

## Person, Dialogue and Love: The Narratives of the Self

Yunhee Lee

**Abstract:** This paper uses Peirce's semiotic perspective to explore narrative ideas about identity and to examine the processes of self-formation through narration. The self is examined as an instance of semiosis that exists in three stages of consciousness, which correspond to Peirce's categories of phenomena: corporeal, social, and spiritual consciousness. I argue that social consciousness is a two-sided consciousness consisting of ego and non-ego. This consciousness is embodied in I-and-You relationships, which are the primordial forms of the narratives of self that are necessary for knowing, loving and narrating. That is, the act of loving another mediates the desire for wisdom, and love is required to know oneself. For this inquiry, I examine Montaigne's autobiographical writing, *Essays*, focusing on the friendship between Montaigne and La Boétie. This friendship illustrates dialogic love as a method for self-formation; that is, such friendships create a narrative dialectic through which the narrative self can acquire a personal identity as part of the communal self.

**Keywords:** self-consciousness, Peirce's semeiotic, Montaigne, narratives, person, autobiographical writing

### 个人、对话与爱：自我叙述

李允熙

**摘要:** 本文主要运用皮尔斯符号学原理来探讨关于身份问题的叙述理论, 同时也考察叙述对自我的建构过程。自我作为符号过程实

体存在于意识的三个阶段，正好对应皮尔斯的三个现象范畴：肉体、社会与精神意识。笔者认为社会意识是一种双面的意识，由自我与非自我构成，该种意识通过“我和你”的关系得到体现。这种关系是自我叙述的基本模式，是了解、爱与叙述的基础。也即是说，爱别人的行为调节人对智慧的欲望，要了解自我则必须有爱。基于这个问题，笔者试图探讨蒙田的自传性作品《随笔录》，主要关注蒙田与埃蒂安·德拉博埃蒂间的友谊。这段友谊阐明了对话性的爱是一种构建自我的方式。也就是说，这种友谊创造了一种叙述话语，叙述自我通过这一话语能够获得个人身份，而这一个人身份则是群体自我的一部分。

**关键词：**自我意识，皮尔斯符号学，蒙田，叙述，个人，自传性作品

**DOI:** 10.13760/b.cnki.sam.201601002

*A person is in truth like a cluster of stars, which appears to be one star when viewed with the naked eye, but which scanned with the telescope of scientific psychology is found on the one hand to be multiple within itself, and on the other hand to have no absolute demarcation from a neighbouring condensation*

—C. S. Peirce<sup>①</sup>

## I . Postclassical Narratology and the Self

David Herman described postclassical narratology as a triangulation of narrative, media and mind (2010, p. 139). Alternative names for postclassical narratology are cognitive narratology and transmedial narratology. Both approaches extend narrative inquiry from structural narratives to dynamic narratives that represent both the mind and real-life experiences across different media. Accordingly, postclassical narratology is not limited to literary or verbal narratives and can examine not only the narrative representation of words, images and actions, but also those of the mind and lived experience.

In this respect, postclassical narratology concerns the interrelationship between the internal world and the external world. The basic premise of this approach is that narratives are the semiotic representation of the internal world projected onto the

---

<sup>①</sup> Quoted in De Waal (2013, p. 155).

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

external world. Thus, the narrative representation of a storyworld is analogous to the real world as mediated by the human mind. The human mind is a medium through which the external world is represented to the internal world. That is, the internal world of fancy and the external world of fact are paired: appearance and truth, thought and language, the mind and narrative are all mediated by the human mind. From the internal world we acquire the self and from the external world we acquire the mind, which in postclassical narratology are called identity and alterity, respectively (cf. Fludernik, 2007, pp. 260 – 273). Narrative structure is not separate from narrative fact; rather, it is the representation of the mind, the inner world, which, semiotically speaking, is constituted of the self, mind, and person. This view is analogous to Peirce's objective idealism<sup>①</sup>, which views the world from an anthropomorphic perspective, producing diagrammatic thinking. In this approach, the human interpreting mind connects the internal and external worlds. This view should not be confused with an anthropocentric view, which rejects any dialogic or dialectic relation between the two systems. An anthropomorphic perspective means that the narrative structure representing the mind shapes our understanding of who we are through social interactions, which thus *become* who we are. Thus, narrative is not simply a cognitive instrument, but a modelling system through which we acquire the self. In this sense, narrative is a starting point from which the possibility of a particular personal identity can be actualised through narratives of the self.

