

Revisiting the narrative theory of genres: Critiquing Jürgen Habermas's Communicative Action

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Abstract

The world is deeply connected through narratives, which enrich its stories and meanings. Tales about others and us bring vibrancy to life, making existence more dynamic. Critical Discourse Studies analyse these narratives, with the Discourse Historical Approach being a prominent method. This approach emphasises the centrality of narratives while integrating elements like comedy, tragedy, irony, and romance, as suggested by Frye. Such integration not only enhances causality, an essential aspect of textual analysis but also ensures that other essential features like conflict remain significant. By combining social dimensions with storytelling, this approach offers a more profound understanding of narratives. Habermas's theory of communicative action plays a vital role here, enhancing the semantic depth of the Discourse Historical Approach. It provides a solid foundation for analysing genres and narratives, making the process more authentic and insightful. Together, these methods create a robust framework for exploring how stories shape meaning and enrich discourse.

Key words: argumentation; critical discourse analysis; critical theory; narration; narrative genre; Northrop Frye

1 Prolegomenon

Narrative is omnipresent in life. Existence receives meaning from the ubiquitous presence of storytelling. Roland Barthes said that narratives are "present in every age, in every place, in every society" (Barthes, 1977, p. 79). However, diverse theoretical models like Discourse Historical Approach/ Critical Discourse Analysis/Critical Discourse Studies tend to marginalise narratives/ narrative genres. Therefore, such analyses stand impoverished, otherwise presenting an array of concepts for analysis and study, such as key features of argumentation. Northrop Frye cogently argued and succinctly discussed narrative genres of comedy, tragedy, romance and irony, perspectivized by Hayden White as "modes of emplotment" (White, 1973). Frye discussed narrative genres in the light of archetypal myths in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

Such an insight into narrative genres and their core relevance leads to a better comprehension of the form of narrative and Fryean mythmaking and meaning-forming. Somers has studied the ontological and epistemological significance of narrative and form, which has led to a more detailed semantic analysis. Deliberations on narrative genres and their basal relevance will "demystify and unmask manipulative discursive practices" (Forchtner, 2020, p. 315; see also Reisigl & Wodak 2001, esp. pp. 32-35; also Reisigl 2018, esp. pp.50-51). As Forchtner explains, the aim is to strike "reconciliation and freedom in terms of constraint-free intersubjectivity" (Forchtner, 2021, p. 315). Jürgen Habermas explained it as "sociation without repression" (Habermas, 1984, p. 391). This will also break the monotony of the prominent argumentation characteristic in Critical Discourse Studies. Such a reunion vis-a-vis providing prominence to narrative genres as a "mode of emplotment" will broaden the horizons of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, where Habermasian pragmatics gains further depth and subtlety and duly acknowledges the validity of his theory's sundry aspects, videlicet inclusivity, egalitarianism, the efficacy of intersubjective interrelationships. The feature of 'rational argumentation is situated in the structuration of narrativity. This also calls for the presence of other elements in the theoretics of both Habermas and Critical Discourse Studies and not to caricature them by advocating solely for narrative genres since narrative alone does not constitute the whole. It only stresses that the whole operates in a context of narrativity and its genres.

2 Significance of narrative

Inculcation of narrative genres enhances the comprehensiveness of Critical Discourse Studies, rendering it multi-perspectival and providing greater efficacy to its various domains, videlicet, epistemological, ontological and conceptual. Also, the concept of critique gets intense and comprehensive. The narrative has its significance as H. Peter Abbott explained that it is "the principal way in which our species organises its understanding of time" (Abbott

2002, p. 03). Ricoeur discussed its efficacy and relevance, since narrative selects and arranges diverse epochal events in an "intelligible whole" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 21).

Events in a chronology are narrativised or suitably backgrounded or foregrounded, rendered articulate or mute, as also provided a structure, or as Aristotle said: beginning, middle, and so on. A narrative juxtaposes events and, thus, sometimes even breaks chronology, instead following causality, turning a story into a plot. Therefore, a different sequentiality is provided to events in quest of meaning that "arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imagined" (White, 1980, p. 27). Teun Adrianus van Dijk states that "narrative has a good story...a point" (van Dijk, 1980, p. 14). Such meaning, signification, and "point" may not be in the story but 'crafted' or created through narrative: "emplotment."

