

Analysis of Narrative Voice in Bonnie Winn's Protected Hearts

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Abstract

This article deals with fictional narrative voice by incorporating analytic concepts from the theory of narratology. It shows how the narrators construct events and experiences, including contrasting descriptions of emotional states. This study offers insight into narrative voice which is equivalent to the narrator's telling of a story. The narrative voice is an answer to the question, "who is the speaker?" Based on the narratological framework, the paper tried to investigate the voice of the novel. "Protected Hearts" successfully enforces the narrative power in the novel. The voice of an isolated woman dictated the narrative discourse of the genre. A heterodiegetic narrator emerged extensively with the narrative mood of horrifying experience, desperation, care, alienation and optimism.

Keywords: Narrative Voice, Narrative, Narratology, Mood

Introduction

Narratology explores a wide range of narrative arts in a written or spoken, in a literary or non-literary works. If there is one thing as yet to be emphasized in the theory of narratology, literary genres have a number of aspects. One essential aspect is, a story is a sequence of chronological event that serves as repository of voice (Kwiat, 2008). Toolan (1988) says, narrative is characteristically a perceived sequence of connected events in a meaningful way. This explanation recognizes that narrative is a sequence of events. Events are some recognized state or set of conditions, and that something happens, causing a change to that state or mood. The non-random connectedness is sequence of events that are taken to be considered as significant.

Based on Genette's conception, the term 'narratology' designates the production of narrative action in the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place (Genette 1980, cited in Patron, 2006, p.119). Narratives crave attentions onto a story and bring us to another important asset of narrators through which a direct voice speaks in a work. In this way the study of narrative, i.e. narratology can be incorporated into that of narrative voice. The notion of narrative voice is especially significant in a discourse of narrative text.

On the borders of this corpus one finds narrative genres as cultural or literary studies, all of which contain large sections on narrative (Matei, 2012). Narrative is a telling of some true or fictitious events or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator, although there may be more than one of each (Baldick, 2004). Baldick adds a narrative will consist of a set of events that are selected and arranged in a particular order. The category of narrative includes the shortest accounts of events and the longest literary works, novels, epics, short stories, and other functional forms.

Therefore, the focus of this paper is also to discuss and analyze the main topics of narrative voice in the novel “Protected Hearts” written by Bonnie k. Winn, (2005). More specifically, the paper aims to:

1. Analyse the narrative voices projected by the author;
2. Examine the type of narrative voices represented by the characters in the novel and;
3. Scrutinize the tone or mood of the narrative voice recounted by the narrators.

Narrative Voice in a Literary Work

Narrative voice is the important element to writing an effective story. Depending on the story and other devices used, it can make or break the story. Abrams (1981) defines narrative voice that a recently evolved usage and signifies the major feature in literature and the narrators’ voice speaks in a work. Voice is “the tool that authors use to create mood, plot and theme.

Chatman (1978) says narrative voice refers to the speech or other unconcealed means through which events and existents are communicated to the audience”. According to him, narrative voice is the medium through which perception, conception, and everything else are communicated. Narrative voice is, therefore, the silent speech that presents the world of a text to the reader. It is also understood as a characteristic of vocal or tonal quality projected through a text (Recoeur, 1984).

The narrated world is the fictional world of the characters and it is narrated by the narrator. Voice is involved in communication, as in much as it addresses itself to a reader. It is therefore, situated at the point of transition between the word of the text and the world of the reader. Baldick (2004, p.14) states that “the voice of literary work is then the specific group of characteristic displayed by the narrator.... In some uses, the actual author behind them assessed interms of tone, mood, style or personality”.

The “words” of the text, the product of the narrator’s voice and the rhetoric choices (what Genette would call “discourse”) can then be successfully distinguished from the specific way the story is told and from

the action which actually happens or is supposed to happen (Matei, 2012). Distinctions are between kinds of narrator in terms of how they address the reader rather than in terms of their perception of events, as in the distinct concept of point of view. Whatever the form, the content may concern real world of people and events. When the content is fictional, the text projects a narrative voice; the narrator belongs to an invented or imaginary world. The narrator may be one of the characters in the imaginary world.

The term “voice” in literary criticism, generally, points to the fact that there is a voice beyond the fictitious voices that speak in work (Abrams: 1981). Baldick (2004) adds that the term refers to the distinctive features of a written work in terms of spoken utterance. In general, voice is the answer to the readers mind as “who is speaking in the text?”

