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Worldly Interpretations of a Suspicious Story

A large number of scholars have reached agreement that historical and contemporary interpretation rests on narrative[1]. Their work involved both the study of the structure of narrative and the analysis of natural language embedded in stories. With so many people now focusing on stories, there is little wonder that great interest has emerged in the numerous techniques developed to help scholars treat of their materials. Perhaps in the near future a book will be written that classifies and describes all these methods. I for one would favour such a document.

In this paper, I want to turn the concept of 'methods of analysis' on its head. Most specifically, I want to argue that although professional techniques and methods are absolutely necessary for the scholarly study of narrative, we should not abandon the work of investigating how the story both in its production and its interpretation are a feature of daily life (Pollner, 1974) for everyone in society. It is to such commonplace story-involvement that this paper will be addressed. I especially want to show how stories become part of the world by the way events and situations are caught up in a story and how a story can get caught in events. While I seek to demonstrate this ordinary use and production of stories, in doing so I will also point to some of the most elementary assumptions (Mannheim, 1936) that all people must necessarily hold for stories to be in the world as society-making devices.

In order to show that society can be investigated in and through the mundane-story-making-process, I employed a natural approach[2] by going out one night on a tour of duty with a policeman. As we turned a corner in an unmarked patrol car he spotted four boys whom he suspected of stealing gas. Right at that time I turned on the tape recorder and caught this episode:

'NOTHING:' A SUSPICOUS STORY
by
A Cop and A Kid

Location and situation: November, 1977, night, in a prowl car driving around a city.

> Policeman (pointing to the radio): Hear them saying, 'We'd like to get a car over by the Quality Wholesale place.' We're having prowlers over there again. Let's go over and see what we can come up with. Hell, we might get a ***Bingo***.[3]

[1] A small sample of scholars focusing on narrative would include: in sociolinguistics Coontz, 1977; Patrokom, 1977; Rose, 1966; Sacks, 1972; ethnomethodology, Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970; Scott and Lyman, 1968; Ryave, 1978; Jefferson, 1978; Sacks, 1978; history Louch, 1969; Becker, 1935; Dray, 1969; anthropology, Colby, 1966; Geertz, 1975; religious studies Crites, 1971; Wiggens, 1973, 1975; Robinson, 1964; Funk, 1966b, 1977; Estess, 1974, 1976; social work, Nelson, 1972; psychotherapy, Lennard, Psathas, and Rose, 1964; Yesseling, 1970; Winguist, 1974.

[2] By natural I mean those stories that can be found in the world which have not been prompted by professional sociologists. I would not argue against the deliberate occasioning of stories as a reasonable kind of procedure as long as the 'about' character of stories is in no way decided ***a priori***. In this sense 'Rose's Gloss' (cf. Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) would be an instance of a basic research technique. The basic question is 'tell us ***about*** it.'

[3] 'Bingo!' is a word the police might use when they see a crime in progress. Being able to say '***Bingo!'*** is a rare moment for a law enforcement officer in the overall course of his work. Catching

We quickly drove over to Quality Wholesale and slowly entered the Salt Creek Truck Front.

> Policeman (talking to me, telling me what I was seeing): Now there we've got three kids. What are they out doing? Four of them. There is a car parked down there.

We slowly drove down to where the four kids were standing. The policeman stayed in the car, leaned out the window, and initiated the following conversation:

> Policeman: Hi. I'm a police officer. What are you doing out there?
> Kid: Nothing.
> Policeman: Just walking?
> Kid: Yeah.
> Policeman: Is that your rig down there, fella?
> Kid: Sure is.
> Policeman: Where do you live?
> Kid: I live up on Reserve Street.
> Policeman: Your name?
> Kid: Brian Nelson.
> Policeman: Okay.
> Kid: We're not doing anything wrong.
> Policeman: No. I'm sure you're not. Just, you know, we're checking up.
> Kid: I can see that.
> Policeman: Hell, I figured four good-looking guys like you would be out with four good-looking girls or something. Well, hell, all girls are good. Some are just better than others. Right? HA, HA, HA. Well, you guys stay out of trouble.
> Kid: We are.
> Policeman: Well, it would be worth your while not to park out in the boonies. You drinking?
> Kid: No. Honestly. We haven't got a thing.
> Policeman: What the hell are you parked down here for? Ain't low on gas, are you?
> Kid: Well, we're low on gas but we have enough to get home.
> Policeman: Well, you guys take care, huh? See you later.

