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A Matter of Perspective: The Social Framing of Narrative Meaning

In their magisterial study of *The Nature of Narrative*, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg point out that "[t]he quality of irony is built into the narrative form as it is into no other form of literature" (240). Irony, they seem to imply, is a constitutive feature of narrative, a narrative universal, and it has its origins in the never completely unequivocal relationship between what is being told (story) and the way it is being told (discourse).¹ This fundamental instability has in recent years clearly become the focus of narratological interest. The notion that "[d]iscourse is always potentially subversive of its ostensibly 'natural' role as instrument or vehicle" (O'Neill 4) is by now widely subscribed to even to the point where an acknowledgement of the primary constitutive function of discourse *producing* story replaces the traditional notion that story is reproduced, depicted or staged by discourse.² Narrative discourse never simply 'gets the story told'; it creates the story in more or less interesting ways and always in an interested manner, and thus lends itself to epistemological and ideological deconstruction.

Seen from this 'postmodern' angle,³ the inherent irony of narrative, which Scholes and Kellogg identify as one important aspect of the nature of narrative,⁴ emerges as a structural counterpart of that increasingly pervasive and specifically modern philosophical and artistic programme, Romantic irony.⁵ Here, or so it seems, is the structural reason for the emergence of the novel as the most important genre of modern literature.⁶ But then, one could hardly argue that all novels are ironical or have always

¹ The terminology for this fundamental distinction has been proliferating (for a useful overview cf. O'Neill 21). Seymour Chatman's distinction between story and discourse will be used in this paper.

² For the persistence of the traditional hierarchy and its gradual replacement by discourse-oriented approaches cf. Roland Barthes's distinction of cardinal functions/kernels and catalysers/satellites and its later reinterpretation by, for example, Coihan/Shires (54-64).

³ For a state-of-the-art survey of recent developments in narratology cf. Currie.

⁴ It is worth pointing out that Scholes and Kellogg are perfectly aware of the historical dimension of narrative irony, which they discuss in the context of the historical development from monism to relativism (cf. Scholes/Kellogg 240-282, esp. 274-276).

⁵ On romantic irony cf. Mellor 3-30, on romantic irony in narrative cf. Furst, on irony and modernity in general cf. Behler.

⁶ For a detailed account of the history of the novel along these lines cf. Reinfandt 1997: 123-254.

↓ contextual communication (external) ↓

N5: non-literary contexts

N4: literary communication

↑ 'work of art' as medium of communication ↑

N3: text

↓ 'structure' as semantic category ↓

N2: narrative mediation (discourse)

N1: character communication (story)

↑ textual communication (internal) ↑

Table 1: Narrative in Modern Literary Communication

In this model, the narrative text contains two levels of intra-textual communication: on the one hand, there is communication among characters in the story world, and on the other hand, there is communication between the narrating voice and an implied or explicit addressee. Obviously, these two levels of communication suggest two levels of intra-textual perspectives: there are, on the one hand, character-perspectives on the story level N1, defined by Ansgar Nünning as "an individual figure's subjective rule or model of the fictional world," and, on the other hand, narrator-perspectives on the discourse level N2, defined by Nünning as "the system of preconditions or the world-view of a narrating instance."¹⁰ As all internal relations of a text 'crystallize' on the abstract communicative level N3, which comprises all elements of its structure and includes paratextual features such as the title, epigraphs, prefaces, afterwords, etc., the potential for overlaps and contradictions between narrator-perspectives and character-perspectives mirrors the fundamentally ironical set-up of the discourse/story relationship mentioned above. But, needless to say, this 'crystallization' only takes place when the text is actually read, and in this sense the narrative text functions as a medium of external contextual communication. It is here that the text's potential for irony is ultimately controlled by being subordinated to the conventions of specific communicative contexts. Thus, readings can be literary in the sense of being concerned with a text's status as 'literature' and its relationship to other literary works (N4, communication between "author" and "reader"). But readings can also be more generally concerned with questions of, say, identity formation, moral edification, or other interests (N5, communication between human beings in their non-literary social roles). While these latter readings tend to be selective, literary readings (in an ideal theoretical sense) are guided by the underlying notion of the 'work of art' and should thus imply inclusive, integrative reading strategies employing the notion of "structure" and including closure as a semantic category.

