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The Point of Narratology

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By the accidents of life, I started out in the literary profession as a narratologist, having French as my foreign language and structuralism as my training. By another accident, I started in Israel. As one of the young, unknown invitees of the Synopsis 2 Conference where an unusual number of established stars were mixed with a good number of beginners like myself, with the most fortunate result, I optimistically brought a formalist, quite technical paper written in French to a conference where most people tended to speak English and some to suspect formalism. My feeling awkwardly out of place was to be combatted by actively participating in the debates, and that this was possible, that within half a day I felt excited and encouraged while having completely revised my views of narratology, was due to the exceptional intellectual and humane qualities of this conference. I have been to a large number of conferences since, but just as childhood bliss is irretrievably lost in later life, so did I never feel the same deep satisfaction again.

What was so special about this conference that it deserves memorialization? First of all, it was intellectually open and yet focused enough: a wide variety of topics and attitudes toward narratology and its assumptions made for lively and serious debates. In retrospect, the conference really gave an overview of narratology as a field, neither taking it for granted nor rejecting it a priori. It also marked a turning-point in the discipline. Looking at what the field is today, it seems hard to tell if the conference was at the vanguard or the core of the development; if it announced what was going to happen or demonstrated what was

already happening. The conference thus exactly fulfilled the promise of the Synopsis series, as announced in the program: "to clarify the state of the art in one specific area of poetics or the semiotics of culture, both through synoptic reassessment of existing theory and through presentation of new departures or seminal work in progress."

In those days, the construction of a narrative grammar was still being pursued and less formalist structural models partly inherited from prestructuralism were being improved. The rigorously structuralist, programmatic papers by the late Marc Adriaens and by Gerald Prince alternated with more specific topics and "gentler" approaches. In that category, free indirect discourse was a central subject (Ron, Banfield, Perry), in addition to character (Tamir-Ghez), space (Frank), repetition (Rimmon-Kenan), and redundancy (Suleiman), to name only a few from the rich range of topics, all clearly narratological. At the same time, deconstruction was beginning to flourish widely, and Jonathan Culler's opening paper effectively undermined one of the basic tenets of structuralist narratology, the distinction between story and plot, while Rolf Klopfer pleaded for a nonhierarchical structuralist model of Bakhtinian inspiration. Empirical psychology (Kreitler) and anthropology (Ben-Amos, Winner) also posed challenges to narratological model-building, while semiotics (Eco, Doležel) proposed a wider framework for it. Finally, excellent examples of narratology-in-use were given by Kittay (Renaissance), Lodge (realism), McHale (postmodernism), demonstrating that the often alleged opposition between historical and systematic analysis is a false one.¹

Ten years later it may seem, superficially, that narratology has gone out of fashion. We have moved on to other things: one of the Synopsis 2 participants, Susan Suleiman, edited a double issue of *Poetics Today* on the female body, and although this volume is definitely not devoid of narratological concerns, these certainly do not predominate; text-grammars have ceased to appear; formalist models are deemed irrelevant (Brooks 1984); and, while some retain early structuralist distinctions, many of those who discussed the criteria for free indirect discourse in 1979 moved on to practice analysis rather than worrying about how to do it. Today's options seem to be either regression to earlier positions (Genette 1983), primary focus on application, or rejection of narratology. All three are problematic: Regression demonstrates a powerlessness to move on; application may imply an unwarranted acceptance of imperfect theories; and rejection, while moti-

1. Most of these papers have been published in *Poetics Today* in 1980–1981. Quite a few have led to books (e.g., Prince [1984]; Kittay and Godzich [1987]; McHale [1987]; Bal [1985, 1986, 1988]; Banfield [1982]), which is another way of measuring the conference's fertility.

vated by a shift in priorities, is also a denial of the importance of the *questions*—rather than the answers—of narratology, and sometimes even a lack of understanding.² In general, more important issues, mainly historical and ideological ones, have taken priority. In my own case, feminist concerns have taken the lead but not, I wish to argue, at the cost of more formal narratological issues. Rather, the concern for a reliable model for narrative analysis has more and more been put to the service of other concerns considered more vital for cultural studies.

In this situation, for those of us like myself, whose reputation is based on the kind of narratological work deemed central at Synopsis 2, the title “narratologist” seems to call for an apology, a denial, or a justification. The apology, which maintains that much of literature is, after all, narrative in kind, misses the point of the challenge, for the existence of narrative texts is less the issue than the relevance of narrative structure for their meaning. The denial, which claims that one does other things now, throws out the baby with the bathwater, for those “other things,” like ideological criticism, must be based on insights one has developed earlier unless one considers one’s earlier work truly futile, an attitude which is, in itself, a token of futility. Given the dialectical yet reasonably stable continuity in scholarly work, justification may be the more realistic response, even if one *also* does “other things.” My own variant consists of demonstrating the usefulness of narratology to those “other things” being done today. In other words, the most responsible attitude I can imagine consists in answering the question, what’s the point?, while taking that question seriously. And that question, already posed in 1979, is what all academic work should continually be asked to answer.³ For posing that question seriously, dialogically, and with historical consciousness, the conference deserves, I feel, to be memorialized today.

