From Literary Narratology to General Narratology: the Empire and its Frontiers

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This English translation has not been published in printed form/Cette traduction anglaise n'a pas été publiée sous forme imprimée.

- 1 The discussion in this chapter, in conjunction with the excellent article by Raphaël Baroni (2016) "*L'empire de la narratologie, ses défis et ses faiblesses*" (The Empire of Narratology, Its Challenges and Weaknesses), begins with an exploration that nevertheless takes different paths from those of literature. Indeed, the fact that we led an interdisciplinary research unit, whose main theme is narrative, allowed us to observe how narratology has developed (although it may not always be labelled as such) in ethnology, psychoanalysis and history.¹ Moreover, the issue of media and transmedia, which is receiving significant interest today from researchers in information and communication sciences, raises important questions about narratology with regard to cultural novelty.
- 2 First, we need to take a new look at the problem of how narratology has been institutionalized in order to place the scientific practice within its academic context. More specifically, we will highlight how the disciplinary framework can be used to model research itself.
- 3 This approach will enable us to consider the ways in which practices in the humanities and social sciences can confront and complement each other within an interdisciplinary research unit. Narrative is more than just a statement—it is primarily

a social act that must also be analyzed. Situating the social science researchers in this way with regard to narrative practices explains why they have questioned their own theories. To a certain extent, they themselves produce narrative scientific statements, which can in turn be analyzed.

Academic mapping: from the empire without a capital to the *limes* (frontiers)

Where is narratology at?

- 4 Raphaël Baroni (2016) twice raises the problem of how academic institutions and research function, as well as the status of narratology within those organizations. The first observation, which applies equally to France and to Switzerland (although there is likely little risk in assuming that most university systems follow the same approach), is that narratology does not have an identity as a discipline in the classical sense of the term: “It seems to me that the main problem of narratology is that it has been unable to establish itself permanently in the institutions of academia, owing to heredity and it being a relatively young discipline” (Baroni, 2016: 229).
- 5 This situation would create a paradox, where narratology owes its scientific strength to its institutional weakness, which would result in dispersion:

“In other words: if narratology appears to be moribund, then it is probably because we tend to confuse it with a branch of literary theory, looking for the members of its congregation only in literary departments, whereas in reality, they are spread out across a range of institutions. Moreover, if narratology is clearly not in great shape, at a time when we probably need its services more than ever today, this is mainly because the researchers [...] are too few in number and too widely dispersed (ibid).”
- 6 It must be recognized that, despite calls for interdisciplinarity, institutions tend to be organized into disciplines in almost all academic practices, including research. In France, researchers are qualified and hired within a particular discipline; they will teach and be promoted within that same discipline. Professionals come to identify strongly with their chosen discipline: they appropriate it and hold on to it as the sole way to legitimize their work. It becomes a “simple, monological identity” (ibid.), which would explain the rejection of the “narratologist label” as Baroni argues (ibid.: 230). This analysis brings to mind Edgar Morin’s view (1994) that claims, with some hostility, that

“the hyperdisciplinary mindset will become a mindset of ownership that forbids any foreign incursion in its fief of knowledge. the word ‘discipline’ originally meant a small whip used for self-flagellation, thus allowing self-criticism; in its more popular sense, discipline becomes a means to flog anyone who dares venture into the domains of ideas that specialists consider to be their own.”
- 7 Some criticisms about narratology can thus be better understood: having moved from the literary field where it originated to other fields, it sometimes finds itself like a stranger who has entered somewhere they were not expected. If we set aside the risk of flogging by other disciplines, which would consider that the science of narrative does not belong in their territory, the other risk, raised by Paul Dawson and cited by Raphaël Baroni (2016: 227), is very real. The danger is that narratology would become a simple method for analysis, a sort of toolbox that can be transposed to a kind of narrative

comprehensiveness that would be encompassed by all the humanities and social sciences. The postulate would be that since everything is narrative, narratology must be present everywhere. This premise is outlined in detail from the very first lines of Baroni's article. Narrative is certainly an empire, but one that would have no center of power or reflection, and no frontiers—it would be totally dispersed or fragmented into a multitude of disciplinary spaces. It is a situation that recalls the old structuralist empire, to which narratologists still pay tribute to some extent, like the Romans did with Greek culture.

