

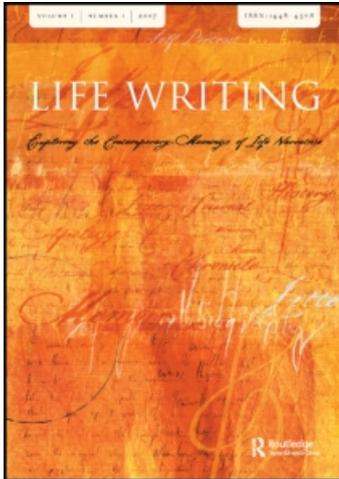
This article was downloaded by: [Hyvarinen, Matti]

On: 18 May 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 922306742]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Life Writing

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t762290978>

Revisiting the Narrative Turns

Matti Hyvärinen

Online publication date: 17 May 2010

To cite this Article Hyvärinen, Matti(2010) 'Revisiting the Narrative Turns', Life Writing, 7: 1, 69 – 82

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/14484520903342957

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14484520903342957>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Revisiting the Narrative Turns

Matti Hyvärinen

This article reconsiders (self-)critically the constitution of the scholarly phenomenon called the 'narrative turn'. Based on the intellectual autobiographical experiences of the author, it is argued that the turn may be understood as having proceeded in three successive phases: as an interest in narrative theory and research; as recognition of narrative inquiry as a field; and as an explicit identity concept. In order to resist straightforward chronology, it is suggested that instead of one fixed narrative turn, we should talk about at least four different turns with different agendas and attitudes toward narrative: firstly, the turn in literary theory in the 1960s; the turn in historiography following literary narratology; the turn in social sciences from the 1980s onwards; and finally a more broadly cultural and societal turn to narration. There is no simple plotline or causal chain between these layers; instead they tend to receive locally idiosyncratic articulations. Understanding the different agendas of different disciplines is understood to be crucial for cross-disciplinary discussions, and may help to reformulate individual scholars' own sets of priorities.

Keywords narrative; narrative turn; narratology; social sciences

Introduction

'The narrative turn' is arguably a concept that is primarily meant to be used after the fact, and secondarily, as a matter of identity ('our work is now part of the narrative turn'). The rhetoric of the turn suggests some significant changes in the practice of a research field and its theorisation; on the other hand, it may also extend a gratifying feeling of belonging, of contributing to the leading edge of scholarly and intellectual change. Dominick LaCapra (7) notes that scholars tend to recognise identity politics elsewhere (in the texts of minorities, for example), but dismiss disciplinary identity politics in their own work. Having characterised the 'narrative turn' in terms of scholarly identity politics earlier (Hyvärinen 'Four Turns'), I now try to adhere to an analytical and historical concept, that is, to a concept used in research literature and conferences.¹

In the first part of the article, I try to trace basic elements of my own confusion in experiencing the narrative turn. Next I change my perspective entirely and will look at the turns within three separate disciplinary fields: in

literature theory and linguistics; in historiography, and finally in social sciences (in the broadest possible sense of the term). Then I complement these disciplinary turns by considering a broader, intellectual-cum-socio-cultural change towards narration. What I explicitly try to avoid is to give the last layer some self-evident causal power to 'explain' the previous levels, instead I invite readers to see interdependences and complex paths of inspirations.

The Narrative Whirlpool

In the late 1980s, I was starting my doctoral thesis on radical student activism in Finland. Over the coming few years, I conducted tens of what I called 'autobiographical interviews' with activists. In a small country on the academic periphery, those years manifested the breakthrough of cultural studies and qualitative inquiry, flavoured with a criticism of 'positivism' and 'behaviourism.' Being a political scientist in a small country, my position was doubly peripheral, as political science was neither then nor afterwards a centre of narrative studies. Rather than a narrative turn, I was originally experiencing a kind of narrative whirlpool; the first narrative texts I occasionally came across drew inspiration from different directions, giving contradictory ideas, and offering precious little by way of help in analyzing the collected interviews, the activists' life stories. Thanks to the many overlapping turns and academic movements, there were practically no knowledgeable supervisors in Finland at the time to guide the work, which in my case did miserably slow progress. Narrative, in other words, did not come to me or my fellows as a ready concept, theory, and methodological package.

