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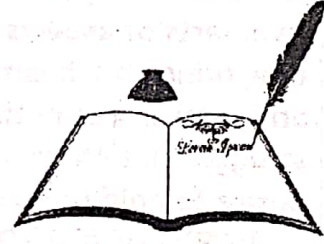
2021-2022

Third Year

Second Term



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Literary Texts

25.06.2022

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Literary Texts II 3.5

AYDI 2022

HELLO EVERYONE!

Narration and Point of View

❖ CONFLICTS (*plot continued*)

Whatever their sequence and pace, all plots hinge on at least one conflict -some sort of struggle- and its resolution. Conflicts may be external or internal. External conflicts arise between characters and something or someone outside themselves. Adventure stories and films often present this sort of conflict in its purest form, keeping us poised on the edge of our seats as James Bond struggles to outwit and outfight an arch-villain intent on world domination or destruction. Yet external conflicts can also be much subtler, pitting an individual against nature or fate, against a social force such as racism or poverty, or against another person or group of people with a different way of looking at things. Internal conflicts occur when a character struggles to reconcile two competing desires, needs, or duties, or two parts or aspects of himself. His head, for instance, might tell him to do one thing, his heart another. Often, a conflict is simultaneously external and internal, as in the following brief folktale, in which a woman seems to struggle simultaneously with nature, with mortality, with God, and with her desire to hold on to someone she loves versus her need to let go.

NARRATION AND POINT OF VIEW

When we read fiction, our sense of who is telling us the story is as important as what happens. Unlike drama, in which events are acted out in front of us, fiction is always mediated or represented to us by someone else, a narrator. Often a reader is very aware of the voice of a narrator telling the story, as if the words are being spoken aloud. Commonly, stories also reveal a distinct angle of vision or perspective from which the characters, events, and other aspects are viewed. Just as the verbal quality of narration is called the voice, the visual angle is called the focus. Focus acts much as a camera does, choosing the direction of our gaze, the framework in which we see things. Both voice and focus are generally considered together in the term point of view. To understand how a story is narrated, you need to recognize both voice and focus. These in turn shape what we know and care about as the plot unfolds, and they determine how close we feel to each character.

A story is said to be from a character's point of view, or a character is said to be a focal or focalizing character, if for the most part the action centers on that character, as if we see with that character's eyes or we watch that character closely. But the effects of narration certainly involve

more than attaching a video camera to a character's head or tracking wherever the character moves. What about the spoken and unspoken words? In some stories, the narrator is a character, and we may feel as if we are overhearing his or her thoughts, whereas in other stories the narrator takes a very distant or critical view of the characters. At times a narrator seems more like a disembodied, unidentified voice. Prose fiction has many ways to convey speech and thought, so it is important to consider voice as well as focus when we try to understand the narration of a story.

In this paragraph we're going to explain the types of the narrators in prose fiction. In most times, the narrator tells us about a character or tells us the perspective of a character. The character which the narrator focuses on is called *the focal character*. The rest of this paragraph is going to be explained later on.

Besides focus and voice, point of view encompasses more general matters of value. A story's narrator may explicitly endorse or subtly support whatever a certain character values, knows, or seeks, even when the character is absent or silent or unaware. Other narrators may treat characters and their interests with far more detachment. At the same time, the *style* and *tone* of the narrator's voice -from echoing the characters' feelings to mocking their pretentious speech or thoughts to stating their actions in formal diction- may convey clues that a character or a narrator's perspective is limited.

We don't have to take what the narrator tells us for granted.

The tone is important in the story with which we are going to deal. What is the tone of the narrator? Is he serious? Is he ironic? Is he funny? Is he objective? Is he honest? Is he lying? Does he hold information from me? I have to follow the gaps in his narration because he is hiding something from me; I don't have to take his words for granted. I can discover things about this point from the things that he does not tell me. I have to be suspicious and notice what he does not tell me.

You have read the story; what is the tone of the story?

