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Between De-narrativization and Story-Selling: From the Paradoxes of Self-narration to the Concept of Self-narrative Resistance

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Abstract
Building on Hannah Arendt's insights, storytelling is presented not merely as a literary form, but as a fundamental mode of human existence and meaning-making. However, as Yuval Harari and Byung-Chul Han suggest, contemporary digital culture has led to a crisis of narration through de-narrativization (the fragmentation of narratives into algorithmic data) and story-selling (the commodification of personal narratives). In response to this crisis, this paper proposes the concept of Self-Narrative Resistance, which examines how individuals actively challenge and reshape their own narratives against imposed structures. Rather than passively conforming to algorithm-driven representation and performative self-branding, individuals navigate and reconfigure their self-narratives as a mode of resistance. Finally, the paper turns to Donna Haraway's fictional imagination as a way to transcend traditional master plots and rethink self-narration. Speculative modes of identity construction are further explored through fictional imagination, hybrid media, and AI-based reflective interaction—enabling forms of self-narrative that move beyond normative narrative frames, toward figures such as the chimera and the cyborg. By positioning Self-Narrative Resistance as an existential-phenomenological practice, the paper proposes a renewed understanding of self-narration—as a fundamental mode through which human beings critically engage with the world, move beyond internalized narrative structures, and create new meaning in life. In this light, self-narration becomes not only a gesture of surviving the digital present, but also a way of imagining the otherwise.

Keywords Self-Narration · Existential-Phenomenological Philosophy · De-narrativization · Storyselling · Self Narrative Resistance · Fictional Imagination

1 Introduction

"Be loyal to the story."

— Isak Dinesen, quoted in Hannah Arendt (1968, p. 97).

In recent years, philosophers have shown increasing interest in how digital environments influence human self-understanding and self-constitution, particularly with regard to self-narration. While existing research on narrative identity and the phenomenology of storytelling has emphasized the central role of narrative in the formation of the self (Bortolan 2024; Heersmink 2018), recent debates have drawn attention to the ways in which these narrative practices are being structurally dismantled or distorted under neoliberal capitalism, algorithmic governance, and the digital environments of social media (Han 2024; Harari 2018). This paper analyzes the paradoxical condition in which contemporary self-narration finds itself—caught between processes of de-narrativization and the pressures of story-selling.

Yuval Harari (2018) defines Homo sapiens as a "storytelling animal," claiming that humans understand both themselves and the universe through stories. Yet in his earlier work Harari, Y. N. (2016), Harari warns that the informatization of experience through big data and algorithmic systems disrupts coherent narrative identity, replacing it with data flows and machinic modes of self-construction. At the same time, Byung-Chul Han (2024) argues that digital platforms increasingly compel individuals to commodify their lives into consumable content, leading to the branding and exhibition of the self. In today's digital condition, self-narration faces a paradoxical dual pressure: on the one hand, the fragmentation and automation of narratives via algorithms lead to a collapse of temporal and meaningful

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narrative identity—what I refer to as de-narrativization. On the other hand, the hyper-production of stories through social media forces individuals to curate their identities according to social and market expectations—what I call story-selling. These two movements are not sequential but simultaneous: self-narration is both disintegrated and overproduced, both erased and imposed. It is in this paradoxical context that this paper introduces the concept of "the paradoxes of self-narration." First, it refers to the coexistence of de-narrativization and story-selling, two seemingly opposite but interwoven forces. Second, it refers to the possibility that narrative itself—especially self-narrative—can become the site of resistance against these pressures. Paradoxically, this paper suggests that we must return to self-narration—critically, reflectively, and imaginatively—as a way to respond to the very conditions that appear to make it impossible.

This paper contributes to the emerging discourse on enculturated self-narration (Fabry 2023a,b, 2024) by proposing a new concept: Self-Narrative Resistance. As Hannah Arendt (1998) has argued, storytelling is a form of action through which human beings appear in the world and constitute reality. I argue that self-narration not only mediates human subjectivity and social recognition, but can also function as a quiet yet powerful form of resistance to imposed narrative structures. Unlike counter narratives or alternative narratives that directly oppose dominant master plots (McLean et al. 2023), the concept of Self-Narrative Resistance centers on individual meaning-making that resists reduction to ideological representation.

On this basis, I explore emerging practices of self-narration that include fictional imagination, narrative reflexivity, and narrative expansion through AI. These practices open up possibilities for self-narration to resist algorithmic capture and neoliberal commodification. The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 discusses the existential and phenomenological dimensions of self-narration through the work of Arendt and Dinesen. Section 3 analyzes the paradoxical conditions of de-narrativization and story-selling that shape contemporary self-narration. Section 4 introduces the concept of Self-Narrative Resistance and articulates its distinction from other resistant narrative frameworks. Finally, Sect. 5 proposes a pedagogical approach to self-narration through fictional imagination, exploring how narrative practices can foster existential meaning and subtle forms of resistance.

2 Self Narration: Story-telling about Oneself as a Way to Remain Alive

According to Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1998), storytelling is an essential mode of human existence that transforms the private sphere—comprising individual experiences such as thought, feeling, and perception—into the space of public appearance, thereby rendering these experiences visible and audible not only to others but also to oneself. In doing so, storytelling serves to constitute reality (Arendt 1998, p. 50). Arendt emphasizes that without storytelling and without others with whom one can share such stories, the inner experiences of an individual cannot attain reality. As she writes, "The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (Ibid.). Moreover, by drawing private and intimate experiences into the public realm, storytelling intensifies the affective intensity of experience and enables the story, each time it is told, to acquire a renewed sense of reality (Ibid.).

Thus, storytelling may be interpreted along two dimensions. First, in a phenomenological sense, storytelling is the act of making one's experience appear in the world, securing its reality through the gaze and hearing of others. Through this process, the human being comes to understand both self and world more deeply, no longer merely as a subject of private experience but as a being that emerges within the public domain. Second, in an existential sense, storytelling is not a mere sequence of narrated events, but an active and self-constituting practice through which one assigns meaning to one's existence. The human being does not exist merely by being, but comes into existence through the act of storytelling. In this way, storytelling is not simply the production of narrative; it is both a phenomenological act that actualizes being-in-the-world, and an existential practice through which one renders one's life meaningful.

Hannah Arendt, in *The Life of the Mind* (1978), discusses the existential significance of storytelling in which the storyteller and the doer are separated, using two examples from Greek mythology. The first example is a record of Pindar's lost poem, which begins with Zeus asking the gods gathered at his banquet whether there is anything they still lack. The gods then request that Zeus create "some new divine beings" who can glorify their greatness "with words" (Snell 1944, pp. 77–79; quoted in Arendt 1978, p. 132). According to Arendt, these newly mentioned divine beings are the poets—the storytellers—who, through words, render human beings immortal. For, as she notes, "the story of things done outlives the act" and "a thing said walks in immortality if it has been said well" (Pindar, Nemea 4 and Isthmia 4 in Lattimore 1947, p. 111; quoted in Ibid.).

The second example is drawn from Homer's work, where Odysseus, upon arriving at the court of the Phaeacians, hears his own life story sung by a bard. Though he never wept when actually enduring those experiences, the moment he hears the story, he bursts into tears: "Only when he hears the story does he become fully aware of its meaning" (Arendt 1978, p. 132). In these two examples, Arendt distinguishes between "the spectators" and "the participant."

The participant, being too immersed in life and occupied with fulfilling their tasks, cannot fully perceive their own actions. It is the spectator—the storyteller—who sees, organizes events into a narrative, recalls what has vanished into the past, and conveys it into the future (pp. 132–133). Arendt identifies the human longing for immortality as an essential aspiration for living a truly human life. She argues that, in pre-philosophical Greece, this was the only meaningful motivation, much like in Plato's *Symposium*, where all forms of love ultimately manifest as the yearning of mortal beings for immortality (p. 134).