Narrative aids in specifying 'identities', as explained by Somers: "Narratives and narrativity... are ... concepts of social epistemology and social ontology... social life is itself storied, and narrative is an ontological condition of social life" (Somers, 1994, pp. 613-614). Of course, the narrative provides form. It is 'representational' in nature, but this is not all since it extends to ontological and epistemological domains. Hence, stories put us in the world; we make meaning of this world through stories, leading to their partial/gradual comprehension. Stories/narrative (genres) position all of us. Ringmar is helpful here: "We tell ourselves what kind of a person we were/are/will be; what kind of a situation we were/are/will be in; and what such people as ourselves are likely to do under these particular circumstances" (Ringmar, 1996, p. 73). Thus, the construction and comprehension of discourses depend on narrative(s). Reisigl and Wodak define discourse as follows: "[Discourses are] clusters of context-dependent semiotic practices which are socially constituted and socially constitutive, macro-topic-related and linked to argumentation" (2016, p. 27). As Wodak (1996) explains, sociolinguistics concerning critical discourse discusses "narrative structure (group theory)", described earlier by Labov and Waletzky in "Narrative Analysis" (1967). Further studies (see Wodak et al., 1990, 1994) have discussed narrative but vis-à-vis anti-semitism. They view them as a "construction of the past." Forchtner explains: "reflections on construction of the past through selectively and causally connecting historical events via the narrative form" (Forchtner, 2020, p. 316). A detailed discussion of narrative in Critical Discourse Studies is available in Wodak et al. (2009, pp. 14-30). They explain that narrative identity is comprehended through narrative and identities constructed therein. Wodak et al. (2009) say the nation is "constructed and converged in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture" (p. 22). Hence, there is a greater need to comprehend and integrate narratives. Rheindorf and Wodak (2017) deploy the dictum of narrative to expatiate varied narratives of national chronicles and represent heroes and villains.

Heer et al. (2008) also discuss narrative as representing the national chronicling of a nation's events, which Heer and Wodak (2008) continued. They stress continuity among past, present and future representations in the narrative, where nations and their histories blend into their narrativisation, including catastrophic and cataclysmic events. Berger and Wodak (2018) and Wodak (2018) studied narratives concerning Austrian victims. John E Richardson (2018) focused on the Holocaust and its narratives vis-a-vis 'argumentation'. Wodak's study, *The Discourse of Politics in Action* (2009), analysed stories from a narrative perspective. She even interviewed Members of Parliament to explain the significance of stories in uploading subjects, constructing an individual identity, and social interaction (pp. 99-100). Labov and Waletzky's study "Narrative Analysis: Oral Version of Personal Experience" (1967) is the primary model for analysing narratives. This is clear from Wodak's study *Disorders of Discourse* (1996) as also 'Wir sind Alle unschuldige Tater': *Diskurshistorische studien zum Nachkriegsantisemitismus* (1990), where she has gone beyond this and drawn from Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), primarily to interpret TV episodes of *The West Wing*. This study illuminates the domain of the Discourse Historical Approach, eschewing its structural aspects. Reisigl's study "Argumentation analysis and the discourse historical approach" (2014) stresses varied texts and their significance in the form of explanations, arguments as well and narrations, focusing on the synchronising of narratives and arguments, especially at places of intersection of agons, highlighting "contexts where narrative episodes are told as illustrating examples that back a specific claim (illustrative argumentation scheme)" (Reisigl, 2014, p. 73). Texts have been restricted and analysed by linguistic scholars like Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler in their study *Einführung in die Textlinguistik* (1981), and they have interpreted text according to their dominant domains and functions (pp. 190-191). Of course, ontological and epistemological dimensions were not studied by these linguistics scholars, so texts full of agons are storied, proceeding from specific to more prominent and broader, or as Jürgen Habermas explained the context of storied as follows: "Social life is itself storied, the latter ranging from the narrow and particular to an intuitively known, unproblematic life world" (Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 298). Here, reference may be made to Matthias Aumüller's "Text Types" (2014).

