

The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre

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Abstract This article brings together the scattered research from the French, English, and German research traditions on the literary interview, that is, the extensive personal interview given by (or in some cases also conducted by) a literary author. The literary interview can be regarded as a hybrid genre for several reasons. First, it belongs to both

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the media and the literary domains. Second, its authorship is not only divided between interviewee and interviewer but also affected by editing and publishing interventions. Third, it mixes features of an oral interaction and of a written or edited communication. As a result, the literary interview as an object of study raises important questions about notions like genre, authorship, authorial positioning, and discourse at large. From a literary perspective, moreover, new light is also thrown on some of the basic characteristics associated with the personal interview in general: the “pact” or assumption of authenticity; the tension between format, on the one hand, and spontaneity, on the other hand; and the formal strategies used to (re-)create the encounter in the interview text. Both as a historical object and as a present-day, culture-specific practice, the literary interview is an interesting case of the dynamic interaction between the media and literature in contemporary cultures.

1. Introduction

The interview is a relatively young form, as we will see in section 2, yet it has quickly become almost ubiquitous. Today, it is hard to imagine any journalistic medium—print, audiovisual, digital, or multimedia—that does not feature interviews. It is a standard tool for individuals—both public figures and private persons—who want to voice an idea, opinion, or experience in the public arena. In many countries, political campaigns and confrontations between rival candidates are conducted to a large extent through a variety of interview forms, ranging from talk shows, street interviews, telephone interviewing, and e-mails to chat sessions. Likewise, sports and showbiz celebrities are haunted by (hordes of) relentless interviewers who cater to the ever-more pressing demands for immediate report, live coverage of events, and first-hand information. As the sociologists Paul Atkinson and David Silverman (1997: 308) have already pointed out, we live in an “interview society” (see also Fontana and Frey 2003: 62–63; Gubrium and Holstein 2001a: 8–11).

Ever since the beginning of the “press civilization” in the nineteenth century (Kalifa et al. 2011), interviewers have been eager to put questions to artists and literary authors. Some authors, like J. D. Salinger, Thomas Pynchon, Maurice Blanchot, Samuel Beckett, and Botho Strauss, famously refused nearly all interviews. Others, like Vladimir Nabokov, Cormac McCarthy, or Julien Gracq, did consent to give some interviews but tried to maintain maximum control over the interview situation and the published text by imposing different kinds of conditions, such as asking to receive the questions in advance and responding to them in writing. At the other end of the spectrum, writers like Heiner Müller, Paul Auster, or Marguerite Duras embraced the interview as a form of communication with the public and even integrated it into their artistic activity. For instance, they became what is called “interview authors,” specializing in the form (see below), or included

interviews in collections of nonfiction. Regardless of how they feel about interviews, all writers have to face the fact that, in contemporary Western cultures, success—both literary and commercial—is increasingly determined by visibility and media exposure.

For readers, literary interviews have become important gateways to literature. Usually short and reader-friendly, interviews are accessible in various popular media. Moreover, especially since the rise of the Internet, they often remain available in the public domain. Personal interviews, that is, subjective in-depth interviews (Bell and van Leeuwen 1994: 60–124), along with accompanying illustrations (photographs, drawings, and sometimes also facsimiles of manuscript pages or letters), have contributed to the visibility of authors in contemporary society. They provide firsthand information from the author about his work or literary opinions but also about his life, personal history and experiences, viewpoints, and personality and can contribute to an author's celebrity status. As sources of information, interviews derive (part of) their credibility from the lingering and renewed belief—against the intentional fallacy—that authors can offer unique insights into their work. (On interviews in relation to authorial intention, see Bawer 2001; Lewis 2008: 329–67; Melmoux-Montaubin 2006.)

The present article will focus on the *literary interview*. We reserve this term for personal interviews in both popular and more specialized literary media, such as are given by, or in some cases also conducted by, a literary author, that have some bearing on literature, its writing, or its experience.¹ The primary question that we want to address is the specificity of the literary interview: does the fact that the interviewee (and sometimes the interviewer) is a “professional in language” affect the interview enough to warrant a definition of the literary interview as a subgenre of the personal interview?²

1. The term *literary interview* reflects the differences between various cultural traditions and researchers. First of all, quite a number of scholars have distinguished the interview from the conversation or dialogue (e.g., Deleuze and Parnet 1977; Genette 1997 [1987]: 363–64; Hansen and Heine 1983; Marin 1997). As will emerge below, the English word *interview*, to indicate the journalistic genre, was imported early on into French, although the alternative *entretien* is also common there (Kött 2004: 53). Second, both terms *interview* and *literary interview* have been used to designate encounters involving literary figures. In the English tradition, however, the latter term is common. In the Francophone tradition, the term *entretien d'écrivain*, which can be translated as *writer's interview* (with the objective genitive *writer's* indicating the interviewed person), is frequently used. Thus, for example, the title of the special issue on the topic in *Lieux littéraires*, “L'interview d'écrivain” (Lavaud and Thérenty 2006). In German studies, different terms multiply, such as *das narrative Interview* (Schröder 1991), *das literarische Interview* (Hansen 1998), *das Autoreninterview* (Heubner 2002; Seiler 2009), and *das Schriftstellerinterview* (Hoffmann 2009, 2011).

2. In work about interviewing in the discipline of oral history, the term *narrator* is often used alongside *respondent* or *interviewee* (see Oral History Association www.oralhistory.org). But to

If so, what criteria would distinguish this subgenre: the position and status of the interviewee (or the interviewer)? The type of interaction in the interview? The content and the form of the interview; the final, edited report; or the emergence of a specific form of “interview literature”?

Moreover, how does the literary interview function within a literary context? Is there a connection between interviews and the reception of a new work or oeuvre? How does the interview affect the notion of authorship in literature? What is the role of interview collections within an author’s collected works, for instance, or within certain publishers’ catalogs? Is the literary interview (merely) an epitext that diverts the attention from the work to the writer?³ Or can it be considered as a genuine literary practice, a comparatively new literary genre in its own right? As we will see, one of the indications of the literary interview’s struggle for autonomy—or to use Torsten Hoffmann’s term, its “deparatextualization” (“*Entparatextualisierung*”)—is the emergence of various practices of fictional interviews and the creative use of interviews as performance.⁴ At the same time, these more or less experimental, playful interview forms can also lead to the question of mutual influence: in this view, the literary interview not only signals a transformation of the literary field but may also influence the interview as a journalistic genre.

Predictably enough, we will not be able to offer conclusive answers to all of these questions. But we hope to achieve a double aim in the present article. On the one hand, we want to bring together the existing research on the literary interview in English, French, and German scholarship.⁵ Thus far, there has been minimal contact among these research traditions or between them and the research done on the interview in media studies and the social

avoid confusion with narratological terminology, we will consistently use the term *interviewee* to indicate the interviewed party.

3. Gérard Genette (1997 [1987]: 2) defines the *epitext* as a specific form of paratext, i.e., a heterogeneous group of practices and discourses that mediate the access to the literary text and influence the reading of the text. It differs from the other types of paratext in spatial position: while peritexts (e.g., titles, footnotes, blurbs) are located in the proximity of the actual text, epitexts (reviews, interviews, correspondence) are not materially appended to a literary text but circulate around it in a virtually unlimited social space. But even epitexts are sometimes added to a later version of the text, in a critical edition, for example (ibid.: 34).

4. The term *Entparatextualisation* is used to describe an evolution in German literature of the 1980s, when interviews with writers, fictional interviews, or artistic happenings in interview form became “an independent textual or artistic form” (Hoffmann 2011: 316; authors’ translation). As such, it can no longer “be placed under or above the literary work, but must be classified horizontally next to the other genres as an aesthetic play form between narration, dramatic dialogue and theatrical production” (ibid.; authors’ translation).

5. All quotes from French and German texts will be translated by us, unless an official translation is available.

sciences. Moreover, scholarly and other writing on the topic is scattered and sometimes hard to locate. On the other hand, we want to propose a framework or a poetics for studying the literary interview, focusing on four areas of research that present a special challenge to contemporary literary studies: genre, authorship, discourse, and authenticity. We will begin our investigation with a brief overview of the origins of the interview in the media and in the social sciences as well as of the state of scholarship on the literary interview itself.

2. The Interview as Discourse Form and as Research Object

2.1. *Origins and Functions of the Interview*

Both the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) trace the first known occurrence of the term *interview* in English back to 1514.⁶ The term is derived from the Middle French *entre-veue* (from *s'entre-veer*, to see one another) and is defined by the *OED* as “a meeting of persons face to face, esp. one sought or arranged for the purpose of formal conference on some point” (*ibid.*). In *Twenty-First Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*, Charles T. Stewart (2009: 193) gives the following, more extensive definition:

The interview is a dyadic form of communication between two distinct parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose. It is interactional in that both parties speak and listen from time to time and may share the role of interviewer and interviewee. It is relational because both parties are connected interpersonally and have varying degrees of interest in taking part and influencing the outcome of the interview. It typically involves questions designed to elicit information; verify accuracy and understanding; heighten self-disclosure; and influence feelings, thoughts and attitudes. It is a communication that is a dynamic, ever-changing and continuing interaction of many variables, between two complex parties, with often different backgrounds, motives and goals. The close proximity of parties magnifies the verbal and non-verbal messages, sent and received, and variables, and enhances the importance of situational variables such as time, seating arrangement, physical surroundings and noise.

Not all of the elements mentioned by Stewart are applicable to all kinds of interviews—for instance, interviews need not always occur in a face-to-face proximity but can also be conducted over the phone or in writing. But his is nonetheless a broad, inclusive definition that covers different types of interviews in a great number of situations.

6. Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “interview,” www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interview (accessed October 4, 2013); and OED Online, s.v. “interview, n.,” www.oed.com/view/Entry/98442?rskey=WdG1MN&result=1 (accessed October 4, 2013).

One of the oldest forms of interviewing is population censuses in ancient Egypt (Fontana and Frey 2003: 64). Other precursors are various forms of conversation: the dialogues of Socrates (e.g., Lewis 2008: 27–35), Martin Luther's *Table Talk* (*Tischreden*, 1566) (e.g., Hansen 1998: 466; Hansen and Heine 1983: 7–8), James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) (e.g., Arkin 1983: 12), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's conversations (*Gespräche*) with Johann Peter Eckermann (1836) (e.g., Hansen 1998; Heubner 2002). Louis Marin (1997: 16–17) views the European tradition of art conversations (that started in the seventeenth century) as an important precursor to the contemporary art interview. In its modern media form, however, the interview is an American creation that coincides with the rise of the penny press (boulevard press) in the 1830s (e.g., Arkin 1983: 13; Fontana and Frey 1994: 362).

2.1.1. The Interview in the Media The term *interview* in the journalistic sense was first used in 1869 (Kött 2004: 4–5, 53, 54),⁷ and the first interviews appeared three decades earlier in the *New York Herald*, founded by James Gordon Bennett.⁸ They were associated with sensationalist crime reporting and regarded as trivial and invasive of privacy (e.g., Bell and van Leeuwen 1994: 28; Lewis 2008: 46). However, this negative reputation did not hinder the rapid rise of what Philip Bell and Theo van Leeuwen (1994) called “the media interview” at the end of the nineteenth century, when American newspapers were increasingly owned by commercial organizations (rather than by radical, politically motivated individuals) and sought to reach mass audiences. Interviews that merged information with more informal, subjective forms of conversation catered to that need, along with larger headlines, shorter texts, photographs, and advertising (ibid.: 34). In this period, the interview also spread to other countries, where it was adapted to different existing traditions. Martin Kött (2004: 80–85) and Marie-Eve Thérénty (2007: 47) link the rise of the interview in the French press to the democratization process in the late nineteenth century. The elitist salon model of high conversation was replaced by public debates that were increasingly made possible and generated by the media.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the interview was also imported to other popular media. The first radio interviews appeared in the United States in the 1920s, to give a voice to ordinary listeners in entertainment programs (Bell and van Leeuwen 1994: 35). In Europe, radio interviews

7. The first source that mentions the term *interview* in French is *La vie publique en Angleterre* (1883) by the journalist Paschal Grousset, writing under the pseudonym Philippe Daryl (Kött 2004: 53).

