

DISCOURSE AND NARRATIVE METHODS

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FOUR

Narrative Phenomena: Entanglements and Intra-actions in Narrative Research

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'The world is full of stories [...] just waiting to be told' Arendt has written (1968: 97). In expanding the Arendtian proposition on the plurality and richness of the stories we live with, I would add that indeed the world is full of stories not just waiting to be told, but also to be written, retold, read and reread. As Barthes has eloquently put it: 'Those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere' (Barthes, 1974: 15). In making this statement, I remember my own childhood and the obsession I had with a rather sad story that my mother used to tell me again and again. To her complaints and bewilderment, whenever I asked her to tell me that story again, I would argue: 'I know that I know this story but I like it so much whenever I listen to it from you and you only'. There are a number of themes already implicated in what I have talked about so far: the pluralistic and relational character of stories, the infinite circulation and strong affects they can generate, but also the way biographical and autobiographical stories are entangled in the constitution of what Cavarero (2000) has defined as the desire of the narratable self to listen to her story being told. As my colleagues at the Centre for Narrative Research at the University of East London have summarised: 'Human beings are inherently storytellers and it is through the activity of narration that we create meaning in our lives' (Andrews et al. 2000: 77), further adding that: 'If we are constructed by stories, or are storytellers by nature, or perhaps both, then narrative must, surely be a prime concern of social science' (*ibid*: 1).

Indeed, in recent years there has been a great deal of interest in narrative research in the human and social sciences and there is today a rich body of literature, which is burgeoning and developing. As Norman Denzin has explicitly put it: 'The narrative turn in the social sciences has been taken' (Denzin, 2000: xi),

further adding that: 'the study of narrative forces the social sciences to develop new theories, new methods and new ways of talking about self and society' (*ibid*). Clearly, the narrative turn is part of other significant turns in the social sciences:

The narrative turn can be associated with many other social-scientific moves in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: turns to qualitative methods, to language, to the biographical, to the unconscious, to participant-centred research, to ecological research, to the social (in psychology), to the visual (in sociology and anthropology), to power, to culture, to reflexivity [and thus] looking at the 'narrative turn' is to view a snapshot of what these turns have yielded. (Squire, 2005: 91)

In this context, the narrative moment relates to broader transformations in the field of social sciences: 'narrative is one element in a broader cultural and linguistic "turn" through which recognition has been given both to the shaping effects of cultural environments, and to subjective experience' (Andrews et al. 2000: 1). However, despite this growing interest, there is as yet no single approach as to how narrative research in the human and social sciences should be deployed.

Approaches vary according to the disciplinary field they are located: sociologists and anthropologists for example seem to be more interested in holistic approaches to narrative research, understanding narratives in their entirety, Catherine Riessman's (2008) work being exemplary in this area. Socio-linguists on the other hand focus on short narrative sections, in the structure of the telling – Labov's model (1972) being a paradigm for this kind of research. In the same vein that psychologists might be interested in narratives as episodes involving temporal ordering and progression, Bruner's work (1990) being influential here in the way he understands stories as violating normality and as an attempt through human agency at its restoration. Psychoanalysts, however, seem to be more interested in questions of desire and subjectivity, in the emotional rather than temporal sequencing of stories and not so much on what is told, but rather on silences and language inconsistencies, often viewing the uncertainties of narratives as a route to the unconscious. Approaches further vary according to the theoretical and epistemological frameworks that they draw on, a very good example being the structuralist versus the poststructuralist approach, which will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

In this light of diversity and difference, the same question always arises: 'what is narrative?' This question has indeed troubled and divided narratologists over the years and the answer still remains evasive and contradicted. As McQuillan notes: 'narrative is the very term which narrative theory wishes us to understand but which it cannot explain' (McQuillan, 2000: 323), further citing Judith Roof's proposition that, 'narrative is the logic which can never be explained but always narrated' (*ibid*).

Entangled within this aporias and in search of a definition in the very beginning of her book on the use of narrative in social research, Jane Elliot raises a series of pertinent questions:

What is narrative?

What are its defining features and which of its attributes explain its appeal to social scientists?

Why, in short, should we be interested in narrative?

(Elliott, 2005: 3)

Elliot's questions, which clearly draw on the wider tradition of narratology in defining narratives, are clearly placed within a Cartesian framework of analysis: understanding what a thing (narrative) is, in order to trace and understand its causes and effects.