Careful now: the time of the whirlpool is already largely forgotten and poorly documented, and offers all the narrative alternatives from the heroic quest story against hardships, or from a miserable lamentation story about perpetual prejudices against the narrative approach, to a light, ironic play with great names and perennial misunderstandings. The story might emphasise determinate agency, intellectual reflection, or emotional experience from anguish to the delight of discovery. One paradoxical problem of learning was nevertheless quite obvious, which was the shortage of relevant narrative canon(s). There was no-one around to suggest the ten or twenty most essential books to be read in order to be initiated into the field (presuming that a 'field' already existed). This lack of a canon (however temporary or challenged) radicalised, of course, the impact of different narrative turns. First of all, why was the attitude towards narrative changing so dramatically from book to book?

There was, however, one nationally prominent seminar on biographical studies, in Helsinki, and led by J. P. Roos, an internationally known figure in biographical research. When I started attending the seminar, the atmosphere of the group was dominated by great enthusiasm for qualitative inquiry, a relatively open interdisciplinary attitude, and a strong feeling of mutual solidarity. Auto/biography and life writing constitute an exceptional field in the sense that

communication between social scientists, historians, and literary scholars has been far less exceptional than in many other areas of study. At any rate, it was this seminar that brought the new issue of 'narrative' on the table. Step by step I came to know the names of Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White, Nancy K. Miller, Jerome Bruner, James Olney, Liz Stanley, and many others.

Gradually, two major things took place. Firstly, the theory of social constructionism made its slow entry into the seminar. Occasionally, even the ideas of the 'linguistic turn' were discussed. As a consequence, secondly, the narrative approach became increasingly integrated into this perspective of social constructionism, and in so doing it assumed an increasingly critical attitude towards what was called 'realism' in more traditional biographical studies. Ultimately, the issue was about acknowledging the narrative character of our research materials, and pondering the potential consequences of this fact for the ways of analysis. The tentative, even joking debates in the seminar inconspicuously took a rather serious turn. Narrative, as seen through the ideas of social constructionism, for the first time, became a term of identification, a theoretical tool for making distinctions.

For a long time, however, these debates between the 'realist' and 'narrative-constructionist' orientations took place within the field of 'auto/biographical studies'. New concepts had arrived, but they had not yet transformed the conceptual hierarchies. It took a few more years, and after reading through the work of my younger colleagues, before I finally realised that beyond and partly overlapping the 'biographical studies' there indeed was an emerging field of 'narrative inquiry'. Younger scholars, who collected and investigated oral and written life narratives, no longer automatically identified with the idea of 'biographical research'. Narrative inquiry assumed new webs of references and relevancies, different theorists, different genealogies. At this level, the narrative turn can be understood as a programme of field formation.

The final stage in my assuming of the narrative turn was to adopt the terminology itself as an identity concept and to start to theorise and write on behalf of the *narrative turn* in biographical studies. Martin Kreiswirth, in *Trusting the Tale*, introduced the new term in the context of the human sciences; and I began advocating it six years later (Hyvärinen 'Four Turns'). One culmination of this story was the establishment of the interdisciplinary Finnish Network of Narrative Studies in 2000. What I want to emphasise by telling this story is that the birth of general *interest* in narrative preceded by many years the adoption of a *programme* of a 'narrative turn' and the realisation—or, should we rather say, the mental construction—of a *new field* of narrative studies. Even the narrative turn required construction and narration to come into being.

Even though this story from the periphery may exhibit a daring amount of chronology, one overarching storyline, one main character, and possibly even some causal relations, pure linearity can hardly capture one very fundamental aspect of the narrative turn. This confusing aspect is the perpetually *retroactive* scholarly history. Although the metaphor of 'turn' denotes an advance movement, every time one performs such a turn, he or she needs to look backwards from the

turning point to old sources and discussions. The turn in the social sciences created, in particular, such retroactive moves, because very few of the new books on narrative seemed to offer anything solid in terms of reading narratives in politically or sociologically relevant ways. In an academic milieu dominated by new poststructuralist, postmodernist or phenomenological theories, methods were often researched from within the heritage of Russian formalism (Propp) or French structuralism (Greimas).

