

*Language in Society* 43 (2014)  
doi:10.1017/S0047404514000098

CLAUDIA HOLLER & MARTIN KLEPPER (eds.), *Rethinking narrative identity: Persona and perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013. Pp. vi, 209. Hb. \$135.

Reviewed by YAOQIN XUE  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Taiyuan Institute of Technology  
Taiyuan, 030000, China  
[xue\\_yaoqin@163.com](mailto:xue_yaoqin@163.com)

In this volume, the seventeenth of the “Studies in narrative” series, the notion of narrative identity is examined in detail from the perspective of various disciplines. The book shows that narrative identity has been productively defined in different ways in different research fields.

This volume is composed of ten chapters, with an introduction where some important tendencies for future research on narrative identity are first pointed out. The following ten chapters are dedicated to the discussion of narrativity and narrative identities from different disciplines. Ch. 1 examines the correlation of narrativity and morality, revealing that identity and empathy are both constituted by narratives. Ch. 2 explores the notion of persona according to William James’s seminal reflections on self and identity on the one hand and Keith Richard’s *Life* on the other hand, revealing the importance of congruence and personal continuity for the construction of narrative identity. Ch. 3 discusses the relationship between heterotopic self-positioning and narrative identity and shows that adherence to a plurality of social worlds provides the teller with options for self-positioning in his/her self-narratives. Ch. 4 examines how perspectives can be constructed in storytelling by positioning resources in relation to the teller’s self. Two examples of dealing with the ambiguity of the eyes and voices of others in the stories of two women with severe chronic health conditions are analyzed in detail in this chapter. In Ch. 5, narrative identity is discussed from the socionarratological perspective. The chapter shows that narrative identity is always in process of change and reformation rather than being stable or static.

Ch. 6 discusses fictional narratives and narrative perspectives that transcend mimetic and experiential theories of interpretation and narrative in various forms and manners. It is pointed out that fictional narrative opens up new narrative identities. Narrative identity in Jeffery Eugenides’s *Middlesex* is discussed in Ch. 7, which reveals that narratives in this epic novel provide an indefinite selfhood. Narrative identity is reformulated as being open-ended. Ch. 8 explores self-writing, forgiveness, and ethics in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*; the author argues that confessional self-writing cannot attain either truth or self-forgiveness. Ch. 9 focuses on queer subjects as heteronormativity’s marginalized others. Quentin

Crisp's life writing is analyzed, and it is shown that narrative inhibition of negativity turns Crisp's failure in life into a success later in his life. Ch. 10 discusses narrative identity in confessional poetry from a poetic perspective. It is found that identity in lyrical texts can be discussed more poignantly by using the concept of narrative identity.

In a word, an interdisciplinary understanding of narrative identity is presented in this volume, which shows how productive the notion of narrative identity is from various perspectives ranging from morality, persona, and discursive space to socio-narratology. It is a very useful book for those interested in both narratives and identity research.

(Received 6 July 2013)

*Language in Society* **43** (2014)  
doi:10.1017/S0047404514000104

PAUL BOUISSAC, *Circus as multimodal discourse*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.  
Pp. 216. Hb. \$140.

Reviewed by RONGBIN WANG  
*School of International Studies*  
*Zhejiang University*  
*Hangzhou, 310030, China*  
[rongbinwang@163.com](mailto:rongbinwang@163.com)

This book presents a theory of the circus as a secular ritual and introduces a method to analyze its performances as multimodal discourse from the perspective of semiotics and ethnography. The book consists of twelve chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Various circus specialties are discussed to show how cultural meaning is produced, extended, and amplified by circus performance.

The introduction mentions the necessity of analyzing circus as multimodal discourse and introduces the structure of the book. Ch. 1 explains why circus performance can be regarded as a special form of secular ritual loaded with special patterns and conveying special cultural meaning. Ch. 2 elaborates the methodological framework and the author's approach to verbalizing the multimodal experience of circus performance. Both advantages and limitations of this approach are mentioned. Ch. 3 discusses magic as one typical type of circus performance and finds that magic acts can be displayed as forms of either entertainment or for deviant purposes. Chs. 4 and 5 focus on the role of horses in circus performance in expressing cultural meaning. Ch. 4 discusses horses as individual, personalized actors, and Ch. 5 examines horses as groups that can be used as a secondary modeling system to express social relations. Ch. 6 deals with dogs as trainable animal and finds that dog training in circus acts can simulate the discursive dynamics of circus performance. Ch. 7