I would rather follow the Spinozist route¹ of getting to the knowledge of a thing (narrative in our case) by first tracing its expressions: not, what is narrative but what does a narrative do? Second, its causes – what Foucault and Deleuze would call its conditions of possibility. In this context, the rather simple and short question of 'what is narrative?' is reframed as 'what does a narrative do? How does it express its causes? In what way is it a sign of its conditions?' Consequently, the other two questions posed by Elliot above are also reframed: the question is not about the defining features of narratives, which can explain its appeal to social scientists, but rather it is about, as Deleuze would say, tracing difference and repetition, or as Foucault would put it, continuities and discontinuities in how narratives are told and used in the social sciences, exploring how the social scientist's interest in narratives has been conditioned. It is in short about making cartographies of the multi-levelled planes within which narrative research in the social sciences has been deployed.

In tracing genealogical lines of narrative research, there is indeed a multiplicity of meanings that have been attributed to narratives within different periods, disciplinary fields and systems of thought. An important strand in the early periods of narrative theory has been the narratologist's focus on sequence. In this context, narratives have been defined as a recounting of at least two real or fictional events, neither of which entails or logically presupposes the other. Todorov and Greimas (cited in McQuillan, 2000: 323) have further argued that a narrative must be a coherent whole with a continuant subject.

Drawing on this narratologists' tradition of highlighting sequence, social scientists in narrative research have argued that narratives should be understood as organising a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. As Riessman (2008) has pithily put it: 'there must be sequence and consequence'. In this light, the following definition is exemplary of this approach:

Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it. (Hinchman and Hinchman, cited in Elliott, 2005: 5)

There are three key features highlighted in Elliott's definition above: a) temporality – narratives represent sequence of events; b) meaningfulness – narratives carry rich meanings; c) sociality – narratives always have an audience, they are in fact produced with an audience in mind. Moreover, this definition highlights two major areas of narrative research today: the event-centred approach, mainly dominated by the Labovian structurally-led analysis; and the experience-centred approach, which is more or less the field within which the work of the Centre for Narrative Research at the University of East London is situated. According to Squire (2008), 'experienced-centred research' does not provide useful *methodological* guidelines such as Labov's. Instead, it offers a highly appealing *conceptual* technology. It is the dominant conceptual framework within which current social science narrative research operates. In the same vein, the experience-centred approach assumes that narratives are: a) sequential and meaningful; b) definitively human; c)'re-present' experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it; d) display transformation or change (*ibid*).

But we all very well know that boundaries and divisions, such as the event versus experience approach, are only heuristic devices that help researchers in the field situate themselves in complex territories. Being in the same landscape of sorting out the field Riessman (2008) delineates four approaches to narrative analysis: a) the thematic approach, where the focus is on 'what is told'; b) the structural approach, where attention shifts to the 'how' of the telling; c) the dialogic approach, where audiences and contexts come under scrutiny in the analysis; and finally d) the visual turn, a relatively recent interest on visual narratives.

However, when we come to do narrative research and have the experience of what Elliot Mishler has named 'narrative as praxis' (1999: 17) we all soon very well understand that divisions and boundaries never hold together: we can't really separate events from experience, what is told and how it is told, as well as the contexts within which narratives are constructed and indeed performed. Situating myself in narrative research, I will follow Mishler's three assumptions of 'narrative as praxis' in taking personal narratives and life stories as: 'socially situated actions; identity performances; and fusions of form and content' (*ibid*: 18). I will also add a second take on narratives that follows Mishler's configuration of 'narrative as praxis' and I will call it 'narrative as/in discourse'. My three propositions in this formulation suggest that personal narratives and life stories should be taken as the following (see also Tamboukou, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c):

1. power/knowledge effects, and in this light, narrative research should trace the conditions of the possibility of their emergence
2. modalities of power and desire
3. productive; not just as power/knowledge effects, but as constituting realities and indeed the subject.

In following these lines, I take the point that narratives and stories are interchangeable terms, an argument over which tons of ink have been spilt in narrative theory, particularly in the era when structuralism dominated the field.

