

Ronald van der Bergh (University of Pretoria)

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STORY AND DISCOURSE IN THE ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE¹

ABSTRACT

The distinction between story and discourse has become all but canonical in narratology. This article investigates the viability of this approach with reference to the narratological analysis of biblical narratives. It is shown that the distinction is indeed necessary, although the traditional approach should be modified. Discourse, rather than story, should be the starting point of any narratological analysis. This leads to the concept of an “implied story, which can be used as an analytical tool in the analysis of narrative. Special attention is given to the application of this new approach to biblical narrative, with an example drawn from a comparison of Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37.

1. INTRODUCTION

Narrative analysis, including analysis of biblical narrative, has long been using the concepts of *fabula* and *sjuzet*² to perform analysis on texts. This approach has not been without controversy (Funk 1988:3). The terminology employed differs widely, and exactly *what* is defined by the two terms has been interpreted in various ways (Lowe 2000:5), even though there is widespread agreement on the importance of their use.³

The aim of this article is to take a fresh look at the approach taken in distinguishing between these two concepts. The legitimacy of such a distinction, and whether or not it has any importance for the study of (biblical) narrative, will be considered. In a sense, this article is a response to the critique levelled at narrative theory by Herrnstein Smith (2004), who claimed the distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzet* to be redundant.

The article will commence with an overview of the concepts *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (discourse), and the distinction made between them.

1 This article is a revised version of a chapter of the author’s thesis submitted to the Ancient Languages Department of the University of Pretoria in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in Ancient Languages and Cultures. The study was supervised by Prof. G T M Prinsloo.

2 The meanings of these two terms will be discussed below under the heading *The Distinction between Story and Discourse*.

3 In fact, Bourquin & Marguerat (1999:18) goes so far as to claim that “[m]odern narratology is built very precisely on this distinction.”

The relation between the two will be highlighted, and the terminology employed in this article will be clarified. After that, some views on the wholeness of narrative will be given, followed by an excursion into the importance of making such a distinction.⁴ After considering the order in which story and discourse should be taken to come into being, a new model of distinguishing between story and discourse will be presented. It is also necessary to share some thoughts on the distinction between story and discourse in biblical narrative. The purpose of this article is to help shape a methodology by which biblical narrative can be analysed. An example comparing Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37 will illustrate the use of this new model.

2. *THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STORY AND DISCOURSE*

Ever since the Russian Formalists a distinction has been made between the events of a narrative and the ‘real’ chronological order in which they are purported to have happened, and the way in which these events are related (Brooks 2002:130; Funk 1988:2; Resseguie 2005:208; Tomashevsky 2002:165).⁵ The former, known by its Russian Formalist term *fabula*, can be seen as “a series of events,” whilst the latter, known as *sjuzhet*,⁶ can be seen as “the story as reported in the narrative” (Culler 2004:117-118). Whereas *fabula* constitutes the “raw material for the construction⁷ of a narrative,” *sjuzhet* can best be described as the “final product” (Resseguie 2005:208). Chatman (1978:20) refers to *fabula* as the “sum total of events to be related in the narrative,” while *sjuzhet* can be seen as “the story as actually told by linking the events together.” This distinction has also been made in structuralist narrative theory, which distinguishes chains of events from the expressions “by which the content is communicated” (Chatman 1978:19). Perhaps the most enlightening

4 The first part of this article will refer to the distinction as it is applied to different media, even though the biblical narratives are all written texts. Such references more clearly illustrate both the distinction and the problem. The second part, dealing with biblical narratives, will refer to different written texts.

5 This distinction was a useful one in their quest to understand the general “rules of syntax” of narrative. The present article, however, is more concerned with the analysis of a particular biblical narrative and the methodology to be used in such an enterprise.

6 Different spellings of this term abound. Culler (2004), for instance, uses “sjuzhet,” Brooks (1984) prefers “syuzhet,” while Prince (1982) adopts “sujet.” Resseguie (2005) uses “sjuzhet,” which will also be used in this article.

