



# Analyzing Narratives and Story-Telling

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Narrative inquiry has established itself as a broad and polymorphous research orientation within the social sciences. The most varied personal, political, institutional, organizational and conversational stories are currently collected and studied, yet the term “narrative analysis” remains replete with innate tensions. Does the research material as such qualify the narrativity of the analysis, or is it also required that these narratives are studied *as* narratives?

The use of narratives in social research may be characterized by three separate, but by no means straightforwardly successive moments. At the first stage, narratives were used as *factual resources*. The second moment was characterized by the study of *narratives as texts* with a particular form. The third moment includes a movement beyond a separate narrative text, into the study of *narratives and storytelling* as polymorphous phenomena *in context*.

Narratives bring into the open rich, detailed and often personal perspectives. Therefore, it is easy to misunderstand narrative simply

as a *method*, and narratives *as resources* with which to investigate the phenomena of which the narratives make an account. A more ambitious version of narrative analysis draws from the social constructionist notion that narratives already always are part of the constitution of the social, cultural, and political world (Bruner 1991; Gergen and Gergen 1993). “From a hermeneutic point of view,” Guy Widdershoven maintains, “human life is a process of narrative interpretation,” quite independently and before any narrative analysis (Widdershoven 1993, 2). These notions motivate theoretical investigation on *how* narratives are constituted, what their place is in human life, who is entitled to tell them and when, how they are received, and how they work in the social world. Narrative analysis is thus inseparable from concerns of the narrative constitution of selves, identities, and social realities.

This chapter first discusses the concept of narrative and then proceeds to outline the use of narratives before what has been termed “the narrative turn”. Instead of one narrative

turn, three partly separate turns are discussed. As early versions of narrative analysis, the models of Vladimir Propp (1968) and William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1997) will be introduced next. The Labovian model will be systematically used as a comparative backdrop for further developments: the move from text to context and the contribution of recent semantic and cognitive studies for the analysis of narratives. The last section suggests expectation analysis as a way to connect the Labovian heritage, contextual orientation and the idea of positioning. The focus of the chapter is on the analytic procedures, not on the interpretive alternatives.

### THE NOTION OF NARRATIVE

Social scientists have seldom considered definitions of narrative (cf. Brockmeier and Harré 1991; Riessman 1993, 17–18). Many scholars simply repeat Aristotle's characterization of a good tragedy having a *beginning*, *middle*, and *end* (Aristotle 1968, 1450b). For open, conversational or artistic narratives this is a far too compelling formula, emphasizing the clear sequence of events; on the other hand the terms are far too broad to reveal anything fundamental in the nature of what narratives actually do.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1981, 228) offers a useful, rhetorically oriented definition: "Someone telling someone else that something happened". With a slight revision we can also include sensitivity to the context: "Somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened" (Phelan 2005b, 18). The next step taken in this chapter is to suggest that one can also turn the term "somebody" into the plural form, making shared tellership visible (Ochs and Capps 2001).

Cultural studies may be criticized for two confusing ways of discussing narrative. In the first case, all kinds of interview talk is understood as narrative, narration or story. In such manner, the whole term of narrative is itself at risk of becoming redundant. Ordinary talk may as well include different genres of

speech such as argumentation, instruction, and narration (Linde 1993; Fludernik 2000). In the second case, narrative is a substitute for a general assumption, theory, or ideological stance without temporal organization (Rimmon-Kenan 2006). Clive Seale, for example, suggests a far broader notion of narrative:

I understand narratives to be constructed through many things, including acts of consumption, for example, which can be made symbolically to tell stories about tastes, relationships (whether real or desired) or social standing. (Seale 2000, 37)

Seale points out convincingly how narrativity and narrative understanding are not something that only accounts for social action in retrospect. He also rejects, in a useful way, the too narrow textualist ways of understanding narrative and opens new areas for narrative analysis. Narrativity is woven into acting and planning in ways discussed more thoroughly a moment later. But yet, in order to ward off the tendency of "narrative imperialism" (Strawson 2004; Phelan 2005a), the elegant solution suggested by Mari-Laure Ryan might be more sustainable:

The narrative potential of life can be accounted for by making a distinction between 'being a narrative', and 'possessing narrativity'. (Ryan 2005, 347)

Narrativity may be understood as an aspect of texts, experiences, and action; an aspect that invites more or less direct narrative responses. Narrativity is a matter-of-degree, rendering texts and speech more or less narrative. A wish for analytic clarity does not imply that narratives would exist as pure and distinct objects. It would be hopeless and misleading to assume that narratives are formally similar, always complete, and always neatly distinct from other kinds of discourse (Ochs and Capps 2001). "Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres", asserts Ronald Barthes (1966/1977, 79). This means that no definition will fit all narratives and that the desire for a conceptual consensus may be rather counter-productive.