¹⁰ The quotations are from Nünning (forthcoming) in an as yet unpublished manuscript, pp. 5 and 8.

been read as being ironical. Obviously, the inherent irony of narrative meaning can be controlled to a certain degree, and it is this possibility of control, and the historical contexts of its exercise, that the following remarks will dwell upon. Starting with the problem of narrative authority, I will focus on the notion of the perspective structure of narrative texts as introduced by Ansgar Nünning above and try to view this notion in its historical perspective, employing Niklas Luhmann's sociological theory of modernity. The final section of this paper will then briefly outline the possibilities of analysing narrative in the light of this systematic and contextualized model of the relationship between perspective structures and narrative orientations of meaning.

1. Narrative Authority

"Irony, however defined, suggests an authority," writes Joseph A. Dane in his account of *The Critical Mythology of Irony* (11). Accordingly, the question of narrative irony can best be answered in terms of narrative authority, which in turn can be approached in terms of narrative perspective. Perspective as a narratological concept has long been overshadowed by the prominence of point-of-view theories and, later, by the distinction between narration and focalization which emerged from a critique of the category 'point of view' in structuralist narratology. More recently, however, the unresolved theoretical problems of both positions have led to a renewed narratological interest in the concept of perspective, either from a phenomenological or from a constructivist point of view.⁷ It certainly seems promising to deal with questions of narrative authority in a framework which takes problems of reception into account and reintegrates the functions of both narration and focalization without necessarily losing the discriminating power of the structuralist approach.

The notion of the perspective structure of narrative texts⁸ conveniently combines the search for textual markers of the (seemingly) autonomous and the interconnected aspects of narrators' and characters' perspectives with questions of reader response: how many perspectives are involved in the process of narrative communication, and which perspective emerges upmost in determining narrative meaning? As a starting point we can use *Table 1*, which identifies the levels of communication involved in the realization of literary narrative.⁹

⁷ For a phenomenological model cf. Chamberlain, for a constructivist approach cf. the various publications by Nünning listed below.

⁸ The following remarks are based on Nünning (1989: 64-83; forthcoming; 1999/2000).

⁹ The notion of perspective structure derives from Manfred Pfister's seminal work on drama (57-68).

Cf. Reinfandt 1997: 156f. based on Nünning 1989: 25-40. For a brief English summary of the original model by Nünning cf. Fludernik 1993.

From this outline it should be clear that paying close attention to the perspective structure of narrative texts can provide interesting clues for a description of the historically variable conventions and cultural conditions governing the production and reception of narrative. All in all, the question of narrative authority implies a frame of production—and reception—perspectives between which the structural integration or disintegration of narrator—and character—perspectives is negotiated. But how can the notoriously vague category of 'context' be theorized in a sufficiently systematic way? This is the question that the next section will turn to.

2. Perspective in Context

The career of the concept and metaphor of perspective is deeply entwined with the emergence of modern society as we know it.¹¹ Broadly speaking, it marks a movement away from the ontological slant of medieval optics with its associations of higher or divine truth and its objectifying background in the applied mathematics of Euclidian geometry. In the Renaissance a marked shift of emphasis occurs. As one of the most striking symptoms of a changing ideological fabric, the invention—or is it a discovery?—of "linear" or "central" perspective in painting represents "a singular moment when the fine arts made an actual contribution to the history of science," as a recent *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* puts it (Wood 479). It is true that technically and mathematically, perspective is merely a matter of the position or location of the beholder in relation to the object. At the same time, however, Renaissance theories and applications of perspective mark the appearance of the beholder on the map, or rather the agenda, of epistemological speculation in the post-Renaissance West: it is the relationship between the objectivistic appeal of the original concept and the intermittent emergence of a subjectivistic orientation which characterizes the career of the term 'perspective' in various disciplines from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

As opposed to this long process of coming to terms with the subjectivistic implications of perspective,¹² the third component of the original concept, i.e. the notion of the painting as a transcription of an imaginary 'picture plane,' has only comparatively recently received sustained attention. This third dimension of perspective points to specifically modern problems of representation: the process of "transcribing" something "imaginary" implies not only subjective mediation but also the external conditions of this mediation, both in terms of the medium employed and in terms of cultural contexts. Accordingly, the third and most recent position on questions

¹¹ For an overview of its long and distinguished career cf. Guillén.

