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### **Stories of narrative research**

When we were first asked to contribute a chapter to this volume, we thought this would be a good opportunity for us to bring together our views on narrative research under one umbrella. As Co-directors of the Centre for Narrative Research, we have been involved in on-going conversations with one another for a long time about narrative theory and method; these conversations have taken on a number of different formats, including an edited book (Andrews et al. 2000). These conversations have not, of course, been only amongst ourselves, but have also been stimulated by input from the wide array of people who have contributed to the activities of our centre, for instance by giving a presentation in, or by attending our speakers' series and/or narrative workshops.

Perhaps it should not have surprised us that when we sat down to plan the chapter, we realized that there was not one, but several different stories we wanted to tell, and that each of us had not only different areas of research, but indeed had come to narrative work through quite different paths. We considered trying to find the commonality amongst us, and to write from this position, but ultimately we came to feel that much would be lost through such a homogenizing process. Even embarking on an attempt to arrive at a robust shared definition of 'narrative' would, we decided, divert us from what was most interesting about the work itself. Rather, we concluded that it was not only admissible but even appropriate that a chapter on narrative in a book on research practice should be organized around our own stories of our relationship with narrative

research. For while we share a general interest in narrative work, this has found very different expression in each of our lives, as the passages below document. But be the topics of interest political engagement, divorce disputes, HIV support networks, or Foucauldian genealogies, our stories are not unconnected to each other. Indeed, we have worked so closely together over a number of years that it would be surprising if we were not present in each others' accounts. Thus, using our own stories as vehicles for exploring more general principles relating to narrative research, the chapter is organized around the themes of life stories and narrative (Andrews), narrative and subjectivity (Day Sclater), narrative genre (Squire) and autobiographical narratives (Tamboukou).

### ***Living Counter-narratives – Molly Andrews***

In the Introduction to Robert Jay Lifton's deeply thoughtful and moving book about Nazi doctors, he remarks: "My assumption from the beginning, in keeping with my twenty-five years of research, was that the best way to learn about Nazi doctors was to talk to them" (1986: 6). I have spent the last two decades talking with, and listening to, people telling me stories about their lives. Intuitively, I have always been drawn to stories which lie in tension with the ones which we are socialized to expect; only very recently have I begun to theorize these as 'counter-narratives' (Andrews, forthcoming).

My doctoral dissertation was an exploration of lifetime commitment to progressive politics, and for three years I listened to many stories told to me by fifteen women and men between the ages of seventy and ninety, all of whom had been politically active on the left for fifty years or longer (Andrews, 1991). Old age, far from representing

the disengagement and depression of which we so often hear, was for these men and women a very full moment in their lives, a continuation of all which they had been fighting for. In fact, I was told, increased age, far from being an excuse to focus in upon the self, had instead the advantage of perspective. Old peace activists were critical to social movements because they were less susceptible to becoming depressed through lack of immediate tangible results. Social historian Peter Laslett comments upon this:

It could be claimed... that many more duties of older people go forward in time than is the case in those who are young. This follows from the fact that they owe less to their own individual futures – now comparatively short – and more to the future of others – all others... In this the elderly of any society can be said to be the *trustees* of the future (1989: 196).

As one of my respondents, Eileen, explains to me: “It’s the old people who keep going. I think age brings that perspective.” Trevor Huddleston echoes this sentiment. Speaking in 1987, he tells me: ‘I think I’ve become more revolutionary every year I’ve lived. And certainly now, because life is so much shorter. I mean I want to get apartheid dead before I’m dead. There’s no time to do that.’ That he would indeed outlive apartheid, and return to South Africa as the honoured guest of Nelson Mandela, was beyond his greatest dreams. And yet it was something to which he dedicated the whole of his being, and had done so for more than five decades.

Although much of our conversations were not in storied form, some of it was. Elizabeth, for instance, was a great weaver of tales, and often would use dreams to introduce a description of an event or even of a psychological state of mind. At one point in our interviews, Elizabeth describes the mounting pressure on her, as she

attempts to balance her responsibilities at home (with four children to look after) with her political commitments. She realizes that if she chooses to participate in a particular protest, she will risk being arrested, being put in prison, and thus unable to attend to her family's needs. At this critical moment, she has a dream.

I dreamed there was a tray and my hands were underneath holding the tray and I was doing a lot, what with the family and the famine relief and one thing and another. I was doing a lot, and more and more things were piled on this tray, and I said 'Oh Lord, don't put on anymore, I can't hold it. And then I looked under the tray. It wasn't my hands that were holding it, it was sort of symbolic hands, large thick hands that you get on Henry Moore sculptures. And I knew that it wasn't really me, that what I was doing was right, one was upheld in another dimension somehow... It was right, and it was go ahead.

With the strength of the insights gleaned from this dream, this 'fictional story' as it were, Elizabeth decides to participate in the protest. In fact her worst fears are realized; she is arrested, and she spends three weeks in a maximum security prison. But she is mentally prepared for this possibility and is able to continue on. Elizabeth uses the one story (of her dream) to frame the other; for her, they are deeply integrated into her concept of who she was and who she could become.

I learned much from those conversations, and indeed continue to learn from them. Although the conversations (taped and ultimately transcribed) remain unchanged, I revisit them from time to time, and my understanding of them has evolved as I myself have changed. For me, then, the stories continue to be reinvented as I hear them in different ways. For instance, I recently wrote an article about the stories which these same women and men told me about their mothers. (Andrews, forthcoming). But I

was not a mother at the time that I first heard these. Now, more fifteen years and two children later, I see in them layers which I did not, and probably could not have seen before. And so these stories continue to have life, indeed they become new stories, long after they have first been told.

Having completed my Ph.D., I moved back to the United States, in August 1991, as the Gulf War erupted. Having lived overseas for nearly five years, I had for some time begun to ask myself questions of what it meant to be an American living abroad. Now I wondered what it meant to be an American living in the heart of American militarism during wartime. It was in this context that I developed a project on patriotism (Andrews, 1997b). I was prompted to do so, not only by the general context of the war, but by the sight of an American flag which adorned the anti-war 24-7 vigil in downtown Colorado Springs, the most militarised place in the United States and where I was then living. I was curious what this flag meant to those who had planted it there. But American flags were everywhere in Colorado Springs, not only at the peace vigil. What different meanings did this image carry for the many who displayed it?

