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NAMING IN NARRATIVE

In narrative contexts, naming involves the use of singular terms, a class of designators or referring expressions functioning like individual constants in a proposition, to label an entity or set of entities in a *storyworld or any of its subdomains. Naming practices are meant to ensure the identification of the furniture of the storyworld and the continuity of *reference to a given entity throughout the *narration (see EXISTENT).

The terms used for naming can be classified into proper names (or letters or numbers), pronouns and demonstratives, and definite descriptions (see DESCRIPTION). While proper names are the major naming device in literature, they are not indispensable. A story with two or three *characters can make do with pronouns, and *novels have been written in which all characters are designated by definite descriptions. In autodiegetic narratives, such as Dostoevskii's *Notes from Underground*, the narrator-character's name may never be mentioned, or occur just once in a *quotation from an *address by another character (see NARRATOR). Different *authors show clear preference for particular kinds of naming devices – for example, definite description in Zola and proper names in Flaubert. The contrastive use of names and definite descriptions may partition the personnel of a narrative into distinct groups, and may have focussing and *thematic reasons and implications. In Kafka's *The Trial*, for example, persons with whom the main character has personal relations are referred to by names, while officials are referred to by expressions designating their roles, such as 'the judge'.

A text-grammatical perspective on singular terms examines how they form extended anaphoric

chains creating discourse coherence and intelligibility. This phenomenon has been studied in detail by Catherine Emmott (1997), who analyses chains such as a man → the man → John → he → the singer, etc. A semantic approach studies the role of names in establishing a storyworld's cast of characters and how they enable readers to answer questions such as: who is there, how many are there, who is who, who did or was such and such, and is it (still) the same individual? (see NARRATIVE SEMANTICS). Cognitively viewed, singular terms are names of mental files we keep on characters or an anchor for our construction of mental models of them (see COGNITIVE NARRATOLOGY; NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION; SITUATION MODEL). In the course of the narrative text, relations of co-reference, temporary or permanent, are established between different singular terms.

Inside a storyworld, proper names act as rigid designators, picking out the same individual regardless of any transformations s/he may undergo, and a character's true identity is equated with his or her baptismal name. Many literary narratives are concerned with baptismal name-giving, distortion of names leading to doubt whether it is still the same individual, confusion of names and their bearers, refusal to mention one's name or to have a name, quest for one's original name, assumed and changed names, and expressions mistaken for names and leading to false beliefs about the existence of a corresponding name bearer. A character in a narrative may bear the name of a fictional individual from an earlier work or that of an actual person (see INTERTEXTUALITY; POSTMODERN REWRITES). This leads to questions of sameness or counterparthood across worlds between the name bearers (see POSSIBLE-WORLDS THEORY).

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URI MARGOLIN

NARRATEE

Narratee, a coinage of classical, *structuralist narratology, designates the addressee to whom a *narrator tells his/her tale. The narratee, like his/her counterpart the narrator, is integral to a communication model of narrative (see COMMUNICATION IN NARRATIVE; FUNCTION (JAKOBSON); NARRATIVE TRANSMISSION). This model is based on a strict non-crossable ontological separation between the double, two-partner transaction: an 'external' one between the 'real' *author and 'real' reader (e.g., respectively, Austen and anyone reading her novels) (see AUDIENCE); an 'internal' transaction between the narrator and the narratee, who are part of the *fiction but not necessarily part of the fictional world (where the *characters are), being one level above it (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 91–94; see DIEGESIS; EMBEDDING; STORYWORLD). The double act of communication envisaged by the structuralist multilevel model of *narration entails that narrators and narratees *always* occupy the same level of narration (Genette 1980 [1972]). Thus in embedded narratives (e.g. Shelley's *Frankenstein*), not only are there multiple narrators and narratees who change roles (Walton, initially, as narrator, his sister as narratee in the frame story; then Victor Frankenstein as narrator, Walton his narratee; then the monster as narrator, Victor his narratee), but at each level the roles are fixed (the monster addresses Victor, *his* narratee, not Walton, Victor's narratee). The change in roles carries *rhetorical effects, creating *distance or sympathy (e.g. toward the monster).

Some strands of *postclassical narratology, which do not subscribe to the strict communication

model of narrative, may omit the term 'narratee' altogether (Abbott 2002: 187–97) or may use it as a convenient synonym for auditor, disregarding the strict ontological and hierarchical implications explained above ('insofar as a text is posited to address a reader [or narratee]') (Fludernik 1996: 340). Other postclassical strands focus not on ideal *reader constructs, but on an empirical study of communication and literary response (see RECEPTION THEORY). Such work examines the relation between narrators and real as opposed to ideal readers (Bortolussi and Dixon 2003: 66–69); by implication, it either understands the narratee as synonymous with a listener, or has no need for the concept at all. It also denies, in effect, the validity of the non-crossable ontological boundaries of the communication model outlined in structuralist narratology.

Narratees can be ranged along a scale of more or less detailed characterisation: from total absence (Maupassant, 'The Necklace'), through minimal characterisation (the out-of-town customer of Whitey in Lardner's 'Haircut'), to fuller characterisation (Victor as the monster's narratee).

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NILLI DIENGOTT

NARRATING (GENETTE)

In Genette's terminology, *the narrating* refers to the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place (Genette 1980: 27). The term thus designates one category in Genette's trichotomous classification of narrative: (1) story, (2) discourse, and (3) narrating. With written

narratives, the real process of narrating is the *author's writing process, which lies beyond the narrative, but could fruitfully become a part of narratological study through combining intrinsic criticism with extrinsic criticism (Shen 2001). In oral *narration, by contrast, the *audience has direct access to the real narrating process of the storyteller. The storyteller's tone, *gestures, facial expressions etc. interact with his/her words, serving an important affective function. Whatever the storyteller does during the process of narrating may directly bear on the audience's response to the narrative.

