Narratives at the Beginning of the 3rd Millennium

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Edited by

Jessica Homberg-Schramm,
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INTRODUCTION

#N3RDM

JESSICA HOMBERG-SCHRAMM,
ANNA RASOKAT AND FELICITAS SCHWEIKER

The hashtag #N3rdM is the condensed title of the workshop *Narratives in/for the Third Millennium*, out of which this volume emerged.[1] At the same time, it tags this publication as a contribution to the emerging field of 21st century studies,[2] which sets out both to sketch the contemporary and its (narrative) representations as well as to gauge the impact of hitherto unseen levels of global interconnection and mediation in Web 2.0 on interdisciplinary (academic) knowledge production, frequently subsumed under the term "digital humanities"[3].

Introduced by the social network Twitter soon after its launch in 2006 as an indexing tool allowing its users to search, link and frame the ever-growing flux of information on its platform and across various mediascapes such as Facebook, personal blogs and commercial websites, the hashtag has become an epitome of the management of information today. In condensing a societal debate to a buzzword or short phrase, branding a political campaign or framing "news" with a humorous or critical comment, hashtags constitute representations of narratives. As such, they exemplify features which the contributions to this volume conceive of as distinctive of narratives at the beginning of the 21st century: the increased use of narrative approaches beyond literary studies in academic, political and commercial contexts; the democratization of

[1] See the conference report published in *C21 Literature. Journal of 21st Century Writings* 3.1 (October 2014): 127-31.

[2] The last five years have seen the foundation of research centres (e.g. *C21: Centre for Research in Twenty-First Century Writings* at the University of Brighton) and journals (such as *Alluvium*, *C21 Literature. Journal of 21st Century Writings*), institutionalizing the field of 21st century studies.

[3] See projects such as the AHRC-funded *#The 21C Scholar. Digital Engagement in the Arts and Humanities* based at Oxford University: http://www.thec21scholar.com.

information; the idea of a participatory culture that questions traditional concepts of authorship; and the perception of a "time-space compression" that challenges linearity in the 21st century.

The proliferation of narrative approaches has moved beyond the confines of literary studies. Political activists as well as governmental institutions use narratives to frame their messages and facilitate their dissemination. The increasing narrativization has its pitfalls when it results in simplistic, reductionist stories or when it is used to distort facts and commodify information. Marketing agencies employ narratives for commercial purposes, for instance to create consumer immersion to boost brand awareness and sales. In academia, narratives have been established as a methodology as well as a subject for analysis beyond the humanities, from the social sciences and economics to psychology and medicine. Matti Hyvärinen has described this spread of narratives to other research disciplines as "the travelling of narratives" (2013). This metaphor points to the crossing of borders whose permeability, (non-)visibility and—very literally—their de*fin*ing capacities have gained a revived interest in the 21st century despite all the wariness towards borders and concepts of absolute truths inherited from postmodernism.

In this volume, Matti Hyvärinen scrutinizes how narratives cross borders of academic disciplines, arguing that the full potential of narrative research is not yet realized in the social sciences, which he regards as a chance further to develop a conceptual history of narratives. Proceeding from a discussion of socionarratology, Hyvärinen questions whether academia needs a unifying theory of narratives or whether it would rather profit from the differentiated concepts for analysing fictional and everyday narratives which social scientists are primarily concerned with. He thereby taps into a continued discussion about the strategic importance of concepts of particularity and universality in the inter- and transdisciplinary application of narrative approaches.

The concept of the Anthropocene makes the travelling of concepts and the challenges associated with this process evident: the geoscientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer suggested the term "Anthropocene" to describe a new era in the history of the Earth, which is marked by the fact that humans have become the "major geological force" (Monastersky 2015). While the concept remains controversial among scientists (Monastersky 2015), it has been readily adopted in the social sciences and the humanities to theorize the contemporary. As such, it is intricately related to the emergence of ecocriticism, posthumanism and new materialism, which, prompted by the rising acuteness of environmental change caused by human intervention, have set out to map a field of

enquiry which highlights the inadequacy of narrative representations and critical concepts rooted in the Western humanist tradition and instead demands a redefinition of the relationship between (post)humans, animals and the material world (Boxall 2015a, 140). Starting with the recognition that we lack both the necessary scientific insights and the epistemological tools to tackle climate change in its full complexity, these approaches conceive of the Anthropocene both as an ethical and as a cultural/ontological challenge (Bartosch 2015, 60). Posthumanism, in turn, also highlights another entanglement which questions concepts of human exceptionalism and autonomy at the beginning of the 21st century: technology has been perceived variously as a threat to individual freedom, in terms of human enhancement and as an opportunity to recognize humans' partial sovereignty implicating the ethical imperative of a shared agency and cooperation necessary to approach the complex challenges posed by globalisation, terrorism, ageing societies, automation and the environmental disaster (Harrasser 2014, chapter 9).

