# Contents

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## Introduction

Why is a narrative a narrative? What makes a narrative more or less narrative? What elements in a semiotic representation can be qualified as properly narrative? Which formal and/or communicative resources can be exploited or elaborated in specifically narrative ways? What features of a discourse otherwise considered a description, an argument or a dialogue can legitimately be regarded as narrative? How is narrative affected by its realization in the different media? These questions stake out, at least in part, the problem of narrative specificity, or narrativity.

The contributions to this volume address these and related issues from various angles, seeking to shed light on what can be regarded as an increasingly crucial topic in narratology.[1] Indeed, the multitude of paradigms and approaches spawned by "postclassical" narratological theories together with the broadening scope of cultural phenomena seen as coming within the purview of "narrative" is not only a fact of the history of the discipline, but it also underscores the necessity of reflecting anew on criteria that are appropriate and necessary for theorizing narrative in its manifold realizations. In its early stages, narratology devoted considerable attention to identifying and formalizing the underlying structures shared by all narratives, and it produced a number of influential narrative grammars and other such models that sought to capture the minimal and "immanent" features of narrative. Since then, and more perhaps than any other factor, the various attempts to account for the *contexts* of narrative, from the sides of both production and reception, have transformed the horizons of narratological research and indeed the concept of narrative itself, bringing about a number of reorientations in perspective and closer attention to criteria previously not taken into consideration. Given these

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[1] The present publication was initiated at the time of the Narratology Seminar convened by us at the 7th Congress of the European Society for the Study of English held at the University of Zaragoza in September 2004. Papers were read by José Ángel García Landa, Peter Hühn, Ansgar Nünning, Beatriz Penas Ibáñez, John Pier, Michael Toolan and Jukka Tyrkkö.

evolutions, questions such as those asked above have become more prominent, and it is around narrativity, not unlike the "literariness" of literary theory and poetics in earlier times, that some of the most consequent issues in contemporary narratological research are concentrated.

The attempt to define narrative as such, independent of the specific genres or of literary fiction that has dominated the study of narrative throughout its long history, was inaugurated by structuralist narratology and continues to be a subject of debate today.[2] One of the significant consequences of this development, reflected in much discussion about narrativity, is that stories have come to be seen in a double perspective: "being narrative" and "possessing narrativity."[3] In the present collection, this question is taken up most explicitly by Gerald Prince, who speaks of narrativity in terms of narrativehood, an extensional category which designates a class of entities meeting certain conditions (e.g. the logically consistent representation of two synchronous events that presuppose or imply one another), and of narrativeness, an intensional category designating one of the qualities of an entity. Characterized both by kinds and by degrees, narrativity is also influenced by contextual factors and, to account for this, Prince adopts the notion of narratibility (tellability in the terminology of other narratologists): What is the "point" of this story?

It would be an exaggeration to state that Prince's delineation of the components of narrativity provides a blueprint for the other essays, for each of the contributions develops a cogent series of arguments that stands on its own, articulated in function of a particular problematics. Yet readers may at times find this system a useful point of reference, for it sets out in a clear and well-balanced fashion the dimensions of narrative generally acknowledged by present-day research—its formal requirements, its modalizations, its communicational potential—through the perspective of narrativity. And indeed, this characterization largely corroborates the definition of narrativity provided by *A Companion to Narrative Theory*: "the formal and contextual qualities distinguishing narrative from non-narrative, or marking the degree of 'narrativeness' in a discourse; the rhetorical principles underpinning the production or interpretation of narrative; the specific kinds of artifice inherent in the process of narrative representation."[4]

With these general criteria in mind, we now wish to briefly review the essays of this volume, with no pretension, however, to an adequate account of the tightly-wrought arguments and no strictures as to alternative readings each contribution is sure to accommodate. The ordering of the contributions we have adopted reflects what appears to us to characterize the principal areas of narrative theory that have felt the effects of the rise of interest in narrativity and, no doubt, bear witness to the far-ranging consequences of the notion for narratological research. Broadly speaking, some contributions focus on or take into consideration narrativity and its neighboring concepts as a means to single out what differentiates narrative from other forms of cultural representation while others, in contrast with but not necessarily in opposition to or in neglect of this "centralizing" perspective, investigate issues that seemingly lie on the "periphery" of these considerations but which in fact come under a new light when viewed from the angle of narrativity, revealing a true potential for transforming the organization and aims of narrative theory. Following Prince's opening text, the articles are loosely divided into five groups in such a way as to bring out similar and/or complementary lines of investigation, even though some of the issues debated within each group are relevant in various ways to concerns addressed in other groups.