This paper will offer one possible answer, which happens to be my own personal answer, to that question. The point of narratology,

2. See my review article on Brooks (1984), Stanzel (1984), and Genette (1983) in *Poetics Today* (1986). I claim, there, that Stanzel never took up the challenge of structuralism, that Genette did, but then gave up, and that Brooks bypassed it. All three, then, failed to address the issues structuralism has raised, to the detriment of their own theories.

3. The current fashion of “empirical” study of literature—in quotation marks because I do not believe it is empirical in any scientific sense—markedly fails to address the question of its own point (e.g., Fokkema 1988). For example, the “documentary” search for authorial intention—less empirical and more traditional than the author seems to be aware of—seems to me entirely beside the point of the search for insight into literary processes. This falling back into regressive positions could be countered by the kind of permanent self-criticism the question “what’s the point?” summarizes.

defined as reflection on the generically specific, narrative determinants of the production of meaning in semiotic interaction, is not constructed as a perfectly reliable model which "fits" the texts. In addition to making unwarranted claims about the generalizability of structure and the relevance of general structures for the meaning and effect of texts, such a construction would presuppose the object of narratology to be a "pure" narrative. Instead, narrative must be considered a discursive mode which affects semiotic objects in variable degrees. Once the relation of entailment between narrativity and narrative objects is abandoned, there is no longer any reason to privilege narratology as an approach to texts traditionally classified as narratives. Instead, other approaches may be better equipped to account for those aspects of narrative texts that have traditionally been under-illuminated, partly because of the predominance of a text-immanent, structuralist approach.⁴ Narratology, here, is considered guilty of repressing other concerns, and discarding it may be a healthy move. Nor, for that matter, does giving up the method-object bond require us to limit the use of narratology to only narrative texts. One may then want to replace the approach with a different one, whether ideological, psychoanalytical, or rhetorical, but one may also want to mobilize narratological insights for other objects. Here, in contrast, narratology can help supply insights that the field wherein such different objects are traditionally studied has not itself developed. Paradoxically, the very discipline that tends to rigidify its own traditional object is able to de-rigidify other objects. One example among many is Leroux's (1985) narratological analysis of philosophical texts. I will present three cases based on my own work of the past ten years to see if this use of narratology is indeed sensible. My contention in this paper—or my desire, one could argue—then, is that narratology, ten years after *Synopsis 2*, is flourishing, but less within the study of narrative texts than in other disciplines—and that this is as it must be, as far as I am concerned.

Case 1: Anthropology and the Subject

In the decade between *Synopsis 2* and this special issue, an increasing interest in narrative theories by anthropologists and in anthropology by (often dissatisfied) narratologists has emerged. One recent token of narratology's relevance for anthropology and vice versa is

4. I do not really think that the corpus of predominantly narrative texts has been sufficiently explored with the help of narratology. On the contrary, most studies of those texts are weak precisely in that their authors fail to use adequate descriptive tools. But the point I am making is that even if one assumes there have been enough narratological analyses of narrative texts, it is obvious that there have been hardly any narratological analyses of non-narrative texts, which undermines the very generic distinction the idea of "narrative texts" is based on.

the volume that Indiana University Press is bringing out this year in homage to the late Victor Turner, a key figure in contemporary anthropology, and entitled *Between Literature and Anthropology: Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism*. Several contributions to this volume either come from narratologists or use narratology, e.g., Thomas Pavel's "Narratives of Ritual and Desire."

The interdisciplinary interaction between narratology and anthropology is more profound, however, than the two-way borrowing that seems to be occurring. No symmetry can be assumed in this interaction. Anthropology helps to address the issue of literature's grounding in reality, without regressing to a reflection theory, and provides, in its key themes like ritual and kinship, background information that helps fill in that grounding. Focusing more closely and specifically, anthropology's interest in orality provides insights into the *Sitz-im-Leben* of a whole body of narratives that can help relativize the generalizations about narrative structure we have been building up on the basis of written texts (Lemaire 1987).

Narratology is grafted upon anthropology in an altogether different manner: anthropology's self-definition and self-critique are grounded in problems of narrative, for narrative is the stuff of anthropological knowledge. As is only too well known, the major problem of the discipline of anthropology has traditionally been its contamination by the colonialism out of which it emerged. Although aware from very early on of the problems inherent in their work, ethnographers have not been able to avoid a cultural imperialism that obscured the objects of their descriptions: foreign cultures. Difference seems hard to understand and otherness hard to accept.⁵ A stream of critical analyses of anthropology as a discipline has accompanied the more general growing awareness of problematic attitudes toward otherness in contemporary society.⁶ In fact, few disciplines practice self-criticism so consistently as anthropology does.

Yet little attention has been paid to the relationship between the generic conventions of ethnography and the failure of its texts to do justice to their object: the other. But it is precisely to the extent that these texts are narrative, that they have a structure (traditionally

5. For a sustained critique of anthropological fieldwork and the resulting ethnographies, see Fabian (1982); from a gender perspective, see Coward (1983). Literary critics who have written major works on these issues of difference and otherness are Said (1978) and Todorov (1989).