Leaving the four kids we slowly drove away and the policeman began to talk:

> Policeman: Okay. Now that was a prime example. They don't have an excuse for why they are here. You and I both know that. In the brief meeting you and I know that those four, sweet little juvenile boys are up to something. 'Are you low on gas?' 'Well, yeah, but I got enough to get

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a criminal ***in the act*** produces intense excitement for policemen: after all, this is the moment when all the provisional ***realities*** of 'what is going on out there' are ***actually*** displayed right before their eyes. Bingo announces the moment when the criminal world ***indeed shows*** itself. It is a moment or split instance manifesting ***in actuality*** the ***realities*** the police expect of the criminal and of his work. Under ***well-comprehended*** circumstances Bingo or actuality will confirm expected reality. Under circumstances not well thought out, not well worked out, Bingo may not be recognized, should it come about at all.

A moment in the narrative of Bingo shows both how working with narrative is a member's job and how the involvement of the member in the narrative may produce a sense of his own being in the world now as well as a sense of his being in society (cf. Funk, 1966a: 197-207).

home.' Okay, we're looking at a 4-116, 4-16949. Now I've taken their license number. I'll just keep track in a log of suspicious-type things like this for later reference. This is like a deterrence because they know that you know who they are. The kid's name is Brian Nelson. And that is about all he told me basically. Okay, the vehicle is registered to his dad and his residence is 1200 Reserve Street. So what we have got there is we don't have criminals.

We've got the potential-young juveniles - 15 or 16. You can handle that off the cuff. They're not bad kids but they know I was there. They know I'm a policeman, and I don't think they'll be back out there. But we have had gas thefts at Salt Creek here and at these major truck fronts. It is the easiest place in the world to get gas. They don't lock their gas caps and you can get forty gallons on one side of the truck. So in my opinion they were out to steal some gas. That's an educated guess. I didn't smell booze on them. You can bullshit, and you'll find out what you want to know. But you come on hot and strong in a situation like that, you're going to alienate them and they're going to say, 'I ain't going to tell you nothing, man.' You know, 'Bust me if you want. You've got nothing. Bust me.' Well, then you ain't got nothing. So you're not going to take them in. So how are you ever going to know what they are doing?

We then turned and started driving down a main street, preparing to start prowling in another part of town.

Ethno-ontography

Before elaborating upon the suspicious story in the Salt Creek encounter, a word about my approach. In 1958 Edward Rose wrote about how the cultural scientist should make deliberate use of the outlooks of others so as to recognise 'ethno-ontologies' and 'ethno-ontographies'. (Rose, 1962: 174). Later, in 1967, in ***The Looking Glass Conversation*** he elaborated upon the meaning of ethno-ontographical work when he said:

> Any use of language as a matter of course is practical ontological work where persons find ways of talking ***about*** things to talk ***about***, so that, necessarily, realities of references obtain with successful talk. With language, especially according to the common-sense view, there are ***ta onta***, things that are there at least as things to talk ***about***. (Rose, 1967: 138).

It can be said that ethno-ontographical inquiry lays particular stress on ***deliberately*** seeing 'society as a conversation.' Rose himself would say that in fact ***society is a conversation*** and inquiry is focused, therefore, on describing the way things (onta) are made real in

conversations.[4] The quote points to the importance of the preposition 'about'. It can be noted that when people are ***talking about*** things in the world and making them real, narrative is an important talking device.[5]

We will see in a moment how the story of 'Nothing' is set within the entire encounter between the cop and the kid. In the conversation that ensues, society is made, realized, and actually encountered for the participants during the story telling itself. In sum, the ethno-ontography aims to describe and formulate contemporary comprehensions of society as things in society made real and brought to notice through ordinary stories told ***in*** and ***about*** mundane life.

'To the Things Themselves' - A Note on Procedure.

To grasp this episode of the cop and the kid, I will practice 'to the things (onta) themselves' (Funk, 1975: 52). The study of any narrative is couched in the oral tradition: understanding the ways of speaking is qualitatively different than comprehending the rules in writing

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[4] Ethnonomy is a term coined by Edward Rose in 1974. Much of what is included in this paper is based upon extensive personal conversations with Rose that took place over the past ten years and especially the last year (1979-Ed.)while I was on sabbatical leave. Much of the while we have simply termed the work 'Mountain Time' since so many of our conversations took place in Boulder and Durango, Colorado and in Missoula, Montana. Concerning his view of ethnonomy, I have this from Rose which he shared with me July, 1978.

