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MICHAEL BAMBERG AND MOLLY ANDREWS (eds.), *Considering counter-narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004. Pp. x, 381. HB \$126.00.

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Growing out of two special issues of the journal *Narrative Inquiry*, this volume assembles six chapters that “contemplate the meaning of counter-narratives and their relationship to master or dominant narratives” (p. x). The book also contains six clusters of commentaries written in response to each of the focal chapters, along with rejoinders by the six “primary” authors. As the editors point out in their introduction to the book, the format of dialogue and contestation is meant to synergize with the main subject of the volume, since the concept “counter-narrative” is itself “a positional category, in tension with another category” (x). By and large, the organization of the volume is effective and makes for stimulating reading; occasionally, however, commentators treat the chapter to which they are ostensibly responding less as an opportunity for dialogue than as a platform for showcasing their own explanatory frameworks or descriptive nomenclatures (see, e.g., the commentary by Jaan Valsiner, 245–76). More generally, the range of issues explored by the 29 different contributors to the volume – the range of contexts in which the authors and commentators show narrative and narrative analysis to be pertinent concerns – suggests the extent to which the “narrative turn” has taken hold in fields such as social psychology, gender studies, sociolinguistics, public health, and the other domains of research represented in the book. But by the same token, the volume raises the question of whether the contributors share a sense of what narrative is and how it functions – that is, whether they are in fact investigating a common object (or set of common objects: narrative, master narrative, counter-narrative), or rather operating with more or less distinct conceptions of stories and methodologies for studying them.

In this connection, the volume’s framing matter – including the editors’ brief introduction, Molly Andrews’s opening comment on “Counter-narratives and the power to oppose” (1–6), and Michael Bamberg’s concluding chapter on “Considering counter narratives” (351–71) – provides important context. In her opening comment, which constituted the original introduction to the special journal issue, Andrews defines counter-narratives as “the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives” (1), that is, the master narratives that “offer people a way of identifying what is assumed to be a normative experience” (1). In other words, suggests Andrews, the work assembled in the volume “ask[s] how it is that people

frame their stories in relation to dominant cultural storylines which form the context of their lives, especially when those storylines don't seem to fit" (1).

Andrews's opening formulations are noteworthy for two reasons. For one thing, it does not go without saying that analysts should equate LIVING a story and TELLING a story. As Ryan 2005 has pointed out, a distinction can be drawn between the notions "being a narrative" and "possessing narrativity." Whereas everyday experiences may well possess narrativity, in the sense of having elements that can trigger the production of more or less storylike mental or verbal representations, such experiences should be distinguished from narrative proper, central instances of which can be defined as cognitive constructs or textual artifacts that have a specific kind of causal-chronological organization, a focus on particularized situations and events, a structured relationship with background assumptions and expectations, and an emphasis on "qualia," such that they encode the pressure of events on an experiencing human or humanlike consciousness (cf. Herman, in progress). If it is to remain analytically useful, the term "narrative" should not be hyperextended, even if the category it designates has fuzzy rather than discrete boundaries. Living a narrative is, arguably, no more possible than is living an argument, a description, an exhortation, and so on.

Further, with its use of the term "storyline," Andrews's opening section alludes to the theory of "positioning" that the editors' introduction also mentions and that has emerged from work in social psychology – more specifically, from the subdomain of social-psychological research that is sometimes called "discursive psychology" (see Edwards 1997, Edwards & Potter 1992, Harré & Gillett 1994, Harré & Langenhove 1999). Positions, in this work, are choices from among contrasting attributes (e.g., blameworthy/admirable, weak/powerful) that participants in discourse assign to themselves and others via speech acts; such assignments help build storylines in terms of which we make sense of our own and others' conduct, while reciprocally the storylines enable meanings (or position assignments) to be paired with the speech acts at issue. Not all of the research reported in the volume, however, anchors itself in the analytic framework to which Andrews here alludes. In consequence, readers should not assume that when individual contributors use the terms "narrative" and "counter-narrative" they have in mind the storylines described by positioning theorists. (For that matter, Andrews's opening comment might have explored more fully just how the book's focus on the clash between dominant and resistant narratives can throw new light on positioning theory itself.)