8. The earliest interview, with a brothel madame about a murdered prostitute, appeared there in 1836 (Bell and van Leeuwen 1994: 36; Haller 2013 [1991]: 18; Kött 2004: 4; Lewis 2008: 45).

became popular during and after World War II. They represented a new genre of public speech, one that “retained the logical structure and advance planning of formal public monologue speech, but mixed it with informal, private conversation—in a planned and deliberate way, and in order to develop a new form of social control” (ibid.: 36). Michael Haller (2013 [1991]: 29) describes an evolution of the German “radio-features” of the 1940s from a mix of “message or text . . . with noises, sound documents and the talking of people in order to mediate authenticity and atmosphere” to a proper interview form.

Rapid technological innovation—especially the development of recording devices and cameras—had an impact on the interview form. In the early nineteenth century, interview interactions were usually embedded within a narrative text in indirect speech written by the journalist who gave his account of the encounter. This report became more reliable when stenography and, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the improvement of electrical and magnetic recording devices made it possible to record the information accurately (Schröder 2001: 31). Formally, the interview quickly evolved from an indirect-speech narrative text, written by the journalist, in the mid-nineteenth century to a mixed speech act that combines a “primary process of gathering information and a secondary process of mediating information” (Kött 2004: 18–19).⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, the interview typically took the following form: a first-person narrative introduction by the journalist and the report of the dialogue in direct speech in question-answer form (Speirs 1990: 303). Moreover, due to constraints of time and/or length, newspaper interviews have usually been short forms. The short dialogue form and the informal style, along with the accessibility of popular media, made them suitable for rapid consumption by readers.

In the second half of the twentieth century, different styles of media interviewing developed. On the one hand, there arose factual styles of interviewing with minimal intervention from the journalist: this practice was influenced by ethnography, where the exact testimony provided by the subjects who are studied became increasingly important, and by new forms of documentary, *cinéma vérité*, for example. These developments led to a vogue for interview transcripts with very little editing. On the other hand, trends like New Journalism or “gonzo styles,” abandoned all claims to objectivity and often resorted to first-person narrative. These were the trademark of certain magazines (e.g., *Rolling Stone*) or journalists (e.g., Hunter S. Thompson and

9. According to Bell and Van Leeuwen (1994: 28–29), this formal evolution at the end of the nineteenth century signaled the changing position of the journalist from author and commentator to reporter and “middleman.”

Oriana Fallaci) which followed highly subjective, literary forms of interviewing, in which the interviewer became equally if not more important than the interviewee (Bell and van Leeuwen 1994: 37–48). At the end of the twentieth century, the rise of the Internet provided not only new ways of interviewing—for instance, via video conference, chat, or e-mail—but also new channels for the distribution and archiving of interviews (Diu and Parinet 2013: 482–88).

2.1.2. *The Interview in the Social Sciences* The practice of interviewing as a way to gather and mediate information has not been limited to journalism in the popular press. On the one hand, interviews were used to gather a large amount of data for what has been called “quantitative research,” which statistically analyzes large trends in society. At the end of the nineteenth century, questionnaires—standardized lists of questions given to a large number of interviewees—were very popular in early French sociology to obtain objective information about large groups in society (Prochasson 2004). After World War II, the survey or questionnaire as a tool to gather data rose to dominance in American sociology (Fontana and Prokos 2007: 15–16; Platt 2001: 34). On the other hand, one-on-one interviews were also used in different scholarly practices. In medicine and psychology, interviewing patients became a standard tool for diagnosis, especially during World War I (Fontana and Frey 2003: 65). Personal or in-depth interviews were frequently used in research with a more qualitative orientation in, for instance, ethnology, anthropology, or sociology, in the latter the Chicago school in the 1930s (Fontana and Prokos 2007: 15). While this type of interviewing was regarded as “merely descriptive” in the mid-twentieth century, and was marginal in the social sciences compared to the survey, it nonetheless made a comeback in the 1970s and 1980s, in programs like “grounded theory” and “ethnomethodology” (ibid.: 17–18).

Today the term *research interview* encompasses different forms, ranging from the interrogative interview used in criminal investigation to the diagnostic interview in medicine and psychotherapy; to long-standing therapeutic dialogue techniques in psychoanalysis; to the structured interviews or surveys in political, sociological, marketing, and theoretical psychological research; to the open-ended, semistructured, in-depth, or “active” interviews (i.e., those regarded as a process in which both parties are actively creating meaning) in sociology, ethnography, and oral history (see Fontana and Frey 1994, 2003; Fontana and Prokos 2007; Gubrium and Holstein 2001b, pt. 1:55–176). Various aspects of the practice of interviewing—especially conducting and analyzing research interviews—have been discussed in handbooks of qualitative research and of research interviewing. In Anglo-Saxon scholarship, the

most important among these are the various editions by Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, and Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln.¹⁰

A detailed discussion of the interview in the social sciences falls beyond the scope of this article. However, one area of sociological research is worth mentioning by way of conclusion of this brief survey of the history of the interview in general, namely, the critique of the interview as an instrument of self-fashioning in what has been called the *interview society*. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) coined this term not just to describe the omnipresence of the form in the media and in the social sciences but also to deconstruct the romantic myth underlying the practice, as though interviews, particularly of the personal or in-depth variety, provide an “authentic gaze into the soul of another” (ibid.: 305). In their view, even researchers in the social sciences are remarkably uncritical of the data gathered through this technique and accept them at face value as truths. As a result, “they all . . . place the biographical and narrated self at the heart of social inquiry” (ibid.: 312).¹¹ Neither Atkinson and Silverman nor Gubrium and Holstein deny the value of such interviews. However, they point out that the semblance of authenticity and spontaneity cannot always be equated with “ultimate, experiential truth” or with the revelation of a true self (Gubrium and Holstein 2001a: 11; see also Haller 2013 [1991]: 299–300, a handbook for journalists).

Atkinson and Silverman (1997: 315) link the rise of the interview society to three conditions that are often present in modern Western societies:

First, the emergence of the self as a proper object of narration. Second, the technology of the confessional — the friend not only of the policeman but of the priest, the teacher, and the “psy” professional. Third, mass media technologies give a new twist to the perennial polarities of the private and the public, the routine and the sensational.

The problem with the interview society is its (i.e., our) tendency to forget that the “self” that emerges in interviews is in fact a construction. In the mass media (especially the press and television), the dramaturgy of interviews is intended to make the reader or viewer forget the commercial goals behind them. Gubrium and Holstein (2001a: 4) locate the rise of the interview society in the mid-twentieth century, after World War II, when individuals—ordinary civilians and not just experts or celebrities—could for the

10. In her history of the interview in the social sciences, Jennifer Platt (2001) focuses on the handbooks for interviewing in the twentieth century.

11. To illustrate this attitude of social researchers, Atkinson and Silverman reference Arthur Kleinman (1988), who worked on illness narratives, to Elliot G. Mishler (1984, 1986), who wrote books on medical interviews and research interviews.

first time “add their thoughts and feelings in the mix of ‘public opinion.’” This democratization of public opinion raised the importance of the individual in society. Interviews are tools whereby to shape this public expression of opinion and therefore part of what Michel Foucault (1988) calls “the technologies of the self.” However, there is a dark side to this individualizing discourse: interviews are tools not just for self-expression and self-creation but also for surveillance by the state and increasingly also by commercial enterprises (Gubrium and Holstein 2001a: 6).

Interestingly, what led to Atkinson and Silverman’s diagnosis of the interview society was literature, specifically Milan Kundera’s *Immortality* (1991) and Peter Ackroyd’s *Chatterton* (1987), two novels that deal with the biographies and the reputations of literary figures. There, the sociologists find both a sharp critique of the interview society and a less naive way to deal with biographical information. Nor is this a coincidence, because in their view literature and literary theory can provide the tools to debunk the neo-romantic myth of the authentic self and to reveal the interview self as an invention that offers “no guarantee of biographical or narrative unity” (Atkinson and Silverman 1997: 319).

2.2. *The Interview in Literary Studies*

In their reading of *Immortality*, Atkinson and Silverman foreground Kundera’s critical outlook on the celebrity culture in contemporary literature. One aspect of this is the literary interview (e.g., Bawer 2001; Genette 1997 [1987]; Lavaud and Thérenty 2006; Lewis 2008: 237–345). As we pointed out above, interviews became more important to Western literary cultures, including academic literary criticism, in the second half of the twentieth century. Hence the appearance of interviews with writers not just in the media but also in specialized literary journals. The *Paris Review*’s reputation, for instance, is primarily based on its in-depth interviews with authors about the art of writing (Gourevitch 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). Although sometimes criticized because of the far-reaching editing of the interviews in which the original dialogue almost completely disappears, the *Paris Review* interviews are nowadays taken as a standard for the literary interview, certainly in the English-speaking world (see Boddy 1998; Christ 1977; Lewis 2008; Rodden 2001: 5–6; Wilbers 2008).

Another sign of the acceptance of the interview in the literary world is its appearance in book form. On the one hand, previously published interviews are included in the complete works of an author; interview series and archives are published by both traditional publishers (e.g., the collections of literary interviews by legendary interviewers, such as Frédéric Lefèvre by Gallimard and Flammarion and Bernard Pivot (2004) by Gallimard and

Institut national de l'audiovisuel) and by university presses (e.g., the Literary Conversations series at the University Press of Mississippi). On the other hand, "interview books" are based on interviews conducted specifically for the purpose (see, e.g., Amossy 1994 and Schröder 1991). These publications not only ensure the availability of interviews but also heighten their status as texts and promote their acceptability as sources for research on literary works and authors.

This increasing prominence of the literary interview has not quite been matched by the research about the literary interview. Although some interesting studies exist, the research is mostly scattered and at times hard to locate or access. A few book-length critical studies have appeared. Hans Joachim Schröder's *Interviewliteratur zum Leben in der DDR* (2001) analyzes interview books and collections from the perspective of an oral history of literature: the interview counts as a form of documentary literature. John Rodden's *Performing the Literary Interview* (2001) is a collection and discussion of his own literary interviews, with a theoretical preface that offers a genealogy and some notions of the literary interview as an emerging, postmodern genre. His work centers in a typology of roles adopted by interviewees. Sascha Löschner (2002) studies the interview practice of Müller in his PhD dissertation. The title of Holger Heubner's *Das Eckermann-Syndrom: Zur Entstehungs- und Entwicklungsgeschichte des Autoreninterviews* (*The Eckermann Syndrome: On the Origins and Development of the Writer's Interview*) (2002) is somewhat deceptive, for the book does not offer a systematic study of the literary interview but focuses on Eckermann and Müller. Kött's *Das Interview in der französischen Presse* (2004) deals with the French media interview in general but also examines literary instances (featuring Louis Veuillot or Emile Zola as well as the interview practice of the famous interviewer Jules Huret). It also contains the chapter "Fiction and Forgery" ("*Fiktion und Fälschung*") about fictional interviews. The most thorough monograph on the literary interview—as well as on that typical of the *Paris Review*—is the hefty PhD dissertation by Kelley Penfield Lewis, *Interviews at Work* (2008), which has not yet been published.¹²

Apart from monographs, only one special issue has been devoted to the topic thus far. Edited by Martine Lavaud and Marie-Eve Thérénty for *Lieux littéraires* (2006), it focuses on the first forms of the writer's interview (*interview d'écrivain*) in the French press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³ The issue consists of three parts: (1) the early reception of the literary interview by both writers and theoreticians, (2) case studies of

12. A new book on the subject by Torsten Hoffmann and Gerhard Kaiser is forthcoming.

13. Héron 2010d is a special issue devoted to the work done by Jean Cocteau on the radio, including his radio interviews, among other things.

interviewers and types of interviews, and (3) the French practice of the *enquête littéraire*. Finally, we found only one entry on the literary interview in a handbook of literary genres (Seiler 2009).