3 The polysemous text

Storied context also implies that several stories are embedded in the text. They may not be immediately visible in the larger narrative, but their significance for the signification of text is of utmost importance. A text may be in the form of a chronicle or an illustration of agons, but the narrative text types can be grasped if we comprehend the world of the narrative. The narrative and its manifestation in the Discourse Historical Approach have been analysed herein. It also needs pre-determined foundations for critiquing it (see Forchtner, 2011). This aligns with the comprehension of critique in the Discourse Historical Approach, wherein the concept of "immanent" critique by Habermas is employed, and the need is felt to contemplate a narrative in all seriousness. However, before that, a particular perspective regarding narratives (genres) must be introduced to facilitate further study of the subject. It must be stressed that stories contain many other elements apart from the plot, as stories generally follow storytelling conventions as evidenced by their unfolding to the readers by the narrators. Conventions facilitate comprehension, leading to responses that are both emotive and cognitive. A particular narrative may render a specific meaning; the form contains content where the protagonist frees the prince/princess. The reader's response is not only as per the specification of the story but also along the upholding of the conventions, apart from genres, like good triumphing over evil or a quest completed and the destination achieved. Here, Frye pioneered work in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). He provided a quartet of genres: narrative, videlicet, tragedy, comedy, romance, and irony. These need to be connected to the Discourse Historical Approach's conceptual structure.

An easily identifiable genre of narration is romance, wherein the ideal figure of the hero confronts others (evil). The world herein is polarised (Frye, 1957). Frye explained it as one where "subtlety and complexity are not too much favoured" (Frye, 195). Various studies discuss other kinds of literature under this category, such as melodrama. Here, one can refer to studies by Anker (*Orgies of Feeling*, 2014), Robert Bechtold Heilman (*Tragedy and Melodrama*, 1969) and Robin Erica Wagner-Pacifi (The Moro Morality Play, 1986). Fredric Jameson explained melodrama as a "degraded form of romance" (*The Political Unconscious*, 2002, p. 102). The romance genre encourages clarity, exhibiting the world in black and white and clear divisions between good and evil, exhibiting the protagonist in ideal terms with whom one can identify. Frye also says: "Romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream" (p. 186).

4 Employment of history

Philip Smith in *Why War?* (2005) explains the genre of romance as a "fundamentally optimistic genre," stressing the "transformative power of the human agents" (p. 26). Romance can bring more dynamism to an act, but reflexivity is lacking (Jacobs and Smith, 1997). This is avidly discussed by Pfeiffer and Spencer, who explain romance as a way of fooling people since "romances can be effective recruitment tools for the so-called Islamic State" (p. 22).

Tragedy, as compared to romance, exhibits a failing and degenerating world. It exhibits tension among what is going on, what was in the past, what should have been, and what could be. This tension renders it devoid of certainty available in romance and melodrama. So, it is explained that a tragedy takes the audience to self-resignation and a sense of despair. Ronald Jacobs describes this in "The problem with tragic narratives" (2001). This may be true, but Alexander's study "On the social construction of moral universals" (2002, p. 31) on the Holocaust and contemporary society explains that the tragic presentation of an event is a stratagem that enables us to experience dark and sinister forces that are also inside ourselves and not only inside others. Similar views were expressed by Wagner-Pacifi (1986, p. 283) as she explained that the genre of tragedy "ought to tend in the direction of intermittent existential ambiguity and turmoil, i.e. recognition of opposing imperatives". Heilman (1969, p. 79), when discussing tragedy, views it as a conflict "within man" and not "between men," as in melodrama.

Here, the instance of the *Declaration of Stockholm International Forum* on the Holocaust (2000) can be employed since it manifests a similar tragic plot. It aims to educate people regarding the Holocaust and research its various narratives and roots. *The Declaration* stresses eight characteristics. Here, three of them, namely the first one, the third one and the last one, are being mentioned:

1. The first one is basal to the understanding of humanism and the civil features of civilisation. The very basis of civilisation was shaken to its roots by the Holocaust. The catastrophic event will always hold a more significant meaning for humankind. Even after the passing of more than 50 years, it remains deeply etched in the minds of the survivors, who still have nightmares when reminded of its horrors. The suffering of Jews, as well as other victims, scarred the whole of Europe.
3. Humankind has been long afflicted by ethnic cleansing and anti-semitism, so it is the responsibility of the international citizen to withstand these man-made evils. Lessons must be learnt from the Holocaust by enhancing our moral stature and the ethical stature of states and governments to ensure that coming generations avoid the Holocaust.

8. So, we declare firm resolve to sow seeds regarding a humane world by drawing lessons from the horrific past and promising never to repeat. Others' sufferings must affect us and inspire us when witnessing their struggle. Commitment to humanity must be reaffirmed.