¹² Guillén 318-332 points out that the philosophy of G.W. Leibniz "occupies a middle ground [...] between the ontological and the epistemological notions of perspective" (324), while the 'breakthrough' of a radically subjectivistic and relativistic position is generally associated with Nietzsche.

of perspective tends to view it neither in objectivistic nor in subjectivistic absolutes but rather as a culturally framed, conventionalized phenomenon.¹³

This outline for a systematic view of the history of the concept and metaphor of perspective follows a pattern that seems to be characteristic of the evolution of modern culture in its widest sense. Reluctantly abandoning traditional notions of transcendent metaphysical and ontological truth, the emerging culture of modernity had to reinvent 'objectivity' immanently, so to speak, and negotiate its uneasy relationship with the increasing prominence of subjectivity. The conflicting implications of the emerging epistemological paradigms of empiricism and idealism, with rationalism uneasily covering a middle ground, came to a head in the 19th century and led to a radical reorientation, turning towards the linguistic, textual, and cultural conditions of knowledge production in the course of the 20th century.¹⁴ Accordingly, 'objective,' subjective and reflexive dimensions of meaning can be identified as the basic constituents of a specifically modern 'ecology' of semantic orientations (cf. Reinfaandt 1997: 147-154) and Niklas Luhmann's sociological systems theory of modernity provides a theoretical frame for approaching them in terms of communication (cf. Luhmann).¹⁵

According to Luhmann, modern society can be described as a system of communications that reproduce themselves autopoietically. In the process, autonomous functional subsystems of communication emerge, such as, for example, science, economy, politics, law, education, art, etc. It will not be possible to go into any theoretical details here (cf. Reinfaandt 1997: 16-122); suffice it to say that Luhmann's theory establishes meaning (*Sinn*) as a fundamental functional category which features centrally both in the consciousness of psychic systems and in the communication of social systems. With regard to communication, it is important to distinguish between two interrelated but nevertheless different dimensions of meaning:

- (1) with regard to each system's specific identity there is an abstract, functional dimension of meaning which finds its realization in the successful continuation of the system's specific communication. This functional dimension of meaning is thus strictly limited to each single system's horizon of existence, so to speak, and it conditions the availability of
- (2) content-based or semantic dimensions of meaning in the system. Meaning in this more traditional sense can, in a manner of speaking, 'travel' from system to system, but in view of each system's autonomy one has to keep in mind that meaning

¹³ The debate on questions of perspective in 20th-century aesthetics is generally perceived to be between "objectivists" such as, most prominently, E.H. Gombrich, and "conventionalists" such as E. Panofsky and N. Goodman (cf. Wood 480-481). The emerging cognitive sciences, on the other hand, are sceptical about both positions (cf. Kubovy).

¹⁴ For an account of the evolution of the novel in these terms cf. Reinfaandt 1997: 123-254.

¹⁵ For a brief introduction to Luhmann's theory cf. Müller and Schwanitz.

of this type 'travels' only as a kind of energy input which serves as the starting point for processes of meaning production taking place strictly within the limits of each autonomous system. It is only after meaning has been produced in this way that it can be attributed to the system's environment, and it is in this process of attribution that the basic semantic orientations of modern society become clearly discernible. Depending on whether meaning is attributed to a social or a psychic source, it can acquire an aura of 'objectivity' or of subjectivity, respectively, while a system may also acknowledge its own role in constructing and processing meaning on the level of self-observation and self-description, thus adding a reflexive dimension.

Narrative, then, to return to the original focus of these reflections, provides a unique vehicle for a negotiation of modern culture's emerging threefold horizon of meaning. Its structural irony can now be located in the tension between the three levels of

- (a) its 'objectifying' potential, which can be realized in spite of the implicit subjectivity of every narrative act,
- (b) its capacity for explicit stagings of subjectivity, both on the discourse and the story level, and
- (c) its capacity for reflecting upon its own possibilities and limitations.