The literary interview is usually treated in research from a specific perspective. A number of scholars have studied it within specific historical periods, like the nineteenth century (e.g., Salmon 1997) and/or national contexts, like the nineteenth-century French press (e.g., Kött 2004; Lavaud and Thérenty 2006; Seillan 2012; Speirs 1990; Thérenty 2006a, 2006b, 2007) or the interwar period (Boucharenc 2012). It has been studied in different theoretical terms: autobiography (e.g., Lejeune 1980), narratology (e.g., Genette 1997 [1987]), discourse analysis (e.g., Amossy 1994, 1996, 1997, 2007; Charaudeau 1984, 1991; Yanoshevsky 2004, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012a), drama (e.g., Rodden 2001), oral literature and history (e.g., Goetsch 1985; Lévy and Laplantine 2003; Schröder 1991, 2001), critical theory (e.g., Salmon 1997; Roach 2011), and feminism (Amossy 1994; Williamson 1993). Quite a number of case studies examine the interviews given by particular authors, such as Zola (Becker 2006), Müller (Heubner 2002; Hoffmann 2011; Löschner 2002), Jorge Luis Borges (Lyon 1994), or Nathalie Sarraute (Yanoshevsky 2004, 2006). Some also focus on interviews conducted by a particular interviewer: Huret (Kött 2004: 214ff.), for example, Lefèvre (Boucharenc 2012; Héron 2006), or Jean Amrouche (Héron 2000). Many accounts of the literary interview are based on the author's practical experience, whether as interviewer (e.g., Christ 1977; Martens 1998; Rodden 2001; Williamson 1993) or as interviewee (e.g., Durix 1988). A few articles take a comparative cultural approach (e.g., Claudel 2009; Lomeier 2006; Stotesbury 1998). The interviewing and editing policies of the *Paris Review* have received a good deal of attention (e.g., Lewis 2008; Roach 2011; Wilbers 2008), sometimes in comparison to other journals (Boddy 1998). Some authors, like Patrick Charaudeau and Pierre-Marie Héron, are specialists in literary interviews in other media, that is, radio and television.

2.2.1. Histories of the Literary Interview From all these specific case studies, a number of more general insights can be deduced, especially about the history and development of the literary interview, its generic identity, and its underlying motivations. Most scholars agree about the development of the literary interview as a subtype of the media interview that originates in the late nineteenth-century French press (Rodden 2001: 3). However, variations in the development of the genre depend on the national and cultural contexts. English, German, and French researchers thus foreground different precursors of the literary interview. Stephen Arkin (1983: 12), for instance, refers it to Boswell's conversations with Dr. Johnson. Lewis (2008: 32) goes

back much earlier to Plato's dialogue *Ion* about poetry, creativity, and the imagination. Subsequently, she traces a line via the Renaissance conversations to the dialogic life narratives of Boswell and Johnson and to Eckermann's conversations with Goethe. The influence of Eckermann on the literary interview has been emphasized in German research (Heubner 2002). Volkmar Hansen and Gert Heine (1983: 7–10) also point to Luther's table talk (see also Kött 2004: 51–61). Louis Marin (1997: 24–25) studies the European tradition of the art conversation in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

According to Jean Royer (1987: 119), the first literary interview appeared in *Le Petit Journal* in 1884. About that time, the first theoretical reflections on the literary interview in France also appeared, most notably Edmond Barrès's "L'esthétique de l'interview" (1892). Moreover, the age abounds in parodies, novels, and fictional interview forms (see, e.g., Melmoux-Montaubin 2006 and Pernet 2006). One of the early studies of this literary genre is by Dorothy E. Speirs (1990), who coedited the interviews given by the most interviewed author of that period, Zola (Speirs and Signori 1990; see also Becker 2006; Kött 2004: 156–64). Especially authoritative is Jean-Marie Seillan's (2002) introduction to a volume of interviews with Joris-Karl Huysmans. He situates the literary interview within the larger framework of literature's democratization in the popular press and of the competition between the writer and the journalist. This led, Seillan claims, both to the popularity of the literary author as a type and also to the loss of his elevated, "sacred" position.

In the early twenty-first century, quite a lot of research about the early relations between press and literature has been done, among others by Seillan (2002, 2006, 2012), Kött (2004), Lavaud and Thérenty (2006), Dominique Kalifa (2004), and Marie Carbonnel (2004, 2006). A key figure in this early development is the late nineteenth-century interviewer Huret because of his conception of the interview as a truthful genre and the success of his formats (e.g., travel reports, the visit to the author; see Kött 2004: 214). Most important, Huret conducted his well-known *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* for *L'Echo de Paris* in 1891. This survey was not the first in which writers were questioned—about all kinds of events and issues (Thérenty 2006b: 186–89)¹⁴—but it was the first to interview authors about literature in order to give a "scientific" picture of literature at the time. Huret's example as surveyor was followed by competing journals and reached its peak at the turn of the century. Thereafter, the trend went on until the 1930s,

14. A specific type is *l'enquête nécrologique*, which surveys the responses of fellow writers, readers, and even witnesses after the deaths of important literary figures (Lavaud 2006: 120–47).

sometimes in the form of parodies (e.g., the surrealist surveys), and became an indispensable part of the French literary field (Carbonnel 2004: 58). The practice of the *enquête* interacts with the literary interview in that it uses the interview form, especially the code of “the visit to the great author,” as well as written questionnaires. It also links with the rise of the interview for qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences at that time (e.g., Carbonnel 2004, 2006; Kalifa 2004; Seillan 2006; Triaire 2006).

A phenomenon studied by French scholars is the early occurrence of parodies and imaginary interviews in France as a response to the power struggle implicit in the literary interview (e.g., Durand 2006; Kött 2004: 186–204; Pernot 2006; Thérenty 2006a). Other defining moments in the history of the literary interview in France are the interwar period, with the work of the celebrated interviewer Lefèvre (Boucharenc 2012), and the growing importance of radio interviews in the first half of the twentieth century (see, e.g., Charaudeau 1984; Héron 2001, 2003, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d; Martens 2010). Finally, Ruth Amossy (1994, 1996) and Galia Yanosh-evsky (2004, 2006, 2010) have studied the literary interview in the context of the Nouveau Roman.

The first English literary interview was with Jules Verne by Marie A. Belloc in *Strand Magazine* in 1895 (Lewis 2008: 48; see also Compère 2006). Generally, though, little research has been done about the genre in this period. A notable exception is Richard Salmon (1997) on various interviews with Zola and Verne, including the illustrations that accompany them in the Victorian era’s emerging celebrity culture. The main focus of attention in English scholarship is the literary journal *Paris Review* in the second half of the twentieth century, especially its elaborate editorial procedures, often in relation to other styles of interviewing (Boddy 1998; Christ 1977; Roach 2011). The work of Usha Wilbers (2008) and Lewis (2008) stand out because they have been able to use the *Paris Review* archives and private correspondence. Lewis’s study, moreover, locates the *Paris Review* interviews within the context of other modern literary journals and the literary celebrity culture of the second half of the twentieth century.

In German scholarship, the first literary interviewer was Karl Gutzkow, whose *Briefen aus Paris* (1842) contain scenes and reports of conversations with important personalities, including some writers (Hansen 1998: 470). Most German studies focus on the postwar period, when interviews served intensively as tools for critical inquiry. In the 1950s and 1960s, interviews also became important aids to the writer’s self-fashioning. Specific to Germany is the INTERVIEW AUTHOR, who uses factual data gathered through interviews to produce what Schröder (2001: 43) has called “interview literature,” such as Erika Runge’s famous book *Böttroper Protokolle* (1968). This documentary

genre uses literary among other techniques to evade the strong norms prescribed by the aesthetics of social realism in socialist Germany (the Deutsche Demokratische Republik [DDR]).

2.2.2. Accounts of the Genre's Literary Evolution The variations found in the histories of the literary interview correspond to slightly divergent accounts of its development. Seillan (2002), Kött (2004), and Lavaud and Thérénty (2006) thus draw a complex picture. The literary interview is a sign of the democratization of literature in the nineteenth century but also a sign of what Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin (2006) has called “a literature in decadence” (“*une littérature en décadence*”). This decadence or decline is in the first place related to a change in the position of literature. At the end of the nineteenth century, literary interviews in the popular press made writing and writers accessible to a large readership in several ways. However, as public figures, writers were no longer revered as the “great men of letters.” Rather, a new type of writer, the public intellectual—with Zola as an exemplary figure—gradually replaced the older type but enjoyed a somewhat lower status (Carbonnel 2004: 46).¹⁵ New genres like the feuilleton, the report, and the interview¹⁶ brought literature into the newspaper and allowed journalists to aspire to the status of authors, as in the literary form of the interview. But these new genres were associated with “lower,” popular (as opposed to the older, “high”) forms of literature. At the end of the nineteenth century, accordingly, authors exploited the literary interview for self-promotion but with mixed feelings (see Becker 2006; Cabanès 2006; Pernot 2006; Seillan 2006). The literary interview became a site of struggle between the interviewer and the writer, with their different goals (Carbonnel 2006). The latter even reclaimed the interview in a variety of fictional forms (Durand 2006; Pernot 2006; Thérénty 2006a). This mixed tendency continued in the early twentieth century: while the interview grew more accepted in French literary culture, some authors saw it as a threat to the “purity” of literary genius (Boucharenc 2012). A notable trend in French culture is the importance assumed by certain literary interviewers, like Lefèvre and Pivot.

In the English tradition, the interview as a promotional instrument is considered, above all, a product of the (American) fascination with celebrity culture and gossip (e.g., Bawer 2001; Christ 1977; Lewis 2008: 237–44; Salmon 1997). Yet many also see the interview as a reaction against the “inten-

15. The case of Zola, the most interviewed author of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is telling. He used the press to promote himself and his views about almost everything, but he was also highly ambivalent about it (Becker 2006).

16. Many authors link the interview and naturalism to older conversation genres in French literature (Lavaud and Thérénty 2006: 13–14).

tional fallacy” and the ban on the author in New Criticism and later structuralism (e.g., Lewis 2008: 293–364). In German scholarship, both Schröder and Hoffmann have studied the literary interview becoming an increasingly autonomous literary form after World War II and its relation to a documentary trend in literature.