In line with this direction in narrative inquiry, I investigate the narrative process of self-formation, examining how personal identity is attained through the transition of the narrative self to the moral self. This is associated with the evolution of community, the use of narrative techniques involving first-person perspective and dialogic love, and so-called friendships. Specifically, to understand personal identity, or personhood, this study uses a first-person perspective based on the Peircean semiotic approach and cites dialogic love as a cognitive instrument that leads to knowing one's self and others. I analyse the themes of love and friendship in the autobiographical writings of Montaigne, particularly his *Essays*, which show how

---

<sup>①</sup> Peirce's idea of objective idealism on evolution is unlike that of other evolutionists in the sense that "rather than taking matter as primordial and mind a modification of it, he takes mind as primordial and holds that matter is a modification of mind", viewing matter as in effect the same as mind, but with a difference of degree of habit formation. (De Waal, 2013, p. 151)

the external world affects the internal world and vice versa through dialogic love. I first explain the concepts of mind, self, and person within Peirce's semiotic perspective, and the narrative process of the self. Then, I discuss the relationship between fact and fiction in autobiographical writing. Thereafter, I use the case of Montaigne to illustrate how dialogicality is achieved through love and friendship. In the last section, I discuss how autonomy of the self is operative in love within the first-person perspective, which develops into the moral self, leading to the establishment of personhood in a community.

## II . The Sign in Person

What is personal identity? In other words, how can I know who I am, as I am now? How can I claim things that belong to me as mine? Is personal identity a matter of body or brain, or a continuity of memory or soul? Baker (2013) argued that the first-person perspective naturalises a property as one's own. She argued that this process has two stages: "(1) the rudimentary stage, which human infants (and some other people without language) share with certain nonhuman animals, and (2) the robust stage, which is available only to persons with complex conceptual and linguistic abilities." (p. xxii)

The two stages can be explained from Peirce's semiotic perspective. First, the rudimentary stage, during which the subject of the experience reacts to an external phenomenon, entails a double consciousness of effort and resistance. Peirce explains resistance as evidence of self-assertion. (Peirce, 1998, p. 4) For example, a child is warned by his mother not to touch a stove because it is hot. But the child touches it anyway, and finds that his mother is right. This is a moment of self-consciousness in the child's mind, as he becomes aware of his ignorance, and acknowledges that his mother's testimony is right. (Peirce, 1931 - 1958, vol. 5, para. 223, vol. 5, para. 235, vol. 5, para. 317) Both self-assertion and self-consciousness are aspects of the self-recognition that is active when the internal world encounters the external world. In this process, the self is externalised and can observe itself in a kind of double consciousness. This is the origin of the self. (De Waal, 2001, p. 79) The outer self and the inner self cooperative in a single action, but have different directions; that is, the centripetal and centrifugal movements of perception and volition. (Peirce, 1998, p. 268) Perception and volition bring about

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

a double-sided consciousness, a sense of the other and self as *altersense*<sup>①</sup>, a reaction between *ego* and *non-ego*. (Peirce, 1998, p. 268)

The robust stage involves a scientific conception of the self, which has a linguistic structure with the index “I”. The index “I” can have two different references. The degenerate form of “I” refers only to a predicate, but the genuine form of “I” refers to an actual existence that embeds a predicate in a linguistic structure. Unlike the first stage, where self-awareness emerges through mechanical actions and reactions, or cause and effect, in the robust stage a genuine index “I” connects the real person and the linguistically structured person. In this sense, in the robust stage, a subject and predicate separately indicate their object. (see Stjernfelt, 2014, Chapter 3) Naturally, this brings out perceptual and volitional judgments about the proposition (Peirce, 1998, p. 221) “who am I?” These evaluations could lead to a mediation between fact and fantasy as a way of testing whether the self is an object of “me”. In this sense, self-consciousness serves to “Mediate Cognitions, that is, Knowledges, through some third idea or process different from either the Knowing self or the Known object”<sup>②</sup>(Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 544). This leads to the dialogic process of thinking between ego and non-ego. (Peirce, 1931 – 58, vol. 4, para. 6) This mediation enhances narratives of the self by means of, for example, autobiographical writing, which establishes selfhood.

Personal identity forms through the first-person perspective, which is associated with the three phases of consciousness. Together these phases establish continuity and form the self: corporeal consciousness is regarded as the “*primisense*”<sup>③</sup> of the self; self-consciousness is derived from the “*altersense*” and is based on social

---

① Peirce identifies two parts of this double-sided consciousness *altersense*: “sensation” is “an event in which feeling is forced upon the mind”; “willing” or “volition” is “an event in which a desire is satisfied, that is, an intense feeling is reduced”. Thus, “The sense of reaction or struggle between self and another is just what this consciousness consists in. Hence, to give it a name, I propose to call it *altersense*”. (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 543)

② Peirce calls this kind of cognition *medisense*, referring to “the consciousness of a middle term, or process, by which something not-self is set up over against the consciousness. All consciousness of a process belongs to this *medisense*”. (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 544)

③ Peirce explains *primisense* as a feeling, or the consciousness of firstness, as consciousness in its first state apart from anything else. Thus, feeling (*primisense*), *altersense*, and *medisense* constitute a kind of system. (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 551)

consciousness; and “medisense” is a process, or a “medium between primisense and altersense, leading from the former to the latter” (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 551), and is based on spiritual consciousness or consciousness of a thirdness (see Peirce, 1998, vol. 2, para. 3). This suggests that the self is not pure, but rather is constructed in part by a narrative process, and thus it is acquired through mediated cognitions.

