

Creating Narrative Space for Marginalized Voices through Focalization Techniques - **Jessica van Wynsberge** (Ghent University)

For a long time, white storytellers and characters dominated the narrative space in the Afrikaanse plaasroman. However, examining the concept of focalization as introduced by Gérard Genette, reveals a noteworthy development. While the presence of black characters was almost entirely ignored in novels such as *Bart Nel* (1951) by Johannes Van Melle, we see an increasing creation of narrative space for the consciousness representation of black characters in the years that follow. This study highlights several examples of how focalization techniques have facilitated the emergence of the voices of oppressed minorities. By combining an analysis of focalization techniques with the concept of intersectionality, the study shows how power dynamics influence the ways in which white authors like Elsa Joubert and André P. Brink have appropriated the voices of black and female characters. Through systematic creation of narrative space for characters like Poppie Nongena (1978) authors in positions of power have generated space for the expression of interior spaces for protagonists in less privileged positions. Another worthy example is the creation of space through spookcharacters in *Toorberg* (2003) en *Die swye van Mario Salviati* (2000) by Etienne van Heerden. Here, the narratological technique of creating space through focalization in the world of the non-living, has brought back the perspective of marginalized voices from the past in the historical place of the plaas. These examples paved the way for further experimentation in first person narrations, as seen in Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2020) and Ronelda S. Kamfer's *Kompoun* (2021) where intersecting power relations on the axes of race, ethnicity, gender and class can further be studied.