2.2.3. The Literary Interview as Genre Quite a few scholars have approached the interview as a modern form of autobiographical practice (Lejeune 1980) or as a dialogic form of self-portrait, at the crossroads of different genres (Amossy 1994, 1997; Yanoshevsky 2004, 2006, 2011). An increasing number of scholars, moreover, argues for the study of the literary interview as a genre, but there seems to be no consensus about its definition. Thus, Royer (1987) describes in the nineteenth century an evolution from a journalistic to a more essayistic and reflexive form. Speirs (1990) tries to characterize the nineteenth-century literary interview, whereas Seillan (2012: 1030) reduces it to “more like a formal nebula than a strict form.” Salmon (1997) reaches a similar conclusion about the English literary interview at the time. Schröder (2001: 2) places the contemporary literary interview within a “forcefield of science, non-fiction discourse, journalism, and literature.”

Nor does the scholarly divergence end there. Looking at the interview in the late twentieth century, Rodden (2001: 17) does not find it yet a proper literary genre but a hybrid, postmodern one. He proposes the term *docudrama* to indicate the “complex combination of numerous literary genres and forms: melodrama, comedy, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and others.” Hoffmann (2011: 316) similarly defines the interview as “an aesthetic play form between narration, dramatic dialogue and theatrical performance.” Hoffmann (2009: 277–79) most programmatically examines the literary interview’s “art form,” arguing against Genette (1987) that it does not involve a “metatextual form of self-explanation” but is an autonomous text type that must be related to an author’s oeuvre.¹⁷

Besides the history and the definition of the literary interview, scholars, especially in the German tradition but also elsewhere, have worked on its typology (Hansen 1998; Schröder 1991; Seiler 2009; Seillan 2002, 2012). Subtypes that have been proposed include the visit to the writer’s house (e.g., Kött 2004: 67–71; Nora 1986; Salmon 1997), the workplace conversation (*das Werkstattgespräch*) (Hansen 1998), the questionnaire (Carbonnel 2004, 2006; Hansen 1998; Kött 2004; Seillan 2006; Thérénty 2006b; Triaire 2006), the personal conversation (*das Feuilletongespräch*), the last interview (de Bloois and Masschelein, forthcoming), the interview book (*le livre entretien*) (Amossy

17. On literary interviews in relation to an author’s oeuvre, see Löschner 2002; Lyon 1994; Miller 1984; Rodden 1997; and Yanoshevsky 2004, 2006, 2011, to name a few.

1994, 1996, 1997; Cornuz 2011), and the imaginary or fictional interview (Durand 2006; Kött 2004; Martens and Meurée, forthcoming; Pernot 2006; Thérenty 2006a).

3. A Poetics of the Literary Interview

The above state of the art shows that in the last decades of the twentieth century the literary interview rose on the research agenda as something more than a peripheral phenomenon or a source of information about the author. The strange thing about the interview in general is that, despite being a highly recognizable and commonly used text type, its generic identity nonetheless remains complex from both a historical and a pragmatic point of view. First, the form has evolved (and continues to do so) due both to technical developments and to the media's demand for innovative formats and devices. Second, the interview can fulfill different functions and occur in very different types of discourse, ranging from the popular to the scientific or artistic. When interviews enter the literary domain, they must also evolve relative to specific literary traditions. Finally, the creative play by individual writers and interviewers also makes it difficult to draw strict lines and conclusions about "the literary interview." In what follows, though, we want to outline a more systematic poetical framework for the study of the literary interview, bringing together several domains of literary theory that are affected by the emergence of this novel phenomenon from the margins of literary production and its gaining autonomy as a genre.

3.1. *The Literary Interview: A Hybrid Genre*

The most recurrent phrase used to characterize the literary interview is "hybrid genre." Hybridity is found on various levels. Above all, the interview consists of both a primary component, the oral or written dialogue, and a secondary component, the edited text (in the broad sense) that we will designate as "report."¹⁸ These two types of discourses are fundamentally different. Both the (oral) dialogue and the report are subject to constraints imposed by the format and the medium in which they appear as well as by the premises—nonfictionality, authenticity, and spontaneity—that govern the interview in various "interview societies." The dialogue or conversation is marked by hesitation, improvisation, and discontinuity. "Conversational interactions hardly fit into a generic frame," as opposed to "institutionalized" genres, such

18. Haller (2013: 123–25) uses the terms *Darstellung* and *Gestaltung* (respectively, representation and the shaping of the dialogue). Schröder (2001: 56–61) talks about "transcription," referring to "*Material aus zweiter Hand*" (secondhand material, as opposed to the preceding dialogues).

as literary genres, which, according to Dominique Maingueneau (2006: 58), presuppose an author function. By contrast, the edited report is structured and formulated by the interviewer in some collaboration with the interviewee and under the direction of the editor and publisher. The importance of the author function for the recognition of an institutionalized genre, such as literature, can explain why in literary scholarship the term *literary interview* is generally not used for interviews that adopt a literary style or literary techniques, as in New Journalism, but for those given (or conducted) by an actor who is related to or legitimated by the literary field: usually literary authors, sometimes also critics. Even so, most scholars hesitate to regard the literary interview as a full-fledged literary genre: the author function is a necessary but not a sufficient generic criterion.

The specific “hybridity” of the literary interview first and foremost highlights its mixed origins in the domains of journalism and literature: its roots in the popular media determine the genre as a heteronomous practice. In the media, it fulfills diverse functions: it operates for commercial (self-)promotion; it invites a writer to comment on recent events (not necessarily literary); it can be autobiographical, confessional, or biographical; and it can also serve a documentary purpose when concerned with literary life and writing habits. None of these functions (and the above list is not exhaustive, as the media constantly change) are uniquely literary, however. One may wonder, then, what distinguishes the literary from other media interviews, besides the identity of the interviewee/interviewer. Is there any particular “literary function” in interviews, or do literary interviews add a twist to the ordinary functioning above?

One cannot answer this question in general, of course, outside a given context and corpus. In our view, different degrees of “literariness” can be distinguished based on different parameters. Therefore, it makes more sense to look for what Jean-Michel Adam and Ute Heidmann (2007: 25) have called “effects of genericity” that appear in a dynamic process, on different levels of editing, production, and reception, than to try to define the genre as an essential category.

On the level of production, one can then find out whether interviewers pose special kinds of questions to a writer or whether writers respond in a specific way. Is the narrativity that oral history talks about (see Schröder 1991: 96) also part of this literary function? Are some formats more typical of the literary interview, such as the “visit to the great writer” or the “work-room conversation,” or do they also occur with other interviewees? The place and the medium in which the interview appears likewise affects its perception: compare a specialized journal or literary magazine with a newspaper or a printed interview with an appearance on a television talk show. However,

there are exceptions to the rule. For instance, the interviews in *Playboy* magazine have a relatively high literary status despite the lowbrow position of the magazine, because the founder of the magazine used interviews with important cultural figures to elevate its reputation (Lewis 2008: 55–56).

On the level of the interview's reception and its perception by the literary field, its mixed origins in the media and in literature also affect its symbolic status. The interview—certainly in nineteenth-century French literary culture—was felt to be in sharp contrast with the elevated, sacred sphere of literature. As Seillan (2012: 1032) puts it, for example: “The interview contributes to a decline of cultural elitism . . . because it grants artists and writers unprecedented possibilities for intervention. At the same time, it also robs them of their traditional autonomy and desecrates their voice by dispersing fragments of it in the chaotic polyphony of journalistic discourse, printed in the newspaper.” In other cultures as well, both writers and scholars have voiced concerns about interviews degrading literary authors to celebrities (e.g., Bawer 2001; Lewis 2008: 237–45; Salmon 1997).

At the same time, as seen above, the interview was quickly adopted by other disciplinary discourses, especially the social sciences, giving it more credibility as a research tool. Soon, artists and writers were using interviews as an artistic tool, especially in nonfictional genres, such as the documentary, the biography, the autobiography, and the essay. This use could lead to a new literary genre. When put to documentary ends, as in the nineteenth-century surveys (*enquêtes*) or in the German documentary literature (e.g., Runge's *Bottroper Protokolle*), interview forms come close to the genre of the narrative documentary (in French, the *reportage*). They provide firsthand information about writers' lives and opinions and are thus sources for biographies, but they can also become new forms of autobiography (Lejeune 1980). Consider “interview books” (Amossy 1994, 2007; Yanoshevsky 2006) dedicated to a single author. Another example of an existing autobiographical genre renewed by the interview is the testament. In the “recorded last interview” that emerged at the end of the twentieth century, a dying writer leaves a kind of testament (e.g., the British playwright Dennis Potter or the American literary critic Edward Said; see de Bloois and Masschelein, forthcoming). Again, consider literary interviews (e.g., the *Paris Review* kind or “workroom conversations”) that focus on the art of writing, on the genesis of literary works, and on an author's poetics. They approach the essay and lead to a strong competition with literary criticism in certain periods, as was the case with the vogue of literary questionnaires at the beginning of the twentieth century in France (Carbonnel 2004: 50–57).

A last element of hybridity relates to editing as the secondary communicative situation (Kött 2004: 84): the editor applies to the interview narrative

techniques (e.g., visual representations, setting, character, typical details, and the tensions of narrativity proper [see also section 3.4]), especially in the discourse surrounding the dialogue. In this way, journalists make their reports more “literary” (Lewis 2008: 148–53; Schröder 1991: 96, 2001: 66 ff.) and try to realize their “fantasy” of becoming writers. Some of the specific narrative and stylistic features found in literary interviews bring the form closer to “higher” literary currents in certain periods. At the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, the eye for telling detail and catching depictions of the scene were related to sharp observations of naturalist writings; in the 1960s, the paradoxical attitude of some writers toward the autobiographical tendency in the interview can be related to the *Nouveau Roman*, which adopts an anticharacter attitude.

To sum up, does the entire range of interviews belong to the field of journalism? Can the literary interview—a little over a century old—be taken as an autonomous, properly literary genre? This question has been posed since the end of the nineteenth century, especially in France. And the answer to it is not clear-cut, certainly not when one works with sharp genre categories. Most scholars agree that the interview is a hybrid genre. This hybridity can be perceived on several levels. To start with, all interviews have a mixed, dialogic discursive form. Moreover, this hybridity can be related to the literary interview’s simultaneous belonging to multiple fields of discourse: its functional closeness to (and rivalry with) existing, mainly nonfictional, genres as well as to literary currents in certain periods, and, finally, its recourse to narrative and stylistic devices are widely seen as literary. None of these criteria is a sufficient marker of literary generic status; we would rather see them as “preconditions” for becoming a genre. In what follows, we will take a closer look at the first precondition, that regarding authorship. This feature of an institutionalized genre (according to Maingueneau 2006) is assumed by nearly all scholars for whom the literary interview is the “author’s interview,” but it has seldom been questioned.

3.2. A Shared Authorship

The most obvious feature of the interview is that it is a dialogue (or polylogue) performed for an actual or implied audience in a specific media context that imposes a certain format and editorial protocol. This dialogue is, moreover, marked by an asymmetrical relation. The two participants occupy different institutional and discursive positions and are motivated by different goals. The interviewee, who occupies the center stage, gets a chance to express himself or promote his work in public. The interviewer is provided with copy. Operationally, his role is to direct the talk, to create a sense of intimacy, and to extract new information while typically rendering himself as invis-

ble as possible. In the words of Seillan (2002: 19), the interviewer's task is "knowing-how-to-make-speak" ("*savoir-faire-dire*"). Genette (1997 [1987]: 357) puts it rather extremely when describing the ideal interview with a writer as a false dialogue in which the journalist is "a nonperson." For this reason, Genette makes a distinction between the common media interview and the "conversation," which is characterized by the lack of any tie to an event and the journalist's knowing the author's work well or being a friend or colleague.¹⁹ However, Lewis (2008: 148) points out that the distinction is not always so clear-cut, even with literary interviews that are—in Genette's sense—conversations, like those in the *Paris Review*:

Unlike some more egalitarian successors, the *Paris Review* interviewers are nearly anonymous throughout the process, their names appearing only at the end of the piece or the headnote, with the questions labeled simply "INTERVIEWER" throughout. The presence or absence of the interviewer can have a significant impact on the tone of the interview. However, especially in the early interviews, the personality and identity of the interviewer can come to the forefront in cases when there is a personal relationship between the two parties (as in the example of Plimpton and Hemingway).

