

Sylvie Patron

## The Death of the Narrator and Other Essays

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# **The Death of the Narrator and Other Essays**

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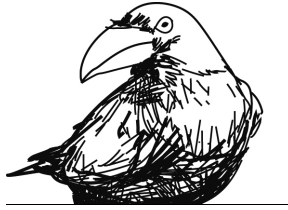
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## The Raven

“Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore.”

(Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*)



*“Raven is our version of what you call Coyote in the Southwest. Raven stirs things up and makes change happen. He catalyzes different interactions to occur. Whether you like it or not, Raven makes the people grow and change.*

[...]

*Maybe that’s how change starts – with someone getting angry enough to upset the apple cart, to initiate revolt, to cause trouble, like Raven did.”*

(indigenous story, quoted from Lewis Mehl-Madrona,  
*Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process.*  
Rochester/Vermont: Bear & Company, 2007, pp. 60-61)

Sowohl die traditionelle Narratologie als auch die interdisziplinäre Erzählforschung haben in den letzten Dekaden einen anhaltenden Boom erlebt, der zur Entwicklung zahlreicher neuer Ansätze in einer zunehmend transgenerisch, intermedial und interdisziplinär orientierten Erzähltheorie geführt hat.

Die neue Buchreihe RABE/RAVEN trägt diesen Entwicklungen nicht nur Rechnung, sondern stellt ein Forum dar für Monographien und konzeptorientierte Sammelbände, die

- sich mit Erscheinungsformen des Narrativen in lange als ‚nicht-narrativ‘ eingestuften Gattungen (z.B. Drama und Lyrik) oder in vernachlässigten Phänomenen und Texttypen (z.B. Rituale, Nachrichten, Alltagserzählungen) beschäftigen,
- Formen des Narrativen in anderen Medien (z.B. Cartoons, graphic novels, Film, bildende Kunst, Musik, Hyperfiktion, Erzählen in den neuen Medien) oder multimodales bzw. transmediales Erzählen untersuchen,
- narratologische Kategorien rekonzeptualisieren, neue narrative Formen untersuchen oder die Konzepte, Modelle und Methoden der klassischen und postklassischen Narratologie erweitern,
- Ansätze, Erkenntnisse und Methoden aus der Erzählforschung anderer Disziplinen (z.B. Geschichtswissenschaft, Linguistik, narrativer Medizin, Psychologie, Kognitionswissenschaft, Sozialwissenschaften) einbeziehen,
- Formen des langsamen Wandels (z.B. Altern, Evolution, Klimawandel, der durch digitale Technologien ausgelöste Geisteswandel, Krankheit, Artensterben) und andere Phänomene (z.B. Performances, Rituale, komplexe Systeme) erforschen, die auf nicht-narrativen Logiken basieren, sich einer narratologischen Analyse widersetzen und mit zentralen Kategorien der Narratologie nicht recht zu erfassen sind (z.B. Geschichten ohne Akteure, Ereignisse, Handlungen, Plot).

Darüber hinaus versteht sich die Reihe als ein Forum für innovative Publikationen und alternative Beiträge zur Erzählforschung, die die Grenzen der Narratologie ausleuchten und der Erzählforschung neue Gegenstände, Konzepte, Methoden und Horizonte erschließen. Sie ist auch ein Forum für Bände, die Definitionen des ‚Narrativen‘ im Sinne eines kognitiven Schemas, einer (Repräsentations-)Form oder eines semiotischen Artefakts weiterentwickeln, das Narrative von anderen Modi/Strategien der Sinnerzeugung abgrenzen oder es in seinem Verhältnis zum ‚Fiktionalen‘ bestimmen. In der Reihe erscheinen Bände in deutscher und englischer Sprache. Die Bände werden von den Herausgebern und/oder Mitgliedern des internationalen Beirats begutachtet.

Both traditional narratology and interdisciplinary narrative research have witnessed an ongoing boom during recent decades which has resulted in the development of a host of new approaches in an increasingly transgeneric, intermedial and interdisciplinary narrative theory.

The new book series RABE/RAVEN does not only reflect these developments, but offers a forum for monographs and concept oriented collective volumes which

- deal with forms of narrative in genres traditionally regarded as ‘non-narrative’ (e.g. drama and poetry) or with relatively neglected phenomena and text types (e.g. rituals, the news, narration in everyday contexts),
- explore forms of narrative in other media (e.g. cartoons, graphic novels, film, art, music, hyperfiction, storytelling in new media), and multimodal or transmedial storytelling,
- reconceptualise narratological categories, explore innovative narrative forms, or extend the range of concepts, models and methods of classical and postclassical narratology,
- take into consideration approaches, insights, and methods developed by narrative researchers working in other disciplines (e.g. history, linguistics, narrative medicine, psychology, cognitive science, the social sciences),
- examine forms of slow change (e.g. ageing, evolution, climate change, mind change as a result of the impact of digital technologies, illness, extinction of species) and other phenomena (e.g. performances, rituals, complex systems) that are based on non-narrative logics, and that challenge or defy narratological analysis and its key concepts (e.g. stories without actors, events, actions, and plot).