## NARRATIVES BEFORE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Many kinds of narratives were used as research material long before any narrative analysis. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1984) used hundreds of more or less storied letters and other life documents in their classical work *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, originally published 1918–1920. In their analysis, letters and other documents constitute “life records”.

*The Polish Peasant* demonstrates the power of individual story for the sociological imagination. The belief in the factual, referential transparency of these documents of life is tangible while the authors read the letters as *illustrations* of attitudes, life situations or their own conclusions. While the authors introduced new kinds of material to social research, they were still convinced that their field of study was sociology. No less than 50 years later, when Norman K. Denzin (1970) revisited the heritage of life history method, he shared this sociological point of departure. Denzin points out that “the life history presents the experiences and definitions held by one person, one group, or one organization as this person, group, or organization interprets those experiences” (ibid, p. 220).

Daniel Bertaux’ anthology *Biography and Society* (1981b) is an important threshold publication. It can be read as an early example of narrative studies; yet most of its articles discuss biography without any explicit narrative vocabulary. Bertaux himself recommends a far-reaching shift from the study of “life history” to “life stories”, believing that the two kinds of data “might well involve a distinction between two different approaches” (Bertaux 1981a, 7).

Martin Kohli (1981) explicitly offers the vision of narrative analysis. Kohli approaches biographical data from the perspective of its terms of production and wants to notice the “codes”, or “textual schemata which are available for the production of meaningful biographical accounts” (p. 62). But this is a new research problem, and “one has to rely

not only on sociological approaches, but also on those of linguistics and literature” (p. 62). Where “life records” orient the analysis towards registering past events, Kohli already addresses the relevance of the present moment and expectations of the future in the creation of biographical materials. Kohli notices the relevance of literary analysis for sociology by asserting that “both literature and sociology are dealing with texts” (ibid., 67). The tone and point of view of his analysis is explicitly textualist: life stories should be analyzed as texts like literary artefacts.

The use of stories in social research thus has a much longer history than narrative analysis. Erik H. Erikson (1956, 118) had even suggested the systematic study of biographies of “ordinary people”. However, narrative was not theorized as such, and it received no entries in the index sections of the early works.

## THE NARRATIVE TURNS

Instead of one narrative turn and one new attitude towards narrative, we can rather speak of at least *three* different turns and attitudes. Within *literary* studies, the narrative turn began as early as the 1960s and signified a structuralist, scientific and descriptive rhetoric in the study of narrative. In *historiography*, the turn to narrative theory indicated criticisms of naive narrative historiography and more generally “the value of narrative in representing reality” (Mink 1987; White 1987). The narrative turn in *social sciences* began later, in the early 1980s and encompassed entirely different issues: positive appraisal of narratives as such, a general anti-positivist and often humanist approach to the study of human psychology and culture (Plummer 1983, 2001; Bruner 1991; Riessman 1993). Several historical accounts of narrative turns are currently available (Fludernik 2005; Herman 2005; Kreiswirth 2005; Riessman 2001; Hyvärinen 2006b), yet the diversity of histories of different disciplines is seldom addressed.

But why is it a *turn* in the first place? Aristotle wrote on tragedy; epics, biographies

and folktales had been studied for ages. But the new theoretical landscape was neither normative nor Aristotelian. What was new in the 1960s narrative inquiry was what Martin Kreiswirth identifies as “the institutional study of narrative for its own sake, as opposed to the examination of individual narratives” (2005, 377–378). Marie-Laure Ryan (2005, 344) points out the birth of the new *concept* of narrative: “it is only in the past fifty years that the concept of narrative has emerged as an autonomous object of inquiry”. The abstract, theoretically rich, flexible, and thus quickly moving concept of narrative was a new thing even in literature and linguistics in the 1960s. Roland Barthes’s famous passage has been used to characterize the ubiquity of narrative:

Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting [...], stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. (Barthes 1977, 79)

Looking from another angle, this passage indicates the existence of a new kind of *concept of narrative*. Structuralist narratology nurtured scientific ambitions and rhetoric. Its imagery “projects the illusion that narrative is knowable and describable, and therefore that its workings can be explained comprehensively. Narratology promised to provide guidelines to interpretation uncontaminated by the subjectivism of traditional literary criticism” (Fludernik 2005, 38).