Underneath this apparent hierarchy, however, there lurk all kinds of power struggles. While the interview is an apparent win-win situation, for the writer and the interviewer, frictions can arise: for instance, between the commercial drives of the press and the symbolic status of literature or between the interviewer's desire to provoke surprising revelations or to elicit biographical data and the author's attempts to control the disclosure. As a result, the literary interview requires a continuous negotiation of terms, not just at the outset but throughout. Its main struggle, however, is the control over the words that are uttered. As the interviewer Lefèvre, who was often criticized for the substantial editing and even manipulation of his texts, put it: "Who owns the interview?" (Héron 2006: 149).

The literary interview undermines classical authorship in several ways. First, interviews are normally directed by the interviewer, who prepares the questions and the course of the dialogue, usually out of the writer's control. In many interviews, we see how interviewees try to gain control over the situation by interrupting the interviewer, commenting on questions, and try to adopt the role of interviewer for themselves, as in the cases

19. Hansen (1998: 471–72) similarly distinguishes between the "ritual conversation" (*Ritualgespräch*), tied to a recent publication, and the "feuilleton conversation" (*Feuilletongespräch*), which centers on the personality of the interviewed author and stages a nonconfrontational interaction in a private, intimate atmosphere. The term *feuilleton* refers to the place where the interview appears, that is, the newspaper, usually in its cultural section. The occasion for this type of interview can be the birthday of an author or the anniversary of an important work.

of Ernest Hemingway, Nabokov (Lewis 2008: 196–217), or Isaac Bashevis Singer (Miller 1984).

Second, literary authors are familiar with the written word and with long processes of revision, but they may be less fluent in an oral situation. As a result, they often demand to see questions in advance and in some cases even carefully prepare written answers (e.g., see Becker 2006 on Nabokov). Moreover, some writers are natural-born performers, “raconteurs,” as Rodden (2001: 10) calls them, or improvisers, but not all are. In the early days of the radio interview, for instance, many writers came prepared, often in writing. André Breton thus not only refused to improvise, he even read a text written for the occasion (Héron 2010c: 12). Likewise with Joyce Carol Oates responding to various questions in her *Paris Review* interview “via correspondence. She felt that only by writing out her replies could she say precisely what she wished to, without possibility of misunderstanding or misquotation” (Johnson 2006: 65). In this case, an actual encounter preceded the correspondence, and the written form is presented as if there were a perfect continuity with the author’s oral speech: “Her speaking voice was, as always, soft and reflective. One receives the impression that she never speaks in anything but perfectly formed sentences” (ibid.: 64). In the early twentieth century, literary questionnaires were also mostly answered in writing (Carbonnel 2004: 32, 39). A contemporary practice in literary journals (among others, the *Paris Review*) is the e-mail interview (see Atlas 2011).

Finally, the interview text is first and foremost created by the interviewer. As Melmoux-Montaubin (2006: 46) puts it, “The interview forces the writer who speaks to let the other write, with everything that entails.” Still, the author (usually) has the right to look at and correct the edited text before publication. In the *Paris Review* especially, authors are involved in the editing process, and various scholars (e.g., Durix 1988; Lewis 2008; Wilbers 2008) explain it as among the main reasons for the literary quality of the interviews. The research on the editorial practices of this magazine shows, moreover, that it was often not the interviewer but the editor, George Plimpton, who imposed a thorough editing process with many rewrites and who had the final word on the text. Sometimes, the interview’s rewriting can lead to substantial changes in the distribution of roles. In *Blaise Cendrars vous parle* (1952), for instance, some statements originally spoken by Cendrars on the radio are later attributed to the interviewer (Michel Manoll) by turning them into questions (Martens 2007: 249). In Duras’s *Practicalities* (1990), the interviewer’s questions are completely suppressed by the author, in spite of the subtitle: *Marguerite Duras Speaks to Jérôme Beaujour*; furthermore, the introductory statements are mostly rewritten. As we will see in section 3.4, the genetic study of

the interview is an important area of future research. (For a recent interesting parallel call for studying the genesis, see Bernaerts and Van Hulle 2013.)

What Yanoshevsky (2004: 148; see also Yanoshevsky 2006, 2011) has called the symbolic “double signature” of the interview thus hides a complex and flexible distribution of authorship: “When the oral or written interview is transcribed, one doesn’t know to whom the responsibility can be attributed: the writer or the interviewer? The instability of the signature is a sign of this troubling uncertainty.” When the interviewer signs his report, sometimes using a formula like “in conversation with . . .,” he reduces his role to little more than transcriber and editor: the writer stands out as the intellectual “owner” of the discourse and can later integrate the text in his work. In a collection of several interviews with the same writer, it is the recurrent name of the interviewee that ensures unity throughout, even though he is not the actual writer or editor. In fact, with regard to the authorship or editorship of interview collections, various practices of attribution are found. In the long series at the University Press of Mississippi, *Literary Conversations*, the interviewed writer’s name appears in the title, but we encounter the edited collections with the different interviewers as authors of the respective chapters. In other collections, such as *Silent Interviews* (1994), a collection of interviews with the science fiction author Samuel R. Delaney, Delaney appears as the author of the book, and the chapter titles refer either to the journal in which the interview appeared or to the interviewer. Sometimes, literary interviewers become celebrities and authors themselves: Lefèvre and Pivot in France and Heinz Ludwig Arnold in Germany, for instance, have each published interview collections under their own name. Here again, we see the importance of the author function as a precondition for the literary interview’s becoming a genre: given interviewers with a strong personality and unique style, the function may attach to them, rather than the interviewed author.

3.3. *A Staged Dialogue*

As well as having a shifting balance of power, the interview is also a staged dialogue, in both its primary (the actual spoken) and its secondary (the report) forms, which are often difficult to mark off in practice. A discourse turns on a specific “scene or space of enunciation,” meaning a distribution of speech positions in discourse (Maingueneau 2002: 515). In the personal interview particularly, the scene involves a unique event and an encounter between two interlocutors that is addressed to a third party, the audience. The interview dialogue is (partly) scripted in advance as a meeting of an author, known

through his work, and an interviewer, who represents the reader.²⁰ The triangular structure raises questions about the audience's presence in the interview scene. What type of audience is envisioned, and how is it involved in the dialogue? Is it explicitly addressed, by whom, and why (or why not)?

The private/public event is shaped by the operative devices of recording and distribution, which impose their own formats of staging, from studios to regular interview sections in magazines to edited shows. This staging is usually concealed, however, in order to create an effect of intimacy that is one of the main features of the successful personal interview. In the social sciences, interview researchers often stress that the presence of recording equipment may break the illusion of spontaneous interaction (see, among others, Fontana and Frey 1994: 368), with a negative effect on the "dramaturgy of revelation and (auto)biographical narration" (Atkinson and Silverman 1997: 314). Personal literary conversations in particular take the form of an intimate dialogue that usually requires a concealment of the material circumstances (recording devices, photographers).²¹ The evocation of the recording equipment can also reinforce the effect of the interaction's spontaneity and authenticity, as when Robert Pinget (1993: 209) says: "I don't like this microphone. . . . In journalist interviews nothing is explained. It must be done in haste." The same is true of the unliterary people who take part in the interview—for instance, translators, other guests in a television show, or even censors.²² The presence of such "alien" actors can uncover the usually concealed offstage of the realm of literature as a scene of its own.

The confusing simultaneous exposure of scene and off-scene expresses the double enunciation that governs the interview: the participants address each other and at the same time an audience. With all its actual and virtual participants, the literary interview marks an exception to the literary rule of solitary and autonomous creation.²³ Moreover, the participants are brought

20. Although writers frequently complain that (professional) interviewers have not read their work, the preparation of some literary interviewers (e.g., Lefèvre or those of the *Paris Review*) was meticulous. Lefèvre outlined his method in an unpublished manuscript (Héron 2006: 151).

21. On the importance of intimacy in the English nineteenth-century literary interview from a Foucauldian perspective, see Salmon 1997.

22. In the introduction to Ismail Kadaré's (1991: 8) *Entretiens avec Eric Faye*, Faye describes the effect that a third party can have on the interview situation: "We met in a hotel lobby and he ordered three coffees. Three because when an Albanian intellectual met a stranger, the rule said that an Albanian colleague had to be present."

23. Out of the mainstream, there exist, of course, collaborative writing practices like four-handed writing; the literary technique of the *cadavre exquis* (a game invented by the surrealists, where one author writes a phrase and another continues), or duo-authors like the Swedish detective authors Maj Sjöwall and Per Wallöö, who collaborated on a series of detective novels. (On collaborative authorship, see Lafon and Peeters 2006.) Unlike such collaborative literary practices, the interview lacks any "superauthorship."

together on the basis of contradictory force: improvisation and spontaneity, as against preparation and anticipation. Thus, the interview is caught between the ideal of a unique event and the recurrence of conventions and clichés: its success depends on the alchemy of an encounter that is never entirely predictable. Therefore, in spite of the interview's sometimes formulaic and repetitive nature, it always leaves room for surprises—positive or negative—a reader may even read it in the paradoxical expectation of the unexpected. At times, indeed, sensitive information first surfaces in interviews, as Günter Grass's war past did in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (August 11, 2006). In order to meet both the contingency entailed by the interview's principled openness and the constraints imposed by the medium, interviews follow a ritual structure or a protocol, which determines the verbal (beginning, end, sequence of themes) and the nonverbal (gestures, positions) performance.²⁴ This ritual makes it very difficult to distinguish not only between the interview and the literary interview outside a particular corpus and context but also between rituals in the original dialogue and narrative *topoi* in the report of the dialogue. In what follows, we will limit ourselves to some suggestions for further research.

On the macro level, the interview format first of all depends on the place and type of publication.²⁵ Second, they can be linked to a specific person, such as the interviewer, who not only codifies a format but also imposes a particular style of interviewing: for example, Huret's surveys (1981), Lefèvre's series "Une heure avec . . ." (1922–38), Horst Bienek's *Werkstattgespräche*, and Pivot's literary talk shows *Apostrophes* (1975–90) and *Bouillon de culture* (1991–2001). In other cases, most notably the *Paris Review* interviews, the format is linked to its founder and editor, Plimpton. As we will see, moreover, successful interview formats and practices can be transferred to other countries: Huret's survey model was thus imported to Germany (Kött 2004: 217), and the Proustian survey (see below) was adopted by both Pivot in *Apostrophes* and James Lipton in *Inside the Actors Studio* (1994–). Finally, various interview formats can be distinguished based on one or more foregrounded attributes, such as the interview's setting, duration, length, or topic. In what follows, we will briefly discuss some formats that are typically associated with the literary interview.

