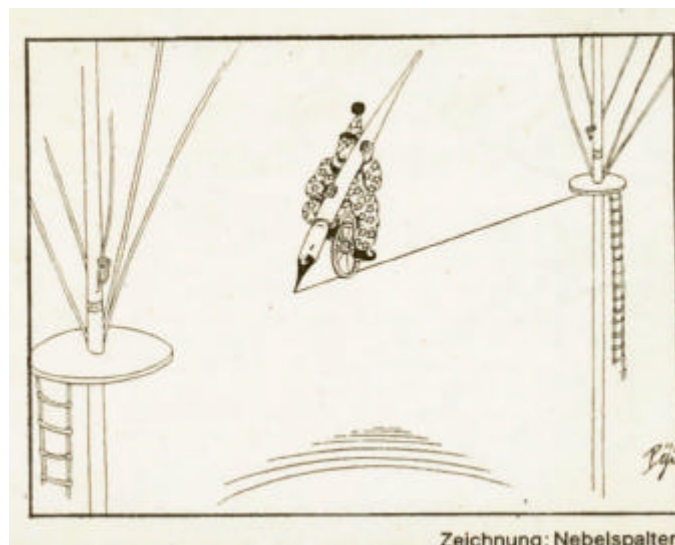# The Eye of the Beholder.

Social psychology's view on narratology

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Paper presented at the Second International Colloquium of the FGN at Hamburg University, 21 and 22 November 2003

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Table 1: Identity and narratology - a superficial closeness

Social psychology focuses on		Narratology focuses on
Identity which is a	⟷	**Narrativity** which becomes visible in the
Process with an		**Telling** being done by the
Agent, taking place in a	**?**	**Narrator**, creating a
Social world and which can be analysed in its		**Story world** and leading to
Constructions		**Narratives**

Table 2: Identity in late modernity – model requirements

Late Modernity/Patchwork identity	Model requirements
• Identity as an ongoing process (Gergen, 1991) • Identity - multiple selves - coherence • Individualisation (of sense making) • Disembedding (A. Giddens) • Tribalisation of society (Maffesoli, 1988) • Sentiment: ambivalence - construction of trust as a continual task • Power, ideology • Difference	⇒ Process ⇒ Multivoicedness - coherence ⇒ Sense making ⇒ Agency ⇒ Self-alter-relationship ⇒ Power, positioning ⇒ Community narratives ⇒ Cultural difference ⇒ "Futuring" (Frederik Melges) ⇒ Reflexivity

"What clothes would I wear? Blue madras suit, black boots, or the old black cord suit with those touching leather elbow-patches. What persona would I wear? On the two occasions I had seen her last August I underwent several complete identity-reorganisations, settling finally somewhere between the pained, laconic, inscrutable type and the knowing, garrulous, cynical, laugh a minute, yet something demonic about him, something nihilistic, muted death-wish type. Revamp those, or start again?"

Martin Amis, The Rachel Papers, p.45

Table 3: Boyd, A. (1999). Life's Little Deconstruction Book. Self-Help for the Post-Hip.

Don't seek the whole
Negotiate identity
Shuffle fragments
Cut and paste
Be ad hoc
Lose the center
Stop making sense
Play with the pieces
Tell lots of small stories
Let stories do their thing
Get along with each of your selves
Pursue multiple narratives that neither explain nor unify

Table 4: Transitions in narratology (Currie 1998)

Transitions in narratology	→ Positions
Discovery → Invention	• Narrative are construable • Unstable → meaning making as open process • active role of the reader → self-alter-relationship
Coherence → Complexity	• refuse the impulse to reduce the narrative to a stable meaning or coherent project, → beware of coherence and closure • sustain contradictory aspects of narrative, → open for heterogeneity • preserve their → complexity
Poetics → Politics	• binary opposition as unstable basis for meaning and as a place where the values and hidden ideologies of the text are inscribed • narratives are everywhere

Table 5: Patchwork identity and narratology – a closer look

Social psychology / narratology	• Narrativity as viewpoint in psychology (add in) *versus* cultural studies as common ground
Identity / narrative	• "Strong" narrativists (e. g. Kerby) – "weak" narrativists (e. g. Bruner), • Narrative identity and historical truth as empirical question
Process / telling	• Telling as performative act, • Orality as central focus
Agent /narrator	• Unitas multiplex (W. Stern), agency-structure, dialogical self (Hermans), • Narratives of change • coherence - dissociation – suffering
Social world / story world	• The narrative construction of community as a theoretical and empirical program
Constructions / narratives	• Minimal narrative, "antenarrative" (Boje)

Table 6: The resources of narratology for social psychology

- Narrativity as central question

- Narratologist notions/concepts as analytical resource (Currie)

- Analogy building: performative storytelling, e. g. in the cyberworld (Janet Murray)

- Narrativity and media - differenciation (orality/literality)

- Complex constructive models for the relationship between real and possible world(s)

- Cultural studies-approach as common ground

- Art: literature, films, paintings as "wilderness" (looked at out of the 'orderly' garden of social sciences)

  - Literature as a historical resource: much reflection about modernity can be found in the literature of the last 200 years
  - Literature as the "the continuation of theory by other means", the performance of theory by theoretically well-informed authors within fictional texts (e. g. Rushdi, Amis, Barnes)
  - Literature as a medium with a surplus of meaning:

    "We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life. In this direction fiction is truer than history, because it goes beyond evidence, and each of us knows from his own experience that there is something beyond the evidence ..."

    (E. M. Forster, 2000 [1927], p. 70)

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