In education, psychology and sociology the narrative turn properly took place in the early 1980s, and often implied qualitative, humanistically oriented research – in stark contrast to the scientific, descriptive tenor of structuralist narratology and the growing post-structuralist discourse in cultural studies. The narrative turn signified both a new prospect and a new dilemma: many kinds of research materials were now to be theorized and analyzed as narratives – but often without the smallest consensus on what it actually meant.

Two major theoretical moves had huge impact on social research. Critical reception of

Jean-Francois Lyotard’s (1993[1983]) rejection of *grand narratives* was emblematic for the gradual rehabilitation of the alternative, small, forgotten, and untold stories, often first in feminist studies. If quantitative research foregrounded dominant trends, stories were to theorize the particular. The post-modern suspicion of authoritative professional, scientific and institutional truths legitimated the search for new voices. Second, the new metaphoric discourse on “*life as narrative*” suggested that narratives should have a unique role in the study of human lives, action, and psychology (MacIntyre 1984; Ricoeur 1984; Carr 1986; Sarbin 1986; Bruner 1987; McAdams 1988, 1993; Polkinghorne 1988; Ochberg and Rosenwald 1992; Widdershoven 1993; Brockmeier and Harré 2001; Plummer 2001; Bamberg 2004a; Hyvärinen 2006b).

The new theoretical perspective was not easily reconciled with the inherited structuralist, formal and scientifically oriented methods of reading. In many a case, the adopted way to interpret narratives might duly be characterized as the *hermeneutic re-telling* of the stories, or narrative “criticism” (e.g. Freeman 1993, 2004; Josselson 2004). There is always the point to which good stories are informative as such, and able to evoke strong reader responses.

The metaphorical impulse for narrative studies created a huge *search for methods*. Here the story of narrative turn is not so much progressive as often explicitly regressive: methods and theories were searched out from earlier decades and from other disciplines. Vladimir Propp (1968) and William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1997 [1967]), for example, became widely topical in the 1980s. These retroactive moves of reception created substantial inconvenience between dominantly structuralist methods and often post-structuralist, phenomenological and hermeneutic theorizing. Yet, many authors have tried to overcome this tension and have written introductions to narrative analysis, including for example Kohler Riessman (1993, 2001); Lieblich et al. (1998); Clandinin and Connelly (2000); Czarniawska (2004); Daiute and Lightfoot (2004).

The metaphoric understanding of life as narrative sometimes incorporated the idea of one, ideally coherent, and encompassing story of life, as for example in McAdams (1993, 5, italics MH) “(I)n the modern world in which we all live, *identity is a life story*. A life story is a personal myth that an individual begins working on in late adolescence and young adulthood in order to provide his or her life with unity or purpose [...]” (see also Polkinghorne 1988, 150). Narrative is thus adopted as a way to re-theorize too static conceptions of self and identity. However, a kind of sweeping phenomenology and a rush to totalize the narrative aspect of life seems to characterize parts of the early theorizing: it is indeed the undivided and unquestioned “we” who is having these narrative identities and narrative selves. Despite considerable diversity among authors regarding how normative the tone was, two major conclusions seemed to appear repeatedly: life as a whole is, or is in search of, a narrative while narrative implies first and foremost a unity of life (McAdams 1988, 1993). Discursive, post-structuralist analyses of personal narrative of course rejected this unitary vision. “From this perspective, the storyteller is not a unitary self, making holistic sense of his/her life in the telling. Instead, the stories that people tell about themselves are about many selves, each situated in particular contexts, and working strategically to resist those contexts” (Squire 2004, 116).