The quest for a new relational epistemology for the age of the Anthropocene is explored by Judith Dörrenbächer and Ludwig Zeller with regard to narrational design strategies. They discuss recent design approaches which account for the transformed relations of (post)humans with the environment, other species and technology. Narrative experiments such as the *Theatre of Negotiations* in which Bruno Latour asked participants to take on the perspective of non-human entities such as oceans, forests and deserts as part of the *Paris Climat* conference 2015, attest for the attempt to design epistemic experiences in the form of open narratives whose "conclusion or outcome is not fixed and cannot be determined by just one human, nor by only humans in general" (Dörrenbächer and Zeller this volume, 35). Taking the level of mimesis even further, design projects which involve the prosthetic and sensorial transformation of their participants explore forms of being beyond the human and thus challenge traditional paradigms of the relationship between subject and matter. Similar to posthuman literature, these experiments impressively illustrate "that for us to understand the possibilities of posthuman life […] we have to find a new accommodation with matter" (Boxall 2015a, 141), while still pointing us towards a certain ontological unavailability.

Contemporary authorship is characterised by two contrary developments. On the one hand, the transmedial presence of cultural products allows for instantaneous, largely uncontrolled reaction, reframing or sharing, and thus a blurring of the boundaries between creator and consumer. The increasingly aggressive marketing of authors as celebrities who acquire a

brand-like status, on the other hand, runs counter to this trend by putting a marketable image of the author as the sole creator of his work at the centre of attention (Eaglestone 2013, 1096).

The former development is closely linked to one of the characteristic features of contemporary media ecologies, namely the various forms of interaction between content creators and their audiences who form networks and fan communities, shaping the production process (Jenkins et al. 2013, 2). This development has been associated with the rise of participatory cultures which may have the potential to impact on the politics of representation in mass consumer societies but are also themselves subject to marketing strategies by the entertainment industries (Manovich 2009, 321). TV series which Kelleter describes as texts "that evolve […] in a feedback loop with [their] own effects" (2014, 4) allow for a transmedial analysis of these phenomena: as their success story is deeply rooted in the 20th century, their 21st-century manifestations reveal the impact of contemporary participatory cultures which are closely linked to the rise of social media. In this volume, Johanna Schorn explores the ways in which some showrunners engage with their audiences and how, in turn, networked consumers influence the development of television series and their portrayals of LGBT characters. The increasing interest in LGBT protagonists in 21st-century TV shows has resulted in more diverse and comprehensive storylines for LGBT characters which reflect postmillennial teenagers' lives more accurately. These informal collaborations have blurred the lines between audiences and authors and changed the politics of LGBT representation while ultimately maintaining asymmetric power structures which producers increasingly seek to conceal.

The contrary development, with the author very much in the limelight, is illustrated by Carola Briese's article on the creation of commercial narratives for the literary market. Her contribution analyses the branding techniques underlying the marketing of Rajeev Balasubramanyam's début novel *In Beautiful Disguises* (2000), which highlighted the author's ethnic background over the literary quality of his work. As much as we might consider our day and age as being "done with postcolonial criticism," given the huge amount of research that has been published over the past decades, in terms of marketing narratives and generating media value for non-Western literary fiction, the tools and mechanisms of white hegemony and power relations appear to be intact and to sell well in the literary market of the 21st century (see e.g. Huggan 2001). Briese identifies mechanisms of othering and exotizicing within the marketing narrative that was designed to appeal to a presumed Western audience. While *In Beautiful Disguises* has been acclaimed by some academics for its avant-

garde style of writing and its intertextual engagement with traditional Indian myths, the publisher, Bloomsbury, further opted for marketing the novel as chick-lit fiction. Since the genre is designed to provide "light reads" for a young, female readership, this marketing strategy falls short in addressing and promoting the complex intercultural dialogue with Indian intertexts which Balasubramanyam's novel would suggest. As the majority of reviewers unquestioningly adopted the exoticising framing of the novel, they became complicit in rendering literary narratives from non-Western contexts as "other," despite the increasing adoption of postcolonial criticism in mainstream culture.