The process of fictitious narrating is not accessible to the reader unless reported either by the narrator himself or herself or by a higher-level narrator. These two cases are exemplified in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* when, on the one hand, Marlow as embedded first-person narrator recounts his own narratorial activity as follows: 'When you have to attend to things of that sort... the reality, I tell you – fades...', "Try to be civil, Marlow", growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake beside myself' (49); and when, on the other hand, the frame narrator reports: '[Marlow] was silent for a while... He paused again as if reflecting, then added...' (39). Not surprisingly, in narrative fiction, where only the verbal signs are accessible to the reader, the fictive narrating has no other way to present itself except through being reported. And when it becomes an object of narration, it either becomes part of the story (when narrated by a higher-level narrator) or part of the discourse (see STORY-DIS-COURSE DISTINCTION). Generally speaking, apart from the issue of temporal orientation (whether the narrating is retrospective, simultaneous, or prospective in relation to the narrated *events; see TIME IN NARRATIVE), there is no necessity for the narrating to be an explicit element of a narrative. When the fictive narrating is not mentioned as such it is usually 'considered to have no duration' (Genette 1980: 222; see also Shen 2001). In the case of extra-heterodiegetic narration, if the narrator is a depersonalised narrative instance, readers can only get access to the words reported via a 'disembodied' voice. If readers try to look behind the words for the narrating process, they will only find the writer's writing hand.

Since the real process of narrating lies beyond the written narrative and the fictitious process is not accessible unless narrated, many narratologists

have refrained from making narrating a separate category in their classification of the dimensions of written narrative.

SEE ALSO: communication in narrative; narrative transmission

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DAN SHEN

NARRATING-I

The *narrator in a first-person narrative; specifically, in retrospective first-person *narration, the older self who recounts the experiences undergone by the earlier 'experiencing-I'. See NARRATIVE SITUATIONS (also PERSON; TIME IN NARRATIVE).

NARRATION

'Narration' can be synonymous with **narrative' when referring to individual narrated texts, as for example in the narration or narrative of a life (see LIFE STORY). But in most analytic discussion of narrative, narration is more closely synonymous with *narrating' or the *production* of narrative, and thus is subsumed within the larger category of narrative. Genette, for example, identifies narration as one of the three levels of narrative, along with story (*histoire*) and narrative discourse (*récit*) (see STORY-DIS-COURSE DISTINCTION). However, opinions vary regarding the application of the term, ranging from a tight restriction to unquoted verbal narration by a *narrator to usage that is so broad as to encompass the entirety of narrative discourse.

Even in its narrowest sense, narration is a complex subject, containing within it a great number of narratological concerns: prolepsis, analepsis (see TEMPORAL ORDERING), *point of view, *voice, *suspense and surprise, *distance, omniscience, and others too numerous to take up

here. Early classifications of the kinds of narration relied on distinctions of *tense and grammatical *person. These classifications persist in popular usage (as in, for example, past tense third-person narration), but in analytic usage they have been widely found to be inadequate and replaced with a number of more useful, though still debatable, systems of classification.

Narration can also be a formal attribute of augmented reflexive attention in fiction, particularly as *thematized in *modernist and *post-modernist fiction. A considerable body of later-twentieth-century commentary on narrative has drawn attention to the ways in which, in certain texts, narration can absorb a great deal of the reader's or *audience's attention, often at the expense of the story itself (see REFLEXIVITY).

Verbal narration, quotation, monologue, and interior monologue

The term 'narration' has been traditionally restricted to the verbal (oral or written) production of narrative by a *narrator (Cohn; Genette; Prince). At times, the term has been further reduced from a global to a local concept by distinguishing it from *quotation or monologue, which are set off in some way by quotation marks and/or by phrases like 'he said' and 'she said' (see SPEECH REPRESENTATION). The argument for this position turns on the fact that quotation, insofar as it occurs within the story, is more mimetic than diegetic, in that it is *directly* presented rather than *indirectly* represented through the narration (see DIEGESIS, MIMESIS). Bal, in addition to stressing narration's difference from 'embedded texts' like dialogues and monologues, draws attention to those numerous segments of almost any 'narrative' text (e.g. segments involving *description or *metanarrative comment) that do not participate in the narration of the story.

Discussion of narration and quotation has also been impacted by the common confusion between William James's concept of 'stream of consciousness' and Edouard Dujardin's term 'interior monologue' (see STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTERIOR MONOLOGUE; THOUGHT AND CONSCIOUSNESS REPRESENTATION (LITERATURE)). The former is meant as a description of the moment-by-moment flow and texture of consciousness, the latter as a method of representing it. For James, however, the stream of consciousness includes

more than language and therefore more than can be directly represented in a monologue. Moreover, as Cohn points out, the term 'interior monologue' itself has been used to designate two very different things with two very different modes of narrative production, the one a technique of 'presenting a character's consciousness by direct quotation of his thoughts in a surrounding narrative context' and the other 'a narrative *genre* constituted in its entirety by the silent self-communion of a fictional mind' (15) (see GENRE THEORY IN NARRATIVE STUDIES). Thus Joyce deploys frequent passages of interior monologue in *Ulysses*, but with the exception of the 'Penelope' chapter these passages are contained within and mediated by narration in the third-person. Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, by contrast, is interior monologue in its entirety and therefore essentially 'direct' first-person discourse. As Cohn points out, where the genre is a comparatively recent development, the technique is a natural outgrowth of a long tradition of representing consciousness by quotation within third-person narration.