- 8 We thus more clearly understand one of the solutions Baroni puts forward, which is to return to the “original discipline” of literary studies, which once again gives “the Empire” a center.

Can a discipline be reinvented by going back to its legendary origins?

- 9 The article's attempt to reinvent a capital for narratology addresses several imperatives. The first aim is to recover the bygone luster of literary studies. Without going into the causes of their decadence (they were also an empire), it is undeniable that today, for modern university leadership, literature is at best a luxury product and at worst a frivolity or an antiquity. One can only hope for the field to be revaluated, which could be achieved by a return to the origins of narratology: “Departments of general or comparative literature could be particularly well suited to people from these backgrounds, since comparative studies could encompass these different genres, media or practices, providing a basis on which to view them against narrative theory (ibid.: 234).”
- 10 The idea would have the merit of giving back to Caesar what was Caesar's and undoubtedly, as the quote from Antoine Compagnon cited by Baroni (ibid.: 235) conveys, it would allow us to return to the golden and glorious age when literary research was, through its contributions to theoretical models, a practice that enjoyed great prestige. However, in light of the theories outlined in Baroni's article, this solution seems paradoxical for several reasons.
- 11 First, the postulate of “returning” or anchoring narratology to literature departments might seem logical, since it would be motivated by a necessary epistemological refocusing, which is presumed to underpin this solution: “In this way, the study of literary narratives and theories of literature would create excellent conditions for learning and research. This would also help to develop more general studies on narrative” (Baroni, 2016: 235).
- 12 The remaining postulate deals with a more complex view of narrativity in the literary field, which would be “transferable” to other fields where narrative phenomena are observed: “At the same time, confronting narrative with other media systems would be an opportunity for literary students to learn how to transfer their analytical skills to new contexts, while developing an awareness of the specific nature of literature as a verbal, written and generally fictional medium” (ibid.).
- 13 As we will develop further on, it cannot be taken for granted at present that narratology can continue to be forged solely in the literary field, nor that the literary model is the most complex (and so transposable). Its spread to other disciplines has

also resulted in unique narratologies that tend to break away from written verbal narrative while contributing novel theories by exploring specific narrations.

- 14 Furthermore, institutionalization within a discipline could be an obstacle. Indeed, while no discipline can really claim to make progress if it does not adopt a critical attitude with regard to what makes its object and methods specific, openness to other disciplines is not especially common. As is often the case for many disciplines, the strong identity of literary studies departments could be a significant hindrance. As elsewhere, objects other than literature are considered with considerable caution. For those who attended university in the 1990s (or before), the memory of the condescending gaze of the major disciplines towards the emerging ones is not just a matter of personal opinion. The value of the research was (is still?) measured not by the procedure itself (the method of analysis) and the results, but by reference to the symbolic cultural value of the object studied. One classic example is great literature taking precedence over secondary literature, which itself was ranked ahead of popular literature; those in literary studies hardly ever questioned this primacy (Bourdieu, 1991: 18b). As for the press or advertising, although Roland Barthes (1957) showed that they were of considerable interest when searching for the foundations of contemporary mythological narratives, these were objects that had nothing to do (apparently) with the immortal classics of the pantheon of French literature. However, this situation is not specific to literary studies, whose boundaries are no more rigid than those of other disciplines.
- 15 What we want to suggest is that it is not so much the difficulty of crossing into institutionalized disciplines as determining the legitimate birth of narratology. Historically, the literary origin is indisputable but very heterogeneous. Vladimir Propp (1928) theorized by drawing on folklore tales. Umberto Eco (1966) was interested in his time about combinatorial narratives in the popular novels of Ian Fleming while Gérard Genette's theory on time was primarily based on an analysis of Marcel Proust (Genette, 1972). This diversity leads us to consider that, in the end, a return to the origins would not necessarily be more advantageous for narratology (would it perhaps be so for literary studies departments?).
- 16 Moreover, one of the current trends, favored by approaches that focus on the media or pluri-, inter- or transmediality, is the creation of "new" disciplines in which narratology is given serious consideration. Games studies, which are inherently interdisciplinary, explore narrativity and playfulness (Rueff, 2008: 157; Baroni, Marti, 2014; Solinski, 2015: 218). They will likely soon represent a new discipline, which will be unified by its object of study. Information and communication sciences are at a more advanced stage. They are particularly interested in new modes of cultural production, which they see as practices that are connected through narrative, but whose novelty lies in the combination of the media used. They insist, however, on reconfiguring the traditional plot over time (Jenkins, 2006: 157) and reception space through "narrative extensions" (Masoni-Lacroix, Cailler, 2016: 15).
- 17 As can be seen, the empire has spread towards its frontiers, which tend to retreat more and more. Perhaps refocusing is not the answer. The discipline's future now undoubtedly lies in creating a concept of narratology that is interdisciplinary, constantly in motion, but that could be unified through a networked approach, such as the European Narratology Network (ENN) and the *Réseau Romand de Narratologie* (RRN, a narratology network in Switzerland), until a more widespread French-language