## Narrativity in a dynamic, anti-immanentist frame of reference

Meir Sternberg inquires into the pertinence of the law-code to narrative. The *corpus juris*, he notes, is frequently perceived as timeless and immobile, bearing on the general as opposed to the particularities of the cases for which the law is used to adjudicate, so that its codified and static nature is often seen as being at odds with the dynamic and dialogical character of narration. Sternberg maintains, however, that the law is fact-contingent and thus necessarily rooted in narrative. Among the examples discussed (all taken from the Old Testament) is the following: "*If* thou buyest a Hebrew slave, six years he *shall* serve." The "If ... then ..." pattern of this mini "law-tale" is both contingent and future-oriented: if such-and-such an action is accomplished, then a certain course of action must

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[2] Cf. Marie-Laure Ryan, "Narrative," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 344.

[3] Ibid.: 347.

[4] Edited by James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz (Maldon, MA, etc.: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 548.

follow. Such "antecedent futurity" (of which there are three basic forms) exemplifies perfectly well the trial-and-error dynamics of narrativity described by the author in his other publications: suspenseful prospection, curiosity-driven retrospection, surprise-generated recognition—all of which, as illustrated by the if-plot, serve to invest narrative with fluctuating degrees of uncertainty. One interest of the if-plot, built into the law-code, is that it highlights a feature of legal storytelling which is present in narrative as a whole, and thus forms an integral part of a comprehensive theory of narrative.

Taking exception to the "immanentist" theories of narrativity, John Pier adopts the logical fallacy of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* as a key to the concept of narrativity. An examination of Roland Barthes' suggestive proposal to treat this fallacy as "the mainspring of narrative activity" reveals that, for Barthes, the principle must ultimately be abandoned in favor of an "atemporal matrix-like structure" (Lévi-Strauss), since it rests on a "logical error"—that of a "confusion between consecutiveness and consequence." However, on consulting the relevant writings by Aristotle (on *mûthos* in the *Poetics* and on "non-cause as cause" in the *Rhetoric*) and in consideration of the fact that from the perspective of informal logic, fallacies may not be errors in all cases, it becomes apparent that Barthes (who is not alone in this regard) mistakenly superimposed errors in syllogistic reasoning on the problem of causality in the natural sciences (it is assumed that if B follows A then B is caused by A). A more fruitful way of looking at the relevance for narrative theory of the fallacy in question is to place it within a context of inferential reasoning in which, during the reading process, inferences of varying degrees of probability are drawn, subsequently to be confirmed, invalidated or revised, possibly in the light of unforeseen factors. To the extent that reading "linearly," from beginning to end, generates hypotheses, conjectures, etc. (a "naïve" reading) that are then "tested" retrospectively (a "critical" reading), the theory of abductions (Peirce, Eco) provides a text semiotic basis for accommodating the formula "after this, therefore because of this" as a key to the processual nature of narrative. At the same time, the process triggered by the fallacy is also relevant to what Meir Sternberg has described as the "dynamics" of prospection, retrospection and recognition, this dynamics thus serving as a bridge between the heuristics of a "naïve" reading and the semiotics of a "critical" reading of narrative.

