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## **Preface. Emerging Vectors of Narratology**

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## Preface

Is narratology consolidating or is it diversifying?

Such was the question debated at the third conference of the European Narratology Network held in Paris on March 29 and 30, 2013: *Emerging Vectors of Narratology*.<sup>1</sup>

The essays collected in the present volume, all of them full-length research articles developed subsequent to the lectures presented at that conference, provide no clear-cut answer to this question or to the numerous matters surrounding it. Rather, these in-depth studies are emblematic of the diverse and sometimes complementary, sometimes conflictual, but always thought-provoking ways in which the contributors frame the issues in today's research environment, suggesting that current narratological inquiry is consolidating in some ways while at the same time diversifying in others. All of the authors draw on established advances in the field, and all seek to refine existing frameworks or to venture into areas which, whether already well-known or only nascent, call for further exploration. This, basically, is the rationale behind grouping the contributions into "Contexts" and "Openings."

As readers of the following pages will see, the "contexts" of the first section refer partly to the various theoretical and disciplinary environments and/or narrative objects focused on by the authors, and partly to context in the sense of the cultural and historical or communicative circumstances within which narrative discourses occur.

Dan Shen discusses a number of attempts to "contextualize" narrative poetics, such as feminist narratology, but finds that while this approach enriches and refines formal narrative poetics, it is not possible to "genderize" structural distinctions, as such distinctions are by nature decontextualized. As for rhetorical narratology, it stakes out a position which, although not fully appreciated for a number of years, has considerable potential for the sociohistorical contextualization of narrative theory itself, without any need to challenge the principles of formal narrative poetics.

In the following essay, Jannike Hegdal Nilssen, in an analysis of Linn Ullmann's *Before Your Sleep*, examines "ambiguous" discourse, a combination of free indirect discourse with character-(in)dependent discourse which forms a hidden layer of narrative unreliability and irony in this *Bildungsroman*. Whereas

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<sup>1</sup> Complete information on the conference can be found on the ENN website at: <http://narratology.net/node/189>

unreliable narration is frequently in the first person, unreliability in this case results from the intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator and extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator functioning together. Refinement of another type is brought to unreliable narration by Per Krogh Hansen. Typically associated with fictional texts, unreliable narration undergoes a novel transformation when it is employed in autofiction, a genre characterized by the presence of both referentiality and fictionality and by the blurring of borders between author, narrator and character. As attested by Hansen's corpus, this state of affairs leads to the unexpected conclusion that the implied author is not necessarily inseparable from unreliable narration. David Stromberg brings yet another set of considerations to unreliability. This raises a host of questions about value judgments which, in narrative contexts, bear on *narrative faith*: "a conviction that, regardless of its source in the imagination, literary narrative retains its relevance to both the phenomenal world and to human life." Narrative faith often exists in a relation of tension with *narrative doubt*: "hesitation between the believability of the illusion and the consciousness of the story as invention." Valery Timofeev offers a close analysis of a page from Nabokov's story "Ultima Thule" (in both Russian and English) that incorporates unreliable narration into generative narratology, a model he has developed which is predicated in part on two aspects of authorial self-consciousness drawn from blending theory: self-reflexiveness and internal state awareness.

In another group of articles included in the same section, Natalya Bekhta argues for the existence of a distinct, first-person plural narrating agent which defines we-narrative, an emergent form of narrative situation. Nora Berning, working within the framework of critical ethical narratology, analyzes a corpus of autobiographical end-of-life stories, a form of factual narrative in the life-writing mode that makes heavy use of fictional strategies. In Berning's study, the immediacy of this form of writing is made more salient by the fact that her tutor text, Wolfgang Herrndorf's *Arbeit und Struktur*, is a blog. Manja Kürschner studies how history is fictionalized in a corpus she describes as post-constructivist metahistorigraphic fiction—a form, she explains, that "refutes radical constructivist theories that postulate an all-encompassing unreliability of historical writing and storytelling." The fragile dividing line between factuality and fictionality is also taken up by Silke Lahn and Stephanie Neu, although with a transmedial focus. On the basis of Richard Walsh's proposal to redefine fictionality as a "rhetorical mode" and the ensuing intensive Danish research in this field, the authors analyze two recent and iconic examples in European television series and movies. The Italian film *Romanzo Criminale* and the Danish series *Klovn* (subsequently a film) mix supposedly irreconcilable elements of fictional and factual origin into the narrative by including "forensic" elements—real events, archive footage and real persons as characters—so as to achieve effects of fictionality. Narrative cannot be