I interviewed a number of people with contrasting views on the war, most of whom had used the American flag as part of a means for expressing their feelings about the US military involvement. One particular event, "One Hour for America," featured in many of the accounts which I heard. This event had been organized by some of the residents of Colorado Springs to show support for the war, and had raised a considerable sum of money for families of troops who lived locally. The event, described by Hal, one of the key organizers, was intended as "a show of patriotism

and Americanism” and “a euphoria of those of us who have served in the military.” The event was held in the downtown area of the city, and attracted thousands. Everywhere one could see, there were American flags, large and small. Some people even had dressed as Old Glory, others as Uncle Sam. Hal describes the “huge flags, fifty feet by fifty feet, hanging off of the buildings... what that means to you is freedom... There’s no symbol as strong as that American flag.” He himself “took three flags down [to the event]. I had them in both hands and I was just one of the crowd.”

But some of the people who had been living at the anti-war vigil decided to attend this event, and their experience of that time was radically different. Mary describes her experience of the “Love America rally” as she terms it:

There was so much intense hostility it was incredible ... you could just cut it with a knife... after the rally itself was over [people] lined up and you could see that they wanted to attack us and the police were there and they were kind of forming this barricade between us and the people at the parade... It was one of the most depressing moments I've had in a long time... they just wanted to sing louder and wave their flags faster every time they would look at us and spit.

Despite the fact that anti-war protesters saw themselves as responsible citizens exercising their constitutional right to protest (and on those grounds exhibited the flag at their vigil) this symbol of America was used on occasion as a weapon against them. As one of the peace protesters described to me in his interview:

There were a couple of times in which people with huge American flags tried to hit us over the head with the actual flag poles and sort of drape the flags over our heads ... there was another time when this pickup truck with some red necks stopped next to the vigil and they harassed us for a while and then they ran around us with their flag in a circle a few times.

And yet, the American flag continued to wave on the grounds of the anti-war vigil. Far from being 'unpatriotic' or 'un-American', the peace protestors saw themselves as making an essential contribution to the democratic process, and as such, doing their duty as 'good citizens.'

The third and final arena that I will use to describe my ongoing engagement with life histories and counter-narratives is that of East Germany. In 1989, many Westerners viewed the acute political upheaval in East and Central Europe as a clear and straightforward victory for capitalism over socialism. The Cold War had ended, and we had won; this seemed to be the interpretation which permeated reporting on these events in Western Europe and the United States. But I was curious how those who lived through those changes regarded what had happened. I decided to go and listen to the stories of those who had been involved in the underground citizen's movement in East Germany. (See, for instance, Andrews 1997a, 1998, 1999, 2000). Contrary to the "monolithic, mass unquestioning celebration" (Borneman, 1991:58) portrayed in the Western popular media, many leaders of the East German changes of 1989 experienced deep agony, realizing that they had "helped give birth to a child that quickly turned into a rather ugly creature" (Sebastian Pflugbeil quoted in Philipsen,



1993:161). As autumn turned to winter, they witnessed not the realization but the end of their dreams.

Barbel Bohley, the so-called mother of the revolution, comments upon the capitalist triumphalism which followed the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It was simply the revolt of the humiliated people. And they did not ask why they revolted, for capitalism or socialism, they were simply fed up to live with this lie... Most certainly people did not go into the street and shout "we want capitalism." Deep down they wanted [to] change the system, change their living conditions... it was not a victory for capitalism.

Once again, I was confronted with stories which challenged the received narrative in the west. Until I spent time in East Germany, I never knew that in the forty years of the existence of GDR, more than one million people immigrated to East Germany. Instead, one hears only of those who were killed by border guards in their desperate attempts to flee communism. Neither did I know about those East German political dissidents who were involuntarily exiled from their country, forced to spend time very much against their desires in some of the great cities of Western Europe. One such story came to me from Werner Fischer, one of the key leading dissidents of East Germany. It was amusing but also strange to listen to his tale of his months living in London. "I spent days in bed in London, so that time would pass quicker ...in London, one can study pure capitalism... I realized that if there is to be a change then it must be within the eastern bloc, there must not be a transition to

that system.” Living in the west for six months brought home to Fischer what instinctively he already knew,

... I only realized ... when I was in England that my roots were here [in the GDR], that I had become firmly rooted to this soil, here was the friction that sparked controversy. I did not want to see the GDR disappear. This is how many opposition members express it today: 'better to have a stormy relationship than none at all.'

Fischer tells a revealing story which occurred during his time in London. Describing his relationship with his Stasi interrogator, he tells me:

... in a way I quite liked him. In fact, they [the Stasi] chose the interrogators for every opposition member very carefully. They knew our profiles and to whom we would respond... when I was in custody, he knew everything about me, whilst I knew nothing about him. I could assess him by his appearance; I would notice that he had been to the barber, or that he was married. He had a wedding ring, and he loved wearing a new tie every day. So much so, that when I was in London, I found myself browsing through Harrods' tie department and choosing a tie for him.

The image of Fischer – the man who later would be responsible for overseeing the disbanding of the Stasi – going about in Harrod's, a symbol of capitalist opulence if ever there was one, mentally selecting a tie for his Stasi interrogator, speaks volumes. Here one can experience 'up close' the power of stories, for what Fischer conveys is not only revealing about himself, and his interrogator, and the relationship between them; through this seemingly innocuous detail, one gets a sense of how long the arms

of the Stasi really were, and why, even now more than a decade after its abolition, its spirit still haunts the land.

Another image which has stayed with me from my many conversations in East Germany was that told me by Wolfgang Templin, the man once identified by Honecker as "the number one enemy of the state." He, like Fischer and Bohley, had been exiled from East Germany, but unlike them, he went to West Germany, where he was still living in 1989. I ask him what he did on the night the Berlin Wall fell. He responds with great warmth: finally after nearly two years away, he was allowed to come home. Fighting against the crowds pouring into the west, Templin made his way back into East Germany.

...the fall of the Wall for me meant that I could go back into the GDR rather than get out of it. And purely physically I experienced this - everybody pushing past me in the opposite direction and me pushing against the stream the other way. I was overjoyed and it was in that mood that I re-entered the GDR... Two, three weeks later ... my family moved back here.

November 9, 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall. Celebrations, champagne, jubilation. Finally able to return to one's own country. Finally able to return to East Germany. The quintessential counter-narrative.