The series offers a forum for innovative publications and alternative varieties of explorations in narrative which gauge the limits of narratology and which open up new objects, concepts, methods and horizons for research in narrative studies. It is also a forum for volumes which advance definitions of narrative as a cognitive schema, as form or as semiotic artefact, which conceptualise narrative in contradistinction to other modes/strategies of meaning-making, or which probe into the relationship of narrative and fiction. The series publishes books in German and English. All volumes are peer reviewed by the editors and/or members of the international advisory board.





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All these articles were translated by Susan Nicholls.

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Versions of chapters 4 and 8 appeared in two special issues of the *Amsterdam International Electronic Journal for Cultural Narratology (AJCN)* after being presented as papers at the second and third conferences of the European Narratology Network: “Narrative Fiction Prior to 1850: Instances of Refutation for Poetic Theories of Narration?,” in *AJCN* 6, autumn 2010/autumn 2011; “Translating S.-Y. Kuroda: Past and Present,” in *AJCN* 7, autumn 2012/autumn 2014. The first one was translated by Susan Nicholls, the second one by Melissa McMahon.

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite the diversity of themes addressed, the ten essays and one interview that make up this volume follow a singular path, which goes from testing certain narrative theories against the reality of the texts, or certain narrative texts, to a meta-historical reflection on the ways of representing the history of narrative theories, via considerations of the identity and difference between certain terms and concepts, the refutation of theories, the reinterpretation of old theories within new theories, the historicity of translations... These texts belong to a discipline or field of research which does not yet exist in literary disciplines as a whole and which I have called, following the model of the history and epistemology of linguistics, “the history and epistemology of literary theory.”<sup>1</sup> There is the same difference in specialization between the historian of literary theory and the historian of literature as between the historian of linguistics and the historian of language, for example. There is also the same continuity between the two types of activity. All of these texts were developed after writing and in some cases after the publication of my work *Le Narrateur. Introduction à la théorie narrative* (The Narrator: Introduction to Narrative Theory), republished as *Le Narrateur. Un problème de théorie narrative* (The Narrator: A Problem in Narrative Theory).<sup>2</sup> They use its theoretical frameworks and extend and systematize its analyses on certain specific points. I will thus begin by briefly presenting the debate that forms the focus of *Le Narrateur*.

\*\*\*

The narrator is a central concept in narrative theory, but its definition and extension divide two major types of theories, which we can call *communicational* theories of narrative, or of fictional narrative, and *non-communicational* or *poetic* theories of fictional narrative, respectively.<sup>3</sup> For Gérard Genette’s narratology, which is the paragon of communicational theories, every narrative has a real or fictional narrator, who communicates a narrative content to a real or fictional narratee. More precisely:

(1) in the case of factual narrative, a real narrator (the author) communicates to the reader a narrative content that is given as true;

(2) in the case of fictional narrative, the author communicates to the reader a narrative content that both of them know has no claim to truthfulness, via the mediation of a fictional narrator who communicates to a fictional narratee a narrative content that is given as true. Genettian narratology is only interested in the second situation of communication, which can be summarized by the questions “who is speaking?” and “to

---

<sup>1</sup> See Patron (2016 [2009]: 26; 2014: 27ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth Patron (2016 [2009]).

<sup>3</sup> On these terms, see Kuroda (2014 [1979; 1976]: 71-73, 78-87, 93, 101; 2014 [1979]: 112-113; 2014 [1980]: 132); Patron (2016 [2009]: 26 and n. 39, 40, 41; 2014: 15, 25).

whom?” (implying: fictionally).<sup>4</sup> It frequently forgoes the operator “It is fictional that ...” and considers fictional narrative as an *analogon* or an imitation of factual narrative.