divided up only into nonfictional and fictional, though, for as Brian Richardson observes, there is a considerable body of “unnatural” or “antimimetic” narratives that defy verisimilitude through the use of physically impossible time schemes, endings with multiple conclusions, etc. There is no unified narratology suited to accounting for all narratives, Richardson contends, and for this reason he calls for an unnatural narratology to supplement the standard mimetic models.

The next three articles examine aspects of narrative that are less bound to context properly speaking than they are to phenomena that span narrative in a broad sense. Stating that causation as such is not adequate for the analysis of narrative, Göran Rossholm, after reviewing a number of causal theories of narrative, presents a causal expectation model. A candidate for a narrative universal, this model incorporates external factors (e. g., genre) as well as internal factors, effect expectations and causal explanation, but it also allows for narrative point and surprise, two elements essential for the narrativity of a discourse, in whatever medium. Wolf Schmid examines the partly related issue of eventfulness. Events, he claims, are bound to the necessary conditions of factuality or reality and resultativity; eventfulness, however, results from the degree of relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity through which events are narratively portrayed. At the same time, Schmid notes that the novelty of eventfulness is threatened by repetitiveness, thus pitting (in Šklovskij’s terminology) recognition against defamiliarization. On this basis he goes on to discuss narrative eventfulness in cultural history with reference to Lotman’s “aesthetics of identity” as opposed to “aesthetics of opposition.” Raphaël Baroni reflects on the virtualities of possible worlds in narrative theory. In possible worlds semantics, he observes, opposing statements about the *fabula* need not always be ordered hierarchically but can, as in Jorge Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths,” accommodate multiple alternative worlds that cannot be reduced to mutually exclusive versions. Virtualities can be expressed in the discourse (as in Gerald Prince’s “disnarrated”), or they can be shaped by the character at the level of the *fabula* or formulated by the reader. Unlike the logical structure of *fabula*, the dynamics of plots open up (in David Herman’s words) “a dialectical interplay between narrative and consciousness.”

With the following three contributions, the context is that of non-verbal narratives. In his article, Jan Alber argues that film is much better suited to depicting character interiority than is commonly assumed. Through facial expressions, the use of music and associations of characters with other entities, for example, internal states can be conveyed in ways that are structurally similar to psychonarration in prose narratives. Furthermore, dual-perspective shots, which combine the subjective vision of a character with an ‘objective’ one, are analogous to free indirect discourse. Finally, Alber also discusses more immediate cinematic ways

of rendering inner lives (through subtitles, captions, enacted mindscreens and interior monologues at the auditory level) that function like stretches of direct thought in prose texts. The question of transmedial transposition is taken up by Małgorzata Pawłowska in her study of the extensive repertoire of musical works (especially though not only opera) inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The discussion of music and literature relations date back many years, of course, but Pawłowska, referring to a growing body of research devoted to musical narratology, shows how the properties of media "affordances" and the use of musical themes (known as "topics") enable music—particularly in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*—to capture emotional content in ways that parallel the Freytag Pyramid while at the same time following the processuality of narrative as mapped out by Greimas in his model for the narrative scheme. The broader issue of narrativity across media is addressed by Matthias Brütsch. In a survey of theories of narrativity, synthetically grouped into five "positions," Brütsch analyzes the implications of these positions for verbal, audiovisual and dramatic forms of narrative, and he goes on to confront them with narratological models based on the categories of story/discourse, mediacy and mimesis/diegesis. In the end, he opts for Wolf Schmid's "constitutional model," built up from happenings, story, the narrative and presentation of the narrative, as a framework for defining narrative.