The validity, or at least usefulness, of the distinction between quotation and narration is complicated by the fact that narration can be and frequently is found embedded within monologues or quoted discourse, and much of this 'embedded narration' conveys events of the story within which the quotation occurs (see EMBEDDING; FRAMED NARRATIVES). Correlatively, entire *novels narrated in the first-person are in essence long quotations. The tension involved in maintaining the distinction between quotation and narration can be seen in a narrative like *Heart of Darkness* in which, within a few pages, the anonymous third-person narrator who begins the narration in effect hands over the discourse to a character, Marlow, whose words, though technically being quoted, narrate the rest of the novel with few interruptions. The distinction between narration and quotation is made even more difficult by the very common novelistic practice of *free indirect discourse, which as Cohn observes occupies 'a position astride narration and quotation' (14), fusing as it does third-person narration with the language, intonation, and manner of a *character within the narrative (see DUAL-VOICE HYPOTHESIS). One could argue, however, that in written texts there is in fact no direct discourse, since, as Banfield contends, even quotation is mediated by conventions that separate it from oral discourse.

Whether for these reasons or others or simply to expand the framework for investigating the production of narrative, recent studies of narration have broadened the focus of inquiry to the point where *narration* no longer strictly denotes narrative production by a narrator.

Classification by tense

Narrative is generally understood as presenting *events that have already happened by the *time of the narration (either actual, as in historical narrative, or invented, as in *fiction) (see HISTORIOGRAPHY). Narration, in other words, is understood to mediate a story, either true or fictional, that in some way precedes the narrative. For this reason, narration is rendered most commonly in the past tense ('Margaret picked up the scissors and ran at her accuser'). Not infrequently, however, novelists have deployed the present tense to narrate action in the past. Usually referred to as the 'historical present', this move is thought to heighten the immediacy and dramatic impact of the narration ('Margaret picks up the scissors and runs at her accuser'). Casparis argues that such narration diminishes reader-awareness of narration altogether, throwing the stress on perception: 'Plot, character development, logical causal framework are relinquished in favour of the act of perceiving' (74). The device is also common in narration that occurs naturally in the ordinary course of conversation ('So I'm heading for the train station when suddenly this thunderstorm comes out of nowhere'; see CONVERSATIONAL STORYTELLING; NATURAL NARRATOLOGY).

Narration in an actual, rather than a historical, present raises the issue of when what we read or witness is no longer narration but rather the unfolding of events as they happen. Cohn (1978) and Fludernik (1996) both note that one cannot at the same time live a story and narrate it. Whether one agrees with this or not, art forms like role-playing games, theatrical improv, or 'happenings' would all appear to be as unmediated as life itself and therefore not examples of narration until rendered in retrospect (see DRAMA AND NARRATIVE; NARRATIVE, GAMES, AND PLAY). 'Current report' – the present-tense reporting of events as they happen (sports, on-the-scene news; see SPORTS BROADCAST) – even though a mediated presentation, would also appear to be so tied to the unfolding of events as (arguably) not to qualify as

a form of narration. Use of the non-historical present tense or 'narrative present' (Cohn 1978; Stanzel 1984) in fiction is often difficult to distinguish from the historical present and requires sufficient cues to be understood as one or the other. Narrative present in the first-person ('I pick up the scissors and run at my accuser') conceivably qualifies as 'monologue' or 'interior monologue', but again much depends on the context to indicate how it is to be read. In sum, present-tense narration is multi-functional and can substitute 'for all tenses except the present perfect and the future' (Fludernik 1996: 254).

Reacting to narrative theory's traditional bias toward the 'past-factive-completive triplet' and the increasing proliferation of event-representational texts of other kinds, Margolin has used the tense-aspect-modality (TAM) approach to try to sharpen theoretical discriminations between kinds of narration on the basis of temporal features and 'reality status'. For Margolin, any adequate analysis of narration in one of the three commonly recognisable types – in his terms, *retrospective* narration (past), *concurrent* narration (present), and *prospective* narration (future) – requires further discrimination of a multitude of potential meaningful differences within these types depending on whether the action is completed or in progress and whether the world invoked is 'actual, non-actual, hypothetical, indeterminate, counterfactual, wished for, ordered into being' (143; see MODALITY). Naturally, the probabilities of one or the other of these modal variants depends to some degree on the temporal position of the event in relation to the narration (e.g., the ratio of actual to non-actual modalities is usually higher in ret-narration than in concurrent or prospective narration).

Classification by person; homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration; reliability

In addition to classification by tense, kinds of narration have traditionally been discriminated according to the grammatical person of the narrating voice. Far and away the commonest types are first- and third-person narration, with second-person narration forming a comparatively small, though growing body of texts. As the basis of a useful system of classification, grammatical person is fraught with difficulty, beginning with the fact that third-person narration is so frequently

contained within narration identified as first-person. Even in most, and possibly all, *autobiographies in which the authorial subject explicitly and frequently refers to himself or herself in the first-person, third-person narration tends to predominate (see AUTHOR). Yet customarily all that has been necessary to classify a text as first-person narration has been its delivery by a character who belongs in some way, however peripherally, to the diegesis or world of the story, regardless of how infrequent the instances of self-reference.