There are two theorists who epitomise this retroactive temporality more than anyone else: M. M. Bakhtin and Hannah Arendt. Both authors are often missing from histories of narrative theory, largely because they were ‘discovered’ years or decades after the publishing of their work (see Hyvärinen ‘Towards’; McHale). When Arendt’s *The Human Condition* was originally published in 1958, her discussion on the relationships between action and narrative remained largely unnoticed. Bakhtin’s relevance, in turn, seemed to grow hand in hand with the criticism of structuralist narratology in the 1980s.

Four Narrative Turns—Four Different Attitudes

A good number of useful historical accounts of narrative theory already exist (e.g. Fludernik; Herman ‘Histories’; Hyvärinen ‘Towards’; Kreiswirth ‘Narrative’; Riessman *Divorce Talk*), yet the diversity of disciplinary histories is seldom properly addressed as a problem. Instead of *one* narrative turn and one new attitude towards narrative, I find at least four different turns and attitudes. Within literary studies, the narrative turn began as early as the 1960s, after the structuralist reception of the newly translated *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp. The connection with linguistics was intimate and essential, because the Saussurean, structuralist linguistics was understood as a pilot science for the scientific narratology (a term coined by Tzvetan Todorov in 1969, for a ‘science of narrative’ [Herman ‘Histories’ 19]).

But why speak, in the study of literature, about a *turn* in the first place? Aristotle wrote on tragedy; novel, epics, biographies and folktales have been studied for ages. In a manner of speaking, narratives have always been studied by literary scholars. What was new in the 1960s narrative inquiry was what Kreiswirth identifies as ‘the institutional study of narrative for its own sake, as opposed to the examination of individual narratives’ (‘Narrative Turn’, 377–378). Marie-Laure Ryan points out the existence of a 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. From Aristotle to Vladimir Propp and from Percy Lubbock to Wayne Booth, the critics and philosophers who are regarded today as pioneers of narrative theory were not concerned with narrative proper but with particular literary genres such as epic poetry, drama, the folktale, the novel or more generally fiction, short for ‘narrative literary fiction’. It was the legacy of French structuralism . . . to have *emancipated narrative from literature* and from

fiction, and to have recognised it as a semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and media. (Ryan 344; emphasis added)

The abstract, theoretically rich, flexible, and thus quickly moving concept of narrative was a new invention even in literature in the 1960s. Thus the concept of narrative did not simply *travel* from discipline to discipline; it was radically re-created and re-evaluated even in the theory of literature and linguistics. The conceptual network was changed, and ‘narrative’ received a higher position in the hierarchy. Roland Barthes’s renowned words from his 1966 *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* indicate the ubiquity of narrative:

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances—as though any material were to receive man’s stories. 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 items, conversation. (251–252)

This passage forcefully asserts the existence of a new kind of concept of narrative and a new conceptual programme: a genuine narrative turn. But in total contrast to the later narrative turn in social sciences, structuralist narratology nurtured scientific ambitions and rhetoric. It built its theory with binary oppositions, typologies and a quasi-linguistic formalism. As Monika Fludernik says, 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*’ (38; emphasis added).

The Narrative Turn in Historiography²

In historiography, the story was partly similar, partly entirely different. Throughout its own history, historiography had always produced stories. The historians who introduced the narrative theory of history were not primarily interested in methods of analyzing narratives, rather the question was, at least originally, about the consequences of crafting narratives in particular ways, of ‘seeing the nature of history as a narrative-making exercise’, as Alun Munslow suggests in *Narrative and History* (1). However, Munslow’s argument holds true chiefly as regards the long theoretical debate on the ‘narrativist’ view of historiography (see below).

What simultaneously, and partly as a consequence of this debate, took place within the actual historical research is a much more complicated story. Natalie Zemon Davis, for example, in *Fiction in the Archives*, studied the ‘pardon tales’ as narratives in her study of sixteenth-century France. Davis did not take on the

task of searching for ‘documentary value’ behind the tales, but focused instead on their fictional and artful qualities, and found the ordinary tellers exceedingly proficient narrators. New kinds of experimentation with narrative became possible, as is documented in Luisa Passerini’s *Autobiography of a Generation*, which combines her own personal story and the oral history of the Turin activists of 1968. ‘Oral historians have paid a great deal of attention to the narrative structure of life histories, in many cases drawing upon theories from linguistics and literary studies’, observes Anna Green (91). As a result, the conventional narrative, epitomised in (perhaps poorly received) nineteenth-century novels, is no longer the exclusive alternative of historical discourse.