The growing impact of marketing requirements on cultural production has also promoted the rise of genre fiction and films in the 21st century with "the boundaries of genre […] rigidly enforced by agents, publishers, academics, booksellers, and journalists" (Eaglestone 2013, 1097). Science fiction, or more generally the various popular subgenres of speculative fiction, provides a space to explore the timely preoccupations which mark the "precarious life" (Butler 2004) with "fragile futures" (Botha 2014) "off the edge of history" (Giddens 2014) at the beginning of the third millennium. The fact that in the 21st century "change is no longer automatically assumed to be a change for the better" and instead "[t]he future has become an object of concern, prompting ever new measures of precaution" (Assmann 2013, 41), is more than just the result of the postmodern rejection of teleological linearity. Instead, it expresses the frailness of life in view of environmental disasters, growing global inequalities, restricted human sovereignty and spreading technology, rising fundamentalisms and global terrorism. Set in a future which still bears some likeness to the present, science fiction allows the exploration of these issues and our fragile position in relation to the past, present, and future.

As an event that very much instilled a sense of crisis, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are often constructed as the historical caesura which marks the beginning of the 21st century. In the wake of 9/11, the re-heated rhetoric of the "clash of civilisations" (Huntington 1993) was increasingly framed in terms of a clash of religion (represented primarily by Islam) with the secular West. Under the headline of a "religious turn" or a "post-secular age," academia has shown a revived interest in the place of religion in contemporary societies and their cultural dimensions (Gorski et al. 2012, 2). This new visibility of religion in the 21st century does not only manifest itself in the negotiation of the relation of religious nation states to secular world views, but also in the way secular societies perceive migrants with different religious backgrounds foremost in terms of their

religion, i.e. as Muslims, instead of their cultural or national backgrounds (Nash 2012, 7). In her chapter on the TV show *Battlestar Galactica*, Stefanie Esser takes up these issues by outlining how the familiar villains of communists and Nazis have been replaced by Muslim terrorists within the established narrative of "Us vs. Them." In contrast to much of the US-American cultural production following 9/11, Esser demonstrates how *Battlestar Galactica* undermines this binary opposition by engaging critically with a home-grown religious fundamentalism in the form of Christian Evangelists. Embodied by a sexualized female protagonist, the show takes up of the fear of the enemy within, presenting her in a conventional shape, thus complicating a clear delineation of "us" and "them."

A turn to politics and ethics is also manifested in literature where postmodern relativism is complemented by an engagement with socio-political issues and forms of emancipation through art (see e.g. Rancière 2011). Many of the literary texts that respond to these issues share a concern with the weakening of democratic structures through globalisation and international capitalism as "we see a crisis in our understanding and experience of freedom and equality, in the very meaning of democracy" (Boxall 2013, 189). Thomas Wellmann's contribution sets out how this crisis is addressed in the novels *New Model Army* and *By Light Alone* by the British science fiction author Adam Roberts. Written during the Arab Spring protests, *New Model Army* deviates from the ubiquitous discourse of governmental surveillance through information technology and instead depicts it as an opportunity to widen democratic decision-making in the form of digital referendums and real-time polls even within the military. At the same time, the novel remains ambiguous as to the ethics of direct democracy, swarm intelligence and collective consciousness. Similarly, *By Light Alone* depicts a society which has been relieved of world hunger but nonetheless retains reinforced global inequalities in the form of different social classes whose cultural scripts control people's behaviour to such an extent that they become estranged from each other. The distinctive feature of Adam Roberts' science fiction texts is that they are neither utopian nor entirely dystopian. Instead, they challenge the reader to think through various political discourses from Rousseau to de Tocqueville and 21st-century debates about a basic income and the potentials and pitfalls of online-based direct democracies.

