

Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction (Texas Linguistics)

Suzanne Fleischman

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In this pathfinding study, Suzanne Fleischman brings together theory and methodology from various quarters to shed important new light on the linguistic structure of narrative, a primary and universal device for translating our experiences into language.

Fleischman sees linguistics as laying the foundation for all narratological study, since it offers insight into how narratives are constructed in their most primary context: everyday speech. She uses a linguistic model designed for "natural" narrative to explicate the organizational structure of "artificial" narrative texts, primarily from the Middle Ages and the postmodern period, whose seemingly idiosyncratic use of tenses has long perplexed those who study them. Fleischman develops a functional theory of tense and aspect in narrative that accounts for the wide variety of functions—pragmatic as well as grammatical—that these two categories of grammar are called upon to perform in the linguistic economy of a narration.



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