

Working Groups at the BCDSS

[Narratology in Slavery and Dependency Studies](#)

In this working group, we explore the manifold possibilities of applying narratological approaches to the analysis of different texts, text types and genres related to strong asymmetrical forms of dependency, be it autobiographical "slave narratives", historiographic texts, normative sources, literary works, or archive material. We also seek to integrate colleagues working with artefacts, or even performative material, such as music.

We do not understand narratives as purely literary art forms, but as phenomena that are closely interconnected with the reality of life and thus with history. Narration provides cultural patterns of understanding which, in its diverse manifestations, can be found in every human society and which is central to practically every expression of human cultural action.

Narratology as a discipline dedicated to the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation also offers an approach that is not restricted to the study of texts as literary objects of art: "Narratology applies to virtually every cultural object" (Mieke Bal 1999, 19).

Narratology has developed, over the past decades, from being a structuralist approach to literary texts, to offering a methodology that considers the discursive strategies of texts as well as their socio-historical context of the origin and their reception. With its specific "toolkit", its analytical questions, narratology is an excellent basis for interdisciplinary and transcultural comparison, as other initiatives have already proven. With our working group, we build upon the work of the Bonn Center for Transcultural Narratology ([Bonner Zentrum für Transkulturelle Narratologie – BZTN4](#)).

What we do

We meet on a monthly basis to explore the methodological framework of narratology, its application and, possibly, adaptation required by our source material. We also seek to strengthen the collaboration with external partners of the BZTN and to forge new partnerships

inside the University of Bonn and beyond. Most importantly, the group will provide an open space for testing what may be gained by applying narratological approaches to different forms of narratives and discussing methods and results among colleagues.

The first signpost activity on the working group's schedule is the conference Narratives of Dependency, to be held in June or July 2021, during which members of the working group will present case studies. A preparatory workshop has been held in July 2020.

Readings

There is a large body of theoretical and methodological literature on (transcultural) narratology. A reading list will be discussed during the first meeting. Please note that most texts on transcultural and cultural-historical approaches in narratology are in German.

Who: BCDSS members and M.A. students, researchers affiliated with the BZTN, everybody interested in narratology and its application to sources related to strong asymmetrical forms of dependency.

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