At the intersection of fictional and non-fictional narratives, travel writings represent cross-cultural encounters and therefore open a space for the negotiation of the ethics of travelling and its representation. Anna von Rath's contribution investigates how travel writing as a genre has the

potential to emancipate itself from its historically close connection with colonialist discourse by self-reflexively engaging with genre conventions. She shows how the conscious attempts to overcome racist preconceptions made by a journalist travelling in the Caribbean partly fail and rather result in the reinforcement of racist stereotypes due to complacency. Still, von Rath argues that even if contemporary travel writers are often only partly consistent in their efforts to break preconceived notions of the Global South, they can still promote a new ethics of travelling amongst their readers by creating an awareness of the difficulties of such an attempt. In accordance with Carola Briese's chapter, von Rath's contribution suggests that theoretical approaches originating in the 20th century, such as postcolonial studies, continue to be of importance, thus indicating that new concerns of the third millennium have not replaced old discourses, but rather enhanced them.

In 2010, two years after the suicide of David Foster Wallace, an article on the conceptual impact of this author widely considered "one of the most significant writers of his era" was published under the heading "David Foster Wallace: The Death of the Author and the Birth of a Discipline" (Kelly 2010). As this title suggests, the theoretical legacy of Wallace's oeuvre has appealed to literary critics as a lens through which to analyse contemporary American fiction. Wallace's writing is then seen as the pivotal attempt to overcome postmodern ironic detachment by promoting sincerity and authenticity through literature. Laura Morris' contribution scrutinizes the interpretation of Dave Eggers and George Saunders in this vein, informed by Wallace's critique of irony, and instead proposes a theoretical framework based on Rancière's notion of the "emancipated spectator," which acknowledges the various forms of ethical engagements in post-postmodern American fiction. Morris shows how Saunders' fiction enters into a dialogic mode with the reader, who plays an active part in taking up the loose threads in his fictional narratives and in creating meaning. Reading thus becomes an emancipatory practice which potentially impacts upon real-life actions. Eggers' *A Hologram for the King* similarly engages with existential questions of ethical behaviour, but in responding to these by presenting the reader with a firm set of values, it promotes a conventional moral reminiscent of the 19th-century novel.

Morris' contribution brings to the forefront the difficulties of moving beyond postmodernism while being "caught in the double bind of the incompatibility between the urge to provide the reader with ethical values and absolute truths and postmodern culture's aversion to reducing a complex and ambiguous reality to a simple and univocal moral position," which is a legacy 21st-century writings continue to subscribe to (Morris

this volume, 121). On a conceptual level, Morris' analysis itself, along with other contributions to this volume, exemplifies how the 21st century has outgrown postmodernism: what was once regarded as an all-encompassing, overarching term denoting both a historical period from the 1970s onwards and a critical inventory has now been complemented by other theoretical approaches which have decentred postmodernism and rendered it just one aesthetic or analytical category amongst others (Gladstone and Worden 2011, 292; Gladstone et al. forthcoming 2016). This development is part of a broader shift which has been staged somewhat dramatically as the "death of theory": what had set out to be a critical "*project*, an effort of renewal and transformation" (Connor 2004, 5; emphasis in original) deconstructing meta-narratives which have governed societal discourses on collective and individual identities, class, race, gender, centres and peripheries, has itself become canonized and dogmatic today (Hutcheon 2002, 5). Thus, stuck in its self-referential loops, postmodern theory appears to be incompatible with the contemporary quest for realism, authenticity and ethical engagement in culture and the arts.

Not only theory but also the novel (Self 2014; cf. Boxall 2015b, 138-39) and narratives in general (Manovich 2011, 225; cf. Hoydis 2015, 13-14) have been deemed under threat in the new millennium in view of the rise of digital media, an "aesthetic of flow" (Bolter 2012, 254), vast databases and hyperconnectivity. The "explosion of interest in narrative" (Herman 2015, 4) which the contributions to this volume attest to can also be understood as a response to these contemporary phenomena which are withdrawn from narrativization and question the future of narratives in the 21st century. The "aesthetic of flow" impedes the emotional engagement that narratives can cause as they generate meaning through establishing chronological or thematic connections between separate entities, which implies that they have a beginning and an ending—even if this can be an open one. In contrast, the "aesthetic of flow" prompts a state that hampers any critical engagement and finds its embodiment in the target audience of YouTube which seeks to make users click from one video to another, "losing" themselves in myriad interconnections online.