Bamberg's concluding chapter, meanwhile, provides additional information about the genesis of the volume and contextualizes the concepts of counter-narratives and master narratives via earlier work on counter-narratives viewed as "alternatives that run counter to hegemonic ideologies as micro-discursive accomplishments" (352; cf. Bamberg 1997, Talbot et al. 1996). Cogently written, the chapter examines the organic link between storytelling and self-construction and self-presentation; it suggests that the microanalysis of narratives-

in-interaction reveals “complicity and countering [to be] activities that go hand-in-hand” (353); and again it appeals to positioning theory as a framework for analyzing the co-presence of master and counter-narratives in everyday communicative processes. Especially illuminating are the pages (354–59) in which Bamberg provides an account of the distinguishing features of narrative; here Bamberg notes that although narrative is just one discourse genre among others, “there seems to be something special [about narratives’] implementation, even at the level of mundane, conventional everyday interactions” because “narratives provide the possibility of a format that has become the privileged way of fashioning self and identity, at least in ‘modern times,’ which is open to a certain fluidity, to improvisation, and to the design of alternatives” (354). Again, though, it remains disputable whether the other contributors to the volume operationalize the concept “story” in ways that converge with Bamberg’s account of the structure and sociocommunicative functions of what he calls “small stories,” narratives told in passing but with crucial consequences for the ongoing identity constructions of self and other (356–57). Equally disputable is whether other contributors would subscribe to the discursive-psychological methodology championed by Bamberg; that method of analysis is premised on the idea that the mind itself is a function of discourse, rather than preceding and grounding the business of communicative interaction: “Rather than seeing master and counter narratives as mentally held properties or convictions, either/or, and slow to move, I propose to view them as talk’s business, in and outside of interview settings” (365). To be sure, a book with contributions by so many different hands is bound to reflect differences of opinion about what narrative is and how best to study it, but it is worth reflecting nonetheless on what those differences say about the current status of narrative inquiry, as well as the prospects for integration and synthesis among the various disciplinary traditions that concern themselves with stories and storytelling.

Andrews’s first focal chapter is titled “Memories of mother: Counter-narratives of early maternal influence” (7–26). Based on interviews with four men and women between the ages of 75 and 90, the chapter discusses how the informants “dip in and out of dominant cultural scripts of motherhood, manipulating and reformulating them in ways that are not always immediately apparent” and thereby subverting a “well-worn tale, with the mythology of motherhood at its centre” (9). More precisely, Andrews shows how each of the informants tells the story of his or her mother’s early influence in a way that impedes or prohibits the production of master narratives based on mother-blaming, thus rejecting the deterministic individualism she argues to be implicit in normative developmental narratives. Commentators writing responses to this chapter question the status and origin of master and counter-narratives; the role of the researcher in eliciting such narratives, particularly when he or she discovers them (as Andrews did) while revisiting data previously collected for other

research purposes; and the place of these narratives within a wider array of mother-blaming practices.

The second chapter, “Negotiating ‘normality’ when IVF fails” (61–82), is contributed by Karen Throsby. The chapter focuses on “dominant storylines” about in vitro fertilization, zooming in on people for whom IVF does not work and exploring how the stories they tell about their experiences pertain to master narratives concerning both technology and reproduction. (As it turns out, in the data Throsby examined, 80% of all cycles of IVF end in failure.) Throsby’s discussion targets stories used to claim “normative femininity” by women living without children – women who thus resist the categories in which they nonetheless continue to locate themselves. In a manner that invites closer study of the relation between the concepts “discourse” and “narrative” in Throsby’s own account, the chapter reviews strategies adopted by the interview participants to manage “dominant discourses” surrounding the use of technology for reproduction. It also considers how the participants construct themselves “as meeting . . . normative standards by demonstrating their fitness to mother” and explores ways in which they develop positive stories of the experience of living without children. As Throsby points out in her conclusion, “From a feminist perspective, the necessity of this discursive labour [performed by the participants] points to a depressing lack of change in the narrow construction of femininity through reproduction, in spite of decades of feminism” (80). Commentators who responded to Throsby’s chapter situate the participants’ narratives in the broader context of stories told in an attempt to deal with disappointment; they reflect on the implications of Throsby’s study vis-à-vis the role of medicine and technology in human life (and death) more generally; and they consider how researchers and informants often engage in a co-production of counter-narratives in interview settings such as the one reported by Throsby.

