

Classical Narrative

Versatility is one
of your outstanding
traits. 😊

Liv Hausken

MEVIT 1110 Audiovisual Aesthetics

IMK, Nov 11, 2011

From the reading list

- Barthes, Roland (1966) "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative"
- Hausken, Liv (2004) "Textual Theory and Blind Spots in Media Studies"

Focus: narrative and medium

Narrative Theory in Scandinavian Media Studies

Historically: two fields of study

1. News (television)
2. Film

Currently also: game studies, 'digital storytelling' etc.

Narrative Theory in Scandinavian Media Studies

1. News (television)

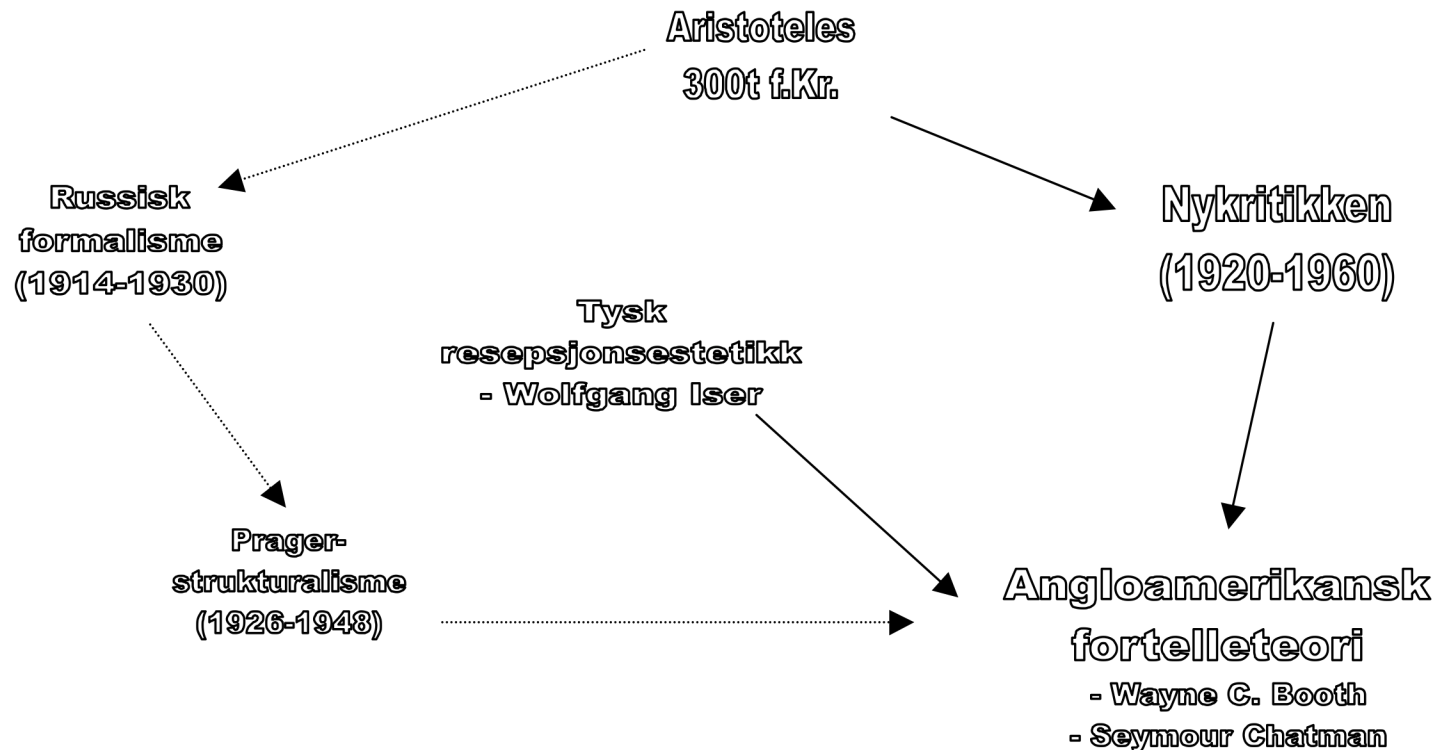
Anglo-American theory of modernist
literature