However, a full realization of all three levels depends on a suitable context, and it seems that such a suitable context can be traced in the emerging system of modern literary communication as epitomized by the rise of the novel. In view of its 'naturalizing' capacity for rendering subjectivity invisible, narrative is an ideal and seemingly transparent vehicle for all those formerly objective truths which can henceforth be traced to their particular and contingent origin, i.e. the social systems of religion, politics, education, law, economy, etc. These can in turn be staged in their newly problematic relationship with subjective experience,¹⁶ and the narrative form is even flexible enough to accommodate the emergence of reflexive and specifically literary dimensions of meaning. Other systemic contexts, on the other hand, such as,

¹⁶ Probably the most consequential effect of the emergence of modern society as Luhmann describes it is the abandonment of the medieval or pre-modern principle of social stratification. It is replaced by the new principle of functional differentiation, which, in Luhmann's terms, removes Man from the fabric of society. In contrast with the preconditioned and comparatively stable identity provided by a person's position, determined by birth, in the social hierarchy of pre-modern society, the identity of the modern individual has then to be formed in complex multi-contextual processes of socialization in those newly differentiated spheres of communication. I should stress at this point that in spite of his emphasis on communication, in contrast to widespread prejudice against him, and notwithstanding his insistence on the operational autonomy of both psychic and social systems, Luhmann views the emergence and evolution of modern society as an effect of the co-evolution of psychic and social systems, i.e. of consciousness and communication.

for example, social and physical sciences and philosophy (cf. Nash), typically exclude or subordinate subjective dimensions of meaning and accordingly provide less flexible frames for narrative communication.¹⁷

3. The Social Framing of Narrative Meaning

So how does this social framing of narrative meaning work in detail? And in what sense can the perspective structure of narrative texts provide clues for a description of emerging modernity? In order to answer these questions let us turn to *Table 2* (in the *Appendix*), which works its way down from the global orientations of meaning characteristic of modern culture towards a classification of perspective structures in modern narrative. Read from left to right the table charts what Scholes and Kellogg describe as

[t]he whole movement of mind in Western culture from the Renaissance to the present—the very movement which spawned the novel and elevated it to the position of the dominant literary form—[...] a movement away from dogma, certainty, fixity, and all absolutes in metaphysics, in ethics, and in epistemology. (276)

It is, however, not this idealized version of a broad cultural development in which historical Contexts of Control¹⁸ move from a disintegrating 'monism' to pluralism and relativism which is of interest from a narratological point of view. Instead, even a casual glance at the earliest examples of modern novel writing suggests that all three Orientations of Meaning had to be dealt with from the very beginning, with (to mention just the most famous examples) Defoe maintaining an 'objective,' i.e. predominantly religious and economic focus, Richardson struggling with the subversive subjectivistic implications of the epistolary form, or Fielding explicitly embracing the challenge of demarcating a literary position for the emerging genre, and Sterne demonstrating the reflexive potential of narrative. A regularized version of the complex 'Ecology' of Meaning suggested by these examples is presented as a three-dimensional dynamic of shifting hierarchies at the bottom of the table, indicating the movement away from socially embedded modes of Narrative Authority towards a full acknowledgement of the role of subjectivity in the narrative act and finally towards a full emancipation of the text's own authority as language/narrative/literature.

With modifications, Manfred Pfister's original typology of Perspective Structures in dramatic texts (65-68) can be incorporated into this conceptual framework. According to Pfister, an a-perspectival structure conflates the external and the internal communicative dimensions of a text by restricting them to exclusively one and the same perspective, such as, for example, a highly didactic moral one. As this is

¹⁷ What I term 'subjective orientations of meaning' is closely related to Monika Fludernik's concept of 'experientiality' (cf. Fludernik 1996: 20-30).