> 'The interest is in an obdurate world ***laid out*** and made accessible ***generally through the words of people***. The concern is for ***that*** world, not for the words so much nor for the views of people, least of all my own views. With all the rest that people are doing, they take a world regularly into account ***as*** they talk. Indeed, ***in*** the course of talking they formulate together a world. Thus conversation, talking together, whatever it may be turned to, necessarily is ***ontological work*** carried on by people diligently, naturally and ordinarily without guile. In the early fifties I played with such terms as ethno-ontographies and ethno-ontologies to lay stress on ***things made real*** by people as they talk together, on things thus made ready to say and do more about. I still stress the making of things through conversation and accordingly the making of conversation, which for me exactly ***is*** society. What is thus set forth and made public by people then makes up topics for an inquiry I've lately been calling ethnonomy. ***How*** people manage to succeed in bringing a world about, much of which is heavily worded and incidentally often badly worded, in as I see it the topic of ethnomethodology, for me finding ***what*** has been made of a world and ***as*** a world through conversation requires learning ***how*** people know pretty well ***how to produce*** and provide their full circumstances, their worlds, however put into words. Ethnonomy, study of a world ***rendered there*** by people, depends on ethnomethodology, study of a world ***wrought there*** by people. I refer here just to the ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel'.

[5] I choose to see my work here with narrative as a kind of ethnonomy since I view narrative as a specific kind of conversation which gains its distinction by collecting ontologies displaying the 'about' nature of the world. I am grateful to Sam Burns for pointing out this distinction between talking ***in*** the world as contrasted to talking ***about*** the world. His work with community development is based importantly upon the ***in*** and ***about*** ways of talking (cf. Burns, 1974, 1978).

(Weiner, 1979). To understand any actual story, first the whole of it must be seized. It is like 'getting a joke;' it cannot be comprehended by dismembering it line by line, word by word, or letter by letter.

After getting the overall grasp, my next step is to go to the (words) (Things) (onta) themselves. According to this procedure, the slices from any narrative as well as the entire narrative must be permitted deliberately to propose their own unravelling. This necessitates examining the actual text and finding the meanings expressed in the actual story itself. Technically, this hermeneutical approach uses the actual concrete expressions. In addition, by going to the words, to the expressions themselves put forth in the actual situation as recorded and turned into text, I shall describe as best I can what was being said as well as point out basic knowledge assumptions (Mannheim, op. cit. 280-282; Garfinkel, 1967, 53) necessary for the construction of any story in any situation about whatsoever.

To Begin: Having a Story

We can begin a study of the episode by wondering deliberately how it is that the text shows any member[6] developing a personal interest in whatever kind of story another might have about anything.

> Policeman: What are you doing out here?

This is a crucial question in the text itself for it points to a general state of affairs of people recognizing that something in the world was out of place, was not taking place normally, or was occurring unusually (Driessen, 1969). Asking for a story from another person shows a presupposition that the other person indeed has a story. A boy, seen as out of place by the policeman, indeed had an immediately recognizable kind of story for ***that*** recognized set of circumstance (Driessen and Pyfer, 1975).

> Kid: Nothing.

The police officer caught four kids at the Salt Creek Truck Front, ***on the street.*** The policeman had then to decide through what he could see and what he could find out through the talk, whether he ***actually*** had come across a 'Bingo' he was looking for, kids ***caught in the act*** of stealing. It turned out that he missed that Bingo, perhaps barely missed ***that actual*** perpetration of a crime. But gas stealing remained as a ***reality*** in that part of town, as anyone can tell you who knows anything about that scene. It ***really*** remained as something known and as something ***there*** to talk about or not. Whether brought out or not in the talk, the seriousness of that reality occasioned a conversation, occasioned the narrative construction and management at least of what might be made of kids-caught-by-the-policeman-out-of-place-on-the-street-where-a-crime-might-be-committed. With all of that, a boy then told an interesting story: they were doing 'nothing'.

