

My Narratology

An Interview with Thomas Pavel

DIEGESIS: What is your all-time favourite narratological study?

Pavel: Rather than choosing among the many excellent studies published in the last couple of decades, I'd like to acknowledge what all of us owe to *The Rhetoric of Fiction* by Wayne C. Booth, both to its original edition of 1961 and to the expanded edition published in 1983.

DIEGESIS: Which narrative would you like to take with you on a lonely island?

Pavel: It depends on how long I'd have to stay on this island. For a vacation of two weeks, a novel by Charles Dickens; for a sabbatical leave, *The Human Comedy* by Honoré de Balzac. In case of a life-long exile, a while ago I answered a similar question by mentioning Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* and Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, assuming that the Bible and the complete works of William Shakespeare would also be part of the deal. I'd still choose these books.

DIEGESIS: Why narratology?

Pavel: Narratives are about human beings and the actions they take in the light of their needs, passions, norms and values. Narratology, in principle at least, should therefore blend the rhetoric with the ethics of fiction...

DIEGESIS: Which recent narratological trends are of particular interest to you?

Pavel: ... as does the work of James Phelan and his colleagues at the Ohio School of Narratology.

DIEGESIS: What is the future of narratology?

Pavel: Without being a member of the WACP (World Academy of Clairvoyants and Prophets, Stuttgart & Trier), I dare submit that narratology would considerably benefit from paying attention to the links between stories and human values.

DIEGESIS: What other question would you like to answer?

Pavel: If the next question were "What do you think of formal narratology?", the answer would be "Formalism is wonderful, but narratology might also try to listen to the human heart."

Born in Romania, Thomas Pavel was educated in his native country and France. He received his Ph.D. from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France, and subsequently pursued a teaching career in Canada and the U.S. His research interests are poetics, literary theory, and the history of the novel. He has published several monographs including *The Poetics of Plot: The Case of English Renaissance Drama* (1985), *Fictional Worlds* (1986), *L'Art de l'éloignement: Essai sur l'imagination classique* (1996), *The Spell of Language: Post-Structuralism and Speculation* (2001 [1988]), and *The Lives of the Novel* (2013 [2003]).

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How to cite this article:

Pavel, Thomas: "My Narratology. An Interview with Thomas Pavel". In: *DIEGESIS. Interdisciplinary E-Journal for Narrative Research / Interdisziplinäres E-Journal für Erzählforschung* 6.1 (2017). 97-98.

URN: [urn:nbn:de:hbz:468-20170606-143200-7](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:468-20170606-143200-7)

URL: <https://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/diegesis/article/download/265/369>



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