In an effort to improve on the inadequacy of classifications based solely on grammatical person, Stanzel developed a comprehensive complex paradigm of the kinds of narration according to their degree of *'mediacy' (see NARRATIVE SITUATIONS). All elements of the paradigm fall within three major modes of narration: first-person narration (internal to the story), authorial narration (external to the story), and 'figural' narration (conveyed largely through the unspoken perceptions of a character operating as a 'reflector'). Genette similarly promoted a distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, the one emanating from a character inside the diegesis, the other from a voice or character outside the diegesis. But Genette did not adopt the concept of an unspeaking narrator, developing instead the subsidiary concept of *focalization in place of Stanzel's reflector-mediated figural narration. Another notable reaction to the inadequacy of a system based on grammatical person is Booth's stress on the *reliability of the narrator. An author's strategic choices, for example, of 'dramatised' or 'undramatised' narrators, of 'observer narrators' or 'narrator agents', affect the narration's degree of emotional and perspectival distance from the action and hence the reliability of the views embedded in the narration (see EMOTION IN NARRATIVE; PERSPECTIVE).

Locating second-person narration in any comprehensive scheme of classification has also been problematic. Grammatical second-person is an implicit concomitant of narration in the imperative and instructional modes. Yet second-person narration is also arguably a subcategory of third-person narration, the narrating voice turning its attention toward what is most likely the reader (though some might argue for an implicit *narratee, or addressee, as both recipient and object of the discourse) (see ADDRESS). Conversely, the

personal relationship implicit in the address to the reader brings with it the aura of a speaking subject: that is, a first-person behind the voice. Finally, the effect whereby second-person narration can extend the world of the narrative out into the world of the reader – i.e., incorporate the reader into the diegesis – makes it fundamentally asymmetrical with first- and third-person narration. For more on the complexities of second-person narration see Fludernik (1994; cf. McInerney 1984).

Narration in non-verbal media

For those who would limit the use of 'narration' to the production of narrative by a narrator, stories presented in drama, *film, and other non-verbal *media are non-narrational. Though works in these media often contain narrators, either as characters who address the audience or in film through *voice-over technique, such verbal narration is rarely sustained, most of the represented action being freighted by performers and other visual and aural elements. Yet the term 'narration' has been widely applied to non-verbal media, even static pictorial media like paintings (see PICTORIAL NARRATIVITY; VISUAL NARRATIVITY). In the discourse on film especially, narration can be a very broad concept, referring at times to the combined effects of all the elements, verbal and non-verbal, that generate the narrative as it unfolds (see SOUNDTRACK). Bordwell, for example, includes within the concept of narration both *sjuzhet and style, a combination that is close to what in Anglo-American narratological thought is referred to as 'narrative discourse'.

The issue of whether or not narration should be limited to narration by a narrator or, more broadly, to narration in verbal media relates intimately to the effort to distinguish telling from showing or presenting from representing (see SHOWING VS. TELLING). These in turn are rooted in ambiguities in the classical distinction between diegesis and mimesis, first introduced by Plato in *The Republic* as the difference between telling a story (as in *epic poetry) and performing it (as in drama; see MODE). Shortly thereafter, Aristotle in *The Poetics* subsumed Plato's distinction within a single, much broader, concept of mimesis that encompassed the subcategories of telling and performing. Whether following Aristotle's lead or not, mimetic theories of narration have stressed that narration can be a matter of *performance and

can draw as much on visual as on aural or written elements. It was a short step from this to argue, as Pudovkin did in an early and influential treatise on film, that the camera lens is essentially the eye of an 'invisible observer' who visually narrates the film.

Contesting the idea of an invisible observer, film theorists like Branigan and Bordwell have further broadened and complicated the whole discussion by including within the concept of narration, not only formal narrational elements of mimesis and diegesis, but also the *agency of the spectator. While Branigan insists on the distinction between narrative discourse (the complete textual system as object) and narration (the implied or explicit activity of a subject in grasping elements of that system), he nonetheless greatly extends the direction Stanzel took when he introduced the idea of unspoken narration. Branigan's complex understanding of narration allows for multiple kinds of knowing, including the shifting understandings of both characters and spectators. In Bordwell's 'constructivist' account, narration is the process of eliciting the spectator's construction of the film by a complex stream of cues designed to trigger schemata that pre-exist in the spectator's consciousness (see SCRIPTS AND SCHEMATA). Encompassing and transcending not only voice-over but also the information produced by the camera eye, this is narration without a narrator. Indeed, on this view, a narrator is simply another among a multitude of schemata that may or may not be cued by the narration.

Foregrounding narration

In much twentieth-century fiction, narration itself has become a point of focus and in the process has tended to keep the reader from an *immersion in the story untroubled by questions regarding its transmission (see NARRATIVE TRANSMISSION). Though this development is one of the common signatures of modernist and postmodernist fiction, it can be found in earlier narratives like Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767) and Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* (1796). The twentieth-century increase of novels using versions of the narrative present (Fludernik 1996: 251) would appear to be a part of this switch in focus, drawing attention, as Casparis argues, to the on-going production of the narrative.

This shift of focus has been frequently seen to reflect a crisis of epistemology in which doubt is

cast on the capacity of narrative to represent a reality outside the prison-house of a narrator's subjectivity and language. A more radical version of the crisis is the existentialist tenet that stories exist only in the mind and nowhere in external reality. The idea there are no 'true stories' existing outside our constructing imaginations was powerfully developed in Sartre's *Nausea* (1938). Narration's displacement of story as an object of readerly attention is also developed in Brooks's reading of *Heart of Darkness* as a text in which 'the impossibility of original story, the need to retell, places emphasis of the tale on the plane of narration itself' (262). Where Brooks locates this shift in a *modernist* exhaustion of narrative possibility, Hutcheon and McHale, following the lead of Barthes, stress the way *postmodern* texts extend an invitation to the reader to participate actively in the world-making process of narration (see POSSIBLE-WORLDS THEORY; READER-RESPONSE THEORY; STORY-WORLD). The optional and transposable lexia of some forms of hypertext fiction (see DIGITAL NARRATIVE) can be seen as variants of this trend. The collaborative products of *interactive fiction would seem to carry this process even further, yet they also raise again the question discussed above: whether or not 'narration' is an appropriate term for projects (like role-playing games and theatrical improv) that invent themselves as they go along.