2. Film

European (French) interdisciplinary theory
of narrative logic

1. News: Anglo-American theory of modernist literature

Angloamerikansk teoritradisjon



Detour: Scandinavian *film* studies / American *film* theory

Narrative *film* theory, from syllabus:

- Seymour Chatman (lit/film; inter-media)
- Edward Branigan (Russ form; Genette / Am modernism)
- David Bordwell (Russ form)

1. *News*: Anglo-American theory of modernist literature

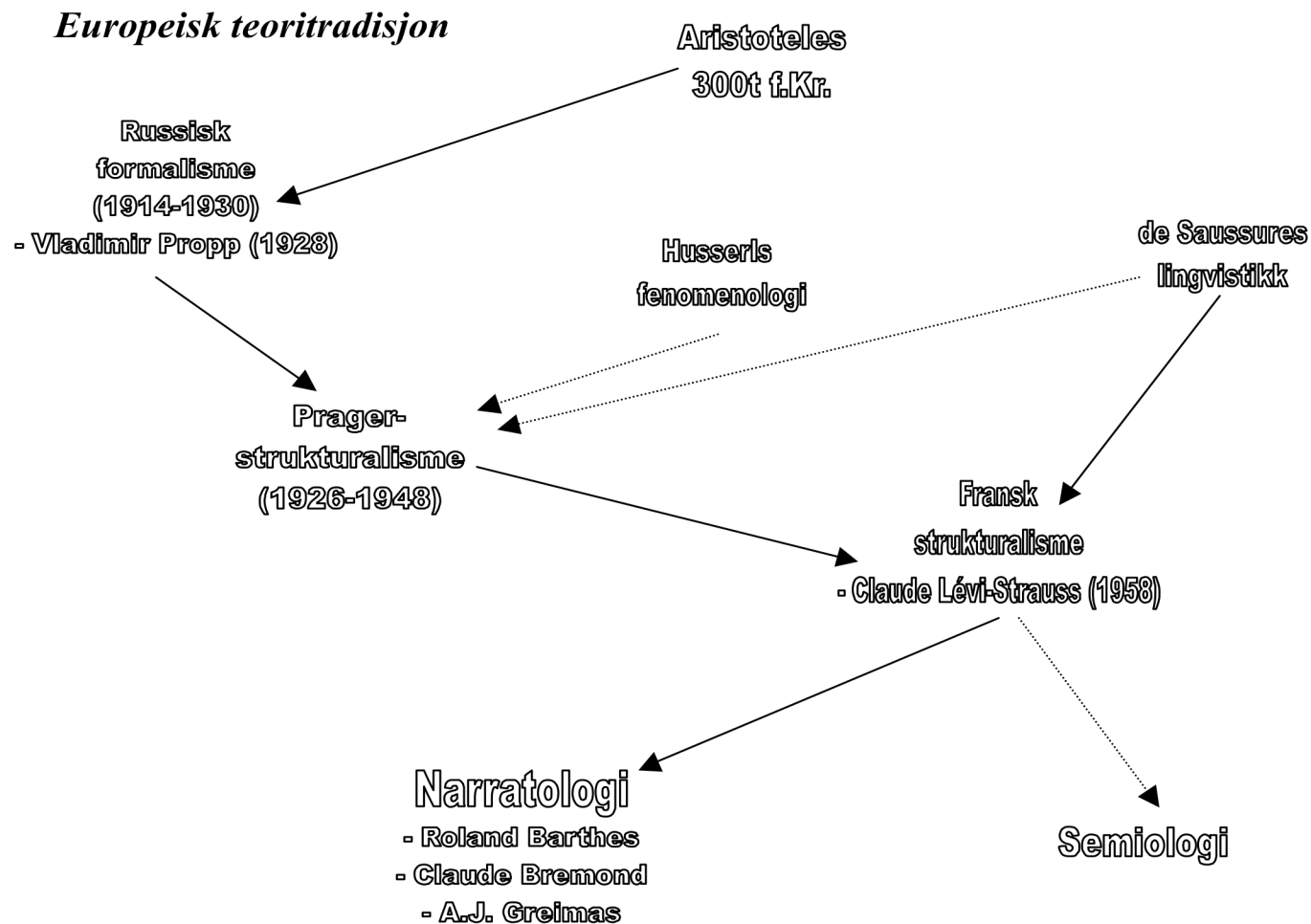
- Narration: Narrative voice, point of view
- Narrator: Reflection, unreliable narrators
- Aim: Literary analysis (analysis + of literature)

- Transfer to media studies: verbal? paper based? (print? pagination? etc)
- Challenge: translate media specific theory + media sensitive analysis

QUINTO



2. Film: European, interdisciplinary theory of narrative logic



Pre-narratology

- Aristotle: The Greek Tragedy
- Vladimir Propp: The Russian folktale
- Claude Levi-Strauss: the myth

Genre; medium?: specific culture?

