Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative

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If words have meaning (or even multiple meanings), then "narratology"—whether in its formal aspect, as the study of narrative discourse, or its thematic aspect, as the analysis of the sequences of events and actions related by this discourse—ought by rights to concern itself with stories of *all* kinds, fictional and otherwise. It is evident, however, that the two branches of narratology have until now devoted their attention almost exclusively to the behavior and objects of fictional narrative alone.[1] And this has not been a simple empirical choice, implying no prejudice toward whatever might, for the time being, have been explicitly excluded from consideration; rather it has involved the implicit privileging of fictional narrative, which has been hypostatized as narrative par excellence, or as the model for all narratives whatsoever. The few researchers—Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White, or Paul Veyne, for instance—who have shown any interest in the figures or intrigues of historical narrative, have done so from the perspective of some other discipline: philosophy of temporality, rhetoric, episte-

1. This has already been established by Paul Ricoeur (1984: 13). A striking illustration of this state of things is furnished by two more or less contemporaneous texts by Roland Barthes (1966, 1967). The first, despite its very general title ("Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits"), deals with narrative fiction only, and the second, despite an initial antithesis between "historical narrative" and "fictional narrative," completely neglects the narrative aspects of historical discourse, which is rejected as a deviation belonging to the nineteenth century (Augustin Thierry), and devalued in the name of the "anti-historical-event" principles of the French school.

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mology. And when Jean-François Lyotard applied the categories of *Discours du récit* to a newspaper story on the death of a militant, he did so in order to efface the frontiers of fiction (Lyotard 1980). Whatever the merits and faults of fictional narratology in its present state, it seems unlikely that it can spare us from having to undertake a specific study of factual narrative.[2] In any case, it is certain that fictional narratology cannot indefinitely postpone asking whether its results, that is, its methods, apply to a domain which it has never properly explored but only silently annexed, without examination or justification.

Having said this, I have evidently confessed my own guilt, for not only did I once use the title *Discours du récit* for a study manifestly confined to fictional narrative, but I even repeated the offense more recently in *Nouveau discours du récit*, despite having lodged a protest there (Genette 1983: 11) against this overly unilateral practice of what might be called *restricted narratology*. However, I have neither the intention nor the means to redress the balance here by undertaking a study of the characteristic features of the discourse of factual narrative. This would necessitate major research into such practices as history, biography, diaries, newspaper stories, police reports, judicial *narratio*, everyday gossip, and other forms of what Mallarmé called "l'universel reportage"—or, at the very least, a systematic analysis of certain major and supposedly typical texts, such as Rousseau's *Confessions* or Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution française*.[3] Rather, I would like to examine, provisionally and in a more theoretical and a priori way, why factual narrative and fictional narrative[4] behave differently towards the story which they "report" by the mere fact of this story's (supposedly) being in one case "truthful" (as Lucian put it), in the

2. For lack of a better term I shall use here the adjective "factual," which is not without its difficulties (for fiction too consists of sequences of facts), in order to avoid the systematic use of negative locutions ("nonfiction," "nonfictional") which reflect and perpetuate the very privileging of fiction that I want to put into question.

3. On this last text, see Rigney (1988). Pursuing the approach pioneered by Hayden White, Rigney is less concerned with narrative strategies than with the means for producing meaning in a text which, defined as essentially (and authentically) retrospective, is therefore constantly drawn to anticipation. For specific and generic studies, see Phillippe Lejeune (1975) on narrative order in Sartre's *Les Mots* and Daniel Madelénat (1983: 149–58) on choices of mode, order, and speed in biography.

4. For obvious reasons I shall leave out of the account here non-narrative and nonverbal forms of fiction (e.g., drama, silent film). The nonverbal forms are nonliterary by definition, that is, by their choice of medium; on the other hand, among the forms of narrative fiction the distinction between written and oral does not seem pertinent here, and the distinction between literary (canonical) and nonliterary (popular, familiar, etc.) fiction seems too relative and conditional to be taken into consideration.

other case fictional, that is, invented by someone, whether the present storyteller or someone from whom the latter has inherited the story. I specify "supposedly" because historians do on occasion invent details or arrange "intrigues," and novelists do on occasion draw inspiration from topical events. What counts here is the official status of the text and its reading horizon.

One opinion, among others, which denies the pertinence of such a venture is that of John Searle, for whom a priori "there is no textual property, syntactical or semantic [or, consequently, narratological,] that will identify a text as a work of fiction" (1975: 325) because a fictional narrative is purely and simply a pretence or simulation of a factual narrative, where the novelist just makes believe ("pretends") that he is telling a true story without seriously asking the reader to believe in it, but also without leaving in the text the slightest trace of its non-serious, simulated character. However, this opinion is not universally shared, to say the least. It clashes, for instance, with that of Käte Hamburger (1957), who restricts the field of "make-believe" (*Fingiertheit*) to the first-person novel, an indiscernible simulation of the authentic autobiographical story, while, on the contrary, emphasizing in fiction proper (i.e., third-person fiction) its incontestable textual "indices" (*symptoms*) of fictionality.[5] In one sense, the summary examination which follows aims to adjudicate between these two theses. For reasons of convenience, and also perhaps because of my inability to imagine any other way of proceeding, I propose to follow here the procedure tested in *Discours du récit*, successively addressing questions of order, speed, frequency, mood, and voice.

