

Introduction: Narrativizing Novel Studies, Historicizing Narrative Theory

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Abstract The novel is both a type of narrative and a distinct literary genre. This introduction argues that theoretical accounts of formal elements of narrative fiction, on the one hand, and historical investigations into the development of the novel, on the other, suffer from a lack of methodological exchange. It sketches out the interrelated disciplinary histories of the fields of narrative theory and novel studies and anatomizes the theoretical ground they share in determining their objects of study before identifying four topics of convergence: fictionality, surface reading and computational narratology, diachronic narratology and novelistic history, political criticism and new technologies. These topics provide a frame for ongoing debates which the essays in this special issue seek to engage with and intervene in.

Keywords narratology, novel studies, fictionality, distant reading, surface reading

This special issue of *Poetics Today* is designed to issue a challenge: how can we develop more sustained and productive theoretical and methodological exchanges between the broad fields of novel studies and narrative theory? The polemical fault lines between these two scholarly enterprises are well established. One is historical, ideological, thematic, and interpretative; the other is ahistorical, scientific, formalist, and abstract. These distinctions are simplistic but recognizable and retain a rhetorical force that frames our sense of the challenge. The research questions and methods of novel studies and

narrative theory differ as a result of divergent intellectual traditions, but the internal criticisms of both have typically converged in charges that they are founded on an untenable, restrictive focus on modern canonical texts to exemplify their respective objects of study: the novel is English realism, and narrative is the novel. A desire to unravel this nexus has provided the point of departure for new scholarship over the past few decades. It must be said, though, that calls for greater dialogue between the two fields tend to be one-sided. There is a trend for narratologists both to engage with cultural and historical concerns and to promote the value of narratological methods for close textual analysis, but there is no comparable trend for novel studies to engage more substantially with narratology. The case for this remains strong, however, because novel studies is ineluctably concerned with narrative not only as an inherent feature of the novel itself but as a critical practice which relies on narrativizing the relation of the novel to history.

The challenge resides in how to negotiate the historically informed disciplinary boundaries that frame these two scholarly endeavors. On a larger scale, this means reconciling the broad cultural understanding of narrative that informs work in novel studies, exemplified by the influence of Fredric Jameson's "political unconscious," with the more strictly narratological concern with the shared formal properties of narrative artifacts stemming from the influence of structuralist poetics. This involves two things: addressing the way these two scholarly traditions have developed alongside each other and laying out the theoretical ground they share in determining their objects of study.

1. Disciplinary History

One way to address the relation between narrative theory and novel studies is to consider their institutional framing as disciplines. As a shorthand approach, we can look at the development of representative journals in the Anglo-American academy. The official journal of the Society for Novel Studies (established in 2012) is *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. This journal was founded in 1967 and was promoted as a forum for sorting out existing critical debate on the novel, with the editorial for the inaugural issue stating: "We will invite readings, then, which accommodate the novel's breadth, depth and variety as a literary form; we will cover the novel's history in all literatures; and we will serve as a clearinghouse for theory. We believe that the novel is moving toward a 'poetics' like those which older forms enjoy, and toward readings of the greatest possible relevance" ("On Box 1984" 1967: 5). By the thirtieth anniversary edition in 1997, the founding editor, Mark Spilka (1997: 6), felt confident in writing, "The journal has more or less completed its

initial mission as a clearinghouse for novel theory and critical practice within and beyond the formalist tradition.” Novel studies, it would seem, had moved on from the need for a poetics to take up the more pressing challenges presented by post-structuralist theory, ideological criticism, and cultural studies.

The *Journal of Narrative Technique* was founded in 1971 (and noted as a new rival, along with *Studies in the Novel*, in the tenth anniversary edition of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*). In winter 1999 the title changed to *Journal of Narrative Theory* (*JNT*), which the editorial (Dionne and Wojcik-Andrews, 1999) states was “to signal our commitment to the latest interdisciplinary research in literary studies.” The change from technique to theory, the editors explain, “expands the interpretive boundaries to include more broadly historical and cultural influences of narrative,” hence following the same trajectory as *Novel*. *JNT* became the official journal of the Society for the Study of Narrative Literature (founded in 1986) until a new journal, *Narrative*, was established in 1993. As further evidence of the desire to expand the scope of narrative theory beyond fiction, the society later changed its name to the International Society for the Study of Narrative.