A further development which has suggested "the death of narratives" in the 21st century is the phenomenon of data mining, the agglomeration of unfathomable masses of data which resist narrative organisation. In their *History Manifesto*, Jo Guldi and David Armitage state that

> [a]n information society like ours needs synthesists and arbiters to talk about the use we make of climate data tables and economic indicators. It needs guides whose role is to examine the data being collected, the stories

> being told about it, and the actions taken from there, and to point to continuities, discontinuities, lies, mismanagement, and outright confusion that occur in the process. (2014, 68)

In their view, historians should take on the role of these "synthesists and arbiters." Without denying the need for experts as participants in today's information society, this volume stresses the importance of a critical narrative competence for *all* in an age which constantly presents us with simplistic and reductionist narratives and commercial stories. The contributions to this volume share an engrained scepticism towards meta-narratives inherited from postmodernism but also the conviction that narratives constitute "a basic human strategy to come to terms with time, process and change" (Herman 2015, 3), thereby evoking the importance of narratives of scale and value which meet the ethical challenges of humans as storytelling animals (see e.g. Antor 2010, 57-58) in the Anthropocene.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROSPECT OF SOCIONARRATOLOGY

MATTI HYVÄRINEN

> Socionarratology is construed here as one branch of narrative analysis in its postclassical setting, its life after structuralism. (Herman 1999a, 223)

> "What does it mean?" was never the question for structuralist narratology; "How does it mean?" was the point. And the answer to that question was supposed to be deduced more or less objectively. (Warhol 1999, 342)

This article returns to David Herman's (1999a) path-breaking proposal for socionarratology. The relevance of the proposal is addressed from two different but complementary perspectives. Firstly and historically, the mere proposal of the term at the end of the 1990s informs us of a sustained and unwarranted cleavage between the broadly understood social research of narrative, inspired by such authors as William Labov (1972) and Jerome Bruner (1986; 1990), and the concurrent trends in literary narratology. This claim, as such, questions the reliability of the then dominant view about the one, unified and homogenous narrative turn, and indicates a substantial lack of continuity between the projects of narratology and the narrative turn in social sciences. As a second move, the relevance of socionarratology will be discussed within the current landscape of several, competing versions of narratology. At the end of the article, I will suggest a few relevant areas of research for future socionarratology.[1]

I understand socionarratology as a project including the transportation of narratological ideas, analytic concepts, and ways of asking questions into social research, and vice versa, and in doing so constituting a shared field of theoretical issues, relevant concepts, and methodological

[1] I am grateful to the Academy of Finland research project (285144) *The Literary in Life: Exploring the Boundaries between Literature and the Everyday* for supporting my work with this article.

approaches. The idea of socionarratology is not exactly new. At the beginning of the project of structuralist narratology, Roland Barthes describes how "[a]ll classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is every so often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds," and how "narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (1977, 79). There is no word about limiting the scope of interest exclusively to literature, fiction or the artistic. Furthermore, Barthes and his fellow narratologists launched the conceptual revolution that was a necessary condition for the whole idea of socionarratology by generating the abstract, conceptually central and generalized concept of narrative, which qualitatively differed from the earlier, more concrete level foci of research such as novels, folktales, or diaries. Before such an abstraction, it was implausible, if not entirely impossible, to theorize the modernist novel and oral storytelling—broadly—within the same conceptual frame.

However, the structuralist orientation of classical narratology, and especially the idea of structuralist linguistics as the model science for the study of all narratives (Herman 2005), meant that early narratology primarily focused on the forms of narrative, or more precisely on the structural conditions of the possibility for narrative meaning-making, rather than on the interpretation of narrative meaning-making as such. Following the structuralist reception of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), many narratologists wanted in fact to disclose the "narrative grammar" (reflecting the distinction *langue/parole* in structuralist language theory), which was supposed to lend meaning to all "instances" of narrative.

Propp was one of the early theorists who successfully travelled from (and through) literature to social sciences. Jerome Bruner (1987; 1990) uses him as a theoretical inspiration, but for many others, he also provided the core of research methodology, a model of study. Will Wright's *Six Guns and Society* (1975) was an early and influential work that offered Propp as a crucial model for narrative analysis. The past identification of narrative analysis with Propp is puzzling, for he himself clearly points out that he did not intend to make any claims even on the titular topic of the "folk tale," and far less about narratives in general, but only on the much narrower category of "Russian wonder tales" (Propp 1984). The structuralists were fascinated by myths, thus the idea of reading everyday storytelling from a mythical perspective was found to be appealing.