6. An awareness that, unfortunately, is not accompanied by real acceptance and respect, as we see daily in many domains, such as increasing sexual violence, increasing racism in multi-ethnic communities, and continuing political and military oppression of the "others," as in South Africa and Israel, to name only the most blatant examples.

called "third-person narrative") which entails distortion, that the problem can be analyzed. As narratologists know, objective narration is by definition impossible because the linguistic constraints imposed on narratorial voice and the subjective focalization no speaker can avoid adopting shape the fabula or content of the narrative decisively. Of course, ethnographers know this, too, but narratologists can provide the means to theorize this problem as a textual one. In this section I will explore some ways in which this problem can be addressed, albeit not solved. At the same time, this discussion will address a problem of interdisciplinary methodology.

The specific relations between two disciplines involved in interdisciplinary exchange are never adequately perceived if they are one-sided and hierarchical, if a master-code prescribes how a target discipline is to behave. Instead, a variable interaction, whose tenets can be usefully assessed, occurs. Let me give one small but significant example. The title of Clifford Geertz's seminal paper, "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding" (1983) is programmatic enough. Geertz presents a few case studies meant to provide insight into the fundamental problem of anthropology, and he chose his cases extremely well. The concept used by Geertz to discuss this problem is precisely what lies at the heart of relations between ethnographer and autochthonous subject, as well as at the heart of narratology: the concept of subject, person, individual, as a node in a network of social and textual relations. The concept poses an equally difficult problem for both disciplines. As Geertz demonstrates, both the content of the concept of subject—what defines an individual in a given society—and the structural properties of the interpersonal reference system vary greatly according to different cultures. Hence, the very notion of subjectivity, so central to narratological considerations of, for example, description, cannot be given a fixed, universal meaning, lest we imperialistically build a theory valid for only a limited section of Western literature while claiming general validity for it. So far, then, anthropological analysis helps narratology refine its categories and circumscribe their validity.

But the different concepts of the subject that Geertz describes are more clearly demonstrated by the person-to-person interaction in which he perceived them (in drama, if you wish) than in the ethnographic narrative itself. For there, while exposing the different conceptions of the subject, Geertz continually doubles up the Balinese, Javanese, and Moroccan voices with his own perspective, which, for the purpose of the demonstration, remains blatantly ethnocentric. Thus he explains how the Balinese widower represses his grief and derives his subjecthood from the denial of mourning, and how the Moroccan person is identified through a network of features of kinship, profes-

sion, and location, but he does so within a structure built on Western concepts of person, the ethnographic third-person narrative. Narratology, however, can formulate this relationship: to simplify in terms of my own narratological categories, "we" speak, and focalize, the focalization of "them," but "they" do not speak, and "their" focalization only comes to us filtered by "ours." As a result, Geertz's explicit lesson concerning the differences between two conceptions of the subject, magnificently taught, itself obscures the very core of anthropology's problem, the imperialist contamination inherent in a narrative "about" another.

To a certain extent—and such is Geertz's conclusion—this is the inevitable limit of understanding, and the acceptable form of anthropological knowledge. We now know what a subject is (in the Moroccan village) and how a subject fulfills its being (in the Balinese village), but not *how* this concept makes the narratives produced in such cultures *mean*. Hence, we cannot adequately interpret the cultures' own narratives. This conclusion is a bit too aporetic. I doubt if we must accept a form of understanding that reduces the understood to a filtered object, nor does it seem that we need to. For a subtle narratological analysis of anthropological material can go a bit further precisely because such an analysis temporarily brackets both ends of the embedding reality, the reality of the events "out there" and the reality of the colonizing reporter; for the purpose of a provisional analysis, the narratologist presupposes that the narrative is structurally self-sufficient.

I have experienced the usefulness of thus integrating an anthropological eagerness for understanding real otherness with a narratological method of structural textual analysis in my studies of the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Book of Judges,⁷ which poses a number of acute problems of alterity. Studying Judges closely, I was particularly struck by the fact that three concepts referring to women seemed inadequately rendered in translations and commentaries informed by modern Western concepts: virgin (*bethulah*), concubine (*pilegesh*), prostitute (*zonah*). At first sight, the problem with "virgin" is that the immediate contexts systematically overdetermine the concept, such as adding a phrase like "who [has] not known a man" (e.g., Judges 11); with "concubine," the problem is no primary wife being mentioned (e.g., Judges 19); and with "prostitute," the certainty of paternity seeming to contradict the very idea of prostitution (again, Judges 11 and 19).

My first response to these problems was, let's say, "anthropological." For just as Geertz became particularly suspicious in the face of a concept so central to Western culture, the individual subject, and

7. See my "trilogy," 1987, 1988a, 1988b. The following remarks on the status of young women are elaborated in 1988b, chapters 2 and 3, esp. page 48.

rightly set out to challenge its universal validity, so did I become suspicious before the conjunction of these three concepts indicating female status in a culture we have reason to assume was thoroughly patriarchal, but which were translated into modern patriarchal terms. In other words, these translations seemed to endorse too smoothly the notion that patriarchy is a monolithic, transhistorical social form. As a consequence, they suggest that patriarchy is unavoidable; they blame ancient Judaism for our being saddled with it; they obscure the ancients' otherness; they even obscure the "otherness within," that is, the pluralities of modern society in relation, precisely, to patriarchy. Specifically, modern translations of the ancient text are comparable to Western narratives about Eastern behavior, of which Geertz's account is an example. In both cases, our source of knowledge is a narrative, which by definition imperialistically filters the utterances of the other.

