

# Fictionality, Factuality, Reflexivity

An Interdisciplinary Conference of the Interdisciplinary Center for Narratology

University of Hamburg, 25-26 September 2015

## Call for Papers

The dominant tone in the literary critical discourse on narratives of the past couple of decades suggests that self-reflexivity became somewhat outdated as postmodernism reached a stage of exhaustion: the novel, after its narcissistic phase, has returned to the story, to the subject, and to a non-ironical and less sceptical approach to history, and it is now concerned again with more serious issues than itself. The implication is that reflexivity goes against referentiality and that it undermines the very possibility of factuality, fictionalizing narratives. Linda Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction as "novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet *paradoxically* also lay claim to historical events and personages" (1988: 5) is symptomatic in this respect. But why should, in fact, the combination of self-reflexivity and the reference to historical events – and thus a degree of factuality – be paradoxical?

Meanwhile, reflections on method addressing the conditions of a scientific or argumentative (factual) discourse within the space of that same, not exclusively non-narrative, discourse proliferated in the second half of the past century. Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Hayden White's *Metahistory*, Roger Laporte's or Derrida's reflections on writing, to mention only a few, all discuss their own conditions as discourse and activity without excluding a degree of narrativity – but also without turning fictional.

A crucial question in these and other late-twentieth-century metadiscursive texts is to circumscribe the part of fiction(ality) or fictionalizing in the production of discourses which are factual in their aim. The distinction between fact and fiction, between factuality and fictionality, has indeed itself been the object of much recent discussion not only in literary theory but also in philosophy, both analytic and continental. While literary theorists and fiction theorists first hoped to find distinctive traits in the text that helps identify the traces of fictionality (Cohn 1999) and came to the conclusion that these are neither semantic nor syntactic but depend on the pragmatic framework (Schaeffer 1999), continental philosophy, particularly poststructuralism, formulated the question primarily in terms of representation and referentiality and the limits of language's ability to faithfully mediate the world. At the same time, in analytic philosophy logicians have been grappling with the consequences of the ontological difference between fictional and factual objects on logic (e.g. Woods 1974/2009, Priest 2005, Sainsbury 2010), its laws and its formalizability. Self-referentiality, on the other hand, poses the problem of the paradoxes it can generate, reflections on which greatly contributed to the development of non-classical logics (Priest 1987). As a result, the concept of logical impossibility, which is one reason why certain forms of narrative self-reflexivity in particular are associated with fictionality (Dällenbach 1977), has become much less straightforward and also needs to be reconsidered in the context of literary and other narratives.

This conference aims to bring together the perspectives of literary criticism, approaches to other media and analytic and continental philosophy in order to rethink the complex relations between fiction/fictionality, fact/factuality and self-reflexivity.

### Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

**Graham Priest** Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, CUNY Graduate Center

**Barry Sandywell** Honorary Fellow at the Department of Sociology, University of York

**Frank Zipfel** Senior Lecturer (Akademischer Oberrat) in Comparative Literature, University of Mainz

Proposals are invited for **20-minute papers in English** addressing aspects of these relations.

**Possible themes include but are not limited to the following:**

- the place of reflexivity in theories of fictionality and in the fictional-factual distinction
- the place of fictionality in theories of reflexivity
- clarifying terminology: self-reference, self-reflexivity, metareference, etc.; fiction, fictionality, fictiveness, etc. in literary/art criticism and/or philosophy
- self-reflexivity in fictional and/or factual and/or hybrid narratives (e.g. autofiction, biofiction, historical novel, etc.)
- forms and modes of reflexivity in different discourses, genres and media and their effect on factuality, authenticity, or their appearance
- the influence of reflexivity on the reception of narratives as fictional or factual
- self-reference and heteroreference in factual and/or fictional discourse
- fictional or factual framing and self-reflexivity
- post-postmodernism as a move beyond reflexivity and/or as a return to representation/referentiality
- diachronic approaches to the concept or forms of self-reflexivity

Please send a 300-word abstract in a single Word document with your name, email, affiliation, and a 50-100-word bio-bibliography **by 30 January 2015** to Erika Fülöp at [erika.fulop@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:erika.fulop@uni-hamburg.de). Please name the file as follows: “[your surname]\_FFR\_proposal” and indicate “FFR proposal” in the subject line when sending it.

**References:**

- Cohn, Dorrit (1999). *The Distinction of Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dällenbach, Lucien (1977). *Le Récit spéculaire. Essai sur la mise en abyme*. Paris : Seuil.
- Hutcheon, Linda (1988). *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.
- Priest, Graham (1987/2006). *In Contradiction*. Oxford: OUP.
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- Sainsbury, R. M. (2010). *Fiction and Fictionalism*. London: Routledge.
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie (1999). *Pourquoi la fiction?* Paris. Seuil.
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