符号叙述学专辑

Introduction to the Special Section “Narrative and Semiosis”

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In the last two decades there have been some clear trajectories of narrative study. The cognitive and social sciences direction of narrative investigation, coupled with more traditional, literary-orientated theories of narrative, augmented by a nod to non-literary media, plus a dash of the more fashionable aspects of discourse analysis, has constituted “postclassical” narratology. The term was inaugurated by Herman (1997) and he notes that narrative theory has “undergone not a funeral or burial but rather a sustained, sometimes startling metamorphosis” (1999: 1; see also Alber & Fludernik, 2010; Nünning, 2003). “Postclassical narratology” has acknowledged the synchronic impulse of the “narratologie” bequeathed by the Paris and Tel Aviv schools, among others, while allowing some of the newer currents in narrative study to flourish.

Nevertheless, “postclassical narratology” has coalesced into a specific school, with certain delimited concerns in cognitive theory—“Theory of Mind”, “worldmaking” and other examples of what Roy Harris (2003) has called “cognobabble”, in preference to traditional designations of cognitive/emotional processes such as “empathy” (Keen, 2007). On its social science side, in part following the heritage of Labov and Waletzky (1968), it has tended to favour such

pursuits as reading off identities from "big" and "small" stories (Bamberg, 2006) of everyday discourse or attempting to trace the linguistic path of fictional constructs in "text world theory" (Werth, 1999).

Clearly, there has been a widespread backlash against some of the shortcomings of "classical" narratology, particularly in its failure to account for narrative's dynamism, audiences and the vicissitudes of affect. The turn to the study of narrative*across media* that was inaugurated by narratology in the 1960s had had the profound effect of abolishing the value-laden concepts of "Art" and "Literature", along with their Leavisite baggage of moral and spiritual enrichment. This is arguably its most cherished gift and there is some retention of the spirit of that gift in postclassical narratology's lip service to "transmedial" narrative. Yet the true lineage from classical narratology to the present is, perhaps, semiotics—the birthplace of narratology.

As Structuralism spread through the human sciences in Europe and then into Anglo-American academia, so did the structuralist-orientated literary theory. Roland Barthes' essay "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1977, [1966]) and Tzvetan Todorov's *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969), the latter of which actually coined the term "narratologie", represented the birth of narratology proper. In the late 1960s and early 1970s these paved the way for works by names frequently associated with the narratological enterprise: Mieke Bal, Seymour Chatman, Dorrit Cohn, Gérard Genette and Gerald Prince. Narratology not only encouraged the study of narrative in general, as opposed to the "pure" study of, say, the novel or film, but also grew out of the structuralist imperative to subject different forms to a "neutral" method of questioning. Narratology therefore took encouragement from structuralism and, more broadly, the newly crystallising field of semiotics or the study of the sign in all its manifestations.

However, apart from a couple of decades during which semiotics was fashionable in the West (the 1960s & 1970s)—that being, not coincidentally, also the era of narratology—it has experienced a marginal position in the global academy. The reasons for this are overdetermined and this is not the place to go into them. However, it is sufficient to note, in broad stroke, that the academy has tended to favour the word; the academy's glottocentrism, its bias towards all things linguistic as characterising the nature of humanity and the world in which we live,

has also been accompanied by neglect, in those instances when it is forced to consider multimodality, of the sheer breadth of sign action in the known universe. In relation to narrative theory, but also applicable to the academy in general, the glaring problem is that the marginalisation of semiotics has invariably entailed that supposedly expository perspectives have proceeded without a general theory of semiosis.

It was this issue that led to the formation of a roundtable on "Narrative and Semiosis" at the 11th Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in Nanjing, October 2012. Arranged and chaired by myself and Professor Yiheng Zhao, himself the author of a landmark work in narratology (2013), the roundtable was a cross-cultural enterprise on intersemiosis, voice, cultural memory, collectivity and mediation, from whose papers the following selection is taken.

Exemplifying the kind of startling and thoughtful work that is being carried out on the margins, Yunhee Lee's paper "Person, Dialogue and Love: The Narratives of the Self" is set within a strongly Peircean theory of semiosis. Focusing on a somewhat traditional text, although not necessarily one that is often cited in narrative theory—Montaigne's *Essays*—she presents a complex argument about selfhood achieved through love. Undermining customary accounts of identity with their all-too-frequent individualist overtones, she shows how, through autobiographical narrative, the first-person perspective can connect the narrative self in a storyworld with the moral self in the real world. In order to "know oneself through the possible world of self-narrative", she writes, "it is a prerequisite to love the other through the established self-narrative". This might seem to be merely a recasting of the Christian edict to love one's neighbour or an example of straightforward liberal dialogue; however, as Lee shows quite clearly, such a narrative must be based in a radical Peircean perspective whereby every person is like a "cluster of stars" or a "bundle of habits", multiple within themselves but having no "absolute demarcation" from neighbouring clusters or bundles.

Two of the papers that follow also give accounts of the core topics of narrative and identity but, once more, do so from a most illuminating marginal position. Anneli Mihkelev's paper, "Entangled Memory and Historical Narratives in Intersemiotic Space" is concerned with the working of narrative in texts that are interpreted as a mnemonic sign. The cultural memory that she uncovers concerns

Estonian literature, particularly during the Soviet period, when the specificities of tropes and figures such as Hamlet have social and geographical meaning beyond their usual literary historical co-ordinates. Thus, the article proposes "entangled memory", where remembering is not just an act of recall but a complex process of interpretation.

The second of these two papers also deals with narrative and identity in the wake of the Soviet Union. In an extraordinary and original take on the topic, Valery Timofeev's "Vyborg Local Identity" selects as its focus the sometimes controversial re-use of old graves. In a town which has had a chequered history in terms of local identity, Timofeev finds that local identity is bound to time and space, built around a (re-) learning of the past. At odds with customary accounts of identity, the paper persuasively argues that the people of Vyborg construct a narrative of their identity precisely because they are *not* self-determining in the usual way; rather, they are doubly-estranged, defamiliarized, "disconnected and cut off" in a fashion that makes the forging of their identity all the more surprising.

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