However, there is a very first stage that is not explained in Baker’s argument for the first-person perspective. That is, a stage of possibility of the self which takes the form of self-surrender and involves the corporeal consciousness associated with *primisense*. This stage is critical, as it enables us to be aware of the role of narrative construction in creating the self (the narrativists’ view), which is tied to a naturalistic view of self-making (Bruner, 2002; Löschnigg, 2010). In other words, the natural primal self, as a sign of possibility, is represented by the narrative world, which reflects who we are. Self-awareness progresses from its first stage, *primisense*, to *altersense* by way of a narrative process. In this sense, we are able to see ourselves through narrative media. Thus, we tend to rely solely on the narrative construction of the self, neglecting the ontological perspective of narrative being whose condition of being necessarily leads to the moral self within the first-person perspective. However, the possibility stage of the first-person perspective implies there can be a mimetic representation of narrative, rather than a deterministic view of narrative construction, connecting the “I” that refers to an existence based on *primisense* with the “I” represented by a narrative structure based on *altersense*. In fact, Baker explained this point in a metaphysical way, using Duns Scotus’ term “haecceity”, which in Greek means “thisness”. (Baker, 2013, pp. 179 – 182) In this regard, we are reminded of the linguistic expression of the indexical “I”, which has a double reference to both reality and appearance. This small and simple word “I” carries significant complexity and it mediates between the Outer and the Inner worlds. In this sense, the first-person perspective is a semiotic device for knowing oneself through knowing another. Herman shared this view with Baker, but adopted a different direction, drawing our attention to the “*qualia*” in narrative, that is, “the sense of ‘what is it like’ for someone or something to have a particular experience”. (Herman, 2010, p. 156) This remark implies that the ultimate goal of narrative is to infer and thus to explain *primisense* such that *qualia* becomes a sign

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

of possibility captured by an interpreting or explaining narrative. Yet self-consciousness originates only from encountering the other within the framework of social consciousness. Moreover, the self is acquired when the medisense mediates two feelings, forming a habit/idea that is originally derived from the storyworld as a quality of feeling.

In this way, the three stages of consciousness for self-formation are continuous in a surgical sense, which Peirce called synechism<sup>①</sup>: “the tendency to regard everything as continuous”(Peirce, 1998, vol. 2. p.1). In this regard, for self-consciousness involving social consciousness, continuity requires a surgical trick or an ‘I-You’ relationship.<sup>②</sup> Properties of the ‘I’ in real life become felt experience through this relationship. Accordingly, Peirce regarded the concept of the self as ‘negative’; that is, it is constituted by ignorance and error, with a glassy essence (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 5, paras. 225 – 237). To know myself is to remark that ‘all I know is that I know nothing’, following Socrates (Bakewell, 2010, p. 124). Therefore, to know myself is not a natural process, but requires a surgical treatment consisting of semiotic intervention. As we have seen, there is nothing that I can claim to be mine, except for consciousness or feelings, which Peirce defined as mind. Within the Peircean perspective, the human mind is a thing in psychics just like matter in physics, which functions by connecting and making parts continuous in time and space. (cf. Peirce, 1998, vol. 1, Chapter 23) With the living mind, we are placed in a drama of creation, as narrative beings with moral selves. Thus, this idea of self-constitution illuminates personality as a “bundle of habits”<sup>③</sup>(Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 6, para. 228) characterised by consistency. Thus, cooperation of the three stages of consciousness in a surgical sense is requisite for understanding narrative representation of the mind in cognitive narratology. As the etymology of

---

① Peirce’s definition of synechism constitutes the law of mind, which leads to a theory of evolution in a metaphysical sense, involving personal identity and community by way of intercommunication. He wrote about synechism: “The Greek word means continuity of parts brought about by surgery; ‘the establishment of continuity’ in a surgical sense.”(MS 946, p. 5) (Peirce, 1998, p. 1)

② What I mean by an “I-You” relation is parallel with the primordial term I-You (*Ich-Du*) in Martin Buber (2000, p. 15); I and you are considered a united pair.

③ As Murphey (1993) pointed out, Peirce’s definition of “a person” is not synonymous with that of “a human being”(p. 343). A person belongs to Peirce’s category of thirdness, not the category of secondness, which refers to a general idea. (De Waal, 2001, p. 84)

narrative indicates, we are “telling for knowing”.<sup>①</sup> The wisdom of love, thus, is tied to self-formation, as it develops and builds personal identity, leading to co-evolution with the universe.

Knowing me is equivalent to knowing you; that is, loving me is loving you. This is “a little trick”<sup>②</sup> in which “loving you” combined with “knowing you” establishes a continuity for the purpose of discovering the inner, virtual world of the self. Thus, knowing, loving and narrating<sup>③</sup> are the semiotic enterprises for man. They are a sign to himself, which allows the man to know his own self.