The metaphoric discussion of life as narrative seems to have four equally important consequences. First of all, it makes the collection and study of life narratives vitally important; second, it privileges the “big” narratives of life (see Bamberg 2004a, 2006; Freeman 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006); third, it gives a strong impetus toward reading life narratives as coherent and unitary; and finally, the emphasis on the expressive nature of life narratives encourages us to envisage them as self-sufficient wholes, waiting for “externalization”, and not primarily interactionally occasioned utterances within institutional and cultural contexts.

## THE PROPPIAN MODEL

Propp studied one distinctive genre of narratives empirically – the Russian *wonder-tales*. He found out that “in the wonder-tale different characters perform identical actions, or, what is the same thing, that identical actions can be performed in very different ways” (Propp 1984, 73). Within this formulaic genre, therefore, there are basic *functions* that can be actualized in different ways but which still occur in the tales in the same order. “So, for example, if the hero leaves home in quest of something, and the object of his desires is far away, he can reach it by magic horse, eagle, flying carpet, flying ship, astride the devil” and so on (Propp 1984, 73).

Propp takes a remarkable variety of actions and condenses them into basic “functions”. On the other hand, the number of key actors in fairy tales was also reduced into basic categories. He identified the roles of villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher and hero (Propp 1968, 77–83). The power of the model lies in this compression of the seemingly unlimited number of agents and their possible moves into a limited number of alternatives, and in arranging the functions into a sequence.

Propp intended a bottom-up, empirical and strictly inductive approach in the study of wonder-tales. The reception of the book in the French discussion of the early 1960s turned his project upside down (Propp 1984, 69–74). As a consequence, the model was primarily used in a top-down way: trying fit parts of whatever narratives into wonder-tale categories. The merit of the model is to suggest that well-established cultural genres may privilege certain categories of agents, repertoires of actions and processes.

## THE LABOVIAN PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Few other models of narrative analysis have ever had such huge impact in social research as the one presented by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1997 [1967]).

The formative role of the model was reflected in the 1997 special issue of *Journal of Narrative and Life History*.

Emerging from the linguistic discourse, the model provided social research with one of the first tools to approach the studied narratives in a detailed way. Textually, the model offered clear criteria to recognize narrative, and recognize its difference from other forms of talk (description, argument or question).

Labov and Waletzky tried to find the smallest, most elementary, oral version of narrative. Following the main trend of the time, their approach is formal, trying to locate the *structural* model of narrative. But in addition to this, there is a conscious *functional* element: narratives are for “recapitulating experience”, but this not the only function. A sheer experiential narrative would be pointless, they argue, without the function of “evaluation” (Labov & Waletzky 1997, 4).

The basic element of the model is a “narrative clause”. Narrative clauses are ordered sequentially, and the change in their order would change the whole narrative. Thus, “I fell in love with Paula. My wife left me” would be an entirely different story if the order of clauses had been reversed. But still, only very elementary narratives are exclusively built on these narrative clauses; “free” and “restricted” clauses are needed as well. The model is based on sequence, narratives being “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred” (Labov and Waletzky 1997, 12). The model has the following parts (Labov 1972, 370):

- |                         |                |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Abstract;            | 4. Evaluation; |
| 2. Orientation;         | 5. Result;     |
| 3. Complicating action; | 6. Coda.       |

As Hymes (1996, 193) notes, this structure resembles models created earlier in literary studies. In comparison with the very theoretical discussion of life as narrative, it steered interest towards more empirically based problems. Labovian approach and such influential works as Elliot Mishler’s (1986) *Research Interviewing* informed

narrative studies in practice, and offered the means to approach fairly small stories in a detailed way.

Mishler, however, was among the first to voice a key problem with the Labovian model, when he “pointed to its relative inattention to the interview context in the production of narratives” (Mishler 1997, 71). In a typically structuralist way, the model portrays stories as independent and fully formed texts, and “appears to take the story or narrative as already formed, as waiting to be delivered” (Schegloff 1997, 100). Schegloff points out that nothing is told about the recipients during the telling or afterwards, no silences or hesitations are reported (Ibid., 100–101).

The strong emphasis on sequence is another problem. Mishler (1997, 72) conveys a broadly shared experience in noticing how “in intensive life history interviews, respondents rarely provided chronological accounts”. In other words, the model, strictly based on clause level narrative sequence, was all too narrow actually to capture the complex narration so typical in interview situations. This seems to lead to a marginalization in the model of other aspects such as place, by rendering it only as a static element of orientation. But from life stories to fiction, place may have a much more central and constitutive role in the narrative (e.g. Herman 2002; Georgakopoulou 2003).