The third focal chapter is Barbara Harrison’s “Photographic visions and narrative inquiry” (113–36). The chapter explores methodological questions concerning the role of visual data in narrative research; it examines the use of photographic images in auto/biography, photographic journals, and video diaries; and it then focuses on the functions of everyday photography, considering whether family photographs, for example, can be viewed as forms of storytelling that unfold within a wider context of master narratives and counter-narratives. In discussing the different sociocultural functions of everyday and professional photography, Harrison draws on Bourdieu’s (1990) account of the norms and conventions regulating the practice of taking pictures in informal settings. In the terms afforded by Bourdieu’s work, photographs can be said to solemnize “climactic moments which reaffirm group unity, and they may in themselves become objects of regulated social exchange. . . . It is photographs which create events and occasions or moments” (125–26). The chapter goes on to explore the relations among photographs, memory, and identity, characterizing photographs as both physical embodiments of memory and triggers for telling – that is, prompts

for the construction of narratives about the experiences to which photographs synecdochically allude. However, in just the few years since Harrison wrote her chapter, the widespread dissemination of digital (including digital video) photography has drastically changed the status and distribution of still as well as moving images in everyday life – images that, instead of being placed in photo albums, are now burned onto CDs or DVDs or e-mailed among family members. An updated discussion of the issues raised by Harrison would need to take these technological innovations into account. For their part, the commentators who responded to Harrison's chapter discuss how photographs can pertain to inter- and intrapersonal modes of conflict; the relation between verbal and visual/pictorial expression, as well as issues connected to the elicitation and analysis of picture-generated stories; and the difficulty of reconciling the need to register the experiential, emotional dimensions of photographs with the need to develop a standardized method for analyzing visual data in narrative inquiry.

The fourth chapter, by Rebecca L. Jones, is “‘That’s very rude, I shouldn’t be telling you that’: Older women talking about sex” (169–89). Jones’s contribution is perhaps the chapter that makes the most concerted attempt to use empirical data to address the key concepts of master narrative and counter-narrative. The author interviewed 23 women aged 61 to 90 about their experiences of sex and intimate relationships in later life. She then studied the relationship between the women’s narratives about intimacy and two cultural storylines currently competing for cultural dominance in modern-day England: the “asexual older people” storyline, and the “liberal” storyline premised on the assumption that older people have sex, too. Either of these storylines can be viewed as dominant within a given (segment of) interaction, depending on whether speakers invoke it in an uncontested and normative way. Thus, subjecting her data first to an emic analysis (by examining linguistic constructions signaling participants’ orientation to one or the other dominant narrative) and then to an etic analysis (by considering how dominant and counter-narratives might be identified in data where participants themselves don’t signal any awareness of them), Jones argues that “the status of narratives and storylines as dominant or counter is determined not by any property of their content but either by participants’ orientations or by explicit analyst’s identification” (174). Overall, Jones’s account reveals the extent to which dominant cultural storylines and counter-narratives are intertwined, making it difficult, often, to tease them apart. Commentators who critiqued the chapter dispute the validity of the emic/etic distinction on which it is based; they argue for the addition of a “radical” storyline to the “asexual older people” and “liberal” storylines circulating within the cultural imaginary; and they further contextualize Jones’s approach by situating it within frameworks for inquiry developed by interactional sociolinguists.