2. Film: European, interdisciplinary theory of narrative logic

- Aim: create a scientific model (theory) of narrative (not literature, film, ...)
- Narrative logic, function, structure
- Transfer to media studies: abstract, media neutral?
- Challenge: media sensitive + analysis

Same detour: Scandinavian film studies / American *film* theory

Narrative *film* theory, from syllabus:

- Seymour Chatman (lit/film; French connection)

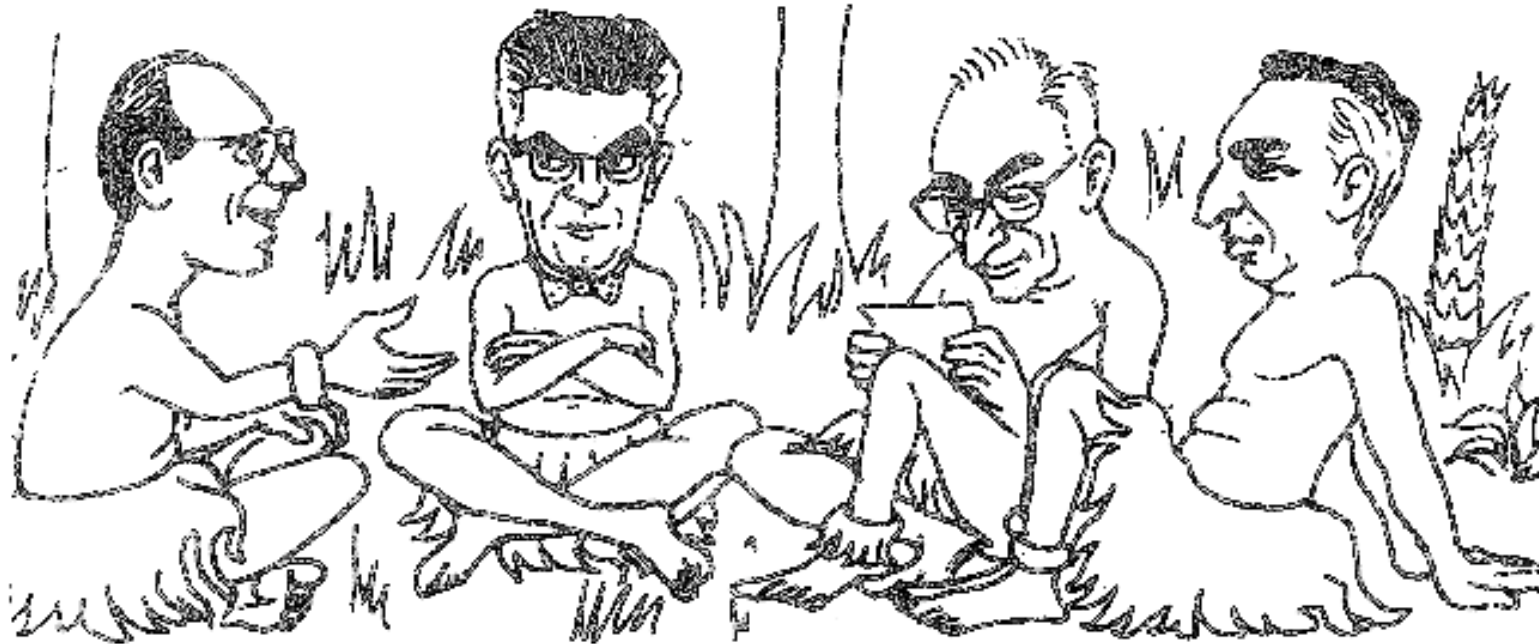
Cognitive film theory:

- Edward Branigan (Russ form; Genette)
- David Bordwell (Russ form)

2. Film: European, interdisciplinary theory of narrative logic

- Narratology: French, structuralist approach, 1960s
- Part of structuralist program: creating scientific models in the humanities and social sciences (anthropology, sociology, literary theory, ...)