This dual situation of communication is found in all communicational theories of fictional narrative: the narrative theory of the earlier work of Seymour Chatman (specifically, the theory of “narrated” fictional narratives, as opposed to “non-narrated” fictional narratives);<sup>5</sup> the narratology of the later Chatman;<sup>6</sup> Franz K. Stanzel’s narrative theory, and Lubomír Doležel’s theory of “authentication.”<sup>7</sup> It is described well in this quote from Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (whose theory of narration is a hybrid of Genette’s and Chatman’s):

Narration can be considered as both real and fictional. In the empirical world, the author is the agent responsible for the production of the narrative and for its communication. The empirical process of communication, however, is less relevant to the poetics of narrative fiction than its counterpart within the text. Within the text, communication involves a fictional narrator transmitting a narrative to a fictional narratee. (Rimmon-Kenan 2002 [1983]: 3-4)

In these theories, communication is always conceived on the model of oral communication. The question “who is speaking?” is not a metaphor or shortcut for “who is speaking or writing?,” except in cases where the narrative explicitly thematizes the fact that the fictional narrator is conveying the narrative to the fictional narratee in written form.<sup>8</sup> In other cases, the written dimension of the narrative is effaced or even denied outright.<sup>9</sup>

For non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative, on the contrary, it is not at all obvious that:

(1) the relation between the author and the reader is one of communication, in any essential and interesting sense of the term “communication.” In order to talk about communication in an interesting way, it is necessary to be able to draw on a linguistic and, potentially, a pragmatic analysis of what communication is, as opposed to what it can be considered not to be;<sup>10</sup>

(2) there is always a fictional situation of communication implying a fictional narrator and a fictional narratee. It is in this respect that these theories are *non-communicational*: because they oppose *communicational* (or, if preferred, *pan-communicational*) theories by promoting a conception of optional communication.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Genette (1980 [1972]: 26-32, 186, 213-214, 243-245, 259-260; 1988 [1983]: 64, 100-102, 139; 1993 [1986]: 113).

<sup>5</sup> See Chatman (1978: 197-266) and Patron (2016 [2009]: Ch. 3, 57-72).

<sup>6</sup> See Chatman (1990: 85, 109-123, 218, n. 29) and Patron (2016 [2009]: Ch. 3, 72-73).

<sup>7</sup> See Doležel (1980) and Patron (2016 [2009]: 105-111).

<sup>8</sup> See for example Genette (1980 [1972]: 214) on Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*.

<sup>9</sup> See Patron (2017) and herein Chapter IX.

<sup>10</sup> See Kuroda (2014 [1979; 1973]; 2014 [1979; 1976]; 2014 [1979]; 2014 [1980]; Banfield (2014 [1982]); Patron (2016 [2009]: Ch. 8 and 9) and Patron (2014).

The representatives of these theories consider that the most interesting question in the case of fictional narrative is not “who is speaking?” (implying: fictionally), but “how is it written?,” which can also be expressed as: “what possibilities does the language offer to the writer?,” “what limits does it impose?,” or “what does the extralinguistic factor of writing add to the ability to exploit the potential of language?” It is in this respect that these theories are *poetic*, because they focus their attention on the role of the author as creator (*poiētēs* in Greek) of the fictional narrative in and through language.

Communicational theories of narrative, including fictional narrative, are based on a very widespread postulate concerning the essential function of language, which is assimilated to communication. They do not however develop any linguistic analysis; they are on the whole *non-linguistic* theories of fictional narrative (even if linguistics is involved in another way: as a model of reference, or a reservoir of terminology that is often employed in a metaphorical way).<sup>11</sup> In contrast, non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative are produced by linguists (S.-Y. Kuroda, Ann Banfield)<sup>12</sup> and are based on a close analysis of the distinctive linguistic features of fictional narrative, studied in Japanese (Kuroda), English or French (Banfield). One of their hypotheses is that certain languages can help clarify aspects of language that are not necessarily expressed in other languages.<sup>13</sup>

In communicational theories of fictional narrative, everything happens as though there were no possible alternatives to their assertions (or as though the alternatives were either too extravagant or too trivial to be taken into consideration<sup>14</sup>). These theories are overwhelmingly dominant in research, publishing, media (internet), and teaching. The non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative suffer from a lack of celebrity, which has probably to do with the fact that they are more complex and demand more of their readers than the other type, especially when it comes to knowledge of linguistics.

In addition to the oppositions given above, here is what I consider to be my own contribution:

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<sup>11</sup> It is not the case for Doležel: see Doležel (1973) and Patron (2016 [2009]: Ch. 2).

<sup>12</sup> It is not the case for Käte Hamburger, which is more akin to logic and the philosophy of language. However, some of her propositions are translatable into linguistic discourse, as is shown by the way they are taken up by Kuroda and Banfield (cf. Kuroda 2014 [1974]: 67-68, 70; 2014 [1979; 1976]: 80-83, 87-92, 100-101; 2014 [1979]: 113; 2014 [1980]: 121; Banfield 1995 [1982]: 141-180, 185, 263).

