

How to tell a story?

How to tell a story. Or more, how to convey a message, write something, you want to be said through a story? There is the artisanal story-telling model to say something by talking about something else. Narrating another story, a parallel one, maybe very pictorial or imaginative, hoping for it to expand, without that you have to connect the story-lines yourself, and without that you have to explicitly name what you are talking about. This figurative model is used in Science Fiction, it produces the thousand murders of the crime novel, and the moralist story, like Fontaine's fables. This includes, that the good story is said to be one which draws no conclusion and gives no explanation as to its implicit content. An insight written down by Walter Benjamin in *Kunst zu erzählen*, where he cites Herodot, and the story of the Egyptian king Psammenit. This gives a clue to a weakness of Fontaine's fables: The kill-joy, by giving us a moral at the end of the story narrows his depicted story-images into a one-lined code of conduct. This—I guess—is the point where generations of French school children always rolled a disgusted eye. But you can also give the clue at the beginning of the story, as in *Christiane et Monique – LIP V* by Carole Roussopoulos, in which a story is about to be told, and the narrator starts by saying: I am going to tell you about the women in the factory LIP, but I am going to call the men, whites, and I am going to call the women, Arabs. And thus she continues.

No explanation is given to this rhetorical decision, so we are left to wonder, along with Montaigne in Benjamin's story about the reasons of Psammenit's break-down, and muse if, in the LIP story, it was because the narrator by using this ellipsis hints to the barriers feminist discours meets (boring! boring!) in comparison to post-colonial discourses or whether she was just too tired to restate the obvious, and wanted to have some more fun as a narrator, being able to thus say: "So I, being an Arab myself, ...".

And, you can plunge into your story head first, and start your text with: *I am writing as an ugly one for the ugly ones: the old hags, the dykes, the frigid, the unfucked, the unfuckables, the neurotics, the psychos, for all those girls who don't get a look-in the universal market of the consumable chick. I am making no excuses for myself. I am not complaining. I would never swap places because it seems to me, that being Virginie Despentes is a more interesting business than anything going out there.*

These are the first lines of *King Kong Theory*, by Virginie Despentes, who became far more known and read with her then fifth book, the *Life of Vernon Subutex*, the first in a trilogy by that name. These first lines, as I can tell you, having been their reader just recently myself, leaves you somehow open-mouthed and stunned. Someone says something. How extraordinarily astonishing! Not a gesture to vanish into style, but invoking a sort of uncontrollable, and un-stylable subjectivity! But then you might somehow relax. It is from 2010! Or you could say: aye, the old punk gesture! Was there even internet? The machine, as we are constantly being reminded, even by posters in the subway of well-meaning government agencies, to be unforgiving and un-forgetting, and will diminish your chances with the projected future super-employer by recalling the moment you puked into the commuter-train waste bin. And while writing the last line, and noticing I am referring to a Berlin sub-way campaign, it dawns on me, that I am actually writing a very German text, and just by chance of an early morning decision, I write it in English. Discourses vary locally, and my first intention of writing about Delphine Seyrig's, and her video *SCUM Manifesto*, which she did together with Carole

Roussopoulos¹, turned into a nagging doubt, if I really understood French feminism, and its high level of colloquialism. It felt as if I had become more an expert in hidden messages, or in avoiding interrogative glances, if there are any, asking for explicit opinions, and a reader of meaningful sighs. But you know what I mean.

Actually you might even not guess what I mean when I say it, but the chances are higher, though, you might get it.

So I move in the classical way you would if it were a police state and still it is just the art scene. And this could be opinionated, or this could be judgmental.

Trained to read intentions in a discussion of the Alt Right movement in some far away country as a hint to what is going on here, there remains a question to be answered, which is why this is not said out more clearly. So maybe 1) because there is nothing here, and no discussion to be entered, and commented upon, because at first it would have to be started, and / or 2) the question; Wouldn't it mean that we would be willing to lose control? To plunge into something, a space opened up by words? In a strange sort of opposed movement to writing a text that wishes to control a discours. A text that is placing it, sorting it in and showing its limits and your perception of those, and the people who lead it—a mediation.

Losing control, as far as I remember from advices to drug-usage, is recommended, if there is a sort of fall back mode, be it a circle of friends, or whatever, called a supportive environment, which can stand an issue addressed, a rage about something, without answering im- or explicitly by: "But this is understood. Why recall it again?" Otherwise I guess, the only thing that remains at the moment are style choices.

But nothing is understood, which is—I guess—the message conveyed in the difference between Despentes *King Kong Theory*, and the Trilogy on the *Life of Vernon Subutex*. The first one being based in the recollection of a community, the punk scene, which in her descriptions takes some utopian gender bending, rich and rags confounding notion—while I also remember my 16 year old ego asking myself, if our guys had really finished with a sexist women image as shown in the films we were watching (*Clockwork Orange* e.g.) and liked our deliberately uglyfying styles of consciously unflattering hairstyles and dress code (because it was at the core, contrary to what is seen nowadays no fashion movement in the sense—too many knocked-out teeth count for that). She evokes this as the foil of her boldness in speaking, even as a sort of inner obligation as to language.

And then the Vernon Subutex novels, where this foil is beeing torn apart, deconstructed into speech acts, inner and outer monologues, mostly fascist. Between those books she loses the subjective writing position, and the argument in the sense, as Elisa R. Linn has called in her text the "irreducible subjectivity" of Punk (which I doubt anyway, seeing it as another sort of reaction pattern to abject living conditions, less afraid, maybe, than the overskilling attitude of our time). So in a very logical sense she cannot speak anymore as herself, as she has done in *King Kong Theory*, and she resumes to telling stories, parallel ones, maybe very pictorial or imaginative, hoping for them to expand, without that you have to connect the story-lines yourself.

¹ The whole video consists in reading out a text aloud and giving it alas a voice, which strangely turns the text from the bluntness it had if transformed by reading into a sort of inner voice to something said, and said out loud.