Structuralism, inter-disciplinary program



Karikaturtegning af de fire strukturalistiske koryfæer: Foucault, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss og litteraturteoretikeren Roland Barthes.

Structuralism: Basic principles

- Difference: meaning is not a question of identities but of distinctions
- The principle of immanence: thesis of semantic autonomy
- An object or expression is given meaning from its position in a system

2. Film: European, interdisciplinary theory of narrative logic

Aim: Models

Pragmatic choice of object:

"Popular tales, myths and traditional narratives in general stick closer to the pole of repetition. This is why they constitute the preferred kingdom for structuralism."

Paul Ricoeur (1991),
«Life in quest of Narrative»

An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*

Roland Barthes

THERE ARE COUNTLESS FORMS of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame* [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in *Santa Ursula* by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: ¹ narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.

New Literary History, 1975

2. Film: European, interdisciplinary theory of narrative logic

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Why are all narratives so similar?

(Vs Am-trad: how can we best analyze this piece of literature)

Narratologists

- Roland Barthes
- Claude Bremond
- A.J. Greimas
- [Gerard Genette]

Narratology: deep structures

- Barthes 1966: three levels
 1. Narration (mediation, POV etc)
 2. Action (narrative discourse)
 3. Function (narrative logic; story)

«[...] the narrational code should be the final level attainable by our analysis, other than by going outside of the narrative-object, other, that is, than by transgressing the rule of immanence on which the analysis is based. Narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it: beyond the narrational level begins the world [...]. Just as linguistics stops at the sentence, so narrative analysis stops at discourse - from there it is necessary to shift to another semiotics.»

Roland Barthes, 1966,

”Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives”