Narrative voice can enter into a text through a reader’s imaginary perception. Voice in a text is a readily construct. It is primarily associated with the narrator’s voice. According to Genette (1996), cited in Tadese (2010, p. 11), two types of narrators take part in narrating a story: Homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. Homodiegetic narrator is a character in the story that he/she is telling his/her personal experience. The narrator tells a story that he/she has experienced him/herself, that is, a story of personal experience. Heterodiegetic (third-person) narrator is not present as a character in the story. The heterodiegetic narrator is an external observer like a cameraman or foot ball commentator. This narrator presents a story as figural narrator, who is presenting a story as if seeing it through the eyes of character and the story’s events as seen through the eyes of the third-person ‘reflector’ character.

Baldick’s (2004) implicates in narrative voice there always indicative voice makers- projective of a narratorial voice. These indicative voice makers are: content matter- the content matter of a text that can indicate about what is spoken; subjective expressions – the narrator in the story can give clues to his/her background or qualifications; and, pragmatic significance– this include the critical attitude of the speaker, value judgments like awareness of the audience.

The Framework of Narratology

In the contemporary literary study narratology alternatively lends itself to a theory and method (Kindt & Müller, 2003). It embraces theoretical and application-oriented approaches to narrative. The study falls into the concept of theory of ‘narratology’ and ‘narrative voice’. According to Ahmadian and Jorfi (1955), narratology is the study of narrative structures, including narrative voice, mood and narration- it is what narratologists study and analyze.

Narrative-based analysis is a theoretical approach to interpreting literary texts. Utilizing the notion of narrative is a useful account of the ways in which different disciplines have approached the notion of narrative analysis. Therefore, the aspects of narrative analysis are considered in answering questions that are important for understanding narrative voice (Matei, 2012).

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper also includes the theoretical aspects of narratology and the analytical interpretation of “Protected Hearts”. Besides, the narrative voices of the novel are categorized in terms of the functions they serve and the mood they reflect through the words of the speakers in the story.

Analysis of Narrative Voice in the novel “protected Hearts”

Synopsis of the “Protected Hearts”

The story revolves around the main character. From the beginning of her career, Emma searches for a solution to the problems of division between life and family. Her world is shattered by tragedy. Emma Perry thought she would never survive the murder of her husband and child, let alone regain her faith and ability to trust. But the witness security program took her to Rosewood, Texas, where a caring community and belief in God gave her the strength to rebuild her life. Emma’s neighbor, Seth McAllister was also a wounded heart who was struggling with the death of his own child. Their common gash opens their hearts to love each other. She was exposed to unidentified killer. Although the obsessed killer tries to kill Emma- her world continues with Seth’s.

The Analysis of the Voice of Horror

In “Protected Hearts” the voice of the speaker could be answered when asking the question “who speaks?” The major speaker of the words in the novel is the one behind the story. Predominantly the story is narrated by the third person point of view. The use of repeated pronouns like she, he, Emma, they, Toby to list a few indicates the narrator is not someone behind the scene. Although it does not seem that one can actually see or hear the narrator, the text encloses literary features that project the narrator's voice. It is possible to give an appropriate intonation, perhaps making it sound like a hetrodiegetic narrator.

The narrator recounts story of horror and painful memories. Otherwise, the voice enters in a narrative, reminding the characters’ voice of feelings and life experiences. Disruptive experiences of people turn to stories in a form of narrative. The experience of conflict has a relevance to reveal the embodied

experience of trauma from the sufferer's perspective (Matei, 2012). The novel starts the voice by a covert narrator who communicates a violent action of a terrible accident. The narrator tells a terrifying screaming of characters, that the horrible fire accident kills Tome and Rachel. An evident case of the extract from the novel can be identified in:

Screaming for Tom and Rachel, Emily grabbed the doorknob. She ignored the searing burn the hot metal pressed into her hand as she frantically tried to turn the knob. To her horror, it was locked. She spans around and raced towards the front of the house..... "Rachel! Tom!" She screamed (p.18).

