

Narratives across media as ways of knowing

Double panel proposal, Narrative Matters 2014, Narrative Ways of Knowing

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Interest is growing both in forms of narrative that go beyond written and spoken verbal signs, and in how such varying narrative media expand the range and types of knowledge expressed in narratives and made available through narrative analysis. These two connected panels, arising from the chairs' work on a joint project between the UK Narratives of Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches, (NOVELLA) and Multimodal Methodologies for researching Digital Data and Environments (MODE) research programmes, explore these interests. Papers in the panels address still image (collage and paint) narratives; gestural narratives; moving-image (film) narratives; and new-media narratives (blogs, message forums, computer games, texting). They investigate the suggestions that narrative ways of knowing are more extensive than a concentration on speech and writing would suggest, and that attention needs to be paid to the variable media of narrative. Papers in the first panel, concentrating on visual narratives, propose that addressing visual modalities can provide new, cross-modal ways of understanding self-narratives, that expand the usual temporal framings of narratives. They suggest that narrative approaches are important within visual social research analysis generally. At the same time, they point out that visual narratives must be understood as heterogeneous and changeable. The second panel, concentrating on digital narratives, argues that these narratives' multiple elements point up the diverse modalities within narratives generally. In addition, they operate as good examples of the development of new narrative forms. Both panels argue that narrative ways of knowing across media can be identified and analysed using common processes to a considerable extent, but that forms of narrative knowledge, and the limits of those knowledges are to a strong degree shaped by and dependent on their modalities.

Panel 1: Potentiating narrative knowledges through visual and cross-media research

Telling stories in the picture: narrative multiplicity and more...

Cigdem Esin, CNR, University of East London

This paper draws on the research which Corinne Squire and I conducted with a group of young people in East London, an area which is known for its culturally, ethnically, economically and socially diverse population. In summer and autumn 2012, we ran art based workshops with students at the Keen Students' School, which is a community organisation that works to support students of the neighbourhood, many with immigrant backgrounds. One of the research questions was what visual material could offer for an in-depth exploration of the interrelations between personal and cultural resources from which self narratives were constructed. The participants of workshops were asked to make images about any part of their lives. They were also interviewed about the stories told in the images, and their participation in the workshops. The visual narratives of the participants were created with reference to visual and popular resources which indicated the travelling positions of

storytellers across cultures. The spoken narratives in the interviews mostly focused on the process of making images, with reference to interpersonal exchanges between participants. This paper will focus on the possibilities that a cross-modal approach can create for knowing more about the multiple constituents of self-narratives

Imaging the Subject

Renata Kokanovic, Monash University

Image based research uses visual data such as paintings, drawings and photographs among other media as objects of inquiry and a mode of investigation. Visual analysis considers images as central to the representation and production of meaning and identity - a 'process of seeing guided by theory'. It has emerged as an important interdisciplinary field across sociology, visual studies, anthropology and cultural studies. Encountering the visual through its production, observation and documentation produces contexts which may serve as the representative narratives of society, knowledge and experience. Looking at how stories are expressed visually and reading images as narratives is an important aspect of interpreting visual representations. My aim in this paper is to prompt discussion on how images construct narratives about mental illness by analysing a work of art expressing such experience. I am also looking at how a narrative emerges in a visual text, and the ways of seeing as well as ways of interpreting expressions of the process of seeing. I will examine the complex relationships between visual images and socio-cultural contexts in experiences of mental illness by combining a narrative analysis of both visual images and interview data. Specifically, I analyse a set of images created by an Australian artist to express the lived experience of mental illness, as well as data collected through a narrative interview with the artist in which she reflects on the lived experience of mental illness. Artistic practice is analysed as a non-verbal and verbal mode of expressing illness experiences.

Masculinity, ambiguity and the new intimacy in narrative cinema

Candida Yates, University of East London

The notion that Western masculinities are in crisis and undergoing some kind of cultural shift is a familiar one in film and psychosocial studies. The binary oppositions that once sustained the certainties of gender and sexual difference have been tested, and the old cinematic narratives of masculinity and what it means to be a man are no longer convincing. This has a number of implications for representations of masculinity in Western popular culture and cinema, where the prevalence of images of male suffering and emotional crisis are arguably part of a broader 'cultural undoing' of masculinity. In cinema, these shifts, have implications for psychosocial and cultural processes of spectatorship and reception, as they challenge the mastery of the male gaze and undercut the certainties of masculinity in new ways. This development is also linked to new 'cross-over' genres associated with independent cinema and artistic production, which bring new narrative elements to bear on the shaping of emotional masculinities in Western cinema today. Using selected examples from films such as *Shame* (Steve McQueen, 2011) and *Candelabra* (Steven Soderbergh, 2013), this paper develops the argument by discussing representations of masculinity and what I call the 'new intimacy' in contemporary narrative cinema. By examining a shift from cinematic images of masculine jealousy and possession where a desire for jealous certainty often dominate, to those, which can be characterised as 'flirtatious', in style and content, the paper also reflects on what this might for new cultural formations of masculinity today.