I do believe that, indeed, we are storied selves, (Bruner, 1990; Eakin, 1999; McAdams, 1997; Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992; Sarbin, 1986); that there is a close relationship between the stories we tell and hear and who we are; and

that our stories are the cornerstone of our identities (Holstein and Gubrium, 1999; Widershoven, 1993). But I also think that this is no simple matter, as Shelley Day Sclater discusses below. Critically, our stories are not and can never be wholly personal. Rather, we perceive reality in terms of stories, and ultimately how we construct, interpret, digest and recount for others our own experiences bears a strong relationship to the storylines which are already ‘out there.’ As a researcher, what has fascinated me most are those situations in which people fashion stories which challenge – either implicitly or explicitly – those master tales, revealing alternative versions of how those stories we know best might be retold.

### *Narrative and Subjectivity – Shelley Day Sclater*

I spent many years of my life writing stories on behalf of other people. I was a family lawyer – dealing mostly with divorce, ‘domestic violence’ and ‘child care’ cases – before I changed focus and came to the academy in 1993. Part of my job was to listen to people’s stories and write them down – translating them into legal language, emphasising the parts law wanted to hear, and minimising (or deleting) the rest. Any lawyer will tell you that making out a good case for a client, is a fine art. Legal documents and submissions must include only material that is legally relevant. But, at the same time, the best evidence takes the form of persuasive stories that engage the reader, elicit sympathy and establish the moral rightness of the client’s case, whilst appearing to do nothing other than dispassionately report the ‘facts’ (see, for example, Jackson, 1990).

Doing the legal bit was easy enough, once you had some practice, and writing a persuasive tale soon became second nature. What was more difficult – and didn't get much easier as the years went by - was persuading the client that sometimes the issues the client felt to be of vital importance had to be omitted. I discovered that people were wedded, often very deeply so, to their personal narratives and that it was sometimes impossible to prise apart the person from their story, even when judges made it perfectly clear that such-and-such was of no concern to them. This gulf proved to be a major source of stress for many people. It seemed that people needed to tell their stories and, more importantly, they needed to be heard – to have their feelings, and themselves, recognised. And they felt deeply wounded when the law simply refused to participate in any such validation process.

It seemed that people habitually made deep emotional investments in their personal narratives, particularly when their lives had been disrupted by something like divorce. I saw people struggling to cope with various forms of 'family breakdown'. In their stories they attempted to piece together the fragments of their lives and to make sense of what had happened. Those stories were often of desperation, for there were precious few positive cultural scripts available when it came to speaking about divorce. I saw also how little space there was in the legal process for acknowledging feelings of hurt, anger and grief – there was certainly no place at all for recrimination and destructiveness – but as a psychologist I knew that those feelings would not just disappear. I wondered about the role of law in relation to people's coping – in denying these messy feelings, was the legal process helping or was it hindering?

Not long before I left legal practice, interest in ‘alternative’ forms of dispute resolution crystallised in the UK, and there were attempts to instate mediation as the preferred procedure. My initial reaction was one of interest – here, I thought, was a forum in which feelings could be acknowledged, and stories told and heard; surely everyone would benefit. I did a mediation training course and my illusions were quickly shattered. I discovered that mediation was, fundamentally, about changing people’s stories – ‘reframing’ the process is called. I found it deeply patronising. And it was ‘management’ – one of the ‘technologies of the self’ that Maria Tamboukou, drawing on Foucault’s work, talks about - that relied too heavily for my liking on accepted wisdom. The dominant discourses were being offered as templates for the construction of acceptable divorce stories. I began to see mediation as a dangerous proliferation of half-baked psychology being put in the service of social control and treasury savings.

When I left legal practice and began life as an academic, it seemed natural to pursue research into divorce. A grant from the ESRC enabled me to study people’s experiences of different forms of dispute resolution. Part of my mission was to develop a new methodology for divorce work that could take account of psychological dynamics as well as social structures and cultural processes. It was during the long search for such a ‘psychosocial’ methodology that I encountered ‘narrative’ in the social sciences– first in the form of Elliot Mishler’s seminal book on research interviewing (Mishler, 1986) and then, quite by chance, Catherine Riessman’s little book on ‘narrative analysis’ (Riessman, 1993). Mark Freeman’s *Rewriting the Self* (Freeman, 1993) and Jerome Bruner’s *Acts of Meaning* (Bruner, 1990) were two other texts that were particularly significant on my journey as they

raised the issue of the ‘turn to narrative’ as a socio-historical formation. New to academia, it was a relief to find others grappling with the same kinds of preoccupations.

I began my divorce work with a small pilot study in 1995 and wrote it up in several publications (Day Sclater 1995, 1997, 1998a, 2000). In this early work, I was clumsily feeling my way, trying to find the best means to get people to talk at length, always coming up against my own (lawyerish) tendency to ask too many questions, interrupt, guide the direction of talk, take sides, and so on. It was a painful learning process for me – good lawyers don’t necessarily make good research interviewers, I soon discovered. By the time I came to look in detail at the ‘data’ I had collected, vast numbers of questions were lining up in my ‘research log’. I was awestruck by the sheer volume of the material I had – and I hardly knew how to begin to ‘analyse’ it. There was no recipe book for narrative data analysis. But when I started looking at the transcripts, like Riessman (1990), I became interested in the patterns of the narratives that people were telling – ‘survivor’ stories, mostly – and the kinds of ‘selves’ that were being claimed in those stories. As I was interested in psychological processes in divorce, I wanted to find ways to focus more specifically on issues of self and identity in personal narratives.

I began ‘reading’ the personal narratives for the identity claims in the stories. What was immediately striking was the way in which the stories seemed to speak a coherent identity that the subject had had to put together again after the trauma of separation or divorce. Hopper (2001) makes a similar point; selves are foremost among the issues that are contested and negotiated in divorce proceedings. A closer reading of the

divorce stories I collected revealed, not coherence and continuity of self, but Humpty-Dumpty-like fragments and partialities – sometimes inconsistent, contradictory even. The appearance of unity and coherence came from the narrative – or, in other words, the autobiographical genre provided a template for a continuing life and a coherent sense of self. What I was seeing were the narratives and ‘counter-narratives’ in life history work that Molly Andrews describes.