Indeed, structuralism brought forward a double-layered model, according to which a narrative consists of two parts: story and discourse, *story* being understood as a temporal sequence of events, while *discourse* appears as the mode of representation of that story. In this configuration, narrative has been taken as the interrelation of story and discourse. Within the structuralist paradigm, we therefore have the construction of an opposition between a) what is told and b) how it is told. In this model, narratives and stories should not be conflated. Further, within the structuralist universe, narrative is the production of the surface units of meaning from a set of deep structure functions (see Propp, 1968; and Greimas, 1977, amongst others).

Moving on to poststructuralism, narratives are taken as minimal linguistic (written or verbal) acts. In this context, as McQuillan (2000: 8) comments, even short phrases such as 'Could you pass the salt' or 'Help' can register as narratives within what has been defined as the narrative matrix – a plane wherein minimal linguistic acts become narrative marks that take up meaning as they are interrelated within contexts of inter-subjective experiences. The very production of narratives is about making a moment of inter-subjective experience, knowable or discernible as such through communication (*ibid*). In this line of thought, 'narratives are the inevitable form which communication between subjects take' (*ibid*: 9). A central theme that therefore emerges from poststructuralist narrative approaches is the connection between language and narrative to the point of suggesting that there can be no rigorous distinction between narrative discourse and any other form of verbal behaviour (see Smith, 1980). Derrida's (1980) position is important in the post-structuralist terrain, particularly as he 'demonstrates the impossibility of what he calls "the law of genre", i.e. the impossibility of the rigorous purity of taxonomies and typologies required to uphold the structuralist model of narrative, and the simultaneous necessity of such boundaries and borders in order to allow narrative to be conceptualised. In this sense, narrative is an aporia' (McQuillan, 2000: 323).

To continue surfing the poststructuralist spectrum, Lyotard (1984) conceptualises narrative as a mode of knowledge. Narratives in this light define the possibilities of knowledge, and hence, action in any given society. Last but not least, in both Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988) and Derrida (1992, 1993), narratives are embedded in the expression and structure of human temporality. Simply put, it is through narratives that past, present and future are held together in consciousness and in this light 'narrative is both the process and the consequence of this temporal structuration' (McQuillan, 2000: 324).

Therefore, within the poststructuralist agenda, narrative has a necessary connection to time and to cognition. Narrative is actually a cognitive process by which the subject constructs meaningful realities. What is crucial here, particularly for what has been called 'the narrative turn in the social sciences' is a shifting from structure to structuration, an interest not in how narratives are structured, but how they work, with what effects and how subjectivity is ultimately an effect of narrativity. As feminist theorist Teresa de Lauretis has put it:

Subjectivity is engaged in the cogs of narrative and indeed constituted in the relation of narrative, meaning and desire; so that the very work of narrativity is the engagement of the subject in certain positionalities of meaning and desire. (De Lauretis, 1988: 112)

I would add power in de Lauretis' triangular configuration, suggesting that subjectivity is constituted in the relation of narrative, meaning, power and desire (see Tamboukou, 2010a; 2010b).

To round up my explorations in the theoretical foundations of narrative research, I will draw on the short story of narrative theory that McQuillan has produced:

In the beginning there was Aristotle who theorised 'plot', then there came the novelists who theorised their own plots, then after false starts (Propp, Benjamin, Bakhtin) narrative theory really took off with narratology (the structuralist-led 'science of narrative'). However, like the dinosaurs, narratologists died out and were replaced by more mobile, covert forms of narrative theory within a 'post-structuralist' diaspora. Narrative theory now lives on, embedded in the work and tropes of post-structuralism. (McQuillan, 2000: xi)

Narrative is then a problem of conceptualisation for McQuillan, a historically constructed concept, which needs its genealogy to be traced. While I agree that narratives bring forward crucial problems of conceptualisation, I cannot accept the proposition that narrative is just a concept. I think it is much more than that. In agreement with feminist philosopher Cavarero (2000), I see narration as a discursive register confronting the discursive register of philosophy in focusing not on the traditional philosophical question 'what is man?', but rather raising the question of 'who is he/she in her unrepeatable uniqueness?', a question that I will further elaborate and discuss in Chapter 10.

My position is therefore that narratives should indeed be conceptualised as a whole discursive register confronting philosophy, although I would add that the philosophical discourse of the search for the universality of Man is not as solid and uncontested as Cavarero shows it to be. It is rather the Cartesian route that Cavarero has in mind – which is of course the dominant philosophical discourse, there is no doubt about that – but as I have already shown, there is also the Spinozist route that has opened up a philosophical tradition that can and has made connections with the questions raised within the register of narration.

