

Annotating Narrative Levels: Review of Guideline No. 2

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In this brief review, I will assess the theoretical soundness of the categories as explained in the "SANTA 2 Annotation Guidelines" as well as the practical implementation of the theory through exemplary annotation choices.

All in all, the explanations of the categories reflect what can be found in many introductory textbooks to narratology. This is what is to be expected, of course, since the Annotation Guidelines do not provide the space for an extended, and critical, discussion of the more recent state of research. I shall therefore confine myself to commenting on where I think that the clarity and/or consistency of the explanations can be improved, and on whether the examples provided are controversial. My comments concern (1) *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, (2) *stream of consciousness*, (3) *free indirect discourse*, and (4) *level* respectively.

Analepsis and prolepsis

In the example passage from *To the Lighthouse*, the following sentences are not treated as part of the analepsis: "That meant he was going to catch crabs and things. That meant he would climb out on to a rock; he would be cut off. Or coming back single file on one of those little paths above the cliff one of them

might slip. He would roll and then crash. It was growing quite dark.” The reason given for not treating these sentences as part of the analepsis is that Mrs. Ramsay “speculation [...] is not a thing that we know is definitely happening,” and therefore the sentences are taken to be “disconnected from narrative time.”

Now it is certainly true that we do not learn whether any of the things Mrs. Ramsay speculates *about* are actually happening in the story. But it seems to me that Mrs. Ramsay’s *speculation* about these things can be part of the analepsis. That is, she not merely ‘summons’ how the group looked when they left, but also what she thought at the moment when they left. In this case, the sentences quoted may be considered part of “narrative time” and hence part of the analepsis.—Note that we do not have reason to doubt *that* Mrs. Ramsay speculates about these things. So treating the passage as part of the analepsis is consistent with the criterion explicitly given: the speculation is something that “we know is definitely happening”. What we do not know, however, is the point in time when the speculation takes place; there are two possible interpretations both of which are consistent with the text. I’d therefore suggest using a clearer example, i.e. one that does not allow for two viable interpretations (only one of which is consistent with the proposed tagging of the example passage).

Stream of consciousness

In the introductory paragraph the *stream of consciousness* is explained as follows: it “is meant to come directly from the character’s mind, without authorial intervention or translation into something more grammatical or contextually-informed”. The example however, clearly shows several marks of “authorial intervention”. Among these are the use of third person pronouns (“she”) and past tense. But Miriam neither thinks about herself using the third person nor using past tense, presumably. Moreover, in the passage that introduces the example, it is suggested that what is decisive about stream of consciousness is that what is said is neither “objective” nor “observable by anyone else”. These are criteria different from the ones introduced above (“without authorial intervention or translation into something more grammatical or contextually-informed”), and one wonders which of those is actually decisive or, in any case, how these different criteria relate to each other. It seems to me that the passage quoted from *Pointed Roofs* is indeed such that it is about something that is not observable by anyone but the character herself; but it does show several marks of authorial intervention. Actually, this passage is an instance of free indirect discourse rather than stream of consciousness.

Free indirect discourse

Stream of consciousness is distinguished from free indirect discourse by claiming that the latter “is coloured by the perceptions of a character, not to the radical extent of stream-of-consciousness, but in a more subtle way”. It will be hard to judge whether the subjective “colouring” of a passage is “subtle” enough in order to distinguish it from stream of consciousness. The criterion could work only if one were able to *compare* two passages, such that one could be able to judge the *relative* ‘subjectivity’ of them. In standard cases, however, we do not have two passages for comparison. Moreover, the passage from *Tender is the Night* is introduced as containing “evaluations”, but I can’t find any in there.

Level

The passage quoted from *To the Lighthouse* contains the phrase “that hedge which had over and over again rounded some pause, signified some conclusion, seeing his wife and child, seeing again the urns with the trailing of red geraniums which had so often decorated processes of thought, and bore, written up among their leaves, as if they were scraps of paper on which one scribbles notes in the rush of reading”. Given that “seeing” is a factive verb (in the sense that ‘seeing that *p*’ implies the truth of *p*), this strikes me as an analepsis too.

One final note: I think that it might be useful to distinguish clearly between the *definition* of a narratological term (such as *stream of consciousness*) on the one hand and the *criteria* which help us to decide whether the phenomenon in question is instantiated in a given narrative. The definition of a term captures the nature of the phenomenon or, to put it differently, its constitutive features. Criteria for the application of a term, in contrast, are mere guides to its application. Accordingly, if a constitutive feature of some narrative phenomenon is missing from some passage, we know that the passage does not feature that phenomenon. But if some criterion for the application of a term is not satisfied, that does not mean that the term *cannot* apply. (Criteria, in other words, need not have the status of necessary conditions.) To give but one example, the grammatical correctness of a passage may be a criterion for *stream of consciousness* such that the grammatical correctness of a passage counts against its being in this narrative mode. (In other words, it may be unlikely that a passage is both grammatically correct *and* in the stream of consciousness mode.) But the grammatical incorrectness is not a constitutive feature of stream of consciousness. It is certainly

possible that a grammatically correct passage features this very narrative mode.