Order

In 1972 I wrote a bit hastily that the folktale follows an order more faithful to the chronology of events than does the literary tradition of narrative initiated by the *Iliad*, with its in-medias-res beginning and completive analepses. I retreated somewhat from this position in *Nouveau discours du récit* (1983), observing that the use of anachronies is inaugurated instead by the *Odyssey*, not the *Iliad*, and is perpetuated more in the novel than in the epic tradition. Meanwhile, in a very interesting article that I discovered only belatedly, Barbara Herrnstein Smith has invited me to retreat on a different front, arguing

5. For a comparison between Hamburger's theses and the methodological postulates of narratology, see Schaeffer (1987). Without committing himself on fiction in general, as Searle does, Lejeune, like Käte Hamburger, observes no difference between autobiography and the autobiographical novel "if one remains at the level of the internal analysis of the text" (1971: 24). The differences which he later introduces and to which we shall return below, are of a paratextual rather than properly narratological order.

> not only that absolute chronological order is as *rare* in folkloric narrative as it is in any literary tradition, but that it is virtually *impossible* for any narrator to sustain it in an utterance of more than minimal length. In other words, by virtue of the very nature of discourse, nonlinearity is the rule rather than the exception in narrative accounts. Indeed, for that reason, the literary-historical "progression" is probably closer to being the reverse of what Genette implies: that is, to the extent that *perfect* chronological order may be said to occur at all, it is likely to be found only in acutely self-conscious, "artful," or "literary" texts. (1980: 227)[6]

This anti-Lessing inversion is perhaps as excessive as the hypothesis it inverts, and my intention of course was not at all to establish a historical "progression" in opposing Homeric anachrony to the supposed linearity of the tales collected by Perrault or the Brothers Grimm. Anyway, this opposition takes into account only two or three genres (folktale, epic-novel) belonging to the domain of fiction. But I do accept the point that no narrative, including extrafictional and extraliterary narrative, oral or written, can restrict itself naturally and without special effort to a rigorously chronological order. If, as I assume, consensus can easily be reached on this proposition, then another ensues a fortiori, namely, that nothing prevents factual narrative from using analepses or prolepses. I shall accept this in principle, for further, more precise comparisons would only be a statistical matter and would probably reveal great diversity according to periods, authors, and individual works, but also according to genres, fictional and factual. From this perspective, fewer affinities emerge among all fictional types, on the one hand, and all factual types, on the other, than between certain fictional types and certain factual types—between, to choose an example almost at random, the diary-novel and the authentic diary. My "random" is not really innocent and suggests, I hope, an important reservation that I prefer to save for later.

But Barbara Herrnstein Smith's article raises in another, more radical way the question of the differences between fiction and nonfiction in their treatment of chronology: she wonders if and when the comparison, which narratology postulates, between the order of the *fabula* and the order of the *syuzhet* is possible, and she answers that it is possible only when the critic has access, *outside the narrative itself*, to an independent source of information about the temporal succession of the "reported" events—lacking which he can only receive and register these events without discussion in the order in which the narrative de-

6. This critique is directed simultaneously against certain "classics" of narratology, such as Seymour Chatman's and my own, and against Nelson Goodman's essay "Twisted Tales" (1980), which appears in the same issue of *Critical Inquiry*. Goodman's and Chatman's replies to Smith appear in a later issue of *Critical Inquiry* (Goodman 1981: 799–809).

livers them. According to Smith, this possibility is present in two cases only: in the case of a work of fiction derived from a previous work, for example, the latest version of *Cinderella*, and in the case of nonfictional works, such as historical narratives. In these cases alone, she says, "it makes sense to speak of the narrative in question as having rearranged the sequence of some given set of events or the events of some given story" (1980: 227). In other words, in these cases alone do we or can we have access to at least *two* narratives, of which the first may be considered the source of the second, the fabula relative to which the possible distortions of the syuzhet may be gauged. So convinced is Smith of the impossibility of any other procedure that she does not hesitate to add:

> Indeed, one suspects that these two types of narratives (that is, historical reports and twice-told tales) serve as unconscious paradigms for the narratologist, which may, in turn, help explain his need to posit underlying plot structures or basic stories to account for the sequential features of those rather different narratives that he *does* study most closely, namely, works of literary fiction. (1980: 228)

This is a totally gratuitous hypothesis, not in the least corroborated by the history of our discipline, for the narratologists who, since Propp, have worked on folktales have scarcely bothered with their chronological aspect (or, more generally, their narrative form), while conversely the specialists in formal narratology, since Lubbock and Forster, have shown little interest (unless very "unconscious" indeed!) in the folktale, let alone (as I have already complained) historical narrative.

But above all, Smith's criticism (that narratologists speak of anachrony in connection with texts of original fiction, where comparison between fabula and syuzhet is impossible by definition) forgets or neglects one essential fact, which I mention in *Nouveau discours du récit* (1983: 17) and which Nelson Goodman emphasizes in defending his own use of the notion (if not term) of anachrony. This fact is that the majority of analepses and prolepses, in original fiction and elsewhere, are either explicit, that is, signalled as such in the text itself by means of various verbal signs ("La comtesse ne survécut que fort peu de temps à Fabrice, qu'elle adorait, et qui ne passa qu'une année dans sa Chartreuse"), or implicit but nevertheless obvious due to our knowledge of the "causal process in general" (chapter N: the countess dies of grief; chapter N+1: Fabrice dies in her Chartreuse).[7] In both