## Narrativity and the perception of eventfulness and chance in narrative

Working with the concept of "eventfulness," a key notion among the Hamburg narratologists, Peter Hühn begins with the observation that structuralist models of narrativity tend to be based on "mediacy" (or "perspectivity") and "sequentiality" (or "temporality").[5] Some models, he notes, consider that change in narrative involves a violation of expectations, and he associates this feature with "point," insisting on the connection between narrativity and tellability: narrativity combines gradational qualities with binary narrativehood, while eventfulness is context-sensitive, an event being qualified as such according to its social, cultural and historical setting. Further specifications of eventfulness are provided with the incorporation of Lotman's concept of *sujet* (texts departing from a norm due to violation of an established boundary within a "semantic field") and of cognitivist schema theory (frames and scripts inferred from the text by the reader, deviation from which underscores the degree of noteworthiness of an event). For these reasons, "tellability (and ultimately narrativity) can be said to depend on eventfulness." Based on these criteria, it is possible to assess how events in narrative are perceived according to their cultural and historical contexts. The article concludes with an analysis of the manifest and revolutionary eventfulness of the story of social ascension in Richardson's *Pamela* as compared with the staged and illusory eventfulness in Joyce's "Grace," the story of the non-occurrence of the protagonist's spiritual rehabilitation.

Werner Wolf takes up the problem of chance in narrative fiction. Noting that one of the functions of narrative is precisely to come to terms with chance in a world governed by change, he argues that the ways in which chance is positioned in relation to a given narrative, be it ruled out, bracketed or highlighted, can provide valuable insight into the worldview implicit in that narrative, worldview thus forming an overarching complement to the text's system of causation, its implied author and its perspectival structure. In narrative, chance occurrences, whether in the form of contingency, accident or coincidence, can materialize either at story level or at discourse level, but they are also apprehended in relation to a number of "filter factors" such as the individual reader, cultural and historical context and narrativity. Narrativity is of particular relevance to

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[5] Hühn's article also provides a lucid overview of narrativity-related research.

chance in fiction to the extent that beginnings are inherently contingent, for instance, or that, given the constraints of narrative teleology, chance occurrences at the end of a story have a significance different from those found in the middle; moreover, the status of chance occurrences must be qualified in yet other ways if they result in a coincidental recognition in comedy or if they are overdetermined by the *deus ex machina* of tragedy. Wolf completes his essay with a highly pertinent analysis of chance and implied worldview in *Pandosto*, a sixteenth-century romance, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The former illustrates the inconstancy of fortune and the mutability of worldly affairs in interplay with providential justice. Hardy's novel, written in the age of realism, pits numerous natural incidents of chance against the secular, even Darwinian, urge for explanation and overdetermined plot-based causality with somewhat ambiguous overtones of tragic fate.

## Narrativity from pragmatic and performative perspectives

Beatriz Penas Ibáñez integrates a *"natural language text"-based* concept of narrativity and a *"natural language use(r)"-driven* concept of narrativity. She underlines the consequences of assuming a perspective on narrativity either as a product's property or as a process evolving out of use and proposes an integration of both. Her balanced perspective on narrativity results in a backgrounding of issues characteristically dealt with in classical narratology and a foregrounding of other features derived from an understanding of narrativity as semiosis. Specifically, Penas Ibáñez understands narrativity as a process of narrative meaning-making and interpreting "irreducible to form and grammar," reliant on a variety of factors which condition the configuration of a narrative. Place, time, society, a particular context of situation and culture, a tradition and an individually stylized performance are factors of diversity through which narrativizing takes place for specific linguistic-literary communities of readers and writers. Diverse ways of narrativizing lead to diverse narrativities, some standard and some non-standard. She finds prestige attached to the non-standard narrativities of authors like Vladimir Nabokov and Ernest Hemingway. While the proportionality between surface-to-bottom narrativity is deviational in Hemingway's "iceberg" texts, in the Nabokov text it is the proportionality between center-to-margins narrativity that is non-standard. Their measure of deviation is read as a trope in accordance with the literary register that their narratives adhere to, while outside the pres-

tigious literary register, the same or a lesser degree of deviation can easily lead from non-standard to plainly sub-standard narrativities.