It is *ironic* or *funny*.

❖ TYPES OF NARRATION

1. Third-Person Narration

A *third-person narrator* tells an unidentified listener or reader what happened, referring to all characters using the pronouns *he*, *she*, or *they*. Third-person narration is virtually always external meaning that the narrator is not a character in the story and does not participate in its action.

Even so, different types of third-person narration -omniscient, limited, and objective- provide the reader with various amounts and kinds of information about the characters.>

The first type of narration is very common in literature. It's the third person narrator, a narrator who refers to the characters as he, she, or they. This means he's telling us that I'm not part of the story; I'm an external narrator, I'm watching the events and I'm not a character.

This is the main difference between third-person narration and first-person narration; the third-person narrator is an external voice whereas the first-person narrator is a character that is involved in the events.

The third-person narration has three characteristics:

- ✓ Omniscient
- ✓ Limited
- ✓ Objective

What is the difference between these three subcategories of third-person narration?

The omniscient narrator is not objective but he creates the illusion that he is objective. The omniscient voice can go into the voice of each one. The omniscient narrator tells us what's going on with all the characters in the events he is detached from.

The limited third-person narrator chooses some of the characters. For example, he chooses one or two or three characters to tell us what's going on with them. He has a limited perspective of what's going on but he's also detached from the events so he's not part of the story.

An omniscient or unlimited narrator has access to the thoughts, perceptions, and experiences of more than one character (often of several), though such narrators usually focus selectively on a few important characters. A limited narrator is an external, third-person narrator who tells the story from a distinct point of view, usually that of a single character, revealing that character's thoughts and relating the action from his or her perspective. This focal character is also known as central consciousness. Sometimes a limited narrator will reveal the thoughts and feelings of a small number of the characters in order to enhance the story told about the central consciousness. (Jane Austen's novel Emma (1815) includes a few episodes from Mr. Knightley's point of view to show what he thinks about Emma Woodhouse, the focal character, and her relationships.) Finally, an objective narrator does not explicitly report the characters' thoughts and feelings but may obliquely suggest them through the characters' speech and actions. Stories with objective narrators consist mostly of dialogue

interspersed with minimal description.

The omniscient and the limited narrators go into your heads. On the other hand, the objective third-person narrator just tells us what's going on. He's just watching; he's not going into your heads. He's just telling us the events objectively; he's not inventing anything. He doesn't tell us what's going on in the heads of the characters. For example, an omniscient narrator would say:

(She seems unhappy; maybe she had suffered a bad morning.)

The objective narrator just tells what the characters say. It depends on dialog and conversation.

These are the three types of third-person narration and the important point is that the narrator is outside the story, whereas the first-person narrator is a character either minor or major (the hero) or just a passing by character.

2. First-Person Narration

Instead of using third-person narration, an author might choose to tell a story from the point of view of a ***first-person narrator***. Most common is first-person singular narration, in which the narrator uses the pronoun I. The narrator may be a major or minor character within the story and therefore is ***an internal narrator***. Notice that the first-person narrator may be telling a story mainly about someone else or about his or her own experience. Sometimes the first-person narrator addresses an ***auditor***, a listener within the fiction whose possible reaction is part of the story.

One kind of narrator that is especially effective at producing irony is the ***unreliable narrator***. First-person narrators may unintentionally reveal their flaws as they try to impress. Or narrators may make claims that other characters or the audience know to be false or distorted. Some fictions are narrated by villains, insane people, fools, liars, or hypocrites. When we resist a narrator's point of view and judge his or her flaws or misperceptions, we call that narrator unreliable. This does not mean that you should dismiss everything such a narrator says, but you should be on the alert for ironies.

3. Second-Person Narration

Second-person narrators who consistently speak to you are ***unusual***. This technique has the effect of turning the reader into a character in the story.

The first-person narrator tells us a ***subjective*** point of view, whereas the third-person narrator supposedly tells an ***objective*** point of view.