To begin with, a format determined by setting has been most associated with the literary interview since the early days. This is the "visit to the great

24. An intricate semiological and discourse-analytic model of analysis for the ritual structure of television interviews is Charaudeau 1991. On rituality and literature, see also Watthee-Delmotte 2010, 2011.

25. In the nineteenth century, for instance, literary interviews often appeared in a fixed part of the newspaper or magazine (Melmoux-Montaubin 2006: 41).

author's home," described by the historian Pierre Nora (1986) as a ritual and a pilgrimage. Nora associates it with the French tradition, in which the writer enjoys an elevated, even "sacred" status. According to Kött (2004: 67–70), it combines two different historical concepts, a visit to a place and to a person.²⁶ In Anglo-American culture, the format continues the interest in writers' homes that Salmon (1997: 164–75) traces back to the 1840s. The vivid depiction of the home setting typical of the model often consists of two parts: the setting rendered in detail from the subjective viewpoint of the interviewer at the beginning of the interview, when the interviewee is verbally introduced, plus one or more posed photographs. Salmon (ibid.: 169) attributes an additional function to the author's home. It not only serves as a shrine for the author's art but also represents the interviewer's penetration of the celebrity's intimate surroundings for the benefit of the public. A German format characterized by the setting, and practiced, for instance, by the famous interviewer Bienek (1965), is the workplace conversation (*Werkstattgespräch*) (see also Hansen 1998).

A second type of format is determined by length or duration, as with Lefèvre's influential written interview series "Une heure avec..." that appeared in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (1922–38) and that he also adapted for the radio (1930–40) (Héron 2006). In Germany, Moritz von Uslar (2004) gave his celebrities fifteen to thirty minutes to answer his *100 Fragen* for the *Süddeutsche-Zeitung-Magazin* under the motto "As fast as possible, because we don't have forever" ("So schnell wie möglich, denn wir haben ja nicht ewig Zeit").

Third, literary interview formats can be motivated on the basis of their topic. A most typical format is the *Paris Review's* "the art of fiction [or poetry or translation]," which bears either on the literary creation process or on the genesis of particular works.²⁷ These interviews are sometimes illustrated with photographs of manuscript pages. Like those of the author's home, they are readable as a material sign of the writing and revision process of the literary work and, indirectly, of the interview (Lewis 2008: 223). The nineteenth-century surveys usually have a thematic structure, with uniform lists of questions about literary but also general topics submitted to a large number of authors (see Carbonnel 2004, 2006; Lavaud 2006; Seillan 2006; Triaire 2006). These surveys were so common in early twentieth-century French literary culture that they were often parodied—for instance, by the

26. Kött (2004: 68) traces this visit back to the visit culture of the salons in seventeenth-century France. This is not a social, not a textual model, but it concerns the basis of the journalistic interview.

27. The *Paris Review* combines the topic with the visit to the writer's home, but we are now looking at the former.

surrealists—but the format remains thematic even so (Caws 2002: 463–66). Sometimes, the determining factor is not any specific topic but a random structuring device, like the *abécédaire* (alphabetical list of key words) that Claire Parnet used in her interview with Gilles Deleuze (2004) and Madeleine Renouard in that with Robert Pinget (1993).

Whether the structuring device is place, time, theme, or anything else, interview formats are binding, some (e.g., the duration of a radio or television program) more so than others. On top of it, additional restrictions can be imposed, for instance, by interviewees who do not want to talk about certain topics or who want to see questions in advance. Sometimes, however, the interviewer and the interviewee can break the terms: the interviewer will then ask forbidden questions, for example, or the interviewee will try to take over or subvert the format. Consider a spatial transgression. Radio and to a lesser extent television interviews usually take place in a studio. The Swiss writer Albert Cohen, however, only agreed to appear in Pivot's literary talk show *Apostrophes* if the interview were filmed at his home in Geneva. There Cohen received Pivot in his dressing gown and, what is more, in the presence of his friend Gérard Valbert, who is himself a professional interviewer: against the protocol of the *Apostrophes* interview, which functions on a one-on-one basis (*Apostrophes*, December 23, 1977). In this case, the poetics of the program was confronted with the aesthetics of the writer, who enforced his own terms.

On the micro level, some interviewers also use TOPOI, in the sense of recurring rhetorical features. These topoi are less binding than the format, but they nevertheless characterize the interview practice of an interviewer, interviewed author, or journal. In *Apostrophes*, for example, Pivot submitted Marcel Proust's questionnaire (in fact an adaptation of an English society game)²⁸ to his guests. In *Bouillon de culture*, he asked authors and artists what they would say to God after death or what their favorite word was (Woody Allen refused to answer, because his mother might be watching [January 13, 1995]). In the interview practice of writers, topoi can create a special form of intertextuality, as Miller (1984: 196–97) demonstrates in the case of Singer: the latter repeated answers to recurring questions almost verbatim, he often used proverb-like phrases like “As they say in Yiddish: ‘If you say aleph, you have to say beth’” or “I’m not a ‘sociologizer’ or ‘psychologizer,’” and various leitmotifs run through his interviews (e.g., amnesia). Again, the topoi may belong to a certain journal. In the *Paris Review*, the interview encounter or setting or the author himself are often characterized in terms of the work.

28. Proust's answers can be found at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Kolb-Proust Archive, “Les questionnaires de Marcel Proust,” www.library.illinois.edu/kolbp/proust/qst.html.

This technique sometimes verges on parody: the Buenos Aires library and Borges's secretary, for instance, are called "Borgesean" (Gourevitch 2006: 111), Haruki Murakami's writing desk is "Murakamian" (Gourevitch 2009: 336–37), and "the most amazing thing about Jack Kerouac is his magic voice, which sounds exactly like his works" (ibid.: 79). References to linguistic expression are also fairly common, especially when the authors are foreign speakers. An example of this, again from the *Paris Review*, is found in the interview with Borges, where the interviewer has tried to render the author's "cosmopolitan diction" and "formal and bookish" speech in English (Gourevitch 2006: 111–13).

A second topos often found in the literary interview is what we would call the METACOMMENTARY, referring to the place, time, and circumstances of the dialogue but also more generally to the interview form itself. This meta-commentary can be initiated by the interviewer, who thus makes his role known to the public and who, often at an early stage, invites the author to describe his attitude toward the interview. This challenge enables the author to express misgivings and even hostility (e.g., fear of small talk, of overly general questions, or on the contrary, of questions that are too intimate or personal). This can in some cases unexpectedly shift the balance of power in an interview. When Pivot, for instance, in an interview with Dominique Rolin in *Bouillon de culture* (March 24, 2000), suddenly revealed that a character from her autobiographical novel *Journal amoureux* was actually the fellow author Philippe Sollers, the focus of the interview suddenly shifted to Sollers, who was sitting next to Rolin in the show. In other interviews, authors spontaneously express their disdain for the interview or the interviewer in a kind of preemptive gesture. A parody of this topos is found at the beginning of André Gide's *Interviews imaginaires* (1942).²⁹ When the meta-commentary becomes the subject of the interview, we are dealing with what Jenz Ruchatz (2012) has called "post interviews." An early example is the oft-cited "M. Emile Zola interviewé sur l'interview" by Henri Leyret in *Le Figaro* (January 12, 1893). Very often, interviewers have expressed their views on the art or craft of the interview in the form of an interview: Ronald Christ's "An Interview on Interviews" (1977), for example, Royer's "De l'entretien" (1987), or Pierre Assouline in "Vive la conversation!" (2000).

29. "I don't like interviewers. . . . We, writers, don't need this kind of trick to address the public, which most often unfortunately travesties our thinking, even with the best intention of the world" (Gide 1942: 9).

3.4. From Dialogue to Report

The interviewer Royer (1987: 121) has suggested that the literary interview can only be considered as a literary genre when it is transcribed and published, that is, edited and rewritten. Schröder (2001: 52–60) also regards the narrativity of the written interview as a necessary step toward “literarization” of the interview. Indeed, if the author function is one precondition for the interview’s transfer to the literary field, its textual—or to put it more broadly, its edited—form is another one. Formally, the interview is the report of a dialogue embedded in the narrative of an encounter. As Marin (1997: 14) paradoxically put it, “Every written interview is the fiction of an oral interview, even if this did ‘really’ take place.” In the edited report, we would argue that a double displacement occurs. Temporally, the present of the interview in occurrence has become past, with an effect of narrativity. Spatially, the setting has to be evoked after the fact, through descriptions and/or visual images. In the report, the traces of the “event,” such as orality or references to the presence of the interviewer, can be minimized or even suppressed, as was common in the nineteenth-century predominantly narrative interview forms (e.g., Speirs 1990: 304), or they can be preserved and emphasized in order to render the discourse “more vivid,” as in the later transcript forms of interviews that (re-)create or mimic a sense of spontaneity (e.g., the *interview vérité* described in Bawer 2001).

While editing occurs in most types of interviews, the degree of narrativity and stylization of the written interview and of the control of the interviewed author widely count as features of literariness (e.g., Boddy 1998; Lewis 2008; Schröder 1991). One of the “charms” of interviews in general is that they mix orality and written discourse, attempting to convey “an audible voice through the silent medium of writing” (Seillan 2002: 50). In the personal interview with an author, this means that the report conveys both the author’s words and details about the tone, style, and atmosphere. In the “visit to the great author,” for instance, the narrative of the encounter is usually located in the journalist’s introduction and the coda of the interview.

Additional details about the nonverbal aspect of the dialogue and the atmosphere can be provided through stage directions, which describe gestures (e.g., he lights his pipe, he stands up, she looks at the window) and other markers of orality (e.g., laughter or silence). Although these details reinforce the authenticity of the dialogue, the orality included is nonetheless heavily edited, created, or as Paul Goetsch (1985, 2003) puts it, “feigned.” Likewise, in the recorded or filmed interview, its “live” character is mediated

by technology.³⁰ In every medium, repetitions will usually be taken out; the length will be adapted to the format; and statements can be deleted, modified, and even added after the fact.

Given the procedures of ordering, representation, and interpretation in the editing, there is always the risk that the interviewee's words will be misrepresented, accidentally or on purpose (Schröder 2001: 58–60). Since the rise of the interview, authors have complained about this danger. Thus, Zola, for instance, the most interviewed author of the nineteenth century: “I declare that anything a journalist can put in my mouth is non-void. . . . I only acknowledge as my opinion that which I have expressed myself by my own pen” (*Le Figaro*, 12 January 1893 quoted in Speirs 1990: 305; for a more nuanced view on Zola's attitude toward interviews, see Becker 2006). Technical developments (audiovisual recording devices) led to a shift from telling to showing, but the possibility to record interviews has not eliminated the problems of accurate representation. Almost a century after Zola, Kundera (2003 [1986]: 132–33) issued a firm statement in one of his volumes of essays that only interviews that bear his copyright should be considered authentic:

Interview . . . (1) the interviewer asks questions of interest to him, of no interest to you; (2) of your responses, he uses only those that suit him; (3) he translates them into his own vocabulary, his own manner of thought. In imitation of American journalism, he will not even deign to get your approval for what he has you say. The interview appears. You console yourself: people will quickly forget it! Not at all: people will quote it! Even the most scrupulous academics no longer distinguish between the words a writer has written and signed, and his remarks as reported. (Historical precedent: Gustav Janouch's *Conversations with Kafka*, a hoax that is a bottomless source of quotes for Kafkologists.) In July 1985, I made a firm decision: no more interviews. Except for dialogues co-edited by me, *accompanied by my copyright*, all my reported remarks since then are to be considered forgeries.