### III. The Narratives of the Self: Knowing, Loving, and Narrating

As Gergen and Gergen posited (2001, p. 163), self-narratives have three characteristics. First, the social interactions used to construct self-narratives are a special characteristic. Second, the role of social interaction must be differentiated from the role of psychologically enhanced individual autonomy—in other words, self-narrative is “the linguistic implement constructed and reconstructed by people in relationships and employed in relationships to sustain, enhance, and impede various actions”(p. 163). Third, in this sense, “self-narratives function much as histories within the society more generally”( p. 163). Gergen and Gergen’s notion of self-narratives provides a useful connection with postclassical narrative approaches to the self. They examined how the internal world is mediated by narrative structure, which they referred to as social consciousness. Moreover, as we are “mere cells in the social organism” (Peirce, 1998, p. 40), our stories function as histories with first-person perspectives. Accordingly, if our stories are without a symbolic system because they are not connected to a social consciousness, there can be no self-evaluation or criticism to guide us to act appropriately. In this sense, real life is

---

① According to Hayden White, the words “narrative” and “narration”, etc. derive from the Latin *gnārus* (knowing) and *narrō* (tell) from the Sanskrit root *gnā* (“know”). (White, 1981, p. 1 n. 2)

② Montaigne’s scepticism is considered as a kind of little trick for knowing himself, and thus the world, appropriately. He was very passionate in pursuit of wisdom and ideas, and strikingly was also passionate about how to love, following Socrates in believing that love made the self. He wrote about his love of La Boétie in *Essays*. (cf. Bakewell, 2010, Chapter 7)

③ In Biblical language, “to know” is equivalent to “to love”. In line with this, the expression “to love your neighbor as you love yourself”, indicates that loving and knowing are interrelated through cause and effect.



## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

represented by a narrative symbolic system, where the internal world of the self is represented for the purpose of objective investigation and evaluation. In this regard, I argue that the first-person perspective that is geared to knowing oneself is supposed to know another first. This leads to the realisation that oneself does not belong to the private self but rather belongs to a community of general ideas. In this sense, an individual, single person as a sign of possibility is integrated into a community. For this reason, I argue that autobiographical writing shows how the self is acquired through its relationship with another, who is a version of oneself after all, using the rhetoric of love and friendship.

The purpose of writing about oneself is to reveal oneself. In this sense, autobiographical writing raises the issues of realism and fictionality more than other forms of writing such as novels. (cf. Löschnigg, 2010) Generally speaking, cognitive narratology examines how the mind corresponds with consciousness, and how a person corresponds with a character in a storyworld. Thus, the self is constructed narratively. This is telling stories about the physical relationships among characters, which is about ideas, feelings, and consciousness that produce, through a narrative process, a sense of “what it is like”. In this way, the narrative self is formed by exchanges and interchanges of ideas in a storyworld.

Unlike a fictional narrative, in which the characters are fictional and represent established ideas, an autobiographical narrative, whose characters are real, represents the characters’ possibilities. (cf. Bruner, 2002, pp. 13 – 14; Ricoeur, 1990, Chapter 5) Whereas self-narratives are designed to investigate the internal world and connect to the external world on a community or historical level, autobiographical narratives concern the individual self and are concerned with an intimate relationship between oneself and another. In such a narrative, a character plays the role of oneself, who is the sign of a possibility that can be actualised by an encounter with another. Thus, the index “I” has a double reference: a private self, drawn from real life, and a narrated self, created in the writing. Accordingly, there are two “I”s: the experiencing “I” and the narrating “I”. However, as Löschnigg rightly pointed out, the narrating “I” has psychological autonomy, but should not be separated from the experiencing “I” and allowed to override it. He suggested that the experiencing “I” should affect the narrating “I” (2010, p. 257). I believe that this stance allows cognitive narratology to understand life events through a narrative

world. In this sense, we are symbolically mediated animals in that we are forced to use “a little trick” to know both the internal and external worlds. We follow a model of self-controlled behaviours to form habits, and these habits allow others and ourselves to recognise “who I am”. In this sense, the “I-and-You position”, as an intimate relationship in a dialogic situation in the form of oral narrative, is important for experiencing “I”. It is a way of seeing another as one’s alter ego by loving him or her. This is one’s love story, that is, love for an idea of oneself based on one’s primisense of what is possible. Peirce’s lovely expression illustrates this creative aspect of love:

It is my creation. It is my creature [...] it is a little person. I love it; and I sink myself in perfecting it. It is not by dealing out cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending them as I would the flowers in my garden. The philosophy we draw from John’s gospel is that this is the way mind develops; and as for the cosmos, only so far as it yet is mind, and so has life, is it capable of further evolution. Love, recognising germs of loveliness in the hateful, gradually warms it into life, and makes it lovely. (Peirce, 1998, p. 354)