7 Although “construction” can be shown to be problematic. See the discussion under the heading *The Wholeness of the Narrative*.

definition of the terms would be Chatman's (1978:19): "story [as *fabula*] is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse [as *sjuzhet*] the *how*." Even though narrative theorists do not agree on terminology,⁸ it can clearly be seen that the distinction between a chronological order of events and the way in which they are related is an ever lingering presence⁹ (Culler 2004:118). For the sake of consistency, Chatman's terms "story" (as *fabula*) and "discourse" (as *sjuzhet*) will be used in the remainder of this article. Story and discourse will be used only in this sense.

It is also worth noting that a third distinction has recently been made by narrative theorists. This is primarily a further division of the discourse into "text" and "narration" (Toolan 2001:11). Chatman (1978:22) points out that this distinction concerns the difference between the structure of the discourse, and the *way* in which it is presented, *i.e.* the medium in which it is manifested.¹⁰ Therefore Chatman (1978:43) proposes a third category, story-as-discoursed, which has "an internal structure qualitatively different from any one of its possible manifestations (e.g. movie, novel, etc.). Nevertheless, as Toolan (2001:12) warns, "this latter separation is still a source of controversy," and it will not be used in this article.

The relation between story and discourse should be called "plot," although the term "plot" has been used to refer to the discourse itself. However, it is more natural to see plot as the way in which story and discourse bear on each other (Brooks 2002:131). Plot then becomes not only the way events are structured, but also the way in which this structure influences meaning in a narrative (Brooks 1984:12).

8 The French terms *histoire*, *récit* and *discours* have also come into play. As Culler (2004:118) shows, this can be quite confusing, as some narratologists take *récit* as *fabula*, and some take *récit* to mean *sjuzhet*. Translation of *fabula* and *sjuzhet* into English can also create confusion: Lowe (2000:5), for instance, translates "story" and "narrative," Tomashevsky (2002:165) "story" and "plot," and Chatman (1978) "story" and "discourse." Bourquin & Marquerat (1999:20) equate story with "signifier" and discourse with "signified." Funk (1988:2) points out the different uses of the term "narrative," which seems to be applied by theorists to each of these levels.

9 With the exception of Herrnstein Smith, whose theories will be discussed later in this article.

10 For a discussion of the impact of the medium on the message of the Bible, and specifically the New Testament, see Loubser (2007).

3. *THE WHOLENESS OF THE NARRATIVE*

The customary notion of a distinction between story and discourse has been criticised by Herrnstein Smith.¹¹ Herrnstein Smith (2004:95) accuses narrative theorists, and structuralist narrative theorists in particular, of Platonic dualism. She explicitly cites Chatman's (almost canonical) *Story and Discourse* as an example of how this dualism has invaded thoughts about narrative. Although Herrnstein Smith's critique has not impacted extensively on narrative theory, it is worth considering.

According to Herrnstein Smith (2004:97), Chatman holds that the dualism between story and discourse can be clearly seen in the fact that the same "story" can be retold in a different medium (e.g. a novel or a film). Indeed, Chatman (1978:37) does make this assumption about story:

Story, in my technical sense of the word, exists only at an abstract level; any manifestation already entails the selection and arrangement performed by the discourse as actualized by a given medium. There is no privileged manifestation.

Toolan (2001:15) also speaks of "unshaped, uncrafted, 'unaestheticized' story," building blocks which seem to be "medium-independent." Funk (1988:44) thinks along the same lines about the "story" of Jesus contained in the Gospels. Herrnstein Smith (2004:97) certainly seems to be right when she likens this understanding to Plato's world of ideas. In this sense, every discourse is merely a different imprint of the same story.