The metaphoric approach to narrative

As often observed, the project of structuralist narratology had no great hermeneutical interests. The central interest used to be formal, and the rhetoric of research characteristically scientific. Therefore, when the narrative turn in the social sciences was launched in the early 1980s, the relationship with the old narratology was both distant and selective. The overall revolution in social sciences—broadly and inclusively understood—was heading in an entirely different direction. The scientific rhetoric of the dominant quantitative research was under attack, new interpretative qualitative methods were explored, and cultural studies in general made progress—and all of this under the umbrella term of the linguistic turn (Rorty 1967). In short, this indicates a radically different intellectual landscape to the environment of structuralist narratology, which indeed attempted—finally, or once again—to turn literary studies into a serious, scientific discipline.

After these climatic changes, the seeds of narrative thought fell on a ground substantially different to that in the 1960s. Classical narratology, with its theory, methodology and research interests, had little to offer in this rapidly changed atmosphere. The narratologist Henrik Skov Nielsen, however, seems to have a more optimistic view of the role played by literary theory when he suggests that

> [n]arrative theory may well be the greatest export success emanating from the study of literature ever. Originating in structuralism and applied in the early years mainly to literary works of art, narratological terms and insights have now spread to fields as diverse as economics, history, psychology and many others. (Nielsen 2011, 71)

When it comes to social sciences and psychology (or education and health studies), it was hardly a narrative theory, not in the least a literary narrative theory spreading to these new fields. The fastest traveller, I have argued, has been the metaphor of narrative and the metaphoric discourse on narrative (Hyvärinen 2012b; forthcoming). This particular way of spreading or travelling explains most accurately the striking contradiction between the two salient characteristics of the field: the popularity of the language of narrative, and the simultaneous lack of significant theoretical and methodological continuity between narratology and the new studies on narrative.

Two philosophical works from the early 1980s achieved extensive popularity and were able to propagate the significance of narrative. The case of Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1993 [1983]),

and his claim of the decline of professional "grand narratives," is telling for at least two reasons. In his small book, Lyotard does not develop a nuanced narrative theory, even to the extent that it is somewhat unclear *how* narrative the "grand narratives" truly were. Without suffering from substantial loss of actual content, Lyotard's "grand narratives" might easily be re-termed as "hegemonic discourses." Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2006) acknowledges this once fashionable, poststructuralist and metonymic way of replacing such terms as theory, discourse or ideology with the more exciting term of narrative. Nevertheless, Lyotard's book launched a plethora of discussions. As a result, some readers grew to be systematic critics of all kind of narratives, while many others found the book as legitimation for the study of small, marginal, and forgotten stories. Significantly, this second thread coincided with the growing academic impact of second-wave feminism, and its insistence on personal storytelling (Guaraldo 2013).

In contrast to Lyotard's postmodernism, the other key philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, may be characterized as a Christian, conservative, and Aristotelian thinker. Yet it is MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1984) that encouraged the rise of narrative thought most profoundly. MacIntyre, like Lyotard, is rather vague in terms of any kind of narrative theory. By visiting MacIntyre, one is unable properly to discover what narratives are about or how to study them. He does not need to take into account the existence of narratological theories in any serious way. What he mostly reads and comments on, besides Aristotle, is Sartre's novel *Nausea*, which for him epitomizes the decay and fragmentation of Western thought and self[2]. All this considered, MacIntyre's great impact on later narrative thought and research may seem surprising. To render my argument more plausible, I return to the distinction Herman makes to characterize different approaches to narrative and mind: "(c) studying narrative *as the target of interpretation* versus (d) studying narratives *as resource for sense making*" (2013, 1; emphasis added). The perspective (c) does not interest MacIntyre at all; narrative communication tends to be self-evident for him. Nevertheless, he is keenly interested in the ways humans use narratives as resources for sense making, coherence-making and future-orienting.