Montaigne’s case reveals how the experiencing “I” in an intimate relationship with his friend La Boétie was transformed through self-controlled autonomous love into himself by the narrating “I” in *Essays*. For Montaigne, the narrating activity mediated between finitude and freedom (see Ricoeur, 1990), producing a therapeutic effect (cf. Lee, 2015). The real dialogic exchange of ideas with his friend La Boétie was represented in his autobiographical writing, perhaps with some exaggeration. However, Montaigne was more concerned with ideas about love and dialogue with his friend, than with realism. He used the “little trick” of scepticism to learn how to live appropriately. According to Bakewell, Montaigne seemed to have a purpose in life, to know how to live in the world. Thus, he was interested in practical philosophies such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Scepticism. Montaigne asked himself “What do I know?” His desire to live appropriately meant he viewed even Socrates’ remark “All I know is that I do not know” sceptically. (Bakewell, 2010, p. 124)

This attitude brings us to the concept of truth as it relates to knowledge formation. Appearance and truth should not rely on naturalism or psychologism. They

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

are inferences based upon experience. Truth is attained not by correspondence but by convergence (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 110), and the human mind interprets community as “co-duction”. This view can illuminate how the individual self builds a personal identity. Thus, at first, one makes assumptions about oneself, and proceeds to build an identity using a symbolic system or other people’s testimony. Subsequently, one becomes knowledgeable about oneself and the world. This process of self-formation based on knowledge is nothing but habit formation. In this regard, a factual life event is represented not as a copy or as an analogical relation. For this reason, realism in autobiographical writing is not unlike realism in other fictional narratives, as it shares the concept of narrativity based on experientiality<sup>①</sup> as a mimetic representation of real-life events. The only difference is whether the matter described is at the private or communal level. All of these objective ideas about the self contrast with Descartes’ idea of the private self as arising from thinking. Thoughts are not private, but inherently public. (De Waal, 2013, pp. 153 – 154) The human mind is like a law, functioning and mediating two or more parts to establish continuity in the chronotopical, virtual world of meaning. Consequently, the self is to be known in the same way the world is known: by way of signs, which is language.

Montaigne’s scepticism appears to change when he considers love, in particular his friendship with La Boétie. One of Montaigne’s “little tricks” is in the idea that to know oneself is to love the ideas of classical philosophers such as Socrates, Seneca, and Plutarch. As I mentioned, he used these ideas as practical advice for living, rather than just as ideas to think about. His autobiographical writing illustrates his ideas on “how to live”<sup>②</sup>, after experiencing love and loss. Montaigne was not a literary person. He was a society figure involved in law and public matters. Nevertheless, he was fond of classical philosophy. Montaigne used this dispositional quality to build his personal identity, and it was actualised after reading La Boétie’s book *On Voluntary Servitude*. It culminated in his physically encountering La Boétie. According to Bakewell, his love of La Boétie was, at first, motivated and

---

① For Fludernik, the concept of fictionality is defined as narrativity, which represents real-life experience. (1996, pp. 26 – 30)

② Bakewell (2010) attempts to give 20 answers to a simple question “How to Live”, commenting on Montaigne’s ideas of practical living and his life story.

fashioned by Socrates' love for his young handsome friend. Then Montaigne developed an intimate relationship that lasted for three years until La Boétie's death. (Bakewell, 2010, Chapter 5) Without the *Essays*, we would not have known of his internal journey in the service of knowing, loving and narrating. From his autobiographical writing we can infer his journey through the three stages of first-person perspective necessary for building personal identity: *primisense*, or corporeal consciousness; *altersense*, or social consciousness; and *medisense*, or spiritual consciousness.

Here, I consider his dialogic relation with La Boétie to determine how his dispositional character, distributed as general ideas in his writing, is consistent with our experience, even today. Certainly, his ideas have been celebrated as resonant with common experience. One of this contemporaries, Pascal, remarked, "It is not in Montaigne but in myself that I find everything I see here." (Bakewell, 2010, p. 152) A few generations later, Emerson's remarks echo Pascal's: "I remember the delight and wonder in which I lived with it. It seemed to me as if I had myself written the book, in some former life, so sincerely it spoke to my thought and experience." (2011, pp. 139 - 40)

As Bakewell pointed out, this phenomenon by which people see themselves in the *Essays* takes us back to Montaigne's philosophical homeland, the three classical philosophies, with their investigation of the question of how to live. (2010, p. 153) She demonstrated that Montaigne's inclination to the wisdom of love made this possible but, more importantly, the embodied wisdom in La Boétie, and Montaigne's intimate love of him, made it possible for us, contemporary readers, to share the ideas and to see ourselves in Montaigne's autobiographical writing. I investigate the narrative process of creating the self by way of love in the next section.

#### IV. Dialogic Love as a Method for Self-formation

For Montaigne, to know was to love. Montaigne was so interested in studying himself that it became his metaphysics and his physics at the same time. "I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics, that is my physics."