network is created.² These new frontiers that narratology is exploring by transforming itself (without becoming barbaric) should not cause us to forget that other established disciplines have also analyzed narrative.

From the frontiers of narratology to the interdisciplinary empire

Does narrative lie at the foundation of the humanities and social sciences?

- 18 Raphaël Baroni's article lays the groundwork for our position, that the refocusing of the discipline should be abandoned. Indeed, the narratologist he refers to in literary studies departments is clearly meant to cross borders, not maintain them:

"Maybe we should start from the premise that each literary department should have *at least one* narrative theorist, able to coordinate a seminar on 'contemporary narratology.' A seminar of this type should be part of the basic education of literary students. It would welcome speakers and an audience from outside the literary field proper, as part of an approach with a clear interdisciplinary focus" (Baroni, 2016: 234).

- 19 In fact, this opening is such that the relationship with literature ends up being very loose: "However, narratologists must be able to maintain full independence within the department with respect to their body of research and education, which must in no event be limited to literary narrative publicity alone" (ibid.: 235). This paradoxical idea in fact suggests that what would now make narratology specific is no longer its literary origins but its spread into the humanities and social sciences: the narratologist could be interested in any narrative object or phenomenon, whether literary or not. This idea opens up two interesting possibilities.
- 20 The first is that it is not the role of the researcher to create—and even less so, to legitimize—cultural primacy. Researchers can only observe what makes something popular or academic, without placing literature ahead of other social practices, which also produce narrative.
- 21 The second possibility is that narrative is everywhere, or at least that disciplines outside the literary field have been dealing with narrative for several decades. It is on the basis of this last observation that we should look at the nature of the empire. Paul Ricoeur's philosophy (1983: 85) thus laid the foundations for an ontological narrativity when he postulated
- "that between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. To put it another way, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence."
- 22 The French philosopher thus placed human beings at the center of narrative. The field that was then open to the humanities (and social sciences) was broad, because narrative became the vehicle for the multi-pronged questioning that these disciplines impose on their objects.
- 23 Jérôme Bruner's (2002) book *Pourquoi racontons-nous des histoires ?* (Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life), which explores the subject by first studying legal narrative, outlines

the functions of narrative. Once the postulate that narrative is a specific human activity has been accepted, examining its production within a social and cultural framework also involves considering the audience of the narrative and the social functions it assumes. The two questions that need answering regarding production would be “To whom do we tell stories?” and “How do these stories circulate?”

- 24 This research focus, which is key in the humanities and social sciences, shifts the starting assumption of what narratology once was, a formal science (often structuralist), for which the first (twofold) issue was “How do these stories work?” and “How do we tell stories?” (Bremond, 1966: 60). However, Gérard Genette (1972: 13) recalled, in a nuanced way and within the context of an ideological debate at the time on structuralism—which was accused of having ignored historicity and the future (Lefebvre, 1971)—that the formalist research of narratology that was emerging was only one stage before returning to history:

“This apparent rejection of history was in fact only temporarily putting things in parentheses, a methodical suspension, and this type of criticism (which we would more aptly call the *theory of literary forms*—or, more briefly, *poetic*) seemed to me to be destined, perhaps more than any other, to one day encounter history in its path.”