<sup>13</sup> See Kuroda (2014 [1979; 1973]: 56); Banfield (2014 [1982]: 12-13 and *passim*). See also below Chapters II and VIII.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Genette (1988 [1983]: 100-102), criticized at the beginning of Patron (2016 [2009]: 13-15). See also more recently Margolin (2009; 2013 [2009]), and Patron (2011e). The representatives of the communicational theories also refer often to McHale (1983), criticized in Galbraith (1995: 35-42 and *passim*).

1. *The identification of the point at which the concept of the narrator took on a stabilized form.* — I refer here to the introduction of *Le Narrateur*, and a section entitled “La conception traditionnelle du narrateur” (The traditional conception of the narrator). The necessity of the concept of the narrator appeared with the success of the memoir novel or first-person novel in the original sense of the term.<sup>15</sup> It encapsulates the following issues: an *I* which is not that of the author but of a character in the fiction; a pact of truthfulness within the fiction (the narrator speaks of the past in a truthful manner, which does not mean that he or she cannot lie or deform the truth, but simply that he or she does not relate a fictional narrative); a restriction of narrative information to what the narrator can know and plausibly remember; and a more or less marked opposition between the “experiencing I” and the “narrating I,” to use Leo Spitzer’s terms (1988; 1970 [1928]: 451-452; my translation, S. P.<sup>16</sup>). This conception of the narrator is inseparable from the conception of a duality or a differential nature of the universe of fictional narratives (the narrator is reserved for the first-person fictional narrative, considered as a particular case of fictional narrative). It is dualist or differentialist, whereas narratology is monist in this respect.

I will refer several times in this volume to the traditional conception of the narrator: as a reminder of the context of the appearance of the concept of the narrator; to emphasize the permanence of certain features in other uses of the term and concept (“the narrator is different from the author,” “the narrator is fictional,” “the narrator communicates a narrative content which he or she gives as true,” etc.); and to evoke the reinterpretation of this conception in non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative.

2. *The examination, in relation to the concept of the narrator, of the fact that “concepts with the same name may in fact be totally different,” and that “concepts with different names may be strictly equivalent” (as per the formulation of Jean-Claude Milner).*<sup>17</sup> — I will mention a few examples. Under the heading of concepts that are homonymous and (totally or partially) different: the traditional conception of the narrator and the narrator as the personification of a generic opposition, namely the opposition between the narrative and dramatic genre, in Käte Friedemann and, follow-

---

<sup>15</sup> The term “narrator” itself, dates from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Barbauld 1977; 1959 [1804] and 1808 [1804], quoted in Patron 2016 [2009]: 249-251). I mean of course the term “narrator” used to refer to this concept (one of the difficulties of the analysis being that the term “narrator” also belongs to everyday vocabulary: Anna Laetitia Barbauld speaks for that matter of an “imaginary narrator”). We find the opposition between “the author” and “the narrator” in Charles Lamb, in letters or reports concerning Defoe’s novels (cf. Rothschild 1990: 23) and in Balzac, in the preface to *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*).

<sup>16</sup> The article on Marcel Proust’s style is not used in Spitzer (1974 [1948]).

<sup>17</sup> See Milner (1995 [1989]: 17-18; my translation, S. P.) and below Chapter III.



ing Friedemann, in Stanzel;<sup>18</sup> the traditional conception of the narrator and the narrator as “internal addressor” (or “immanent addressor,” or “textual addressor”) of the narrative or the fictional narrative in Barthes and, following Barthes, in Doležel and Genette;<sup>19</sup> and the traditional conception of the narrator, which is also John Searle’s narrator, and the personification of Searle’s theory of illocutionary pretense in Marie-Laure Ryan and, following Ryan, in Genette.<sup>20</sup> Under the heading of concepts that are heteronymous and strictly equivalent: the narrator and the author of a historical or fictional narrative, in Émile Benveniste;<sup>21</sup> and the (role of the) “anonymous narrator” and (the role of) the author of a fictional narrative in the later Doležel.<sup>22</sup>

3. *The compilation of the corpus and the reflection on the succession of theories (in the case of communicational theories of narrative).* — I have favored Genette’s and Chatman’s theories over Rimmon-Kenan’s for example, which does not offer an original conception of the narrator or narration (the same applies to Mieke Bal, who has an original conception of narrative focalizations, while her conception of the narrator is strictly equivalent to Genette’s). I have given Stanzel’s theory a prime position because of its originality, as well as its reception and scope of influence (which is shown in *Le Narrateur* with the examples of Gottfried Gabriel and Monika Fludernik<sup>23</sup>). In the case of Doležel’s narrative theory, the criterion of influence was not of primary importance, since this theory is not well known outside the circle of specialists in Czech literature. It was rather the criteria of originality, interest, and difference from Genette’s narratology in its relation to linguistics, and also the fact that it is necessary to be familiar with this theory to understand the theory of authentication, a branch of Doležel’s theory of fiction, which seemed an interesting topic to examine in the chapter “Théorie des actes de langage and narratologie” (Theory of speech acts and narratology).