However, in a narrative where the observer-storyteller and the actor are separated, the actor inevitably becomes dependent on the presence of an observer. Consequently, unless the actor is in a position where an observer is naturally present, they must generate heroic deeds or emotionally stirring and tragic events that are worthy of being noticed and turned into a story. Likewise, the storyteller, from the observer's position, immortalizes others by turning their lives into stories. Yet, in doing so, their own life remains unstoried and is forever lost. In a narrative where the storyteller and the actor are separated, "not the deed itself and not the doer," nor even the storyteller, but only the story told in words remains (p. 133).

In contrast, in *Men in Dark Times* (1968), Arendt explores self-narration—storytelling about oneself—through the Danish novelist Isak Dinesen, who exemplifies a mode of storytelling in which the storyteller and the actor are not necessarily separate. She refers to "almost any kind of world or milieu; for the world is full of stories, of events and occurrences and strange happenings, which wait only to be told," including the storyteller's own life, which itself awaits narration (Arendt 1968, p. 97). Isak Dinesen is the pen name used by Karen Blixen, who added a male name, Isak, to her surname, Dinesen, thereby "half hid, half showed her authorship" (Dinesen, cited in Arendt 1968, p. 97). This choice was a result of her keen awareness of the risks and burdens of stepping out as a female writer, a public speaking subject. It was a strategy of fictionalized self-exposure, partially concealing and simultaneously revealing her identity. This decision granted her both honesty in her self-narration and narrative freedom. Dinesen began her professional writing career in her late forties and only gained attention in the literary world when she published her first work, *Seven Gothic Tales*, at nearly fifty. Her life before this was a series of losses and hardships, including her move to Kenya, syphilis contracted from her husband, the bankruptcy of her coffee plantation, divorce, and the death of her lover, Denys Finch Hatton. Of course, it cannot be denied that her ability to turn these experiences of loss into narrative success was supported by her socio-economic privileges as a member of the Danish aristocracy. Even after the failure of her plantation, she was able to recover as a writer, thanks to class-based resources such as capital, education, and networks. However, Arendt (1968) argues that this "bitter experience of life" itself provided Dinesen with the motivation to become captivated by a rare narrative form, one that was more original than a "chef-d'oeuvre." Through all these experiences, she became deeply engrossed in storytelling as "a great passion," which led to works such as *Out of Africa* (p. 111).

Arendt particularly highlights Dinesen's self-narration in her autobiographical memoir *Out of Africa*, in which she recounts her seventeen years in Kenya and once again finds success through storytelling. However, Dinesen does not engage in self-narration "in order to become an artist, not even to become one of the wise and old professional storytellers," but rather as a way of being "fully alive," as a mode of existing—in other words, as "the way to remain alive" (p. 97). If the Greek origin of storytelling, rooted in the desire to overcome temporality and achieve immortality, enables its existential interpretation, then Dinesen's philosophy of storytelling, along with Arendt's reading of it, helps to phenomenologically understand storytelling not as a mere recounting of facts but as a way in which humans structure their experiences, assign meaning, and actualize their existence.

For Dinesen, storytelling is not merely a literary act or a factual transcription of past events; rather, it is a fundamental mode of life—one that involves repeating in imagination "what has happened" and, "whatever it may be, by recollecting and pondering over it," coming to understand the "world or milieu," seeing the stories embedded within it, articulating them, and thereby constructing meaning in life (p. 97). A story thus constructed by the individual "reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings" (p. 104). A human being who organizes their experiences into a coherent narrative through storytelling not only shapes their life into a unified story but also extends this process into the realm of destiny—no longer something fixed but something that evolves depending on how the individual reveals and interprets themselves within the world. Arendt writes, "In the repetition of imagination, the happenings have become what she would call a 'destiny'" (p. 105), illustrating how storytelling—rooted in the interpretation of one's own experiences and the world—leads to a life where the story and the storyteller become inseparable, much like a dance and its dancer.

Storytelling—especially self-narration, in which one tells stories about oneself—is not merely a retrospective act of organizing past experiences. Rather, it is a way of constituting both reality and meaning. Storytelling shapes one's personal experiences and one's perspective on the world and the environment, and by transferring these into the public realm, it grants them reality. In this way, self-narration possesses a phenomenological dimension in that it secures ontological reality by situating one's experiences within the

shared world. At the same time, self-narration is also an existential practice. Storytelling is not only an existential resistance against the transience of one's being—an attempt to endure and preserve oneself through narrative in the face of temporal flow—but it is also an existential act through which one recognizes and integrates the patterns of meaning that emerge from lived experience, thereby forming one's identity. In this sense, self-narration can be understood as an existential-phenomenological mode of being: through storytelling, the human being encounters, interprets, and comes to understand both life and the world. And through such storytelling about oneself, we remain alive.

3 The Crisis of Self-narration between De-narrativization and Story-Selling

Regina Fabry defines self-narration as "the retrospective or prospective self-referential narrative configuration of personal events and experiences" (Fabry, 2024, p. 5). However, she emphasizes that the self-narrator (the narrating "I") necessarily undergoes a process of enculturation in constructing self-narration—learning to adopt the perspective of the protagonist (the narrated "I") and solidifying the temporal structuring, epistemic coherence, and emotional connectivity of remembered or anticipated experiences (Fabry 2023a, b, 2024). Challenging the common assumption in the philosophy of mind and cognition that self-narrative is inherently unique or special, she argues: "I assume that self-narration is always prefigured, shaped, and constrained by narrative patterns, templates, and widely shared narrative configurations in the sociogenetic niche" (Fabry, 2024, p. 5). What influences this process of enculturation in self-narration is, fundamentally, narrative itself. In this sense, Fabry conceptualizes Master Plots as "narrative structures that prevail in a given sociogenetic niche"—structures that facilitate the internalization of dominant ideologies (McLean & Syed 2015; Fabry 2024, p. 6).

In my interpretation, Yuval Harari (2015, 2016, 2018) extends the scope of master plots to encompass all myths and religions, as well as ideologies such as nationalism, communism, liberalism, and capitalism. He argues that grand narratives throughout human history have profoundly influenced individuals in constructing their self-narratives. Harari identifies humans—Homo sapiens—as storytelling animals and emphasizes that their power lies in "creating and believing fictions" (Harari, 2018, pp. 271-272). While Dinesen distinguishes between fiction and storytelling by defining the latter as an imaginative reenactment of real experiences, Harari focuses on fiction—the imaginative creation of narratives—to be the foundation of storytelling, arguing that it is this capacity for fiction that enables humans to unite into collectives, amass power, and cooperate more effectively (Ibid.).

Harari argues that the grand narratives of humanity, based on fiction, have been collapsing and undergoing de-narrativization in the digital age, which signals a crisis for Homo sapiens. Of course, the idea that grand narratives are collapsing, that narratives are becoming unstable, and that they are being commodified is not a new one. Jean-François Lyotard (1979) argued that in postmodern society, grand narratives lose their trustworthiness, and can no longer possess universal legitimacy, leading to the collapse of grand narratives. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) pointed out that the traditional, solid modernity has given way to a state where identity, life forms, and narrative structures are in constant flux, which he calls"liquid modernity,"describing the emergence of unstable and fragmented narrative structures. Fredric Jameson (1991) also viewed postmodern culture as a product of late capitalism, analyzing the situation where narrative structures lose their connection to totality and history, becoming commodified and consumed as superficial and fragmented forms.

However, in the digital age, where big data and algorithms are increasingly replacing human decision-making processes, Harari specifically highlights the collapse of grand narratives and, further, the revelation of "the narrating self" as a fiction (Harari 2016). As big data and algorithms surpass individuals in understanding their past, predicting optimal present choices, and forecasting future decisions, self-narration loses its status as a fundamental mode of human existence. Furthermore, in an era where all personal experiences are digitized, preserved with near-immortality, and reconstructed or reinterpreted without being eroded by time, self-narration is no longer an essential means by which individuals comprehend themselves.