Herrnstein Smith (2004:102) concludes that for each narrative there is no "*basically* basic story subsisting beneath it," but instead that narratives are related to, and responses to, other narratives. For this reason, a summary of a narrative (the story is, in essence, a summary of the discourse) only constitutes a new narrative (Herrnstein Smith 2004:99). She calls for a complete cessation of the use of dualistic concepts in the reading of plot and time (Herrnstein Smith 2004:111). Brink (1987:41) echoes the opinion that one should not try to abstract the story from the narrative, as such an enterprise is simply, in some cases, too difficult, and not applicable to all narratives, although Brink still tends to use dualistic concepts.

11 Herrnstein Smith's original essay was published in Mitchell, W J T (ed.) 1980. *On Narrative*, 209-232. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Narrative theorists have, however, pointed out the wholeness of narrative, regardless of the distinction between story and discourse.¹² It is not merely the events and the order of their occurrence that generates meaning, but also the relationship between events, characters, settings and every other element of narrative (Ricoeur 2002:43; Van Aarde 2006a:665). Brink (1987:47) likens the process of reading to a spider's web, every part connected to another, moving at the slightest touch of the reader. Reflection upon narrative as a whole is therefore inherent to understanding a narrative (Ricoeur 2002:43).

4. *THE IMPORTANCE OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN STORY AND DISCOURSE*

The distinction between story and discourse, even if artificial, is, as Culler (2004:118) states, "an indispensable premise of narratology." Funk (1988:44) even suggests that a narrative poetics should be based on it. The distinction is especially important for the analysis of time (and especially order) in a narrative (Resseguie 2005:208). Since narratives cannot escape the constraints of time in their telling (Lowe 2000:20), a distinction between story and discourse becomes crucial. In fact, a narrative is so dependent on time that it can be said that, if the events related cannot be chronologically arranged, it can hardly be called a narrative (Van Aarde 2006a:664). Tomashevsky (2002:164) states that it is always possible to recite the events of any given narrative in chronological order because of this fact. All the same, it is rare for a narrative, as discourse, to be related in exact chronological order¹³ (Culler 2004:118; Funk 1988:44; Herrnstein Smith 2004:107-108), and therefore it is imperative that the story should be reconstructed from the discourse (Culler 2004:118; Van Aarde 2006b:12). This chronology of events should be reconstructed from the text alone and not from outside sources (Tolmie 1999:89). A reconstruction of this kind can only be done if one assumes that every narrative has a true order of events (Culler 2004:119), however difficult to extract.

The order in which events are related in a text can heighten the rhetorical effect, and this can only be seen through the use of such a distinction as mentioned above (Resseguie 2005:208-209; Rimmon-Kenan 2002:121). The difference between story and discourse can impart

12 In fact, it was never the intention to divorce the two. Rather, the intention was to better understand narrative in general. See the discussion under the heading *The Importance of Distinguishing between Story and Discourse*.

13 Biblical narratives, however, tend to convey the events in chronological order. Deviations should thus be given special attention (Bar-Efrat 1989:166).

significance to some events in the narrative, and it can also highlight specific themes (Chatman 1978:43; Prince 1982:50). Furthermore, a comparison of the discourse to the story brings to the fore ideological perspectives (Van Aarde 2006b:22), since “information and attitudes presented at an early stage of the text tend to encourage the reader to interpret everything in their light” (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:121). Even Brink (1987:97) is of the opinion that the order in which the events happen conveys meaning. This can, of course, only be analysed if story is compared to discourse. These motives are, indeed, important for understanding a narrative text (Tolmie 1999:88). It is worth noting that discrepancies between story and discourse can influence the reader in quite a significant way (Resseguie 2005:209). One should keep in mind that some logical events could have been left out of the discourse (which should be read chronologically together with the story), and this once again highlights the implied author’s ideological views, to the extent that Fokkelman (1999:76) believes to “have found the main point of access into [the implied author’s] linguistic work of art.”