- 25 As part of the framework of their own disciplinary fields, the humanities and social sciences began to explore the question of narrative. Likely less equipped at the outset than the literary sciences, they resorted to narratology, at least partially, especially when narrative forms had undeniable social and historical dimensions.

Coincidences and cooperation

- 26 The questioning in the humanities and social sciences focuses first on the way narrative circulates: a currency of exchange between people (Bruner, 2002: 17). Thus, the *homo fabulator* could not exist without its *reader/auditor in fabula*. As Jerome Bruner notes (*ibid.*: 18),

“Michael Tomasello argues persuasively that what originally differentiated the human species from other primates was our extended capacity to read each other’s intentions and mental states—our capacity for intersubjectivity, or ‘mind reading.’ It is a precondition for our collective life in culture. I doubt such collective life would be possible were it not for our human capacity to organize and communicate experience in a narrative form. For it is the conventionalization of narrative that converts individual experience into collective coin which can be circulated, as it were, on a base wider than a merely interpersonal one.”

- 27 It is no longer the statement and its functioning that are at the center of the analysis, but rather the conditions (social, cultural, psychological and historical) of the statement, as well as the way in which they shape the narrative forms used. By bringing together the proposals of Paul Ricoeur and Jérôme Bruner, narrative becomes the place where the social and the individual are articulated, a promising (and irreplaceable) meeting point for any humanities and social sciences researcher. Raphaël Baroni’s interest in self-, media and political narratives is a perfect example of the new way of looking at social relationships and the socio-psychological construction of the individual, particularly in contemporary societies.
- 28 With the benefit of time regarding the research carried out over the last 30 years or so, we can see the perspective that has been gained with respect to narrative. As an

individual and social phenomenon, it has been considered in turn coercive or liberating. When people tell their stories, they either free themselves or alienate themselves even more (Zenetti, 2016: 1). Similarly, the stories that a social group consumes emancipate it (Marti, 2016) or shackle it together (Salmon, 2007). From a literary starting point, the humanities and social sciences are able to form their own specific narratology, adapted to their needs, which simultaneously contributes to general narratology.

- 29 At the individual level, the first idea that runs through the concept of narrative in psychoanalysis (but also in ethnology) is that of historicization and the ordering of events that make the “narration” of lived and real experiences possible (Konichekis, Forest, 1999: 8):

“The formless takes shape and, through this function, the narrative manifests its organizing and binding force; it unites, gathers, and thus opposes the tendencies of the psyche towards disintegration, dispersion, oblivion. It provides the right form and provides units of meaning that resist senselessness. The narrative’s characters represent objects as well as emotional and impulsive movements.”

- 30 However, in psychoanalysis, there are two opposing approaches with regard to the concept and function of narrative. As Simon Harel (2001: 23-24) notes,

“For some, speech is not immediately intelligible. On the contrary, narrative would be a coercive tool, a preformed container that camouflages, or inhibits, a more archaic meaningful structuring. For others, however, narrative is not a constraining container that locks the patient and analyst in the prison of language. It would take into account a complex polarity that brings together a containing form and an internal psychic space.”

- 31 The postulate that highlights the plasticity of the forms of language emphasizes that they are never rigid containers: they can always adapt and express disorder (impulsive, traumatic) regarding syntactic, logical and temporal appearances. In this case, narrative is only one space for speech among other possibilities. What matters most is the act of saying. The opposite view considers narrative as a rigid and coercive container in that by shaping it, it creates order from the syntactic, logical and temporal psychological disorder. Narrative can thus become a decoy because it fits “into narcissistically satisfying forms that maintain appearances and the creation of a false self” (Konichekis, Forest, 1999:10). Psychoanalysis thus identifies it as a defensive form, in accordance with social expectations.

