. 228], however, the discourse also inherits the precedential nature of the latter. Eventfulness is initially presented to the mythological substratum because it is presented as a precedent and the first occurrence in a series of such happenings. The archaic character is similar to a mythological character in that it is a performer of actions which realise some level of necessity.

The precedential picture of the world also determines the ethos of archaic narratives. As Neklyudov has argued, the moral code of these narratives means adhering to "rules of behaviour," while "wrong" actions characterise the "false hero" [15, p. 26]. The receptive attitude of the addressee of early narrative texts involves acquiring and preserving an attachment to a common generic experience of "correct behaviours" in a choral identity with everyone. This attitude implies an optic of narration in which the diegetic world is seen from a single perspective held by the narrator, the characters and the reader. This complete solidarity with other narrative instances ("eyewitnesses" of the events) is a necessary precondition for the adequate perception of the narrative. The ethos of the imitative narrative strategy is the ethos of calm.

### 2.2 The regulative strategy

The historical crisis of mythological consciousness led to the formation of several paths for the further development of human mentality. The most important one was the emergence of religious legends, and this required a fundamentally new regulative strategy. In post-mythological religious consciousness, an imperative picture of the world was formed, as manifested in the narrative practices of the Old Testament. This picture of the world is based on the initial assumption that life is determined by a super world order in which a sacred law or a subject of higher justice rules. It is not determined by cyclical recurrences.

The narrator's point of view determines the entire course of the story, and the narrator thus becomes the representative of such a subject in the narrative. The character's vision is not presented in the structure of the narrative, and his perspective is not actualised. All events are demonstrated and evaluated from the perspective of the narrator, who is the bearer of an unquestionable system of values. The reader also sees things from narratorial point of view: "[...] all the subject-object relations expressed in the text" converge "in one fixed focus," [4, p. 265].

The Old Testament narratives are characterised by the ethos of duty. The narrative focuses on the ultimate positivity or negativity of the chain of events, allowing readers to extract values of existence from the perceived story. The ethos of duty exists with concern for the dignity of one's position in life and the legitimacy of one's motives and actions.

A kind of quintessence in the second narrative is a parable. The historical roots of parables are found in the hagiographic genre of Medieval authorship, as well as in many genres of fiction such as fables, canonical genres of drama (tragedy/comedy), etc.

### 2.3 The adventurous strategy

A radically new strategy is found in adventurous Greek novels from the 2nd century AD. The world of adventure, according to Bakhtin, is one

of initiatory chance, "where the normal, pragmatic and premeditated course of events is interrupted" [3, p. 92]. Bakhtin further argues that "Greek adventure-time lacks any natural, everyday cyclicity" [3, p. 91]. This is an occasional picture of the world, presenting life as a chaotic stream of mishaps. This is like a game of chance, where any outcome and the most improbable set of circumstances are possible. For the adventurous character, everything is determined by the unpredictable "lot" that falls to him.

his 1922 essay "The End of the Novel," Mandelstam defined the writing of novels as "the art of becoming interested in the fate of individuals" [17, p. 72], as opposed to national heroes or generic characters. In contrast to adventure novels, 19th-century classic novels developed the strategy of the biographical narrative so as to reveal the indirect trajectories of individual existences via a series of situations that could be precedent, imperative, adventurous or occasional. The biographical strategy is based on a

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The receptive attitude of an adventurous narrative can be defined as an ethos of desire or an intention to self-actualise (i.e., to become oneself ).  This reading imbues the narrated story with a meeting that involves the "desire" [16, p. 40] of the reader.

The narrator is a private witness to events, thus allowing for an alternative view of the story. This creates the possibility of structuring a character's perspective. The reader's optics will still be closely tied to the narratorial point of view, but now the reader is also allowed to look at the diegetic world through the eyes of the characters.

The adventurous strategy emerged long before Greek novels in the marginal narrative practice of anecdotes about the private lives of notable historical figures. These anecdotes captured the separation of private life from polis communality, and this carried a germ of carnival-related profanation. Bakhtin has linked this to the emergence of the novella: "The 'extraordinary' in the novella is the violation of the prohibition and the profanation of the sacred" [3, p. 41]. The canonical novella is a product of the third basic narrative strategy.

### 2.4  The biographical strategy

The genre-forming factor of a novel relates to the biographical structure of the narrative. In

probabilistic picture of the world which, on the one hand, combines existing types of eventfulness, and, on the other hand, generates its own type of eventfulness that is different from all previous ones. In Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, the main character, Grinyov, leaves the precedent world of domestic existence and finds himself in a world of adventurous incidents (losing to Zurin, experiencing a disastrous snowstorm and a miraculous rescue, a duel with Shvabrin). With a noose around his neck before the outstretched hand of Pugatchev, Grinyov enters a situation of unequivocally imperative choice. During his trial, Grinyov can justify himself and defend his noble honour, but only at the cost of the loss of his human dignity (that is how he imagines Masha's involvement in the trial) . This is atypical "bifurcation point" that is characteristic in the probabilistic picture of the world. The defining nodes of the novel's narrative are the moments of inevitable, but not predetermined changes in life, with the character appearing as a subject of individual experience and personal self-identification. The narrator does not possess complete knowledge of the diegetic world. The narratorial point of view loses its authority not only in terms of witnessing and evaluating the narrated events, but also if identifying them. In this respect, this is likened to the point of view of the character which, for its part, appears to be dominant.