Most narratologists used to understand narratives as some kind of representation of past events (a selection of such definitions is provided by Tammi 2006). MacIntyre turns this temporal perspective around, and argues that narrative is a vital mental tool in thinking about the future as

[2] For fuller analyses on Sartre and *Nausea*, see Hyvärinen (forthcoming) and Meretoja (2014).

well, thus his famous expression about people "living out narratives." The significance of narrative for life is concisely communicated with his popular slogan of humans as "storytelling animals." Besides turning the temporal axis of narrative, MacIntyre launched a tremendously important discussion by outlining the idea of narrative identity. He poses the fundamental dilemma of personal sameness by arguing that at the age of 50, we tend to be very different from what we used to be at the age of 20, and yet there is some deep similarity. As he argues, no psychological theory can account for this sameness despite the change over time. The only way to understand human continuity and change thoroughly is with the help of the image of "character," understood as a concept drawn from the modern novel. His account, besides suggesting such a thing as narrative identity, provides the possibility to understand the existence of contemporary narrative identities as a result of the historical development of the novel. Thus, we all seem to be children of the *Bildungsroman*.

MacIntyre's chapter on narrative is not extensive or thorough; rather, it is heuristic. There is no other obvious continuity between the projects of structuralist narratology and MacIntyre than the abstract, generalized concept of narrative. MacIntyre's persuasive language was full of metaphor, and as a whole his work profoundly motivated what I have called the "metaphoric approach to narrative" (Hyvärinen 2010; 2012b; 2013; forthcoming). In these papers, I have suggested that "narrative" was, within this discourse, accepted as a useful metaphor for a great variety of phenomena ranging from communication to life itself. The discourse was metaphoric not only because of the explicit metaphors that abounded, such as *Storied Life* (Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992) or "Life as Narrative" (Bruner 1987). The crucial idea, following MacIntyre, was to study and theorize life, identity, communication and so on from the perspective of narrative. Within this discourse, the main research objective was never to analyse and interpret narratives better, to embark on Herman's first strategy, "studying narrative as target of interpretation."

"Metaphoric" is by no means a critical term here. Narrative was a new metaphor, and as such it has inscribed an open invitation to study more closely what "narrative" may actually mean. For Richard Rorty new metaphors do not necessarily "mean" anything; instead, the metaphorical use of noises "is the sort which makes us get busy developing a new theory" (1989, 17)—and this indeed happened during the narrative turn, inspired by narrative-as-a-metaphor. The histories of narratology and the narrative turn in social sciences (in what follows, the narrative turn) are in this sense entirely different. The metaphoric discourse demonstrates once and again the crucial value of narrative in human life and sense-making,

inviting the rather large questions that follow about *what* narratives are and *how* they should be studied. Vladimir Propp's narratology and William Labov's sociolinguistic theories were often "found" retroactively as exemplifying possible ways of analysing narratives (as in Herman's strategy c). One such example is Catherine Kohler Riessman's influential and genuinely empirical study *Divorce Talk* (1990). During the 1990s, the work of such linguists as William Labov (1972), Livia Polanyi (1989) and Deborah Tannen (1993) was established as part of sociological study of narratives. However, no significant trace of narratology or MacIntyre can be found in *Divorce Talk*. Some influential authors from the narrative turn side, such as Bruner (1987, 1990) and Donald Polkinghorne (1988), certainly studied narratological literature and explored its uses in their work in the 1980s. Yet even this interest waned during the 1990s, when empirical research on narratives started to flourish in the social sciences.

The two faces of narrative research

Narrative as a target of interpretation became, over the course of the 1990s, an increasingly established subfield. Following Elliot Mishler (1986) and Catherine Kohler Riessman (1990), the sociolinguistic tradition in different versions became the dominant source of inspiration. Over the years, methods and ideas from conversation analysis and discourse analysis have been actively imported and employed (e.g. Bamberg 2004, 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008; Gubrium and Holstein 2009). There has been a constant quest for methods—methods to read oral and written narratives, and methods to understand "narrative contents," but in spite of the real surge of empirical study of different kinds, the demand for narratological literature has been scanty, at least until recent years (Mildorf 2006; Hyvärinen 2008; 2015a).