Narratives are constituted to reflect the immediate and possible response of the characters to defend against inauspicious situations. Narrating pain and memories is problematic; this is because of the human nature that no wants to show off as lacking strength (Breheny and Stephens, 2015). In the above excerpt, the victim's woman who did not survive the killing of her family is narrated heterodiegetically (in third person). The woman's account of pain, how she *frantically tried to turn the knob*, is narrated by situating the painful feeling within the context of unforgettable coincidence. The narrator shares the atrocious experiences of Emily, how she looks for help in a state of frustrating situation. The way that the narrative is constructed with the victims or diseased family shows the trauma narrative, the narrator trusts the figural character's suffering and sense of hopelessness to save and survive the victim member of family as it says, "... *To her horror, it was locked. She spans around and raced towards the front of the house..... "Rachel! Tom!" She screamed*" (p.18).

It is a high tone of voice that affects the emotion of readers- that the terrible experience of the fire is searing on the memory of the character "she, i.e Emily". A voice of a single effect of horror also says, "the sky was dark and Emma shivered despite the warmth of evening , sundance was nowhere in sight. She called out softly hearing scratching from other side of the vacant property(p.19)." The third person narrator's terrifying voice communicates the panic show of the character in the dark night of no hope. This story can be in the category of an atrocious scene because the story goes in terrifying mood.

The Voice of Painful Memories

The accounts of the character's initial reaction of fearful experience reveal their legitimate reaction and how they are exposed to undesirable stressful and painful situations (Olga, et al, 2013). The narrator explains emotion of the character in the story that her past painful events left her hopeless,

They deserved more; were more than painful memories. She thought of late husband's smile, of baby's Rachel's laughter. That is what she needed to remember (p.58).

The heterodiegetic narrator's voices what she intends to remember is a sense of hopelessness in case of her family's life. What is left to her is the painful memories. The narrator voice tells the instability of the 'self' Emily's frustration. What she needs is what she cannot get it back -smile of her husband and laughter of her baby.

The extra textual voice continues with the conflict of the character with herself. It is the figural narrator voice that narrates the internal feeling of the character, particularly when the narrator tells that "she knew" what the character knows is the intention of God to her –of course it is up to the narrator to determine her fate and transform her life from the overwhelming pain of emotion to spiritually restful life. It talks about Emily's husband's death which has happened in the very present state of the story, it is recounting the death of child which had happened as adding fuel into the fire.

"Emma, the homodiegetic narrator, voices her name and she speaks with soft spirit when she says, "I am Emma Duvere... I don't work here. I m decorating ... (p.12)". It is the voice of a lonely woman who is isolated after the death of her child and husband. A selected tone of voice of the character in the story takes over the power of dominant horrible voice of authorial narrator, when the "I" character says, " I am encouraged when new businesses choose Rosewood. Big or small (p.56)." Here, she gives a bleak of hope that emanates from Rosewood –which is the source of Emma's encouragement and her small contribution of business.

Moreover, she feels that she lost her self-esteem and confidence. The voice of an isolated woman emerges in a form of first –person narration as she says, "... When I first came to Rosewood I spent most of my time hiding. I thought I had never fit in. It took a long time to believe I really had (p.91)." A feeling of seclusion is reflected in her voice including the appreciation of restorative qualities of Rosewood.

The frightened woman is presented by a mood of frustration as she narrates her experience of confusion: the mood of uncertainty and feeling of doubt take over her confidence to survive. She says, "All I got was eyestrain and headache. I like to think of myself as capable of surviving in a wilderness if I had to I couldn't even survive in my own living room. I can't believe it I don't even own a manual can opener (p.119).

Emma, the main character in the story, has lost her husband and lovely baby with ‘a terrible red glare’. The suspect Ready Carter is also trying to kill her. The woman’s incurable voice is as follow: “he was trying to kill me. And he murdered them, burned them to death. Burned my precious baby (188),”

Emma’s voice has a feeling of memory that all room darkened and her heart sank. It has a hideous tonal effect of expressible sadness weighted her down. This voice is the voice of a victim woman from unutterable wretchedness of mind that reinforces to the sense of disintegration.

The Optimistic Voice

Characters optimize their self-narratives of resilience embedded within their discourses. Anthias (2015) implicates narratives construct past experiences to bear in the present, by creating a state of hope even in time afflictions.

The narrator had adopted the mantle of stoicism in a relationship that she has build with friends. The woman’s self-narrative is also informed by her struggle to regain hope after surviving adversity, which had helped her to optimise her hope in supernatural power, despite her frustration.