My second response, however, was narratological: checking immediate contexts, speakers, focalizers, and combinations of the problematic terms soon led me to reorganize the material. Instead of lumping together the three terms that at first had drawn my attention,⁸ a careful narratological analysis suggested a different structural context for "virgin," on the one hand, for "concubine" and "prostitute," on the other. Therefore, I aligned "virgin" with two other terms referring to young women—according to age/life phase, the series then became *na'arah*, *bethulah*, *'almah*—while "concubine" (*pilegesh*) and "prostitute" (*zonah*) became near synonyms, for which the projected features of "secondariness" and "harlotry" could be suspended.

These decisions were motivated by structural properties of the text. For example, the noun *bethulah*, traditionally and universally rendered as "virgin," is in Judges either hilariously overdetermined and then spoken by a male voice, or not explicitly connected to virginity at all and then spoken by a female voice. Compare, for example, Judges 21:12: "found . . . four hundred young girls, 'virgins', that had not known man by lying with him," where the general narrator speaks and the women do not focalize their own fate, to 11:37: "leave me alone two months, that I may depart and wander upon [towards] the mountains, and lament [until] my *bethulah*," where the "virgin" herself expresses her view of self.⁹ In no case in Judges is *bethulah*, "virginity," in any way connected with *zonah*, "prostitution," which suggests that I should examine them separately. In contrast, the one juxtaposition of *bethulah* and *pilegesh*, "concubine," in 19:24 ("Behold, my daughter

8. Needless to say, this focus was as much informed by my own modern feminist interests as by the texts' incongruities. In this respect the literary analyst has no choice but to endorse Geertz's pessimism.

9. My translation. In square brackets are elements that I argue are appropriate, in *Death and Dissymmetry* (1988b, chapter 2). I will not repeat the arguments here.

the 'virgin' and his 'concubine'" [quotation marks added]) is revealing. While appearing to corroborate the opposition between *bethulah* and *pilegesh*, it actually confirms the interpretation of *bethulah* as referring to a life phase—sexually ripe but not yet married girls—rather than to a state—bodily integrity. The speaker here is the father of one woman and host of the other. He transfers his focalization of the two women to the rapists ("behold"), filtering for them. The issue is protecting the male guest from gang-rape by offering a more attractive alternative. Now, if being a virgin in the conventional sense is a recommendation to the rapists, then being a concubine in the conventional sense is not. The host would have been well-advised to leave the women's status unspecified, unless, that is, the terms refer to age: two mature women, sexually useable, hence, rapeable, but still pretty "fresh."

Without going into detail about the two other concepts, let it suffice to point out that those, too, change their meaning according to the narrative structure. This time, however, it is not the shift in voice and focalization that decides, for these two terms are only used in narration and narratorial commentary. The issue is situated on the level of the fabula. Here, the usefulness of provisionally suspending both contemporary (i.e., ancient) and modern reality becomes apparent. Suspending moral views of sexual lasciviousness as well as assumptions about ancient Hebrew life often based on projection, while looking at the fabulas for which these terms are used, reveals a structurally recurrent combination: the terms referring to female status are linked up with the father's house, with inheritance, and with displacement (most literally, by travel). The key is the location of marital life. In all cases where these terms occur in Judges, the status of the female spouse is at stake, and that status is related to her not living or not staying in the house of her husband, but staying in or going back to the house of her father.

The terms, then, must not be related to a moralistically loaded concept like prostitution or to a class-bound, condescending concept like concubine—the conspicuous display of the father's wealth, in Judges 19, hardly suggests the view that this woman has been sold by her poor relatives to serve as a secondary wife. Instead, the terms must be related to the issue of marriage forms. Judges displays other symptoms of a violent transition from patrilocal (wrongly called matriarchal) marriage to virilocal marriage (e.g., Judges 15), and the hypothesis that this tension underlies the narratives as well as the uses of the problematic terms helps to explain the most obscure passages, particularly those of the Book's final section.

What is the interdisciplinary interaction occurring here? Let us assume that I learned from Geertz to suspend the content of a category, the subject, for he suggested that we take apparent incongruities as

evidence of otherness, not of stupidity. Thus, anthropology "came first." As a result, I refrained from wondering what Jephtah's daughter might have thought of her imminent death, as a modern realist psychology would entice one to do, and instead took her words as indicators of some sort of ritual behavior.¹⁰ (Incidentally, ritual is an anthropological favorite, and much of Turner's work is devoted to it, e.g., *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* [1969], on precisely the kind of rite of passage at stake here, but also chapter 2 of *The Forest of Symbols* [1967], the useful methodological considerations of which supplement the other book.) The meaning of the particular term could then be related to phase rather than state. But I could only do this because, in a second move, I had related the detached term to narrative structure. This additional move is one that Geertz does not make; instead, he narrates in the double voice I have pointed out.