The first issue of *Narrative* included a debate between Ralph Rader and Michael McKeon that neatly demonstrates the methodological and disciplinary tensions between an intrinsic formalist and a historically framed approach to the emergence of the English novel as a distinct genre. It also included an article by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse called “History, Poststructuralism, and the Question of Narrative.” In this article the authors point out that the development of post-structuralism forced aside questions of narrative that had been ushered in by structuralist poetics, questions which needed to be reconsidered, particularly to determine how narrative differs from categories such as discourse, *écriture* (writing), and textuality. In describing their then forthcoming book (*Imaginary Puritans*), the authors state: “Our project rests on the hypothesis that narrative is an act of articulation that makes, remakes, and naturalizes certain cultural materials and the categories that organize them. Narrative might, in other words, be called the trace of intellectual labor, a reproduction that adds something to existing cultural materials in a way that puts them quite literally in the past” (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 1993: 46). With this premise in place, “our task became that of examining historical, literary, and theoretical accounts of modernity and to discover, in each case, what must have been left out so that the account might ring true” (*ibid.*: 47). This broad postmodern concept of narrative suits a historical and sociological approach to the genre of the novel and is indicative of the influence of thinkers such as Jean-François Lyotard and Jameson. In *The Political Unconscious*, for instance, Jameson (1981: 13) notes that he draws upon the pioneers of narrative analysis (citing

Northrop Frye, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and György Lukács as these pioneers) to “restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of *narrative*, which I take to be (here using the shorthand of philosophical idealism) the central function or *instance* of the human mind.”

Armstrong went on to assume the editorship of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, and this concept of narrative is evident in her 2009 introduction to the triple-decker special issue on “Theories of the Novel Now” commemorating forty years of the journal. Extrapolating from the contributions to describe “The Way We Read Now,” Armstrong notes that novel theory no longer seeks “a formal morphology” (E. M. Forster), or to characterize the genre as a bearer of enlightenment and liberal morality (F. R. Leavis), or an expression of the middle class (Ian Watt). Instead, the dominant mode of reading approaches the novel as a privileged participant in the discursive construction of historical narratives and hence as a genre through which we might read the contested narrative of history itself. “In following the Jamesonian mandate ‘always historicize,’ the tendency now is to show how the novel calls attention to official history, not as the grounding for narrative events but as the institutional means of authorizing narratives that naturalize the dominant ideology” (Armstrong 2009: 173). History thus becomes one of many competing ideological narratives. Echoing her sentiments from the 1993 article in *Narrative*, Armstrong writes: “From this it follows that a number of novels from such a place and time should tell us not only what a novel had to include in making the world seem comprehensible and comprehensive but also what the novel had to keep out and at bay in order for that world to seem at once coherent and convincing. In this respect, novels can be said to provide us with a truer history than history proper” (ibid.). It is difficult to comprehend how a knowledge of what the novel had to keep at bay could be arrived at without recourse to history proper, but this editorial demonstrates the broader position that novel studies has adopted in the wake of the transdisciplinary narrative turn in the humanities and social sciences.

Poetics Today was founded in 1979, and its inaugural editorial outlined its particular focus this way: “Poetics is the systematic science of literature—literature as art, literature as communication, literature as an expression of culture in history and as personal creation” (Hrushovski: 5). The guiding principle of the journal is thus methodological, and semiotics and narratology have historically provided the basis for this systematic approach. How can a systematic approach to narrative in its broadest sense help inform narratological contributions to the study of the novel? The question depends, of

course, on what a novel is and what narrative is or, in more recent parlance, what constitutes narrativity.

2. Defining the *Novel* and *Narrative*

The object of study for novel studies is clear: the novel as a literary genre — except, of course, that defining this object is notoriously difficult. In their introduction to *The Encyclopedia of the Novel* the editors point out that in deciding on the scope of reference, they had to consider what actually constitutes a novel. While they felt a novel ought to be in prose and have a narrative, they recognized there are novels without these things, novels without characters, and novels that are not fictional. They point out that a rough consensus would likely coalesce around Mikhail Bakhtin’s claim for the novel as anti-genre that parodies all previous literary forms. Despite the generic looseness that characterizes the term, we can see that “extended fictional prose narrative” would serve as a kind of default generic description against which to measure deviations that rely on their relations to this default to make sense as novels.