## FROM TEXT TO NARRATIVE PRACTICE

The changing reception of the Labovian model exhibits a more profound change from studying narratives as separate, complete and self-sufficient *texts* towards a study of narratives *in context* and interaction and the study of *narrative practices* (Gubrium and Holstein 2007). Within this emerging understanding, “emphasis is on narrative activity as sense-making *process* rather than as a finished product in which loose ends knit together into a single story-line” (Ochs and Capps 2001, 15).

The work of Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001, 3) marks, in various ways, the end

of the dominance of the Labovian *form* in narrative analysis. Instead of full narratives, proceeding through the six steps, the authors suggest conversational narratives, many of which “seem to be launched without knowing where they will lead” (Ibid., 2). If narrative, as “a cognitively and discursively complex genre” often incorporates the elements of description, chronology, evaluation and explanation, then the conversational storytelling completes and complicates this picture with the respective elements of *question*, *clarification*, *challenge* and *speculation* (Ibid., 18–19). What seemed to be formal and stable elements are transformed into processes.

Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (2007) argue for a similar shift from strictly textual study of stories towards investigating the storying process, or “narrative ethnography”, as they call their approach. They recognize the relevance of the conceptual distinction between the story and storying process, which offers “grounds for thinking about narrativity as something interesting on its own” (Ibid., 1). The observation has profound consequences. When the interest moves from narratives as separate texts into storytelling and narrative practice within social institutions, the social functions of narrativity can be theorized in a new way. This move out from the confines of narrative structure invokes a whole new array of questions, and the authors emphatically invoke even larger contexts than Ochs and Capps, seeing them embedded like nested dolls:

Concern with the production, distribution, and circulation of stories in society requires that we step outside of narrative material and consider questions such as who produces particular kinds of stories, where are they likely to be encountered, what are their consequences, under what circumstances are particular narratives more or less accountable, what interests publicize them, how do they gain popularity, and how are they challenged? (Ibid., 19)

Distinctive for the work of Gubrium and Holstein is the recognition of two different layers of control: interactional and institutional (Ibid., 30–41). Within this

approach, they welcome the study of “narrative environments”, which “challenge as well as affirm various stories” (Ibid., 26) and “narrative control”. Arthur W. Frank’s influential study *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995) portrays “restitution narrative” as one of the three basic models of illness narratives, but as the model that is heavily supported by medical institutions, advertising and media. (Frank 1995, 78–79).

### **Events, states and narrative genres**

Catherine Riessman (1990, 75–78) identifies three separate narrative genres in the interviewed divorce talk she studied, calling them “proper” stories, “habitual narratives”, and “hypothetical narratives”. In her discourse, “story” is reserved for the kind of oral narratives Labov and Waletzky studied. Indeed, how representative is the Labovian narrative?

Paul Ricoeur (1984) discusses “the semantics of action”, suggesting a strong relationship between the vocabularies of narrative and action (Hyvärinen 2006a). The narrative theorist David Herman takes this point further and unpacks the key Labovian terminology of “complicating action” in his *Story Logic* (2002). Drawing on the work of language philosophers and semantics, he suggests a far-reaching distinction between *states*, *activities/processes*, *accomplishments* and *achievements* (Herman 2002, 29–37):

[Zeno] Vendler [...] proposed a fourfold distinction between *activity* terms (e.g. used to describe someone running or pushing a cart), *accomplishment* terms (used to describe someone running a mile or drawing a perfect circle), *achievement* terms (used to describe someone reaching the top of a hill), and *state* terms (used to describe someone as female, North-American, or in debt). (Herman 2002, 30)

Each of these categories presumes a different extension of time. For processes, the implied period of time is not definite, as it is for accomplishments. “Growing old takes a certain unspecified amount of time, whereas finishing a peanut butter sandwich entails a sequence of action that falls within a definite

temporal span” (Ibid., 30). States (being in debt, being pregnant, being ill) apparently hold true over variable stretches of time.

This plurality helps to recognize new kinds of narratives. Frank (1995, 77), for example, briefly summarizes the restitution narrative: “Yesterday I was healthy, today I’m sick, but tomorrow I’ll be healthy again”. Does this narrative qualify at all as a story in the Labovian model? One could reasonably argue that states – states of mind, states of illness, states of body – figure more prominently within genres such as illness narratives. Herman suggests that different narrative genres have different “preference-rules”.