¹⁸ The capitalization of terms in this section of the paper indicates a reference to the main categories in *Table 2*.

certainly already a perspective,¹⁹ it should be useful to put the term 'a-perspectival' in inverted commas in order to indicate that under modern conditions texts of this type can only pose as a-perspectival. While a naturalized monoperspectival communicative frame providing a generally shared Orientation of Meaning could be taken for granted by allegorical morality plays of the late middle ages (the example Pfister mentions), the emergence of modernity gradually introduces conditions of pluralization and fragmentation. Accordingly, purely one-dimensional perspectival frames, which are largely typical of the non-literary varieties of modern narrative in science, economics, historiography, politics etc., might pose as a-perspectival, and they might even be read as a-perspectival by those readers who share the particular systemic context of a narrative. However, a contextualized analysis in the sense introduced in this paper will have to treat these narratives as 'a-perspectival' (in inverted commas!) and try to describe their particular monoperspectivity in terms of systemic reference to specific systems/contexts of communication and in terms of those strategies which are aimed at making the one-dimensional frame persuasive. Historical narrative, for example, aims at an elimination of the subjectivistic (and thus pluralistic and relativistic) implications of the narrative act by drawing on, as Dorrit Cohn puts it in her quest for "Signposts of Fictionality," "a language of 'nescience' [. . .], of speculation, conjecture and induction (based on referential documentation)" (787), thus implying a seemingly objective 'a-perspectivity' which is in fact the result of an 'objectifying' systemic framework of scientific communication.

Modern literary narrative, on the other hand, is from the very beginning primarily concerned with what Hegel describes as the conflict between the subjective poesy of the heart and the adverse 'objective' prose of modern society.²⁰ Even in its didactic and moralizing early stages it is thus much more akin to what Pfister calls a closed Perspective Structure, in which a variety of more or less individual character-perspectives is presented in a convergent way. As in 'a-perspectival' texts, the external monoperspectivity of closed Perspective Structures, which short-circuits production- and reception-perspectives, suggests a dominant narrator-perspective. However, while the unmarked narrator-perspective of 'a-perspectival' texts (cf. *Table 2*, Narrative Mode #1) either omits character-perspectives or subsumes them under the overall monoperspectival design, the literary device of authorial narration (Narrative Mode #2) as introduced by Henry Fielding marks a shift towards an effective stage-managing of internal polyperspectivity. Seemingly independent character-perspectives converge in a closed Perspective Structure in a more or less explicit way, thus opening up a range of possibilities. On the one hand, authorial narration provides opportunities for a clear textual articulation of the overriding external perspective. On the other hand, first-person narration (Narrative Modes #3 and #4) blurs the distinction between narrator-

¹⁹ Pfister himself speaks of the "authorially intended reception-perspective" (66). For a critique of this concept cf. Nünning (forthcoming).

²⁰ Cf. Hegel Vol. 15, 392f. See also *ibid.* Vol. 14, 219f.

and character-perspective so that the external perspective will ultimately have to be inferred by the reader. In this latter sense, the range of literary teller-mode narratives from authorial narration (#2) via first-person retrospective narration (#3) to first-person "experiencing I" narration (#4) illustrates how the (external) reception-perspective can acquire a more emancipated but still embedded status, while the internal poly-perspective provides scope for various stagings of subjective perspectives, both on the story level and, even more importantly, on the discourse level. While teller-mode narratives can always maintain an 'objective' orientation by favouring synthetic, generalizing commentary and avoiding more personal explanatory and evaluatory statements as well as any sort of reflexive commentary,²¹ it can also acknowledge its inherent subjective dimension by personalizing its source, and it always does so implicitly in the case of first-person or homodiegetic narration. Thus, the sequence of Narrative Modes #2-#4 implied in *Table 2* indicates the inherently subjectifying tendencies of these modes, which can, however, always be narratively neutralized in their actual realizations. If this is not the case, the sequence of Narrative Modes describes the emergence of increasingly subjectivistic Orientations of Meaning which find their structural equivalent in the transition from closed to open Perspective Structures.