Jacobsen (2022) analyzes how algorithms influence the formation of individual self-narratives and can function in ways that limit personal autonomy through the concept of"algorithmic emplotment."Similarly, Osler (2024) explores how digital technologies constrain an individual's narrative agency and guide them toward specific narrative paths. Both focus on how algorithms and digital technologies shape how we narrate ourselves, but neither connects this to de-narrativization. However, Harari points out that humans are no longer understanding themselves narratively, but rather are changing to rely on data provided by algorithms—data that knows them better than they know themselves—to make decisions about their actions, which he connects to de-narrativization. Harari argues that instead of understanding themselves through narrative, humans are increasingly relying on algorithmic data—data that knows them better than they know themselves—to guide their decisions. In a world where data-based information is considered more reliable than personal experience, and where even subjective experiences are immediately transformed into data

under the imperative to "record it, upload it, share it!" individuals are shifting from a narrative to a data-driven mode of existence. Harari conceptualizes this shift as the emergence of data flows and predicts the advent of a datasim era, in which "the value of any phenomenon or entity is determined by its contribution to data processing"—an era that signifies the de-narrativization of Homo sapiens, the once quintessential storyteller (Ibid.).

Byung-Chul Han, in his book *The Crisis of Narration*, declares that "the informatization of society accelerates its de-narrativization" (Han 2024, p. 10). Citing Walter Benjamin, he explains that a story "does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its energy and is capable of releasing it even after a long time" (Han 2024, p, 15; Benjamin 2002, p. 148) and that storytelling "keeps a story free from explanation as one recounts it" (Han 2024, p, 15; Benjamin 2002, p. 148) —distinguishing it from information, which follows a fundamentally different spatial and temporal structure (Ibid.; Benjamin 2002, p. 148). Han points out that digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat function as "media of information, not narration" (Han 2024, p. 31). These platforms do not weave life experiences into "an extended narrative" or "synthesis" through "the conscious work of remembrance" and reflection. Instead, they accumulate fragments of information through a merely "syndetic" (Han 2024, p. 31) arrangement (Ibid.). Even Instagram Stories, a digital feature where posts disappear after 24 h, fails to function as a genuine story. Rather than creating a lasting narrative, it operates as fleeting visual information, producing a compulsive tension that pressures users to constantly share content before it disappears—before the freshness of experience fades (Ibid.). In addition, short-form video platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikTok fragment self-narration into brief video snippets. As individuals grow accustomed to these digital platforms, they shift from self-narration to self-posting, internalizing a mindset that prioritizes content production over storytelling. Instead of engaging in the reflective and narrative process of linking past, present, and future through extended thought, users increasingly adopt an approach that treats experiences as content to be instantly shared.

However, Byung-Chul Han does not only critique de-narrativization through algorithmic thinking and the datafication of human experience. He also sharply criticizes the present era, in which the development of digital platforms has converged with neoliberalism, reducing storytelling to story-selling (Ibid.). Foucault, in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, describes neoliberalism as the theory of homo-economicus, defining homo-economicus as "an entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer" and explaining neoliberalism as the economization of all spheres of life, not just the economic domain (Foucault 2008, 226). In this context, Han, in *The Expulsion of the Other*, points out that neoliberal digital society compels individuals to exploit themselves by constantly producing themselves as commodities, positioning themselves as both the author and the creator of their own existence. He argues that individuals generate commodifiable difference—a marketable uniqueness— and post it on digital platforms, effectively subjecting themselves to self-exploitation (Han 2018, pp. 18–20). In a reality where self-expression along with high engagement and view counts are directly linked to social and economic success, people increasingly commodify their identities in order to capture attention. This process ultimately leads to story-selling—a form of storytelling that serves the purpose of self-promotion and branding rather than genuine narrative expression. Han underscores that this story-selling does not signify the return of narration but rather its instrumentalization and commercialization. He further critiques how contemporary concerns with "How do we best use storytelling?" and the proliferation of storytelling seminars are, in fact, closer to story-selling than to genuine storytelling (Han 2024, p. 73).

Based on Han's critique, one can critically assess Yuval Harari's prediction that, in the age of big data and algorithms, grand narratives and self-narration will collapse entirely, causing Homo sapiens, once a storyteller, to lose the ability to engage in storytelling as everything becomes datafied. Contrary to this, the neoliberal digital era exhibits a simultaneous process of de-narrativization and story-selling, wherein the neoliberal discourse of self-development and the digital commodification of personal experience emerge as new master plots. Unlike past grand narratives, which provided collective meaning (Harari 2016), contemporary story-selling emphasizes individualized narratives, fostering self-exploitation and absolute competition within oneself (Han 2015). This results in the internalization of self-narration as a form of personal branding, compelling individuals to continuously produce content about themselves. As Fabry (2024) points out, socio-culturally shaped master plots manipulate individuals' self-narration while simultaneously reinforcing and propagating these master plots through the very self-narratives they shape. The entire process of self-narration is completed through the implicit internalization of master plots, which lead individuals to believe they are acting according to their own freedom and desires.

Such story-selling requires even more rigorous criticism, precisely because it holds existential and phenomenological influence. The algorithms of digital platforms guide users to select narrative types that are more likely to gain attention—that is, stories that sell better—and this choice repeatedly blurs the roles of consumer and producer. In this process, users fall into a cycle of self-identification, presenting stories they believe to have created to others, while simultaneously defining themselves through the stories they present. For example, the stereotyped narrative structures performed

by certain types of influencers—successful twenty-somethings, free-spirited travelers, or working mothers balancing childcare—reproduce existing social roles, while also constructing diverse and new master plots. This functions as what Fabry (2020) calls "narrative scaffolding," meaning the cultural structures that the self refers to when forming its story, ultimately occupying and controlling the space of self-narration. In this way, story-selling is not merely the act of selling stories; it mediates identity not only on an existential level—by outsourcing narrative authority—but also on a phenomenological level, by reshaping how individuals perceive and interpret their lived experience.

Furthermore, a common limitation can be found in the analyses of both Yuval Harari (2015, 2018) and Byung-Chul Han (2024): they do not sufficiently distinguish between self-narration and grand narrative, despite the fact that these are grounded in fundamentally different psychological and cultural mechanisms. Both thinkers analyze the narrative nature of the human being as something that is dismantled or distorted under digital capitalism, yet they tend to conflate the act of narrating oneself (self-narration) with historically transmitted and collectively shared grand narratives. Moreover, there is a tendency in their work to treat the former as inferior to, or regressive in comparison with, the latter. Han, in particular, characterizes contemporary self-narration as story-selling, considering it a branded mode of self-display and a product of neoliberal commodification, sharply contrasting it with what he sees as authentic, traditional storytelling. Citing Benjamin, Han presents the premodern storyteller and story—premised on a narrative community and on the presence of listeners—as a vehicle of wisdom transmission, and views modern narratives of the future and progress as a continuation of this lineage, capable of initiating social transformation. For Han, such narratives belong to the domain of the communal and the grand, and thus represent a normative ideal (Han 2024). By contrast, in the Preface to *The Crisis of Narration*, Han dismisses contemporary forms of storytelling—particularly those mediated by social media and characterized by self-narration—as "merely forms of pornographic self-presentation or self-promotion," and offers the following critique: "Narratives create a community. Storytelling, by contrast, brings forth only a fleeting community. (Han 2024, p. 9) … Storytelling produces narratives in a consumable form.… Storytelling is storyselling" (Ibid.).