David Rudrum proposes a critique of the traditional theories of narrativity, theories which, he contends, overemphasize what narrative *is*—the "intrinsic" properties of a text that provide an "essentialist" view of narrative—at the expense of what narrative *does*—the performativity of narrating and its perlocutionary effects. Attempts to define narrative in terms that distinguish it from non-narratives, seeking to specify the degree of narrativity a narrative might possess, or theories that grant centrality to causation in narrative overlook the importance for storytelling of conventions and expectations found in linguistic communities. Although more recent reflection on narrativity has addressed the question of how a text is processed by readers and has introduced such notions as narratibility, tellability and point, these innovations, Rudrum argues, are irreconcilable with attempts to define narrative on the basis of formal or structural features, independently of context. In place of theories that embrace types, degrees and modes of narrativity, and in accordance with the Wittgensteinian notion of "family resemblances," he thus favors a pluralistic conception of narrativity in place of a general unifying conception, "identifying narrativity with Austin's 'perlocutionary effects' and thus deliberately going to the opposite extreme of 'essentialist' theories of narrativity."

## Narrativity and the demands placed on readers through given and/or multiple ordering of texts

Jukka Tyrkkö discusses "kaleidoscope narratives," that is, fragmentary texts, printed or electronic, that exploit the potential for multilinearity and thus call for high levels of participatory involvement by the reader. More than the standard unilinear text, these narratives are highly reliant on the "links" ("decision-points"), or absence thereof, between textual segments or fragments, confronting the reader with alternative orderings of the text (as in Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1*, a set of unbound and unnumbered pages) and thus displaying a variety of potential and possibly concurrent or even alternative plots. This situation poses a serious challenge for causal connectivity between narrative events, making the narrativity of kaleidoscopic narratives dependent on the perception of the reader. "Hypertextual links," writes Tyrkkö, "function not only as verbal connectors and as functional sites of interaction, but also as *de facto* narrative connections between fragments of the text." As a result of textual

fragmentation and of the fragility or absence of links, readerly perform-ance is intensified as the reader is left to explore potential narratives and untold stories. Among the works discussed are Richard Horn's *Encyclo-pedia*, in which fragments are arranged alphabetically rather than chrono-logically, and Geoff Ryman's electronic hypertext, *253*, consisting of 253-word descriptions of 253 passengers on a London underground line, allowing for an untold number of potential links between the fragments and of the possible courses of action open to the characters.

Michael Toolan focuses on the experience of narrativity, which he equates with the process of reading rather than with the conclusion or resolution arrived at by the reader. Conceding that one naturally reads for the plot, he points out that this takes place, in part, "against the grain"—that of the narrative texture—since uncertain predictions and tentative speculations are adopted while the effects of prolonging and postpone-ment can be captured only at subsequent points of the text. To determine how the textual features of a text "guide" the reader to the thematic strands of that text, Toolan, working within a text linguistic framework, adopts techniques from corpus linguistics in an analysis of the opening paragraphs of a story by Alice Munro. The study shows that the link be-tween the compound keywords of this story and its themes, structures and point are indirect but that, projected against the backdrop of the colloca-tions established by a comparator corpus, the choice of certain words proves nevertheless to be crucial in the selection of interpretative possi-bilities. One of the qualities of this discussion is that the author is careful to take account not only of what is said (i.e. the key words that appear in the text), but also of what remains implicit within the context of utterance and of factors contributing to the "narrative interest" of Munro's story. The corpus analytical approach is admittedly restricted to the textual sur-face, ignoring intratextual links, for instance, and Toolan is careful to point out that the methodology employed is fairly rudimentary and in need of greater elaboration. Even so, his demonstration convincingly sug-gests that "[n]arrativity reflects our sense, as we read a narrative, not that there will certainly be an outcome, but only that matters as presented may 'come out', that change may occur."

