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Tommy Sandberg, *The Difference Approach to Narrative Fiction. A Recurring Critique of Narratology and Its Implication for the Study of Novels and Short Stories*. Örebro University. Örebro 2019.

It is a beloved notion in narratology that narrative is everywhere, “like life itself”. Roland Barthes writes this in his “The Structural Analysis of Narrative” in 1966 and, in many ways, it has become the starting point for narratology to take any kind of linguistic, cognitive or cultural expression that can be linked to storytelling as its domain. Narratology, or perhaps, narrative studies, extend the notion of “narrative” very broadly to non-literary, non-fictional texts, to commercial, journalistic and managerial writing, to the dynamics of social discourses and to the patterns in thought from which our memory, identity and sense of self emerge. The structuralist analysis of narrative, the context in which Barthes made his claim, however, developed some of its most powerful statements on the basis of literary works like Balzac’s novella *Sarrasine*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. The paradox that “narrative” is taken to be something present everywhere, while it is predominantly studied in the context of literature and within the field of literary studies, provides the frame for Tommy Sandberg’s doctoral dissertation. He proposes to investigate the implications of this paradox in the context of today’s narratology, which has come a long way from Barthes’ “Structural Analysis” but still appears to be beholden to the same contradictions.

Sandberg chooses the format of the article dissertation to provide perspectives from narrative theory and discourse, as well as perspectives from the actual analysis of literary works. As a result, the thesis takes the stance of an exploration of the problem space rather than delivering a conclusive statement. Some articles discuss a range of recent approaches in narratology, their theoretical investments and analytical practices, while others begin from a literary text and then discuss what light their literary devices can throw on different narratological approaches. The articles thereby get at the paradox from both directions, and they correspond nicely to the split between theory and practice that is observed between, on the one hand, assumption(s) about a similarity between literary narratives and everyday narratives on which narratology builds much of its theorising, what Sandberg calls the “sameness approach”, and on the other

hand, the practice of analysing literary narratives on the basis of their specifically literary devices. Sandberg argues that this split between theoretical pronouncements and analytical practices accounts for the paradox of ever-present “narrative” that is yet mostly studied through literary examples. Throughout the thesis, he then criticises the “sameness approach” and moves towards a “difference approach” that foregrounds the literary and fictional nature of the texts that are analysed for their narratives.

The doctoral dissertation consists of a long introduction and five previously published articles. In the first article, Sandberg articulates the paradox underlying the narratological project. In the second and third articles, co-authored with his supervisor Greger Andersson, he outlines how the “sameness approach” can be distinguished from the “difference approach”, and where each approach can be located in the field of narratology. They touch on the classics of the field, such as Genette’s *Discours du récit*, as well as contemporary narratology with its links to rhetoric, discourse analysis and cognitive sciences. The two remaining articles, then, showcase how the “difference approach” would provide a more accurate theoretical reflection of the “intuitions” on which the practice of analysis is based. Sandberg takes as his case studies here Angela Carter’s short story “The Loves of Lady Purple” (1974), for the study of narrative voice, and Sara Stridsberg’s novel *Drömfakulteten* (2008, translated into English as *The Factory of Dreams* in 2019) for the study of the narrator.

Sandberg opens his introduction with the acknowledgement that the critique that he levies against narratology has been made many times before. Michael McKeon approaches the problem from his work on the history of the novel, while narratologists like Richard Walsh, Sylvie Patron and Lars-Åke Skalin have come in particular from the specifically fictional nature of language that underlies literary narrative. In his introduction, Sandberg provides a very detailed background for these different intellectual traditions from where the accounts of fictional language arise. It illustrates that fiction has played an important role in the theorising of narrative. He outlines in particular, how Marie-Laure Ryan’s discussion of possible worlds theory, Searle’s pretense theory, Käte Hamburger’s “Logik der Dichtung” (logic of fiction), and Dorrit Cohn’s identification of literary strategies like free indirect discourse as “signposts of fictionality”,

have all been very influential in different branches of narratology. However, while some of these accounts, such as Ryan and Searle, show a tendency towards the “sameness approach”, others such as Hamburger and Cohn, show a tendency in the opposite direction towards a “difference approach”. If one takes “fiction” seriously as a component of “narrative fiction”, Sandberg suggests, this does not commit one theoretically to the radical positions of Walsh, Patron and Skalin who would divorce narrative fiction and everyday narrative. Sandberg claims that insisting on the fictional nature of literary narrative can also lead to position more similar to so-called unnatural narratology, where — for most proponents — an argument about literary narrative on the basis of everyday language and thought is possible.