However, storytelling about oneself—that is, self-narration—has always been situated within social and cultural contexts and has been entangled with the desire for recognition from others. It has never existed as a purely disinterested or exclusively collective-historical act. Arendt, in *The Life of the Mind*, points out that storytelling emerged in ancient Greece because human beings, in the "world of appearances," required praise and recognition from others—namely, from spectators—in order for their actions to be seen and remembered (Arendt 1978, p. 132). She further notes that the truly great deeds of human beings were not undertaken for the sake of the fatherland or the nation, but rather in pursuit of "eternal mention in the deathless roll of fame" (Ibid.; Plato *Symposium*, 208c). Moreover, as Arendt writes in *The Human Condition* (1998), storytelling constitutes the reality of the self by bringing what is private into the space of public appearance. Because "our feeling for reality depends utterly upon appearance and therefore upon the existence of a public realm into which things can appear out of the darkness of sheltered existence" (Arendt 1998, p. 51), the human being is, in an ontological sense, dependent upon a public—an audience capable of hearing and seeing one's story—in order for one's reality to be constituted.

Arendt argues that with the advent of modernity, the decline of the public realm and the simultaneous expansion of private life—though it enriched and deepened our subjective emotions and private feelings—came "at the expense of the assurance of the reality" due to the lack of appearance in the public sphere (Arendt 1998, p. 51). In contrast, in today's digital era, individuals who may have lacked the linguistic capacity to construct narratives or access to platforms through which to disclose their stories, can now curate and present their lives through social media in the form of short texts, images, and videos. These new hybrid formats allow people to share their stories, receive recognition from others and from the broader community, and thereby construct new forms of reality for themselves. Indeed, the culture of SNS, such as the selection and arrangement of photos and the rapid posting of short videos, provides a convincing analysis of how it can suppress episodic self-narration. However, even if major life events like travel or graduation are posted in fragments, they cannot prevent those events from becoming part of one's biographical narratives. These acts are not mere spontaneous expressions but rather align closely with the self-narrative construction process emphasized by Peter Goldie (2012, p. 3)—selecting, organizing, and connecting raw materials such as events, thoughts, and emotions, while adding emotional and evaluative coloring. Richard Heersmink (2020) stresses that an individual's identity is connected to digital artifacts in a distributed manner, suggesting that the online posts curated by users can be viewed as a narrative practice that externalizes and organizes pieces of life. Bortolan (2024) also emphasizes that social media platforms can contribute to the formation of self-narratives and that users still retain considerable control over their digital content.

In particular, the tendency for users to construct consistent stories that align with specific social identities ("artist," "entrepreneur," "maximalist," etc.) or concepts ("authentic confession," "trends for recording grief," "meme creation") and upload them to social media reveals the

narrative self-formation in the digital age. This simultaneously influences how individuals perceive the world and construct their meaning, functioning not just as an external performance but as a narrative norm that becomes internalized by the self. In this context, self-narration on social media may be understood as a phenomenological-existential mode through which human beings relate to others and socially constitute their own existence. The contemporary desire for self-expression, too, can be seen as a transformed expression of a fundamental human need, and thus cannot be wholly reduced to the logic of story-selling.

However, as Byung-Chul Han notes, this desire—when internalized within the neoliberal achievement society and its master plot of the "Unlimited Can," (Han 2015 , p. 8) where one is led to believe that they can become anything—can result in what he calls compulsive freedom, "the free constraint of maximizing achievement" (Han 2015, p. 11). When individuals, driven by the imperative to ceaselessly produce and project themselves, begin to exploit themselves in the pursuit of ever-increasing self-performance, self-narration becomes a site of internalized pressure. If this dynamic leads to depression, burnout, or other forms of psychological exhaustion, it constitutes what Han (2015) refers to as the "pathological manifestations" (p. 11). At this point, the problem exceeds that of mere story-selling; it becomes the self-exploitative collapse of storytelling itself. As a result of this self-exploitation, storytelling no longer functions as a free act of self-expression. Instead, it devolves into a commodified narrative tailored to the gaze and expectations of others. Storytelling, in this process, loses its existential and phenomenological force and quite literally turns into story-selling.

Moreover, Richard Heersmink's (2020) argument—that personal identity is connected to digital artifacts in a distributed manner, and that users' curated online posts can also be viewed as narrative practices that externalize and construct fragments of life—may be rebutted by the fact that those individual autobiographical memories dispersed across digital environments do not necessarily connect to form an integrated self-narrative itself. Heersmink (2020, p. 53) identifies technologies such as self-tracking and lifelogging applications as "particularly powerful autobiographical memory technologies," arguing that through these tools, we can not only maintain access to important past memories but also construct self-narratives based on more reliable memories. Furthermore, Heersmink (2018, 2020) contends that since autobiographical memory is distributed across not only the brain but also the body, environment, tools, and social interactions, self-narratives are likewise distributed across these domains, and a distributed self-narrative need not be a self-coherent story.

However, Fabry challenges this claim by asserting: "From the premise that we can ascribe the property of distributedness to autobiographical memories (parts), it does not follow that we can ascribe this same property to self-narratives (whole)" (Fabry 2023b, p. 1259). Extending Fabry's argument, while autobiographical memories may indeed be dispersed across digital environments—and while fragmented narratives might be considered part of a broader self-narrative—this does not inherently guarantee the formation of a self-narrative per se. In other words, curating fragments of autobiographical memory (e.g., organizing photos or videos and uploading them to social media or storing them in digital devices) may appear to narrativize the self, or even seem more reliable. Yet without the synthesizing agency of an actively engaged subject—one who reflects, interprets, and emotionally integrates these fragments—such practices remain inherently fragmented. Mere partial curation (e.g., photo albums, short-form videos) does not spontaneously weave a meaning-making narrative of the self. Therefore, autobiographical memory technologies alone cannot ensure the formation of integrated self-narratives.

Jacobsen (2022, p. 1085) explains automated narratives created by AI and algorithms through the concept of "algorithmic emplotment." Today's platforms and algorithms collect and sort our data to present past and present as a "meaningfully" constructed story. This is an attempt to perform the same function as Ricoeur's (1983, p. 36) notion of emplotment—the "synthesis of heterogeneous elements," (Jacobsen, 2022, p. 1085; Ricoeur, 1983, p. 36) integrating the minimal necessary components of a narrative (characters, events, temporality, etc.) into a unified structure. However, there is an important difference. For Ricoeur, emplotment was an act in which the "*subject of meaning*" actively intervenes to narrate their life. In contrast, automated narratives remove this subjectivity, with algorithms structuring the narrative on their behalf. The "speaking self" disappears, and only the words remain. These automated narratives ultimately weaken an individual's ability to integrate events, emotions, and experiences from their life into a coherent self-narrative and to construct meaning within it. Therefore, judging narrative competence solely by the "existence" of a story is insufficient. The key question is who is telling the story, why, and how. In this regard, when AI-generated self-narratives are repeated and consumed without internal awareness, we are not simply losing the story itself but are placed in conditions of de-narrativization, where we lose "my story." In this context, de-narrativization should not be understood as the complete disappearance of stories, but as a situation where the integrated structure of self-narration (identity, temporality, meaning structure) collapses or becomes unconsciously formalized.