- 32 It is interesting to note that in this case we find, formulated in another discipline, the axiom that narrative constructions are underpinned by social biases. Such biases are acceptable and invisible because they are based on culturally internalized stereotypes (those of the dominant ideology), such as the binary opposition in Ian Fleming’s novels analyzed by Umberto Eco (1966: 91). This postulate served the literary and artistic avant-gardes from the 1950s onwards when they strongly questioned narrative as an aesthetic form, practically suggesting that it be destroyed. Filmmakers and novelists have considered it as a paradigm of order, based on the dominant ideology, which makes all the idealizations and stereotypes that comprise it seem “natural” (Aubert, 2016: 147-170). In post-modern fiction, in a more distant and ironic way, the classical narrative, incorporated into positive science, becomes problematic as a way of reaching the truth: in *À la recherche de Klingsor* (In Search of Klingsor), Jorge Volpi (2001) subverts the narrative form of the classic positivist crime novel using the theme of quantum physics, which is the novel’s central subject (Calderón, 2015: 47-48).

- 33 Gérard Genette's hypothesis (1972: 13) is apparent: narratology (as a theory of literary forms) "was destined one day to encounter history on its path." We find in psychoanalysis at the individual level what second-generation socio-criticism had initiated in the literary field, by exploring "the way in which social problems and group interests are connected at the semantic, syntactic and narrative levels" (Zima, 1985: 9).
- 34 Another interesting point is the emergence in psychoanalysis of the idea of narrative co-construction between the patient and analyst, identified in the process of transference. The narrative is constructed in a transitional space, "a cross between a narrative for oneself and a narrative addressed to a particular 'other' that is the analyst. Little by little, the transference will specify this other as an object of projections" (Perron, Borelli, in: Konichakis, Forest, 1999: 15). In return, in countertransference, the analyst becomes an enunciator (Harel, 2001: 180). For the narratologist, the familiar image of *Lector in fabula* is reflected in this theoretical foundation from another discipline. In a co-authored article (Cabassut, Marti, 2014), we had suggested seeing a narrative tension with a form reminiscent of that described by Raphaël Baroni (2007: 99). Although coincidental, they were of a different nature depending on the disciplinary viewpoint from which they were considered. In literature, this tension assumes a greater involvement of readers, who anticipate (using their prior knowledge) what is going to be told. The unfolding of the narrative will then either confirm this knowledge or invalidate it by being unexpected. In literary reading, pleasure exists in both cases, although in different ways: "I enjoy being in a country of knowledge, and I enjoy learning about what I did not yet know, provided that it can be easily linked to what I already knew" (Dumortier, 2005: 15). However, in analysis, novelty can also simply come not from ignored knowledge, but from inconceivable or repressed knowledge (Cabassut, Marti, 2014: 16). Ultimately, the analyst is situated not as an interpretative but as a cooperative reader (Eco, 1985: 7). A patient's narrative differs, however, from that of a literary narrative, which remains anchored in its materiality, even if it is open to several interpretations or at least multiple perspectives in its reception. The analyst's presence/participation results in the patient's narrative being modulated and constructed through variations, with an exploration of the possible paths of speech. It is in a constant state of flux. It also results from a spatio-temporal confluence caused by its own shaping: the combination of the 'here and now' (the cure) and the 'there and before' (the trauma).
- 35 These observations highlight the differences that stem from a change in media: written on the one hand and oral on the other. They also underscore that the somewhat divergent aims of institutionalized disciplines construct approaches that, although similar, are nonetheless specific. The field of psychoanalysis, which is interested in the individual, is not, however, the only one in which narrative theory is analyzed and developed in a particular way. Bringing narrative theories into the humanities and social sciences has in a way been a boon for these fields, which have also analyzed collective narratives.