While Kundera may be overstating his case, it is undeniably true that interview transcriptions can diverge significantly from the original talk to an extent that recording devices and archives have enabled researchers to measure. A notorious example is the interview conducted by Jean Le Bitoux with Foucault, “The Gay Science,” where Foucault for once openly talked about homosexuality and bathhouses. This interview never appeared officially, existed in several unauthorized versions, and was reconstructed in 2010 on the basis of the original recordings (Foucault 2011).³¹ However,

30. Even live shows are usually transmitted with a slight delay, so that minimal editing can be done.

31. As Le Bitoux explains, the interview was intended for the magazine *Le gai pied* but Foucault did not give his permission. A translation appeared in an underground Dutch magazine in 1979 and in a very different French version in 1988.

accuracy of transcription is not sufficient for intelligibility. The text's belated appearance in a different cultural climate and context made it necessary for the Foucault scholar David Halperin (2011) and the interviewer Le Bitoux (2011) to provide explanations.

Kasia Boddy (1998: 66) suggests that literary interviews can only be used as legitimate scholarly tools in literary criticism when we have sufficient information not just about the interview dialogue itself—setting, duration, writer/interviewer rapport—but also about the recording and editing process. To this we may add the transcription of nonverbal features of the dialogue (e.g., rhythm and mood); the role of other participants in the interview, such as the translator; the representation of the exchange; and the attitude adopted toward the idiosyncrasies of the interviewee or toward the inappropriateness (e.g., vulgarity, profanity, or mendacity) of certain statements. In press interviews, this type of information is seldom communicated to the audience or even accurately archived. Nor is the editing process of literary interviews much revealed elsewhere.

But remarks about editing processes are sometimes available.³² When radio or television interviews are transcribed, the reader may have access to the original. The interviewer may therefore feel the need to justify his transcription and selections. Take Robert Mallet's (1951: 9) introduction to his radio interviews with the French writer and theater critic Paul Léautaud:

Paul Léautaud only agreed to talk in front of a microphone if the spontaneity of his conversation were preserved by complete improvisation. Of course, I had prepared for each recording the topics that would build a sequence both chronological and logical. But Paul Léautaud never knew or wanted to know what questions I was going to ask him. The exchange of talk has thus been entirely "free," according to the immediate, most direct reactions—sometimes least according to protocol.

This way of proceeding will explain, to readers who did not hear the program, the tone of this publication, in which we respected all the fantasies of the conversation in their rough state, captured by the microphone and expressed as if there was no microphone. It will also explain to them that the answers did not permit any of the straightforwardness, in form or in thought, that can be found in premeditated dialogues that were later edited.

Further, remarks about editing procedures often arise where the ethical stance of the interviewer is at stake: for instance, because the interviewee did not authorize the report or because the topic counts as taboo. Both these

32. Archives in universities and in research institutions like Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) increasingly contain numerous published interviews with their original transcripts or recordings of interviews.

issues come into question concerning a practice that gained currency at the end of the twentieth century, namely, the “last interview,” in which a dying author addresses the public (de Bloois and Masschelein, forthcoming). Two variants of this practice exist. One is the “accidental” last interview which took place just before the author died. An example of dubious ethics in the editing of such an interview is the last interview with Kurt Vonnegut, who died on April 11, 2007. Not only were there three interviews that vied for this title, but it turned out that the actual, chronologically last interview (conducted by J. Rentilly [no first name given] on March 6, 2007, and published in the free inflight magazine of US Airways) was to some extent “forged.” The interviewer added statements from an interview that he had conducted five years earlier with Vonnegut for *McSweeney*, a literary magazine, in order to make the last interview more interesting (Neyfakh 2007).³³ But there is also the “staged” last interview, of which an example that attracted enormous public notice is the last interview of the English playwright Potter, broadcast on Channel Four on March 15, 1994.³⁴ Different transcripts of this interview appeared, for example, in the *New Left Review* (1994) and in Potter (1994), as well as in a VHS recording. In the relatively long introduction to Potter (1994), Melvyn Bragg explains the circumstances of the interview (e.g., how they handled the fact that Potter needed morphine during the conversation or the way Potter wanted to stage the entire thing). In addition, he specifies the editorial choices made for the interview (minimal editing and an almost literal transcript) (Potter 1994: vii–xii). He provided even more information when the interview was selected as one of the fourteen best interviews of the twentieth century and reedited as a supplement in the *Guardian*.³⁵

When interviews are reprinted or reissued, as in the cases of the Potter interview or the Le Bitoux talk with Foucault, they can be more or less substantially revised and edited again, depending on the context in which they appear. This occurs quite frequently when interviews are included in a book volume or a series.³⁶ Collections presuppose or produce a coherence

33. Another extreme case regards John Steinbeck’s “last interview” for the *Paris Review*, which was in fact a montage of quotes that did not even come from interviews (Lewis 2008: 189–92).

34. When he learned that he had terminal cancer, Potter agreed to be interviewed by Melvyn Bragg. His visibly ill body strongly contrasted with the lust for life he expressed and his desire to finish his last screenplays. The interview, with its tremendous impact, helped restore Potter’s controversial reputation (Carpenter 1998: 563).

35. See *Melvyn Bragg on Interviewing Dennis Potter*, *Guardian*, September 12, 2007, www.guardian.co.uk/news/video/2007/sep/12/melvynbragg.

36. Interviews can be included in volumes with other text types, as in the collected works of an author or as a critical introduction to a literary work or to a new edition or translation of a classic (e.g., the new French edition of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* was introduced by an interview with the Belgian author and filmmaker Jean-Philippe Toussaint [2011], that was later published as an essay [Toussaint 2012] with no mention of the original interview). By

that may contradict the interview's strong ties to the event at the time. Moreover, while they are not sufficient as markers of "literariness" (other types of interviews being also collected), they can be regarded as a sign of the growing status of the literary interview as an autonomous text.

For these reasons, interviews are not only reframed but are also reedited or even restyled to fit the new context of the volume. Thus, the markers of orality and the references to contemporary events intended to (re-)create the actual circumstances of the interview may become less prominent in favor of the interview's autonomous, written, and enduring text type. Moreover, as Odile Cornuz (2011) has demonstrated, when the author is the collection's editor, he may want to reappropriate the texts from the interviewer by rewriting them. Thus, in the preface to his interview collection *Le roi vient quand il veut* (2007), the French novelist Pierre Michon admitted that he substantially revised several of the interviews in order to impose his literary style on them and to integrate them in his oeuvre.

Finally, paratextual elements, such as a preface by the journalist, the editor, or the interviewed author, may help indicate a new contract of reading (Yanoshevsky 2012b). Prefaces, for example, no longer merely describe the setting and atmosphere of the encounter. They can also provide more detailed and accurate information about the context and role of the interview text and sometimes also about the protocol of transcription. Titles—other than the thematic *Interviews, Conversations with . . .*, or *Art of Fiction/Poetry* in the *Paris Review*—can be metaphorically related to the writer's presentation or self-presentation. In some cases, metaphors like *The Lion in the Garden* (William Faulkner) (Meriwether and Millgate 1968), *Waltzing Again* (Margaret Atwood 2006), *Les yeux ouverts* (*Eyes Open*, Marguerite Yourcenar), *Le roi vient quand il veut* (*The King Comes as He Pleases*) (Michon 2007), and *Harcèlement littéraire* (*Literary Harassment*, Richard Millet) can reflect in miniature both the author's work and his interview style.

3.5. An Interaction of Postures

The interview book, which is often regarded as an alternative form of autobiography (e.g., Amossy 1997, 2007; Lejeune 1980; Yanoshevsky 2010), leads us to what many regard as the primary function of interviews in contemporary literary cultures, namely, to provide information about the author that comes from the author himself, even if it is not always authorized, as

contrast, interview books can also be devoted to one specific interviewee—bringing together in one volume interviews by different interviewers that appeared before and adding interviews conducted for the book—or to the work of an interviewer, who then counts as an author himself (see section 3.2).

we saw. This function is far from specific to the literary interview, however, as sociologists have pointed out that personal interviews are all “technologies of the self” (see section 2.1.2), via repeated reminiscences, confessions, and linkages between past and present, and that the format is actually much more stereotypical than the effect of authenticity and spontaneity would suggest (Atkinson and Silverman 1997: 313–15). Some authors have, indeed, consistently refused to give interviews, determined to preserve their authorial images as constructed through the literary work. Salinger, for instance, defended his reclusive attitude vis-à-vis the press by saying that “all I’m doing is trying to protect myself and my work” (Fosburgh 1974).

Peculiar to the literary interview is not so much that it enables the interviewee to create a certain image or persona but that this process bears resemblances to literary creation. As Arkin (1983) has argued, an author can “compose the self” in much the same way as the fictional characters. Rodden’s (2001, 2013) typology of author performances combines the notion that authors can shape their images with one of character types and interview styles. Lewis (2008: 225–36) adopts a discursive and sociological approach in her detailed analyses of the way the *Paris Review* interviews create images of authors. These images are studied from three perspectives. To begin with, due to its careful selection, preparation, and editing procedures, the *Paris Review* rapidly gained a very good reputation in the American literary field: an interview there was regarded as a measure of an author’s status. This value may in some cases extend to a more general celebrity status that is typical of Anglo-American media culture (ibid.: 237–45). Second, a *Paris Review* interview creates a complex image of an author, which includes the interviewer’s detailed verbal description of his or her appearance, behavior, and manner of expression together with the author’s own self-portrait in word and action. In her case studies, Lewis extensively demonstrates how the *Paris Review* personae interact with existing images of the author in the literary field. For instance, the interviews with Robert Frost and Hemingway both perpetuate existing authorial stereotypes and also refresh the image and correct it. In the case of Marianne Moore, Lewis (ibid.: 248–92) also relates the interview portrait to the poet’s photographs and demonstrates how her groomed appearance is related to her photographs, her work and writing style, and the moral aspects of her persona. Third, Lewis situates the literary interview in relation to the Anglo-American debates on authorial intention that profoundly shaped the literary culture of the mid-twentieth century.

Although Lewis does not refer to Jérôme Meizoz’s notion of *authorial posture*, the concept is particularly well suited for her approach to interviews, because it takes into account different types of elements that escape and transcend the writer’s control. It is worth quoting the different elements of

his definition in more detail:

1. An author's posture marks out his position in the literary field in a singular way. . . . The best equivalent of the concept would be the Latin notion of *persona*, which originally refers to the masks worn by actors on stage and is etymologically derived from the notion "from/through what one speaks" (*per-sonare*), which establishes both the idea of voice and that of the social situation making it intelligible. On the scene of literary enunciation, the author presents as well as expresses himself equipped with his *persona* or posture. . . .
2. Posture is not uniquely an author's own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and various mediators (journalists, criticism, biographies) serving the reading public. . . .
3. Posture, as I see it, presupposes a dual observation track, because it involves both non-verbal behaviour (a) and discourse (b). . . .
4. At a methodological level, the concept of posture allows to describe the connections between behaviour and textual effects in the literary field. . . .
5. Posture and the role of memory within the field: as we have seen, posture comes about through the collaborative input of the individual and the collective: particular variations in a position will become equally fixed in the available repertoire of literary practice. (Meizoz 2010: 84–85)

When we apply this to the study of literary interviews, we realize that the construction of posture in them is not merely discursive but also relies on nondiscursive elements, such as titles and illustrations (photographic portraits, sketches, pictures of the setting where the interview was conducted, and facsimiles of the manuscript).³⁷ In the case of radio interviews, "the grain of the voice," to paraphrase the title of Roland Barthes's (1999 [1981]) collection of interviews, also affects the authorial image, as do gestures, corporeal positions, props, and typical habits, such as chain-smoking or drinking.