Moreover, even when no explicit distinction is made between story and discourse, a reader makes this distinction while reading¹⁴ (Brink 1987:46; Lowe 2000:22). Reconstructing a story from the discourse, therefore, apart from being an analytical tool, is quite natural.¹⁵

5. *THE PRIMACY OF DISCOURSE*

At the risk of eliciting a chicken-or-egg debate, the question must be asked whether story or discourse is the more important, as the one is always determined by the other. One must decide whether story or discourse should be seen as starting point, and which one should be seen as the product (Culler 2004:130). Generally, narrative theorists are of the opinion that story is the logical place to start, thus making discourse the product. This is rarely stated explicitly. However, it can be inferred from the terminology they employ (see, for instance, Brink 1987:45; Chatman 1978:43; Toolan 2001:11; Van Aarde 2006b:10), e.g. *reconstructing a*

14 This process is much more complicated than a simple diachronic reading, as Rabkin (1981:83-87) shows. Toolan (2001:32) remarks upon the fruitfulness of reading a story as if for the first time. Lowe (2000:23-24) compares this synchronic reading of the text (keeping in mind that a reader is always busy synthesizing all the data already read) to a hologram that gains focus as the text is read from left to right and more data are collected.

15 Consider, for instance, how one would relate the gist of a movie or a book to a friend.

story, *rearranging* the events to form a discourse, *repackaging* of story (Lowe 2000:19), etc. Graphically, this can be presented as follows:

Story —————> Discourse

Granted, because of the abstract nature of the concept “story,” it is difficult not to use terminology to this effect. However, it should be noted that for the analyst, the discourse is the only accessible starting point and therefore story should always be derived from discourse (Abbott 2002:19; Van Aarde 2006a:664; also cf. Herrnstein Smith 2004:110).

Discourse —————> Story

In many cases, however, a discourse is constructed from a specific set of events, or in Herrnstein Smith’s terms, in response to another narrative or event. It might be interesting to compare these events as story to the new discourse created. Nevertheless, the newly created discourse will create a new story, which can be deduced from that discourse. It might be useful to distinguish this second story as the story implied by the discourse itself, thus making it inherent to the narrative. Story can then at best be described as “implied story.” This can be presented as follows, with the broken line indicating that the relationship between the original narrative or set of events and the discourse might be irretrievable or, in any case, not applicable to the narratological study at hand:

Story> Discourse —————> Implied story

6. *A NEW MODEL OF STORY AND DISCOURSE*

In the light of Herrnstein Smith’s convincing argument concerning the improbability of “medium-independent” stories, it has become necessary to start thinking anew about the concept of story. Nevertheless, it is essential that the distinction between story and discourse be retained, as the importance of such a distinction can clearly be seen. The primacy of discourse in these cases should be acknowledged. It would be better to postulate that for every discourse there is an accompanying story – an “implied story.” Better still, it should be maintained that for every discourse (or narrative), a story can be constructed. This construction can then be compared to the discourse it was constructed from, as implied by that discourse. The implied story of one discourse can also be compared to the implied story of another discourse, but one discourse’s implied story can never be compared with another discourse. This differs from the

traditional idea, for instance Toolan's (2001:10), that an abstract story can be represented in various media. Graphically, the difference between these approaches can be shown as follows:

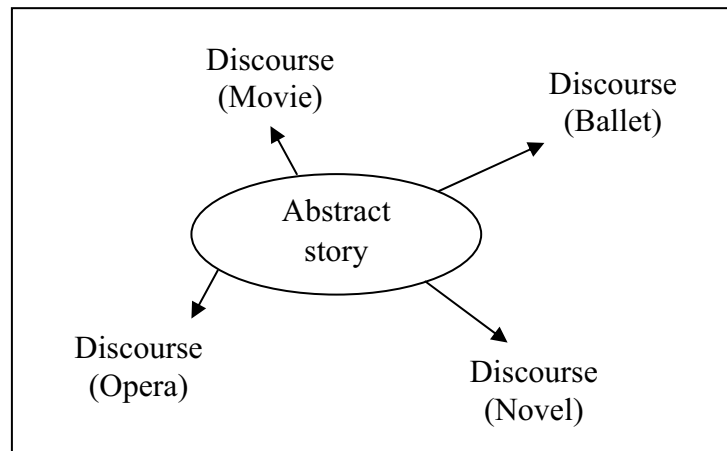


Figure 1: Traditional distinction between story and discourse

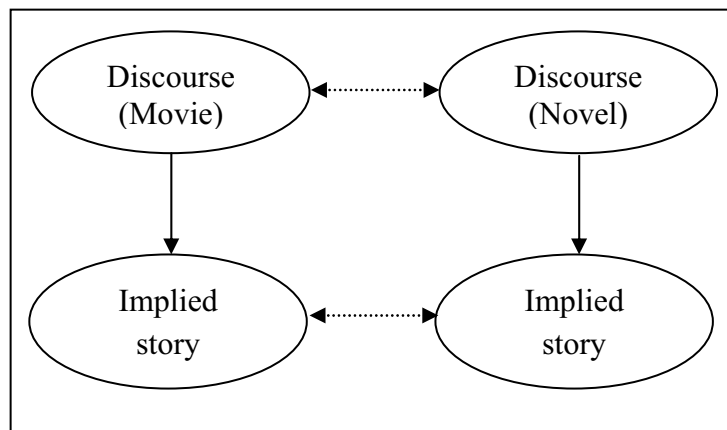


Figure 2: Suggested distinction between story and discourse

Different “versions” of a narrative, even in different media, should be treated as two distinct discourses, although a comparison can be made between their separate discourses or even between their implied stories.

An implied story, as a concrete concept, will always be a summary, taking heed of Herrstein Smith's caveat (2004:99) that a summary itself constitutes a new discourse.¹⁶ The implied story, although a summary, will in this case be constructed with the specific goal of comparison with the discourse it was derived from.

16 Although she would probably phrase it in some other way, to avoid alluding to the distinction between story and discourse.

The construction of such a summary brings into play Chatman's notion of *satellites* and *kernels*.¹⁷ This distinction is based on the idea that some events are more important to the story than others (Chatman 1978:53; Tolmie 1999:65). These events "are the turning points, the events that drive the story forward and that lead to other events" (Abbott 2002:20). According to Chatman, these events (i.e. the kernels) are necessary, while satellites can be removed from the story without changing anything (Chatman 1978:53-54). In the light of the previous argument for an implied story, this view becomes untenable. Indeed, as Abbott (2002:20) points out, even minor events can be of importance to the understanding of the narrative. Furthermore, as Toolan (2001:26) warns, the division into these two categories can at best be a subjective exercise. However, in order to keep a summary to a manageable size, it is indeed necessary to include some events and disregard others. In as far as satellites only elaborate on other events (Chatman 1978:54; Rimmon-Kenan 2002:16), then, they can tentatively be left out. This does not mean that all satellites should be discarded without a second thought.

In order to create a summary, events should be paraphrased by using a single sentence that clearly indicates the action and the subjects involved in it (Tolmie 1999:64). As argued above, the depth of such a summary may vary, but it would be preferable to be as thorough as possible. Even logical events in the chronology which have been skipped may be included in the summary, as they may have some importance (Fokkelman 1999:76).

7. *STORY AND DISCOURSE IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE*

It remains to be considered how this distinction affects the study of biblical narrative. As such a large part of the Bible consist of narratives, studying this material *as narratives* should be a considerable priority.