7. I have substituted these examples for Goodman's; only the second of them, of course, is imaginary. *L'Histoire de la Révolution française* offers at least one example of anachrony whose legibility is not due to the factual character of the historical narrative. In his narrative of the events of July 14, 1789, Michelet first tells about a meeting with the dean of the guild at the Hôtel de Ville; this meeting is inter-

cases, insists Goodman, "the twisting is with respect not to an absolute order of events independent of all versions but to what this version *says* is the order of events" (1981: 799). And when, exceptionally, the text (as with Robbe-Grillet, for example) does not declare either directly (by verbal indication) or indirectly (by inference) what the order of events is, the narratologist can evidently only note, in the absence of any other hypothesis, the "achronical" character of the narrative and accept it as such (Genette 1972: 115).[8] Thus one cannot oppose the factual narrative, where the order of events would be provided by other sources, to the fictional narrative, where it would in principle be unidentified, and where the anachronies would consequently be indeterminable: apart from instances of exceptional reticence, the anachronies of fictional narrative are simply declared or suggested by the narrative itself—just like those of factual narrative, for that matter. In other words, and in order to indicate at the same time a point of agreement and one of disagreement with Barbara Herrnstein Smith, fictional narrative and factual narrative are not to be distinguished wholesale either by their use of anachrony or by the manner in which they signal this usage.[9]

Speed

I would readily extend to what comes under the heading of narrative speed the principle suggested by Smith in connection with order: no story, fictional or otherwise, literary or otherwise, oral or written, has the power—nor, therefore, the obligation—to impose on itself a speed rigorously synchronous with the speed of its fabula. The accelerations, decelerations, ellipses, and pauses which one observes, in the most diverse mixtures, in fictional narrative are also the lot of factual narrative, and are subject, in both cases, to the laws of efficacy and economy

rupted by the arrival of a delegation announcing the taking of the Bastille and displaying its keys. Michelet goes on: "La Bastille ne fut pas prise, il faut le dire, elle se livra. . . ." Then follows the story, in analepse, of the fall of the Bastille.

8. I have already had the occasion to deny, as against Bruce Morrisette, the possibility of "re-establishing" the chronological order of Robbe-Grillet's stories (Genette 1966: 77).

9. More generally, I find it hard to see the import of Smith's criticism of what she calls the "dualism" of narratology. The formula, of an intentionally pragmatic cast, which she proposes instead, runs: "verbal acts consisting of someone telling someone else that something happened" (1980: 232). This seems to me in no way incompatible with the postulates of narratology, and I take it to be entirely self-evident. Moreover, the system of *Discours du récit* (*histoire, récit, narration*) is manifestly not dualist but trinitarian, and has not, to my knowledge, met with objections on the part of my fellow narratologists. I understand that Smith, for her part, is militating for a monist position, but I scarcely see how the formula above illustrates such a position.

and to the narrator's sense of the relative importance of moments and episodes. Here, again, there is no a priori differentiation between the two types. Nevertheless, Käte Hamburger (1957) rightly includes among the indices of fictionality the presence of detailed scenes, dialogues reported in extenso and verbatim, and extended descriptions.[10] None of these features is actually impossible or forbidden (by whom?) in historical narrative, but the presence of such procedures somewhat transgresses historical narrative's verisimilitude ("How do you know that?"), and by doing so (I'll return to this later) communicates to the reader an impression, and a justified one, of "fictionalization."

Frequency

The recourse to iterative narrative, *stricto sensu* a fact of frequency, is in a larger sense a means of accelerating the narrative: acceleration by a synthesizing identification of relatively similar events ("Tous les dimanches . . ."/"Every Sunday . . ."). In this case it goes without saying that factual narrative has no reason whatsoever for denying itself this resource, any more than fictional narrative would, and a factual genre such as biography—including autobiography—makes use of it in ways which have been commented on by specialists (see Lejeune 1975: 114). Thus the relationship between singulative and iterative, which varies so widely from one fictional narrative to another, does not a priori present any marked differences when one passes from the fictional type to the factual—unless one considers, as Lejeune suggests, Proust's massive recourse to the iterative, especially in *Combray*, to be imitative of characteristic aspects of autobiography, that is, a borrowing by the fictional type from the factual type, or more precisely, perhaps, by *a* fictional type (the pseudo-autobiographical novel) from *a* factual type (authentic autobiography). But this highly plausible hypothesis brings us to a case of exchange between the two types, consideration of which I again prefer to postpone.

Mode

It is quite naturally under the heading of mode that, according to Käte Hamburger (1957), most of the characteristic textual indices of fictional narrative are concentrated, for all these "symptoms" point to the same specific trait, that of direct access to the subjectivity of characters. This relationship, incidentally, resolves the paradox of a poetics which, while returning to the essentially thematic Aristotelian defi-

10. A scene, with or without dialogue, is a decelerating factor, while a description constitutes a narrative pause, unless it is connected with a character's perceptual activity, which, according to Hamburger (1957), also counts as an index of fictionality. I shall return to this below.

nition of literature in terms of fictionality, proposes an apparently formalist definition of fiction; for the features of fictional narrative are surely of a morphological order, but these features are only *effects*, the cause of which is the fictional status of the narrative, that is, the imaginary status of the characters who constitute its "I-origo." If it is true that fictional narrative alone can give us direct access to the subjectivity of the other, this is not due to some miraculous privilege, but because this other is a fictional being (or is treated as fictional, in the case of a historical character, such as Napoleon in *War and Peace*), whose thoughts the author imagines whenever he pretends to report them: one intuits with complete certainty only what one has invented oneself. This explains the presence of "indices," such as verbs of thought and feeling, attributed without need of justification ("How would you know?") to "third parties," interior monologue, and free indirect discourse. Of these the last, free indirect discourse, is the most characteristic and efficacious of all, for at its maximum extent it can saturate the entire discourse, insidiously assimilating the whole of it to the character's consciousness. The presence of free indirect discourse explains, among other things, the coexistence of past tense with temporal or spatial deictics of the here and now in sentences such as, "M. *was passing* through the European port for the last time, for *tomorrow* his ship *was leaving* for America."