In the case of non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative, which are less numerous and more concerned to make public the cumulative bases of their knowledges, I only had to adopt the corpus and examine the relationships of succession which had already been compiled.

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<sup>18</sup> See Stanzel (1984 [1979]: 4, 11, 21, 244, n. 2) and Patron (2016 [2009]: 20, 75-76). See also below Chapter V.

<sup>19</sup> See Barthes (1977 [1966]: 109-117 and online); Doležel (1967: 542); Genette (1980 [1972]: 27-28); Patron (2016 [2009]: 25-26, 32, 44, n. 3). See also below Chapter V.

<sup>20</sup> See Ryan (1980: 409-414); Ryan (1981a: 130); Ryan (1981b: esp. 518-519, 523); Genette (1993 [1991; 1990]: 68-79); Patron (2016 [2009]: 95, n. 13, 111-118, 120). See also below Chapters IV and V.

<sup>21</sup> See Benveniste (1971 [1966; 1959]: 206-211), and Patron (2016 [2009]: 23, 168). See also below Chapter II.

<sup>22</sup> See Doležel (1980), and Patron (2016 [2009]: 105-111).

<sup>23</sup> See Patron (2016 [2009]: 101-102, 124, 128).

4. *A refreshed account of non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative.* — The French translation of Hamburger had never been called into question.<sup>24</sup> A synthesis of Kuroda's work in narrative theory had never been carried out, because the 1979 article, "Some Thoughts on the Foundations of the Theory of Language Use," was completely unknown, even in specialist circles (neither Banfield, nor Mary Galbraith refer to it, for example).<sup>25</sup> The case of Banfield's theory is more complex. It is a very well known theory, but known superficially, and generally poorly understood or poorly presented. As in the case of communicational theories, I have endeavored to evaluate the common characteristics and differences between these theories on the level of the issues raised, the concepts and terminology used, and the literary examples cited.

I especially insisted in *Le Narrateur*, and I return to it in this volume, on Banfield's refutation of the narratorial hypothesis in several specific cases.<sup>26</sup> Today this refutation is accepted in specialist circles (but not in narratologist circles, which clearly prefer to ignore it<sup>27</sup>). I also insisted, and continue to do so in this volume, on a distinction I consider to be very important, which is deduced from certain propositions of Kuroda and Banfield and their continuators. It is the distinction between the content of the fictional representation (including the characters, the events, and the narrator, if there is one) and the means employed in the construction of this representation (language, style, the different levels of composition of the text).<sup>28</sup> It allows us to conceive of narratives without a narrator which still imply work on the order of narrated events, on the assemblage of points of view, etc. This distinction can also be formulated in terms of the "limitations on representational correspondence" (Currie 2010: 58-64 and 78-79). According to Gregory Currie, in representational works only certain features of the representation serve to represent features of the things represented. For example, the discourse pronounced by the actor who plays Othello and the discourse pronounced fictionally by the character of Othello are in a relationship of representational correspondence. On the other hand, there is a limitation on the representational correspondence if we consider the versification (or more generally the poetry) of *Othello's* dialogue, because the character of Othello, for example, is not supposed to compose verse (or more generally poetry). Currie also takes the example of the past tense in fictional narratives, which is not necessarily used to indicate that the act of narration takes place after the narrated events, and this observation can be extended to what I above called "language, style, the different levels of composition of the text."

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<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*: Ch. 7, 152-158.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.*: Ch. 8, 135-141. See also Kuroda (2014 [1979]); Kuroda (2014 [1980]); and Patron (2014: 25-27).

<sup>26</sup> See Patron (2016 [2009]: Ch. 9, esp. 188-192), and below Chapters III and IV.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Margolin (2009 and 2013 [2009]).

<sup>28</sup> See Banfield (2014 [1982]: 248-249, 253); Galbraith (1995: 49-50); and Patron (2016 [2009]: 203, 221-222, 226). See also below Chapters I, IV, V, VI.