In the second case, that is, of concubine and prostitution, the interaction between the two disciplines is different. Narratological analysis of the fabula "came first." The structural property—systematic connection between female status and marriage location, inheritance, and property—again corresponds to an anthropological favorite. But while it suggests an anthropological background, that background is a matter of established knowledge, not of method. The methodological issue lies in the suspension of reality that narratological structural analysis entails. That suspension, paradoxically, is necessary in order for the less ethnocentric view of reality—of otherness—to emerge. In other words, narratology and anthropology, here, are continually and polemically intertwined. By virtue of the refusal to establish direct relations between text and society, as do those who construct an anthropological view of ancient Hebrew society in their own image and likeness (e.g., McKenzie [1966]), Geertz's lesson could be endorsed in spite of the fact that anthropologists emphatically deal with reality.

This kind of interaction between narratology and anthropology becomes all the more relevant as it implicitly addresses the major challenge posed to narratology: that of, precisely, the social embedding of narrative or, in other words, its relationship to reality. As we have seen, privileging structural analysis over a reflection theory of language has in fact helped us to reach reality, and by a detour that made it more, rather than less, accessible. What is at stake here is the intertwining of three ideologies and their influence on real lives: the ancient male ideology, according to which women's value is derived from bodily integrity; the ancient female ideology, according to which shifts in life-

10. Seidenberg (1966) blames Jephtah's daughter for too eagerly accepting her sacrifice. This is precisely the sort of anachronistic ethnocentrism Geertz's paper argues against.

phases are crucially important moments; and the modern ideology, which projects sexual exclusivity as the major issue of an ancient narrative. Narratological analysis, in helping to disentangle these, helped to do justice to otherness. It also, albeit implicitly, has made it easy to see the nature of the otherness in sameness, that is, to what extent these modern translations are informed by an ideology that is male and, thus, represses female concerns.

Case 2: Science and the Narrativity of Rhetoric

This question of gender is also acutely relevant to my second case, for another domain where narratology can be helpful is the growing field of "literature and science."¹¹ Among the many questions raised in the cross-examination of two domains traditionally so distinct, philosopher of science Evelyn Fox Keller's work addresses those concerned with the language of science and the ideological aspects of that language. Starting from the premise that distinctions between realms or levels of discourse, such as the distinction between technical and ordinary idiom, are relative rather than binary, differential rather than polar, she wonders if discourse displays the symptoms of the limited human ability to be logical in language, or the limits of logic (a "language") itself. In other words, how does the language of science relate to the results of the inquiry it represents? Is discourse a disturbance or a part of science? Should our aim be minimizing the input of discourse or listening to it, learning from it?¹²

Keller's view that the language of science is profoundly rhetorical and that its rhetoric is motivated by specific, ideological views of gender led me to examine in greater detail the narrativity of rhetoric itself, and particularly this specific, gender-related rhetoric in scientific discourse. My inquiry was in turn based on the premise that narrative is a kind of language; hence, that it is, like language, different from actual narrative speech or discourse but not separated from it—that narrative is a system, but is not ahistorical, collective but not unchangeable, regulated by abstract rules but not uninformed by concrete uses and adaptations of those rules—in short, on the same premise that I had

11. The following remarks grew out of two recent events. In May 1988, the departments of Science Dynamics and of Comparative Literature of the University of Amsterdam organized a three-day workshop on "(Meta-)Theory and Practice in Literature and the Sciences" where the question of narrative was acutely present in the discussions. Later the same month, the Stichting Praemium Erasmianum organized a symposium on "Three Cultures," one day of which was entirely devoted to the question of the language of science. Keynote speaker Evelyn Fox Keller raised questions which called for narratological reflection.

12. I am freely interpreting here the enterprise of Keller's three papers in the book published by the Stichting Praemium Erasmianum (1989), as I see it.

endorsed in my work on Judges, the very premise which had earlier induced me to endorse a subject-oriented narratology.¹³

My hypothesis is that narrative entertains—displays and hides—a special relationship between people—individuals socially embedded and working collectively—and their language: a relation of representation. In other words, the scientist is present in his or her language to the extent that s/he narrativizes his or her discourse. The endeavor, then, is to place narrativity within rhetoric and thereby to explain the dynamics of this narrativized rhetoric's vital influence on the actual accomplishments of scientific theories, which Keller has in effect demonstrated.

Again, one small example will have to suffice to make my point clear. Keller's argument for the intrinsic relationship between the scientific impulse to know the secret of life (and of death: not only DNA but also the nuclear bomb are characters in the story of Keller's cases) and male attitudes toward gender is illustrated by, among others quoted, Richard Feynman's speaking about his own urge to discover the secret of life: "anything that is secret, I try to undo."¹⁴ In order to demonstrate the relevance of a subject-oriented narratology, I would emphasize the undecidability of the verb "to undo": Is this "to undo" meant only in the sense of "to untie/unknot," or does it also include the sense of "to defeat/overcome"? Is the object merely "secret" or "the thing that is secret" as well? This ambiguity establishes a metaphorical identification between the secret—the unknown, the unknowable—and the object of that knowledge: nature. Feynman's metaphor is all the more powerful as it passes unnoticed; it is one of those "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Thus nature, although itself without the will that makes a subject, tends to become the guilty enemy who deserves to be "undone." This shift generates the notion, as yet entirely metaphorical, that nature requires and deserves to be "undone," to be violated. The question then becomes, does this metaphorical notion remain metaphorical, and does that metaphorical status make it innocent of real violence? Teresa de Lauretis, basing her argument on

13. See my *Femmes imaginaires* (1986) for a justification of this conception of narrative. There I tried to refine the model put forward earlier (*Narratology* [1985]) by distinguishing three different aspects of subjectivity which cut across the three narrative agencies of narrator, focalizer, and actor: the subject as source (of meaning), as theme, and as agent (of any of the three narrative activities). This renewed model allowed me, for example, to maintain the focalizer position of Jephtah's daughter even though a different agent determines the subject-theme of the tale. It also allows me both to acknowledge the collective and "dead" status of the metaphors in the discourse of biology and to maintain the ideological agency at work therein.