SEE ALSO: evolution of narrative forms; modernist narrative; novel, the; postmodern narrative

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H. PORTER ABBOTT

NARRATIVE

Though interest in the phenomenon that forms the topic of this Encyclopedia dates back to a couple of millennia, both in Western and non-Western cultures, 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 the 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, more particularly of Roland Barthes and Claude Bremond, to have emancipated narrative from literature and from fiction, and to have recognised it as a *semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and *media (see STRUCTURALIST NARRATOLOGY).

Contemporary uses of the term narrative

No sooner had narrative come of age as a theoretical concept than it began to invade fields as diverse as *historiography, *medicine, *law, *psychoanalysis, and *ethnography (see NARRATIVE TURN IN THE HUMANITIES). This territorial expansion was

accompanied by a semantic broadening that liberated narrative not only from literary forms, but also from any kind of textual support. A decisive influence on the current uses of narrative was Jean-François Lyotard's concept of 'Grand Narrative' (see MASTER NARRATIVE), as outlined in *The Post-modern Condition*. Lyotard contrasts a 'narrative' type of knowledge, typical of ancient societies, where *truth is guaranteed by the special status of the storyteller within the community, with a *scientific type in which *authors are supposed to provide proof of their claims. But scientific discourse is unable to guarantee its own validity, since it rejects authority. During the nineteenth-century, science sought legitimation in what Lyotard calls 'Grand Narratives': sweeping explanations that present scientific knowledge as the instrument of the historical self-realisation of an allegorical *hero variously named Reason, Freedom, the State, or the Human Spirit (see ALLEGORY). Three features distinguish 'Grand Narratives' from the little stories that we exchange in daily life: they concern abstract entities rather than concrete individuals (see CHARACTER: EXISTENT); they may exist as collective beliefs rather than as the message of particular texts; and they inherit the foundational role of *myth with respect to society rather than being told for their *anecdotal or entertainment value. Little stories and Grand Narratives share a temporal dimension, but while the former simply recount historical (or pseudo-historical) *events, the latter deal directly with a capitalised History. The tacit existence of the Grand Narratives, as well as their explanatory and abstract nature, paved the way toward the 'Narratives of Race, Class, and Gender' or the 'Narratives of Identity' of contemporary cultural studies (see CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE; NARRATIVE EXPLANATION).

The increasing popularity of the term 'narrative' also reflects the epistemological crisis of contemporary culture. 'Narrative' is what is left when belief in the possibility of knowledge is eroded. The frequently heard phrase 'the narratives of science', popular in the new field of science studies, carries the implication that scientific discourse does not reflect but covertly constructs reality, does not discover truths but fabricates them according to the rules of its own game in a process disturbingly comparable to the overt working of narrative fiction. Calling a discourse 'a narrative' or 'a story' in order to question its claim to truth thus

amounts to equating narrative with fiction (see PANFICTIONALITY).

In cognitive science and *Artificial Intelligence, narrative tends to be associated with sense-making and problem-solving activities. For instance, the AI developer Kerstin Dautenhahn calls a robot a 'storytelling agent' when, acting on the basis of its memories of past experiences, which are called its *autobiography, the robot performs a sequence of actions leading toward a goal (Dautenhahn and Coles 2001). The assimilation of *memory to autobiography, also popular in psychology (see PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE), expresses the idea that living one's life and reflecting upon it is like writing one's *life story: a continuous act of self-creation that involves at every moment choices, responsibilities, re-evaluations, and the addition of new chapters to the book-in-progress.

What is narrative theory to do about this metaphorical or metonymic assimilation of the concept of narrative with ideas which would have been labelled 'belief', 'interpretation', 'attitude', 'rationalisation', 'value', *'ideology', 'behaviour', 'plan', 'memory' or simply 'content' a generation ago (see METAPHOR; METONYMY)? Should we design a definition that acts like a semantic police, excluding all 'illegitimate' uses of the term 'narrative', but also endangering its theoretical vitality, or should we bow to current fashion, and work out a definition that accepts all current interpretations, at the price of losing some crucial distinction between narrative and other forms or products of mental activity? A compromise between these two possibilities is to regard narrative as a fuzzy set defined at the centre by a solid core of properties, but accepting various degrees of membership, depending on which properties a candidate displays (see MODE). The fuzzy-set hypothesis will account for the fact that certain texts will be unanimously recognised as narratives, such as *fairy tales or *conversational stories about personal experience, while others will encounter limited acceptance: *postmodern novels, *computer games, or historical studies of cultural issues, such as Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.

Describing versus defining narrative

Inquiry into the nature of narrative can take two forms. The first, aiming at a description, asks: what does narrative *do* for human beings; the

second, aiming at a definition, tries to capture the distinctive features of narrative.