Spatiality and non-verbal performance in narratives of amputation

Emily Heavey, Kings' College London

Space (as opposed to time) has been increasingly analysed as an emplotment device in narratives (Baynham & de Fina, 2005), and specifically one which signals progression or change (de Fina, 2009). Simultaneously, there is an emerging focus on the use of gesture and non-verbal performance in narratives; such practices do not simply illustrate the spoken narrative, but enrich and transform it (Hindmarsh and Heath, 2003; Haviland, 2004). This paper will bring these two important areas of narrative research together, and apply them to stories of amputation. Specifically, I will argue that (1) narrative is a primary way in which people make sense of and (re)construct the experience of amputation, and the body that exists after amputation, and (2) the use of spatial imagery and non-verbal performances work together as vital components of these 'narrative body constructions'. Using video interview data from my research with amputees, I will demonstrate how storytellers use gesture and spatial imagery to construct past, present, and imagined versions of their bodies *in relation to* the present, storytelling body. The storytelling body acts as a deictic centre, around which and in relation to which imagined spaces and performative gestures are constructed and located. In turn, these spaces and gestures work to present and make sense of the storytellers' different embodiments – from pre-amputation to post-amputation, including the body in the moment of storytelling. This paper seeks to expand research on body narratives, and on space and gesture in narrative, by considering how the body itself can be seen as constructed in narrative, and specifically as constructed through the use of narrative spatiality and gesture.

Panel 2: Digital media: extending knowledges through and of multi-modal narratives

Narratives of 'parenting' knowledge in online parenting forums

Joe Winter, NOVELLA, Institute of Education, London

As online social networks and mobile technologies continue to proliferate and embed themselves in the everyday practices of families, parenting websites are an increasingly popular resource. Taking a broader view of narrative sense-making than that enabled by a sole focus on speech and writing, my Ph.D project draws on multimodal approaches to discourse analysis. This provides a useful perspective for the narrative analysis of online data, as modes other than speech and writing are increasingly prominent on the web, especially in the context of mobile technologies. In this paper I will interrogate how far narratives of everyday parenting identities and practices generated with parent-users of two popular websites, Mumsnet and Netmums, reflect canonical narratives of parenting knowledge. I will consider how lived experiences and knowledges of parenting are shaped by particular situated contexts and modalities of communication by comparing participants' narratives on forums, and in individual email and face-to-face interviews. My Ph.D has a mixed-method design constituting narrative analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, telephone interviews, online ethnography, email interviews, and face-to-face interviews.

Recipes for mothering

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NOVELLA/CNR, University of East London**

In relation to concerns that engagement with digital worlds undermine capacities to understand 'traditional narrative forms' (Rose, E; 2012), this paper considers what is 'new' about digital narratives and how they relate to other narrative forms. We present narrative analysis of blogs about feeding families written by mothers in the context of constrained resources - economic, emotional and time-related. We draw out how the identities set out in *About Me* pages of blogs relate to contemporary cultural narratives of the maternal and how these identity positions are reinforced and contradicted in subsequent postings, underlining how multiplicities, inconsistencies and ruptures are part of, rather than outside, narrative. We consider how these blogs relate to the canon of narratives documenting the traditional motherwork of memorialising and archiving family life (Rose, G; 2010), feeding families and building communities of like-minded mothers sharing advice and information. We conclude by considering how, as well as narrating motherwork, blogs themselves might represent post-industrial forms of 'women's work' and casual 'piece work' more generally. Online renderings of the everyday into expertise are clearly effortful and this work builds saleable skills as well as extending social resources and bringing in some economic brands. Thus in situations where economic capital is depleted, older forms of social and symbolic capital are not paying off and established forms of cultural capital are not marketable, the blogs develop new forms of all of these.

Contagion, 'pande-media' and narrative knowledge

Mark Davis, Monash University

In Steven Soderberg's 2011 film *Contagion*, Kate Winslet's character – a public health expert at the centre of efforts to combat the spreading virus – becomes aware that she has been infected and is therefore placed in the position of knowing of the pandemic in a technical sense and knowing of her own plight in a visceral sense. TV and press news stories on pandemics draw on contagion narrative to disseminate information on the rise and fall of pathogenic outbreaks such as influenza and SARS. These news stories are also patterned like pandemics; emerging, peaking and ebbing away. Google's *Flu Trends* asserts the pattern of contagion, monitoring as it does peaks in online searches for information and therefore need for knowledge and perhaps anxiety regarding influenza. Health communication texts can also be shown to share knowledge of pandemics in ways that textually and graphically exercise contagion narrative, with informational effects and affective connotations. In an inventive turning of contagion narrative, the online game *Pandemic* asks players to be viruses whose objective it is to gleefully infect as many humans as possible. In this paper I reflect on how pande-media exercise contagion narrative, not just through the information they convey, but through their affective qualities, the form they take and their turning of narrative knowledge. I will therefore draw attention to the ways in which narrative knowledge is sustained in the shapes, rhythms and affects of pande-media and its consumption.