Furthermore, Osler (2024, p. 3) names the phenomenon where platform algorithms guide users' self-narration along specific paths as "narrative railroading," offering a critical response to the optimistic views of Heersmink and

Bortolan. She particularly points out that digital technologies can restrict the formation of users' identities through the narrative structures inherent in platforms, and argues that this should be seen as not merely an individual issue, but as a social and structural problem. These conditions reveal a crisis where the "I" as the subject capable of constructing a self-narrative is at risk of disappearing. The narrative structures based on platforms affect not only users who actively post, but also observers, recipients, and "non-users" of social media who may not engage directly in posting. Osler (2024) explains that "The enculturation of our narrative practices and narrative products are, in part, taught through language, cultural artifacts, social imitation, and interaction," emphasizing that the way we construct narratives is socially learned merely by listening to and observing others' narratives. In other words, even if one does not directly post on SNS, the narrative structures and identity models repeatedly exposed can influence the formation of an individual's self-narrative. Therefore, rather than simply asking about the existence of a story, we must inquire about who is telling the story and what subjectivity is behind it. In this regard, "Self-Narrative Resistance" emerges as a key narrative practice responding to the paradox of the digital age, where the excess of stories and the collapse of self-narration occur simultaneously.

4 Self-narrative Resistance

Fabry (2024) proposes counter narratives as an effective means of resisting and challenging master plots (Fabry 2024; McLean et al. 2023). Self-narrators from marginalized groups, who have been oppressed by dominant master plots, need to construct their own narratives rather than conforming to existing ones when recounting past experiences or anticipating future ones. Kate McLean (2023) introduces a broader concept than counter narratives—namely, alternative narratives—which she defines as narratives developed "in reference to master narratives, pushing back against their constriction and push towards conformity, providing an alternative script for the narration of one's experiences" (McLean et al. 2023, p. 810).

However, McLean (2023) critiques alternative narratives for their inherent inability to be neutral. Because they seek to establish narratives outside the dominant group's master plots in an emancipatory manner, they can, in some cases, become hegemonic or even oppressive (p. 810). In other words, alternative narratives, despite aiming to challenge dominant narratives, may fail to encompass the full diversity of experiences within marginalized communities. When an alternative narrative gains recognition as a representative account of an oppressed group, it can inadvertently marginalize those whose experiences do not align with it, thereby generating a new form of exclusion. Additionally, McLean (2015) points out that because alternative narratives position themselves explicitly in opposition to master plots, they inevitably—whether intentionally or not—presuppose the recognition and legitimization of the very master plots they seek to resist (McLean et al. 2015, p. 325).

In addition, according to Moin Syed (2020), if alternative narratives become sufficiently widespread and influential, they may work to explicitly redistribute the implicit moral authority of master narratives, either by reallocating or erasing moral blame (Syed et al. 2020, p. 512). This suggests that alternative narratives carry an implicit expectation that they must reach a level of public acceptance strong enough to enable such a redistribution of moral authority. As a result, this places both an explicit and implicit burden on the self-narrator to ensure that their narrative gains sufficient traction to effect such a shift.

Thus, I propose a new concept—Self-Narrative Resistance[1]—as a way to overcome the potential emergence of yet another hegemony that may arise when individuals, as representatives of an oppressed group, construct alternative narratives or counter narratives in opposition to master plots. Rather than positioning itself in direct opposition to any master plot or claiming representational authority over a group, this concept centers on the act of self-narration—telling one's own story of life and experience—and derives its resistant force from a refusal to be absorbed into totalizing narrative structures. In doing so, Self-Narrative Resistance functions as a form of resistance by virtue of its detachment from any totalizing framework. In other words, Self-Narrative Resistance refers to a narrative act in which an individual does not simply conform to the dominant narrative framework, but questions, distances themselves from, reflects upon, and sometimes deconstructs it, imagining alternatives and reconstructing their own way of narrating their life. This concept is closely related to Fabry's (2024) analysis of enculturated self-narration, which emphasizes how socio-culturally shaped narrative frameworks—particularly dominant master plots—are acquired through enculturation and perpetuated through structurally oppressive niche dynamics. However, this paper differs in that it not only recognizes these structural conditions but also emphasizes the possibilities of imaginative and narrative experimentation in which individuals shake off and break free from these frameworks. While Fabry primarily focuses on "how cultural structures shape the self," this paper conceptualizes Self-Narrative Resistance around "how one can escape these structures through literary or fictional narrative practices."

[1] This term was inspired by the following passage from Fabry (2024): "While counter narratives and counter plots have become more common in recent years, their creation is an active, effortful act of Self-Narrative Resistance and the rejection of womanhood- as-motherhood master plots in the ontogenetic niche.".

Self-Narrative Resistance is defined as an act of critically responding—through narration of one's own stories, memories, or identity—not only to master plots but also to the dangers inherent in story-selling and de-narrativization. However, it differs from counter and alternative narratives in its specific focus on individual meaning-making that refuses to be reduced to ideological representation or collective identity. Going beyond mere self-expression, it involves reflective consideration of the social frameworks shaping narratives and the structural impacts these have on the very possibility of individual existence. In this context, Self-Narrative Resistance does not reduce an individual to a mere representative of a specific group's plot or ideology. Instead, it respects the complexity, fluidity, and ambiguity of individuals who might simultaneously belong to contradictory or divergent categories, or perhaps fully to none—individuals whose identities shift according to temporal, situational, and internal contexts. Rather than collapsing identity into fixed categories, this narrative practice critically reflects upon such categories themselves and highlights the potential for individuals to construct their own unique narratives and meanings. At times, this Self-Narrative Resistance employs fictional imagination to escape or subvert normative narratives, striving to transcend self-narratives that are constrained by one's everyday reality. Self-Narrative Resistance can thus be clarified through the following four theoretical conditions:

1. Meta-critical Sensitivity toward Narrative Structures—Self-Narrative Resistance must incorporate a critical sensitivity to the potential pitfalls inherent in narrative practices. It acknowledges that while one's narrative resists certain norms, it might simultaneously reproduce or reinforce other normative or oppressive narratives. Therefore, Self-Narrative Resistance demands awareness of, and critical reflection on, these potential contradictions and dangers.
2. Cultivation of Identity Autonomy—Self-Narrative Resistance distinctly differs from counter-narratives or alternative narratives, which primarily arise as reactions to collective ideologies. Rather, it emphasizes narrative practices aimed primarily at reclaiming autonomy over one's own voice, meaning, and identity. Self-Narrative Resistance does not reduce individuals to representatives of specific social categories or ideologies but protects personal autonomy by recognizing identities as multilayered, fluid, and capable of simultaneously occupying contradictory or diverse categories. This approach highlights individual meaning-making and the possibility of self-definition, not by anchoring identity in fixed symbolic systems but by acknowledging identity's internal complexity, ambiguity, and contextual variability. Thus, Self-Narrative Resistance itself becomes a form of resistance against master plots as well as the dangers of story-selling and de-narrativization.
3. Engaging with Fictional Imagination—Self-Narrative Resistance frequently employs fictional imagination to escape from or subvert dominant narratives. However, fictional narratives are not an absolute prerequisite; at times, a reflective distancing alone can reveal oppressive aspects of existing plots. The core issue here is how fiction serves as a mode of selfing—beyond mere fictionality, it must function as a practice of imaginatively reconstructing and meaningfully integrating one's identity, emotions, memories, and experiences into narrative form.

For instance, Self-Narrative Resistance can be seen in how Isak Dinesen, in her autobiographical memoir *Out of Africa*, revisits her life through imaginative re-living and, in doing so, discovers and narratively composes meaning from her experiences. Through this process of sincere reflection and aesthetic contemplation—through the very act of self-narration—she resists dominant master plots in ways that arise organically from the layered particularities of her life. These include, for example, her departure from Denmark to forge a new life in Kenya, challenging gender role expectations of the time; her suffering from syphilis transmitted by a dissolute husband; the collapse of her coffee farm; her divorce; and the eventual death of a newly found lover. These painful, repeated disruptions form a narrative trajectory markedly different from conventional heroic plots. Even without explicitly positioning her story as a counterpoint to any singular master plot, her life itself functions as a form of resistant narrative.