14. For this and other examples, see Keller's first paper in the 1989 publication mentioned in note 12.

Eco's analysis (1979) of Peirce's account of reality's place in semiosis, would call this an instance of the connectedness between the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric.¹⁵

It is certainly no coincidence that Keller's story of the motivation for the scientific impulse, as displayed by this kind of metaphorical expression, is modelled upon a double generic intertext. The urge to discover has both a psychoanalytic antecedent in the child's impulse to discover its own origins and a literary one in the structure of the mystery novel, that narrative genre par excellence in which a secret to be revealed constitutes the fabula and a desire for the discovery and punishment of the guilty party motivates the reading. The former intertext accounts for the gender-specific nature of the urge, the latter for its hierarchical underpinning. Narrativity comes into play as soon as we realize two things: first, we know that a metaphor represents a view, and that this view has its source in a subject, the speaker/focalizer; second, we know that the very idea of secrecy presupposes an acting subject. To begin with the latter implication: according to the semantics of secrecy, this subject is guilty of excluding some members of a community from what some others apparently know; this implied subject produces a split in the focalization of the object. It is obvious that nature is no such subject; nor is "life." This is why Feynman's phrase had to be ambiguous. The secret to be undone must be known by somebody, or how else could it be undone?

This narrative aspect of the rhetoric cannot be detached from historical considerations; the rhetoric obviously has a history. In a previous phase of that history, the subject of secrecy was God, the creator of life. The closest signifier for that creative power is the subject of life, in the sense of procreation. Hence, the ambiguity of "secret" produces a metaphor that identifies woman with nature. Keller quotes an impressive number of phrases in which this metaphorical identification is indeed produced, repeated, taken for granted. That narrativity motivates, indeed necessitates, the gap opened up by the discarding of the Supreme Subject and to be filled by woman implicates narratology in this critical examination of scientific discourse.

15. See De Lauretis (1987: 31–50). Her example is the strategies used by social scientists to cover up the sexual violence taking place within the family. Eco's paper appeared in *The Role of the Reader* (1979), a book that came out literally during Synopsis 2. The debate in semiotics on the status of the referent is endlessly complex; more than just a reflection of the realism-nominalism debate in philosophy of science, as in philosophy of science, it affects the theory itself, but the status of the referent also affects the very content of the other, related terms of object, interpretant, and hence, of sign. Eco's primary source is Peirce, esp. the following items of the *Collected Papers*: 1.372 (1885); 1.422, 477 (1896); 2.310 (1902); 2.441 (1893); 2.275 (1902).

This brings us to the first narrative aspect of rhetoric, the focalization implied, which in turn has two sides to it: the systematicity of the metaphor (the primary symptom of focalization) and the semantics of the focalizer it entails. First, the symptomatic detail of Feynman's remark is only interesting to the extent that it does not stand alone. Keller's analysis demonstrates that the metaphor of secrecy for the scientific impulse is embedded in a whole series of metaphors, a metaphorical system of the kind analyzed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This series is constructed upon the principle of binary opposition, which it needs for its effectiveness. In one set of scientific papers that Keller analyzes, for instance, the following pairs of terms come up: secrecy/knowledge; women/men; fertility/virility; nature/culture; dark/light; life/death. In its apparent inevitability, "naturalness," or "logicality," this binary ordering of terms is itself ideological, precluding other modes of thinking and ordering. As the smallest underlying ideological unit, binarism itself is an ideogeme (Jameson 1981).¹⁶

It is immediately obvious that these pairs do not constitute logical opposites of a single type. The opposition holds between the entire series, and this seriality entails an implied opposition between the terms of each pair. The principle on which this systemic effect is based, that is, the mode of focalization, is metonymic association and conflation. The terms on each side of the opposition are considered to stand to each other in a relation of entailment, causality, or implication. Metonymy accounts for the series' self-evidence.

When we take the discursive samples that Keller analyzes at their word, the pairs can be ordered in the following way:

1. secret	knowledge
2. women	men
3. fertility	virility
4. nature	culture
5. dark	light
6. life	[death]

Such a set implies a hierarchy between the two series, where the first column is the primary one, a chain of associations generated by the ideogeme of implicit but continued opposition to the second column's terms. Typical of ideological systems is a specific "logic," hovering between rhetorical ambiguity and associative mechanisms. The

16. This has serious consequences for narratological theories based on binary opposition, such as Greimas's (1970, esp. 1976). Not that such theories are useless; they do help map ideological structures in narrative, but they must be stripped of the positivistic truth claims often attached to them. For example, the so-called semiotic square both displays ideological thinking and can help us see that; if alleged to account for fundamental structures of meaning, it partakes itself in what it should, rather, expose.

rhetorical system can be seen as functioning like a type of zigzagging sewing machine: moving from right to left, yet primarily preoccupied with the right seam, it stitches all the terms together in ways that are hard to disentangle.