As an example of different preference-rules, one can take the difference between “epic” and “psychological novel”, (Ibid., 37):

Epic	Accomplishment>achievement> activities>states
Psychological novel	States>activities> accomplishments>achievements

It is easy to see that the Labovian model prefers the “epics” over the “psychological novel”. If the original question was about life-threatening situations, this inclination to see adventurous stories as paradigmatic narratives is not surprising. The concept of “state” is obviously of great importance for positional analysis of storytelling. Actions, activities and states can also be either *bounded* or *unbounded* – Riessman’s habitual narratives being a good example of the use of unbounded verbal forms.

Herman’s discussion of Halliday’s functional grammar, different verbal processes and semantic roles is of particular interest (Ibid., 140–148). Instead of approaching the whole range of verbal processes in terms of complicating action, Halliday’s grammar offers useful new distinctions. His model portrays six verbal processes:

**Process Types** (adapted from Halliday 1994 via Herman 2002):

Process type	Role types
Material (Dispositive, Creative)	Agent, Goal
Mental (Perceptive, Affective, Cognitive)	Senser, Phenomenon

Relational	Carrier, Attribute, Identified, Identifier
Behavioural	Behaver
Verbal	Sayer, Receiver, Target
Existential	Existent

By simplifying Herman’s discussion, this variety of process types may be condensed into three semantic roles of *agent*, *experiencer/witness*, and *patient*. In comparison with the Labovian model, the accounted *mental* processes and the corresponding roles of the *experiencers* are considered on equal footing with material actions. Perception, affection and cognition may be the action privileged by particular genres, say in illness narratives. Genres, in turn, are far from exclusively textual phenomena, they are entirely socially conditioned (Bakhtin 1986). Gubrium and Holstein (2007, 34–37), for example, compare the narratives from *Alcoholics Anonymous groups* and *Secular Sobriety Groups* (SGS) as examples of different institutionally fostered ways of talking about alcoholism. While the SGS genre privileges the roles of *agent* and *experiencer*, the AA-narratives in contrast privilege the other end of the continuum, *experiencer* and *patient*. The grammar thus provides a basic semantic matrix for the study of narrative positioning.

## SCRIPTS, STORIES AND NARRATIVITY

The shift in attention from strictly defined narrative *texts* and their inner structures to cover broader narrative *practices*, as Gubrium, Holstein, Ochs, Capps and many others have suggested, invite closer scrutiny of “narrativity” as a theme. Many narratologists have argued for understanding narrativity as a matter of degree (Fludernik 1996; Abbott 2002, 22; Herman 2002). “She drove the car to work” is unequivocally a narrative clause, yet its narrativity is almost nonexistent.

When children begin to narrate experiences at about the age of two, their way of telling is particular, because

...children’s earliest personal narratives depict routine rather than particular, novel events. In addition,

when young children recount *routine, scripted events*, their narratives tend to be more detailed than those of depicting less common incidents. (Ochs and Capps 2001, 78; Nelson 2003, 28)

It is as if these routines and scripts were still, for children, an open and exciting world to be learned and accounted for. But it does not take many years to learn to focus on the unforeseen, exceptional; the diversions from routine. Mark Turner (1996, 19) calls these routine sequences stories, and argues that “most of our actions consist of executing small spatial stories: getting a glass of juice from the refrigerator, dressing, bicycling to the market. Executing these stories, recognizing them, and imagining them are all related because they are all structured by the same image schemas”. Turner is perfectly right in arguing for the relevance of such spatial sequences in organizing and perceiving human action. However, it is argued that these sequences are not yet stories.

Cognitive theorists have discussed scripts, frames and schemata as mental ways of understanding new and old situations (Schank and Abelson 1977). The famous restaurant script informs us about understandings of choosing a table, having a menu, ordering food and paying the bill as relatively permanent parts of the script. Scripts organize shopping, political campaigning and sexual relationships. Scripts, in addition to being cognitive, cultural, and normative, also seem to be future oriented as well. It is possible to think that in both *following* such scripts in practice, and in *telling* stories on visiting restaurants, that each teller contributes to the construction of a script, or as I suggest, a *master narrative* on the issue. Michael Bamberg (2004a, 361) expresses a similar thought without explicitly making the connection between master narratives and scripts:

I would like to catch up with the concession that speakers constantly invoke master narratives, and that many, possibly even most, of the master narratives employed remain inaccessible to our conscious recognition and transformation. Master narratives structure how the world is intelligible, and therefore permeate the petit narratives of our everyday talk.