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

(Montaigne, 2003, p. 1000) Montaigne's adoption of Seneca's advice<sup>①</sup> enabled him to appreciate friendship. He expressed his feelings for La Boétie in this way: "Our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again." (qtd. in Bakewell, 2010, p. 93) He expressed his friendship with La Boétie as destiny or "as a great surge of love that swept them both away" (Bakewell, 2010, p. 93). His famous marginal addition reads: "If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I." (Montaigne, 2012, p. 79) This remark implies a unique and intimate relationship between Montaigne and La Boétie in which they were different and independent, yet their souls were united as one seamless soul. I think that La Boétie was Montaigne's alter ego, clothed in a different body, but sharing the same general ideas. This allowed Montaigne to experience a double consciousness by recognising himself in another. Furthermore, his love for ideas allowed him to recognise La Boétie as someone who embodied the ideas in Montaigne's primisense, leading to the creation of an altersense between ego and non-ego.

Let us examine how this altersense shaped Montaigne's actions. First, their relationship, which is depicted in "Friendship" in the *Essays*, appears to have been one of servant and master. His feelings towards La Boétie were manifested as worship or self-surrender. Such relationships are characterised by tyrannical dominance, which was described in La Boétie's book *On Voluntary Servitude* and at the same time reflects Socrates' love of his young and handsome friend, Alcibiades.<sup>②</sup> In sum, Montaigne was positioned as a servant offering voluntary servitude to be united with his master, La Boétie. As Montaigne rightly said, he could not explain his feelings toward him, thinking it was destiny, until he experienced La Boétie's death. Therefore, the first stage of love, in the form of a slave-and-master

---

<sup>①</sup> Montaigne followed Seneca's advice after La Boétie's death: "a wise man should be so good at making new friends that he can replace an old one without skipping a beat"; yet, according to Bakewell, "he did not really feel that anyone could replace the original". (Bakewell, 2010, p. 107)

<sup>②</sup> This relationship denotes a kind of love based on self-surrender or self-denial, which is embodied in the relationship between an ugly and wise old man, Socrates, who has a very beautiful soul, and his good-looking young friend, Alcibiades. According to Bakewell, Montaigne described La Boétie's character and appearance as being similar to Socrates'. (2010, pp. 92 - 95)

relationship, allowed Montaigne to recognise the ideas of similarity-in-difference.<sup>①</sup>

Second, Montaigne's love reconciled the gap between two feelings, that is, it was not a way of blending or uniting those feelings but of mediating them through a dialogic relation of "friendship". In line with this, Montaigne argued that friendship is like an explanatory tone, unlike the first stage of love which was characterized by his passionate feelings towards La Boétie. He wrote:

In friendship there is general, universal warmth, tempered, moreover, and even, a constant and settled warmth, all gentleness and smoothness that has nothing harsh and stinging about it. [...] Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed all the more as it is desired; since it is spiritual, and the soul is refined by practicing it, it arises, is nurtured, and is only enhanced by enjoyment. (2012, p. 76)

Montaigne compared friendship with other types of love, such as love between father and son, or man and woman, stressing that friendship is based on equality and that friends address each other as "brother". Thus, the intensity of emotion is generalised. He described perfect friendship, but when it comes to practice, a different story arises as we witness in Montaigne's passionate and intimate feeling for La Boétie.

Montaigne's sense of loss lessened this intense feeling so that it became more general than when he first loved La Boétie. True and perfect friendship was reached as he mourned La Boétie's death.<sup>②</sup> At the same time, a dialogic relationship was established between them after he lost his alter ego. Thus, Montaigne was able to provide a room for him, which La Boétie requested on his death bed, which also allowed Montaigne to have two inward dialogues: one between La Boétie and himself and the other between his old self and future self. In this regard, using a dialogic sign to mediate between ego and alter ego actualised his self-formation, producing

---

<sup>①</sup> This stage of love demonstrated their "intimate" relationship created a feeling of union that elicited personal emotions associated with their focused and purpose-driven imaginations. It was not a mere objective connection based on their common interests before they met at a festival event. The development of true friendship depends on this intimate feeling of involvement, which is a process of mediating cognition from outside-in, internalised as inner dialogue between the old and new self.

<sup>②</sup> This stage of his love for La Boétie is evaluated and justified as a true and perfect friendship thus allowing him to build autonomy of his inner life. (cf. Helm, 2010, pp. 290 – 301; Colapietro, 1989, Chapter 5)

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

stability and consistency. In the dialogic context of love and loss, Montaigne experienced loss as separation, while observing the last moment of La Boétie's life. At that time, Montaigne's feelings became alienated from La Boétie, after hearing La Boétie's strange and absurd request:

He began to entreat me again and again with extreme affections to give him a place; so that I was afraid his judgement was shaken. Even when I had remonstrated with him very gently that he was letting the illness carry him away and that these were not the words of a man in his sound mind, he did not give in at first and repeated even more strongly: "My brother, my brother, do *you* refuse me a place?" This [continued] until he forced me to convince him by reason and tell him that since he was breathing and speaking and had a body, consequently, he had his place. "True, true" he answered me then, "I have one, but it is not the one I need; and then when all is said, I have no being left." (qtd. in Bakewell, 2010, p. 105)