While mapping out this problem space, Sandberg demonstrates his familiarity with the many different strands of narratology in its “postclassical” state, namely, in the wake of structuralism’s attempts at unifying and generalising narratology. In his introduction and the first three articles, he and Andersson address rhetorical narratology (as represented by James Phelan and Liesbeth Korthals Altes), unnatural narratology (as represented by Jan Alber, Brian Richardson and also Richard Walsh), linguistically informed narratology (as represented by Sylvie Patron and Lars-Åke Skalin), as well as cognitive narratology (as represented by Marie-Laure Ryan, Monika Fludernik, H. Porter Abbott and David Herman). And he and Andersson also go into exchange with discourse-based narratology through their response to Mari Hatavara and Matti Hyvärinen in the third article. The “difference approach” that Sandberg and Andersson establish in this context is characterised by its rejection of the notion that literary narrative attempts to communicate and by its rejection of the notion that literary narrative is natural. The claim that narrative is not communication moves against rhetorical narratology, and its elaborate accounts of narrators, implied authors and intended audiences, whereas the claim that narrative is not natural moves more against cognitive narratology that turns psychological concepts into a resource for the analysis of narratives and their effect on readers. “Sameness” and “difference” are issues that concern postclassical narratology in its entirety. The paradox, however, is rarely articulated in the extensive theorising of postclassical narratology, and the main contribution of Sandberg’s doctoral dissertation lies in

bringing this paradox to the fore as a unifying conundrum, while keeping different strands of narratology in play.

The dissertation raises a number of intriguing questions. Why do the narratologists who pursue the “sameness approach” continue to return to literary fiction in their discussions? Why do the narratologists who pursue the “difference approach” not leave narratology behind and keep to literary studies more generally? What are their respective commitments to literature on the one hand and to narrative on the other hand? And why has the paradox so rarely been acknowledged in narratology, even though the issue has been raised repeatedly in the last decade? Sandberg and Andersson argue in the second article that narratology actually shifts between the sameness and the difference approach in the manner of applying two “rule systems” that are taken into use as necessary. While it might be theoretically attractive to argue on the basis of the “sameness approach”, for example, so that you can claim that narrative is “like” something else, it can become necessary in the analysis of literary texts to practice a “difference approach” without acknowledging it. The answer does not account for the investment in literature in the “sameness approach” and the investment in narrative in the “difference approach”, but it provides a clear analytical statement of the state of affairs across different strands of current narratology.

The introduction, the theoretical articles and the analytical articles are linked by two terms that run across them, namely, “function” and “intuitions”. Sandberg calls for a narratology that bases its “analysis on [narratologists’] readerly intuitions about how works like novels and short stories function, i.e. produce meaning” (102), rather than foregrounding general theoretical statements because this narratology would follow the *de facto* analytical practice. The “function”, however, can be understood within the literary work or in a larger context. When discussing cognitive narratology a couple of pages later, Sandberg characterises the “difference approach” as “envision[ing] fiction as differing in functionality from other forms of storytelling” (110). Within the literary work, devices have their functions, as the “difference approach” underlines. Literary fiction, taken as a whole, however, can either be understood as a special use of general cognitive, linguistic functions (in the “sameness approach”) or as having its own, independent function (in the “difference approach”).

These two aspects of the notion of “function” remain somewhat separate in Sandberg’s dissertation. In the introduction, “function” does different conceptual work from the analytical chapters, depending on whether the reference is to the function of literature and/or fiction in general or whether it is to the function of particular devices in a particular literary text. It is perhaps one of the disadvantages of the article dissertation format that the need to relate the one to the other does not impose itself.