The fifth chapter, by Corinne Squire, is “White trash pride and the exemplary black citizen: Counter-narratives of gender, ‘race’ and the trailer park in contemporary daytime television talk shows” (221–37). Squire argues that closer study

of representations of women on such talk shows as *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Ricki, Geraldo*, and *Jerry Springer* can reveal the dynamic interplay between master narratives and counter-narratives circulating within culture. More specifically, as Squire puts it, “women in these shows are often the storytellers and story subjects through which the shows patrol but also transgress boundaries of gender, sexuality, class and colour” (224). Exploring the narrative functions of the shows’ use of *mise en scène* and carefully timed commercial breaks, as well as the sociosemiotic implications of the participants’ own storytelling acts, Squire suggests that these television performances stage incoherencies and displacements in dominant narratives about race, class, and gender: “Trailer park whiteness seems especially likely to be mixed up narratively with blackness when women are in the frame; women therefore become a preferred vehicle for this kind of racism by proxy” (231). At the same time, the shows tell counter-narratives of black citizenship that outline the possibility for a new form of civil society. The first three commentators who responded to this chapter suggest the benefits of supplementing Squire’s methodology, largely grounded in the field of cultural studies, with ethnomethodological, social psychological, and media-studies paradigms, respectively. The final two commentators urge a more careful consideration of the interface between gender and race, on the one hand, and of the situated verbal practices of talk show participants, on the other.

The final focal chapter, Mark Freeman’s “Charting the narrative unconscious: Cultural memory and the challenge of autobiography” (289–306), contains some of the most suggestive pages in the book. The author bases his account on a kind of epiphany he experienced when first visiting Berlin in 1997. While taking a bus ride through the city, Freeman experienced a moment in which “[e]verything that had been a fascinating or disturbing monument . . . [was transformed into] a kind of living breathing presence” (293); in response to “this sudden transformation from object to presence – from monument to memory – [came] something like a deep grief, a mixture of sorrow and horror, all rolled into one” (293). To account for this experience, Freeman proposes the concept of a “narrative unconscious.” At issue is not a private, secretive dimension like the unconscious posited by psychoanalytic theory, but rather an unconscious viewed as “culturally rooted aspects of one’s history that remain uncharted and that, consequently, have yet to be incorporated into one’s story” (289). Thus the author suggests that he carried with him to Berlin a store of “common knowledge and common imagery” that functioned as a kind of prosthetic (or socially and materially distributed) memory triggered by the traces of the past he encountered at first hand during his initial visit to the city. Accordingly, the Freudian notion of the unconscious needs to be recontextualized as an explicitly cultural unconscious, one “having to do with those largely unrecognized and in turn uncognized aspects of our own histories that have been bequeathed to us by virtue of our status as historical beings of a specific sort” (295). Freeman goes on (297–300) to connect his account with other theories

of the “supra-personal dimensions of self-formation” (297), including Shils’s (1981) and Gadamer’s (1997). He also suggests implications of his ideas for the study of the genre of autobiography (300–5). Commentators who responded to this chapter contextualize it via other research on the narrative foundations of identity; they consider the nature and possible geopsychological coordinates of cultural memories, propose to supplement Freeman’s diachronic model of cultural memory with a synchronic model (according to which several layers of personal and historical experience exist simultaneously and interact with one another), and use positioning theory as another way of thinking about the phenomena Freeman associates with the narrative unconscious.

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HELEN KELLY-HOLMES, *Advertising as multilingual communication*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. xiv, 206. Hb \$69.95.

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Language choices in advertising are never random. They represent an attempt to use language to achieve a particular goal. In commercial advertising the goal is, ultimately, to sell. The words that are present in advertisements are the product of a very conscious decision to put those particular words there rather than other words. Helen Kelly-Holmes in her fascinating book examines choices that have resulted in the use, non-use or, as it turns out, abuse of features from more than one language in commercially driven discourses. The object of her study is multilingual advertising communication, defined as the appearance of a number of