One example is the association between "men" and "virility," which is simply tautological at first sight. But as it is produced by the association on the other, primary side of the opposition, of women and fertility, virility becomes, not the negative of fertility but a response, polemical or even aggressive, to it. Taking these associations literally makes us wonder why all of man's self-image, virility, is needed to counter what is after all just one aspect of femininity.¹⁷

The systematic character of the series (on which more shortly) produces the semantic image of the focalizer, whose contours become more obvious as we enter into the detail of the rhetoric. Of those aspects of metaphor traditionally distinguished,¹⁸ vehicle (the metaphoric expression) and tenor (the idea omitted but implied on the basis of assumed similarity) are most often discussed. But since similarity, besides being *assumed* (not real), is also *partial* (not total), motivation is the more crucial aspect—the one which implies narrativity.

The motivation for the metaphorical associations between the pairs listed above can briefly be sketched as follows. Between 1. and 2.: synecdoche or *pars pro toto*. Secrets, being the property of women, represent women as a detail or feature represents the whole. Between 2. and 3.: *totum pro parte*. Women possess, among other things, fertility, which is therefore taken to characterize them. Between 3. and 4.: *pars pro toto* again, but with a difference. Nature is, among other things, a locus of fertility. Between 4. and 5.: metonymy. What is dark about

17. This is one place where the Book of Judges analysis parallels this analysis of scientific discourse.

18. I use the terminology derived from Beardsley (1958) because it is more current than Black's (1962) focus and frame, which also might be confusing in combination with my narratological terminology. The literature on metaphor is rich and confusing. For a critique of the traditional view of metaphor, see Ricoeur (1977); and Mark Turner (1987), who rightly endorses Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) basic or systematic metaphor theory, and especially argues for the centrality of kinship metaphor; also Goodman (1968), who speaks of networks of metaphors. And Cooper (1986: 178), who provides arguments for the relevance of the ideological critique I am practicing here but without falling into the trap of a massive condemnation of metaphor as such, based on the illusion of "pure" language. Hrushovski (1984) usefully elaborates on Black's frame, and emphasizes the decisive influence of the frame of reference. Van Alphen (1987) rightly stresses the undecidability of these frames of reference, due to the reader-text interaction, and completes the circle which undermines the very distinction between literal and figurative language, and hence, by implication also that between dead and live metaphors. The untenability of these distinctions supports the relevance of Keller's work from a literary perspective.

fertility is precisely its secrecy; this is the logic of tautology. Between 5. and 6.: this association is far from simple. The connection between darkness and life is itself, as an association, the representation of the secret, *including* its unbearability. The association, only made plausible by its passing through that motivation, would otherwise be totally absurd. As a consequence, the negativity of darkness has to be both activated and suspended, according to its context, but always be kept available.

The rhetorical subject of motivation includes not only the speaker who comes up with the metaphor, for it also takes a context, a group identity, to make such metaphors understandable at all; hence the relevance of a narratological perspective, which accommodates, in the concept of focalization, both the individual subject of vision and that subject's embedding in the historically and socially specific situation of language exemplified by group talk. In the founding metaphor of secrecy, the tenor is "secrets of nature." The untenability of the opposition between figurative and literal (van Alphen 1987) is immediately obvious, however, for it already enforces a *certain kind* of metaphor: one which fills in the missing subject of withholding. The vehicle or substituted term is "women," and not all aspects of "women" but their sexual difference from "men." This factor is not "just" a vehicle either, since the aspect of women especially focused on in the metaphor is their difference from men, presented as opposition. The motivation, that is, the aspect which makes the metaphor plausible, is the logic of opposition.

The logic of opposition allows us to associate women with secrecy *because* the men who feel excluded by this (self-constructed) narrative of secrecy have privileged access to language and story-telling. This opposition, in turn, is plausible as the underlying motivation because it is already *in* language, as a dominant strategy of meaning production. Hence, this metaphor does not need an explicit linguistic modalizer; the ideologeme makes the word, that is, the linguistic marker, superfluous.¹⁹ Note that the self-evidence of opposition as a meaning-maker allows the semantic specifications of opposition itself to pass unnoticed in turn: opposition becomes polemical opposition, which leads to hierarchization so that the "other side" becomes both enemy and lower half.

Keller's analysis demonstrates an extended network of metaphors grounded in this rhetorical story of secrecy. The analysis above, of narrativity in the metaphor of secrecy, makes it easy to see the links

19. This is one case among many which demonstrates the need for the concept of gap, indispensable despite its theoretical problems. See Perry (1979) for a demonstration; Hamon (1984) for a critique. Also chapter 1 of my *Femmes imaginaires* (1986).

between the various terms. If the starting point is a secret, then the goal is to *unveil* or *penetrate* it (more of those words whose metaphorical nature is metonymically motivated), a motivation already shared by the group whose talk has gained the status of "normal" language. Note, for example, that the innocent word "discovery" means, precisely, "unveiling." In addition, a secret calls for a strategy, the method, and, if the secret is already tainted with darkness, then the method will be visually oriented: "seeing" becomes the aim. Accordingly, the next section of this paper will show that from "seeing" to "forcing entrance" is only one small step, as another of Keller's quotations (from Watson and Crick: "a calculated assault on the secret of life") suggests. The militaristic language ("assault") must of course be read in terms of war, but as the rest of the context shows, it is a war between the sexes.