Finally, with a switch to cultural contexts far removed from those of the modern Western corpuses habitually taken into account by narratologists, the parameters of inquiry may change significantly. Such is the case with ancient Greek narrative which, according to Claude Calame, is less a literature per se than it is a "poetic form of action" or an instance of "ritualized enactive speech." Required for such a corpus, he contends, is an "interpretive understanding of intercultural translation demanded by cultural and social anthropology" together with discourse analysis working along the lines of French enunciative linguistics and pragmatics. This leads to a critique of the concept of narrativity as developed in the classical/postclassical paradigm for narratology which, among other things, fails to account for the prefigurations, configurations and refigurations of time as formulated by Paul Ricœur.

When it comes to literary traditions such as that of China, looking in from the outside calls for a comparative approach. It is in this spirit that Huaiyu Luo surveys a body of research on Chinese narrative theory, both Western and Chinese, that got underway during the 1970s. During the 1980s and 90s, a number of major programs for translating Western literary and narrative theory into Chinese got underway. It was under this influence that narratological studies by Chinese scholars has been gathering speed over the past twenty years. Involved is not only the assimilation of Western research but also a rereading of traditional Chinese poetics, dating back over more than two thousand years. More recently,

important work has been done within a properly Chinese context, thus developing narrative theories which open up perspectives for non-Western forms of narratological reasoning.

In a number of ways, the contributions included in the second section of this collection—"Openings"—expand the contexts set out, sometimes implicitly, in the first section.

This observation is confirmed by the topic of the narrative turn, a line of inquiry that has been evolving for more than thirty years but that is now undergoing important changes in response to recent developments in the research environment. Philippe Roussin shows how the narrative turn, which ushered in an instrumental conception of narrative and sense making in a departure from the structuralist preoccupation with form and story structure, resulted in the reintroduction of narrative into the social sciences. In his commentary, where the work of Lyotard, Bourdieu, Bruner and MacIntyre, among others, is discussed, Roussin stresses the rise in postmodern culture of narrative as a form of knowledge that rivals science. This tendency is felt particularly in historiography (notably in the work of Hayden White), but also (more recently) in the rise of storytelling—"the grand narrative of the present"—in communication, management and politics. In another commentary on the same topic, Paul Dawson looks at the implications of the narrative turn for interdisciplinarity. With narratology's expansion beyond the literary canon, on the one hand, and the growing web of the narrative turn in the social sciences, on the other, narratology has been confronted by both centrifugal and centripetal forces, leaving its boundaries ill-defined. Dawson concludes by noting that narrative does not provide "unified knowledge about narrative as a fundamental cognitive faculty by which humans make sense of experience," but rather that the different ways in which the story/discourse distinction run through the various disciplines afford possibilities for fruitful methodological exchanges in interdisciplinary research.

The following three chapters are devoted to some of the numerous cognitive issues that have been studied by narrative theorists. In the first of these contributions, it is noted that the silent reading of literary fictions has long been regarded "as an incorporeal process of mapping written words onto mental representations and meanings." This practice tends to make the reading of narrative a cerebral and abstract exercise, ignoring the various ways in which embodiment affects narrative sense making. Taking a cue from Monika Fludernik's notion of experientiality, Marco Caracciolo, Cécile Guédon, Karin Kukkonen and Sabine Müller, working within the scope of second-generation cognitive approaches, explore the possible avenues for an "embodied" narratology. Such a theory incorporates cognitive parameters, the representational dimension and interpretive strategies for projecting the storyworld into cultural and ideological meanings. The possibilities

of a neuro-narratology are taken up by Ralf Schneider. Although such a field does not exist yet, and although it cannot be expected to explain how neural activity might contribute to an adequate understanding of the production and reception of narratives, neuro-narratology, nourished by neurobiological data, does have the potential to provide “a heightened awareness of the richness and complexity of mental processes below the level of consciousness.” Finally, Richard Walsh questions the true scope of the cognitive sciences in narrative theory. Taking as his example a close analysis of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy*, he argues that narrative cognition, dependent on the serial logic of temporal sequence, and spatial cognition are incommensurable and consequently that narrative cognition does not suffice to comprehend the spatiotemporal reality we inhabit; on this basis, Walsh calls into question any totalizing global conception of storyworlds as well as the pertinence of immersion for the definition of fictional worlds, which he conceives as mental models, not as extra-representational referents. Taken together, these three chapters address only a small portion of cognitive narrative studies, yet they are indicative of several important tendencies in this field of research.

