

〈書評〉

Michael Heitkemper-Yates and Ana Penjak 編

*The Practice of Narrative: Storytelling in a Global Context*

(Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2016 年)

---

小 椋 道 晃

---

Why does narrative matter? Why is storytelling indispensable? Each of the sixteen essays in *The Practice of Narrative: Storytelling in a Global Context* pursues these questions, demonstrating the necessity of narrative as a vehicle for understanding ourselves and others in a globalized world. This volume reflects various approaches to narrative in interdisciplinary and global contexts, and in their introduction, editors Michael Heitkemper-Yates and Ana Penjak stress the unique role storytelling plays in our lives: “We all have stories; we all know stories; we all share a vast complex of personal and non-personal stories; we each participate in creating stories on different levels (global, national, regional, local, personal, sub-conscious) and in different socio-historical contexts” (vii). What underlies these studies then—through their reconsiderations of interactive storytelling and storytelling’s world-making—is a desire to reinvigorate and defend the humanities.

The essays here survey “modern concepts and approaches to storytelling through, beyond, and within the narrative constructions and collaborations of architectural, historical, visual, sonic, space-specific, and theatrical narrative contexts” (xiii). Unlike previous scholarly inquiries that have tended to focus on certain types of narratives, this volume features interdisciplinary research on story-

telling practices in a variety of formats: historiography, literature, performance, visual art, architecture, music, and even face-to-face interactions. It also demonstrates cutting-edge methods of analysis and interpretation from perspectives developed across multiple fields.

The collection consists of five sections: “Teaching and Learning through the Act of Storytelling” (Part I), “Storytelling across Space, Place, and Experience” (Part II), “The Narration of Character, Author, and Text” (Part III), “Visual Representation and the Embodiment of Story” (Part IV), and “Narrative Structure and Narrative Cognition” (Part V). The first section concerns the role of storytelling in the educational apparatus and settings such as multilingual classrooms, school curricula, and interactive activities. The second section deals with the contemporary cultural and political issues surrounding storytelling, such as social memory, shared history, narrative interchanges of religion, and the spatial aesthetics of ambience. The emphasis of the book’s third part will perhaps be the most familiar to readers: storytelling in literature. This section contemplates the agency of authors, narrators, and characters, and the impact of narration upon the story. The fourth part of the book reflects contemporary discussions of how visual artworks, including artistic installations, illustrations, and X-ray images structure and embody narratives through non-verbal components, with each contributor expanding the concept of storytelling and considering the affective implications of narrative in artistic media. Affective responses and intersubjective engagements of the audience are also a significant theme of the collection’s final section. Across a wide range of media and storytelling situations, these essays challenge the usual definitions of narrative structure, in both theoretical and practical terms, by attempting to delineate the way narratives are constructed through cognitive processes during the telling of a story.

Among others, the book’s third part will be of particular interest for scholars focused on literary studies, as each of the essays investigates the impact that fictional characters and/or narrators have upon the content of stories as they develop. Michael Yates’s “Multiple Voice/Multiple Choice: Non-Linearity and the Fracturing of Identity in Robert Coover’s *Pricksongs & Descants*” concentrates on the narrative agency of both the narrator and the characters, and contends that reading Coover’s metafiction makes readers “more aware of his/her own expe-

riential ‘drama of cognition’” (84). Where Yates stresses the participatory experience of reading a postmodern text, Nishevita Jayendran’s “The Re/birth of the Storyteller in Salman Rushdie’s *Luka and the Fire of Life*” more directly examines the relationship between authors and their work. Reconsidering the influence of the author (storyteller) as it belongs to both story-world (text) and real-world creation, Jayendran showcases the ways in which the text makes the narrative dialogic, establishing “a connection with her audience” and incorporating “them into the storytelling experience” (94). These two articles both regard the storyteller’s position as dialogical and focus on how “the author and the story-world draw upon each other for their mutual sustenance” (91). From multiple-positioned narrators to intrusive authors, these essays explore the narrative function of characterization and its affect upon textual reception and narrative structure. Their emphasis on the dialogical, intersubjective experience of reading resonates with the other articles as well, and is further developed in, for instance, Ewelina Twardoch’s consideration of narrative beyond language, particularly narrativity outside established forms of representation (“Are There Stories Hidden behind Hormonal Spaces and X-ray Photographs?: Around Narratives in Biometrics-based New Media Art”). Given that the body always affects our thinking about objects, the world, and ourselves, it would be interesting to see further consideration of the impact of the body on storytelling, story creation, and narrative in literary works.

Volumes of essays are notoriously difficult to unify around a central theme, and the cost of this collection’s interdisciplinary richness is a sense of discontinuity between the individual essays. Overall, however, *The Practice of Narrative: Storytelling in a Global Context* demonstrates how interdisciplinary approaches offer new opportunities within narrative studies. Indeed, the variety of these essays, with their distinct methods of analysis and their focus on different kinds of storytelling, reflects the diversity of narrative itself. Furthermore, each of the articles offers “an international range of viewpoints regarding how the multiple applications of story intersect and facilitate communication between past and present, between reality and fantasy, and between people across the globe, regardless of culture, time, and place” (xiii). In other words, these perspectives collectively underscore the multidimensional complexity of narrative and storytelling practices in both aesthetic and political terms. The collection thus aims to foster a dialogue

about taking the measure of storytelling, not just as a means of artistic expression or a communication tool, but also as a fundamental human instinct.