An interesting interplay occurs above, involving slightly different horizons of a *cultural script* or (at least partly) shared cultural knowledge, *master* narratives presenting normatively privileged accounts, *counter* narratives that resist and take distance from such culturally privileged ways of telling, and *high narrativity* of good stories that do not simply recount the cultural scripts. Because master narratives are seldom explicitly told by anyone, the more formulaic term “script” is preferred here to refer to the cultural and situational impacts on narration.

As Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré (2001) argue, very little is known about how exactly cultural scripts impose their models on individual action or narration. There seems to be two different ways to reckon with cultural-cognitive scripts. One is conscious reflection, resisting or affirmation of what has been called “master narratives” (Andrews 2004; Bamberg 2004a; Jones 2004).

But what should be said about the master narratives, which “remain inaccessible to our conscious recognition and transformation” (Bamberg 2004a, 361)? One answer is that the human capacity of narrativity processes this scripting level in an automatic way. As a child, we start recounting the formulaic, normal course of events but learn step by step – in telling, listening and monitoring responses – to report on the exceptional. Our skill as narrators is established on expert understandings of such cultural scripts as “going to a restaurant”. Herman suggests “a direct proportion between a sequence’s degree of narrativity” and the richness of “world knowledge” that it triggers by using scripts. A clear paradox is made manifest here: narratives should invoke a rich density of scripts to provide thick narration, yet narration cannot merely constitute the repetition of these scripts:

Just as there is a lower limit of narrativity, past which certain “stories” activate so few world models that they can no longer be processed as stories at all, refusing to be configured into action structures drawing on pre-storied scripts and frames, so there is an upper limit of narrativity, past which the tellable gives way to stereotypical, and the *point* of

a narrative, the reason for its being told, gets lost or at least obscured [...]. (Herman 2002, 103)

Important conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. Narrativity is based on the processing of numberless cultural scripts. Scripts as such are *not* stories or narratives, because narrativity requires both “canonicity and breach”, as Jerome Bruner (1991) has put it. Scripts and formulaic narratives are used as resources both in living and telling; yet the whole point of narrativity grows out of surprise, betrayal of expectations, the “discordance” of life (Ricoeur 1984). Beyond early childhood, there is no social telling of script-like sequences. But the told narratives can never be entirely individual, devoid of script-like resources. Narratives and narrativity thus move between cultural scripts (“canonicity”) and totally idiosyncratic babble (breach in every moment).

If scripts and master narratives are vital parts of narrativity, so is the *expectation* they necessarily carry along. Labov and Waletzky (1997) noticed that recounted experiences are regularly contrasted with expectations. Reading, watching or listening to narratives trigger expectations that the stories either confirm or betray.

### EXPECTATION ANALYSIS

Bakhtin (1986) not only understands all language use as response to earlier utterances, he also includes the aspect of expectation in every utterance: “As we know, the role of the others for whom the utterance is constructed is extremely great. [...] From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response” (Bakhtin 1986, 94).

Expectation analysis presumes that oral life stories essentially recount the story of changing, failing or realized expectations (in other words, they reflect “cononicity”). While experiences may be thought as mainly

personal and subjective, expectations are always social, local, and conventional. The analysis of expectations focuses on the dialectics of recognizing, following and deviating from scripts. Originally presented by Hyvärinen (1994, 1998), the practice has been further elaborated by Komulainen (1998) and Löyttyniemi (2001).