Taking my point of departure from the focus of narration on 'who one is in his/her unrepeatable uniqueness', I will therefore argue that narrative research is saturated and driven by an interest on singularities and differences that can nevertheless be imagined as related and as making connections. To the Arendtian line that human beings as unique existents live together and are constitutively exposed to each other through the bodily senses, Cavarero adds the narratability of the self, a notion that I will return to in Chapter 10. In this light, narrative research works in charting lines of flight that the self as a narratable entity can take. In following Cavarero's proposition that narrative relations open up political spaces wherein storied selves are being exposed, transformed, ultimately deterritorialised, what I suggest is that narrative research should grasp narrative moments of this process of becoming other, while always remaining unique and unrepeatable.

In therefore situating myself within a philosophical plane wherein feminist analytics make connections with Spinoza, Foucault and Deleuze, I will make the following propositions about narrative research:

1. Narrative research focuses on singularities, addressing the question of 'who one is'. At the heart of this proposition lies a philosophical tradition that focuses on difference rather than sameness and identity. In his major philosophical work, *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze has forcefully put forward the concept of pure difference, not different from, but different *per se*. I do not intend to expand more on Deleuze's philosophy of difference here, as I will come back to this philosophical tradition in Chapter 8. What I want to underline however is the narrative interest on singularities on the unique existent, on the unrepeatable 'who' breaks away with the tyranny of representation and transferability, 'validity criteria' that have long been interrogated, particularly within the field of qualitative research in the human sciences. The narrative interest on the uniqueness of human beings is not however individualistic, an important point that brings me to my second proposition of the political matrix within which narrative research is deployed.
2. Narrative research is immanently situated within the political as conceptualised in Arendt's thought: I have used the Arendtian conceptualisation of speech and action as the modes par excellence 'in which human beings appear to each other' (Arendt, 1998: 177), revealing as it were the uniqueness of the human condition. Indeed, action in the presence of others is a *sine-qua-non* condition for the emergence of the political subject. However, Arendt (*ibid*) has pointed out that action is lost as the fleeting moment in the passage of time if it is not transformed into a story. As I will further discuss in Chapter 10 following Foucault and Arendt, stories should not be conceived only as discursive effects but also as recorded processes wherein the self as the author/teller of his/her story transgresses power boundaries and limitations following 'lines of flight' in its constitution as a political subject. It is this very process of storied actions, revealing the 'birth' of the political subject, that the political in narrative research is about. This political dimension should not therefore be conflated with 'the politics of emancipation' that narrative research has occasionally been hailed to: the researcher's emancipatory task of giving voice to the research participants, a trend and belief that has recently received quite important criticism (see Elliott, 2005).
3. The nomadic self of narrative research: following Arendt and Cavarero, narrative research traces the constitution of the narratable self. This self is exposed from birth within the interactive scene of the world, and through this constitutive exhibition, the self comes to desire the tale of his or her own life story to be told or written. The narratable self is thus constituted within collectivities and out of culturally marked differences. But social milieus and collectivities are always in flux. The narratable self is therefore discursive, provisional, inter-sectional and unfixed. It is not a unitary core self, but rather a system of selves grappling with multi-levelled differences and taking up subject positions, not in a permanent way, but rather temporarily, as points of departure for nomadic becomings.
4. Narrative research is a site of embodied knowledge: in Spinoza's monistic philosophy, mind and body are the same reality, though expressed in different

ways. Spinoza's treatment of the mind as an idea of the body has indeed created the anti-Cartesian philosophical tradition within which I have already placed my conceptualisation of narrative. The body in its closed unity to the mind is therefore a site of auto/biographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied. In Cavarero's articulation of the narratable self, the auto/biographical exercise of memory is not about the self becoming 'intelligible'; it is rather about the experience that the self has of being narratable and therefore familiar.

Each one of us knows that who we meet always has a unique story. And this is true even if we meet them for the first time without knowing their story at all. Moreover, we are all familiar with the narrative work of memory, which in a totally involuntary way, continues to tell us our own personal story (Cavareo, 2000: 33).