The entire encounter between the boys and the policeman came to be ***managed within the narrative***, turned into an interrogation (Estees, 1976) centered on the search for ***what then could be talked about*** more than 'nothing'. By the

[6] Member is used here in the technical sense of one who has 'mastery of a natural language where language indicated not only grammar but also its use' (Garfinkel, 1972: 304-5). My definition of member included this general definition but is sharpened to make a person who can use the story form and participate in the telling of a story along customarily and situationally appropriate lines.

way in which he talked the policeman expressed suspicion that more was happening than nothing. The boy gave him a little more: 'We're not doing anything wrong'. A reality of wrongdoing was brought up but not ***admitted to*** by the boy: innocence in the face of suspicion was made available ***for*** narrative considerations. The claim of 'not doing anything wrong' was, of course, an immediately recognizable and customary reply, typically comprising part of a scenario for a 'nothing' story. In the text we see that this commonplace claim of innocence is followed by more interrogation by the officer, no doubt fully expected by the kids:

> Policeman: You drinking?
> Kid: No. Honestly. We haven't got a thing.

Drinking for these teenagers can spell an arrest. More displays of suspicion by the policeman followed. The gas stealing story moved into the background as the policeman sought a story on drinking. Of course, in the management of the interrogation the kid claimed, 'We haven't got a thing'.

Notice the use of the term, 'honestly.' The boy tried to tell his story sincerely by appealing to the officer's sense of truth. Then quite suddenly the policeman addressed the gas stealing story. At this moment a prospect of Bingo, i.e., actuality, and the narrative, i.e., reality, merged.

> Policeman: Ain't low on gas, are you?
> Kid: Well, we're low on gas but we have enough to get home.

This question of gas moved what might be ***seen to the spoken*** (Funk, 1966a): it moved what might be taken as truth from a level sometimes called experience to the level of spoken management and construction (Berger and Luckmann 1966) or reality. If he lied suspicion would be enhanced and, just perhaps, the policeman might then say, 'I am arresting you on suspicion of attempted gas theft.' Making the right kind of reply here perhaps could keep the boys out of trouble.

The policeman then closed the story-giving and story-getting encounter when he said, 'Well, you guys take care, huh? See you later.' 'Take, care, huh?' could simply have been good-bye. But ***really*** 'Take care, huh?' and 'Stay out of trouble' meant more in this situation than good-bye: they constituted a friendly little ***warning about*** wrongdoing. In effect the officer was saying, 'I know you were down here stealing gas, and if I ***actually*** find you again down here under this set of circumstances I am going to arrest you.' Here we may see worked out through the narrative a ***real*** lesson or the point to his searching for the story. Even though the policeman did not get a story clearly involving the kids in the ***reality*** of gas stealing, ***his*** story ***actually*** got across - at least as he saw it.

As we drove away having never heard the boy actually say, 'Yes, officer, we are out here stealing gas,' the policeman seemed somewhat content with his searching through talking at having verified his sense of reality and his treatment of things actually happening. He turned and said, 'Those four sweet juvenile boys are up to something …… They were out to steal some gas.'

He knew he had his version of the story the instant he saw the kids ***caught on the street***. In fact, in listening to him it was evident that he knew the ***real*** story at

Salt Creek even before the radio told us about a possible arrest down there. Knowledge of the gas thefts was all over town. He told the ***real*** story:

> We have gas thefts as Salt Creek here at these major truck fronts. It's the easiest place in the world to get you. They don't lock their gas caps and you can get forty gallons on one side of this truck. So in my opinion they were out to steal some gas.

No doubt this account of gas stealing at Salt Creek is currently going on around town as one kind of a here-and-now story that a lot of people have heard and have told as a matter of course.

Say that every person as a member of society has a story, whether about gas stealing or about any other matter. Say further that there are ever so many kinds of stories to have and ever so many that might be told. To hear and to tell stories and to unravel realities from actual stories told constitutes commanding, elementary, common and commonplace involvement ***in*** the world and ***in*** narrative. Imagine a real world where persons carried on as follows:

> Policeman: What are you kids doing here?
> Kids (in unison): Stealing gas, officer.
> Policeman: You are under arrest!

The examples thus far show that being a competent person in society means being able to assume that everyone has a story, especially when something or some person is out of place. The stories must be appropriate for use by the people who are making worldly interpretations in life. And stories must correspond with personal versions of ***what*** particular stories should be like on any here-and-now occasion in ongoing daily life. Let us now move along.

Fashioning Involvement in the World: Telling and Helping to Tell a Story.