But the main focus in the longstanding debate around the narrative theory of history has remained fixed upon the problems of representing the past in narrative forms, in narrative as cognitive form. As a matter of fact, the successive attempts at making a categorical distinction between ordinary story-telling, fiction, and proper historiography seemed to culminate in the question of narrative. Both positivism and the critical thinkers of the French *Annales School* endeavoured to limit the scope of narration in historiography (see Ricoeur for an extended discussion on historiography and narrative). Ironically, this sceptical attitude towards narrative as a cognitive tool was continued by a group of scholars called ‘*narrativists*’, including such prominent names as Louis Mink,³ Hayden White, and Frank Ankersmit. White and Ankersmit, in particular, follow the legacy of the French narratology in terms of their theoretical interest in narrative and its ‘form’, but in a manner that renders them highly sceptical of the traditional, naive narrative historiography. Within this discourse, narrative is predominantly understood as being imposed, external and ideological. Michael André Bernstein, drawing on the Bakhtinian understanding of language-at-use, has instead been able to foreground momentous differences between narratives as explanatory tools in his *Foregone Conclusions. Against Apocalyptic History*. According to Bernstein, the processes of foreshadowing and back-shadowing are able to produce closed, deterministic histories, while narrative side-shadowing essentially opens the understanding of historical processes.

Narrative as a Metaphor: Social Sciences

In social research—ranging from Law and education to cultural studies and philosophy—the narrative turn was initiated, hesitantly, in the early 1980s, with the publication of *On Narrative*, edited W. J. T. Mitchell in 1981 being one of the key signposts. For many years to come, however, the flow of publications was rather minimal when compared to the real deluge beginning later in the 1990s. The major difference to literature and historiography was that narratives were now, for the first time, seen as material, theory and as a perspective for reading. In contrast to historians, relatively few sociologists wrote narrative accounts; in contrast to literary scholars, sociologists had little background in reading

narratives. But how contingent these distinctions are, may be seen from Daniel Bertaux's important argument in *Biography and Society*, whereby:

I have come to the conclusion that we should try and develop a different form of discourse, namely 'le récit' (narration). This is the form novelists but also historians and some anthropologists use ... We should tell stories; not only the life stories of various people but also the story of such and such a pattern of social relations, the story of a culture, of an institution, of a social group; and also, our *own* story as research workers. (43–44)

In contrast, then, Bertaux does not suggest the adoption of any kind of narrative analysis or theory.

The narrative turn in the social sciences implicated qualitative, often humanistically oriented research—in stark contrast to the scientific, descriptive tenor of structuralist narratology. Mark Freeman's impressive personal story of approaching narrative through literature and psychology in his *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative* is a powerful document of the climatic change of attitudes towards narrative. Freeman rejects literary narratology as his major subject for being too technical and not properly existential, and has to struggle hard through the thickets of experimental psychology (1–3). From the early days onwards, however, a real tension between an openly humanistic programme of 'giving voice' to those who have been silenced and marginalised, and the seemingly opposite poststructuralist denial of privileging narratives as an expression of unitary subjects and their unitary voices has followed the narrative studies and contributed to the plurality of the field (see, for example, Atkinson; Bochner; Gubrium and Holstein 'From Individual').

Two major theoretical moves had a noteworthy impact on social research. Firstly, the reception of Jean-Francois Lyotard's criticism of *grand narratives* of science, as well as parallel criticism by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, was emblematic of the gradual rehabilitation of the alternative, small, forgotten, and untold stories including those of women, gays, lesbians, postcolonial and other voices. The often repeated rhetoric of grand narratives and corresponding limits of dominant regimes of knowledge could not but eventually generate new conditions of possibility for small and particular knowledges and narratives. If quantitative research foregrounded dominant trends, narratives were to theorise the particular. Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith's *Human Rights and Narrated Lives* is a strong argument for the political potency of such alternative stories.