5. *The genealogy of certain concepts or ideas.* — Once again, a few examples. In the case of communicational theories of fictional narrative: the concept of an *Ich-narrator* that implies that of an *Er-narrator*, in the later Doležel, which is derived from the opposition between the *Ich-form* and the *Er-form* of the early Doležel, which is taken from Friedrich Spielhagen via the intermediary of Wolfgang Kayser.<sup>29</sup> In the case of non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative: the concept of pure narration or narration *per se* in Banfield, which is derived from the notion of straight narration in the American translation of Hamburger;<sup>30</sup> and the notions of objective and subjective sentences in Janyce Wiebe and William Rapaport, which follow from certain propositions of Banfield.<sup>31</sup>

6. *The revelation of certain errors (the problem of conceptual transfers).* — Some further examples: the interpretation of the performative in the later Doležel, which is a long way from John L. Austin's theory,<sup>32</sup> the profound alteration of Searle's theory of illocutionary pretense in Ryan's works;<sup>33</sup> the use of Searle's theory of indirect speech acts by the later Genette.<sup>34</sup> I also allude in this volume to Genette's interpretation of the terms "first-person narrative" and "third-person narrative."<sup>35</sup> Genette writes:

Readers may have noticed that until now we have used the terms "first-person – or third-person – narrative" only when paired with quotation marks of protest. Indeed, these common locutions seem to me inadequate, in that they stress variation in the element of the narrative situation that is in fact invariant – to wit, the presence (explicit or implicit) of the "person" of the narrator. This presence is invariant because the narrator can be in his narrative (like every subject of enunciation in his enunciated statement) *only* in the "first person" [...]. (1980 [1972]: 243-244)

The problem is that, in the traditional definition of these terms, the term "person" does not refer to the "person" of the narrator but that of the protagonist:

In the language of art, we call a novel in which the protagonist is himself the narrator of his fate a "first person novel" [*Ich-Roman*], in opposition to other novels, where the protagonist is a third person whose adventures we are told by the writer. (Spielhagen 1969 [1883]: 66; my translation, S. P.)

The stress of the variation is thus placed on an element that is itself in fact subject to variation: not of the "narrative situation" in Genette's sense, but of the poetics of fictional narrative. The whole "Person" section of *Narrative Discourse* is a *coup de force* in relation to the traditional conception of the narrator, pseudo-justified by the appeal

<sup>29</sup> See Patron (2016 [2009]: 47, n. 7, 106, 110-111).

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*: 149, n. 35, 196, n. 27.

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*: 216, n. 13.

<sup>32</sup> See *ibid.*: 107, n. 35.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*: 95, 112-117, and below Chapter V.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*: 120.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*: 18-19, 36, and below Chapter V.

to the linguistics of enunciation (“like every subject of enunciation in his enunciated statement”).

I also devote half a chapter of this volume to systematizing the observations I already made in *Le Narrateur* in relation to the errors of interpretation around Benveniste’s concepts of “history” (*histoire*) and “discourse” (*discours*) in the theories of Tzvetan Todorov and Genette.<sup>36</sup>

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The essays brought together in the present volume place various aspects of what is today called *classical* narratology in perspective and entertain an ambivalent relationship with *postclassical* narratology or narratologies.<sup>37</sup>

Against classical narratology, these essays promote a reconceptualization of fictional narrative from a non-communicational point of view. They also invite us to distrust the substantialization of the “levels,” notions, and oppositions of classical narratology (“history” and “discourse,” “voice,” “focalization(s),” “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic,” etc.). They observe the absence of historical and epistemological reflection in classical narratology, replaced by unfounded assertions that are ultimately derived from analogies between poetics and linguistics (as when Genette writes that “[i]t seems that poetics is experiencing a comparable difficulty in approaching the generating instance of narrative discourse, an instance for which we have reserved the parallel term *narrating*,” 1980 [1972]: 213).

Postclassical narratology, which is characterized by a profusion of tendencies, currents and undercurrents, is difficult to grasp in a global way. What can be said in general is that it is for the most part communicational (based on the same postulate concerning the essential function of language, assimilated to communication, as classical narratology); that it often reproduces the substantialization of the “levels,” notions, and oppositions of classical narratology (in particular the opposition between “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic” narratives, which is integral to the pan-narrator theory of narrative); that it legitimates the silence on sources used, or indeed the vaunted “*tabula rasa*” of classical narratology, through a retrospection that focuses almost exclusively on classical narratology, as though no consideration had been given to the narratorial instance, for example, in previous theories or theoretical clusters.

Probably the most influential expression of the communicational theory of fictional narrative at the moment comes from James Phelan, a major representative of “rhetorical narratology”: “Narrative: In rhetorical terms, the act of somebody telling somebody else on a particular occasion for some purpose that something happened” (2005: 217). Monika Fludernik’s definition in her *Introduction to Narratology*, which associ-

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<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*: 23-24, 170, and below Chapter III.

