

Analyzing Representations of National Identity and Alterity in Fiction and Film

Episode 1: A Structuralist Approach to Literary Imagology

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Overview of the learning unit

Episode 1:

A Structuralist Approach to Literary Imagology

Episode 2:

Filmic Representations of Inuit Identity: *The Fast Runner Trilogy*

Episode 3:

Interview with the lecturer

Learning target of the episode

You will be able to analyze and describe...

Learning target 1:

...literary and filmic representations of national and cultural identity and alterity by applying a structuralist model.

Learning target 2:

...filmic manifestations of Western hetero-images of the Inuit.

Learning target 3:

...auto-images of pre-contact Inuit identity.

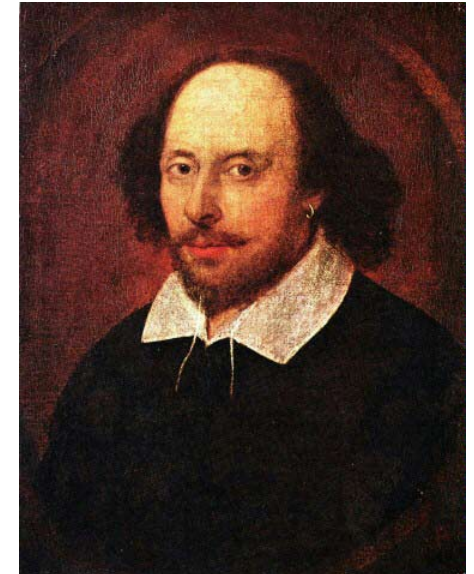
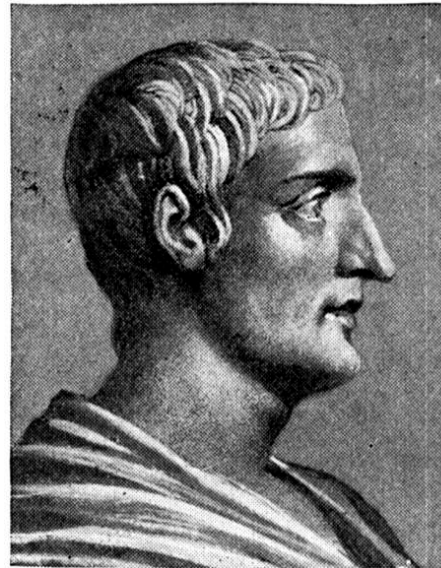
Learning target 4:

...Inuit hetero-images of Western culture.

Topics

1. National Images in Literature
2. Definitions of Basic Notions
 - 2.1 Image(s) – Imagenes
 - 2.2 Stereotype(s) – Stereotypical Features
3. A Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction
 - 3.1 The Personal Dimension
 - 3.1.1 The Functions of Characters: Representation and Articulation
 - 3.1.2 A Structuralist Concept of Characters in Fiction
 - 3.2 The Transpersonal Dimension
 - 3.3 The Non-Personal Dimension
 - 3.4 Intradimensional and Interdimensional Relationships
 - 3.5 Imagological Indeterminacy: The Empty Spots of National Images
 - 3.6 The Image Held by the Implied Author
 - 3.7 The Extraliterary Dimension

1. National Images in Literature



1. National Images in Literature

Literary Imagology

=

Branch of General and Comparative Literature dealing with national images as phenomena of literary texts.

2. Definitions of Basic Notions

Everyday use of the term ‘image’

“concept or impression, created in the minds of the public, of a particular person, institution, product, etc.” (*OED*).

Etymology of the term ‘image’

Latin ‘imago’ = “mental representation” (*ODEE*)

2.1 Image(s) – Imagenes

The term ‘image’ denotes the conception, idea or view a certain character featuring in a work of fiction or the (implied) author of that specific work of fiction himself holds and/or voices of his own country and its people (‘auto-Image’) or of a foreign country and its people (‘hetero-image’). A national image should be regarded as a cluster of features, that is image facets or, ‘imagenes’ which are applied by a *single* person or character to a certain country and its people, be it his own country (‘auto-imagenes’) or a foreign country (‘hetero-imagenes’).

2.1 Image(s) – Imagenes

Auto-images and hetero-images are...