After surviving the loss, he restored his strength by reconciling real life (with contingency) and fancy (as a form of knowledge), an attitude he took from his classical forebears. This was a reconciliation of finitude and freedom, as well as of the external and the internal world. He not only modelled a philosophical system, but experienced and internalised a real life situation. The *Essays* was produced as his testimony to surviving love and loss in real life. Moreover, he kept a promise to leave a place for La Boétie, not only physically but also spiritually, as the *Essays* proves. They were motivated and fashioned by La Boétie, whom he loved. Montaigne's ideas influenced later generations to adopt his attitude to human nature: "At times, we are as different from ourselves as we are from others. The surest way to be taken in is to think oneself craftier than other people. Chance and caprice rule the world." (Bakewell, 2010, p. 150) In this regard, all of us have a two-part dialogic self: the self and other on the external plane, and the old and the new self on the internal plane.

Dialogue as an oral narrative presupposes the "I-and-You position" in autobiographical writing. In the dialogue between La Boétie and Montaigne at the bedside, just before La Boétie dies, the gap between what they say and what they mean is open to interpretation. (cf. Thomas, 2007, p. 83) In fact, La Boétie's request to have a place prepared for him can be interpreted as every human's need

for a dialogue partner who makes one rational and logical. Oral narratives, which appear verbatim in narrational form, demonstrate the process through which the dialogic external event is internalised through narration.<sup>①</sup>Autobiographical writing in particular—life events in a unique dialogic situation—is a form of commentary on remembered events. Thus, the experiencing “I” in a dialogic situation, as in a storyworld or real-life situation, is represented by the narrating “I” through mediating cognitions. Generally speaking, dialogue and narration are showing and telling a narrative, respectively, according to Plato’s distinction between mimesis and the poet’s voice.

## V. Narrative Dialectic: Love, Friendship and Self

As we have seen, Montaigne’s concept of friendship and its practice in his life reveal a gap, that is, a gap between the act of loving and an autonomous verbal concept of friendship. After surviving love and loss, Montaigne appeared to bridge the gap, producing an observation of himself as another in the *Essays*. In this sense, his story of love and loss in “Friendship” was not made of private thoughts, but of public thoughts that show us the human essence of knowing, loving and narrating of self. He moved through the three stages of the first-person perspective: the dispositional (possible); the rudimentary; and the robust. I have argued that the dispositional stage as a sign of possibility is actualised in the rudimentary stage, where it establishes a relationship between action and reaction. In this regard, Montaigne’s love for ideas was actualised in a particular relationship with La Boétie. In general, a conventional love story is recognised through the established form of a story. At the same time, each story is unique as it is about an intimate relationship between two specific persons. Montaigne sought to proudly demonstrate that his friendship with La Boétie was unique, as love stories continue to assert three centuries later.

Bruner posited that narrative dialect constitutes a relationship between the possible and the established world (2002, pp. 13 – 14). Narratives of the self are,

---

<sup>①</sup> This phenomenon is also observed from a child’s egocentric speech, which Vygotsky explains as a process of *internalisation* of the external, social speech, which he calls inner speech. (Vygotsky, 1986, p. xxxv; cf. de Waal, 2013, pp. 153 – 154)



## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

on the one hand, examples of a possible world, that is, I represent myself in the form of a hypothesis with a dispositional quality based on perceptual judgment of who I am. On the other hand, in a narrative of the self, I also represent myself based on volitional judgement of what I am or what I do, which is formed from social interaction with others; in this case, a proposition is established in a narrative world where the possible love story can be actualised. By mediating the inner and relative (outer) qualities of the two worlds, the narrating “I” uses an autobiographical narrative to form a self that is based on a logical judgement, where the first-person perspective connects the narrative self in the storyworld to the moral self in the real world. In other words, knowing oneself through the possible world of self-narrative, is a prerequisite for loving the other in the established self-narrative. Thus, the dialectic love of self-narratives leads to a narrative argument for personal identity, remediating the self-hypothesis in the narratives of self. In this sense, a self-narrative of love that moves the first-person perspective through the three stages is “a little trick” or semiotic device through which the self is acquired.

I now consider acquiring the self through other types of friendship. As I mentioned earlier, to know oneself requires a form of self-consciousness that is actually double consciousness. This double consciousness is two-sides or phases of one’s consciousness. Thus, without intimate feelings for another, one’s self cannot be connected to an alter ego. This phenomenon is expressed in Montaigne’s relationship with La Boétie: their souls were united, yet they were individuals. It is through their friendship that they discovered their own identity through their intersubjectivity, by way of autonomous self-controlled behaviour. They both loved a general idea about themselves that was actualised in each individual. Thus, in their friendship, they were real people with both personal and impersonal characters.<sup>①</sup> Accordingly, friendship is required to establish a self-narrative, as it is a form of love based on equality, and therefore allows for the exchange of positions or places in a dialogic context.