“Intuitions” is the core term of an alternative way of doing narratology that Sandberg proposes to explore in his analytical chapters. He draws attention to the fact that narratologists rely on their intuitions whenever they divert from their theoretical pronouncements. At the same time, there are some intuitions that support the “sameness approach” and some intuitions that support the “difference approach”. Sandberg writes “Readers do, I think, often have a sense that there exists a world beyond the text, which the text, so to speak, represents. Yet they are also aware, I presume, that novels and short stories are written with a purpose; authors try to say or express something by linguistic means and draw from their knowledge of life as well as from literary conventions developed over time” (112). Not only the analytical practice of sameness narratologists betrays intuitions of difference, but arguably, also the theorising of difference narratologists might at some point be based on intuitions of sameness. A fully developed analysis of the possible sameness intuitions in “difference narratology” in the introduction or in a separate article in the thesis could have provided a useful complement to the extensive treatment of the difference intuitions that underlie much of “sameness narratology” in the first three articles.

“Intuitions” are central for the answer Sandberg gives to his second research question, namely, why the critique from a difference perspective had “no apparent effect on the discussions in narratology” (89; see also articles 2 and 3). The ingenious answer is that even those who articulate a position of sameness already follow intuitions based on difference (in literary conventions and style). It is also the basis for his (and Andersson’s) argument more generally. In article 2, they introduce “empirical evidence”, namely, studies in how pupils react to literary texts in the classroom, an important basis, arguably, for identifying “intuitions” that are not yet informed by prior theoretical knowledge. Here, they demonstrate that pupils, just like seasoned narra-

tologists, read these stories with intuitions for difference and a sense for how they relate to the ways in which literary texts are made and how devices have a “function” within the entire design of a literary work. They then go on to show that also Genette approached Proust first “in a direct and intuitive way” (254). As far as his own analytical articles are concerned, Sandberg places “intuitions” centre stage. However, since the articles are concerned with other issues, it remains to be discussed how exactly intuitions could be formalised and whether alternative critical traditions, such as Russian formalism, could be brought into narratology with the aim of resolving the theoretical *impasse* between sameness and difference narratology.

Sandberg includes two cases studies of how narratology could proceed, once it takes seriously the paradox between “sameness” and “difference”. His textual choices for this case studies are thought-provoking, because they appear at first glance *counterintuitive*. Angela Carter’s short story “The Loves of Lady Purple” is discussed for its use of narrative “voice”, even though there is not a line of direct dialogue in the entire story. Sara Stridsberg’s *Drömfakulteten* comes to be the example of the narrator, even though this experimental novel is written as a quasi-theatrical series of dialogues, with no traditional narrative exposition and discourse. One of Stridsberg’s speakers is indeed called “the narrator” (“berättaren”) but does not fill the classical narratological role. These highly crafted texts from Carter and Stridberg would in any case not be mistaken for everyday narratives, and they make full use of the devices of literary fiction.

Sandberg’s analysis of “voice” in “The Loves of Lady Purple” foregrounds the “didactic” feel of the narratorial discourse of Carter’s short story about a vampiric puppet that comes to life and goes on to drain the vital energies of the professorial puppet master who usually controls her in a macabre reenactment of their normal performances. Sandberg presents the accounts of voice by Sylvie Patron, Gérard Genette and Richard Walsh and suggests, even though there is no personal narrator in “The Loves of Lady Purple”, one nevertheless finds a presence that attempts to “interpellate” readers to its subject position, Althusser-style. With this extension of “voice”, based on Genette and Walsh, Patron’s radical critical difference position that there simply are some narratives without any instance that could be called a narrator, appears too extreme to Sandberg. He proposes to replace the narrator here

through “functions” within the literary text that he, in this instance, relates in particular to ideology and didacticism.