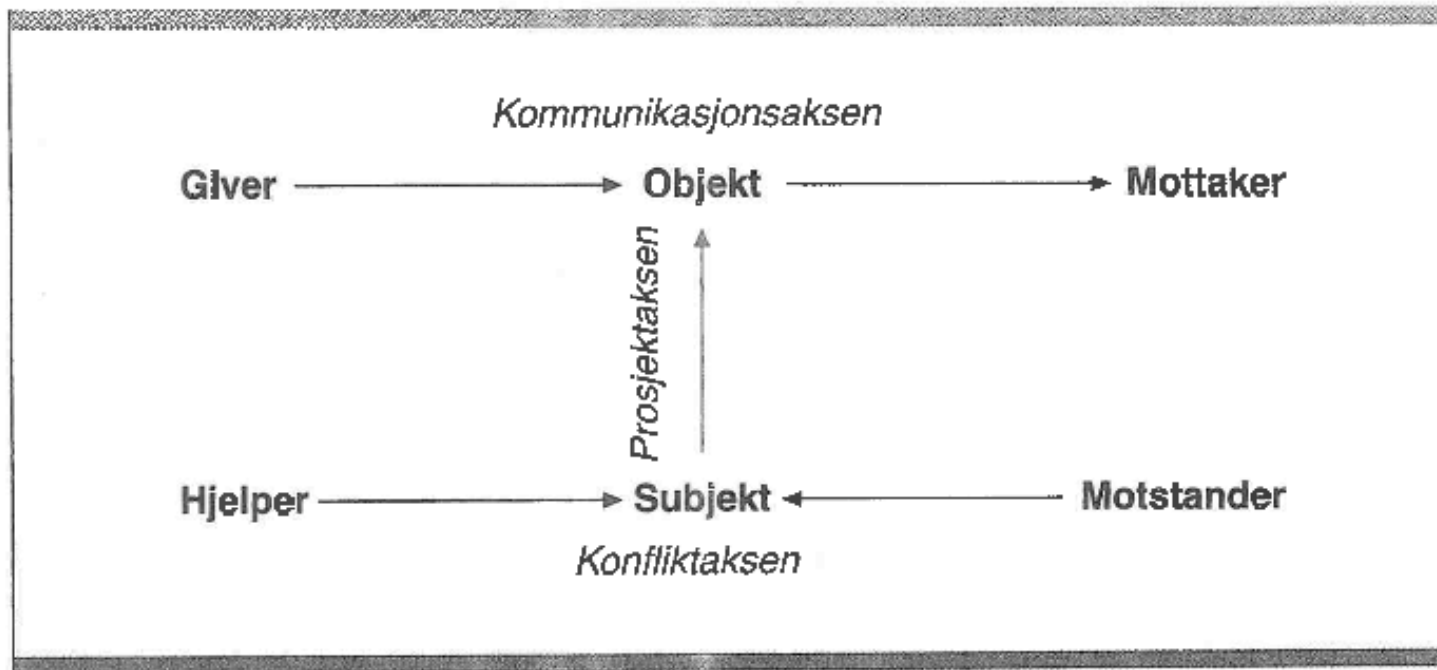
The principle of immanence

Common criticism of structuralism

- It is argued they neglect reception and context
- This criticism misunderstands the project:

Methodological choice: The principle of immanence; focus on language

Greimas' model of narrative logic



Figur 3.2: Greimas' aktantmodell.

QUINTO

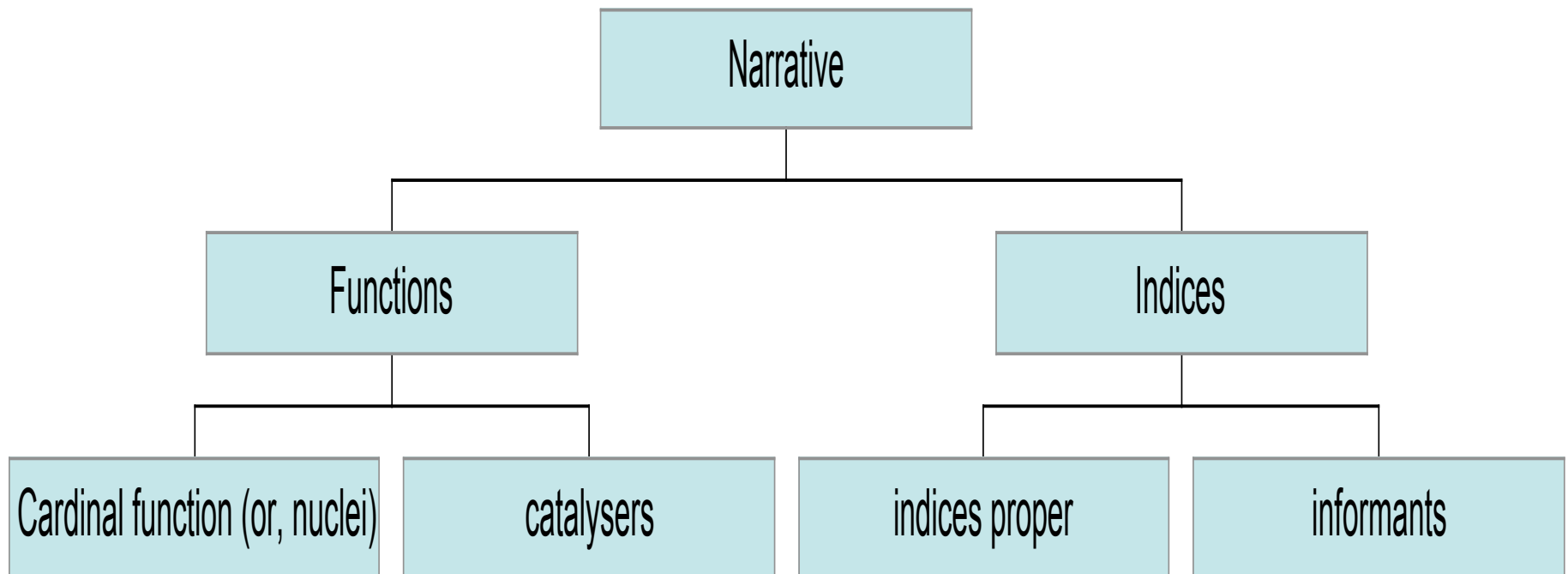


Bremond's concept of narrative

"All narrative consists of a discourse which integrates a sequence of events of human interest into the unity of a single plot."