Secondly, there was the powerful new metaphor, *life as narrative*, suggesting that narratives have a unique role in the study of human lives, action, and psychology (Bruner; Hyvärinen 'Towards'; McAdams; Ochberg and Rosenwald; Polkinghorne; Ricoeur). To my understanding, the metaphoric discourse of narrative has been absolutely central for the success of the narrative turn in social sciences, cultural studies and psychology. The collection of all kinds of life narratives, both large and small, received an entirely new acuteness and shook the received agendas of biographical studies. Together these two promises—to offer

politically alternative stories, on the one hand, and to offer an existentially new vision to human life, on the other—helped to create the atmosphere of a new intellectual movement. Within this perspective, the story of the narrative turn itself was sometimes understood as a quest narrative. Narrative and story-telling, as such, could be seen as beneficial for personal and communal well-being.

This wide metaphoric discussion on life as narrative seems to have four equally important consequences. First of all, it makes the collection and study of life narratives vitally important; secondly, it seems to privilege the covering and ‘big’ narratives of life (on the discussion concerning big and small narratives, see Freeman ‘Life’; Georgakopoulou); thirdly, it also gave a strong impetus toward reading life narratives as coherent and unitary; and finally, the emphasis on the expressive nature of life narratives promoted envisaging them as self-sufficient wholes, waiting for ‘externalisation’, and not primarily interactionally occasioned utterances within institutional and cultural contexts. The emergent narrative studies had to challenge all these original biases, save the relevance of life narratives (see Brockmeier and Harré).

Problematically, neither of these major impulses for narrative studies suggested any methodology concerning how to study, analyse and use narratives as such. The history of the narrative turn does not include any major attempts, or model case studies, in applying literary narratology systematically in social research. In this sense, there is a major methodological break in the adoption of the idea, theory and metaphor of narrative. In many a case, the adopted way to analyse and interpret narratives might duly be characterised as a hermeneutic and theoretical re-telling of the stories or narrative ‘criticism’ as Mark Freeman (‘Data Are Everywhere’) has called it.

As a matter of fact, the literary impact touches social sciences in a mediated form through linguistics; and it is the Labov and Waletzky model of oral narrative that gives the decisive impetus for more detailed and concrete analysis of interview materials. The model, in all of its rich applicability, carried along a trace of the structuralist-formalist belief in a narrative form and a complete story, even though it already suggested the closer study of the *use* of language in narration. Quite in contrast to the generally enthusiastic attitude of the metaphorical discourse, the Labovian approach suggests a rather neutral, matter-of-fact approach to narration. Socio-linguistic ideas, conversation analysis and positioning analysis now constitute a long thread of discussions and major studies, beginning from the work of Elliot Mishler, who early on foregrounded the interactional situation of narration, and Catherine Kohler Riessman to the work of Michel Bamberg and Alexandra Georgakopoulou.

The Cultural Turn to Narrative

Many commentators argue that the turn to narrative and narration is much broader than the academic turns to narrative might indicate. For example, Gary Saul Morson argues for a general cultural turn to narrativeness and historicity

from law-like models of thought. Lyotard's observation on the crises of grand narratives concerns, of course, the inherited professional knowledge regimes in general. The changes within media, both in terms of its growing societal power and strong emphasis on personal revelations create both models and demand for an increasing number of personal stories. The sheer fact of increasing mobility creates new pressures for individuals to be presentable and individually narrated in new social, professional, personal and political contexts. The modernist novel, from Robert Musil, Virginia Woolf and Jean-Paul Sartre to the French New Novel, was famously a major site for the testing of the limits and sometimes resisting of narrative. But even here one can see a change of emphasis and, for example, Hanna Meretoja has argued for a 'narrative turn in the French novel'.

This larger socio-cultural change needs more careful analysis, that is, realisation of its contradictions and varying regimes of narrative control. The model of media-supported confession, for example, cannot account for either the growing interest in narrative or narrative analysis, as Atkinson's 'Narrative Turn' article seems to indicate. Straightforward conclusions based on singular features of media cannot be a solid basis for evaluating a whole research orientation. Schaffer and Smith, for example, offer a politically different account than Atkinson on the relevance and missions of life writing:

The post-Cold War decade of the 1990s has been labelled the decade of human rights ... Not incidentally, it has also been described as the decade of life narratives, what commentators refer to as the time of memoir. Many of these life narratives tell of human rights violations. Victims of abuse around the world have testified to their experience in an outpouring of oral and written narratives. These stories demand that readers attend to histories, lives, and experiences often vastly different from their own. (1)

The cultural turn to narrative has many different aspects and facets. As such, it neither renders narrative inquiry as a continuation of media practices, nor as an unproblematic basis upon which to celebrate narrative studies and turns.