This new model of a distinction between story and discourse has clear implications for reading biblical narratives, even if it has nothing to say

17 These are the terms Chatman prefers. Barthes uses *nuclei* and *catalyzers* (Abbott 2002:20). Tomashevsky (2002:166) works with almost the same concept, using the terms *bound motifs* and *free motifs*. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:16) adopts an eclectic approach, using the terms *kernels* and *catalysts*. Abbott (2002:20) prefers *constituent events* and *supplementary events*. Although this wide variety of terms may create the impression that there is considerable discord over these two concepts, there is in fact general agreement on the use of this distinction. Since Chatman's terms seem to be the most widely known, they will be employed in this article.

about the historicity of the narrative or its factual nature.¹⁸ Narrative criticism is a gateway to the theology of a specific (set of) author(s) of a biblical narrative (Bourquin & Marguerat 1999:22). The distinction can be used in various forms of analysis, not the least being an analysis of time and order in a certain narrative. For instance, by comparing the implied story with the discourse in a biblical narrative, analepses and prolepses may emerge. These may in turn highlight theological and ideological motifs in the narrative.

Perhaps the greatest implication of this new model for the analysis of biblical narrative is in the comparison of narrative texts. This applies not only to the comparison of two biblical narratives (e.g. Samuel and Kings vs. Chronicles), but also to the difference between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint.¹⁹ This latter point should be stressed: for the purposes of a narratological analysis, the Septuagint constitutes a different narrative than the Masoretic text. The use of the distinction between implied story and discourse in the comparison will now be illustrated by an example: a comparison of Isa 36:1-22 with 2 Kgs 18:13-37.

7.1 *Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37*

The comparison of narratives in the Hebrew Bible can be illustrated by way of Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37.²⁰ These narratives seem to

18 A word of caution concerning narratology and historical facts should be extended. Funk (1988:2-3) considers the distinction between story and discourse as it relates to the question of whether the events depicted in the story “really” happened or not. This is a natural presumption. Funk finds it necessary to distinguish between fictive events and historical events in the story. This distinction is, however, not applicable to the narratological analysis of texts. Whether an event really happened or not has no bearing on the analysis of a narratological text (if it is studied as a narrative), especially if that event can only be recovered from the text itself. Culler (2004:118) notes that one should treat events contained in the story as “having the properties of real events,” although Culler explicitly states that this doesn’t mean that the event really took place. To put it rather bluntly, “[S]tory has nothing to do with *history*” (Bourquin & Marguerat 1999:20).

19 A viable method of study for the Septuagint would indeed be to look at aspects such as translation technique and the study of textual recensions. These kinds of studies, however, are diachronic in nature, whereas narratology concerns itself with the synchronic study of texts.

20 This comparison does not purport to be a thorough narrative analysis, but only serves to illustrate the way in which the concept “implied story” and the new model for a distinction between discourse and story should be applied. This is purely a synchronic study; Isaiah is mentioned first simply because it is the shorter narrative.

concern the same characters and take place in the same narrative space. Yet each of these narratives should be taken as a narrative on its own.²¹ According to the model set out above, these two very similar narratives each has its own implied story. A comparison between these two texts should set out by first reconstructing the implied stories of each, as is done in Table 1.

Implied story of Isa 36:1-22		Implied story of 2 Kgs 18:13-37	
36:1	Sennacherib captures the Judaeen cities	18:13	Sennacherib captures the Judaeen cities
36:2a	Sennacherib sends an army to Jerusalem	18:14a	Hezekiah sends a message to Sennacherib at Lachish
36:2b	The Rabshakeh ²² and the army stop outside Jerusalem	18:14b	Sennacherib demands tribute from Hezekiah
36:3	Hezekiah's men go out to meet the Rabshakeh	18:16a	Hezekiah tears off the golden covers of temple doors
36:4-10	The Rabshakeh gives a message to Hezekiah's men to relay to him	18:15; 18:16b	Hezekiah pays Sennacherib with funds from the temple along with the golden covers of the temple doors
36:11	Hezekiah's men ask to be addressed in Aramaic	18:17	Sennacherib sends an army to Jerusalem

21 One should not forget that these narratives each forms part of a different context. It would be folly to take them completely out of this context. Nevertheless, they do form separate units. Both narratives begin with **וּבְאַרְבַּע עָשָׂר שָׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּה** (“in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah”), a clear indication of a new narrative scene. 2 Kgs 19:1 can also be taken as a new narrative unit, starting with **וַיְהִי** (“and it happened”). The internal logic of the narrative block is also coherent up to this point, although the following section builds upon this narrative. Nevertheless, 2 Kgs 18:13-37 forms a narrative unit on its own. The same can be said of Isa 36:1-22, having exactly the same markers.