However, one aspect of Self-Narrative Resistance that we must not overlook is that self-narration is inherently focused on one's own life, making it difficult to adopt a critical perspective that transcends one's own experiences and environment. As a result, self-narratives are not necessarily resistant or liberating; they can function to conceal and distort dominant ideologies and masterplots. Specifically, Dinesen's autobiographical memoir *Out of Africa* critiques masterplots such as gender role expectations, but at the same time, it reinforces a colonial masterplot. The writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o once described *Out of Africa* as "one of the most dangerous books ever written about Africa," criticizing what he saw as its condescending tone disguised as affection (Jaggi 2006). In *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981), he critiques how Dinesen's *Out of Africa* depicts Kenya as a vast, erotic dreamland, where her various white lovers are portrayed as "young gods" (Ngugi 1981, p. 35) and Kenyan servants as "usable curs and other animals" (Ngugi 1981, p. 35). He also points out how the death of Kitosch, a young native who was brutally beaten and left to die by his master, was cleverly concealed and allowed by the legal

system, and how Dinesen romanticized the event, portraying Kitosch's death as noble, a victim's voluntary demise. He sharply critiques her for "celebrating a hideous colonial aesthetic" (Ngugi 1981, p. 35). While Dinesen resists fixed gender roles and conventional male hero narratives, her narrative, in fact, strengthens the imagined stereotypes of colonial utopia, noble savages, and benevolent colonizers, thus glorifying colonial ideologies. In this context, what distinguishes Self-Narrative Resistance from existing self-narratives is its emphasis on a meta-critical sensitivity toward narrative structures. That is, self-narratives should not only resist certain norms but also recognize the potential to reproduce or reinforce other norms or oppressive narratives, and incorporate a critical awareness of those potential traps.

In contrast, Ngugi's lifelong anti-colonial literary-philosophical project serves as an intriguing case study of Self-Narrative Resistance. Ngugi argues that imagination itself is "not just a form of creativity; it's a form of resistance" (Marshell 2018) in an article for *The Guardian* on March 12. He wrote his autobiographical novel *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981) about his year in a high-security prison in 1978, where he was imprisoned without trial due to his political beliefs. Even in the highly controlled space of the prison, he continued to speak through writing, refusing to let his voice be silenced. Through his self-narration of imprisonment, he rejected the narrative structures imposed by others, and through his reflections, he internalized the processes of colonial power, censorship, and oppression, fulfilling the conditions for critical reconfiguration of self-narrative resistance.

However, Self-Narrative Resistance is not about collective opposition to public discourse or ideological responses like "alternative narratives" or "counter-narratives." Rather, it focuses on the process by which individuals seek to secure autonomy over their voice, meaning, and identity in their self-narrative. Therefore, while meta-critical sensitivity is an essential attitude and a byproduct of this process, it should not become the goal in itself. Self-Narrative Resistance is more about speaking differently rather than simply critiquing, and is closer to the practice of selfing than to argumentative opposition. In this sense, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* may exemplify one aspect of self-narrative resistance, but it focuses more on the realistic representation of events without the intervention of literary imagination or fiction, giving greater emphasis to political denunciation and social critique. Thus, *Detained* can be read as an important boundary case of self-narrative resistance, but because it is focused on resistance grounded in reality, it is mixed with alternative narratives. Self-Narrative Resistance often emerges in ways that are intertwined with other self-narratives, so it should be understood not as a "complete escape" but as an "experiment in fractures." This concept provides a unique analytical possibility in that, while overlapping with existing theories, it intervenes to creatively deconstruct internalized structures through fiction and practice.

Self-Narrative Resistance extends beyond Dinesen's autobiographical storytelling by incorporating the realm of fictional imagination into the scope of self-narration. In this expanded framework, the narrating "I" naturally infuses their personal life experiences into the story, while the narrated "I"—the protagonist—may be only partially or entirely different from the actual self, whether physically, environmentally, or narratively. This allows an individual to experience a fictional reality distinct from their own, while still embedding within it "the retrospective or prospective self-referential narrative" (Fabry 2024, p. 5). By recognizing such narratives as self-narration, this concept broadens the scope of what constitutes self-narrative expression. This marks a significant departure from Dinesen's approach to storytelling, which distinguishes between imagination and fiction, advocating for patience in accepting life as it unfolds rather than fabricating fictionalized versions of it. In contrast, Self-Narrative Resistance does not view fiction as a tool for enforcing a predetermined destiny or idea. Instead, it leverages fictional imagination within storytelling to transcend the constraints of one's personal experience, environment, and reality. This enables individuals to envision alternative possibilities and destinies beyond the confines of their existing self-narrative. Rather than imposing life onto a preconstructed story—a tendency that Dinesen warns against—this approach does not fit the individual's life into a story. Rather, it allows them to imagine lives beyond their own and to realize them within self-narration as a means of new meaning-making.

For example, as revealed in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, while in prison in Kenya, he wrote his novel *Devil on the Cross* using thick, rough toilet paper and wrote it not in English but in his native language, Gikuyu. This novel, based on his experience of political oppression, uses fictional imagination to tell the story of a young woman who fights against racial and sexual oppression in post-colonial Kenyan society. While the novel is grounded in his political oppression experience, it expands beyond his own life by using fiction to narrate the life of a woman facing oppression—an experience he himself never directly lived. In other words, he not only internalized the oppression he faced using Gikuyu but also extended his self-narrative by imagining and narrating the life of a woman, thus moving beyond the limits of a master plot restricted to his own experiences. This example illustrates the concept of fictional self-narrative within Self-Narrative Resistance. In this case, the author's identity, emotions, experiences, and memories are reflected within the fictional narrative, through which he reimagines and gives meaning to himself. Unlike mere fiction, fictional self-narratives explicitly operate as

practices of selfing. Therefore, not all fiction possesses a self-narrative character. From the perspective of self-narrative resistance, the key lies not in the use of fiction itself but in how it functions as a mode of selfing.

Furthermore, Self-Narrative Resistance distinguishes itself from Yuval Harari's Harari (2015, 2018) notion of fictional stories, which serve as the foundation for collective cohesion and efficient cooperation in human history, as well as from Byung-Chul Han's (2024) critique of story-selling in the neoliberal digital age. Self-Narrative Resistance does not seek to position itself in direct opposition to master plots or counter plots; rather, while maintaining a critical awareness of the grand narratives and counter-narratives that inevitably enculturate an individual's life, it focuses instead on the narrative itself—the process of repeatedly imagining, and even fictionally envisioning, the stories that feel personally meaningful and compelling to the individual. This approach ensures that an individual's self-narration is not subsumed by the broader role or significance that self-narration is expected to hold within society or the community.

Moreover, Self-Narrative Resistance resists the neoliberal imperative to commodify one's experiences for external recognition or validation—a process that often transforms self-narration into content for public display and sale. Instead, it emphasizes a self-narration driven by an inner compulsion to tell the stories one genuinely wants to tell, regardless of whether they reach a broad audience, gain recognition, or generate income. By doing so, it encourages individuals to recognize self-narration beyond the master plots imposed by neoliberal branding and digital platforms, which pressure individuals to frame themselves as compelling narratives designed to capture attention. In this way, Self-Narrative Resistance naturally resists the transformation of storytelling into story-selling.

Self-Narrative Resistance is not simply about opposing dominant masterplots; it is also a response to the condition where coherent self-narratives are gradually weakening in the age of narrative excess and automation. In today's digital environment, almost every action is turned into data, and AI automatically recalls and predicts our memories and preferences. At the same time, while everyone expresses themselves through formats like shorts, reels, and feeds, these fragments are often consumed in a disconnected manner, without the narrative flow or reflection that connects the past, present, and future. This makes it difficult to realize the narrative ability that forms the self, that is, a coherent self-narrative. In these conditions, Self-Narrative Resistance does not give up on storytelling. Rather, it emerges as a narrative attempt to experiment with and construct new plots for identity, even while acknowledging fragmentation and disconnection.