The second-person narration is so uncommon in literature; it's common in postmodernism. This is when I drag the reader to the story. For example, I address the reader telling him that you must suspect something; you as a reader are going to be a character in the fiction. It's so common in postmodernism.

Note:

In the exam, there will be a question of 3 marks that depends on memorization. It will help you pass the exam.

Now we are going to read the story and analyze the narrator; this is similar to the exam questions. We're going to analyze and you're going to see that it's not that difficult.

Let's start to read the story and pay attention to the *tone* and the *voice* of the narrator. Amontillado is a very fine wine in Italy. Cask means (البرميل). Edgar Allan Poe is a major figure in literature; he writes Gothic literature and detective fiction as well.

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled— but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.

- Immunity *مناعة*
- Redressed: set things right.
- Retribution: penalty.
- Redresser: the one who takes revenge.
- Immolation: killing.

- The first paragraph tells us the whole theme and the matter of the story. Later on, we're going to come to the conclusion.

- Fortunato is the second character that we are going to see later on.

- Notice the statement "I had borne". What's the type of the narrator?

First-person narrator because he's a character in the story.

- This is a plot about revenge. We have Fortunato who has wronged our narrator and our narrator is going to take revenge on Fortunato.

- According to our narrator, Fortunato is a bad person.

- Keep this question in your mind: Does the text support the narrator's claim?

- Pay attention to the description of Fortunato and to the gaps and the contradictions in the narration. When I analyze the narrator, do I have to believe him? Is Fortunato actually a bad guy?

The text is going to answer these questions without the narrator saying that. You are going to operate like a judge seeing the gaps in the narrator's words and seeing where his words are not credible.

- "You who so well know the nature of my soul". The narrator uses the second-person pronoun.

Instructor: What does "you" refer to? Who is he addressing?

Student: The reader.

Instructor: Maybe the reader, what else?

Actually, he is addressing someone outside the story. In this line, the narrator pulls me as a reader to the text because he's addressing me. Maybe "you" is a judge, a priest, a reader, etc.

- "but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk". When he's going to take his revenge, there is a risk. He tells me that I'm going to punish you without carrying the sequences of my revenge. He's telling us that he's going to take his revenge without being punished. He says: if I take my revenge and I am executed then it's as if I didn't take my revenge, so I will commit a crime without punishment. He says that the successful revenge is done without enduring the retribution of my actions. Maybe "you" is a judge or someone outside the story.

- "A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser." This means that if I kill and get killed then my revenge is meaningless. This is the theme of the first paragraph. The rest of the story is going to tell us a lot of things.

This is the way you analyze a literary text; it's hard but you can do it.

- Read the last four lines of the first paragraph. What do you

understand from them?

Student: He's pretending in front of his enemy that he is not going to kill him; he's smiling at him.

Instructor: He's deceiving him.

- What does that tell you about the narrator? Do you trust him? Do his words reveal the opposite of what he wants to tell us?

Student: Yes I trust him because this is war and war is a trick.

Instructor: OK so until now you trust the narrator. I'm going to ask you the same question when we finish the story.

That is all for today. We are going to continue next lecture.

I advise you to read the text because we are going to continue analyzing it.

Thank you

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احذر المحاضرات المسروقة!
[مكتبة العائدي لا تنشر محاضراتها على الإنترنت ونحن لا نتحمل مسؤولية أي
نقص أو تشويه أو تزوير تجده في تلك المحاضرات. فالمرجع الرئيسي
للمحاضرات هو المحاضرات الورقية فقط والتي يمكنك الحصول عليها من مقر
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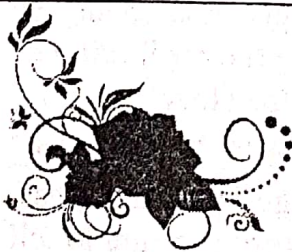


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مؤسسة العائدي للخدمات الطلابية

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