5. Narratives open up to the importance of the imaginary in what counts as research: Moira Gatens has underlined Spinoza's line of thought that without imagining that we can do something, we will actually never be able to do it (James, 2000: 47). In this light, Genevieve Lloyd has further argued that Spinoza's philosophy has opened up possibilities 'for a reconceptualization of the imaginary' (*ibid*: 41) and has discussed how Antonio Negri has read Spinoza's formulation of imagination as a path, giving access to the realities of the social world: 'Imagination can play a constitutive role, rather than just a distorting one; in understanding its fictions, reason reflects on the real social world in all its confusion and contradictoriness' (Lloyd, 1996: 63). In my own work, I have mapped an extremely divided and contested field opened up by women narrating their stories of becoming a subject. Indeed what I have traced is a diverse range of subject positions for female subjects to inhabit, but also for 'the subject of feminism' to emerge from. In thus focusing not on beginnings or ends of stories, but rather, the middle, the intermezzos, I have traced nomadic routes in becoming a woman. Grasping powerful contractions of these becomings, I have further imagined virtual possibilities of becoming a woman – through connecting with other women in critical communities of action – within the horizon of what I have called the 'feminist imaginary' (Tamboukou, 2006). What I therefore suggest is that narrative research, embedded as it is in the 'truths' and fictions of the mind, memory and imagination of embodied human beings, creates conditions of possibility for the actual and the virtual to be brought together in the understanding of how 'realities' – be they social or personal, past or present – are being constructed.
6. Narrative research is closely interwoven with space/time deployments, Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope being, of course, a significant analytic moment of this interweaving.² In considering time and memory in narrative research, linear conceptualisations of time are abandoned: narrative research is not about linear temporalities; but rather about time contractions and rhizomatic formations, stories that contract the past that have made them what they are, starting from the middle, going back and forth, making connections with other stories of other times and other places. Narrative research raises questions about how the past is contracted in the telling of stories, what allows memory to have access to the pure past, how cultural memory works in the production and indeed narration of stories. These problematics around time

and memory are further interrelated with question around spaces and places. In my work, I have always been drawn to narratives of space, of how we tell and write stories about the meaning and significance of space and of those related concepts that comprise what Soja (1996) calls 'the inherent spatiality of human life'.³ According to Michel de Certeau, 'stories carry out a labour that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places' (De Certeau, 1988: 118). Moreover, places are constituted in the very writing of 'space narratives', which further 'traverse' and 'organise' them (cited in Augé, 1995: 84). Narrative research is therefore instrumental in discussions revolving around the spatial constitution of human beings within the matrix of parallel configurations of spaces and places.

7. Narrative research is deployed in the whirl of the dance between power and desire: desire in narrative is a theme much discussed and written about. As de Lauretis has put it: 'A story is always a question of desire' (De Lauretis, 1988: 112). But how desire is conceptualised and used is in itself an unresolved question analogous to that of the question of narrative and obviously psychoanalysis has been the field par excellence wherein questions of desire have been discussed and debated.
8. Stories, however, are not just effects conditioned by relations of power, knowledge and desire. Stories do things: they produce realities. Narrative research is therefore about the constitutive power of stories in producing realities and indeed the subject. In my own research I have theorised women's narratives as technologies of the female self (Tamboukou, 2003). I have argued that women's narratives have operated as a critical technology of their self-formation, suggesting various and often contradictory political and ethical ways of 'becoming a subject'. In doing this, I have drawn on influential feminist analyses of women's life narratives. These analyses have explored the historical devaluation of women's narratives but have further shown how, moving beyond silence, women began making sense of dispersed moments of their existence, and through writing, they attempted to describe those moments and articulate them in a narrative system. Narratives work with multifaceted power effects and in this light, narrative research informed by Foucauldian insights is concerned with the processes, procedures and apparatuses, whereby truth and knowledge are interrelated in the production of narratives.

These eight propositions about narrative research are by no means exhaustive or final. I would rather suggest they be taken as research trails that can always be bent into different directions. They have been offered as tools in those strands of narrative research exploring the multiple connections that difference in narratives can generate. Having recognised the fact that narrative research is a complicated field with multifaceted levels of analysis, this does not mean that any route chosen within the narrative approach cannot be rigorous and systematic, creating of course its own norms, rules and taxonomies that work within particular contexts, what, drawing on the work of feminist theorist Barad (2007), I have called 'narrative phenomena', as already discussed in Chapter 2.