Interestingly, too, the ‘personal’ narratives weren’t only ‘personal’. Not only did the stories draw on cultural scripts and the kinds of ‘genres’ that Corinne Squire talks about, but also they were also organised around discourses that participants invoked and used for their own ends. Moreover, these stories, and the identities participants constructed in those stories, took shape in an intersubjective space – in interaction with me as researcher, interviewer and, crucially, as other human subject. In the stories, too, selves were almost invariably fashioned in relation (usually in opposition) to the former partner - the anti-hero in the stories.

My background in psychology and psychoanalysis, and my own experiences on the couch, predisposed me to think psychodynamically about narratives and selves. Much later, this orientation was to make me suspicious about what I recently heard the biographer Victoria Glendinning refer to as the ‘lies and silences’ of biography; and make me wary of being seduced by narrative (see, for example, the edited collection by Rhiel and Suchoff (1996) and Young-Bruehl (1998)). Phillips (1999) also reminds us that Freud was distrustful of biography. For Freud, in telling one story of one’s life, we simultaneously avoid telling any number of other stories, involving ourselves in denials, repressions and displacements. I am acutely conscious of these limitations as



I tell my own story, here. But at the time, I was more curious than critical. It seemed a commonplace that selves were constructed in stories (even ‘by’ stories), but I wanted to know why and how that should be. I found it very helpful at that stage to theorise the storied construction of self using Winnicott’s idea of ‘potential’ space (Day Sclater, 1998b). Stories, I argued, were of the order of ‘transitional phenomena’ – neither wholly objective, nor wholly subjective – they were creative spaces in which, as in infancy, selves could take shape again and again. I subsequently developed this work with Candida Yates and we explored the idea that narratives, circulating in culture, and taking particular forms, can be either facilitating or constraining for human potential and creativity (see Yates and Day Sclater, 2000).

Thus began my preoccupation with the relationship between narrative and the self, and the problem of how specifically ‘psychological’ knowledge may be derived from personal narrative accounts. This issue was central in my ESRC-funded project on the Psychology of Divorce Dispute Resolution. This work was written up in several publications (see, for example, Brown and Day Sclater (1999), Day Sclater (1998c, 1999a, 1999b), Day Sclater and Yates (1999)). Personal narratives were collected during long, unstructured conversations that were modelled on ‘life-history’ work. Psychological well-being was also assessed quantitatively using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). What was striking was a distinct lack of fit between the quantitative and the qualitative data we collected – the GHQ indicated deep and enduring psychological distress, but the narratives gave a much more nuanced picture.

Most stories were ‘survivor’ stories. The majority spoke of the positive rebuilding of lives and selves shattered by divorce, evincing a determination to survive and a

growing strength to meet the challenge. These stories challenged prevailing dominant 'divorce as disaster' images. But what was interesting was that these optimistic narratives could co-exist with others that were much less certain and more ambiguous, evincing an ambivalence that I came to see as characteristic of the divorce process. Comparison of the qualitative and the quantitative data helped me to understand divorce as a multilayered process in which the subject marshalled personal, relational and cultural resources to make sense of a past that had become other than it had been before, and to forge a new sense of self. Narrative reconstructions play a central part in that process, as past, present and future are all transformed. Comparison of the two types of data was also an object lesson in the different readings one can make of any 'data'.

A nagging problem was how to derive some specifically 'psychological' data from the narratives. Here, we were treading on unfamiliar ground. At about the same time, Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson were grappling with a similar problem in their study of fear of crime. Their solution (see Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) was to posit a 'defended' subject and to conduct interviews according to principles of 'free association' such that data analysis then revealed aspects of biographical experience framed in the language of psychoanalysis. Michele Crossley (2000), tackled a similar problem in a different way. She wanted to salvage something of psychology's 'individual' from what she saw as the ravages of postmodern thinking, and she wanted to locate that individual firmly as a 'narrative' subject. Her formulation of a 'narrative psychology' took its place firmly within a social constructionist tradition.

For me, however, these kinds of ‘solutions’ raised more questions than they answered and more problems than they solved. I began to think that, if there is such a thing as a purely psychological realm of experience, then it was full of tensions, provisos, ambiguities and even contradictions – it was just not possible to ‘read off’ anything to do with psychology from the narrative interviews. It was tempting to immerse myself in semiotic theory to try to work it out (see, for example, Silverman, 1983), but the kind of tools I was looking for were not to be found there either. Later I was to come seriously to question whether there was such a thing as a psychological realm of experience, as distinct from the psychological (or social constructionist, or psychoanalytic) discourse we use to think about it.

But I knew that my work could have policy implications and, for that reason, I persisted with the ‘psychological’ aspect of the analysis. I returned to an old interest - Althusser’s idea of ‘interpellation’ whereby subjects were ‘hailed’ and thereby constituted ‘ideologically’ (Althusser, 1971). Davies and Harré’s concept of ‘discursive positioning’ (Davies and Harré, 1990) similarly suggested important links between the social and the individual. But many issues remained: was there anything ‘behind’ the discursive and narrative choices people made? Why were some identifications more likely than others, some positions more desirable than others? These kinds of issues make some sceptical of the value of narrative. Frosh (1999), for example, asks what is ‘outside’ discourse, and falls back on an open-ended concept of ‘the real’. Craib (2000) goes further and talks about narratives as ‘bad faith’.

The question of research ethics also loomed large. The possibility of using the language of psychoanalysis to effect particular readings of the interview transcripts

was considered but rejected as potentially going beyond the 'informed consent' that participants give -, and potentially neglectful of the jointly-produced nature of the narratives. I wanted to avoid a 'realist' take on the unconscious that is implicit in much psychoanalytic discourse. I decided to work, not with the inner worlds of individuals, but with the structures of their stories - psychoanalytic ideas could usefully illuminate dimensions of the stories that might otherwise remain hidden. Read in this way, the stories revealed ambivalences and polarisations that were theorised with reference to Klein's notion of 'splitting' and the vacillations between 'depressive' and 'paranoid-schizoid' positions in the wake of the trauma of divorce. In this way, I was able to move from the narratives to say something about the psychological processes in divorce, and the ways in which they were played out in dispute resolution.