According to Pfister, open Perspective Structures, which have no line of convergence to draw different character-perspectives together, reflect the lack or loss of a unified ideological perspective or world-view on the external level so that poly-perspectivity is characteristic of both internal and external levels of communication. In view of this overriding polycontextuality, modernist narrative tends to abandon the options of social integration staged in conventional realist narrative. Thus, the potentially synthetic teller mode is replaced by the more analytic figural reflector mode. Interior monologues (Narrative Mode #5), which can be viewed as a logically consistent development of experience-focused modes of first-person narration (Narrative Mode #4), effectively bracket the teller function as a main source of textual unity on the structural level N3. They rely on external conventions of genre instead, often merely implying internal polyperspectivity through the archetypal universality or the sheer contingency of the chosen character-perspective. Extended free indirect speech in the sense of Stanzel's figural narrative situation (Narrative Mode #6), on the other hand, retains the teller function, but renders it artificially invisible by limiting it strictly to the technical function of establishing character-perspectives as story world without any commentary whatsoever. Any convergence can only be achieved by means of literary construction alone, thus transforming the original attempt at preserving subjective Orientations of Meaning into an ultimately reflexive one, which, in spite of modernism's emphatic self-descriptions, presents a merely literary perspective within the larger framework of modern polyperspectivity. Similarly, the two remaining Narrative Modes, neutral/restricted heterodiegetic narration (#7) and

²¹ On these narratorial functions cf. Nünning 1989: 84-124.

restricted/neutral homodiegetic narration (#8),²² can also be viewed as typically modernist, consciously deficient attempts at preserving a sceptical adequacy of representation.

All in all, the technical innovations characteristic of modernist Narrative Modes bear witness to a kind of last-ditch attempt at preserving the possibility of 'objectivity' or at least of an 'objective' representation of subjectivity in the face of an increasingly pluralist world, and this attempt is primarily focused on reducing narrative to its seemingly objective essentials.²³ However, in retrospect the modernist notion of a new 'objectivity' based on Narrative Modes supposedly uncompromised by society turns out to be a socially framed, purely literary 'objectivity' after all. In this sense the implicit reflexivity of modernist writing modes clearly paves the way for the surge of explicitly reflexive versions of Narrative Modes #2 to #6 under the banner of postmodernist metafiction in the 1970s and 80s.²⁴ Effectively combining self-consciousness with self-confidence, postmodernist fiction can draw upon the accumulated experience of 300 years of continuous exploration of modern narrative possibilities, and in this sense the novel is certainly, as Salman Rushdie points out, a "crucial art form of [...] the post-modern age" (Rushdie 424). It should thus be well-equipped to embrace the challenge of irreducible polyperspectivity, and narratology should follow its lead.

4. Analysing Perspective

In the concluding section of my paper I will try to atone for the somewhat uneasy, not to say ironical relationship between the neat story I have just told and the innumerable actually existing modern narratives. I will do so by presenting, as a conclusion, the outline of an analytic framework for describing perspective in narrative. It should be obvious by now that I consider the level of discourse (N2) to be at the heart of

²² In Genette's terms #7 would be the combination of heterodiegetic narration with strictly external focalization. #8 implies a focus of narrative presentation within the narrated world which is deficient with regard to functions of perception and narrative integration so that the paradoxical impression of an internal variety of external focalization is created, i.e. in Genette's terms, the combination of homodiegetic narration and external focalization. Examples could be instances of a damaged consciousness or a purely (i.e. technically) objective camera-eye focus. On the systematic place of narrative modes #7 and #8 cf. Genette 1988: ch. 17.

²³ Significantly, these essentials again hover uneasily between subjectivistic (stream of consciousness) and 'objectivistic' (neutral narrative) implications.