The editors of *The Encyclopedia of the Novel* further point to the difficulties of scope that emerge when moving beyond the traditional focus on eighteenth-century European fiction as the point of origin. And clearly the problem of generic definition becomes more acute when attending to the history of the form. We are happy today to call all sorts of works—from magic realism to science fiction—novels, yet in determining the origins of the genre, scholars have persistently linked it to the form of realism, not least because eighteenth-century writers themselves sought to distinguish their new species of writing on the grounds of its probability. There is no doubt that extended fictional prose narratives have been written since antiquity. The question remains whether every work that fits this very broad definition ought to be called a *novel* or whether the term is best restricted to a tradition beginning in eighteenth-century Europe. Part of the problem here is a terminological conflation in which the novel has become synonymous with fiction. At stake in how we tell the story of “the novel”—say, in evolutionary terms established by Franco Moretti in his edited collection *The Novel*, with its frame of polygenetic classical origins leading to a “European acceleration” or in more qualitative terms that emphasize the historical discontinuity of fictional genres—is our definition of the *novel* itself.

The object of study for narrative theory is impossibly broad, given Roland Barthes’s (1977 [1966]: 79) famous pronouncements in “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative” that “the narratives of the world are numberless” and “narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is

simply there, like life itself.” However, partly as a result of the methodological choice to employ linguistics as the model for developing a grammar of narrative, Barthes and other structuralists, such as Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette, tended to favor narrative fiction as the exemplary form on which to base their observations and findings. Recent developments in narrative theory, drawing upon sociolinguistics in the Labovian tradition, successive generations of cognitive psychology, antipositivist methods of narrative analysis in the social sciences, and interrogations of the process of narrativization in historiography along with more extended studies of other media, such as film and comics, have facilitated the original transmedial and interdisciplinary aspirations of structuralism.

In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* David Herman (2007: 5) argues that structuralism “helped initiate the narrative turn, uncoupling theories of *narrative* from theories of the *novel*, and shifting scholarly attention from a particular genre of literary writing to all discourse (or, in an even wider interpretation, all semiotic activities) that can be construed as narratively organized.” Not until its “postclassical” phase, though, he argues, did the larger aspirations of narratology come to be fully pursued and developed. Herman offers this history as a reason the volume he has edited is a companion to narrative rather than to the novel. He defines narrative as “a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change, a strategy that contrasts with, but is in no way inferior to, ‘scientific’ modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws” (ibid.: 3). This definition stems from cognitive psychology and chimes with Lyotard’s account of the postmodern condition. It also echoes Jameson’s (1981: 13) claim for narrative as “the central function or *instance* of the human mind.” It is a far cry from Gerald Prince’s (1980: 49) early definition (in a 1980 special issue of *Poetics Today* on narratology) of narrative as “the representation of real and fictive events in a time sequence.” While not being limited to the novel, Prince’s definition emphasizes a formalist understanding of the artifactual nature of narrative which could be the basis for a poetics of fiction, whereas Herman’s definition exemplifies the more ambitious scope of the cognitive revolution in the humanities and the aspirations of narratology to marshal the interdisciplinary force of the narrative turn. Not all postclassical developments have directly contributed to new understandings of the novel, and neither have they been designed to. However, cognitive narratology has been highly influential, from Monika Fludernik’s location of the history of the novel in the cognitive frames of narrativization derived from oral conversational storytelling to work on theory of mind by scholars such as Alan Palmer and Lisa Zunshine.

A key tradition of novel studies has been the post-Jamesian Anglo-American study of novelistic method, from Percy Lubbock's *Craft of Fiction* (1921) to Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), itself a vital contribution to narrative theory for introducing the concepts of the unreliable narrator and the implied author, as well as providing a link between the Chicago school of rhetoric and the rhetorical approach to narrative developed by James Phelan. Structuralist narratology built on some of the insights provided by this tradition, with Genette's *Narrative Discourse* explicitly engaging with both Booth and Lubbock, for instance. Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* introduced Genette's theories to an English-speaking readership in 1978, followed by the translation of Genette's book in 1980.