<sup>37</sup> For a comparison between classical and postclassical narratologies, see Prince (2008). For the most recent presentations, see Alber/Fludernik (2010); Sommer (2012); Meister (2013 [2009]).

ates narrative primarily with the act of narration, then with the narrator, can also be cited: “Narrative [...] is to be found wherever someone tells us about something: a newsreader on the radio, a teacher at school, a school friend in the playground [...] or the narrator in the novel that we enjoy reading before going to bed.” (2009: 1) It is consubstantial with the project of “natural narratology” presented by Fludernik and adopted by a large number of postclassical narratologists.

The works of Hamburger, Kuroda and Banfield are generally unknown to the postclassical narratologists, and even when they are known, they are not considered as the work of theoretical contemporaries with whom the postclassical narratologists could engage in a current debate.<sup>38</sup>

For all of these reasons, the essays brought together in this volume entertain a rather oppositional relationship with respect to postclassical narratology or narratologies. At the same time, they are addressed to postclassical narratologists, among other potential readers. They recognize affinities with certain currents of postclassical narratology, or with certain authors within these currents.<sup>39</sup> They aim to introduce particular elements into postclassical narratology or narratologies: history (historical relativism), epistemology (for descriptive and explanative purposes, but also evaluative), or else an attention to the reality of the texts, which is also attention to their detail.<sup>40</sup>

To a certain extent these essays belong to the history of linguistics as it is understood by the so-called “French school,” which is closely linked with epistemology, more so than with pure historiography.<sup>41</sup> They also belong to a discipline or field of research which does not yet exist in literary disciplines as a whole. In this case, it is a matter of writing “recent” history, targeting the recent past of linguistics and literary theory compared to the more clearly “completed” past generally targeted by historians.<sup>42</sup> The two disciplines under consideration share a common condition, which is that recent theories often fall victim to being overlooked in the same way as very old theories do, an oversight which is not necessarily linked to their falsification or inclusion within a more general theory (in Kuroda’s and Banfield’s cases, to my knowledge, there has been no attempt at empirical falsification worthy of the name; nor can it be said that these theories have been subsumed under a more general theory). Added to this, in the case of recent theories, are phenomena relating to voluntary ignorance or “valorization” in the Bachelardian sense of the term – the attribution of values to certain theories or hypotheses on the basis of non-scientific interests. I share with historians of linguistics the idea that a past, overlooked, or even voluntarily ignored, state of

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<sup>38</sup> See below Chapter IX. An exception needs to be made for certain representatives of “unnatural narratology,” especially Henrik Skov Nielsen (cf. for example 2010: 282). See also Hansen et al. (2011: 1-4 and *passim*).

<sup>39</sup> See below Chapters III, V, IX.

<sup>40</sup> See below Chapters I, VI, X.

<sup>41</sup> See among others Auroux et al. (eds.) (1984) and Colombat/Fournier/Puech (2010). See also Archaimbault/Fournier/Raby (eds.) (2014).

<sup>42</sup> See Puech (2008); Colombat/Fournier/Puech (2010: 230-233).

the discipline of linguistics or of literary theory can rediscover its pertinence within a current context.

I have taken from historians of linguistics a certain number of concepts and ways of conceptualizing the disciplines of history of linguistics or literary theory. Firstly, the “horizon of retrospection” (*horizon de rétrospection*), which refers to the set of prior knowledges of a discipline, or even an author or a group of authors within this discipline.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the idea that knowledges grow by a process of *accretion*, which is to say by the addition of new conceptual productions to kernels in which the older knowledges are always already contained.<sup>44</sup> Thirdly, the refusal of the *narrative* model, in the sense of the single, linear, teleological narrative that presents a succession of theories corresponding to separate research programs (general grammar – comparative grammar – structuralism – generative grammar, and, in the same way: “proto-narratology” – classical narratology – postclassical narratology), and the corollary affirmation of the coexistence of several research programs.<sup>45</sup> Also, the necessity of selecting “finer” objects of research (concepts, names of concepts, examples, etc.), that can shift the terms of the debate and lead to the emergence of new representations.

Finally, I believe that new connections could be developed between linguists and literary scholars in the area of the history and epistemology of theories, where the linguists would have a significant lead on the literary scholars, but where perhaps there would also be a promise of enrichment for the linguists.