## Narrativity and the transmedial expansion of narrative theory: transgeneric and transfictional dimensions

In a reflection on transmedial narratology and in response to the need for a greater understanding of the kinds and degrees of narrativity, Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer take up the neglected question of narrativity in drama. A brief survey reveals that theories of narrativity tend to focus on narrative types (e.g. narrative as opposed to description or argument), but it is also noted that some theories are text-oriented (narratives possess certain properties that distinguish them from non-narratives) while others are reception-oriented (emphasizing cognitive experience of an anthro-pomorphic nature). Adopting the view, essential to transmedial narratol-ogy, that narrative is not indissociable from a verbal act produced by a narrator, the authors call into question the traditional view that drama is distinguished from fiction by the lack of narratorial mediation. They also question the extent to which plot-oriented narratologies apply to drama, claiming that "plays do not just represent narratives (i.e. a series of events), they also stage narratives in that, more often than not, they make storytelling, i.e. the act of telling narratives, theatrical." These realign-ments, which lay the way to a narratology of drama, also result in a dis-tinction of considerable interest for the analysis of theatrical representa-tion: "mimetic narrativity" pertains to the causal and/or temporal se-quence of events independent of a given medium or communicative situa-tion as opposed to "diegetic narrativity," bearing on verbal rather than visual or performative communication and thus "dramatizing" the act of narration in ways that are unavailable to written narratives, for example. The distinction also alerts us to the fact that narrativity functions differ-ently from one medium to another and from one genre to another.

Monika Fludernik, for whom drama is a narrative genre whose narra-tivity remains largely unexplored, draws attention to a paradox of tradi-tional approaches that include drama among the narrative genres on the basis of plot while at the same time excluding it from narrative due to the absence of a narrator or of a narrative function. More satisfactory than a theory based on plot, she maintains, is a theory focusing on fictional worlds and/or experientiality. From the perspective of her "natural" narra-tology, she thus postulates as a minimum requirement for narrativity in drama the presence of a character on stage, the effect of which is to place a consciousness within a space-time frame and to evoke a fictional world. Where narrative fiction and drama (together with cinema) differ is not so

much in the represented world as at the "discourse" level, i.e. in the mediation of the represented world: in verbal narratives, setting is necessarily described but is more readily presented visually on the stage; drama opts for ellipsis where verbal narrative can resort to summary; etc. Also discussed is the alternative between dramatic discourse as "performance text" as opposed to "dramatic text" and dramatic discourse as synonymous with playscript, with the result that discourse is located between plot and staging. The problem of performance, rarely taken into account by narratologists, reveals a blind spot in communication models of narrative since, for example, the medieval bard is neither an author nor a narrator, but a narrative performer. Fludernik concludes with an examination of the potential for interchangeability between narration in drama (e.g. narrativization of stage directions) and performance in narrative (e.g. the use of stage directions in the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*).

Marie-Laure Ryan investigates the features of fictionality in narrative as they appear in one medium or another an also explores the consequences of these various manifestations from the perspective of narrativity. She first outlines four basic conditions of transfictionality: transfictionality involves a relation between two distinct texts by different authors; the texts are distinct but related to each other; it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the transfictionalized text; transfictionality seeks to preserve the immersive power of the narrative text. She then reviews the characteristics of these conditions with regard to the major technological periods in the history of communication: the oral age; the age of manuscript writing; the age of print; the electronic age; the digital age. It is noted, for example, that transfictional practices intensified during the age of print in reaction to the closely knit relations between author, text and fictional world. The digital age has important consequences for transfictionality to the extent that digital texts acquire something of the volatility of oral texts, the computer serves as a medium of both expression and transmission and the relations between text and fictional world are rendered problematical. The author studies several computer games that push the resources of transfictionality to the limit, observing that "[t]he Protean texts of digital culture may thus comply with the spirit of transfictionality, without respecting its letter." The article concludes with a discussion of the controversy surrounding the narrative status of computer games. Noting that texts, unlike life, can both *be* a narrative and *have* narrativity, Ryan approaches the issue by adopting a "fuzzy" conception of narrativity, locating computer games between life

and the mimetic mode. On the one hand is "semantic narrativity" with certain core conditions (a story "conjure[s] the mental image of a world populated by individuated entities [that] undergo changes of states caused by events"), but also marked by a number of more or more or less constraining features (e.g. a story must have a beginning, a middle and an end). On the other hand, "pragmatic narrativity" concerns the medium or situation in which a story takes form, linguistic media being the best adapted, followed by film and drama and then by digital media where computer games, for instance, allow for greater inferential leeway.