22 The very ambiguous **רַב־שָׂקָה** clearly denotes a title, and not a personal name. Since the exact nature of this position is debated, this article will translate this term with “the Rabshakeh.”

36:12	The Rabshakeh refuses to comply	18:18a	Sennacherib's men demands to speak to Hezekiah
36:13-20	The Rabshakeh speaks directly to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Hebrew	18:18b	Hezekiah's men go out to meet the Rabshakeh
36:21b	The king commands the people to remain silent	18:19-25	The Rabshakeh gives a message to Hezekiah's men to relay to him
36:21a	The people remain silent	18:26	Hezekiah's men ask to be addressed in Aramaic
36:22a	Hezekiah's men tear their clothes	18:27	The Rabshakeh refuses to comply
36:22b	Hezekiah's men relay the Rabshakeh's message to Hezekiah	18:28-35	The Rabshakeh speaks directly to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Hebrew
		18:36b	The king commands the people to remain silent
		18:36a	The people remain silent
		18:37a	Hezekiah's men tear their clothes
		18:37b	Hezekiah's men relay the Rabshakeh's message to Hezekiah

Table 1: The implied stories of Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37

These two implied stories can now be compared to each other and to their respective discourses. The implied story of 2 Kgs 18:13-37, however, cannot be compared to the discourse of Isa 36:1-22. For instance, Hezekiah's tribute to Sennacherib found in 2 Kgs 18:13-17 cannot be read into the analysis of Isa 36:1-22, as it is simply not implied by this discourse.

An example of comparing the discourses of these narratives would be that the implied stories reconstructed for Isa 36:13-20 and 2 Kgs 18:28-35 are designated in this reconstruction by the same act: "The Rabshakeh speaks directly to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Hebrew." However, when the two discourses are compared, it can clearly be seen that the discourse in 2 Kgs 18:28-35 is longer than the discourse in Isa 36:13-20.²³

²³ In Hebrew the direct speech in 2 Kgs 18:28-35 is 129 words, while the direct speech in Isa 36:13-20 is 116 words.

The longer discourse of 2 Kgs supplies the reader with even more information about the background of the narrative. Clearly, the Rabshakeh of 2 Kgs 18 places more stress on the glorious land to which Sennacherib will take Jerusalem's inhabitants by means of the longer speech containing אֶרֶץ זֵית וְדַבָּשׁ ("a land of olive oil and honey") in v. 32. The decision is made plain: וְחָיו וְלֹא תָמָתוּ ("so that you live and do not die"). Much the same can be said for the longer discourse of 2 Kgs 18:34, containing two more deities in the list than Isa 36:19: הֵנֶּעַ וְעֵנָה ("Hena and Ivah"). The discourse of 2 Kgs 18:34 is probably to be taken as being more persuasive for the city's inhabitants, giving clearer examples of benefits to be had by letting Sennacherib have his way and using a longer list of defeated nations and their gods. The longer wording in 2 Kgs 18:22, through the addition of בִּירוּשָׁלַם ("in Jerusalem"), also has implications for the understanding of narrative space, which is not to be found in Isa 36.