Further, posture must be studied in a continuum of different interviews and other public appearances, from which a more or less stable authorial image arises. This does not mean, however, that authorial posture is static. It may vary according to the occasion: writers like Zola, Leo Tolstoy, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet, James Baldwin, or Said, for instance, can be interviewed either as literary creators or as political activists and may adopt

37. One of the few scholars who discuss photographs that accompany interviews is Salmon (1997). The iconography of the literary author has lately received a lot of attention in French scholarship. See, among others, Dewez and Martens 2009; Ferrari and Nancy 2005.

other postures as a result. Nor does authorial posture appear *ex nihilo*. Writers position themselves in relation to existing postures, such as those associated with fellow writers or predecessors and literary traditions—for example, by quoting or interpreting the work of others. Even the author's attitude toward the interview constitutes a posture in that it belongs to the public behavior of the intellectual.

Moreover, both the interviewer and the interviewee adopt a posture, at once in independence from each other and in interaction. On the one hand, interviewers play a big role in the creation and fixture of authorial postures in a certain period and culture. When they address an author, whom they usually do not know, they in fact address a persona that is a mixture of what Wayne Booth (2010) has called “the implied author,” of other public appearances of that author, and of existing authorial postures that circulate in the media. This horizon of expectations will influence the course of the interview and its reception, either confirming or correcting prevalent images and stereotypes. Also, as the dynamics of the interview is determined by the interaction between writer and interviewer, status, gender, and level of familiarity must be taken into account. For example, when Simone de Beauvoir (1981) interviewed Sartre at the end of his life, she was his long-time partner. Inversely, when Djuna Barnes (1922) interviewed James Joyce for *Vanity Fair* in 1922, she was doing a journalist's job, but the two became friends afterward.

An interesting area of research concerns the art of interviewers. While there is some research on famous interviewers (e.g., Huret, Amrouche, Lefèvre, Pivot, Plimpton, Bienek, André Müller, Arnold) and the successful formats they developed, a more general study might examine interviewers' postures, imagery, typical rhetorical strategies, stance toward the interviewee, and changing professional status. A well-documented aspect of this changing professional status is the early twentieth-century fear that the literary interview and the survey may replace literary criticism (e.g., Carbonnel 2004: 50–58; Melmoux-Montaubin 2006: 40–41; Seillan 2006: 211–17). This is not self-evident: the interviewer in the media apparently remains neutral (a nonperson even) in order to create an atmosphere of trust and intimacy. The interviewer does not voice his own opinions; his task is to elicit those of others. At most, he will refer to the other's opinions to provoke the writer's responses.

The more literary interviewers develop their own styles and use interviews to express their own opinions, the closer they come to a kind of authorship. If, in the nineteenth century, it was felt that the journalist was a rival to the critic, we have seen above that he also aspired to authorship—for instance, when he wrote imaginary interviews or when his interviews were collected. Moreover,

early theorists like Maurice Barrès and Pierre Giffard advocated that ideally interviewers should be literary authors (Speirs 1990: 304). It is noteworthy that many writers have at some point in their careers turned to interviewing, either for professional reasons (as with journalists or biographers, e.g., Bienek or Assouline) or on special occasions (as when Alberto Moravia [1963] made a book of interviews with the actress Claudia Cardinale). Often the encounter between writers later becomes a part of the literary oeuvre of one of the two. Duras thus hosted a part of a 1960s television show (*Dim Dam Dom*), called “Marguerite Duras Interroge . . .” (“Marguerite Duras Questions . . .”) and interviewed her old friend François Mitterrand while he was president of France (Duras and Mitterrand 2006, 2007; see Jaffray 2011). Inversely, in the twentieth century, many known literary journalists, like Madeleine Chapsal and Bragg, were also writers.

3.6. *The Authenticity of Fiction*

The interview as a social practice presupposes a rapport between the interview partners and the author’s willingness to provide information. It is typically based on a minimal truth claim that the discourse is empirically correct and morally honest. With no indications to the contrary, the overall effect is one of authenticity. This “pact of authenticity” (by analogy to Philippe Lejeune’s autobiographical pact) constitutes one of the text’s main attractions for a modern audience, who expects to get a unique inside perspective into the writer’s private life and opinions. As we saw above, the staging of the literary interview is also intended to reinforce this sense of authenticity and intimacy: for example, by concealing both the audience’s (real or supposed) presence and the economic motivations behind the interview or by presenting the author in his home.

However, we have already found that tension can arise between these two expectations: producing an effect of authenticity may clash with the pursuit of an accurate transcription. In the literary field, a fictionality factor can also come into play, subtly or playfully undermining the interview pact and allowing for a different kind of authenticity. In the literary interview, according to Arkin (1983: 18), the effect of authenticity depends on the recognition of what may be most familiar to the reader, that is, the fictional universe. Even when the interview serves to introduce the work, the interviewer will take care to characterize the writer’s style, themes, and fictional world in the paratext: “Because it is precisely in their creations, their stories, their poems, plays, that they are unique, a conjuring of their art is for many the best response that they can make. . . . For the artful dodger seated across from an interviewer, the fictive self is the truest self” (ibid.). In this view, the truthfulness of the inter-

viewed writer's self-presentation is found not so much in the accuracy of the facts as in the consistency of the interview and the creative oeuvre.

The practice of "inventing" can be regarded as a specific aspect of the institutional habitus of literature. Invention, irony, self-depreciation, mystification, and manipulation have increasingly become stock features of the literary interview, whereby the writer projects his image or plays with the interviewer and the audience. Some authors, like Müller or the Flemish author Hugo Claus, deliberately confuse the issue and contradict themselves in order to avoid coherence and being pinned down to one image or facet (Vanasten, forthcoming). This can be seen as a form of aesthetics or poetics in which the boundary between fact and fiction is subverted, leading to a conflation between the person and the work or to a new type of writing that variously presents itself as fictional. Faulkner, for instance, invented a delirious ancestry in one of his first interviews: "I was born of a negro slave and an alligator, both named Gladys Rock. I had two brothers, one named Dr. Walter E. Traprock and the other Eagle Rock, an airplane" (Meriwether and Millgate 1968: 9). The foregrounding of acting and of fiction in an interview is often signaled by nonverbal indicators provided by the interviewer, for example, "laughs" or "winks" in his reaction to some of the author's claims. These indicators can be regarded as disambiguations for the reader but also as markers of the literary interview's autonomy. Moreover, it can also be related to the self-reflexivity of some twentieth-century literary currents, like the Nouveau Roman, metafiction, and auto-fiction. In this sense, what appears to be a loss of authenticity can be a surplus of literarity.

Another, early sign of the appropriation of the interview by the literary field to a transgressive effect is the fictional interview found in various literatures. Parodies and pastiches of the literary interview are commonly found in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French literature, as has been well documented by Thérénty (2006a), Melmoux-Montaubin (2006), Durand (2006), and many others. An early German example is Karl Kraus's (1912) biting satire on the press, "Interview mit einem sterbenden Kind" ("Interview with a Dying Child"). Hoaxes and mystifications also occur frequently, the most daring example probably being the interviews invented by the Catalan writer Enrique Vila-Matas in a cinema journal (Volle 2010). Sometimes actual interviews inspire fictional ones, as in Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* (1996; see Martens and Meurée, forthcoming). In other cases, interviews are either invented and presented as real—Müller took a nap during his interview by Frank M. Raddatz, who had agreed that he would write the interview himself (see Hoffmann 2011: 313–14)—or flaunted as invented, as by the title of

Gide's *Interviews imaginaires (Imaginary Interviews)* (see Marty 2000) or *Le journaliste impossible (The Impossible Interviews)* (Pavolini 2006). In this experimental Italian radio show, writers interview long-dead celebrities or historical figures who are played by an actor: Umberto Eco thus interviews Pythagoras. A special kind of the imaginary interview is the "self-interview," or the "self-portrait with two hands," as Amossy (1997) calls it in the case of Romain Gary's *La nuit sera calme (The Night Will Be Calm)*. Michel Butor's (1988: 5) *Le retour du boomerang (The Return of the Boomerang)*, a collection of interviews with the French scholar Béatrice Didier, is accompanied by the following note, signed B.D.: "Michel Butor is the only writer but I gladly subscribe to all the statements he puts in my mouth."

The often humorous character of these practices arises from their deliberate transgression of the genre's premises. Fictional interviews are not just the response of individual authors to a media practice that invades their literary existence as well as contemporary life. They are also active attempts on the part of literature to (re)appropriate a form that partly eludes it, and they reveal some of the basic tensions that characterize the literary interview: authorship and control, authenticity and accuracy, heteronomy and autonomy.

4. Concluding Remarks

The literary interview is, like the journalistic interview from which it descends, a hybrid genre that belongs to different domains and performs different functions. Its relatively stable form conceals a lot of variation and heterogeneous practices. Underlying these, we can nonetheless identify a number of basic features. First of all, the literary interview is minimally determined by the presence of a literary interlocutor. This is a necessary precondition for its transfer to the literary domain, because it allows us to attribute an "author function," mostly to the interviewee but sometimes also to the interviewer when he is an established authority in the literary field. A second condition lies in the narrative form of the finished report and the literary or aesthetic qualities of the written interview. This is not a feature exclusive to the literary interview either, but it again brings it close to existing literary genres, like the autobiography, biography, report, essay, monologue or conversation, and even fiction.

Under certain conditions—in particular ages, magazines, and programs and regarding certain writers and interviewers—the "genericity" of the literary interview grows stronger. It becomes an autonomous text that takes its place within a larger oeuvre (of the interviewee or of the interviewer) and within a constellation of literary genres in a given period. The literary

field responds to the rise of this new “genre” through parodies, fictional interviews, “interview literature,” and commentary on the form. Since the last decades of the twentieth century, the literary interview has been establishing itself as an object of research in French, German, and English scholarship. While these traditions show some overlap and exchange, the research done has nonetheless remained mostly isolated and limited to specific cultural and historical phenomena. Our inquiry into the state of the art has revealed that some periods, magazines, formats, interviewees, and interviewers have been extensively studied—the nineteenth through twentieth centuries in France, the *Paris Review*, the “visit to the great author,” the literary questionnaire, Zola, Müller, Nabokov, and Lefèvre, to name the most important ones. But this still leaves a lot of room and need for further research on particular corpora and ages of the literary interview; on forms and topoi; on the poetics of interviewees and interviewers; on the practical, genetic, and ethical problems involved in transcription and editing; and on the analysis of the verbal and nonverbal, textual, and audiovisual dimensions of its discourse in different media.

The literary interview constitutes a new site of interaction among various discourses, institutions, and media. On the one hand, its development shows a tendency toward autonomy, which raises questions about aspects of literature that are often taken for granted: genre; authorship; editing; the shifting relations among truth, authenticity, and textuality, between private and public, between the construction of posture and the creation of character. On the other hand, it remains a “heteronomous” practice that is governed by social, political, commercial, and symbolic functions. It makes literature visible in other fields of society, and it displays the influence of society and the media—the interview society—on the literary domain, which constantly adapts itself and changes. The necessarily interdisciplinary study of the literary interview as a hybrid genre will doubtless be of interest not only to literary scholars but also to other fields concerned with discourse and (post)modernity.

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