Self-identity is formed by the dialogical self in an intimate relationship with the other. In this sense, self-formation is not a metaphysical matter, but is derived from

---

<sup>①</sup> With reference to this idea of a person, a person is regarded as a word (Moore, 1984, p. 241; Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 591). Thus, we, as persons, are recognised by our habits of thinking.

the narrativisation of everyday experience. Therefore, autobiographical writing as self-narrative investigates personal identity, which is a narrative process arising from the dialectic being of dramatic narrative representation. It reveals both impersonal and personal qualities through the rhetoric of love and friendship. An individual human cannot be reduced to the nonpersonal, but can be an impersonal “bundle of habits” that maintain the stability and consistency needed to make an individual a word. (Peirce, 1931 – 1958, vol. 7, para. 591) In this sense, to build one’s personal identity through self-narratives is related to the process through which the communal self creates a community. To argue this point throughout the paper, I have defined dialogue and love as cognitive instruments for knowing oneself. For this reason, the possibility of love is actualised through the self-and-other relationship, which mediates the internal and external worlds. Perfect friendship as realised by Montaigne and La Boétie, provides us with a stable understanding that “oneself is another”, and this demands that we love our neighbour because he or she is I. After all, we are “a cluster of stars” in the universe. Consequently, the narratives of self-built on dialogic love in the *Essays*, show us ourselves as signs in another person.

#### References:

- Baker, L. R. (2013). *Naturalism and the first-person perspective*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bakewell, S. (2010). *How to live or life of Montaigne: In one question and twenty attempts at an answer*. New York, NY: Other Press.
- Buber, M. (2000). Ich und du (Chun Bae Kim, Trans.). *Buber Martin: Das dialogische Prinzip* (pp. 7 – 122). Seoul, KOR: The Christian Literature Society of Korea.
- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making stories: Law, literature, life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Colapietro, V. M. (1989). *Peirce’s approach to the self: A semiotic perspective on human subjectivity*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- De Waal, C. (2001). *On Peirce*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- De Waal, C. (2013). *Peirce: A guide for the perplexed*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Fludernik, M. (1996). *Towards a “natural” narratology*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Fludernik, M. (2007). Dialogue. In D. Herman (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to narrative*, (pp. 260 – 273). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (2001). Narratives of the self. In L. P. Hinchman & S. K.

## □ 符号与传媒 (12)

- Hinchman (Eds.), *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences* (pp. 161 – 184). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Helm, B. W. (2010). *Love, friendship and the self: Intimacy, identification, and the social nature of persons*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Herman, D. (2010). Directions in cognitive narratology: Triangulating stories, media, and the mind. In J. Alber & M. Fludernik (Eds.), *Postclassical narratology: Approaches and analyses* (pp. 137 – 162). Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.
- Houser, N. & Kloesel, C. (Eds.) (1992). *The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings*, (Vol. 1). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. (Originally published 1867 – 1893).
- Lee, Y. (2015). The semiotics of emotion and narrative therapy in the case of Montaigne. *Semiotica*, 204(2/4), 21 – 31.
- Löschnigg, M. (2010). Postclassical narratology and the theory of autobiography. In J. Alber & M. Fludernik (Eds.), *Postclassical narratology: Approaches and analyses* (pp. 255 – 274). Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.
- Montaigne, M. (2003). *The complete works* (D. M. Frame, Trans.). New York, NY: Everyman's Library.
- Montaigne, M (2012). *Montaigne: Selected essays with La Boétie's discourse on voluntary servitude* (J. B. Atkinson & D. Sices, Trans.). Indianapolis, IN; Cambridge, UK: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Moore, E. et al. (Eds.) (1984). *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A chronological edition* (Vol. 2). (1867 – 1871). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. (Originally published 1867 – 1871)
- Murphey, M. G. (1993). *The development of Peirce's philosophy*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Peirce, C. S. (1931 – 1958). *Collected papers of Charles S. Peirce*, 8 vols. C. Hartshorne and p. Weiss (Eds.) (vols. 1 – 6); A. W. Burks (Ed.) (vols. 7 – 8). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Peirce, C. S. (1998). *The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings*, (Vol. 2). The Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. (Originally published 1893 – 1913).
- Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Oneself as another* (K. Blamey, Trans.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stjernfelt, F. (2014). *Natural propositions: The actuality of Peirce's doctrine of Dico-signs*. Boston, MA: Docent Press.
- Thomas, B. (2007). Dialogue. In D. Herman (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to narrative* (pp. 80 – 93). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and language* (A. Kozulin, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

White, H. (1981). The value of narrativity in the representation of reality. In W. J. T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On narrative* (pp. 1 -23). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

**Author:**

Yunhee Lee, research professor of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea. Her study fields include Peirce's semiotics, narratology and movie studies.

**作者简介:**

李允熙，韩国外国语大学教授，研究方向为皮尔斯符号学、叙述学、电影研究。

Email: yunheele333@gmail.com