In this light, the task of the narrative researcher is to map 'the narrative phenomena' she is working with and trace the emergence of entities, be they stories, themes, discourses, modes and of course narrative figures. As I have already shown above,

in my teaching and research this question is explored on two interrelated planes: a theoretical plane wherein Foucauldian, Deleuzeo-Guattarian and feminist lines of thought are making connections; and a post-narratological plane where I chart how conventions of classical narratology are bent and how differentiations within various sub-genres of life writing, namely autobiographies, diaries and letters, emerge. What is central in this approach is the recognition and discussion of the fact that we are part of the storyworlds that we seek to understand, and therefore there can never be a clear-cut separation between 'the subject' and 'the object' of the research process. Rather, the 'research findings' and consequently the published outputs emerge through the multifarious entanglements – both material and discursive – between 'the researcher', 'the research object' and 'the research context'. As a matter of fact, 'the narrative researcher', 'the documents of life' and 'the research context' are not pre-defined entities either: they are constituted through entangled intra-actions and their particular constitution can only hold within the conditions of specific 'narrative phenomena'. The following chapter will further consider questions of entanglements, particularly focusing on interrelations between discourse, authoring and performativity.

Open questions and current concerns

- Do you agree that human beings are inherent storytellers?
 - How important is it to consider geographical and disciplinary differences in understanding the diversity of approaches to narrative research? Think in relation to your own disciplinary background and/or field.
 - What do you think about the problem of defining narratives? Is it important or irrelevant?
 - Who is 'the subject' of narrative research and what implications has the death of the author had on postmodern approaches to narrative research?
 - What does it mean to analyse narratives in duration? Think about connections between time, space and narrative in relation to specific research exemplars.
 - What are the consequences of acknowledging that we are part of the storyworlds that we seek to understand?
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Suggestions for further reading

- Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (eds) (2008/2013) *Doing Narrative Research*, 2nd edn. London: Sage.

This is a comprehensive collection of essays that engage with a range of question, themes, topics, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches in doing narrative research in the social sciences. In their introduction the editors map the diverse field of narrative inquiries and show the disciplinary, geographical and philosophical traditions that underpin and condition this diversity.

- Cavarero, A. (2000) *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. London: Routledge.

This is an excellent philosophical exposition of the relationship between narration and the self. Drawing on Arendt's understanding of the human condition, Cavarero develops her thesis of

relational ontology and traces its origins in the role of narratives in the web of human relations, particularly focusing on feminist critiques of the Western philosophical tradition.

- Kristeva, J. (2001) *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative*, translated by F. Collins. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

This book draws on Kristeva's series of Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto, engaging with Arendt's philosophical framework of life narratives within the political. The essays engage critically with Arendt's understanding of narratives and highlight and explicate misconceptions and misunderstandings. They thus offer an enlightening commentary on Arendt's theorisation of narratives.

- McQuillan, M. (ed.) (2000) *The Narrative Reader*. London: Routledge.

This is an important volume presenting a wide range of theories of narrative from Plato to post-narratology. In his introduction the editor writes a comprehensive genealogy of the development of narrative theories as a framework of the selection of important texts that are included in the volume. The themes include formalism and its critiques, structuralism and poststructuralism, responses to narratology and disciplinary connections with history, literature and psychoanalysis.

- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1981) *On Narrative*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

This is an excellent collection of theoretical essays on narrative that brings together a set of concepts, questions and concerns that are still at the heart of narrative scholarship. Contributors include, amongst others, Jacques Derrida, Frank Kermode, Paul Ricoeur and Hayden White, combining essays with critical responses and animated dialogues. The volume re-enacts the climate of a conference on narrative and the problem of sequence, held at the University of Chicago in October 1979.

- Riessman, C. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Renowned narrative scholar Riessman offers a critical overview of contemporary critical approaches to narrative research in the social sciences, creating four interrelated analytical levels: thematic; structural; dialogic; and visual. In doing so, she critically presents and discusses exemplars of narrative analysis on these four levels by a number of researchers in a range of geographical and disciplinary areas, and discusses the strengths and limitations of their approach.

NOTES

1. In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze (1992) contrasts Spinoza's and Descartes' methods by claiming that the former works under the assumption that the cause of a thing is known better than the thing itself, while the latter claims the exact opposite.
2. Bakhtin's (1981) formulation for explaining the interrelation between temporal and spatial categories in artistic representation.
3. These are the stories we tell and write about places, locations, landscapes, homes, cities - all those real, but also imagined spaces - what Lefebvre (1974/1991) has called 'lived spaces of representation'.