As has often been noted, this description of fictional narrative hypostatizes a particular type, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel, where the systematic use of these devices contributes to focalization on a small number of characters, or even on a single character, and where the narrator, a fortiori the author, would (if Flaubert had his way) seem to absent himself entirely. Though one might endlessly argue the degree to which these subjectivizing constructions are present in nonfictional and even nonliterary narratives, it is incontestable that they are more natural in fictional narrative, and, give or take a few nuances, we could very well consider them to be distinctive features which differentiate one type from the other. But, unlike Käte Hamburger (who is silent on this topic), I would say the same about the inverse narrative attitude, which I have christened *external focalization*, and which consists of avoiding any intrusion whatsoever into characters' subjectivity so as to report only their actions as seen from the outside, with no attempt at explanation. From Hemingway to Robbe-Grillet, this "objective" kind of narrative seems to me as typically fictional as the other "subjective" kind, and together these two symmetrical forms of focalization characterize fictional narrative, as opposed to the ordinary attitude of factual narrative. The latter does not a priori deny itself psychological explanation, but it does have to justify each explanation with some indication of source ("We know from the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* that Napoleon thought that Kutuzov . . ."), or to attenuate and *modalize* it by some circumspect marker of uncertainty and supposition ("Napoleon *probably* thought that Kutuzov . . ."), while the novelist, fictionalizing his character, can afford a péremptory, "Napoleon thought that Kutuzov. . . ."

I have not forgotten that these two types of focalization are characteristic of relatively recent forms of fictional narrative, nor that the classical forms (epic or novel) rely instead on the non-focalized mode, or "zero focalization," where the narrative seems to privilege no "point of view" but enters at will the thoughts of each character in turn. But such an attitude, generally characterized as "omniscient," flouts no less than the other two the criteria of truthfulness which are obligatory for factual narrative, namely, to report only what you know for a fact, to report only what is pertinent, and to say how it is that you know these things. If anything, "omniscient" narrative is even less verisimilar than the other two types, logically speaking, for if it is a violation of verisimilitude to know the thoughts of one person, then it ought to be a quantitatively greater violation to know the thoughts of everyone (though to do so one only needs to have invented them all, of course). Let us keep in mind, then, that mode is, at least in principle, revelatory of the factual or fictional status of a narrative and, therefore, a point of narratological divergence between the two types.

Of course, for Käte Hamburger (1957), who excludes the first-person novel from the domain of fiction, this divergence can operate only between two types of impersonal narrative. But Dorrit Cohn has demonstrated (1978) that the first-person novel is free to emphasize either the "narrator-I" or the "character-I" (this fluctuation is obvious in *A la recherche du temps perdu*); and Phillippe Lejeune, who has from one book to the next (1975, 1980) added further nuances to his initial diagnosis of indiscernibility, now sees in these alternatives a tendency ("Il ne s'agit que d'une dominante") towards a distinction between authentic autobiography, where the emphasis falls more on the "narrator's voice" (for example, "Je suis né à l'extrême fin du XIXe siècle, le dernier de huit garçons. . . ."), and pseudo-autobiographical fiction, which tends to "focalize on a character's experience" (for example, "La ciel s'était éloigné d'au moins dix mètres. Je restais assise, pas pressée . . ."). This is where, quite legitimately, this typical criterion of fictionality, namely, internal focalization, extends to personal narrative.

Voice

The characteristics of narrative voice essentially amount to distinctions of time, "person," and level. It does not seem to me that the temporal situation of the narrative act is a priori any different in fiction

than it is elsewhere: factual narrative is also acquainted with ulterior narration (which here, as in fictional narrative, is the most frequent), anterior narration (prophetic, anticipatory), simultaneous narration (reporting), and even intercalated narration, as in diaries. The distinction of "person," that is, the opposition between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrative, divides factual narrative (history vs. memoir) as it does fictional narrative. Undoubtedly, the distinction of level is the most pertinent here, for the effort to achieve verisimilitude or simplicity generally discourages too heavy a use of second-degree narration in factual narrative: it is hard to imagine a historian or memorialist permitting one of his "characters" to narrate an important part of his narrative, and we have known since Thucydides what problems transmitting a somewhat extended discourse poses. The presence of a metadiegetic narrative is thus a quite plausible indication of fictionality—even if its absence is no indication of anything.

I am not sure whether I remain within the boundaries of the properly narratological in invoking, under the heading of voice ("Who is speaking?"), the tricky subject of the relations between narrator and author. Philippe Lejeune has demonstrated that the canonical autobiography is characterized by the formula *author* = *narrator* = *character*, reserving for the special case of "third-person autobiography" the formula *author* = *character* ≠ *narrator*. It is rather tempting to exploit further the possibilities opened up by this triangular relationship. The dissociation of character and narrator (N ≠ C) evidently (and even tautologically) defines, in fiction and elsewhere, the heterodiegetic system, just as their identity (N = C) defines the homodiegetic system. The dissociation of author and character (A ≠ C) defines the (thematic) system of "allobiography," fictional (whether heterodiegetic, as in *Tom Jones*, or homodiegetic, as in *Gil Blas*) or factual (generally heterodiegetic, as in history or biography, for here the homodiegetic system would imply that the author attributes the narrative to his "character," as Yourcenar does to Hadrian, which inevitably induces—I keep returning to this—an effect of fiction), just as their identity (A = C) defines that of autobiography (homo- or heterodiegetic).