The role of narratology is not dramatically different among those who focus on stories as a resource for sense-making. Bruner is surely the prime example of this research orientation (1990; 1991). For example, in building his theory of "canonicity and breach" and of narratives as a method of explaining and alleviating deviations from cultural expectations, Bruner draws from psychology, his earlier studies on children's storytelling, and the narratological tradition. Nevertheless, narratology mostly remains in the background, and he never engages in systematic dialogue with the tradition. Later writers belonging primarily to this research orientation, such as Mark Freeman, seem to distance themselves even further from all versions of narratology. Freeman (2010) characteristically discusses both literary and everyday narratives without

explicating any kind of methodologically grounded analysis of these narratives.

All this considered, narratology was not an active part of the narrative turn literature and debates around the time when Herman made his proposal. There is simply no strong methodological continuity between the projects of narratology and the narrative turn. Such areas as biographical and gender studies may partly constitute exceptions to this rule because of their thematic exchange across disciplinary borders. There is, however, one minor exception, the 1997 special issue of the *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, published in honour of the 30th anniversary of William Labov and Joshua Waletzky's article on oral narratives, which also included the contribution of the narratologist Gerald Prince (Bamberg 1997).

At the same time in narratology

The period of structuralist narratology did not display any strong interest in phenomena beyond the limits of literary theory. The emerging interest in interdisciplinary narrative work rather coincides with the "crisis" of the classical period of structuralism, the impact of cultural studies, and the consequent emergence of many competing versions of narratology (Herman 1999b; Warhol 1999). James Phelan's rhetorical narratology characteristically foregrounds the communicative situation, as in "somebody telling somebody else on some occasion for some purpose(s) that something happened" (2005, 18), rendering his narratology more relevant for social scientists who constantly work with this situatedness. Phelan's work also exhibits a strong hermeneutical aspect, since the purpose of his close reading is never fulfilled with finding the formal features of narration but reaches toward understanding the narratives and the ethics of narration.

However, the most radical and, arguably, far-reaching proposal from the 1990s was Monika Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996). Fludernik generates nothing less than a major attempt at establishing everyday oral narratives as one of the primary sources of all narrative theory. In the late 1960s, when Labov started to publish his work on oral narratives, he and his fellow sociolinguists were positioned in a marginal niche compared to the more centrally positioned structural linguists. For many scholars of cultural studies, the "linguistic turn" of the 1980s still indicated an obligatory re-run of the Saussurean structuralism with its binary oppositions, requiring most of all paying homage to the *langue/parole* distinction. For these reasons, Fludernik was genuinely "postclassical" (the term was only coined some years later by David

Herman (1999b)). In focusing unconditionally on oral narration and rejecting the relevance of the *langue/parole* distinction, Fludernik radically changed the nature of narratology's points of departure.

Social scientists often complain about narratology's uselessness due to its unrequited interest in the forms and structures of narrative. However, when the narratologist Fludernik elevates experientiality as the defining characteristic of narrativity, years before social scientists themselves started to write about the experiential turn (Squire 2008), social scientists systematically failed to recognize the event. Fludernik's book offered whole new agendas for interdisciplinary work, yet without much reaction or recognition from the social sciences (Hyvärinen forthcoming).

A quick comparison between the handbooks and encyclopaedias of the time offer a straightforwardly divided picture. On the side of social research, the *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, edited by D. Jean Clandinin (2007), provides a strictly exclusive vision of narrative research. The phenomenon of postclassical narratology, including its major players, is entirely missing, and references to the structuralist narratology are equally rare and haphazard. On the other hand, the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, published in 2005, exhibits a whole range of social scientists as writers as well as referred authors. Around the time that Herman made his proposal, the field of narrative studies was indeed starkly divided, and the increasing interdisciplinary interests were asymmetrically situated on the side of narratology.

Herman's proposal(s)

In his original proposal for socionarratology (1999a), Herman emphasizes two particular themes. Firstly, narratology could profit from renouncing its one-sided commitment to Saussurean linguistics, and from drawing more actively on sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and the North-American theory of language in general. Herman specifically discusses William Labov's (1972) sociolinguistic theory of narrative as an alternative approach to the language of narrative. With these proposals, he closely follows Fludernik's lead, and programmatically suggests ideas that Fludernik had already employed a few years earlier. Secondly, he continues: "Arguably though, what I shall call the Labovian model […] can gain both descriptive and explanatory adequacy if it is enriched with resource tools developed first under the auspices of narratology" (Herman 1999a, 222). The first major contribution to the Labovian model should, Herman suggests, be "the distinction between story and discourse;" the "second is the redescription