The other key tradition in novel studies, however, has been that of the history of the genre, most importantly with Watt's *Rise of the Novel* in 1957. Histories of prose fiction up until this point tended to be catholic in their scope and descriptive in their intent, indicated by the title of John Dunlop's *History of Fiction: Being a Critical Account of the Most Celebrated Prose Works of Fiction, from the Earliest Greek Romances to the Novels of the Present Age* (1815). Watt introduced a more sociological (the rise of the middle-class reading public) and philosophical (the emergence of realist philosophy) perspective and, of course, encouraged a restriction of the novel to the emergence of "formal realism" in eighteenth-century England. As interest in poetics became less urgent than cultural and political concerns in the 1980s, novel studies became deeply invested in revising and critiquing Watt's cultural history, with important work by scholars such as McKeon, Armstrong, Catherine Gallagher, and Srinivas Aravamudan. Given the formalist and largely synchronic approach of narratology, it became less relevant to novel studies, which sought to situate the novel in relation to the emergence of modernity, the rise of capitalism and modern bourgeois subjectivity, and the development of nationhood. At the same time, however, narratology itself began to respond to the broader critical climate, with feminist narratology in particular offering a model for later contextual and cultural approaches.

What narratology has tended to lack until recently is a historical dimension or, more precisely, a historiographic orientation to its method in which various formal features are understood as historically contingent practices rather than reified linguistic structures or universal cognitive processes and in which these features are studied through time. This is the contribution narratology stands to make. Susan Lanser's *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992) remains the model for tracing the link between narrative voice and social authority from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Recent work in "unnatural narratology," such as Brian Richardson's (2015) history of antimimetic narratives and Jan Alber's (2016) diachronic account of

“impossible” narratives, locate the novel in a larger historical dynamic whereby new forms emerge from the introduction of unnatural elements that later become conventionalized. From the perspective of novel studies, what this work currently lacks is a sustained investigation of the sociohistorical conditions that might accompany these dialectical shifts, as well as a study of their contemporaneous reception.

3. Topics of Convergence

Given the disciplinary and theoretical relationship between novel studies and narrative theory that I have sketched out, it remains to consider the current areas of debate in both fields that could profit from a more overt exchange of ideas and to outline how the contributions in this special issue seek to establish or further these exchanges.

3.1. Fictionality

The relationship between narrativity and fictionality has been a source of much debate in narrative theory, including whether certain formal features are exclusive to the genre of fiction. Gallagher (1994: xvii) has been instrumental in reconfiguring novelistic history around the question of fictionality, claiming that realism must be understood as “fiction’s formal sign” and that the genre of the novel was made possible by the emergence of a discourse of fictionality in eighteenth-century England. Gallagher’s (2006: 337) assertion that there is “mounting historical evidence” for the proposition that “the novel discovered fiction” has the effect of reinforcing the traditional equation of the novel with English realist fiction. While recognizing the prior existence of fiction that did not intend to deceive, Gallagher argues that what distinguishes “novelistic fictionality” is its use of plausible rather than incredible stories that also proclaim their distinction from fact. For Gallagher, this is the product of a conceptual category of fiction that did not exist prior to the eighteenth century and that can only retrospectively be applied to earlier forms. Gallagher’s thesis invites us to ask whether realist fiction ought to be considered the theoretical exemplar of the category of fictionality and whether novel studies ought to engage with scholarship on fictionality in earlier periods. For instance, in medieval studies Walter Haug (1997) attributed the “discovery” of fictionality to Chrétien de Troyes’s Arthurian romance in the twelfth century, and this work has been refined by scholars such as Fritz Peter Knapp (1996) and Dennis H. Green (2002).

Gallagher’s (2006: 341) argument for the historically distinct nature of the novel is its use of fictional “nobodies,” characters with proper names that lack embodied referents, constituting the “key mode of nonreferentiality” that is

specific to the “overt fictionality” of the realist novel. One consequence of this argument is to make relevant to novel studies the tradition in philosophy of language that debates the ontological status of fictional entities. However, Gallagher (ibid.: 337) speculates that one reason the vital feature of fictionality has been neglected by scholars of the novel, beyond its apparently self-evident nature, is that “perhaps we find that the theories of fictionality debated by philosophers and narratologists finally tell us too little about either the history or the specific properties of the novel to repay the difficulty of mastering them.” In seeking to articulate the affective force of fictional characters, she dismisses the value of analytic philosophy and possible worlds theory, acknowledges the importance of pragmatic speech act theory for drawing these traditions closer to formalist and stylistic concerns, and attends briefly to studies of signposts of fictionality because they support her thesis of overt fictionality.