An event like the Holocaust commences with the narrativising of the catastrophe, to be interspersed with mention of other evils and a path to uphold the rights of humanity. The Holocaust represents a division between good and evil, and *The Declaration* affirms its seriousness. The narrative continues to haunt humankind with no scope of a happy ending. So, the Holocaust is an event demanding deep contemplation regarding its nature and consequences. The event reiterates the need for mutual harmony and a juster world. The insights provided by scholars mentioned above, Wagner-Pacifici, Alexander, and Heilman, regarding telling a tragic story present the dichotomous good-evil binary. It is *The Declaration* that presents redemptive features of the sad narrative, a lesson where history turns up as a veritable teacher. Wagner-Pacifici in *The Moro Morality Play* (1986, p. 280) has alluded to the ability of tragedy to usher "confidence in survival through regeneration".

5 History and historiography

White in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) alluded to it as "a gain in the consciousness of the spectator" (09). So, the Holocaust *Declaration* is a clear call for being steadfastly truthful and morally assertive to herald a better future. In this context, while tragedy stresses failure, comedy brings a happy ending with the characteristics of regeneration, rebirth and reintegration. Comedy also records a failure, a fall beyond the ambiguities and scepticism. There is a silver lining when things begin to mend. It takes a turn for the better. The decline does come, but there is reascendancy. So, narrative in the comedy genre struggles with difficulties, but they are gradually overcome. Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism* (195, p. 137), traces its lineaments: Genre of comedy journeys "from things as they are to things as they should be, from bondage to freedom, unhappiness to festivity, alienation to a growing awareness of a regained identity".

6 Relevance of philosophy in times of terror

White in *Metahistory* (1973, p. 09) explains the comedy plot as centring on "reconciliation". He says that the genre portrays a society in the comedy "as being purer, saner and healthier as the result of the conflict among seemingly inalterably opposed elements in the world; these elements are revealed to be, in the long run, harmonise with one another" (p. 09). Frye explains that while speaking of the genre of comedy, it exists in a more tribal environment as compared to romance because, despite the presence of the problems in comedy, they are overcome and hence "a newborn society ... [rises] in triumph" (Frye 1957, p. 192). So, comedy has its status and cannot degenerate into slapstick. The comedy genre is better illustrated by Habermas and Derrida entitled: "February 15 or What binds Europeans Together" (2005). Forchtner (2020) explains that this text "spells out a series of supposed differences between the United States and Europe including secularisation, capitalist modernisation and historical past" (p. 07). Habermas and Derrida are concerned about the past and present of Europe, the ills and maladies it suffers from and its consequences:

... contemporary Europe has been shaped by the experience of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century and by the Holocaust—the persecution and the destruction of European Jews in which the National Socialist regime made the societies of the conquered countries complicit as well. Self-critical controversies about this past remind us of the moral basis of politics

A bellicose past once entangled all European nations in bloody conflicts. They drew a conclusion from experiences of military and spiritual mobilisation against one another: the imperative of developing new, supranational forms of cooperation after the Second World War

Each great European nation has experienced the bloom of its imperial power. What is more important in our context is that each has had to work through the loss of its empire. In many cases, their declining experience was associated with losing colonial territories. With the growing distance of imperial domination and the history of colonialism, the European powers also got to reflect distance from themselves. They could learn from the perspective of the defeated to perceive themselves in the dubious role of victors (pp. 12-13).

Habermas and Derrida present a catalogue of crimes against humanity: "totalitarian regimes," "the Holocaust," "bloody conflicts," the "Second World War," "imperial power," and "colonialism". This, however, is not the complete picture. Calamities prevailed once and must always be remembered, but times have changed. This is more like history, becoming a teacher, which has brought Europeans together. Habermas and Derrida's text begins with voices against the Iraq War, like the Habermasian European Public Sphere. It is a presentation of reintegrating, which is so essential for the genre of comedy. Tragedy portrays ambiguity, but there is reassurance on the protagonist's part in comedy. This reassurance is probed and penetrated in the genre of irony. Frye explains irony. He says this genre is best approached as a parody of romance (p. 223). Irony betokens detachment, juxtaposing diverse perspectives

leading to ambiguity. Frye further explains, "Irony gives form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealised existence" (p. 223).