Of course, imagination and fiction may also be deeply enculturated by masterplots. However, Self-Narrative Resistance is an imaginative and creative practice that captures the gaps within these enculturated structures, twists them, and generates new possibilities. Therefore, Self-Narrative Resistance is not merely about expressing or revealing a given self-identity, but begins with the reflective question, "In what narrative structure am I living my life in this society right now?" This question leads to a critical re-recognition of the empirical and symbolic context one finds oneself in, and by narrating that process of recognition, it attempts to reconfigure oneself and create a new version of oneself moving forward. In this sense, Self-Narrative Resistance is a phenomenological act that seeks to reinterpret the world surrounding oneself and one's position, as well as an existential act that practices the creation of new meanings.

5 Fictional Imagination and the Role of Education

> But there is another route to having less at stake in masculine autonomy, a route that does not pass through Woman, Primitive, Zero, the Mirror Stage and its imaginary. It passes through women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs, not of Woman born, who refuse the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life Haraway's (2013, p.177).

At first glance, presenting Donna Haraway's (2013, p.177) fictional imagination—which she proposes as a powerful counter-narrative against male- and Western-centric master plots in socialist feminism—as an example of Self-Narrative Resistance, which distinguishes itself from alternative narratives or counter narratives, may seem paradoxical. As evident from the excerpt of Haraway's work cited above, she proposes the narrative of "women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs" as a counter to the masculine autonomy of Western men. To this, she adds the following qualification: "who refuse the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life." This highlights a focus on women who seek to live real lives, rather than being positioned as conceptual resources within master plots. These women are not necessarily those who have undergone specific past experiences, nor must they be biologically female in a conventional sense. Rather, they are beings that exist in the present, embodying a cyborg identity—an identity that transcends conventional gender categories.

As a form of resistant exploration against master plots, Self-Narrative Resistance critiques the instrumentalization of such women—or cyborg-like beings that transcend gender—as ideological resources in counter narratives, particularly within the framework of socialist feminism as a project of subversion. Thus, while it remains sharply aware of the necessity of critiquing master plots, it advocates for

a fictional imagination that unfolds in direct focus on the real lives of these women—or of beings who transcend gender—without subordinating them to counter-narratives as ideological instruments.

Haraway introduces Chela Sandoval's (1984) concept of oppositional consciousness, which rejects the social categories of race, gender, and class, instead constructing a new identity through "otherness, difference, and specificity". Sandoval develops this concept through the figure of "women of color" as a model of political identity (Haraway 2013, p. 155). Haraway, in turn, aligns women of color with cyborg identity. She draws on Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984), which depicts the sister outsider—the life of foreign women of color—as exemplified by "Young Korean women hired in the sex industry and in electronics", whose fluency in English renders them desirable as cheap yet attractive labor. However, should the lives of these Korean foreign workers truly be represented through the lens of cyborg identity, simply because they embody otherness, difference, and specificity? Upon closer examination, this framing risks imposing "otherness, difference, and specificity" (Haraway 2013, p.155) onto women of color, thus reinforcing the very categories it seeks to dismantle. Moreover, it overlooks the possibility that, under the framework of oppositional consciousness, their lives might be instrumentalized as tools of resistance within a counter-narrative.

In contrast, Self-Narrative Resistance allows a Korean female foreign worker to engage in self-narration in a way that is both sincere and exploratory. Beyond recounting her lived experiences, she can ask: What if I had made a different choice? What if I had encountered a different person? What if my environment had been slightly different? What if I had received a new opportunity? Rather than merely repeating past experiences through imagination, Self-Narrative Resistance incorporates fictional imagination into one's self-narration, granting it both uniqueness and an inherent form of resistance. This approach does not reduce her life to a fragment of a grand counter-narrative; instead, it enables her to explore alternative possibilities—versions of her life that could have unfolded under different conditions—by adding fictional imagination to her lived reality. Through this process, she compares her actual life with imagined alternatives, expanding her self-narration into a creative act that generates new meanings.

Fabry (2024) explains that self-narration depends on learning broader narrative practices, which are acquired through cultural learning (Fabry 2024; Heyes 2018), particularly through formal education such as schools (Ibid.; Van Bergen and Andrews 2022) and media (Ibid.; Smith & Watson 2010). In other words, individuals encounter various narratives through education—whether in schools, within families and peer groups, or through all forms of media—and in doing so, they internalize traditional and dominant master plots while simultaneously learning how to engage in self-narration. In today's paradoxical context, where the de-narrativization of life—relinquishing self-determination and meaning-making to big data and algorithms—coexists with the pressure of story-selling, which compels individuals to commodify their own stories as personal brands, the role of education in self-narration becomes especially critical. Education in self-narration allows individuals to develop a critical perspective on the master plots that have been subtly internalized under the guise of freedom, enabling them to reflect on their own lives and construct meaningful personal narratives. This educational approach aims to help individuals not only experience being alive through self-narration but also assign meaning to their lives and explore alternative ways of existence. By doing so, individuals can develop a heightened awareness of the narratives that shape them and, ultimately, cultivate the ability to resist imposed structures through their own storytelling.

Self-Narrative Resistance is not only a creative narrative practice for individuals or activist groups but also an educational practice that can serve as a critical turning point for self-formation within educational systems. Self-Narrative Resistance can be applied across various educational stages, from elementary to high school and even in university settings. It is particularly applicable in classrooms such as literature, critical writing, and ethics education. The core of this approach lies in creating a safe and free narrative environment that enables learners to engage in self-reflective awareness and critical selfing. Existing studies have highlighted the educational potential of self-narration— for instance, Moon (2004) emphasized how reflective writing allows learners to structure and critically understand their experiences, Nash (2004) demonstrated the liberatory potential of connecting personal narratives with academic writing, and Yancey (1998) empirically showed how reflective writing contributes to the development of identity and critical thinking.

However, these studies have generally focused on the coherence and self-integration of self-narratives, with relatively less analysis on how these narratives tense and collide with socio-cultural narrative structures and how they are newly re-adjusted. In contrast, Self-Narrative Resistance not only reveals the inner self but also emphasizes the conflict with dominant masterplots, narrative fractures and reconfigurations within them, and the imaginative experimentation of selfing. This presents a unique theoretical horizon. Furthermore, it becomes a more urgent practice in the context of today's world, where the structure of narratives is algorithmically standardized in AI and digital platforms, and individuals'self-narratives are commodified. As Turkle (2011) points out, self-expression in the digital age is sometimes automated without reflection. In this regard, Self-Narrative Resistance functions as an ontological attempt to

embrace fragmented selves and, within them, construct new possibilities for narrative.

Thus, as a final proposal, I advocate for the integration of Self-Narrative Resistance and fictional imagination into educational frameworks. By encouraging individuals to engage in self-narration, education can help them recognize the master plots they are unknowingly swept into, ultimately guiding them toward writing their own unique narratives—ones that transcend both master narratives and alternative narratives, fostering their capacity for self-resistance. Specifically, I propose the following three pedagogical approaches for implementing Self-Narrative Resistance as a self-narration practice: (1) Diary Writing: Encouraging individuals to document their daily experiences and reflections. (2) Critical Reflection on Master Plots: Identifying implicit master narratives embedded in one's diary entries and cultivating awareness of their internalized influence. (3) Narrative Expansion through Fictional Imagination: Utilizing fictional imagination to creatively reimagine and reconstruct one's self-narration, thereby fostering greater autonomy in meaning-making.