The question is whether Gallagher has too summarily dismissed the contributions of earlier scholarship on fictionality in a quest to distinguish the novel and whether a narratological approach to fictionality can contribute to the history of novelistic form. Several articles in this issue take up this challenge by engaging explicitly with Gallagher’s work. Fludernik provides an overview of competing traditions of scholarship on fictionality as a way of addressing its historicity and ongoing debates over when this category emerged as an alternative to truth or lying. She furthermore seeks to provide theoretical clarity by stressing the distinction in the German tradition between the fictive and the fictional and builds on earlier claims by scholars such as McKeon (1987, 2005) and John Bender (1998) to argue for the rise of factuality as a more plausible way to frame the emergence of the realist novel. Phelan assesses the overlaps and divergences between Gallagher’s historical account of the “rise of fictionality” and the emergent rhetorical approach to fictionality. Taking up Gallagher’s theory of character, Phelan emphasizes the double consciousness of readers who simultaneously occupy a narrative audience and an authorial audience to demonstrate how novelistic fictionality differs from rhetorical deployments of fictionality outside the genre. In doing so he offers a competing, more pragmatic account of the function of fictional nobodies. Simona Zetterberg Gjerlevsen uses the emergence of the Danish novel in the eighteenth century as a test case for the wider applicability of historical accounts of novelistic fictionality in England. As opposed to fictional characters, however, her emphasis is on the rhetorical means by which novelists sought to frame the truth status of their genre in prefatorial statements and to distinguish their work from the earlier tradition of *Volksbücher* (popular books), in which fantastic stories were presented as fact.

3.2. *Surface Reading and Computational Narratology*

In the same year that *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* published its special issue with Armstrong's editorial on how we read now, invoking Jameson's dictum to always historicize, *Representations* published a special issue on surface reading in which the editors framed "the way we read now" as a generational response to the practice of symptomatic reading popularized by Jameson and articulated a number of alternative critical practices that attend to the surfaces of texts rather than plumb their depths. Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus (2009: 11) include narratology alongside thematic criticism, genre criticism, and discourse analysis as one type of reading which sees "surface as the location of patterns that exist within and across texts." For Best and Marcus (*ibid.*), surface readers are anatomists breaking down texts into their components or taxonomists arranging them into larger categories, both of whom "locate narrative structures and abstract patterns on the surface, as aggregates of what is manifest in multiple texts as cognitively latent but semantically continuous with an individual text's presented meaning."

It is certainly the case that structuralist narratology positioned itself as an antidote to the dominance of interpretative and evaluative criticism in literary studies, and in this sense it would be resistant to symptomatic reading. However, postclassical narratology typically characterizes its difference by emphasizing that it puts the narratological "toolbox" in the service of textual analysis, including interpretative criticism of individual works. Ansgar Nünning (2009: 63), for instance, claims that "any literary or cultural historian who wants to address ethical, ideological, or political issues raised in or by narratives can, therefore, profit from the application of the toolbox that narratology provides." The interpretative practices of thematic and genre criticism could certainly profit from closer attention to form. Novel studies tends to conceive of formalism on a large generic scale (the romance and the novel, sentimental and gothic fiction, etc.), meaning that vital textual features such as narrative voice are often neglected or given short shrift and categories such as free indirect discourse (FID) are used in a loose descriptive sense, devoid of the microstylistic attention that narratology affords and inattentive to theoretical debates about these categories themselves. Having said this, I suggest that rather than being understood in terms of its pragmatic export value for delivering a tool kit of formalist categories for novel studies, narratology could more productively function as a model for new modes of reading that are wary of hermeneutics.