I have subsequently embarked on a narrative study of seemingly intractable disputes between divorcing people over their children, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The project is still ongoing. The focus so far has been on what happens at the limits of law. Litigants who occupy entrenched positions explain their actions in moral terms and the most significant feature of parents' talk is the way in which their negotiations of moral positions take a narrative form. Rights-talk no longer has any currency in family law, but for parents themselves, taking part in a contact dispute is clearly about making or resisting a moral claim. But participation in litigation obliges parents to position themselves in relation to a range of discourses that explicitly exclude 'rights'. Parents' narratives reveal interesting tensions around 'rights' and 'welfare'; verbal performances of the acceptable 'welfare' discourse are common, sitting uneasily

alongside other competing discourses, including rights-talk. Disputing parents are adept at reframing their claims to 'rights' as welfare issues.

I am now focussing more on theoretical work – in particular the relations between narrative and subjectivity. I have become quite circumspect about the proposition that selves are narratively constructed. Instead, I want to ask other questions about the nature of subjectivity, and the nature of narrative, and what it means to say that subjectivities and identities are negotiated in stories. I don't want to lose sight of the fact that subjectivities are embodied (see, for example, Curti (1998), Smith (1993) and, after Butler (1990, 1993), gendered and performative. And I want to reassert the importance of material social practice. My current preoccupation is to formulate both 'narrative' and 'subjectivity' in processual terms – narration as embodied practice and subjectivity as many-layered always-becoming in the matrices of culture (see Day Sclater, 2001a,b).

Narrative analysis, for me, is not only a way of finding out about how people frame, remember and report their experiences, but is also a way of generating knowledge, that disrupts old certainties and allows us to glimpse something of the complexities of human lives, selves and endeavours. It illuminates not only individual lives but also broader social processes (see Rustin, 2000). Narrative analysis, as an interdisciplinary practice that cuts across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences, is also a useful corrective to the reductive tendencies that other analyses, rooted in individual disciplines, can manifest. It opens up some very exciting possibilities for thinking about creativity in relation to research and it provides a very rich source for theory-

building – read any stretch of narrative text and remind yourself how many important questions there are still to be asked!

### *Narrative Genres – Corinne Squire*

Stories, some researchers say, are rooted in human agency. A story is told *by* someone, although that person may not know everything about the story they are telling. In such accounts, narrative analysis is a kind of compromise between modernism and postmodernism. Stories change over time, and the language of stories constructs our subjectivities; but we are all, nonetheless, active and effective storytellers. In performing narratives we can create new possibilities for identities and actions (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1986).

Unsurprisingly, given that HIV threatens physical, personal and social agency, this perspective has been popular in HIV research. The relation of particular stories to the mental and physical health of people with HIV has been explored (Crossley, 1997; Ezzy, 2000; Schwartzberg, 1993). More generally, much research enables people with HIV to tell their own stories, a sort of corrective to the prevailing pathologisation of the HIV 'story.' And so when in the mid-1990s I began a longitudinal study in Britain of people's experiences, expectations and requirements of HIV support, I considered doing a biographical analysis of the many stories that people told.

The difficulty with this perspective, for me, is that it understands stories as having, despite their multiplicity, a fixed, human pattern, and frequently claims to know what is a good, healthy story or a bad, maladaptive one. This perspective's emphasis on a

purposive, agentic subject is also often at odds with the fragmented, indeterminate subject underlying its more flexible concept of 'stories.' My own findings from the HIV support study, and that of some other HIV researchers (Ciambrone, 2001; Squire, 1999) suggest that the storytelling 'subject' in these cases is a diverse, strategic entity, that stories cannot necessarily be related to universal narrative forms and that it is invidious to judge the psychological value of individuals' stories. People's stories do not always show progressive adaptation over time for instance. Apparent 'regressions' cannot always be related clearly to health or other life crises. For women living with HIV, as well as people living with the condition in difficult social or political circumstances, for instance as refugees, a story that develops increasingly consistent and coherent notions of identity is exceptional rather than exemplary (Squire, 1999).

There are other ways to read stories. We can, for instance, approach narrative analysis outside of a developmental or teleological frame. We can treat 'story' as an important but culturally variable 'discourse,' that is, a Foucauldian formation of meaning and power with significant but hard-to-determine effects (Parker, 1992). From this perspective, the storyteller is not a unitary self, making holistic sense of his/her life in the telling. Instead, the stories that people tell about themselves are about many selves, each situated in particular contexts, and working strategically to resist those contexts. When analysing the HIV support study interviews, I realised that this analytic frame fitted the stories better than any attempt to turn them into unified biography. When for instance Katherine (not her real name), an HIV positive woman of African origin, told of her current ease with HIV, her 'acceptance' of it, this accepting 'self' was not an independent or stable construct, but a reiterated, strategically resistant moment within a long story about her and her friends' attempts

to engage with and then appropriate a medical expertise that defined them as virus carriers. When Katherine told of her newfound empowerment in demanding services, she narrated this 'self' as the resistant coda to a story about social service positionings of her as a 'client.' When she described her desire to break free and do all the things she wanted to do, this emergent 'self' was situated, again, as a strategic resistance, within a story of her long-term volunteering and work around HIV (Squire, 1999).

Genre analysis is an emblematic example of the narrative-analytic practice described above. Genres, subtypes of narrative with distinctive structures and contents, are clearly socially and culturally constructed forms. That is why, if you share a genre's cultural matrix, you will know it when you see it (Todorov, 1990). Within western cultures some genres - romance, tragedy, comedy and irony - have wide currency (Jacobs, 2000), but genres shift and intermingle all the time. The heterogeneity and fractures within genres also mean that they undermine themselves constantly (Derrida, 1992). Within western cultures, the term 'genre' has been applied to visual arts that take the everyday as their subject, and to varieties of popular fiction. This indicates the cultural promiscuity that must inform genre analysis; for genres are relatively similar between 'high' and 'low' culture and across media (Todorov, 1990). To address these phenomena, a genre analysis may need to pay attention as much to cultural and media studies as to social science research (For other examples, see Squire, 1994, 1998, forthcoming).