First, diary writing serves as the most basic and intimate starting point for self-narration. In particular, writing by hand—using a pen or pencil in a private diary, away from any external audience—ensures that individuals are not preoccupied with self-branding or content creation. Unlike digital platforms and social media, which reinforce habitual datafication of experiences and maintain a continuous connection with external systems, private diary writing functions as one of the most effective ways to preserve and protect one's inner world. Drawing inspiration from Donna Haraway's reading of Cherrie Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* (1983), in which Haraway describes Moraga's language as "not 'whole'; it is self-consciously spliced, a chimera of English and Spanish, both conqueror's languages," she argues that "it is this chimeric monster, without claim to an original language before violation, that crafts the erotic, competent, potent identities of women of color" (Haraway 2013, pp. 175–176). Inspired by this insight, I propose a mode of diary writing that does not require linguistic purity or the use of a single language. For instance, a Korean woman living in the UK may engage in diary writing through a fluid mixture of Korean and English—a hybrid linguistic practice that resists formal constraints. The act of writing freely, outside of imposed linguistic, social, or systemic norms, becomes a space for uninhibited self-narration. This openness to hybrid expression allows for the emergence of a chimeric subjectivity, one that is not defined by the demand for coherence or wholeness, but rather is constituted through multiplicity and self-fashioned freedom.

In this process, education can play a crucial role in encouraging individuals to engage in the deeply personal act of diary writing, helping them cultivate the habit of self-narration in a private, intimate space that exists beyond rigid convention, digital devices and public exhibition. In this process, an important point in the educational practice of Self-Narrative Resistance is the need to move away from storytelling for story-selling or external evaluation. When Self-Narrative Resistance is incorporated into institutional frameworks, there is a risk of losing its critical power. Formal writing for evaluation, textbook-style personal stories, and the encouragement of socially desirable "inspirational narratives" can obstruct the free formation of self-narratives. The activities that constitute self-narration should be respected as a process of meaning-making and selfing, rather than being subjected to evaluation. To achieve this, a non-judgmental and safe educational space is essential. Education must ensure this space, allowing students to freely experiment and fail, thereby providing them with the narrative room to explore and shape their own stories.

Second, it is crucial to cultivate critical awareness of the master plots and grand narratives that individuals have unconsciously internalized and are actively reinforcing through self-narration. This process allows individuals to distance themselves from their own narratives and observe them from a contemplative perspective, rather than becoming entirely immersed in their subjective experiences and emotions. At this point, education should go beyond simply accepting students' stories; it must also provide critical feedback on the normative narratives, or masterplots, that are implicitly followed within those narratives, thereby fostering meta-critical sensitivity. For example, it should encourage students to explore how social expectations related to gender, race, class, ability, aesthetic standards, and other factors are operating within their self-narratives. This approach promotes an awareness of the societal forces shaping their stories and encourages critical reflection on the underlying assumptions and structures that influence their self-construction.

In the course of this, individuals may utilize AI tools such as ChatGPT to engage critically with the master plots or conventional patterns of thought that emerge in their diaries. This practice not only preserves the privacy and autonomy of self-narration—since one's intimate writing need not be exposed to another human reader—but also enables critical reflection from angles the writer may not have previously considered, prompted by the AI's questions. The significance of this lies in the dual function of such interaction: it safeguards the freedom of self-expression while simultaneously expanding the horizon of critical awareness through a dialogical encounter with an artificial interlocutor. However, education must not only recognize the potential of AI tools but also foster a meta-reflective awareness of their structural limitations and cultural biases. Language-based AIs, like ChatGPT, generate sentences in response to prompts, but the process is never neutral. These systems operate through

linguistic algorithms based on vast datasets, within which specific cultural narrative structures and masterplots are embedded. In other words, AI functions not merely as a tool but as a type of narrative apparatus, reproducing specific social perspectives and norms in story structures, character composition, and modes of expression.

Therefore, education should guide students to critically interpret and analyze the questions, responses, and writing structures provided by AI, encouraging them to question whether the self-narrative generated by AI truly reflects their own voice, what societal narrative structure it follows, and which possibilities and limitations it reproduces. This directly connects to the core competencies required by self-narrative resistance—recognizing masterplots, attempting to fracture them, and practicing selfing through narrative sensitivity. Ultimately, Self-Narrative Resistance can be expanded into an educational framework that goes beyond the use of tools, fostering critical literacy about the operation and cultural implications of AI and digital narratives in the digital age. However, during this process, it is important to ensure that critical self-reflection does not turn into harsh self-reproach or self-blame. Instead, individuals should attempt to view their lives from an external perspective, recognizing self-narration as part of a broader personal narrative rather than isolating specific experiences. For example, the desire for recognition is a natural human longing, and the key is to prevent it from becoming pathological. By examining the specific personal experiences and reasons that have amplified this desire for recognition, individuals can transition from viewing isolated experiences as fragmented emotions to integrating them into a more meaningful and coherent personal narrative.

Third, beyond self-reflection, fictional imagination in diary writing can expand self-narration beyond the mere recollection and repetition of past experiences, instead exploring alternative possibilities and potential destinies. This method provides an opportunity for individuals to engage in new meaning-making by contemplating different life scenarios beyond their actual lived experiences. Through this process, individuals can ask themselves: What other experiences could I have had? What if I had made a different decision in this situation? What if the people I encountered had different personalities or backgrounds? What if unexpected variables had altered the course of my experiences? These questions allow individuals to reimagine and transform their personal narratives through fictional imagination, enabling them to break free from the constraints of their actual life experiences and explore a broader spectrum of possible narratives. Moreover, this approach can be extended into cyborg imagination, where individuals reimagine themselves with entirely different physical forms or environmental conditions. Inspired by Haraway's cyborg imagination, they might even utilize AI tools to generate fictional scenarios that go beyond the limitations of their own imagination, prompting them to ask questions they would not have considered otherwise. By incorporating such elements, individuals can transcend the boundaries of self-narration, breaking free from the constraints of their current reality and engaging in a storytelling process that is both deeply personal and expansively creative.

In particular, the use of fictional imagination in self-narration allows individuals to bring their stories into the public sphere while mitigating the risk of excessive personal exposure. By reconfiguring elements of their narrative through fiction, individuals gain a greater degree of freedom to express themselves in ways they wish to be seen. In this process, there is no need to adhere strictly to linguistic form; individuals may freely employ any medium—whether textual, visual, or audiovisual—so long as it conveys the essence of what they wish to express. Through such multimodal and imaginative forms of narration, the individual becomes, in a profound sense, a chimera or a cyborg—capable of composing and presenting a self-narration that is honest and sincere, yet attuned to the affordances of the digital age. This form of expression enables a new kind of subjectivity: one that resists fixed boundaries, embraces hybridity, and performs itself through creative negotiation with both inner truth and public appearance.

6 Conclusion

I have argued that contemporary self-narration is caught in a paradoxical tension—between de-narrativization and storyselling—under the dual pressure of algorithmic governance and neoliberal commodification in social media environments (Harari 2015, 2016, 2018; Han 2024). Drawing on Hannah Arendt's (1968, 1978, 1998) existential-phenomenological account of storytelling and Fabry's (2024) work on Enculturation in the Oppressive Niche, I have proposed the concept of Self-Narrative Resistance. This concept differs from counter and alternative narratives in that it centers on individual meaning-making that resists reduction to ideological representation or collective identity. Practices of self-narration that incorporate fictional imagination, hybrid media, and AI-based reflective interaction offer new possibilities for constructing sincere and multilayered self-narratives, while resisting structural pressures that threaten to commodify or dissolve the narrative self. Future research may further explore how cyborgian or fictionally imagined forms of self-narration can reconfigure the boundaries of narrative identity in digital environments marked by big data-algorithmic control, neoliberal self-exploitation, and pervasive auto-surveillance on social media. In reclaiming

narrative from these pressures, self-narration may become not only a form of resistance, but an opening toward reimagining the contours of identity and lived possibility. Storytelling, in this light, gestures beyond survival—toward the creation of other possible selves and other possible worlds.

Data availability No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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