Among the questions studied in the final four articles are a number of broad conceptual frameworks within which at least some narratological reasoning currently seems to be developing. Eva Sabine Wagner scrutinizes the conditions for narratological self-consolidation. She challenges the view according to which narratology is built up simply by defining its object of research, arguing that there is a feedback loop between narratology and narrativity. In view of this circular dynamics, the goal of narratological consolidation cannot be achieved by attempting to provide narratology with a supposedly “solid” conceptual basis, but only by exploring narratology’s “complex” processes of self-organization. Wagner contributes to this project by analyzing, on the levels of both narrativity and narratology, a specific dynamics of “coherence in progress” through negotiations between syntagmatic and paradigmatic modes of self-organization. For John Pier, complexity does not serve as a paradigm for narratology so much as it offers a transdisciplinary perspective for viewing narratological principles in terms of their possible degrees of commensurability with the loose federation of complexity sciences. With reference to Ilya Prigogine’s nonequilibrium thermodynamics, Pier shows how narrative sequentiality, whose standard formulations reflect the laws of Newtonian classical mechanics, might profitably be viewed, in today’s research environment, in terms of irreversibility or the “arrow of time.” Doing so supplants equilibrium and disequilibrium as defining features of narrative sequence in favor of the principles of stochastic (or random) processes, dissipative structures and spontaneous self-organization together with the instabilities engendered by nonlinearity, positive feedback and bifurcations. When sequentiality is viewed in this way, the properties found at the micro scale of

narrative are not reduplicated at the macro scale, thus severing the isomorphic relations between parts and emergent wholes.

Another scientifically inspired approach to narrative is explored by José Ángel García Landa. Arguing that literary and cultural phenomena are best understood within a consilient disciplinary framework, García Landa associates this perspective with “big history,” the broad context of the evolution of societies and of life generally. In a discussion of the philosophical works of Herbert Spencer, he finds in nineteenth-century evolutionary theory a historiographical and narratological perspective which is close to present-day research on natural and ecological contextualization of human societies. The concept of “narrative anchoring” is introduced so as to provide temporal schemas with large-scale interpretive contexts (e. g., the Christian myth from the Creation to Apocalypse) and that of “narrative mapping” as a framework to account for the historical situatedness of narrative modes.

Finally, Roy Sommer looks into what might be a way forward in sorting out the multiple theories, models and paradigms that have come to dominate the narratological landscape. Observing that much has been accomplished to establish the links between narrative and knowledge, Sommer raises the question as to how *theories* of narrative, through their epistemological and methodological stances, produce knowledge about narrative. Such an exercise in metanarratology, he contends, stems from intuitive knowledge gained through aesthetic experience and abstract knowledge. From this standpoint, he discerns three types of compatibility in narratological theory building: “backward” compatibility (e. g., cognitive approaches integrate various principles of earlier structural approaches); “forward” compatibility (e. g., research that opens the way to the transgeneric and transmedial dimensions of narrative); and “sideways” compatibility of classical and postclassical narratology, for example, thanks either to paradigm expansion through the revision of existing theories or to paradigm evolution, as in the confrontation of structural and rhetorical narrative theories or of mimetic and antimimetic theories.

Readers of these contributions who are in search of a unified narratological theory are likely to be struck by the diverse though fruitful avenues of inquiry followed by the authors. Yet within this diversity, and on another, more subtle level, many points of convergence will be found thanks to the prolific dialogue taking place in today’s research in narrative theory.

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