Narrative Futures

I have had no hidden agenda in having covered the rich field and processes of narrative turns. For every single discipline and sub-discipline, the story, problems and agendas have probably been different. Take another country, such as Germany, and you would have an entirely different configuration of histories. Nevertheless, I suggest that the overall difference between literary theory, history, and social sciences holds. One purpose of this kind of historical comparison is to adopt fruitful questions, theories, and argumentative strategies from parallel disciplines. Is there something relevant that social sciences might be able to learn from the nearby narrative theories?

My first observation concerns the concept of narrative. Literary scholars have an ongoing debate regarding the proper definition of narrative, whereas only a

few social scientists have pondered the issue (Brockmeier and Harré; Riessman *Divorce Talk, Narrative Methods*). The argument here is not at all that social scientists have a wrong definition of narrative; it is about the lack of theorizing and self-consciousness about the theoretical aspects of narrativity itself. The search for clarity and a profile for individual fields is an important part of the work, not the search for consensus or final correctness. Is narrative a type of text? Is it a cognitive capacity or structure? Or is it rather a mode of interaction? Or could we cope with a fuzzy-set definition or a prototypical model of narrative?

David Herman ('Towards') suggested in his proposal for 'socio-narratology' that perhaps the most important thing social scientists could learn from narratology is the key distinction between story (understood as an inferred sequence of events, the 'what' of narrative) and narrative discourse (covering the 'how' it is delivered, including such aspects as the voice, order, distance, and focalisation). Munslow corroborates the vital relevance of this distinction for history writing, in so far as the first in actual temporal order is the narration (by the author-historian, in this case), and only this narration produces the assumed course of events (the story) and the historical discourse (18–23).

Social scientists often have a professional predisposition to privileging the narrative content. Much too often I have heard the complaint: 'I am not a linguist, therefore I am not inclined to study the formal details'. Considering the vital distinction between narration, story, and narrative discourse, one could argue that there are no direct pathways to the narrative contents. This, of course, is far from a new realisation in socio-linguistics, which typically foregrounds the interactional moment of narration. But it is a misunderstanding to presume that the 'how's' would be important only for the small, interactional narratives, and that the 'big' and/or covering narratives could be directly approached in terms of content.

Perhaps we need entirely new approaches to the narrative content. To better address the issue, social scientists probably need more investigation into narrative conventionality. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein ('Narrative'), for example, theorise the social conventions usefully in terms of institutionally constituted narrative environments. To look for master narratives may be another angle in working towards the key issue of social conventions of narration (Bamberg and Andrews). Narrative genres comprise one more aspect of conventionality. However, the whole methodology of recognizing and categorizing of narrative conventions has been fairly elementary and has proceeded in a rather *ad hoc* manner in social sciences.

David Herman's *Story Logic* portrays the generic differences and preferences between, say epic (foregrounding material processes) and the psychological novel (foregrounding states of mind together with body and mental processes). Herman suggests that different genres have different preference structures as regards semantic roles (say, Agent versus affective Experiencer or Patient). Most illness narratives, for example, are closer to the genre of psychological novel than the Labovian model, with its bias on material processes. These semantic roles also constitute an important middle term in locating the subject positions

that narrators take and bestow upon others. Remembering the way speech genres are fundamentally social, the prospect for locating social narrative conventions through genre analysis is a promising idea, but one that again requires work in crossing the disciplinary boundaries to become actualised.