²⁴ For a comparable view on a synchronic level cf. Lars Ole Sauerberg's observation that "[b]y and large, we find the same kind of argumentation in favour of nonfiction 'fiction' as in favour of metafiction: Both kinds of writing are intended to teach us about the relationship between text and 'reality' which is more complex than conventional realistic fiction leads us to expect" (181).

narrative's capacity for stage-managing perspective. While the broad tendencies inherent in different narrative modes have been outlined above, the actual realizations of these modes can still vary greatly in their allegiance to the available orientations of meaning, depending on the selected content and on the implied frame of communication. Accordingly, the narrator-perspective of each individual text (N2) will have to be described not only in its specific relation to the narrated world (N1) but also with regard to its relation to the structural level N3, which is in turn dependent on external social frames of communication (N4/N5). In this respect, narrator-perspectives can be staged as seemingly autonomous subjective sources of meaning, they can rely on literary conventions, or they can draw upon non-literary frames. Each of these frames (i.e. subjectivity, literature, morality, science, etc.) conventionalizes and thus suggests specific narrative strategies as well as other linguistic and textual or generic and intertextual modes of semantic integration, and it should be obvious that there is room for an additional layer of irony in this dimension.

On the other hand, however, we can now return to the inherently ironical relationship between the discourse and the story level, which served as a starting point for this paper. In terms of perspective structure it seems most profitable to focus on the constellation of character-perspectives within a particular narrative. Each character-perspective will have to be located on an imaginary scale between its (staged) independent existence in the (fictional) story world on the one hand and its functional integration into the narrative on the other. The latter aspect can be divided into discourse and story functions: combining levels N1 and N2, discourse functions cover the involvement of character-perspectives on the level of narrative mediation and can best be described with the help of the narration/focalization distinction as introduced by Genette.²⁵ Story functions, on the other hand, reflect the influence of the structural level N3 on the story world, its framing by the literary conventions on the level N4, and ultimately its relation to the 'real' world N5. They cover the hierarchy of character-perspectives with regard to their involvement in the plot as well as relations of contrast and affinity in their overall combination.

All these aspects are, as far as I can see, broadly compatible with the framework of a 'natural' narratology (cf. Fludernik 1996: 12-52), and it is of fundamental importance to conceive of the analysis of perspective in narrative in these reception-oriented constructivist and cognitive terms. However, it should be useful to keep an eye on the degree to which seemingly 'natural' processes are actually historically determined, and it is to be hoped that the evolutionary model of perspective structures in narrative texts presented in this paper can provide a suitable methodological tool for such an analysis. The more or less pronounced dynamic of perspectives in narrative texts can thus be regarded as an inscription of *socially framed* experientiality which is narrativized in the process of reception. Within the broad frame of emerging modernity readers are

²⁵ For a recent critique of the concept of focalization which could be fruitfully combined with a perspective-centred approach cf. Jahn.

increasingly alerted to the innumerable occasions for irony in the multi-dimensional processes of narrative communication.²⁶

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²⁶ An extended German version of this essay entitled "Die Perspektivstruktur narrativer Texte aus systemtheoretischer Sicht" will be available in Nünning/Nünning (forthcoming).

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Appendix: Table 2: Orientations of Meaning and Perspective Structures

Orientations of Meaning: 'objective'	subjective	reflexive
Contexts of Control: 'monism' > pluralism		
Narrative Authority: embedded	⇔	emancipated
Perspective Structures: 'a-perspectival' structure + closed perspective structure	⇔	open perspective structure
a) external	monoperspectivity	monoperspectivity
b) internal	monoperspectivity	polyperspectivity
Narrative Modes: #1 np (→ cp) #2 np→cp #3 np/cp→cp #4 np=cp #5 cp=(np) #6 (np)→cp #7 np→(cp) #8 cp=(np)	teller mode > reflector mode > reflexive mode >	[introducing refl. versions of #2-#6]
'Ecology' of Meaning: 'obj.?' (subj.)	'obj.?' (subj.)	[('obj.?') (subj.)]
Narrative Modes: [(refl.)] (refl.)	refl./lit.	refl./lit.
Abbreviations:	np= narrator-perspective(s)	cp = character-perspective(s)
#1 non-litrary (e.g. historical) narrative		np= narrator-perspective(s)
#2 authorial narration		cp = character-perspective(s)
#3 first-person retrospective narration		→ = 'dominates', 'organizes'
#4 first-person "experiencing I" narration		= = 'coincides with'
#5 interior monologue		() = function recedes or becomes 'invisible'
#6 figural narrative situation (Stanzel)		= = restricted narrative function
#7 neutral/restricted heterodiegetic narration		
#8 restricted/neutral homodiegetic narration		