What remains to be considered is the relationship *between author and narrator*. It seems to me that their rigorous identification (A = N), to the degree that this can be established, defines factual narrative, in which, in Searle's (1975) terms, the author assumes full responsibility for the assertions of his narrative and, consequently, does not grant autonomy to any narrator. Conversely, their dissociation (A ≠ N) defines fiction, that is, a type of narrative for the veracity of which the author does not seriously vouch.[11] Here too the relationship seems

11. So long, of course, as this narrative presents itself as a truthful description of

to me tautological: to say, with Searle, that the author (Balzac, for instance) does not seriously stand behind the assertions of his narrative (the existence of Eugène de Rastignac, for instance), or to say that we have to attribute them to a function or implicit instance distinct from him (the narrator of *Père Goriot*), is saying the same thing in two different ways, between which we choose only on grounds of economy, in the light of our immediate needs.

From this formula it follows that "third-person autobiography" should be closer to fiction than to factual narrative, especially if we grant, with Barbara Herrnstein Smith, that fictionality is determined by the fictiveness of the narrating as much as (if not more than) by the fictiveness of the story.[12] But here one can clearly see the methodological inconvenience of the notion of "person," which leads us to group *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Caesar's *Commentaries*, and *The Education of Henry Adams* all in the same category, on strictly grammatical grounds. The narrator of *De Bello Gallico* is a function so transparent and so empty that it would no doubt be more correct to say that Caesar assumes responsibility for this narrative, speaking figuratively of himself, according to convention, in the third person—and therefore that this is a case of homodiegetic and factual narrative of the type A = N = C. In *Toklas*, on the other hand, the narrator is as manifestly distinct from the author as in Yourcenar's *Hadrian*, in view of the fact that she bears a different name and that her historical existence can be confirmed. And since, in her narrative, her life and Gertrude Stein's are inevitably mingled, one might just as well say that the title is (fictionally) truthful, and that what we have here is not a biography of Stein fictitiously loaned by her to Toklas but more simply (!) an autobiography of Toklas written by Stein (Lejeune 1980: 53ff.), which makes this case essentially the same, narratologically, as that of the *Mémoires d'Hadrien*. What remains to be found is a genuinely pure case of heterodiegetic autobiography, where the author attributes the narrative of his life to a non-witness biographer and, for safety's sake, to one a few centuries posterior to himself. It seems to me that Borges,

through some formula such as, "Let us imagine that . . . ," or by using the conditional as children do when playing store, or by other devices which might exist in certain languages, would be a perfectly "serious" speech act and would be covered by the formula A = N. Certain medieval novels offer the highly ambiguous case of formulations such as, "The tale says that . . . ," which could be read either as a sketchy hypertextual alibi ("I am reporting a narrative which is not of my invention"), or as an amusingly hypocritical denial ("I'm not the one who's saying this, it's my story"—much as one would say nowadays, "C'est pas moi, c'est ma tête").

12. "The essential fictiveness of novels is not to be discovered in the unreality of the characters, objects, and events alluded to, but in the unreality of the *alludings* themselves. In other words, in a novel or tale, it is the *act* of reporting events, the

always ready to lend a hand when it comes to teratological hypotheses, has composed in this vein an article about himself from a spurious future encyclopedia (Borges 1974: 1143).[13] Even in the absence of errors or factual inventions, merely by the fact of a well-established dissociation between author and narrator (however anonymous), such a text clearly belongs to fictional narrative.

To clarify matters, I shall represent the range of options by a series of triangular diagrams. For reasons no doubt deriving from the axioms, "If A = B and B = C, then A = C," and "If A = B and A ≠ C, then B ≠ C," I find only five logically coherent figures:

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   A
 //  \\   → Autobiography
N  =  C

   A
 //  ≠   → Historical narrative (including biography)
N  ≠  C

   A
 ≠   ≠   → Homodiegetic fiction
N  =  C

   A
 ≠   \\  → Heterodiegetic autobiography
N  ≠  C

   A
 ≠   ≠   → Heterodiegetic fiction
N  ≠  C
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The (relative) interest of this battery of schemes for the subject in hand lies in the double formula A = N → *factual narrative* and A ≠ N → *fictional narrative,*[14] and this is so whatever the tone, truthful or

13. This strategy, of which this is surely not the first example, has more recently been used by several participants in Jérôme Garcin's *Le Dictionnaire Littérature française contemporaine* (1989), a collection of preemptive autonecrologies.

14. "Dans un roman l'auteur est différent du narrateur. . . . Pourquoi l'auteur n'est-il pas le narrateur? Parce que l'auteur *invente* et que le narrateur raconte ce qui *est arrivé*. . . . L'auteur invente le narrateur et le style du récit qui est celui du narrateur" (Sartre 1988: 773–74). ["In a novel the author is different from the narrator. . . . Why is the author not the narrator? Because the author *invents,* while the narrator tells what has *happened*. . . . The author invents the narrator and the style of the narrative which the narrator tells."] Needless to say, the idea of a dissociation (by my account, purely functional) between the author and the narrator would not receive the blessings of Käte Hamburger (1957), for whom the character's *Ich-Origo* necessarily displaces all narratorial presence. This relation of incompatibility seems to me to result from a rigidly monological conception of the utterance, which is wonderfully undermined by the "dual voice" of free indirect discourse.

otherwise, of the syuzhet or, if you prefer, whatever the status, fictional or otherwise, of the fabula. Thus, when A ≠ N, the possible truthfulness of the narrative does not prohibit a diagnosis of fictionality either for N = C (*Mémoires d'Hadrien*), or for N ≠ C: for example, the life of Napoleon told by Goguelat, a (fictional) character in *Le Médecin de campagne*. I admit to owing this example to the special resources of metadiegetic narrative, though this scarcely matters; nevertheless, if cases of metadiegetic narrative are ruled out, then one only need imagine Balzac (or yours truly, or some anonymous forger) attributing to Chateaubriand (or to some suppositious biographer) a rigorously faithful biography of Louis XIV (or of any other historical figure): true to my principle, borrowed from Smith, I maintain that such a narrative would be fictional.