- intricately linked in a dialectical fashion
- purely aesthetic phenomena
- beyond verification or falsification by comparison to extraliterary reality

2.2 Stereotypes – Stereotypical Features

Following on from its Greek meaning of ‘*stereós*’ and ‘*túpos*’ meaning “a solid image”, the category ‘stereotype’ should be applied to denote those clusters of imagenes that remain invariant over an extended period of literary history and are attributed by different authors or fictitious characters to a certain nation, be it their own (auto-stereotype) or a foreign one (hetero-stereotype).

3. A Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction

The Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction offers solutions to the methodological problems of...

- where to find imagenes in fiction and film
- how to structure the imagenes which constitute the national image(s) evoked in a certain work of fiction
- how to compare the imagenes as they occur in the works of different authors from different times
- how to look for recurring imagenes as part of a diachronic analysis

3. A Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction

Features:

- trans-historical
- abstract
- universally applicable
- ‘three-dimensional’ consisting of
 - a personal dimension
 - a transpersonal dimension and
 - a non-personal dimension

3.1 The Personal Dimension

Characters are...

- one major source of imagenes
- carry features that stand in a mimetic/analogous relationship to those of real people
- equipped with properties from all realms of human existence, or, in the terminology of phenomenological philosophy, the human life world

3.1.1 The Functions of Characters: Representation and Articulation

Characters function as carriers of national imagenes in the double sense of...

- representation and
- articulation

3.1.2 A Structuralist Concept of Characters in Fiction

Helmuth Plessner (1892-1985) defines the sphere of the human being, that is his relation to the world, as one which falls into the three realms or worlds of...

- exteriority (“*Außenwelt*”)
- interiority (“*Innenwelt*”) and
- sociality (“*Mitwelt*”)

3.1.2 A Structuralist Concept of Characters in Fiction

Exteriority (Physical Body)

- Physicality (Physique, Physiognomy, Clothing, Gestures, Age, Gender...),
- Physiology (Bodily Functions...)

Sociality (Diachronic and Synchronic Relations)

- Interpersonality (Synchronic Level of Intercourse...)
- Ancestry, Vita, Posterity (Diachronic Level of Descent...),
- Verbality

Interiority (Psyche)

- Emotivity,
- (Self-) Perceptivity,
- Cognitivity: (Practical) Intelligence and (Theoretical) Intellect,
- Aesthetic Sensitivity,
- Creativity and Inventive Fantasy,
- Normativity (Morality, Ideology, Religion...),
- Volitionality

3.2 The Transpersonal Dimension

The transpersonal dimension is intended to capture...

- all imagologically relevant features attributed, through generalizing statements, to a people as a nationally defined community
- imagologically relevant statements on traits allegedly shared by a nation in general
- propositions relating to “the civilization, customs, artistic achievements, etc. of a people” (*OED*) as a whole are commonly referred to by the term ‘culture’

3.2 The Transpersonal Dimension

The transpersonal dimension is based on the pluri-dimensional notion of culture held by cultural semiotics (cf. Posner 1991):

- Material culture (artifacts)
- Social culture (institutions)
- Mental culture (mentefacts)

3.2 The Transpersonal Dimension

Civilization (Material Culture)	Society (Social Culture)	Mentality (Mental Culture)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture and Interior Design, • Arts and Media, • Language, • Clothing, • Science and Technology, • Transportation, (...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions (Families, Groups, Clubs, Associations, Companies, Churches, Administration, Law, Polity), • Social Structure, Social Relations, • Social Climate, • Socio-Economic Conditions, • Political Conditions, • Customs and Traditions, (...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temper, • Ethics, • Ideology, • Religion, (...)

3.3 The Non-Personal Dimension

The transpersonal dimension is intended to register and structure all imagologically relevant features attributed, through generalizing statements of narrators and/or characters, to allegedly typical aspects of the nature of the country under discussion, that is the natural habitat of the nation in focus including

- landscape
- climate
- wildlife

3.3 The Non-Personal Dimension

Landscape	Climate	Wildlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief (Mountains, Lowlands, Plains...), • Stretches of Water (Rivers, Lakes, Oceans...), • Land Surface (Soil, Rock, Sand...), (...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature, • Sunshine, • Precipitation, • Wind, • Humidity, (...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora (Vegetation), • Fauna (Animal Life), (...)

