
Abstracts

David Herman, *Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology* 1046

This essay begins by differentiating between narratively organized sequences of events and nonnarrative sequences associated with deductive reasoning, conversational exchanges, descriptions, and recipes. After reviewing classical accounts of narrative sequences, the essay sketches developments in language theory and cognitive science that have occurred after the heyday of structuralist narrative poetics and that throw further light on two interlinked questions: what is necessary to make a sequence of events a narrative, and what makes some narrative sequences more readily processed as stories than others? Both questions can be addressed by the concept, drawn from artificial-intelligence research, of “scripts”—knowledge representations storing finite, sequentially ordered groups of actions required for the accomplishment of particular tasks. Exploring some literary applications of a theoretical model based on scripts, the final section of the text outlines research strategies for a postclassical narratology that encompasses cognitive approaches to stories. By examining different modalities of the script-story interface, theorists of narrative may be able to rethink the historical development of narrative techniques and to understand better the differences among narrative genres at any given time. (DH)

Wai Chee Dimock, *A Theory of Resonance* 1060

Does a literary text remain the same object across time? This essay answers no and bases a defense of literature on that answer. Temporal extension, a phenomenon neglected in contemporary literary studies, makes some meanings unrecoverable and others newly possible. A text endures as a nonintegral survivor, an echo of what it was and of what it might become, its resonance changing with shifts in interpretive contexts. Since this resonance cannot be addressed by synchronic historicism, I propose an alternative, diachronic historicism, inspired especially by scientific theories on background noise, by Einstein’s account of the relativity of simultaneity, and by critiques of the visual bias in Western epistemology. *I try to theorize the text as a temporal continuum, thick with receding and incipient nuances, exercising the ears of readers in divergent ways and yielding its words to contrary claims. Literature thus encourages a semantic democracy that honors disagreement as a crucial fact of civil society.* (WCD)

Robin Lydenberg, *Freud’s Uncanny Narratives* 1072

Critics who work at the intersection of psychoanalysis and narratology frequently examine Freud’s “The Uncanny” (“Das Unheimliche”). A close reading of the anecdotes interpolated in Freud’s essay suggests that while narrative is often motivated by an effort to contain charged material, something always escapes that control, threatening to proliferate without stopping. The dual containing and dispersing effect of narrative is reflected in Freud’s doubling of himself as narrator and protagonist; in his ambivalence toward women, the maternal, and creativity; and in his attraction and resistance to literature. Although Freud often appears to reduce literature to an illustration of psychoanalytic laws, the subversive literariness of language and the instability of the subject emerge dramatically in the uncanniness of his own narratives. (RL)

Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *The Making of the English Canon* 1087

This essay discusses the origins of the literary canon in mid-eighteenth-century England, looking in particular at the changing reputations of Shakespeare and Spenser. Situating the writing of English literary history within the context of the cultural market, print culture, and nationalism, I argue that the mid-century model of literary history both represents the

dialectical outcome of previous decades of thinking through the problem of cultural change and puts in place the terms for the modern narrative of the literary canon. An earlier aesthetics of gendered and sociable refinement separated itself from a Gothic past later recovered as the singular moment of literary achievement. The Gothic account was then challenged by a rethinking of consumption as reading abstracted over time. Together, Gothic historicism and abstract reading formed the antithetical basis on which critics established the modern canonical account of English literary history. (JBK)

Charlene Avallone, What American Renaissance? The Gendered Genealogy of a Critical Discourse 1102

Since “American renaissance” criticism emerged in 1876, it has derogated women’s writings while idealizing men’s, despite its shifting definitions of period, canon, and literary standards. My genealogy of the critical discourse of renaissance details ways that this criticism has denied literary value to women writers, especially at historical moments of women’s increased publicity and apparent gains of power, thereby helping to maintain larger gender and racial hierarchies. Because of this tradition, I argue, the renaissance discourse is inadequate to current efforts to reenvision United States literary history and to a democratic culture. (CA)



Lesley Dill (b. 1950), *Poem Dress: The Soul Selects Her Own Society*. Published by Landfall Press, Inc., Chicago.