The other side of the formula (A = N → *factual narrative*) may seem more dubious, for nothing prevents a narrator duly and deliberately identified with the author by an onomastic feature (Chariton in *Chereas and Callirhoé*, Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, Borges in *El Aleph*) or by a biographical one (the narrator of *Tom Jones* evoking his deceased wife Charlotte and his friend Hogarth, the narrator of *Facino Cane* evoking his residence in Rue de Lesdiguières) from telling a manifestly fictional story, whether his relation to it is heterodiegetic (Chariton, Fielding) or homodiegetic, as it is in all the other examples mentioned, where the author-narrator is a character in the story, whether a simple witness or confidant (Balzac) or the protagonist (Dante, Borges). The first variant seems to contradict the formula

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   A
 //  ≠   → Historical narrative
N  ≠  C
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since a narrator identified with the author produces here a heterodiegetic fictional narrative; while the second seems to contradict the formula

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   A
 //  \\   → Autobiography
N  =  C
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since a narrator identified with the author produces here a homodiegetic fictional narrative, in recent years commonly called "autofiction." In both cases there seems to be a contradiction between the

fictitious character of the story and the formula "A = N → *factual narrative*." My answer is that this formula is not applicable to these situations, despite the onomastic or biographical identity of the author and the narrator. For what defines narrative identity, I repeat, is not legal identity as the Census Bureau understands it, but the author's serious adhesion to a story for whose veracity he assumes responsibility. In this sense—Searlean, shall we say?—it is clear that Chariton or Fielding does not in the least vouch for the historical veracity of the assertions of his narrative, any more than Balzac does in *Père Goriot* or Kafka in *Metamorphosis*, nor do they identify with the narrator who is supposed to have produced it, any more than I, good citizen, family man, and free-thinker, identify with the voice that, through my mouth, produces an ironic or playful statement such as, "I am the Pope!" As Oswald Ducrot (1984) has shown, the functional dissociation between the author and the narrator (even where they are legally identical), which is typical of fictional narrative, is a special case of the "polyphonic" speech acts characteristic of all "non-serious" or, to revert to Austin's controversial term, "parasitical" utterances. The Borges who is an author, a citizen of Argentina, and almost a Nobel laureate, and who has signed his name to "El Aleph" is not functionally identical to the Borges who is the narrator and hero of "El Aleph,"[15] even if they do share some (not all) of the same biographical features, just as the Fielding who is the author of *Tom Jones* is not functionally (discursively) Fielding-the-narrator, even if they do share the same friend, Hogarth, and the same late wife, Charlotte. In actual fact, then, the formula for these narratives is, in the second case,

A
N ≠ C → Heterodiegetic fiction

and, in the first,

A
N = C → Homodiegetic fiction.

As for the latter, I admit that this reduction to common law fails to do justice to the paradoxical status of autofiction, or better, the deliberately contradictory pact it makes with the reader ("I, the author, will

15. On these effects of Borgesian autofiction, see Mourey (1985). To the stories in which a narrator called "Borges" is the protagonist one could add (at least) "The Form of the Sword," in which "Borges" is the hero's confidant, and "Street-corner Man," where he is revealed at the end to have been the addressee of an oral narration. On autofiction in general, see Colonna (1989).

now tell you a story of which I am the hero but which never happened to me"). In this case one could no doubt adapt the formula for autobiography, A = N = C, by grafting onto it a clumsy artificial limb whereby *C* would be dissociated into an authentic personality and a fictional career; but I have to admit to a distaste for this kind of surgery, which presupposes that one could change the career without changing the personality,[16] and, moreover, that one could salvage in this way a formula which suggests an absence of serious adhesion on the author's part,[17] as though Dante believed that he really had visited the Other World, or Borges that he really had seen the Aleph. I would much rather adopt a different, logically contradictory formula here:

A
N = C

Contradictory it is,[18] no doubt, but then again it is neither more nor less contradictory than the term it illustrates, namely, "autofiction," or than *le propos qu'elle assigne:* "It's me and it's not me."

One of the lessons to be drawn from this state of affairs is that the equal sign (=), employed here in an obviously metaphorical way, does not have exactly the same value on each of the three sides of the triangle. Between *A* and *C* it establishes legal identity, in the Census Bureau's meaning, which can, for instance, make the author responsible for the actions of his hero (Jean-Jacques' abandoning Rousseau's children). Between *N* and *C* it designates a linguistic identity between the subject of the utterance (*énonciation*) and the subject of the sentence (*énoncé*), marked by the use of the first-person singular (I), apart from conventional *énallage* (the royal or modest "we," the official "he"

16. Though one *can* do so without changing *identity*, thanks to the way (pro)nouns function as rigid designators: "If I were Rothschild's son. . . ."
17. I am speaking here of true autofictions, in which the narrative content is, if I may put it this way, authentically fictional, as (I suppose) is the case with the *Divine Comedy*, and not false autofictions, which are "fictions" only in the eyes of the law; in other words, shame-faced autobiographies. The original paratext of these latter is obviously, however fraudulently, autofictional and must be accepted as legal tender. But have patience: it is characteristic of the paratext to evolve, and literary history knows how to separate the wheat from the chaff.
18. The other two contradictory formulas:

A A
N = C N ≠ C

seem to me really impossible because one cannot *seriously* (A = N) propose an incoherent contract.

of Caesar, the "you" of self-address, as in Apollinaire's "Zone"). Between *A* and *N* it symbolizes the serious commitment of the author with regard to his narrative assertions[19] and makes a cogent case for our excising *N* altogether, as a superfluous instance: when A = N, exit N, for it is simply the author himself who narrates. What sense would there be in speaking of the narrator of the *Confessions* or of *L'Histoire de la Révolution française*? With reference to the general system of signs, one could also characterize these three relations as, respectively, semantic (A-C), syntactic (N-C), and pragmatic (A-N). Only this last relation involves the difference between factual and fictional narrative; but I would not say that this is an *index* of fiction or nonfiction, for evidence of the relation A-N is not always as manifest as the grammatical evidence for N-C or the onomastic evidence for A-C.[20] Far from always being a manifest signal ("I, Chariton . . ."), the relation A-N can mostly be inferred from the sum total of the (other) characteristics of the narrative. It is undoubtedly the most elusive relation (whence the quarrels among narratologists), and sometimes the most ambiguous, but, after all, so is the relation between truth and fiction: who would dare undertake to resolve the status of *Aurélia* or *Nadja*?

Borrowings and Exchanges

Up until now I have been arguing, on the one hand, as though all the features which distinguished fictionality from factuality were of a narratological order, and, on the other hand, as though the two domains were separated by an impermeable barrier which would prevent any reciprocal exchange or imitation whatsoever. Before concluding it would be proper to qualify these two working hypotheses somewhat.

The "indices" of fiction are not all of a narratological order, mainly because they are not all of a textual order; more often, and perhaps increasingly often, a text signals its fictionality by *paratextual* markers which are a safeguard against misapprehension: the generic indication "a novel" on the title page or cover is just one of many examples of this. Next, some of the textual indices of fictionality are of a stylistic

19. This commitment obviously does not guarantee the veracity of the text, for the author-narrator of a factual narrative can at least be mistaken, which indeed he often is. He can also lie, and this case does put the solidity of our formula somewhat to the test. Let us say provisionally that here the relation is *supposed* to be A = N, or that it is A = N for the credulous reader and A ≠ N for the dishonest author (and for the perspicacious reader, for a lie is not always felicitous), and leave this problem to the pragmatics of the lie, which, as far as I am aware, we still lack.

20. These two types of evidence are themselves not always guarantees: the *énallages* of grammatical person, like all figures, are a matter of interpretation, and the hero's name can be omitted (the examples are many) or doubtful ("Marcel" in *A la recherche*).

order: free indirect discourse, which I count as a narrative feature, is often regarded as a stylistic feature. Character names sometimes function, as in classical theater, as markers of the novel. Certain traditional incipits—"Il était une fois," "Once upon a time," or, in the formula of the Mallorquín storytellers cited by Jakobson (1963: 239), "Aixo era y non era"—function as generic markers; and I am not sure whether the so-called etic openings (see Genette 1983: 46–48) of modern novels ("The first time Aurelian saw Berenice he frankly found her ugly") do not constitute signals which are just as effective, if not more so: freer, certainly, in their recourse to existential presuppositions,[21] in their exhibition of familiarity, and thus in the "transparency" of their characters, than the "emic" beginnings of tales or the classical novel. But here, surely, we are not far from the narratological index of internal focalization.

My principal reservation bears on the interaction between the fictional and factual domains of narrative. Käte Hamburger (1957) has convincingly demonstrated the "feigned" character of the first-person novel, which proceeds mainly by borrowing or simulating the narrative behavior of authentic autobiographical narrative, in retrospective narration (memoirs) or intercalated narration (diaries, correspondence). This observation surely is not sufficient (as Hamburger would like it to be) to exclude this type of novel from the domain of fiction, for such an exclusion would cover, by contagion, all forms of "formal mimesis."[22] Now, heterodiegetic fictional narrative is in large part a mimesis of factual forms, such as history, news articles, and reporting, but this is a simulation whose marks of fictionality are optional and can very well be done without, as is so spectacularly the case with Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Marbot: Eine Biographie* (1981), the fictitious biography of an imaginary writer who pretends to impose on himself all the con-

21. This was already Strawson's opinion (1950). He contrasted the "unsophisticated" fictionality of the folktale with the more advanced fictionality of the modern novel, which dispenses with the need to *present* the existence of its objects, contenting itself with *presupposing* them. This is both more discreet and more efficient, for whatever is presupposed is non-negotiable and not open to discussion. Beardsley (1958: 414) illustrates this opposition with two incipits, one naïve—"Once upon a time the U. S. had a Prime Minister who was very fat"—the other sophisticated—"The Prime Minister of the U. S. said good morning to his secretaries," etc. The presupposition of existence is also to be found in the example so dear to the hearts of analytical philosophers, "Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street," where regression to the naïve type would be by way of a rewrite in the spirit of Russell, "There once was one and only one man named Sherlock Holmes. . . ." One could also say that the naïve (emic) type presents its objects, while the etic type imposes them with the help of predicates: someone who lives at 221B Baker Street cannot *not* exist.