The most prominent and controversial mode of surface reading over the past decade has been the quantitative approach that Moretti dubbed distant reading—a polemical challenge to the dominance of close reading in literary studies. Moretti's achievement has in fact been to situate methods that have

long informed narrative theory (Vladimir Propp's morphology, corpus stylistics analysis, and computational narratology) in the context of the history of the novel, world literature, and the digital humanities. Two articles in this special issue demonstrate the value of computational investigations of narratological categories. Nicholas Paige provides evidence of the rapid emergence and decline of first-person novels as a proportion of all novels published in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. In particular, he analyzes the proportion of memoir to epistolary "document" novels to argue against a symptomatic reading that would link these forms to the rise of bourgeois individualism in favor of an artifactual approach to literary history informed by technology studies. William Nelles and Linda Williams argue that, contrary to the opinion that the "natural" order of narrative is chronological, the events of fictional narratives are typically relayed out of chronological order, making this the default against which a strictly chronological narrative would in fact be an aberration. They prove this by producing time maps of a number of canonical first-person novels to chart the relation between the order of events and the order of their narration, demonstrating that autobiographical narratives share the same pattern of anachronies as achronological memory narratives. These two articles are forms of surface reading that employ quantitative analysis to challenge prevailing assumptions in novel studies and narrative theory, respectively.

3.3. *Diachronic Narratology and Novelistic History*

In a keynote address, "History of the Novel, Theory of the Novel," published in the fortieth anniversary special issue of *Novel*, Moretti (2010: 3) campaigns for a greater morphological depth to the theory of the novel, suggesting that we ought to invert our focus on the history of complex style that emerged in contrast to popular narrativity: "Taking the style of dime novels as the basic object of study and explaining Henry James's as an unlikely by-product: that's how a theory of prose should proceed because that's how history has proceeded. Not the other way around." This claim for the primacy of raw historical data informs the research questions that Moretti (*ibid.*) indicates should be attached to new quantitative methods:

Looking at prose style from below: with digital databases, this is now easy to imagine: a few years, and we'll be able to search just about all novels that have ever been published and look for patterns among billions of sentences. Personally, I am fascinated by this encounter of the formal and the quantitative. Let me give an example: we all analyze stylistic structures—free indirect style, stream of consciousness, melodramatic excess, whatever. But it's striking how little we actually know about the genesis of these forms. Once they're there, we know what to do; but how did they get there in the first place?

This passage articulates a research program that would be recognizable to any scholar in narrative theory. Narratology is characterized precisely by an encounter of the formal and the quantitative. When faced with the limitless number of narratives that comprise its object of study, structuralist narratologists, such as Barthes and Todorov, proceeded from the scientific method of deduction. The aim was not to describe all existing narratives but to provide a logically coherent theory that would hold true for all possible narratives. The criticism of this approach concerns the limitations of a corpus from which an initial hypothesis is derived (say, modern canonical novels). The empirical promise of big data offers the opportunity to verify or revise these hypotheses, but at the same time it cannot supply the explanatory power of a theoretical model. In her defense of the continued “interest and utility of close reading,” Barbara Herrnstein Smith (2016: 73) contends, first, that faith in the objective results of data relies on an outmoded understanding of scientific objectivity and, second, that the tagging of small textual units required by distant reading involves the same attention to microfeatures that characterizes close reading. To this we could add that if we are to search for patterns among billions of sentences, we require a rigorous grammatical understanding of the textual unit we are looking for while retaining a theory of that unit flexible enough to respond to its shifting functions and formal properties.

A search for the genesis of stylistic structures, particularly the prenovelistic origins of FID, informs much contemporary research in narrative theory, with one instance being Herman’s edited collection *The Emergence of Mind* (2011). Fludernik anticipated Moretti’s call for this kind of inquiry in “The Diachronization of Narratology” (2003), where she argues that, despite the proliferation of new narratological approaches, theoretical interest in “the history of narrative forms and functions” (ibid.: 331) remains minimal. For Fludernik (ibid.: 332), however, two critical developments have fostered the need for greater attention to diachrony: “the study of narrative outside the genre of the novel, especially the comparison of literary and historical texts, and, secondly, the research into the origins of the novel. The two areas are associated, most prominently, with the work of Hayden White on the one hand and that of Michael McKeon (besides Paul J. Hunter, Lennard J. Davis, and Barbara Foley) on the other.”

