

## **Metalepsis as a touchstone of narrativity**

Tomasz Waszak

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

Although primarily a rhetoric device, since it has been adopted by Genette (1985: 234-237), metalepsis is irreversibly intertwined with narratological issues. As is well known, the term relates to transgressions between different diegetic levels, resulting in paradoxical effects of breaking the unbreakable and mingling the disparate (Pier 2014: 326-328). Belonging primarily to the discourse space, the metalepsis feeds nevertheless on the story, i.e. the diegetic acrobations root inevitably in an ontological background provided by the fictional world.

The relation between the diegetic and the ontological aspect of metalepsis is an asymmetric one. Whereas each narratological transgression implies the existence of its ontological equivalent, there is no need for the ontological transgressions to have their diegetic counterparts. This results from the difference between two types of level borders: the illocutionary and the ontological one, as they are explained by Ryan (2004: 439-440). However, Ryan evokes the difference to point out that the change of speaker does not entail the change of world, without maintaining the same about the reverse order of things. It is exactly the latter that becomes the starting point of this study.

Truly, there are multiple-world stories where each world constitutes a full-fledged narrative. But there are also stories where the other worlds are merely referred to, without developing into a separate narrative level. Then, the metalepsis, if in question, becomes a narrated matter, too, and is not a narrating tool anymore. In other words, there is a difference between a meta-narrative and narrative aspect of the term that is important not only for the nomenclatural precision but also for the narrativity question in general. For, as long as literary narratives are concerned, the gap between meta-narration and narration is relatively easy to bridge, which is not the case anymore if other media come into question. Thus the metalepsis, or more precisely: its double structure, becomes a touchstone of narrativity, showing its media-dependent limits.

### References

- Genette, Gérard (1985): *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*; transl. by Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Pier, John (2014): "Metalepsis". In: Peter Hühn/Jan Christoph Meister/John Pier/Wolf Schmid (Eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*. 2nd Edition, Vol. 1, 326-343.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2004): "Metaleptic Machines"; in: *Semiotica* 150, Vol. 1/4, 439-469.