Narrative and the collective

- 36 "These processes of 'narrative setting' must be considered as being at the intersection of collective history and psychic history, of singular stories and group ties, of group ties and the effects of culture" (Pouligny, 2002: 583). Collective narratives, in the form of

commemoration or legal proceedings (e.g., the trial of executioners for crimes against humanity) come into play when looking at “historical” narrative. Jean-Yves Boursier explored the role of narrative in ethnology, particularly when examining the memory of periods experienced collectively as traumatic. Starting with the example of Jorge Semprún, he points out the importance of his testimonial as a reminder that narrative can be more painful than silence, because it reactivates anguish (Boursier, 2012: 223), a possibility envisaged by psychoanalysis. Moreover, the silence or absent narrative of some witnesses can also be explained by the individual difficulty of telling a personal experience through a narrative that will run counter to the commemorative narrative or the official consensual narrative, developed by the community for its own use after the traumatic event (ibid.: 228). The same is true of many historical episodes. In the case of the French Resistance and the subsequent narrative that the French Communist Party created from it, Boursier (2013) emphasizes the gaps between individual memory and how it was expressed through speech, and the official, rigid and very often written memory of institutions, whose ultimate objective was to offer a consensual reading (and writing) of history that made the party look good but which was completely without nuance. For ethnologists who study memory and interview witnesses, the aim is to find where multiform and polyphonic narratives intersect in order to grasp the complexity of history, the participation and role of individuals and the complex relationship that individual memory has with collective memory and history.

- 37 For ethnologists and psychoanalysts (as well as sociologists), narrative is above all an act. However, ethnology also sees narrative as a way of structuring the collective. Societies would thus be characterized by the production of “great narratives” to define themselves and explain the world, akin to the founding narratives of early societies.
- 38 The contours of these storytelling productions in the contemporary world were outlined by Christian Salmon (2007). In his theory, the political and economic sphere would produce narratives whose aim would be first and foremost a reassuring shaping of the world against the ontological fear of a shapeless world, or of a terrifying and senseless (meaningless) chaos. Within this framework, narratives for collective use would simply fulfill the primary function of mythical narratives, intended to unite the group around common values and shared meaning. However, they would also be instruments of power and would contribute equally to creating order in the world, by trying to impose a single view of events, mainly through the establishment of rigid causality. This (media) narration of the world would address the ontological and cultural needs of human beings by creating meaning where an avalanche of information, quantitative data, and indicators on an “inhuman” scale would make it impossible for meaning to emerge (Marti, 2012: 50). However, narrative is not only this “steamroller of reality” that it would unequivocally tamp down. On the one hand, this is because like any form of discourse, it is subject to the vagaries of its reception, which can be critical; on the other hand, it is because in the public sphere, “counter-narratives” occupy the space, proposing emancipation and asserting themselves as real alternatives to the dominant ideology (Marti, 2012: 50; Marti, 2016: 12-13).

Narrative sciences

- 39 These observations point to another problem: while narrative is an unavoidable object of study for the humanities and social sciences, scientific discourse is also articulated

through narrative forms. As such, it can in turn be the subject of a kind of self-analysis or a gaining of perspective within each discipline.

- 40 Historians were probably the first to ask the question, at a time when Vladimir Propp had not yet been translated into French. Without going into detail on the debates in the discipline that have continued for almost a century, several perspectives have pushed historical narrative away. The Annales school considered that “the historical narrative is not a method, or even the objective method *par excellence*, but a philosophy of history like any other” (Braudel, 1946: 14). It could be an obstacle to opening up to other, more quantitative disciplines (physical geography, economics, sociology, demography) that history must turn to in order to understand the past, as these fields do not accommodate narrative very well. For Fernand Braudel (*ibid.*: 13), in the end only “traditional history—history, one might say, on the scale not of man, but of individual men [...] the history of events [...] the richest in human interest,” was really a matter of narrative. The construction of a narrative depends on two deeper historical layers. The first is a “history whose passage is almost imperceptible”—and so hard to narrate —“that of a man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles [...] almost timeless history.” The second is “another history, this time with slow but perceptible rhythms [...] social history, the history of groups and groupings” (*ibid.*: 13). Braudel thus did not renounce narrative, but recognized its limits and reserved it for the history of events, whose deepest foundation lay in other types of scientific representation.