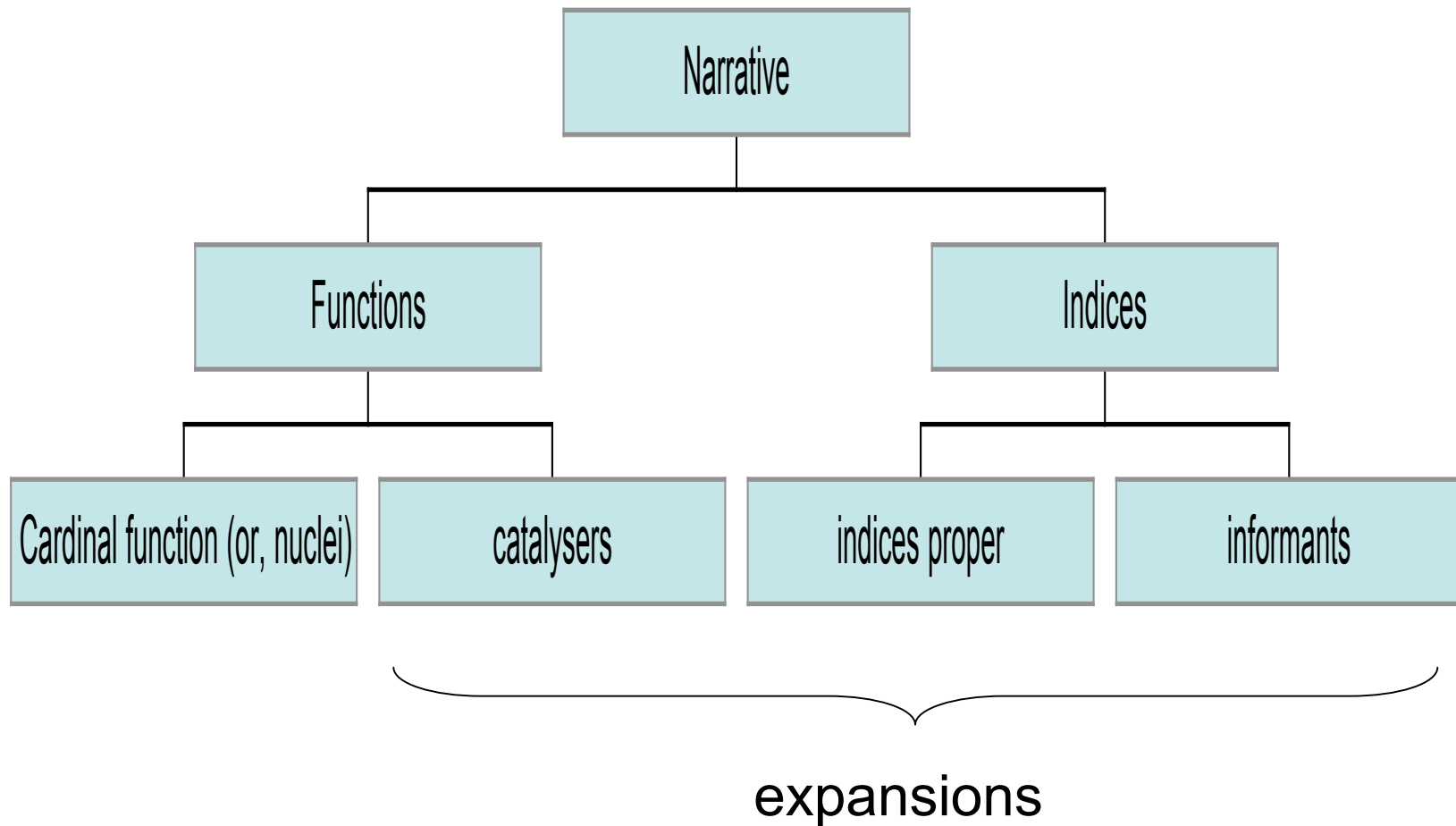
Claude Bremond ([1966] 1980),
«The Logic of Narrative Possibilities»,
i *New Literary History*, vol.XI, no.3, p.390, orig: "La Logique des
possibles narratifs", in *Communications* 8.