Here are some examples of the type of observations produced by the descriptive approach: narrative is a fundamental way of organising human experience and a tool for constructing models of reality (Herman 2002; see NARRATIVE AS COGNITIVE INSTRUMENT); narrative allows human beings to come to terms with the temporality of their existence (Ricoeur 1984–1988; see TIME IN NARRATIVE); narrative is a particular mode of thinking, the mode that relates to the concrete and particular as opposed to the abstract and general (Bruner, who distinguishes 'narrative' and 'scientific' thinking); narrative creates and transmits cultural traditions, and builds the values and beliefs that define cultural *identities; narrative is a vehicle of dominant ideologies and an instrument of power (Foucault 1978; see DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (FOUCAULT); IDEOLOGY AND NARRATIVE); narrative is an instrument of self-creation; narrative is a repository of practical knowledge, especially in *oral cultures (this view reminds us of the etymology of the word 'narrative', the Latin verb *gnare*, 'to know'); narrative is a mold in which we shape and preserve memories; narrative, in its fictional form, widens our mental universe beyond the actual and the familiar and provides a playfield for thought experiments (Schaeffer 1999); narrative is an inexhaustible and varied source of *education and entertainment; narrative is a mirror in which we discover what it means to be human.

While descriptive observations such as these can live in peace with each other, definitional approaches tend to provide conflicting views of the nature of narrative, since different scholars will single out different features as constitutive of *narrativity. The following dilemmas illustrate some of the more contentious points.

(1) Does narrative vary according to culture and historical period, or do the fundamental conditions of narrativity constitute cognitive universals (see NARRATIVE UNIVERSALS)? That narrative was slow to emerge as a theoretical concept, and only enjoys recognition within academic culture, seems to speak in favour of a relativistic approach, but the culture-specific feature could be the awareness of the concept, rather than the properties that define it. The relativistic approach raises the problem of comparability: if narrative takes radically different forms in every culture, where is the common

denominator that justifies the labelling of these forms as narrative? If one opts for the culture-universal approach, the obvious differences between the narratives of different periods and cultures are a matter of thematic filling in and of variations on a common basic structure. Similarly, the *epic plot and the dramatic *plot can be seen in Western cultures as different realisations of a common scheme.

(2) Does narrative presuppose a verbal act of *narration by an anthropomorphic creature called a *narrator, or can a story be told without the mediation of a narratorial consciousness? Gerald Prince (2003: 58) defines narrative as the representation of real or fictive events by one or more narrators to one or more *narratees. The opposite position is represented by the film scholar David Bordwell, who argues that film narration does not require a narratorial figure (see NO-NARRATOR THEORY). Some scholars have attempted to reconcile the narrator-based definition with the possibility of non-verbal narration by analysing drama and movie as presupposing the utterance of a narratorial figure, even when the film or the play does not make use of *voice-over narration (Chatman 1990).

(3) Can the feature of narrativity be isolated as a layer or dimension of meaning, or is it a global effect toward which every element of the text makes a contribution? The first position makes it legitimate to divide the text into narrative parts that move the plot forward and non-narrative parts where time stands still, such as digressions, philosophical considerations, or the moral of a *fable (see STORY-DISOURSE DISTINCTION). But this analysis runs into difficulties in the case of descriptions: while extensive *descriptions can be skipped without causing the reader to lose track of the plot, *characters, and settings could not be identified without descriptive statements (see SPACE IN NARRATIVE). If the purpose of narrative is to evoke not just a sequence of events but the worlds in which these events take place (see STORY-WORLD), then descriptions cannot be excluded from the narrative layer, and the distinction between narrative and non-narrative elements is blurred. Literary theorists, who generally adhere to the dogma of the inseparability of form and content, tend to favour the second possibility: narrativity as a global effect. Among them is the critic Philip Sturges, who writes: 'Narrativity is the enabling force of narrative, a force that is present

at every point in the narrative' (29). The inevitable consequence of this position is that narrativity becomes indistinguishable from aesthetic teleology, or, as Sturges puts it, from the consistency with which the text uses its devices (36). Since aesthetic teleology is unique to each text, so is narrativity, and it becomes undefinable.

(4) Is narrativity a matter of form or a matter of content? The proponents of narrativity as form (see REALISM, THEORIES OF) radicalise the ideas of Hayden White, who argues that a given sequence of historical events can be represented either as an unstructured list (*annals), as a *chronicle obeying certain principles of unity but lacking a comprehensive explanatory principle, or as a fully formed plot (= narrative), in which events are organised according to a global teleology. But if historical events can be made into stories as well as into something else (for instance into diplomacy textbooks relying on historical examples), doesn't narrative require specific types of raw materials? Can one turn Einstein's famous equation, $E = MC^2$, into a story without adding anything to it? One way to resolve the dilemma of form vs. content is to invoke the linguist Louis Hjelmslev's distinction between form and substance, a distinction that applies to both the content plane and the expression plane of a text, i.e. to signifieds and signifiers. Narrativity in this perspective would reside on the content plane, not on the expression plane, but it would consist of both a certain form (expressed by concepts such as plot, *story arc, or *Freytag's triangle) and a certain substance (characters, settings, events, but not general laws or abstract concepts).

(5) Should a definition of narrative give equal status to all works of literary fiction, or should it regard certain types of postmodern novels (and films) as marginal? In other words, does an avant-garde text that refers to characters, settings, and events, but refuses to organise these contents into a determinate story expand the meaning of narrative, making it historically variable, or does it simply demonstrate the separability of the concepts of 'literature', 'narrative', and 'fiction'?

(6) Does narrative require both discourse and story, signifier and signified, or can it exist as free floating representation, independently of any textual realisation? Is the phrase 'untold story', so dear to tabloids, an oxymoron or can the mind hold a narrative without words, as when we

memorise the plot of a novel, or when we tell our friends: I have a great story to tell you?