This trend is very clear in the post-novel genre of the short story, which was primarily represented in Russian literature by Anton Chekhov (*A Nervous Breakdown, the Lady with the Dog*). Paperny has correctly observed that Chekhov's "reader [...] is like a person who enters a garden in which there are no explanations, no signs and no pointers as to where one must look, listen, breathe in the scent and decide for oneself" [18, p.49].

In Chekhov's *The Student*, Ivan Velikopolsky falls under the influence of cold weather and an absence of the comforts of home life, and he succumbs to pessimism. He meets two widows and tells them the parable of Peter's denial. Vasilisa weeps, and Lukerya's "expression [became] strained and heavy like that of enduring intense pain." Velikopolsky realises that "truth and beauty which had guided human life there in the garden and in the yard of the high priest had continued without interruption to this day" [19].

The whole story is a narrative from Ivan's point of view. The emotional decline and the spiritual elevation of the character occur within his horizons. It is necessary to hear the narrator's voice and to find out what will happen to the hero afterward if one is to comprehend Ivan's discovery and determine whether it is simply the impulsive and meaningless gust of a young man. It is necessary to comprehend the context of his future, but the point of view in the short story does not provide us with access to such information. Only at the end of the story the narrator is peering out of the shadow of the character's perceptions for one brief instant, thus hinting at the uncertainties of the hero's future: "[...] and the feeling of youth, health, vigour – he was only 22 – and the inexpressible sweet expectation of happiness, of unknown mysterious happiness, took possession of him little by little, and life seemed to him enchanting, marvellous and full of lofty meaning" [19].

The narrator, as opposed to the character, remains unsure about the significance of changes in his world. Facts may or may not turn out to be events once the character has chosen one of the possible continuations of his life.

Perspective is never a reliable tool for a reader to identify and make sense of a story. The addressee of the narrative gains unprecedented freedom whilst, at the same time, assuming an equally unprecedented responsibility in terms of clarifying the meaning of the narrative (the ethos of responsibility).

## 2.5  Hybrid strategies

In theory, each of the pictures of the world can serve as a basis for any (or almost any) ethos, which gives reason to discuss hybrid narrative strategies in the history of narration. The table below illustrates the possible hybrid strategies along with the basic ones, which are presented in bold.

| Ethos/ Picture | I Calm | II Duty | III Desire | IV Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** **Precidential** | **AI** (imitative strategy | AII | AIII | AIV |
| **B** **Imperative** | BI | **BII** (regulative strategy | BIII | BIV |
| **C** **Occasional** | CI | CII | **CIII** (adventurous strategy | CIV |
| **D** **Probabilistic** | DI | DII | DIII | **DIV** (biographical strategy |

Gogol's *Dead Souls* combines occasional eventfulness with the ethos of duty. The probabilistic picture of the world in the narratives of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky differ in terms of ethos. Tolstoy's narrative is organised by the ethos of necessity. The narrator is always aware of the measure of the hero's rightness, although he does not always say so directly. Tolstoy often leads his characters toward the realisation of a moral truth. In Dostoevsky's novels, the probabilistic chain of events unfolds in the intensive responsibility to take part in the struggle of world power. Raskolnikov's anguish and the happy ending of his story can, of course, bring to mind the ethos of duty, but then there is the epilogue to the novel, in which Raskolnikov does not make any parable-like choice. Agreeing with Bakhtin that each of Dostoevsky's characters has his own truth, which is polyphonically conjugated with other truths without the author's "final world,"

one cannot help but realise that the reader is also left in a similar position. Dostoevsky does not allow for the dispersion of alternative readings. This is how the narrative effect of solidarity is formed.

## 3   Conclusion

The pilot study of a Narrative strategies can be classified as basic models for narrative discourse. An examination of these models makes of view of the narrator and the character. This reflects the picture of the world that is conveyed by the narrative and its target settings. "Traces" discussed in this paper can probably be found in other aspects of the presentation of the narrative as well.

The historical phases of narrative strategies and consistent with the processes of genre formation. The adventurous strategy corresponds to the novella, the biographical one to

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it possible to trace the regularities which characterise not only the transformation of narrative practices, but also the gradual changes in human culture that are associated with the perception, storage, comprehension and transmission of event experience.

It should be noted that narrative strategies do not replace one another irrevocably. Once they emerge, they are again actualised in the subsequent stages of the evolution of the narrative. The regulative strategy, for instance, first asserted itself in religious devotion, but then it was consistently applied in Medieval literature and, later, in Classicism.

The study of narrative strategies is available at the level of the formal organisation of the narrative text. This is a configuration of the points

the novel and the short story. In this sense, the study of genres from a competitive perspective goes hand in hand with the identification of the strategic parameters of storytelling. The results of genre studies reliably support a deeper understanding of the nature of narration as an historically determined phenomenon.

A narrative strategy is a universal analytical tool used to describe narratives in any medium. That is why it would be reasonable to trace the functioning of the discussed category about non-literary materials.

The hybrid strategies mentioned at the conclusion of this paper are worthy of further study. Potential combinations of conditions and target settings of the narrative require more detailed factual confirmation.

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