- 41 Marc Bloch (1949: XIV) put forward another criticism. In attempting to lay the groundwork for contemporary historiography, he considered the narrative mode to be a relatively “archaic” practice that could fall into the traps of fiction:

“For history is not only a science in movement. Like all those which have the human spirit for their object, this newcomer in the field of rational knowledge is also a science in its infancy. Or to explain it more fully, having grown old in embryo as mere narrative, for long encumbered with legend, and for still longer preoccupied with only the most obvious events, it is still very young as a rational attempt at analysis. Now, at last, it struggles to penetrate beneath the mere surface of actions, rejecting not only the temptations of legend and rhetoric, but the still more dangerous modern poisons of routine learning and empiricism parading as common sense.”

- 42 This mistrust was based on an observation: narrative required the co-construction of meaning (and truth) with its readers, while relying on the old rhetorical tradition. Narrative was thus quick to use old techniques, in particular stereotypes, “embroidery,” and “imaginary details” (*ibid.*: 45). Historians had to be doubly wary of this. As a source, they could mix the true and the false: the true event was likely to have been embellished with rhetorical (and fictional) details. As a scientific statement, it was written down at the time and could in turn produce categorizations of which the writer was not consciously aware.

- 43 In his book *Au bord de la falaise* (On the Edge of the Cliff), Roger Chartier (1998) wondered what made the historical narrative so specific. Looking to Michel de Certeau and Paul Ricoeur, he indicated that history depended on narrative models and narrative itself (*ibid.*: 126). He notes that the distance between fictional and scientific narrative is shorter, at least if we consider the top layers: both place characters (which structuralists would call actants) within a plot as part of a temporal and causal construction. The distinction between fiction and history would be based first on the

type of facts narrated: beyond emplotment, the notes and references to a historian's archive construct a narrative that refers to "verifiable knowledge" (ibid.: 120). From there, the purpose of the two types of narratives diverge. In theory, fictional narrative has above all an aesthetic and/or playful purpose, whereas historical narrative is cognitive.

- 44 However, this distinction is sometimes undermined. So-called "historical fiction" works are sometimes conceived and/or received as mere historical narratives, skillfully blending what Roger Chartier calls "verifiable knowledge" and imaginary details (Marti, 2012: 47). Because of how it is elaborated, the historical narrative thus always runs the risk of producing subjective or fictional knowledge. Whether consciously or not, it is always based on a hypothesis. Indeed, a "narrative explains and coordinates events while retracing them, substituting a casual order for chronological sequences of circumstances" (Sartre, 1947: 112). When historians begin to select and connect in a causal manner the "verifiable knowledge" extracted from an archive, they are creating a hypothesis. In doing so, this hypothesis is dependent on the moment at which the narrative was created. In scientific discourse, the connecting of chronological events through causality depends on the context in which the statements are produced. In historical narrative, causality is not inscribed in the facts; it is a product of the historiographic format that creates it using the methods of that time, from what is observable at a given epoch, and from the factors considered valid by the scientific community (Marti, 2012: 48). The rhetorical and argumentative dimension of narrative is obvious to historians, who, despite all the biases we have outlined, will "occasionally" resort to "narrative sequences" (Le Goff, 1999: 17).
- 45 Narrative can also be indispensable, especially when dealing with "uncertainty," in the latest historiographical trends. Constructed retrospectively, historical narrative tends to prove that what happened was predictable, if we consider that "when an event occurs, we strive to seek its causes, to establish the facts from the available traces, clues and testimonies" (Rowley, d'Almeida, 2009: 7). This attitude thus leads us to forget how uncertain the future seemed and indeed was at the time it was happening (and as for all epochs considered during their present). It is in this context that scientific narrative *uchronia* takes on meaning as a way to shed light on the "blind spots of history" by exploring possible narratives, as in Jorge Luis Borges' novel *Le Jardin aux sentiers qui bifurquent* (The Garden of Forking Paths, 1944). The method proposed by Anthony Rowley and Fabrice d'Almeida (2009: 11-12) is a reminder of the extent to which fantasy is limited in history, even within a *uchronic* framework, which should not be confused with literary experiments based on the same principle, but with different purposes.