Within the UK HIV support study, two genres appeared with striking frequency. One was a 'coming out' story that mirrored lesbian and gay coming out narratives, moving from uneasy realisation of a problem (illness, positive status) through denial, to anger



and depression, into an acceptance that often took the initial form of very active engagement with HIV's medical and social context but that later became a more low-level incorporation of HIV within personal and cultural identities. This 'coming out' story of HIV had been noted by the cultural theorist Cindy Patton (1990); some gay men in the study themselves noted the parallels. Here, it was told not just by gay men, but by heterosexual women and men, for whom it seemed to be an accessible and appropriate cultural resource, addressing as it does the relationship of subjectivity to stigma (Squire, 1999) As with lesbian and gay coming out stories (Sedgwick, 1990), this story did not claim to be closed, to contain everything (Frosh, 1999); it had space for imperfection and abjection. Coming out as lesbian or gay, or as HIV positive, is never going to be a completed, or a completely comfortable, endeavour. Thus the genre enabled the articulation of an identity that is empowering, but not fixed or imprisoning, through its optimistic yet pragmatic engagement with stigma.

The other genre that appeared with great frequency in the talk of some women with HIV was that of heterosexual romance. It was hard to ignore this genre, since it often took over much of an interview; some women explicitly noted these stories' apparent deviation from the 'support' topic. The romance genre spoke against HIV's fatality, through the living-happily-ever-after and reproductive ideals at which it aimed. Yet these were also specific, HIV romances, structured by the limits that the condition places on the genre. Again, HIV romance seemed, for women, a genre with space enough inside it for them to narrate failures, often many and desolate, in their quest for heterosexual love and for their own acceptance of their status, yet to continue their stories after them (Squire, 1999; forthcoming).

One criticism of genre analysis in the HIV context is that it denies the affective continuities and development of people's stories. Does it, perhaps, fail to connect with the emotional weight of biography, which lies 'under' genre's surface structures? It is undoubtedly true that an HIV diagnosis has deep and longlasting psychological as well as medical and social implications. However, representation has played such a big role in forming personal and political pictures and policies around HIV, and is perceived as important by people living with the condition. It could be argued, consequently, that their uses of particular genres are highly biographically meaningful. In the study, many interviewees wanted urgently to tell their stories, and the narrative resources available for personal public storytelling were pressing issues. It is important to recognise, too, that a 'life story' is not a universal form, but a genre (Squire, 2000). There are culturally and historically specific rules about how we should autobiographise ourselves, which my study failed deliberately to mobilise, since to do so, to ask people to tell me about their 'lives,' would, in this case, have reduced 'life' to 'HIV.' Instead the study asked people about support, and in the process, it mobilised the other genres I have mentioned.

Were the genres artefacts of the questions asked? Perhaps the general developmental course of engagement and disengagement with HIV support produces a developmental 'coming out' story. Perhaps chronic illness experience itself impels biographical reconstruction (Bury, 2001). The 'coming out' subgenre of biography is, however, specific in its engagement with stigma and uncertainty. Again, women interviewees told HIV romances regardless of what questions were being asked. Nor is romance women's preferred biographical genre. HIV romance seemed to be specific

to these women's gendered struggles with the physical, reproductive and relationship consequences of seropositivity.

In 2001, I also investigated HIV support in another geographical, economic and political place within the pandemic: townships around Cape Town, South Africa. This study again collected interviews that were full of stories. In Africa, where silence about or 'othering' of HIV (Joffe, 1997) have until recently been political and personal norms, the narrative resources that people have available to them around HIV are, as in the west, key issues. (Galavotti et al., 2001). The significance of such resources was magnified for many of these particular research participants by the convergence of their stigmatised HIV positive status with unemployment, poverty and curtailed education. It seemed in this context that an array of genres were being mobilised to tell HIV stories, as in earlier and more apparently urgent days of the epidemic in the west (Crimp, 1988; Murphy and Poirier, 1993) These genre appropriations were highly persuasive for speakers and those who listened to them. Describing them seemed a relevant research focus at a time when the many voices of people infected and affected by HIV in the country were starting to gain a hearing.

South African interviewees often used a 'talkshow' model of talking about difficult events, telling stories about how they came to accept and disclose their status so that others would benefit, the whole issue would be out in the open, and they could live their lives proudly and positively, in both senses of the word. Sometimes this genre appropriation was explicit; interviewees said there needed to be more talk about HIV, 'like on Ricki (Lake)'. This 'Oprification' genre, and its female identifications, has specific significance when it is adopted, as here, within a nation with some cultural

traditions as well as a recent political history around HIV that emphasises silence - especially for women - and in a situation where stigmatised HIV positive status often converges with unemployment, poverty and curtailed education. In these circumstances the Oprification disclosure genre might have empowering gendered and social effects. It is important that this genre does not become a coercive model, forcing people to disclose. But it is, like the coming-out genre, an open form. It does not claim to say everything about a person, or to take the same path for every speaker. This incompleteness preserves its emancipatory potential.

Many interviewees also seemed to draw on a religious genre of conversion and witnessing in talking about their initial HIV denial; their later acceptance of their status which often appeared in the stories as a sudden, life changing moment; and their evangelical attempts afterwards to help themselves and others live positively with HIV. This religious genre might be expected when faith was so important for the interviewees, many of whom spent large parts of Sunday in worship and some of whom devoted most of their week to religious activities. But it had the effect of turning stories about HIV, that previously must be silenced or whispered, into literal 'morality tales,' ethico-political endeavours.

'Speaking out' is also a kind of nation-building genre in South Africa, one with a long political history. Most recently displayed in the country's saturation with stories from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Walker and Unterhalter, 2001), it is more widely exhibited through the increasing volume and multiplicity of voices heard in the country since the end of apartheid, and is foreshadowed in the long preceding struggle for an effective voice for the majority of the population. Nkosi Johnson, the HIV

positive child who told his story to the International AIDS Conference in 2000, spoke as a direct descendent both of the recent TRC storytelling and of that much longer struggle to have your voice heard. Realising the power of this association, the main South African HIV activist group, the Treatment Action Campaign, placed an image of Johnson, who had recently died, next to the famous picture of Hector Peterson, the 13 year old killed in the Soweto uprisings of 1976, on campaign posters. Interviewees, who also spoke to us in the period just after Johnson's death, occasionally used his public storytelling explicitly as a model for their own speaking out. More generally, speaking out about HIV has become a new field of political activism, the latest move in the trajectory of South Africa's revolutionary political history. But this politicised route to talking about HIV is not easily available to all. The direct and indirect effects of the liberation struggle and the TRC must be set against the still-powerful legacy of apartheid, both in creating the economic, educational and political context of the South African epidemic, and more specifically in constraining people's hearing and telling of tales of personal and political resistance to HIV.<sup>1</sup>

Genre is, of course, a co-constructed category. Talking to people with HIV as a white, university-employed, negative-status woman has particular effects on interview data. The situation is further complicated when interviewees are of a different nationality, inhabit communities where English is not usually a first language, and live in informal settlements. In South Africa, too, two-thirds of the interviews were conducted with graduate or undergraduate co interviewers and translators. While genre is always fluid and negotiable, it is important to recognise that in such circumstances, analysis of what genres are in play must be pursued collaboratively -in this case, with co interviewers, and by checking with interviewees themselves.