## Narrativity and retelling

José Ángel García Landa approaches narrativity from the vantage point of narrativization and narrative doubling, understood as interactional communicative phenomena. Narrative, as a dialogic phenomenon, is a rearrangement of previous narratives in order to articulate a new one, more complex or more to the point in a given interactional exchange. Effects of doubling ("narrated narratings," stories within the story, etc.) add semiotic intensity and suggest that repetition and retelling are basic to narrativity. Narrativization is therefore a remaking of previously narrativized events. Notions like "tellability," "point of view" and "event" need to be redefined in view of this interactional situatedness of narratives. Discursive phenomena involving the response to narratives, their use in conversation or criticism or their theoretical analysis also partake of this interactional situatedness. The connectedness between events characteristic of narratives (and which is subject to reinterpretation and retelling) is shown to be relative to the communicative dynamics of discourse interaction. Several definitions of narrativity are examined and criticized in order to emphasize the configurational dynamics of narrativity—a dynamics of constant remaking through communicative interaction. In this light, García Landa addresses the retrospective dimension of narrative, in particular the "narrative fallacy" and its diverse aspects, such as the *post hoc/propter hoc* confusion, hindsight bias, foreshadowing, sideshadowing, the double logic of narrative, simulated contingency, etc. His narratological analysis extends into intertextuality, cognitive theory and hermeneutics and ends by taking up the question of narratives which retell or represent narrative acts. Literary works which narrate acts of narrating keep us aware of the continuity between everyday conversation and elaborate literary genres and build bridges between them, re-appropriating orality for literature and

constructing complex interactional forms precisely through a return, with a difference, to the source of narrative interaction.

The barebones summaries of the articles offered above are but a glimpse at the complete arguments developed by each of the authors. Of the many features of this collection sure to strike the reader is the fact that without, in most cases, adopting the same precepts and criteria and without arriving at the conclusions or thematic unity one might expect of a school of thought or of a monograph, the contributions provide insight into the phenomenon of narrativity from several different angles in ways that are sometimes complementary and sometimes divergent, but at all times illuminating. The points of comparison to be made are too numerous and open-ended and the implications and cross references to be investigated too subtle and far-reaching for these questions to be taken up in any meaningful way in these introductory comments. We leave it now to the reader to explore the contributions to this volume and to theorize narrativity.

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## Narrativehood, Narrativeness, Narrativity, Narratability

Narratology studies certain objects called narratives, what they have in common as well as how they may differ from one another, and there have been various (more or less restrictive) definitions of these objects, various answers to the question "What is a narrative?" Some theorists and researchers define narratives as verbal productions recounting one or more events while others define them as any kind of representations of events (including non-verbal ones relying on still or moving pictures, for example, gestures, or a combination thereof). Some maintain that they must involve causality, that they must be populated with individual beings and things, that they must be anchored in human experience, that they must constitute a whole. Others do not agree with most, some, or any of these prescriptions.[1] As for myself, I will adopt the following definition in my discussion: an object is a narrative if it is taken to be the logically consistent representation of at least two asynchronous events that do not presuppose or imply each other. This definition, which is both flexible and limiting, has many virtues (apart from not conflicting with widely held views about the nature of narratives). For instance, the definition distinguishes between narratives and non-narratives (and, more specifically, between narratives and the mere representation of an event or activity, the mere description of a process or state of affairs). It also distinguishes between narratives and so-called antinarratives (e.g. Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*) by assigning consistency to the former. Moreover, however constraining it may be, it leaves numerous aspects of the objects it isolates indeterminate and makes room for a good deal of diversity. It does not, for example, broach the truth or falsehood of narratives, their factuality or fictionality, their ordinariness or artistry. Nor does it specify the kind of topics they address and the kind of themes they develop. Nor does it limit their poten-

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[1] See, for example, Bal (1997 [1985]); Barthes (1975 [1966]); Fludernik (1996); Genette (1980 [1972]); Herman (2002); Jannidis (2003); Revaz (1997); Ricœur (1984 [1983]); Ryan (1991); Schmid (2003).