Sandberg then goes on to discuss the problem of the “narrator” and “narrativeness” in Sara Stridsberg’s *Drömfakulteten*. The novel is announced as a “tillägg till sexualteorin” (amendment to the theory of sexuality), and it chronicles the final days of Valerie Solanas through dialogues, lists of statements and citations with (mostly) fictionalised characters. In this earliest article from the dissertation, Sandberg discusses Stridsberg’s text with its highly formalised dialogues and non-chronological narrative sequence as a set of “affordances” for readers’ interpretative moves. The notion of “affordance” comes from James J Gibson’s theory of perception as an ecological activity (*The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston 1979). Gibson proposes here that we perceive things always in terms of how they are used in a particular environment. Sandberg argues that different elements in Stridsberg’s text work as affordances for readers meaning-making, within the “ecology” of narrative fiction more generally, and within the textual logic that *Drömfakulteten* establishes in particular. Sandberg takes the notion of affordances from cognitive narratology (and in particular David Herman’s work), and he links it to “functions” explicitly and to “intuitions” implicitly. If one were to develop a fuller account of “intuitions” as the foundation of a critical practice that leads the way out from the paradox of sameness and difference narratology, Sandberg’s article on Stridsberg is certainly a very good place to start. It refers back to the difference narratology of Patron, Skalin and Walsh, but it clearly opens up lines for dialogue with other narratological and literary approaches as well. The two categories “voice” and “narrator” are only a small sample of the entire range of narrative devices that it would have been worth analysing from this perspective. Plot and character would be obvious desirables here as well. Sandberg’s choice of voice and narrator, however, accurately reflects the theoretical and analytical predispositions of mainstream narratology that does not concern itself primarily with plots and characters.

The articles from this dissertation are mostly published in narratological journals, such as *Narrative* (articles 2 and 3) and *Frontiers of Narrative* (articles 4 and 5). Sandberg’s analyses of the literary texts by Carter and Stridsberg, however, also show the importance of considering style, theme and ide-

ological implications when bringing to bear critical “intuitions” on narratological issues around voice and character. Indeed, the dissertation as a whole can be read as an investigation of the links between narratology and literary studies. In many respects, narratology can be seen as a subfield of literary studies. Most narratologists have appointments as scholars of literature, even though they can also choose non-literary narratives as their objects of study. Genette’s narratological set of terms becomes the analytical toolkit for many literature students in their course of studies, standing next to Russian formalism and structuralism. The links in the analysis of literature are obvious, and also the links when it comes to theorising are clear; one need only think of the work of Dorrit Cohn as one example.

Sandberg’s dissertation comes at a moment in time, however, when the relationship between literary studies and narratology needs to be newly articulated, because so much has changed, in both fields, since Barthes wrote about narrative being there “like life itself” and then went on to analyse Honoré de Balzac. Narratology has started to consider the history of the novel and how what appears to be transhistorical categories might look very differently in different periods of literary history, ranging from antiquity to metamodernism. Cognitive narratology (linked to a more or less moderate sameness position) has entered into dialogue with unnatural narratology (linked to a more or less moderate difference position). The project of “post-critique” in literary studies, on the other hand, aims to reorient attention to the text. Here, theorists propose to look at literary texts through what one could call the “intuitions” of readers in the sense that Sandberg uses the term. In *Forms* (2017), Caroline Levine argues for “forms” that guide readers’ sense of how parts of the narrative relate to one another and how they link to social forms. Toril Moi in *The Revolution of the Ordinary* (2018) asks critics to infer writers’ intentions in an intuitive move. And, perhaps most familiar now, Rita Felski proposes in *The Limits of Critique* (2017) that literary studies needs to find a language for the attachments, attunements and emotional engagements that literature provokes without falling back on a reading for hidden symptoms of a text’s ideological involvements. Post-critique could do worse than turn to narratology for critical and analytical sharpness in each of these tasks.

Sandberg does not address this issue himself but, as he outlines the “theoretical starting points” for

his articles in the beginning of the dissertation, the larger relevance of his project becomes clear not only for narratology's understanding about its own investments in literary narratives, but also for its relations to literary studies at large. What he moves towards through "functions" and "intuitions" are not a fixed set of concepts and categories of analysis, but rather "the suggestion that terms should denote aspects of a work that readers can recognise but may have no words for" (33). In finding words for these readerly "intuitions" in response to "affordances" of a literary text and their "function" in relation to other elements of the text, elements of narrative, style and theme are brought together. One might not be able to parcel out exactly where the boundary between sameness and difference runs, but one can draw on intuitions informed by assumptions from both approaches to make sense of the text at hand. Sandberg does well to distinguish between rhetorical stances, the need for conceptual coherence in a theoretical system and the requirement that texts nevertheless need to be understood on their own terms. And with this distinction, the dissertation takes earlier meta-theoretical discussions in post-classical narratology a step forward.