I would suggest that these circumstances of translation and potential research 'colonisation' do not make genre analysis impossible, but clarify its limitations (Andrews, 1995). They also point to one further advantage of genre analysis: its accessibility and meaning for research participants. If analyses of their stories are a good means of reflexively engaging interviewees, so too are accounts of the particular kinds of stories they tell, accounts which, moreover, position them - as indeed they are - as creative interpreters and constructors of their places within cultures. In this respect, genre analysis is an exemplary instance of the narrative approach's interest in what people do, representationally, with their lives, how they remake events and experiences into their lived cultures, and at times use this remaking to live differently.

*Autobiographical narratives: a genealogical approach – Maria Tamboukou*

My interest in Foucault coincided with a critical period in my life, when, dislocating myself from familiar spaces and places, I had felt the need to experiment with new modes of thinking and perhaps with new modes of being. It was the early nineties and I had come to London to make a new start. In following Foucault, I think that I had become passionately interested in a wider shift in the European intellectual landscape: the return of ethics as a primary issue in the philosophical agenda. It is through my particular interest in ethics that I have attempted to excavate the ways people and particularly women have acted upon themselves so as to create a stylistics of life, become ethical subjects, become what they are. It was in the Foucauldian framework

that the initial question of a doctoral research project was formulated: What is the present of women in education today? How have we become what we are and what are the possibilities of becoming other?

Drawing on trails of the Foucauldian genealogy, I turned to the past, so that I could trace hidden practices and unnoticed contours intertwined in the conditions that made a cluster of various subject positions available for woman teachers to inhabit. Doing genealogy involves focusing on insignificant details, searching in the maze of dispersed grey and dusty documents to trace discontinuities, recurrences and play where traditional research sees continuous development, progress and seriousness. In the process of my inquiries, I have therefore wondered where I should look for those traces, those 'grey meticulous details', the forgotten documents that genealogy is after. This is how I became interested in women teachers' texts of self-representation. Reading their forgotten diaries, letters, autobiographies and memoirs has offered me invaluable experience of genealogical research and has helped me make sense of how 'through autobiographical writing the self is written out of and into its historical context' (Steedman, 1992:14) and how this very practice of writing is interwoven in a critical technology of the self.

In using genealogy as a tool for exploring the female self in education, I stabilised moments in the latest part of the nineteenth century and the earliest part of the twentieth century in the UK as strategically chosen starting points for my inquiries. Women's mass involvement in education has of course been the object of numerous and important historical studies, that have often attempted to find a place for it in a supposedly linear historical development of women's liberation (see Purvis, 1991).

However, in the genealogical analysis, this linear development towards progress has been interrogated and problematized. In paying attention to the ‘minor’ pathways and processes surrounding the historical highway that has supposedly led women to the public sphere, different story-lines were able to emerge, while dissonances have often disrupted the melody of feminist history. In focusing on the context of the fin-de-siècle era, I did not try to recover the woman teacher as a heroic figure of social history. I attempted an analysis of the specification of her emergence in a nexus of signifying genealogical events.

In therefore taking up genealogical analytical trails I chose to follow life narratives lives of the first women who attempted to navigate the difficult ways of forming a new self in the various new educational institutions, both as students and later teachers. These women have often been represented in quite contradictory and often juxtaposing ways: either as lady heroes, the legendary pioneers of women’s education or as agents of oppression, reproducing feminine ideals and middle class ideologies in the newly opened sphere of women’s education (see Prentice and Theobald, 1991). Instead of being confusing, these contradictions have indeed been highly relevant to the genealogical project. As a genealogist of the female subject I was particularly intrigued to look more carefully not only at the surrounding discourses, but also at the discourses of women themselves, their autobiographical narratives through which they made sense of their lives. In bracketing the gaze and discourses of the ‘others’, I wanted to concentrate on their own processes of subjectification, using the genealogical device of the technologies of the self. These technologies of the self, according to Foucault, ‘permit individuals to effect, by their own means, or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being so as to transform themselves’ (Foucault, 1988, p.18).

I have argued that the genealogical approach provides the lens for distortions to come to focus, through the examination of autobiographical narratives. It goes without saying however, that genealogy has not come to operate on deserted and unexplored



territories. Various feminist theorists have long argued that recent theoretical debates concerning ‘the self’ and ‘the subject’ become particularly interesting, when examined in relation to lived and/or written lives and have stressed the importance of autobiographical narratives in illuminating the conditions of possibility for the female self in education to emerge (Smith and Watson, 1998). However, deviating from the feminist tradition of locating similarities in the textual representation of women teachers’ experiences, I have opted for the unveiling of their situated differences, drawing upon feminist theorizations that have seen the female self as multiple, fragmented and incomplete (de Lauretis, 1987). It is within this theoretical cartography, that I have found ‘a landscape’ (Steedman, 1986) for a feminist genealogy drawing on women teachers’ autobiographical narratives to be deployed and it is on some details of this landscape that I will now focus.

Foucault’s work has been influential in the theorisation of the social nature of spatiality and its interdependent relation with power and subjectivity. Feminist theorists have further explored the role of space and place in the performance of gender and sexuality (Rose, 1993). Drawing on the theoretical encounter between feminism with and Foucault, I have examined the ways women’s longing for some space of their own has been intensely inscribed in their practices of self representation. Clearly this is not the place to attempt a rigorous genealogy of women teachers’ narratives. What follows is a series of vignettes, which trace the emergence of what I have called technologies of space (Tamboukou, 1999).