Jacobs and Smith, in their paper "Romance, Irony and Solidarity" (1997, p. 71), connect irony to "Juxtaposition of perspectives that disturbs the naive, indolent slumbers of the life worldly consciousness and thus to reflexivity". According to them: "Irony provides the critical distance from which the contingency and limits of the present are revealed and through which possible futures are made available for negotiation at individual and collective levels" (ibid.). So, irony is a counterpoint to romance and its powers of integration.

7 Fryean genres

Thus, romance, tragedy, comedy and irony are discussed to buttress the fact, as mentioned earlier, that human social life is multi-layered and multistoried. The focus has to be on the narrative's ontological and epistemological levels. They are crucial once they carry the semantic component. The narrative has to be synchronised with the framework of discourse regarding the concept of discourse. The Discourse Historical Approach focuses on topics on the macro level, like climate change or the phenomenon of climate change, along with different perspectives. This leads to agonism, where discussions thrive amidst competing claims regarding the validity of one or the other.

Reisigl and Wodak, in their study "The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)" (2016), discuss narrative as another layer which contrasts with discourse and provides a specific perspective through causal comprehension of time so that the semantic component is structured by Aristotelian arrangement of beginning, middle and end, exemplifying the manner of circulation of content in a discourse. In the backdrop of these insights, relations in core categories are analysed in DHA, with narrative superadded. This is how Reisigl Wodak explains it in *Discourse and Discrimination* (2001, esp. 39). This is to say that stories travel through various genres. They may be available in tweets. Discourse may be available, like the one about the European Union and Immigration, along with other topics like healthcare, finances or kingship. Here, the emphasis is on competing texts and various perspectives regarding discourses manifest in a narrative genre, maybe as romance, so the inclusion of narrative in the case of DHA. It adds another aspect to the analysis by pointing out the context of the discourse under study, interrogating the discursive, investigating the available linguistic, as well as realising it as discussed by Reisigl and Wodak in *The Discourse Historical Approach* (DHA 2016, esp p. 32).

8 Synchronicity of the diachronic

This implies that analysis has to be elaborate and concerning the text and the discourse therein. The need is to interrogate metaphor, metonymy, implications and anthroponomy. This analysis would unravel a genre's performances as well as agons. It has to be multi-perspectival and discursive to unravel agons and epochs of history, and its consequences articulated as lessons drawn from the past. This exercise illustrates how diachronic events are articulated and the protagonist and events analysed therein. Here, the allusion to Van Leeuwen's "The Representation of social actors" (1996) would be helpful here. Elaborate and multi-perspectival analyses will unravel dominant narratives, the constituting of discourses, and historico-socio-politico contexts if broader samples of texts and contexts are considered. Herein, the Discourse Historical Approach's four-dimensional contexts would be pertinent (see Reisigl and Wodak 2016, 30-31). It also determines how discursive constructions are transmuted as tragic. It has to be seen that narrative genres bring varied content and linguistic options. In his *Metahistory* (1973) study, White discussed how narrativisation can include/allude to many genres. He has simultaneously included post-lapsarian division of labour, utopian comic reconciliation, and Marxist strategy, rendering history tragic. Stress on narrative in a genre will highlight agons, apart from depictions, portrayals, and narrations of picaresque, as well as the interplay and interaction of diverse textual types and their relations and performance in specific genres. Investigating such elements in genres adds dimensions to the historical discourse approach. This approach focuses on the functioning of text and discourse from a critical perspective and rich semantic propensities.

Critical Discourse Studies must methodically contemplate narrative genres, especially their conceptual aspects. Reisigl has discussed tropology in "Anmerkungen zu einer Tropologie des Historischen und Politischen" (2002). He has discussed plots and modes in White's work. Reisigl critiques White's employing of metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor and is not swayed by White's discussion concerning archetypal plots (see pp. 197-198, 212-213, and 218-220). He eschews alluding to Frye's work, although White expressed his indebtedness to Frye's study *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and recent studies on the topic. Reisigl's critique is notable on two counts:

- 1) Reisigl, in critical discussion of the metaphorical aspect of narrative vis-a-vis other features defining a text as agonistic or otherwise, alludes to Reisigl's assigning importance to 'analytical differentiation'. However, the entire text is not in the form of a narrative. This was explained by White himself in his paper "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" (1980). He clarified that chronicles are not in the narrative mode. Of

course, narratives have significations on various philosophical planes, like ontological and epistemological, along with text-type narratives operating under a broader basal notion of narratives.