McKeon himself has recently launched a scathing attack on the limitations of narratology, an attack which can be taken to exemplify the position of novel studies. McKeon (2017: 41) argues that universalizing assumptions about narrative remain spurious, because “the abstract theory of the narrative mode is largely drawn from the concrete practice of the novel genre,” in particular the modern novel. Hence narratology offers a transhistorical universalizing principle of narrative derived from a localized generic prac-

tice while simultaneously neglecting the historical specificity of that genre. McKeon's critique stems from an assessment of structuralist narratology and particularly Genette's work. These criticisms are valid, but to dismiss narratology on these grounds is akin to dismissing novel studies on the basis of Watt's shortcomings. McKeon himself seems to offer a general definition of the novel adduced from its eighteenth-century manifestation, perpetuating the conflation of realism and the novel by claiming that the genre is defined by a self-reflexive awareness of its own mimetic enterprise. He goes on to argue that even in the postclassical phase of narratology, "the great majority of texts analyzed and adduced as exemplary narratives continue to be novels, hence representative of only the most modern genre of that mode" (ibid.: 70). This may or may not be true quantitatively, but given the development of transmedial theories and the attention paid to factuality, it would be a stretch to say that the novel remains the standard by which narrative is measured.

Of course, McKeon's main concern is to read the problems of narratology through the discipline of novel studies, and this leads him to suggest that the principles and assumptions of narratology are susceptible to a challenge from the evidence of eighteenth-century fiction. The category of FID receives particular attention in McKeon's critique, where he suggests that a restricted focus on its grammatical properties cannot attend to its "generic and historical specificity" (ibid.: 72) or the "larger intellectual and cultural movements" that have enabled it to develop (ibid.: 68). According to McKeon (ibid.), "FID challenges the separation of narrator from character" that underpins the discrete typologies of thought representation in narrative theory, but in explaining its historical development he argues that in the eighteenth century "the separation of narrator from character became an explicit protocol of characterization and interpretation" that made their conflation possible. The important point here is that historical investigation cannot be separated from theoretical construction. We cannot trace the history of FID without having a theory of what constitutes FID while at the same time remaining open to that theory being modified by its history.

In this issue Maria Mäkelä addresses the diachronic study of FID by both attending to its early manifestation in Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* and arguing that a theory of thought representation (and hence a theory of character) based on a schematic model rather than a fidelity model is best suited for analyzing early modern fiction in which subjectivity is experienced and understood in terms of a collective sense of shared and typical emotions. She sets out to demonstrate that the individuated consciousness of fictional minds in the modern novel emerged out of a conventional tension between the exceptionality of characterological experience and the exemplarity of emotional responses in early modern fiction.

3.4. *Political Criticism and New Technologies*

If narratology has been concerned with the relation between story (the events of a narrative) and discourse (the manner in which those events are relayed), novel studies tends to place critical emphasis on the relation between the story and the extraliterary context in which the material text of the discourse circulates. The perennial challenge of both enterprises is how to reconcile these relationships without being reductive. At stake here is how to make “the way we read now” meaningful, and this requires an attention to the mediating force of literary form (between the world it engages with and the fictional world it invokes), a force that is necessarily political. In this issue Daniel Hartley seeks to develop the tradition of social formalism by showing how typically Marxist political criticism can be united with narratology. In this context he offers style as the concept around which a critical poetics can be constructed. Hartley proceeds to elaborate a large-scale relationship between the social and the linguistic aspects of style operating at the different levels of linguistic situation, experience, and stylistic ideology.

If the novel is a genre enabled by the technology of print, the final two essays address how the contemporary novel has been shaped by new technologies. Prefaces to eighteenth-century novels offer vital paratextual evidence for how novelists sought to frame the reception of their work. Virginia Pignagnoli assesses the emergent poetics of the post-postmodern novel in relation to the new environment of digital paratexts and how this has enabled novelists to frame their work in relation to the new sincerity. If, as many scholars have argued, the rise of the novel facilitated the discursive construction of the modern subject as an individual, one wonders whether, in the age of the “death of the novel,” we could make similar claims about both the nature of subjectivity and the power of the novel. In this issue Marta Figlerowicz argues that the promise of “total recall” of our memories enabled by social media and new digital technology has changed our relation to our sense of self and that this relation is being explored in contemporary fiction. Figlerowicz argues that the autofictional works of Ben Lerner and Karl Ove Knausgaard exemplify this trend and proceeds to examine how the accumulation of permanently retrievable data about the minutiae of one’s life paradoxically works against the individualization of the self.

Taken together, the essays in this collection cover the period from the much debated “rise” of the modern novel to the post-postmodern era in the wake of the much exaggerated “death” of the novel. They also demonstrate the need for continued reflection on the methods for studying the history of this narrative form and the theoretical assumptions that inform these methods.

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