When my trunk was landed, I was shown my room. This was some twelve feet square on the ground-floor, with one small window flush with the pavement, a

narrow bed, a scrap of carpet, a basket chair, one upright chair and a bureau. A fire crackled in the hearth. 'Is this *mine*?' [emphasis in the text] cried I in ecstasy. (Hughes, 1946:120)

This is an extract from the autobiography of Molly Hughes, a student having just arrived in Cambridge for a new teacher's training college. It seems that well before Virginia Woolf's influential lectures at Girton and Newnham in 1928, where she related women's writing with economic independence and 'a room of one's own' (Woolf, 1945), women teachers had been seriously preoccupied with the deep necessity of acquiring a space where they could think of and for themselves, articulate their intellectual worries, ultimately 'write themselves'. Contrary to prevailing perceptions that women were restricted in the private sphere of the family and sought to enter the public sphere through educating themselves, the genealogical analysis of their autobiographical narratives reveals that women have fought equally strongly to reclaim their right to privacy as well as their right to be public. Their narratives have also revealed that in reclaiming space for themselves, women have imagined themselves in different spaces and not infrequently have sought to fulfil their 'dreams of elsewhere' by travelling:

Donald, wouldn't you like to go to America, Canada or the great wide west? where perhaps there might be more chance of finding out what manner of being you were? - where there is more room, more freedom, and one is not so hide-bound by conventions - where you could get nearer the soil, and as I said before not be stifled by artificialities and habits and conventions, your own

and other peoples'. Oh wouldn't you like it, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you?  
(Grier, 1937:34)

This extract comes from a letter written in August 1902, by Winifred Mercier, a woman teacher who later became a leader in the reform of teacher training colleges, to her friend and fellow teacher Jeanne K. Borland, Donald for her friends. While on school holidays, studying for her external London degree and looking after her sick mother, Winifred finds consolation in writing to her beloved friend. Her passionate desire for travel brings together a cluster of practices that are interwoven in the fashioning of women teachers' life style. Travel is a means of getting away from the 'artificialities and habits and conventions' that are imposed both internally and externally, 'your own and other people's', travel to 'where there is more room, more freedom', in order to seek 'the manner of being you were'.

Women teachers' autobiographical narratives have indeed been inscribed by spatial images, both real and imagined. In reading these narratives, I was intrigued by the multifarious ways that they have tried to work upon themselves in rearranging their space, and giving different dimensions to the unfolding of their lives. Indeed I would argue that technologies of the female self are historically associated with [~~delete:~~ what I have called] technologies of space.

Women teachers' textual narratives have also revealed how by entering the first university associated colleges, these women lived within the limits of their society, but also beyond them, in yet unrecognised 'different social spaces', that Foucault (1988) has described as heterotopias. In Foucault's analyses of space, heterotopias

contest the real space in which we live, creating transitional spaces and sheltering subjects in crisis. In writing their stories, women have indeed presented their colleges as spaces of 'transition and tension', 'sites outside of society' bringing together, 'heterogeneous discourses' - equal opportunities, male educational and ethical values, lady-like behaviour - for the development of young women. Thus, the notion of heterotopia has become instrumental in the analyses of women teachers' space narratives. (Tamboukou, 1999, 2000). Depicted as heterotopias, the pioneering colleges of women's Higher Education opened up channels to the exploration of the self and gave women access to knowledge, but also to power, 'a pas de deux dance' they had no choice but following. In the genealogical analysis of women's narratives, it was not so much the effects of power that were important, but the subjective capacities that were being developed in the attempt to resist the power that had made women what they were. As their narratives reveal, it is no wonder why some of these resisting practices were deployed against the disciplinary arrangement of their space:

The Mistress's sitting-room and the library, where lectures were given and which was also our common room, were on the ground floor, and the dining-room was in the basement, a bare ugly room with two tables, at one of which we students sat, while the Mistress and her friends sat at the 'High table' alongside. It was at first expected that we should sit in a formal row down one side of our table, lest we should be guilty of the discourtesy of turning our backs upon the 'High'. But this was too much and we rebelled, quietly ignored rule and insisted upon comfortably facing each other. (Lumsden, 1933:47)

Women teachers' autobiographical narratives forcefully depict colleges as contested sites, ridden by contradictions and uncertainties. In such a context of controversy, the techniques women used to map their existence would be a nexus of resistance and accommodation practices, inextricably interwoven. It was through these technologies of resistance (Tamboukou, 1999) that women began to fashion new forms of subjectivity always oscillating between what Milan Kundera (1984) would describe as the 'unbearable lightness and heaviness of being', by adopting unstable positions between them.

In making my argument about the role of women's self writings, as *technologies of the female self*, I have drawn on influential feminist analyses of women's strategies for writing the self. These analyses have explored the historical devaluation of women's writings that have both constrained their writing practices and have excluded them from the canon of traditional autobiographical texts. These analyses 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. I have been particularly interested in feminist analyses of women's autobiographies, memoirs, letters and diaries as practices of self-formation, the argument that the female self constitutes itself through writing (Smith and Watson 1998, 2001). The selves that are inscribed in their autobiographical narratives lack the sense of organic integrity and question the principle of authorial intention that characterises the male canon of the genre. It is this elusive condition of their textual existence that renders female autobiographical narratives provocative for the genealogist of technologies of the female self.

As already indicated, my particular interest in exploring the technologies of the self of women teachers, relates to my own experience as a woman teacher but it goes beyond the 'personal sphere'. Education has been a site of power where freedom has been historically denied to women. It has therefore been a significant locus of resistance. Jana Sawicki (1991) has pointed out that genealogy as resistance opens the way for a 'historical knowledge of struggles', since it uses history to give voice to the marginal and submerged subjects which lie 'hidden from history' and focuses attention on specific situations, thus leading to more concrete analyses of particular struggles. What I have suggested is that women seeking freedom through and within education have attempted not only to disrupt power relations and transcend gendered hierarchical structures, but also to reinvent themselves and live a better life. The genealogical analysis of women teachers' autobiographical narratives has not articulated a closed answer in response to the initial research questions. The Foucauldian toolbox of genealogy has given me the means to pursue my explorations of technologies of the female self, in women's practices of self representation, but has also acted as a source of continuous uncertainty about what I thought had been my 'results' or conclusions. Instead of finding answers, I have rather found new questions which I hope will continue to shake up our perceptions of what we are, what this present of ours is, but also and perhaps most importantly how we can become other than what we are already.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Lumka Daniel for many discussions about and insights into the story forms used by people in this study.