The detailed way of reading owes much to Labov and Waletzky (1997) who already recognized the cognitive relevance of negative expressions, which paradoxically do not tell what happened, but what did not. In a closer examination, there are a good many linguistic expressions reckoning expectations, not the actual experience. Deborah Tannen (1993) has summarized the following list of what she calls “evidence of expectation”:

- (1) Repetition; especially repetition of whole utterances;
- (2) False starts;
- (3) Backtracks, breaking-down of the temporal order of telling;
- (4) Hedges that flavour the relation between what was expected and what finally happened; indeed, just, anyway, however;
- (5) Negatives. As a rule negative is only used when its affirmative is expected (Labov, 1972, 380-381);
- (6) Contrastives;
- (7) Modals;
- (8) Evaluative language;
- (9) Evaluative verbs;
- (10) Intesifiers; including laughter. (Löyttyniemi 2001, 181)

The point of the list is to illustrate the way narrative is accounting for and making relevant past futures and past expectations rather than just piecing together action sequences. The claim behind the analysis is that the key turning points of life stories exhibit *thickness of expectation* and a strong presence of the “I”. The examples below are from a study on the 1970s *Socialist Student Union* (SOL) in Finland (Hyvärinen 1994, 1998). The female interviewee, “Kirsi”, used to be a secretary general in a local university organization and member of the national central government of the SOL at the end of her career as an activist (Hyvärinen 1994, 164–167):

- 1 I guess it has been the same year when I’ve been in the Central Government that
- 2 I was totally stuck up
- 3 that I knew that now everything will go totally wrong
- 4 but I couldn’t say it in a way that I’d believed

- 5 and probably the guys of SOL also loathed me [...]  
 6 but I sulked there  
 7 To me, the visits to the government were horrible. Yuk.  
 8 But ... the reason why I really had the horrible feeling  
 9 was that I was in a deadlock. In a way there was nothing to do

As a narrator, Kirsi is normally very determined and strongly enacts her identity as regards the interviewer. The problem here is that she cannot position herself anymore as an agent within the received horizon of expectations. In the above, she takes the position of *affective experiencer* who is not able to be a competent *reflective experiencer* in the situation. This is also a habitual narrative: it is about *the state* of being stuck, and unbounded emotional processes (sulking, loathing). The whole section is full of intensified, colourful expressions. She hates the situation; it is almost unbearable, but it is against her expectations of being a “good comrade” to withdraw. The conflict of expectations is dramatized on lines (3–4): she sees that everything is going totally wrong but she cannot explain it – that is, she cannot solve the conflict within the frame of enduring expectations, since she cannot take her position as a brave speaker of truths.

A bit later she talks about leaving the position in the organization. The usual dilemma in those days was to find a replacement for the post to achieve a loyal exit:

- 1 It was a horrible task  
 2 I just said that in any case I'll quit  
 3 because I'd next start to go haywire  
 4 it was that tough  
 5 because I was [p]  
 6 afterwards one learned a lot, in a way, though  
 7 but it was a high price to pay  
 8 it was the worst situation I've gotten into in my life including my divorce

At last, Kirsi is able to reassume the role of an agent, in the verbal form of speaker. The conflict of expectations and the old structure of expectations as a dutiful activist are broken down on lines (2–3), where her

words “in any case” indicate that she no longer cares about the old expectations, whatever happens. There is still the balancing role of a loyal ex-activist and reflecting experiencer on line (6) appreciating the experience as such but quickly counterbalanced again by the price of its learning. Kirsi moves to Helsinki, where no one knows her, and is able to experience a new teenage with dancing and partying. The exhilaration is contrasted with the old expectation: “I really had hobbies no Bolshevik would have ever [...] believed” a secretary general to have. It is easy to see how this play with expectations signifies her re-positioning as regards the organization and the Communist movement.

## A SECOND NARRATIVE TURN?

The map of narrative analysis is changing rapidly. Textual and structuralist models of analysis are giving way to more contextual approaches that focus on narrative practices and storytelling. Semantic theories and cognitive narratology offer new tools to connect the vocabularies of action and narrative in productive ways. Recent theories of narrative offer a new sensitivity to stories that are incomplete or foreground mental events (of observation, feeling, and cognition) instead of physical action. Expectation and positioning analysis alike direct attention to the fact that narratives not only account for past experiences but position speakers within networks of social and cultural expectations. The dialectics of “master” and “counter” narratives highlight the continuous move between cultural canon and individual expression. The rich flow of post-classical literary theory of narrative accentuates the need to realize the original, interdisciplinary ethos of narrative studies. Considering all these new and dynamic elements, it is indeed plausible to argue for a “second narrative turn”, as Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2006) does. The key to the realization of this promise, more than ever, seems to reside in realizing the interdisciplinary mission of the narrative turn.

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