The imagination of any individual makes it possible to conjure up for oneself a good tale essentially told in the domain of one's own mind. This possible achievement is perhaps best left for consideration either to 'self-theorists' or to psychiatrists who are trying to help individuals sort fact from fantasy and thus render the world into a more manageable form for a person. The sociology of the narrative in a Durkheimian sense of 'collective representation' is prepared ***for*** sociologists when a speaker gives an account to a hearer ***in*** or ***in regard*** to some accessible and common set of circumstances. Admission to this set of circumstances is displayed and carried out over and over through the ***actual*** telling and the ***actual*** helping telling a story (Cummings, 1967; Gordon, 1965; Meeker, 1977; Sturten, 1971; Ramos, 1972; Smith, 1973; Scrimgeour, 1975; Anderson, 1977). Let us again look at this performative aspect of storytelling by returning to the text:

> Policeman: What are you doing out here?
> Kid: Nothing.
> Policeman: Just walking?
> Kid: Yeah.

Clearly, by asking his first question the policeman presumed that, in addition to having a story, the kids could tell it, and by supplying an answer to a question, the

policeman filled in and helped carry on the 'Nothing' story.

Imagine what would have happened had arrest simply followed in the Salt Creek encounter or had the scenario gone as follows:

> Policeman: What are you doing out here?
> Kid: I can't tell you.

Imagine this:

> Policeman: Can you tell me what you are doing out here?
> Kid: I can't tell you because I don't know how to tell it.

The actual exchange could not go that way. The boy did in fact tell his story: 'Nothing.' This nothing story was good enough for the moment, satisfying jointly-held assumptions that everyone has a story and that each can help tell it.

'Nothing' may not seem like much of a story, and the way that the boy and the policeman told it may not appear to have been very skilful. But given that no arrest was made, it appears that the 'Nothing,' story was skilfully chosen and that it accomplished its purpose in masterly fashion.

The one skill usually accorded the most attention in good storytelling is that of making the story interesting. For the speakers in Bingo, the interest lay not so much in the way or style in which the story was told nor in the reality considered but rather in how the story fitted the practicalities of the immediate situation. The kid was saying 'Nothing' to someone who had license to interrogate: a policeman. It is in this domain where 'Nothing' as a statement became relevant and therefore interesting as a story (Kjoreth, 1972). What was actually said when 'Nothing' was said was 'Nothing…. for you as a cop.' The interesting part in the story then was that the story was relevant to the realities being negotiated in the unfolding exchange between the policeman and the teenager. It might also be noted that the kid was indeed clever because his 'Nothing' story was in fact an 'Everything' story. The kid was claiming that everything he was doing at that site was not within the proper domain of the cop.[7] What commanded the attention of the participants was the narrative wording of social actuality. This elaborates a fundamental rule of involvement: a very short story can summarize and encapsulate in one word, 'in so many words' (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970), the gist of a reality, permitting even the actuality itself to remain unmentioned while still making for the management of a scene for what members may ***take*** it to be.

When the policeman was confronted with the 'Nothing' story, he demonstrated the skills persons have in getting a story told as well as in helping others tell one (Bittner, 1973).

> Kid: We're not doing anything wrong.
> Policeman: No. I'm sure you are not. Just, you know, we're checking up.
> Kid: I can see that.
> Policeman: Hell, I figured four good-looking guys like you would be out with four good-looking girls or something. Well, hell, all girls are good. Some are just better than others. Right? HA, HA, HA.

[7] I went to thank Rolf Kjolseth for giving me the insights on the relationship between domain, relevance and interesting stories.

> Well, you guys stay out of trouble.

At least one skill displayed in this sequence was that of constructing a story together acceptable to all. The policeman and the boy carried each other along, selecting and assembling topics, responding to each other, considering innocence, and injecting humour, thus permitting the policeman to make a point: 'You guys stay out of trouble.' We now can wonder whose story we are considering. What we have is a jointly-produced reality which for practical purposes of contemporary comprehension took its customarily recognizable shape. Durkheim (1958) might have proposed that it could be an instance both of a social fact and of a collective representation.

Knowing how to assemble a story just so in its actual set of circumstances may effect a mutually sought end point. A feature in the telling of this story was in fact seeing the outcome in advance, especially from the officer's point of view.

> Policeman: This is like a deterrence because they know that you know who they are.

There is not only an experienced involvement for each individual in any actual telling and any actual hearing of a story but also a strong, natural, occasioned awareness of proper telling and listening practices among people.