Similarly, the results of narratological analyses of these two narratives can be compared. For this, each implied story should first be compared to its respective discourse. A cursory glance at such an analysis of both these narratives will suffice. In Isa 36 the discourse follows the chronological order of the implied story closely, except for v. 21, where we are first told וַיִּחַרְיֵשׁוּ וְלֹא-עָנּוּ אֹתוֹ דְבָר ("but they kept silent, and did not answer him a word") and then כִּי-מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ הִיא לֵאמֹר לֹא תַעֲנֶהוּ ("because this was the command of the king: 'Do not answer him.'"). It is not quite clear when the king gave the order to remain silent – this could even have been before his men went out to meet the Rabshakeh. In any case, the discourse first relates the people's silence and only afterwards the command of the king. In addition, when one takes into account the ratio of narrated time to narration time, it is clear that in this story direct speech plays an important role. The discourse itself consists of 355 words – of these, 280 are given in direct speech.²⁴ The length of the narrated time includes the conquest of all the Judaeen cities, which would probably take some time – at least the length of one season of warfare. In any case, the length of the narrated time of both narratives is the same, as can be seen in their respective implied stories: both begin with the capture of the Judaeen cities and end with the Rabshakeh's words being related to

24 The Rabshakeh's words in v. 4-10: 123 words; Hezekiah's men answers in v. 11 with seventeen words; the Rabshakeh speaks 22 words in v. 12 and 116 words in v. 13-20; Hezekiah speaks but two words in v. 21.

Hezekiah. This narrative can be described as having a slow pace – 79% of the narrative is given in direct speech.²⁵

In 2 Kgs 18:13-37 there is more than one disturbance of chronology in the discourse. The same logic applies to v. 36 as to Isa 36:21. The incident of Hezekiah's taking down the gold from the temple doors in v. 16a must have taken place before his giving tribute to Sennacherib (v. 15). The repetition of the act of Hezekiah's paying tribute to Sennacherib in v. 15 and 16b serves to highlight the importance of this deed. Clearly, the narrative of 2 Kgs 18:13-37 makes more use of the disruption of chronology to get the message across than Isa 36:1-22. Also, there is a different ratio of narrated time to narration time. Direct speech is also an important aspect in the narrative of 2 Kgs 18:13-37. Of the 480 words in 2 Kgs 18:13-27, 305 words are given in direct speech.²⁶ As has been noted above, the length of the narrated time in both narratives is the same. In the case of this narrative, pace seem to be considerably quicker, even though the discourse is longer – only 64% of the narrative is given in direct speech.

A comparison of these two narratives shows that they differ in at least two aspects: chronology and pace. These differences were noted only after each narrative discourse was compared to its own implied story. By comparing each narrative's discourse as it stands in the text, at least two more differences can be seen: the more persuasive eloquence of the Rabshakeh in 2 Kgs 18:13-37, and the greater emphasis placed on narrative place in this narrative than in Isa 36:1-22.

8. CONCLUSION

The traditional distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzet* cannot be applied in a narratological analysis without some modification of approach. However, this distinction is necessary for the analysis of a narratological text, especially for a narratological analysis of time. In making a distinction between story and discourse, the primacy of discourse should be recognised, as this is the only information available to the analyst.

25 Direct speech slows down narrative pace as narration time and narrated time becomes almost equal (Bar-Efrat 1989:148). This is just a rough estimate, as many other factors can contribute to the pace of a narrative.

26 Hezekiah speaks eight words in v. 14; the Rabshakeh speaks 127 words in v. 19-25; Hezekiah's men answers with seventeen words in v. 26; the Rabshakeh with 22 in v. 27 and 129 in v. 28-35; Hezekiah speaks two words in v. 36.

Also, a narratologist should remember that the story as implied by the discourse can only be applied to that same discourse as an analytical tool.

This approach to the distinction between story and discourse has value for the study of biblical texts, as has been illustrated by a comparative look at Isa 36:1-22 and 2 Kgs 18:13-37. A comparison of these two texts and the relation of their respective discourses to their implied stories brought to light interesting differences between the two narratives.

Even though a distinction between discourse and implied story is necessary, it should be kept in mind that the separate identities of narrative texts should be respected. A narrative should, after all, also be read as a whole. The distinction made between story and discourse, however helpful, can never replace the pure magic of reading a gripping tale.

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