Conclusion

- 46 Our discussion is not meant to be an assessment of the "health" of narratology; rather, we have attempted to qualify the theory according to which the humanities and social sciences are in a narrative-focused period, a theory that has also been criticized by Raphaël Baroni. The example of history as a discipline shows that the issues predate the invention of narratology, while still being related to structuralism. The influence, even indirect, of Claude Lévi-Strauss and *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (The Elementary Structures of Kinship, 1949) on many researchers underlines the fact that this was a central issue in the humanities and social sciences at the time (Ricoeur, 1992: 30). The

analysis is as much about the narrative as an object (as a source) as it is about the scientific form of writing history.

- 47 More generally, narrative is an object of study for various non-literary disciplines, which focus not on the narrative whole but the narrative angle for their purposes. Thus, it appears that narratology is not being transformed into a toolbox (an avatar of structuralism), which would make it possible to tackle any form of narrativity in any situation. In fact, the issues are more related to “the narrative in X (psychoanalysis, ethnology, etc.)” than “the narrative and X.” This shift from “and” to “in” (i.e. from a conjunction to a preposition) is suggestive of a nuanced approach and signals the way forward: the development of disciplinary tools that draw from theories that already exist in other fields, based on borrowing, reformulating and even confrontation analysis. From this perspective, narratology becomes an interdisciplinary practice, which can only function through networking and discussion. Avoiding disciplinary institutionalization could in this sense be much more of an advantage than a disadvantage, making it possible not only to keep the combative momentum specific to *limes*, but also the wealth of exchange that comes from it, once the barbarians, which we all are since the empire no longer has a center, are able (or almost) to speak the same language.

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NOTES

1. The Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Narrative Writing, Cultures and Societies (LIRCES) is a host team (EA 3159) at the Université Nice Sophia Antipolis. Our roles in the research unit ended in late 2016. This article would not have been possible without this enriching human and scientific experience. The following text acknowledges all the researchers who are or were part of the team or who visited the team between 2005 and 2016.

2. The issue of the "French-speaking community" goes beyond mere political representation. Indeed, the ways in which concepts are developed and anchored in a discipline also depend on the language in which they are forged.

ABSTRACTS

Literary narratology seems to be in the process of becoming general narratology. Literary studies would have much to lose if this happens and should therefore focus on what makes them prestigious. The possibility of decompartmentalizing narratology must be qualified, because it runs the risk of confining academic research on narrative to a single discipline, even as the interdisciplinary nature of narrative has been confirmed in recent decades. Moreover, the exploration of narrative and narrative forms and the study of the multiple scopes and possibilities of narratives emerged in the critical landscape of French historiography and social sciences as early as the 1930s. The influence and specificities of each discipline (philosophy,

history, ethnology, psychology, literary studies) should be studied, not as a means to be create a general type of narratology, applicable to any object of analysis, but as a tool—constantly questioned and challenged—to construct a science of narratives that would be by nature intertextual and inclusive of the whole range of research in literature, the arts and social sciences.

La narratologie littéraire tend à devenir une narratologie générale. Les études littéraires auraient donc beaucoup à y perdre et devraient tenter de se recentrer sur ce qui a fait leur prestige. Cette proposition doit être nuancée, car elle risque d'enfermer dans une discipline les recherches sur le récit, dont la nature interdisciplinaire s'est affirmée au cours des dernières décennies. Par ailleurs, l'interrogation sur le narratif et les formes narratives mais aussi, sur la prégnance du récit émerge dans la réflexion critique de l'historiographie française et des sciences humaines et sociales dès les années 30 du xx^e siècle. Les apports et les spécificités de chaque discipline (philosophie, histoire, ethnologie, psychologie, études littéraires) doivent donc être conçus non pas dans l'objectif de créer une narratologie générale, déclinable sur tout objet, mais comme les briques d'une construction, sans cesse remise en cause, d'une science des récits, par nature interdisciplinaire et ouverte sur l'ensemble des recherches en littérature, arts et sciences humaines.

INDEX

Keywords: narratology, interdisciplinarity, arts and social sciences, ethnology, psychology, literary studies

Mots-clés: narratologie, interdisciplinarité, littérature, sciences humaines, psychologie, ethnologie

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