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The first chapter of this volume sets out to test communicational and non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative against an empirical microreading. The text I selected for this purpose is Juan Rulfo’s novel, *Pedro Páramo* (1955), which I shall examine in Spanish and in its English translation by Margaret Sayers Peden (1994). The reasons for this choice have to do in particular with the complex composition of the novel, made up of an assemblage of fragments in which two parts (which interpenetrate in places) can be distinguished, the first involving a fictional narrator, i.e. a character endowed with the status of narrator in the fictional world projected by the text, the second not having this narrator and as a result raising questions on who takes charge of the narration.

Chapter 2, which has already been mentioned, concerns the homonymy, which also incorporates an element of synonymy, between Benveniste’s concepts of *history* and *discourse* and those of *story* (or *narrative*) and *discourse* in some communicational theories of fictional narrative. It also offers a comparison between Benveniste’s theory

<sup>43</sup> See Auroux (1987 [1986]); Puech (ed.) (2006); Puech/Raby (eds.) (2011). See also Merlin-Kajman (2014).

<sup>44</sup> See Auroux (1989: 31 and passim) and Auroux (1994: 19 and passim). See also Auroux (2013: 6 and passim).

<sup>45</sup> See Auroux et al. (eds.) (1984: XIV); Auroux (1989: 33ff.); Auroux (2012). See also below Chapter IX.

of the correlations of tense and Hamburger's theory of the epic preterite, and examines the use made of the alignments between Benveniste and Hamburger in non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative.

Similarly, Chapter 3 analyses the relationships of homonymy and synonymy around the concept of voice in some communicational theories of fictional narrative. It also suggests a commensurability between Genette's theory of voice and the "performative analysis" of John R. Ross, such as it is presented and criticized by Kuroda, or the "dual voice theory" in free indirect discourse, such as it is presented and criticized by Banfield.

Chapter 4 aims to challenge, or at least strongly qualify, the claim that fictional narratives prior to the latter half of the 19th century fall outside of Hamburger's narrative theory, and non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative more generally. In other words, that they refute them, or at least refute some of their essential propositions.

In Chapter 5, which comes from a volume of interviews on narrative theories and poetics, I try to provide clear and concise answers to the five questions selected by the editors of the volume: "Why were you initially drawn to narratology or narrative theory?"; "What do you consider your most important contribution(s) to the field?"; "What is the proper role of a narratology and narrative theory in relation to other academic disciplines?"; "What do you consider the most important topics and/or contributions in narratology?"; "What are the most important open problems in this field and what are the prospects for progress?"

Chapter 6 deals with the relationships between narrative (more precisely, narration) and fiction in a short story by Mario Benedetti, "Cinco años de vida" ("Five Years of Life"), a "fantastic short story" in the words of the author, "unnatural" in the terminology of contemporary unnatural narratology. This chapter forms a pair with the first one, which focuses especially on the problems of interpretation raised by communicational theories of fictional narrative, by showing not only the interest of non-communicational or poetic theories of fictional narrative in analyzing and interpreting some fictional narratives in negative terms, but positive ones as well.

Chapter 7, although chronologically posterior, should be read after the preceding chapter to the extent that it addresses the relationships between verbal narrative and images (iconic narrative) in the illustrated edition of the short story by Benedetti, "Cinco años de vida," taken from *Historias de Paris*. The theoretical framework of this chapter is transmedial narratology.

Chapter 8 results directly from work carried out for the publication in French of six essays by Kuroda on the theory of narration, and aims to be a contribution to the history and epistemology of narrative theory, approached here from the angle of translation practice.

Chapter 9 deals with the distinction between spoken and written language, a subject that remains largely untheorized in narratology. It begins by comparing the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between spoken and written lan-

guage in narratology. Then, it details the reasons that explain why narratology has rarely raised the question of the difference between spoken and written language. It also shows that, just as in the case of the distinction between fact and fiction, it is through Hamburger's, Kuroda's and above all Banfield's theories that the distinction between spoken and written language can become a subject of investigation. The last section reviews the categories of narratology, considering them in the light of Banfield's theory and other theoretical propositions that assign quite distinct roles to spoken and written language.

Chapter 10 takes us from "recent" to "very recent" history, with the examination of several books and articles emerging from postclassical narratology or narratologies that aim to contest the so-called pan-narrator theories of fictional narrative, in favor of optionalism (the argument for the optional nature of the narrator in the theory and analysis of fictional narrative). The chapter places these works in perspective in relation to those examined previously and shows what a history of literary theories can offer the debate between pan-narrator theories and optional-narrator theories, taking from the model of the history of linguistic theories.

Overall, this volume aims to contribute *materials for the history of literary theories*,<sup>46</sup> in the hope that they will be used in other individual or collective projects, and that one day there will be a community of researchers explicitly linked by the dedicated pursuit of research in this domain.

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<sup>46</sup> See again Auroux et al. (eds.) (1984).