22. I have obviously borrowed this term from Glowinski (1977); but Glowinski, like Hamburger, restricts this notion to the homodiegetic system.

straints (but also all the tricks) of the most "veracious" historiography. And reciprocally, the devices of "fictionalization" which Käte Hamburger enumerates have in recent years become widespread in certain forms of factual narrative, such as reporting or investigative journalism (what in the United States is called the "New Journalism"), and related genres such as the "nonfiction novel." Here, for example, is the beginning of an article which appeared in the *New Yorker* of April 4, 1988, in connection with the auction of Van Gogh's *Irises*:

> John Witney Payson, the owner of Van Gogh's "Irises," had not seen the painting for some time. He was unprepared for the effect it would have on him when he confronted it again, at Sotheby's New York offices last fall, shortly before the start of the press conference that had been called to announce its forthcoming sale. Payson, a friendly, cheerful-looking man in his late forties, with reddish hair and a neatly trimmed fringe of beard. . . .

I trust there is no need to stress the ways in which these lines illustrate Hamburger's indices of fictionality.

Such reciprocal exchanges tend to attenuate considerably our hypothesis of an a priori difference between the fictional and nonfictional narrative systems. If one limited oneself to pure forms, free from contamination, which no doubt are only to be found in the poetician's test tube, the clearest differences would seem essentially to involve those aspects of mode most closely connected to the opposition between the relative, indirect, and partial knowledge of the historian and the elastic omniscience enjoyed, by definition, by someone who invents what he narrates. If one took into consideration actual practice, one would have to admit that there exists neither pure fiction nor history so rigorous as to abstain from all "plotting" and all novelistic devices whatsoever, and therefore that the two domains are neither so far apart nor so homogeneous as they might appear. Thus there may be greater narratological difference (as Hamburger shows) between a tale and a diary-novel, for example, than between a diary-novel and an authentic diary, or (as Hamburger fails to see) between a classical novel and a modern novel than between a modern novel and modish journalism. Or, in other words, Searle is right in principle, as against Hamburger, when he states that all fiction, not only the first-person novel,[23] is a nonserious simulation of nonfictional assertions or, as Hamburger puts it, reality-statements; but Hamburger is right in fact, as against Searle, in finding in fiction, especially modern fiction, (optional) indices of fictionality,[24] but she is wrong in thinking or

23. Searle does, however, regard the first-person novel as having a stronger tone of pretence, for the author "is not simply pretending to make assertions, but he is *pretending to be* [for example] John Watson. . . . That is, in first-person narrative the author often pretends to be someone else making assertions" (1975: 328).

suggesting that these indices are obligatory, constant, and sufficiently exclusive that nonfiction could not possibly borrow them. To which she might very well respond that in borrowing them nonfiction fictionalizes itself, and that in abandoning them fiction de-fictionalizes itself. But this is precisely the possibility that I want to raise, and, legitimate or not, it is proof that genres can indeed change their norms—norms that, after all, no one imposed on them; rather (if I may be permitted this anthropomorphism), the genres imposed these norms on themselves, out of respect for a verisimilitude or "legitimacy" which has itself taken diverse historical forms.[25]

Yet this provisional, circumspect, judgment-of-Solomon type of conclusion does not invalidate our having raised these questions in the first place, for, whatever the answers, the questions deserved to be asked. Nor should this type of conclusion discourage further empirical inquiry, for even (or especially) if the forms of narrative blithely overrun the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, it is not less but more urgent for narratology to follow their lead.

Translated by Nitsa Ben-Ari, with Brian McHale.

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the sample of fiction that Searle (1975: 322) cites from Iris Murdoch: "Ten more glorious days without horses! So thought Second Lieutenant Andrew Chase-Smith recently commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edwards Horse, as he pottered contentedly in a garden on the outskirts of Dublin on a sunny Sunday afternoon in April nineteen-sixteen." Käte Hamburger herself could hardly have found a better example.

25. Dorrit Cohn (1989), faithful to a position which she herself characterizes as "separatist," considers some of these borderline incidents, but only in order to minimize their importance: "Far from erasing the borderline between biography and fiction, [they] bring the line that separates them more clearly in view." This observation is correct here and now, but it would be necessary to wait a few decades to find out what becomes of it in the longer run. The first occurrences of free indirect discourse, the first interior-monologue stories, the first "New Journalistic" quasi-fictions, etc., caused surprise and confusion; today one hardly notices them. Nothing is used up more quickly than the sense of transgression. On the narratological as on the thematic level, gradualist or (as Thomas Pavel puts it) "integrationist"

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Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective

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Narratology has been largely disregarded by modern theorists in the ongoing discussion of fictionality. Far more often than not, borderlines between the fictional and the nonfictional realms of narration have been drawn, withdrawn, retraced, and re-effaced on various grounds—logical, ontological, phenomenological, pragmatic, speech-actional, deconstructive, semantic—without looking to the discipline that has dug most deeply into the ground of narrative itself.

There is a certain poetologic justice to this snub: narratologists themselves have, to a quite astonishing degree, ignored the question of demarcation between fiction and nonfiction. One can hardly deplore this omission in studies that openly (by way of title, subtitle, and/or prefatory remarks) limit their area of investigation to fictional narratives (Chatman 1978; Rimmon-Kenan 1983). But most narratological studies, including such classics of the discipline as Barthes's "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1977 [1966]) and Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980), don't explicitly restrict their field, and some even quite expressly announce that they intend to encompass nonfiction as well (Bal 1985; Prince 1982b). In the absence of counterindications of any sort, a narrative poetics of this overarching kind leads one to believe that the entire panoply of conventions, the "figures," structural types, and discursive modes it identifies, applies equally within and without fiction, even when—as is nearly always the case—its textual exemplifications are drawn exclusively from the

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