Barthes' model of narrative functions



(1966)

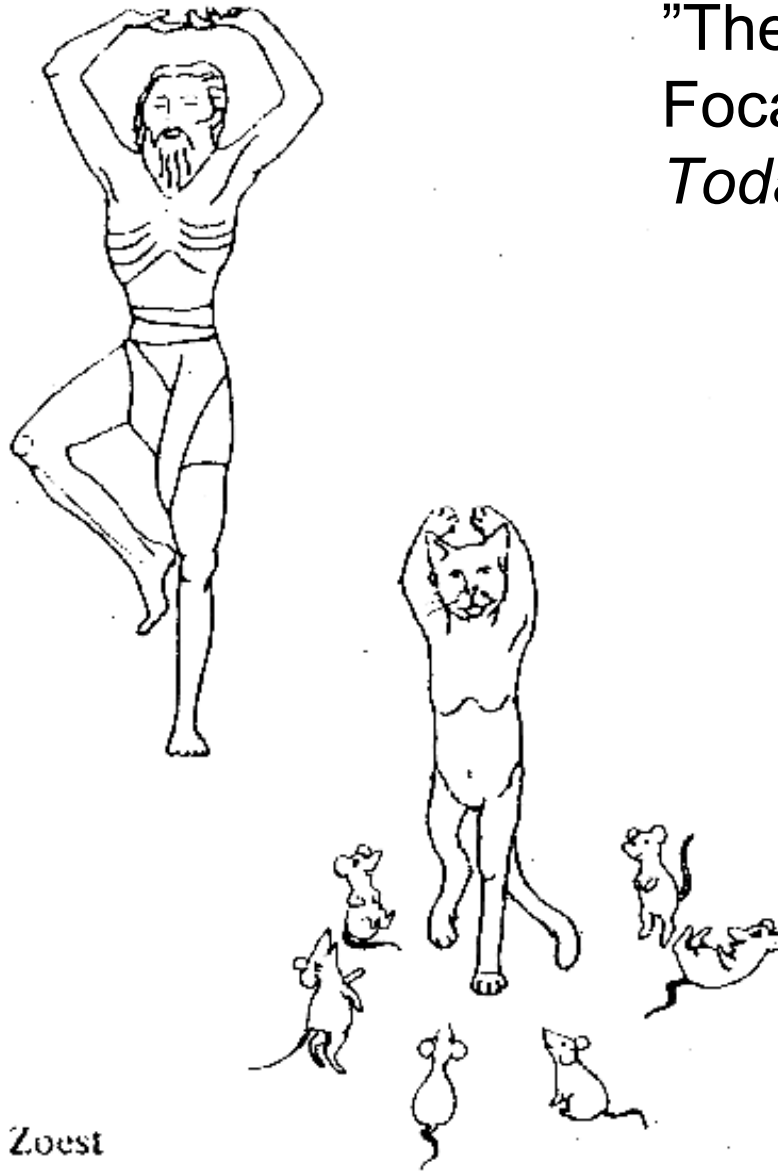
Barthes' model of narrative functions



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From Mieke Bal (1981)
"The Laughing Mice: On
Focalization", *Poetics
Today*



Fransje van Zoest

Arjuna, Southern India

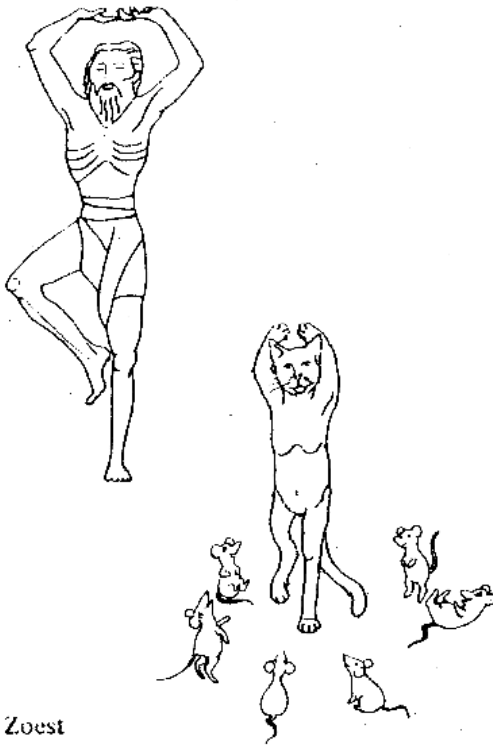
Narrative?

1. Narration
2. Narrative discourse
3. Narrative logic

Medium? Expressive resources
Genre

Analysis: specific purpose

- Specific expression
- Seen as narrative
- How does the medium make a difference?



Fransje van Zoest