The narrator alienates herself from friends and herself with a little glimmer of hope as it says, *She hadn’t allowed it to become her friend. And that was more tempting that it would seem, hiding away drawing on haltered. But she knew that wasn’t what the Lord wanted for her* (p.70). The explanation provided by the hetrodigetic narrator tells who confirms to Emma’s broken heart that, “the warm fellowship of the community church has been a balm to her wounded spirit in the communion. It implies that optimism is clearly there as, “Emma was optimistic as she left the bank. It was a clear, beautiful day. On impulse she walked to her shop (p.56).” The narrator reminds us the authorial presence in optimistic voice.

Moreover, the narrator reveals Emma’s recovery from repressed bruises of the death of her husband. The mature Emma’s observation and her intense feeling to another man show that her broken heart could be restored. The narrator explains what a major character Emma notices and keeps them in record as follow:

Emma stared after Seth’s tall, athletic form as he exited. Rose wood population was small, but she hadn’t run into him before. She would have noticed his handsome face his dark hair that looked slightly too long, as if he need it cut (p.13).

It is the voice of figural narrator who tells as omniscient observer the internal tendency of the character. The affection of the female character twinkles bright future when, “shading her eyes from the late afternoon sun, she watched his tall figure as he run to catch the fly ball.... (p.119)”.

Finally, the heterodigetic narrator tells that the ‘broken hearts’ unite to oneness to be ‘protected hearts’ to one another to avoid the distorted personalities and to flourish a promise to new life. “Emma’s and Seth’s lips touched again, the kiss a promise. Because now they had a new beginning, a new family and all the love they deserved. A little town called Rosewood, where big dreams come true (p.241).

Finally, the novel ends with a love inspiring voice from the narrator-along with the hope of the journey of the two special people.

The Monologic and Dialogic Voices

The voice of Emma points out that the appreciation of a friend’s help when she says, “I really do appreciate your help. The store’s so busy lately it takes nearly all my time.” And another, voice of her friend tells the love to designing arts and confirms the meanings of friendship in time of trouble. She says, “You know I love the design aspects of creating window displays. Besides, what are friends for? (p.15).” Both voices in the intratextual narration are the voices of cooperative friends.

One voice points out that after the death of her child living with children is consolatory. But another voice argues that although his child also died having child is desperate. The narrator explains the voice of passion of love to children. It is the voice of a mother that tells, “I know and it is not realistic for me to think I can avoid children the rest of my life” (p.104).

The counter voice of another homodiegetic character in the story is the hate of having another child. The voice of the father is desperate in having another child after the death of irreplaceable child. He tells, “.... Most people think I should move on, have another child. It is not like getting a new puppy after losing a dog. A replacement child” (p.105).

The prejudice of life emerges by the main character when he tells “I keep thinking the injustice. These people have their child and don’t want him. I would have given the world to save Davy....” (p.134). It is the voice of a father that regrets about his lost child.

A poor kid also voices his feeling of unhappiness in reminding back the times that he passed with his mom before she died, “I used to get in trouble for doing that at home. My mom didn’t like it”. To this effect, a generous woman tells that she will provide the kid not as a foster mother but just as a mother who has a desire to care her child for a better life. She says, “I think “I” build in the desk, give him plenty of room for homework. Even though, when I was a kid my mom and me work on my homework at the kitchen (p.160)”. She promises to provide every accommodation to the child. The exact specification of narrative distance begins when she reminds back with a temporal distance, when the woman reminds her formative development.

Conclusion

This study focuses on narrative voice of the “Protected Hearts”. The novel paves a way for a better understanding of narrative voice. It also explores the narrative power of the novel from the analysis of its narrative voice. The narrators’ voice is analysed based on the mood they implicate to the readers through the narrative techniques. “Protected Hearts” successfully enforces the narrative power in the novel. The novel associates both the intratextual and extra textual voices. In the intratextual voices the voice of an isolated woman and a man with a broken heart dominated the narrative discourse of the novel. In the intratextual narrative the heterogametic narrator emerged extensively with the mixed mood of horrible experience, affection, alienation, optimism and hopelessness. The emphasis is made to the narrative voice of the novel’s dominant voices of the authorial narrator and the main character.

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