- 2) Reisigl (2002, p. 212-13) is critical of White regarding excluding specific textual hermeneutics and micro-level analysis of texts. Nevertheless, this does not distract in any way from White's work, and it is also against the inclusion of analysis of narratives in various genres. Reisigl is correct that an elaborate context-specific critique of narrative genres is needed. A discussion regarding narrative genres leads to other aspects. A practitioner of critical discourse analysis has to be mindful of essential studies of discourse, the concept of critique, and its pertinence. Thus, some space must be provided to contemplate the basal nature of critique.

9 Relevance of Habermasian theoretics

Thus far, space has been provided for the discussion of narrative genres. Some points regarding Habermasian theory, supplemented with narrative-genre insight to help it gain profundity as a Critical Analysis of Discourse Historical Approach and Critical Discourse Studies are needed. There have been many approaches in Critical Discourse Studies, but it is the Discourse Historical Approach that pays attention to Frankfurt School theoretics in general and Habermasian insights in particular (see Forchtner, 2011; Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Hence, the Discourse Historical Approach favours a democracy open to deliberation, laying out tripartite theoretics regarding critique (see Reisigl & Wodak 2016; p. 25). It favours critiquing text/discourse, contemplating upon its inconsistencies, anachronisms and contradictions, as well as discursive practices inherent in it, by other theoretics employed in the text, as also analysis of socio-cultural context, along with critique aimed at enhancing 'Communication' by weeding out language that is discriminating or the barriers therein. Critique is concerned with analysing meaning-making processes and depicting power relations vis-a-vis discourse and language. The endeavour aims to ease repression, heralding freedom and reconciliation through Habermasian 'Communicative Rationality' (see Habermas, 1984, 1987). Habermasian rationality goes beyond its strategic or instrumental domain to include coordination with comprehension, reasoned understanding, and recognition of each other. Instead of proclaiming a substantial concept of reason (that details do's and don'ts), Habermasian Communicative Rationality upholds communication as inherent and intersubjective. Suffice it to say Habermasian rationality diagnoses and critiques societal maladies.

The discourse historical approach receives its validity, and Habermas has contributed to it copiously. DHA was foregrounded when attempts were made towards comprehending it or, as Habermas called it, 'Communicative Action'. Participants recognise each other's raising validity claims, which Habermas upholds as discourse or Habermasian Communicative Action getting reflexive (see Habermas, "Discourse ethics", 1990). Habermasian Communicative Action is 'built into, rooted' in action, veered towards comprehension (Habermas, 1990, p. 100). The crux is that communicators must be focused and involved with truth claims. The discussion has to be non-coercive, and participants communicate/participate on the plane of equality. Consensus may/may not be achieved. It is more important that there is intersubjectivity, which should be inherent to critique distortions in communication. The assumptions have to be idealistic, although they may not portray a situation that is ideal or realisable (see Habermas, 1997) and Forchtner, "Critique, the Discourse, Historical Approach and the Frankfurt School," 2011). There is the possibility of communicators lying randomly, selectively, or all the time, leading to distortions in communication, although such distortions, after a point of time, get identified and assessed and then prone to criticism.

When indulging in such communications, interlocutors make participants competent and free to indulge in such acts of cognition. Habermas says: "In such a process, they *include* one another in a world they jointly construct (Habermas; "Rightness versus Truth," 2003). Where perceptions vary, such a scenario hinders collective, uniform and linear perception processes, where the world is replete with claims and counterclaims wherever interaction occurs. Through exchange and appraisal of perspective, participants question and offer knowledge to amend the structure of cognition and social interaction that will render the world more inclusive, offering both learning and hindrances in learning.