Karin Kukkonen

Anna Sigvardsson, *Möten med dikten. Poetiska läspraktiker inom och utanför gymnasieskolan*. diss. Luleå tekniska universitet, Avdelningen för pedagogik, språk och ämnesdidaktik. Luleå 2020.

Anna Sigvardssons avhandling *Möten med dikten. Poetiska läspraktiker inom och utanför gymnasieskolan* har som syfte "att ge en fördjupad förståelse för gymnasieelevers poetiska läspraktiker i skolan och på fritiden" (3). Avhandlingen är en sammanläggningsavhandling vars kappan efter en inledande del omfattar bakgrund till studien, tidigare forskning, teori, metod, en sammanfattning av resultaten från delstudierna samt en avslutning där avhandlingens samlade resultat diskuteras. Därutöver finns en sammanfattning av avhandlingen på engelska. Avhandlingen omfattar tre delstudier, en systematisk litteraturstudie och två intervjustudier. I litteraturstudien gör Sigvardsson en undersökning av internationell forskning om undervisning i poesiläsning. I delstudie två undersöks "hur poesiintresserade elever använder och skapar mening med dikter på sin fritid" och i delstudie tre "poesiintres-

serade lärares uppfattning om poesiundervisningen och vilka strategier och arbetssätt de finner centrala vid diktläsning". I delstudierna presenteras specifika delsyften och forskningsfrågor. De tre delstudierna har resulterat i fyra artiklar. I det följande presenteras och diskuteras först de fyra artiklarna och därefter kappan. Vissa aspekter som rör artiklarna kommer att tas upp i relation till kappan. Det gäller främst tillägget av ett övergripande teoretiskt perspektiv, New Literacy Studies (NLS), samt metodval och undersökningarnas genomförande som i kappan motiveras och beskrivs på ett fördjupat sätt.

Den första artikeln, "Teaching Poetry in Secondary Education. Findings from a Systemic Literature Review", är en systematisk litteraturstudie av engelskspråkiga vetenskapliga artiklar och täcker perioden 1990–2015. Översikten motiveras av att det råder brist på forskning om poesiläsning i Sverige och att behovet av en forskningsöversikt om den internationella forskningen därför är stort. Argumenten hämtas också från de nya ämnes- och kursplanerna (GY11) där poesi fått ett större utrymme än tidigare vilket skapat ett behov av mer stöd för lärare i arbetet med poesiundervisning. Av 324 artiklar väljs 28 för en tematisk analys. Urvals- och exkluderingsskriterier redovisas noggrant. Den tematiska analysen görs i två steg med utgångspunkt i studiens frågeställningar. Den första analysen är deskriptiv och ger svar på frågor om vilka länder forskarna kommer från, vilket forskningsfält de arbetar inom och vilken forskningsdesign som används. Därefter följer en induktiv tematisk analys där artiklarnas teman identifieras.

Resultatet visar att få studier använder specifika teoretiska perspektiv som redskap för att diskutera poesiläsning och att begreppen poesi och poesiläsning sällan definieras i de undersökta studierna. Forskningen visar att utvecklingen av tolkningsförmåga kräver explicit undervisning. Emellertid förordar forskarna en undervisning där eleverna får utveckla en personlig respons på dikter där deras egna erfarenheter och känslor är viktiga vid tolkning. I detta sammanhang hänvisar "många" forskare till *reader-response*-teoretikern Louise Rosenblatt. Något som diskuteras i artiklarna är vilken vikt som ska läggas vid elevers personliga responser å ena sidan och å andra sidan vid formanalys. Frågan tas ofta upp som en fråga om en motsättning mellan två olika prioriteringar i undervisningssammanhang medan Lockett (2010) hävdar att närläsning och betoning av formaspekter inte behöver stå i motsättning till Rosenblatts teorier. I de un-