> Policeman: You can handle that (Bingo) off the cuff, any way you want: … You can bullshit, and you'll find out what you want to know. But you come on hot and strong in a situation like that, you're going to alienate them and they're going to say, 'I ain't going to tell you nothing, man.' You know, 'Bust me if you want. You've got nothing. Bust me.' Well, then you ain't got nothing. So you're not going to take them in. So how are you ever going to know what they are doing?

As he spoke, the policeman showed that he knew that the typical and customary ways of telling a story constrained him from discussing a gas theft actually happening or attempted. Finally, his phrase, 'If you come on hot and strong,' combined with his conclusion, 'So how are you ever going to know what they are doing?' points to his understanding the ***attending casually to stories*** actually told was his ***basic method*** of noticing and of assembling the well-known realities of theft. It seems clearly the case that all persons know that everyone has a story but that getting something ***actually*** expressed on things ***really*** going on can be troublesome. Plainly, as any policeman knows so well and encounters so often in his daily rounds, all persons are skilful at working with immediate actualities of talking while concealing or dissembling the realities that concern the police. There is at least one more basic skill brought to notice in the Salt Creek encounter; this is the skill of hearing more specifically, that of hearing everything.

Hearing a Story

Hearing is hearing, but ***hearing everything*** i.e. contemporary comprehension was taking place in Bingo. Hearing everything obviously involves the use of ways of interpreting ***what after all*** is going on (Cicourel, 1974): the narrative may actually play upon a reality attended to and yet remain unmentioned. By hearing

everything people may show that they get the point.

> Policeman: Your name?
> Kid: Brian Nelson.
> Policeman: Okay.
> Kid: We're not doing anything wrong.
> Policeman: No. I'm sure you're not. Just, you know, we're checking up.

In this sequence the boy claimed 'out of the blue' 'We're not doing anything wrong.' This statement showed to the policeman that the boy knew that the officer suspected him of being up to something wrong even though the policeman never ***actually*** said, 'I suspect that you are up to something wrong.' The boy's statement immediately showed to the policeman that the boy could hear everything and could interpret what was ***really*** going on. The officer, too, showed his interpretative skills and his comprehensions of unmentioned realities also by lying (Bok, 1976).

Now we find two levels of hearing coming into play: the listening to the spoken, to actually spoken, and the hearing of the unspoken, of unmentioned realities. The unspoken of course can be inaccessible to inquirers such as ourselves. But the policeman, as he told me later, ***knew just what*** he and the boys deliberately were ***not talking about.*** He heard the unspoken in the conversation.

Bingo shows clearly that persons know what is being talked about in an actual narrative and that on occasion they also know that what is being talked about is not what is being said. Obviously ***hearing everything*** for any member involves and revolves around careful, ongoing interpretation constantly distinguishing what-is-said from what-is-meant (Ramos, 1976).

Conclusion

From this episode of the worldly interpretation of a suspicious story, we can see how storytelling is not only an event, but how a story is caught up in other events. We can see also how the story is truly an ingenious device, available to be used by any member of society.

In ethno-ontography, society is realized when any actual narrative is being used as a way of speaking. I hope this paper shows how working with mundane stories permits the sociologist to move on empirical matters bearing on capturing the fantastic array of interpretative schemes of things (onta) made real in the world in the most commonplace ways of speaking.

Working with mundane stories put forth naturally in everyday life and searching them out for their cultural displays does not require any tight ***a priori*** definition of what constitutes a story. Stories are social facts in the world being put to use in ever so many ways by ever so many sorts of persons in ever so many different sorts of daily circumstances. All persons live and comprehend their lives and times so much in and through the use of stories that often it is easy to get wrapped up in the stories themselves and forget that stories make their appearance only ***on occasion***. It is this very coming and going, this appearing and disappearing character, that sets the story apart as a society-making tool, not only for persons involved in everyday activities but also for professionals who study society through the narrative. Let me be clear here: society is taking place whenever persons are ingenious enough to bring it about in narrative. For this society making and interpreting work to proceed in the world and in the world of

scholarship, it makes complete sense to assume for heuristic purposes that indeed every ***member of society*** has, can tell, can help tell and can hear a story ***about*** one's life and times ***in*** one's life and times. Let me conclude this paper with a quote from an old Indian man:

I will tell you something about stories.
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death.
You don't have anything
if you don't have the stories.
(Silko, 1977:2)

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