3.4 Intradimensional and Interdimensional Relationships

- The Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction makes it possible to describe the relationship between single images.
- Two forms of relationships are conceivable:
 - relationships within the various dimensions with their components and aspects (intradimensional relationships)
 - as well as those between the three dimensions (interdimensional relationships)
- These relationships can be expected to fulfil the functions of
 - cross-referencing
 - reciprocal reflection
 - analogy-building

3.5 Imagological Indeterminacy: The Empty Spots of National Images

- The structuralist model of national images in fiction attempts to cover the entire scope of semantic resources that imagenes can potentially stem from.
- The images writers present must remain selective.
- Images will exhibit what Roman Ingarden calls ‘empty spots’ or ‘spots of indeterminacy’ (*Leerstellen*, *Unbestimmtheitsstellen*) that are worthwhile studying.

3.6 The Image Held by the Implied Author

- A mere reconstructive description of the image(s) contained in a text does not provide enough basis for drawing any direct and reliable inferences on the image held by the author of that text.
- The imagologist has to sum up the imagologically relevant features and point out which of them dominate the image held by the *implied* author.

3.7 The Extraliterary Dimension

- Images are definitely influenced by an extraliterary reality and thus embedded in an overall extraliterary context.
- National images have to be scrutinized against the background of the extraliterary context that influenced their genesis.
- The extrinsic line of enquiry should:
 - describe the historical context of an image
 - reconstruct the biographical background of the author and his knowledge of the target country/culture
 - present non-fictional comments on the target country/culture by the author
 - to lend further support to the hypothesis on the image of the implied author
 - possibly indicate the change or stability of the image held by the author

Exercises for Self Study

1. Read Katherine Mansfield's short story "Germans at Meat" (1910).
2. Analyze the German characters featuring in the story by applying the Structuralist Model of National Images in Fiction.
3. Examine the implied author's hetero-image of Germany and the Germans.
4. Reconstruct the extraliterary dimension of the implied author's hetero-image of Germany and the Germans.

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Universities Attended

- 1992/93: University of Bremen Law School
- 1993 –99 Student of English, Political Science, Pedagogy, Philosophy at the University of Osnabrück at Vechta (today: University of Vechta)
- 1994/95 –99 Student of History at Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg
- 1998 Teaching degree for secondary schools (English, Political Science)
- 2004 Doctorate (Ph.D.) at the University of Vechta on *The Image of America in Postwar British Fiction: An Imagological Study of Selected Novels*
- 2003 – 2005 Trainee teacher at Gymnasium Obervieland in Bremen; certification thesis on *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen und Perspektivenübernahme im produktionsorientierten Literaturunterricht der gymnasialen Oberstufe: Nadine Gordimers Roman July's People in einem Leistungskurs Englisch der Jahrgangsstufe 12*

About the Contributor

School Activities

- 2005 – 2007 Probationary Teacher at Gymnasium Obervieland
- Since 2007 Lecturer (*Studienrat*) at Max-Planck-Gymnasium in Delmenhorst; Department Head of Politics and Economics; further functions: restructuring of bilingual branch (Content Language Integrated Learning – CLIL); coordination of public relations and
- 2009 Promotion to Senior Lecturer (*Oberstudienrat*)

University Activities

- 2004 – 2007 Associate Lecturer for Modern English Literature, EFL Pedagogy and
- 2007 Associate Lecturer for American Cultural Studies at the Institut für Anglistik und Germanistik (IAG) at the University of Vechta, Mentor of Internship at the English Department of the University of Bremen
- 2005/06 – 2006 Lecturer for EFL Pedagogy – Content and Language Integrated Learning at the University of Bremen
- Since 2008 Research on postdoctoral thesis at the University of Bremen; working title: *On the Road to Genotopia: the Biotechnological Revolution in Anglophone Literature and Film* (Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Norbert Schaffeld)

Principal Fields of Interest

- Imagology
- Literary translation
- Utopian fiction
- Literature didactics
- Film literacy
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

About the Contributor

Publications

a) Books

Stephan-Alexander Ditze. *America and the Americans in Postwar British Fiction: An Imagological Study of Selected Novels*. American Studies – A Monograph Series. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006.

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b) Editor

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d) Translations

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