Story as cognitive construct

The answer to this last question – the most crucial to a definition of narrative, since it asks what it is made of – lies in a technical distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’, even though English dictionaries present these terms as synonymous. (This is why up to now this entry has used them interchangeably.) Representing a common view among narratologists, H. Porter Abbott reserves the term ‘narrative’ for the combination of story and discourse and defines its two components as follows: ‘story is an event or sequence of events (the *action*), and narrative discourse is those events as represented’ (2002: 16). Narrative, in this view, is the textual actualisation of story, while story is narrative in a virtual form. If we conceive representation as medium-free, this definition does not limit narrativity to verbal texts nor to narratorial *speech acts. But the two components of narrative play asymmetrical roles, since discourse is defined in terms of its ability to represent that which constitutes story. This means that only story can be defined in autonomous terms. Ever since the Russian formalists made a distinction between ‘fabula’ and ‘sjuzhet’ (i.e. story and discourse), the standard narratological position has regarded stories as ‘sequences of events’, but this characterisation ignores the fact that events are not in themselves stories but rather the raw material out of which stories are made. So what is story, if, as Hayden White has convincingly argued, it is not a type of thing found in the world (as *existents and events are) nor a textual representation of this type of thing (as discourse is)?

Story, like narrative discourse, is a representation, but unlike discourse it is not a representation encoded in material signs. Story is a mental image, a cognitive construct that concerns certain types of entities and relations between these entities (see COGNITIVE NARRATOLOGY). Narrative may be a combination of story and discourse, but it is its ability to evoke stories in the mind that distinguishes narrative discourse from other *text-types. Here is tentative definition of the cognitive construct that narratologists call ‘story’:

- 1 The mental representation of story involves the construction of the mental image of a

- world populated with individuated agents (characters) and objects. (Spatial dimension.)
- 2 This world must undergo not fully predictable changes of state that are caused by non-habitual physical events: either accidents (‘happenings’) or deliberate actions by intelligent agents. (Temporal dimension.)
- 3 In addition to being linked to physical states by causal relations, the physical events must be associated with mental states and events (goals, plans, *emotions). This network of connections gives events coherence, motivation, *closure, and intelligibility and turns them into a plot. (Logical, mental and formal dimension; see CAUSALITY: STORY SCHEMATA AND CAUSAL STRUCTURE.)

This definition presents narrative as a type of text able to evoke a certain type of image in the mind of the recipient. But, as mentioned above, it does not take a text to inspire the construction of such an image: we may form stories in our mind as a response to life itself. For instance, if I observe a fight on the subway, I will construct in my mind the story of the fight, in order to tell it to my family when I get home. The narrative potential of life can be accounted for by making a distinction between ‘being a narrative’, and ‘possessing narrativity’. The property of ‘being’ a narrative can be predicated of any semiotic object, whatever the medium, produced with the intent to create a response involving the construction of a story. More precisely, it is the receiver’s recognition of this intent that leads to the judgment that a given semiotic object is a narrative (see INTENTIONALITY: PRAGMATICS), even though we can never be sure if sender and receiver have the same story in mind. ‘Possessing narrativity’, on the other hand, means being able to inspire a narrative response, whether or not the text, if there is one, was intended to be processed that way, and whether or not an author designs the stimuli.

The principles that make up the present definition are hard and fast rules that specify minimal conditions. One of the conditions appears however more controversial than the others: does a story have to involve non-habitual events, or can it concern fully routine actions? Should this condition be replaced with a preference rule? This dilemma points to an area where *narrativity (the product of minimal conditions) is particularly difficult to disentangle from *tellability (an issue better described by preference rules), but if the

border between narrativity and tellability is sometimes fuzzy, there are nevertheless principles that fall clearly on one side or the other.

By loosening some of the conditions of the above definition, we can account for narrative forms exhibiting less cohesion than canonical stories, such as *diaries, *annals and *chronicles, as well as for the extensions of the term 'narrative' mentioned at the beginning of this entry. The flouting of condition 3 explains for instance the narrative deficiency of some postmodern novels: while they create a world, populate it with characters, and make something happen (though they often take liberties with condition 2), these novels do not allow the reader to reconstruct the network that motivates the actions of characters and binds the events into an intelligible and determinate sequence (see INDETERMINACY). But they compensate for the subversion of story with an extraordinary inventiveness on the level of discourse. The lifting of condition 1 describes the 'Grand Narratives' and their relatives. These constructs are not about individuated beings but about collective entities, and they display general laws rather than a concrete world to the imagination. But they retain a temporal dimension, and they provide global explanations of history. Condition 2 is the hardest to ignore, but its lifting occurs when we speak of 'the narrative of white superiority', or of 'the narrative of the vitality of the Soviet system'. What happens here is that the label narrative has been *metonymically transferred from the stories propagated by colonialist literature or party-controlled media to the a-temporal propositions that form their ideological message. The label remains attached to the ideological statement even after its emancipation from particular stories.

SEE ALSO: ancient theories of narrative (non-Western); ancient theories of narrative (Western)

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NARRATIVE AS ARGUMENT

To the extent that argument is about something it depends upon a context, a cause, and an occasion (see CAUSALITY). The purposive character of argument is most obvious in the progressive structure of public discourse: argument is variously persuasive, performative, or in the lexicon of law it constitutes an action or more technically a cause of action (see PERFORMATIVITY). The relation of narrative to argument is thus variable and depends amongst other things upon rhetorical *genre and the topic of *address. At a formal level, narrative governs argument in that arrangement, the ordering or internal progression of a discourse, depends upon a *narrative structure in which a premise is elaborated, developed, proved, or refuted. Narrative as arrangement is in this sense intrinsic to logic as well as to dialectic and rhetoric. In

Aristotelian terms, logical proof and probable argument both depend upon conceptual progression understood as the discursive trajectory from premise to conclusion. At a less formal level, narrative or the juristic *narration of the facts is a key element in the practices of persuasion and proof. Narrative is intrinsic to persuasion in the sense of effective appeal to the *audience. The topics or places of argument (*loci communes*) thus provide a guide to the types of narrative that will appeal to specific classes of audience. Without narrative, the rhetoricians were fond of declaring, argument would be nothing.