I conclude my narrative travels with a confused observation on a few recent handbooks, encyclopaedias and companions of narrative theory and research. The early days of the narrative turn in social sciences exhibited a great deal of interdisciplinary openness and curiosity, the pioneers visiting earlier narrative theories of other disciplines, Jerome Bruner and Donald Polkinghorne being good examples, in addition to Paul Ricoeur and his massive *Time and Narrative*. The *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, edited by D. Jean Clandinin, and broadly covering the field of education, psychology and social sciences, exhibits almost no interest at all in what is now called ‘post-classical narratology’ (Herman ‘Towards’). The names of Roland Barthes and Vladimir Propp can be found in the index, but the extensive work in narratology since structuralism has been omitted. It is perfectly understandable that every single author has his or her preferred set of sources, a version of the canon, but the lack of interest throughout the whole volume is slightly alarming. A perusal of recent textbooks in social research seems to indicate a similar conclusion: narrative studies in social sciences are now understood as an independent, self-contained field with little need for familiarity with the literary theory of narrative (e.g. Crossley). Riessman has a promising title for her new book *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, nevertheless it does not discuss the postclassical narratology in spite of its prevalence in the humanities.

By contrast to such a state of affairs, the contemporary literary theory seems to have a much more hegemonic and overarching approach. Three recent volumes edited by literary scholars—the *Blackwell Companion to Narrative Theory* (James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (David Herman) and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan) recognise many issues, authors, and problems relevant in social research (e.g. illness narratives, identity, narrative psychology, master narrative, to name just a few). Perhaps the most significant single observation, however, is that the literary theory of narrative is now blooming, suggesting new ideas and reappraising old ones. A reader from other disciplines can easily realise that there is little left from the endless play with neologism and scientist rhetoric, the exclusive landmarks of past narratology. If it is true, as I understand, that life narratives do not simply express some inner states and ready historical contents, we have to deal with the endless play of culturally circulating narratives, and to recognise the cultural patterns as clearly as possible. In getting to know better the culturally circulating narratives, it is impossible to disregard the work of literary narratology.

Above, I have made an effort, firstly, to trace back through my earlier steps in narrative studies and then, secondly, made an attempt at figuring out the wider intellectual moves towards narrative. My point of departure for this account is that narrative, as a way of knowing, is prototypically perspectivist. In contrast to

the earlier structuralist understanding of narrative exclusively in terms of form and closure, I argue for the pragmatic role of narrative in inviting the second and third narratives. I have emphasised the fact that I can not have a free entry to the scholarly thoughts and inspirations of the past 'me'. Additionally, a stronger focus on schools of thought might have inspired an entirely different story, emphasizing the rivalry between, for example, realist, phenomenological, discursive and cognitive approaches to narrativity. Over the last 10 years, I have observed that the students of narrative sometimes characterise narrative studies as a social moment, to locate narrative studies primarily within phenomenology, and to outline conversation analysis and discursive psychology as the main alternatives of narrative studies in social sciences. There is, thus, clearly a plenitude of potential alternatives to this account, as it always is with narratives that allow for side-shadowing (Morson) and an ultimate receptivity to the world.

Notes

- [1] This article is part of my larger project, 'The Conceptual History of Narrative', funded by the Academy of Finland. A more extensive list of references is available in my 'Towards'.
- [2] I am grateful to Anu Korhonen and Markku Hyrkkänen for important comments on this section.
- [3] Louis Mink's most essential articles were collected and published posthumously in *Historical Understanding*. His *History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension* was originally published in 1970; and *Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument* in 1978.

References

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Atkinson, Paul. 'Narrative Turn or Blind Alley?' *Qualitative Health Research* 7.3 (1997): 325–343.
- Bamberg, Michael. 'Positioning with Davie Hogan. Stories, Tellings, and Identities.' *Narrative Analysis. Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*. Eds. Colette Daiute and Cynthia Lightfoot. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2004. 135–157.
- Bamberg, Michael, and Molly Andrews, eds. *Considering Counter-Narratives. Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004.
- Barthes, Roland. 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative.' *A Barthes Reader*. Ed. Susan Sontag. London: Jonathan Cape, 1982. 251–295.
- Bertaux, Daniel. 'From the Life-History Approach to the Transformation of Sociological Practice.' *Biography and Society. The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*. Eds. Daniel Bertaux. Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1981. 29–45.
- Bochner, Arthur. 'Narrative's Virtues.' *Qualitative Inquiry* 7.2 (2001): 131–157.
- Brockmeier, Jens, and Rom Harré. 'Narrative: Problems and Promises of an Alternative Paradigm.' *Narrative Identity. Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*. Eds. Jens Brockmeier and Donald Carbaugh. Vol. 1. Studies in Narrative. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001. 39–58.
- Bruner, Jerome. 'Life as Narrative.' *Social Research* 54.1 (1987): 11–32.