10 Dissensus versus consensus

In his study *On The Political* (2005), Mouffe has raised questions regarding the Habermasian idea of consensus. In his research *Habermas and The Public Sphere* (1992), Calhoun raised questions regarding conceiving and schematising the public sphere in Habermas. Then there is the debate by Macgilchrist in his study entitled "Fissures in the discourse-scape: critique, rationality and validity in post foundational approaches to CDS" (2016). Critiquing Habermas's work on the plane of post-foundationalism, he briefly discusses efforts to present a perspective on the universal level, as with God or an all-pervasive rationality as well as a quintessence. This stresses Habermas's concept regarding rationality. It highlights a notion of rationality enmeshed in the tradition of exclusivity, where others are viewed as non-rational. It is during this debate that Slavoj Zizek is cited to clarify that "intersubjectivity

noted above seems to remain a simple reciprocal capability of taking into account the other's reasoning (validity claim) rather than, for instance, an assumption of uncertainty and undecidability" (269). The debate does not mention Habermas's concept's formal aspect or immanent and reconstructive nature. Other aspects of the debate look reasonable enough, especially ideas concerning intersubjectivity and the underlying notion of universality. However, it must be understood that Habermasian rationality is allied to the formal and pragmatic aspects. Habermasian presuppositions lead to the ideas of uncertainty as well as decentering. Habermas expects us to arrive at a non-prescriptive understanding, analysing to delimit right and wrong. Human relations have to bear with such Habermasian presuppositions to avoid "performative contradiction." This is about his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987). Forchtner explains "performative contradiction" as follows:

The notion of performative contradiction describes the theoretical impossibility of a totalising criticism of reason using reason visible in the work of Horkheimer, Adorno and poststructuralists. That is, criticism, which uses the tools of reason and makes supposedly universal validity claims to criticise reason and reject universality. 'Performative contradiction' does not point to a logical contradiction between elements of one statement but between a claim and what this claim, as performed, presupposes (Forchtner, 2021, p. 328).

Forchtner appraises Habermas's notion in terms of the Discourse Historical Approach and expresses his agreement with the Habermasian theoretical model succinctly:

I [Forchtner] argue that Habermas's project, like the DHA with its Habermas-related stance 'against social discrimination, repression, domination, exclusion and exploitation and for emancipation, self-determination and social recognition' would benefit from a 'narrative update' (Forchtner, 2021; p. 326).

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action has received broader resonance from a wider horizon. Critics agree that communication does not take place in a vacuum. It happens in situations that are social and communitarian. Herein, as Habermas said, it is not mere argumentation but broader interactions that would have global implications. Hence, Habermasian argumentation is to be prespecified in the wider context. In his twin studies, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas himself, vol. I (1984) and *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. II (1987) employed the concept of communication to this macro cause in a broader context. This interaction is evidenced in narratives since human existence. It is storied and multi-layered. Hence, greater attention needs to be paid to genres/narratives. These provide relevant context to stand as manifestations of arguments and sites where agonistic interaction goes on. Klaus Eder has stressed this point in his paper "Rational action, communicative action, and the narrative structure of social life" (2009) and also by Forst in his paper "Zum Begriff eines Rechtfertigungsnarrativs" (2015). Forst asserted that argumentation sundry justifications are not simply aligned to tales; instead, they are incomprehensible without them since claims and counterclaims surface in and through genres and narratives. This is the justification for relating narratives/genres to the works of Habermas, as well as the concept of intrinsic and immediate critiquing, for genres and their structuration of plot present stories and their claims and counterclaims differently. Narrative genres facilitate comprehension of stories through their quality of being decentred or coherent, with ritualised episodes and the idealised subject. Hence, audiences tend to identify with those characters and the degree of assurance provided by the plot structure, as well as the sundry emotional states onlookers experience when given a chance to glimpse unravelling such narratives.

11 Genreing narrative

Forchtner et al. (2020) present an explanation: genres give rise to emotional states along the line of uncertainty, i.e. a somewhat unsettled state of mind which encourages reflexivity versus certainty in which the self experiences the joy of clear-cut boundaries between good (we) versus evil (they) (2020; 208). Ozvatan, in his paper "The Great Secession: Ethno-national rebirth and the politics of Turkish-German belongings" (2020), employs such a framework while drawing the boundary between Germany and Turkey. Narratives/genres help bring certainty/uncertainty to plots and provide multiperspectivalism to the concerned genres. They help include the proposition outlined by Habermas and aid in employing processes concerning communitarian learning or otherwise. Demarcated boundaries of the social and elaborate analyses are provided through critical discourses by analysts, who help identify and comprehend their conceptual construction and evolution as Forchtner says in "Critique, the discourse-historical approach and the Frankfurt School" (2011) that argumentations are not appraised for being transparent or clear. However, analysing fallacies/topoi will remain important. This is also meaningfully discussed by Reisigl and Wodak (2016) in "The discourse-historical approach (DHA)" (29-30).