SEE ALSO: apology; law and narrative; narrative progression; rhetorical approaches to narrative

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NARRATIVE AS COGNITIVE INSTRUMENT

People incorporate stories into a wide array of practices, using narrative to carry out spontaneous conversations, produce and interpret literary texts, make sense of news reports in a variety of *media (see JOURNALISM), create and assess medical case histories (see MEDICINE AND NARRATIVE), and provide testimony in court (see COURTROOM NARRATIVE). In this sense, stories function as a powerful tool for thinking, i.e., a cognitive instrument used as an organisational and problem-solving strategy in many contexts. Study of this 'tool function' of narrative thus complements other approaches developed under the auspices of *cognitive narratology, which seeks to map relationships between *narrative structures and modes of intelligent activity. Instead of focusing on how people make sense of stories – e.g., on the processing strategies used to update mental models of situations and *events traced over the course of a fictional narrative (see NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION; SITUATION MODEL) – research on narrative as a cognitive instrument highlights how stories support or enhance intelligence itself. In contexts

of *conversational storytelling, for example, narrative provides an environment for important sense-making activities (Herman 2003a; Ochs and Capps 2001), enabling tellers and interpreters to construct and jointly evaluate conceptual models of states, occurrences, and *existents located in particular regions of experience; to create overarching spatiotemporal links between those regions; and to 'inhabit' the regions in various ways by adopting relatively distant or intimate (and relatively fixed or variable) *perspectives on narrated environments (see DEIXIS; FOCALIZATION; IMMERSION; SIMULATION AND NARRATIVE). Further, narrative affords a basis for ascribing roles to agents within such conceptually modelled *storyworld – agents whose activities as *characters can thus be situated within networks of beliefs, desires, and intentions.

Research by Danto (1985), Mink (1978), and Bruner (1991) bolsters the claim that narrative provides essential support for cognition. Focusing on *narrative explanations of *actions and events, Danto suggests that narrative accounts of happenings are needed to bridge the gap between general world-knowledge (e.g., that water freezes at zero degrees centigrade) and knowledge of how something in particular unfolded as part of the history of (a fragment of) the world (e.g., that a frozen patch of water caused me to slip and fall down yesterday) (1985: 238). Analogously, Mink distinguishes between the brute particularity of experience and the theoretical understanding of occurrences as instances of abstract schemata, positioning narrative between these extremes (1978: 132; see SCRIPTS AND SCHEMATA). For Mink, furthermore, narrative alone can identify aspects of the world in a way that makes constant and necessary reference to their location in some process of development (146). Meanwhile, Bruner characterises stories as a 'symbolic system' supporting a particular domain of knowledge, i.e., the domain of social beliefs and procedures (versus domains associated with the behaviours of physical objects, for example) (1991: 21). More than just identifying key properties of narrative, Bruner's account suggests ways of mapping those properties onto forms of cognition enabled or organised by stories. For example, narratives display 'hermeneutic composability': occurrences must be interpreted in light of larger configurations of events (i.e., *plots), whereas building up an understanding of the larger configurations in turn

requires making sense of individual events (see HERMENEUTICS). Analogously, humans construe particular behaviours of social actors by situating them in a wider context of assumptions about *identity, while also using the specific behaviours to monitor the validity of those same interpretive frames.

Although its original formulation predates the body of research just mentioned, the 'activity theory' developed by the early twentieth century Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978; cf. Wertsch 1998) has come to have an especially vital influence on the many fields concerned with cognitive functions of narrative, from *sociolinguistics, *discourse analysis, and *ethnography to *psychology, *education, and media studies (see, e.g., Lyle 2000; Rowe *et al.* 2002). For Vygotsky, intelligence needs to be re-described in terms of modes of activity within given environments; cognition itself is thus 'de-localised', i.e., spread across all the components of activities viewed as systems at once exhibiting and enabling intelligent behaviour. Such components can be non-human as well as human, material as well as mental (cf. Hutchins 1995); interactions among these elements make the system as a whole intelligent and, reciprocally, confer knowledge-generating properties on each component, including human ones. A key concern for cognitive narratologists is thus to specify how *narratively organised* systems of activity – systems that range from the practice of conversational storytelling to the performance of ceremonies such as eulogies – both embody and enable socially distributed cognition.

Literary narratives also help constitute such intelligent systems. For example, *framed narratives (e.g., Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) at once stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events. The framed events may be more or less remote from the here-and-now of a framing communicative event that is itself structured as an act of *narration. In such contexts, narrative *embedding contributes to the formation of intelligent systems which propagate experiential frames – specifically, the experiences of character-narrators – across *time and *space (Herman 2003b; see EXPERIENTIALITY; NARRATOR). The resulting system affords opportunities for distributing intelligence not provided by other less richly differentiated narrative structures. In a story that does not make use of narrative embedding there

will be no framing narratorial act, and no reference to situations and events making up the framed narrative. In turn, the gestalt formed by *the relations among* these and other components (including the tellers and interlocutors located at different narrative levels, as well as the interpreters of the framed narrative as a whole) will lose definition, decreasing the system's ability to generate knowledge about multiple experiential frames. In other words, there will be a net decrease in the capacity of the system to communicate representations originating from sources potentially quite widely separated in space and time. Narrative embedding thus increases the distributional reach of a framed tale, enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it contributes.

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