- Clandinin, D. Jean, ed. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2007.
- Crossley, Michel L. *Introduction to Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.
- Fludernik, Monika. 'Histories on Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present.' *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Eds. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell, 2005. 36–59.
- Freeman, Mark. 'Data Are Everywhere: Narrative Criticism in the Literature of Experience.' *Narrative Analysis. Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*. Eds. Colette Daiute and Cynthia Lightfoot. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage, 2004. 63–81.
- . 'Life "On Holiday"? In Defense of Big Stories.' *Narrative Inquiry* 16.1 (2006): 131–138.
- . *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*. *Critical Psychology*. Eds. John Broughton, David Ingleby and Valerie Walkerdine. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities*. *Studies in Narrative*. Eds. Michael Bamberg. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2007.
- Green, Anna. *Cultural History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Greimas, Algirdas. *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer and Velie Alan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Gubrium, Jaber F, and James A Holstein. 'From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society.' *Handbook of Interview Research. Context and Method*. Eds. Jaber F Gubrium and James Holstein. Thousand Oaks and London: Sage, 2001. 3–32.
- . 'Narrative Ethnography.' *Handbook of Emergent Methods*. Eds. Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. New York: Guilford Press, 2008.
- Herman, David. 'Histories of Narrative Theory (I): A Genealogy of Early Developments.' *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Eds. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell, 2005. 19–35.
- . *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.
- . 'Towards a Socionarratology: New Ways of Analyzing Natural Language Narratives.' *Narratologies. New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Ed. David Herman. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999. 218–246.
- Herman, David, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
- eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hyvärinen, Matti. 'Towards a Conceptual History of Narrative.' *The Travelling Concept of Narrative*. Eds. Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen and Juri Mykkänen. Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2006. 23 April, 2008 <http://www.helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/volume_1/index.htm>
- . 'Lukemisen Neljä Käännettä [The Four Turns of Reading].' *Liikkuvat Erot. Sukupuoli Elämäkertatutkimuksessa [Moving Differences. Gender in Biographical Studies]*. Eds. Matti Hyvärinen, Eeva Peltonen and Anni Vilkkö. Tampere: Vastapaino, 1998. 311–336.
- Kreiswirth, Martin. 'Narrative Turn in the Humanities.' *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
- . 'Trusting the Tale: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences.' *New Literary History* 23 (1992): 629–657.

- Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky. 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience.' *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7.1–4 ([1967] 1997): 3–38.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition. Theory and History of Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 [1983].
- McAdams, Dan P. *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity*. New York, London: The Guilford Press, 1988.
- McHale, Brian. 'Ghosts and Monsters: On the (Im)Possibility of Narrating the History of Narrative Theory.' *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Eds. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz. Malden, MA. Blackwell, 2005. 60–71.
- Meretoja, Hanna. 'The Narrative Turn in the French Novel in the 1970s.' *The Travelling Concept of Narrative*. Eds. Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen and Juri Mykkänen. Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2006. 23 April, 2008 <http://www.helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/volume_1/index.htm > .
- Mink, Louis O. *Historical Understanding*. Eds. Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob and Richard T. Vann. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Mishler, Elliot G. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Mitchell, W.J.T., (ed.). *On Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Morson, Gary Saul. 'Narrativeness.' *New Literary History* 34 (2003): 59–73.
- Munslow, Alun. *Narrative and History*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Ochberg, Richard L., and George C. Rosenwald. *Storied Lives: The Cultural Politics of Self-Understanding*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Phelan, James, and Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2005.
- Polkinghorne, Donald E. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Suny Series in Philosophy of the Social Sciences. Eds. Lenore Langsdorf. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Trans. Lawrence Scott. 2nd ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Vols. I–III. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler. *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- . *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi & Singapore: Sage, 2008.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. Narrative. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 344–348.
- Schaffer, Kay, and Sidonie Smith. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives*. New York: Palgrave, 2004.
- White, Hayden. *Figural Realism. Studies in the Mimesis Effect*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.