It would be in the fitness of things to discuss narratives/genres since they are the source employed to unravel arguments and discourses. Genres of irony and tragedy are apt mediums for employing the literary device of ambiguity and bringing in elements of uncertainty through decentering. This also helps in action and is in line with arguments offered by Habermas on the subject. This leads to a straightforward process of learning on communitarian levels. It is in plots/stories that are ironic and tragic, hence reflexive, that facilitate more incredible

symbolism. This is to say that protagonists with imperfections and unstable plots help bring more openness, leading to perspectivation by others. In the case of theatrical or romantic tales/plots, such interventions are complex to combine and re-form the society presented in such genres.

Moreover, there are clear boundaries concerning good and evil, which are scarce in literature. Literature of this sort demarcates precise boundaries with protagonists idealised and plots that reassure easy closure, thus excluding perspectivation by others. Stories that are comic lead to symbolic boundaries and tend to be more intended than is the case in romantic literature. Here, the element of fall is a constituent of the story and society's reintegrating leaves space for inclusion of others. Kuusisto's paper "Comic Plots as Conflict Resolution Strategy" is relevant here. Happy endings offer the resolution of problems, providing a greater sense of self-assurance in the text—this thwarts the inclusion of uncertainties and decentering. Kuusisto (2009), in the study, is happy with the comedy genre since it resolves conflicts. Thus, her happiness stems from the happy outcome that appears more desirable to her. According to her, comedy tends to hold communities together, allowing people to transcend the past, which could be riddled with conflicts. The problem is the residue left behind since it was the element triggering irritation. This means that comedy's domain of cognition and sense of uncertainty is constructed. It has to be realised that the irritating, ambiguous, decentred element is significant for learning at the societal level, but it is thrown back in this case. So, comedy and romance genres cannot meet Habermasian requirements since they do not facilitate the community learning process.

It should not bewilder anyone that the genre of irony is favoured instead of romance. Such a model of discourse studies is justificatory vis-a-vis its theoretical appraisal since they establish the connection between genres of narration on the one hand and Habermasian pragmatics on the other. Genres are appraised keeping in mind the elements of communication and pragmatics. This is the crucial feature of the proposal offered by Habermas. It can also be seen as a poststructuralist theoretical model favouring openness at the social level and not closure. It is amenable to the value of discomfort and uncertainty. Here are a few studies that might be helpful: James Bernauer and Michael Mahon's paper "The ethics of Michel Foucault" (1994) and Simon Critchley's study *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (2014).

Furthermore Jason Glynos's paper "Thinking of the ethics of the political in the context of a post-foundational world" (2000) is also relevant to the issue. Apart from arguments and counterarguments, Habermas has reconstructed a basis for critiquing narratives/genres, texts, and discourses. His foundation for critique is pragmatic, while the critic himself becomes immanent. This has come about through the reconstruction of propositions on the formal plane by Habermas.

12 Conclusion

The paper explores a Critical Discourse Strategy (CDS) connected to the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), emphasising the importance of literature, narratives, and genres in understanding meaning. The study takes a serious look at the nature of narratives (ontology) and how knowledge is formed through them (epistemology). It also highlights the unique role of CDS's profound analysis of the component of meaning. By incorporating these aspects, the paper enhances tools for critical discourse analysis while keeping the distinction between narratives, genres, and broader discourse intact.

The study observes that narratives create meaning through organised sequences, following a structure similar to Aristotle's idea of a plot having a beginning, middle, and end, with events arranged causally. Narratives are examined in terms of their genre and purpose, with connections drawn to Habermasian Pragmatics. The DHA's role is re-evaluated within this framework, sharpening its critique by addressing formal barriers to communal learning.

The analysis includes critiques of comedy and romance, recognising that tragedy and irony provide wider boundaries for understanding narratives. The study critiques far-right politics for hindering communal learning through biased storytelling and simplistic narratives. Similarly, the left is critiqued for oversimplifying stories of good versus evil. Irony, used by both sides, is explored in terms of its role in destabilising perspectives and connecting to tradition.

The paper suggests integrating narratives and genres into DHA's foundational structure. This involves recognising narratives as crucial to understanding human experiences and critically studying stories to uncover their more profound meaning. This reappraisal aims to foster richer and intenser debates and provide better tools for critique, contributing to a more comprehensive discourse analysis system.

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