It would take too long, here, to go into the pertinent and difficult question, raised by de Lauretis (1987) about the relation between representation—metaphor as an innocent figure of style—and justification, hence, the ongoing production of sexual violence; nor can I do more than simply refer to Elaine Scarry's (1985) pertinent analysis of the relation between language and pain in the practice of torture. These two studies strongly suggest that the very attempt to argue that discourse has no real bearing on reality partakes of the ideology of oppositional separation, for example, of mind and body, of science and political reality, or of realism and nominalism, an ideology which allows violence generally and torture specifically to take place, and then to be either justified or obliterated.

The advantage of a narratological perspective in this joint venture is to reach a clearer view of the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of the ideological language at stake. The insight that the semantic gap left by the exile of religion from science had to be filled by the "other" of science, and that the "self" of science thus further reinforces his gender-specificity, is certainly not new; Keller's work alone has already amply demonstrated this. But the narrative impulse inherent in such discourse further supports these insights, while providing an additional explanation to the psychoanalytically oriented one that Keller herself proposes. This additional explanation, linguistically oriented and, more specifically, based on the two most common linguistic systems, rhetoric and narrative, helps in turn to account for the paradox that these kinds of impulses, urges, and motivations are both utterly individual and utterly social.

Case 3: Visual Narratives and the Fist of Domination

A third domain where narratology has quite a bit to contribute is visual analysis. During the last few years, the steady current of studies on

the relations between texts and images has dramatically grown.²⁰ In addition to studies on the interaction between literary and visual art, there has also been increasing interest in the literary aspects of visual art itself, and narrativity has pride of place in that inquiry. Again, the relationship is two-sided and asymmetrical: the analysis cannot be limited to the application of narratological concepts to visual representations ("How do images tell?"); rather, the confrontation between the narratological apparatus and the visual image inevitably changes or even subverts the categories. Thus the notion of fabula can benefit from this interdisciplinary work, but only if one leaves behind the question of how an image tells a predetermined story, in favor of asking what story the visual representation produces, thereby thoroughly modifying its pre-textual "source."

The relevance of visual analysis for feminism no longer needs to be argued. The most pertinent publications for a feminist theory of culture over the past ten years have come from film studies, with narratology being a minor but relevant element. Once again, the major foundation of this interdisciplinary venture is psychoanalysis, with special emphasis on the issues of voyeurism and the oedipal structure which, according to some film theorists, is inherent in narrative.²¹ Thus a complicity between narrativity, gender politics, and the visual regime is suggested, whose range extends beyond cinema into the plastic arts, on the one hand, and television, on the other, and which needs in my view a more specifically narratological analysis.²²

Of the many aspects of visual art with connections to narratological concerns, it is again focalization that has seemed particularly relevant

20. Wendy Steiner and W. J. T. Mitchell are famous examples of literary scholars examining visual art; Michael Fried is an art historian preoccupied with literature; all three are interested in the relations between the two arts. Journals like *Representations* and *October* are significant contributions to this field. See also the special issue of *Style* on "Visual Poetics" (1988). See also Ernst van Alphen's contribution to this issue, where the question of narrativity is not only applied to a body of visual art but to the problem of visual representation as such. Norman Bryson (1981, 1983, 1984) has demonstrated spectacularly how enriching a literary perspective is for visual analysis per se.

21. See De Lauretis (1983, 1987). Seminal publications on voyeurism in film are Mulvey's classic (1975); Kuhn (1985); and Kaplan (1983). Narratological considerations in film theory are strongly present in Silverman (1983, 1988), and implicit in Penley (1988). For a feminist attempt to define narrative structure outside of the oedipal model, see Smelik (1989).

22. I have devoted some work to this aspect of the feminist debate by analyzing the relation between spectatorship and internal focalization in drawings and paintings by Rembrandt. By another accident of life, I was led to explore visual art for an occasion that, again, occurred in Israel, a 1985 conference organized at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Devoted to "Discourse in Psychoanalysis, Literature and the Arts," the conference was organized by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Sanford Budick.

Figure 1. Rembrandt, *Susannah Surprised by the Elders*, 1645. Gemäldengalerie, Berlin-Dahlem.

for a feminist perspective. Precisely because the narratological concept of focalization does not overlap with the concept of spectatorship in visual analysis, the relationship between the two contributes to insight into the mechanisms of cultural manipulation. And, again, the smallest of details can help to demonstrate my point.

In *Susannah Surprised by the Elders*, allegedly painted by Rembrandt in 1645, now in the Gemäldengalerie in Berlin-Dahlem (Figure 1), the conventional representation of the semi-nude exposed to the voyeurism of both characters and viewers is complicated by a few changes in the traditional iconographic scheme.²³ These changes, of which the representation of hands is the most striking, affect the position of the internal focalizer and, as I will argue later, the possible viewing attitudes opened up to the external spectator. How exactly the image-internal, formalist-narratological analysis can provide arguments for ideological critique is my concern here.²⁴

23. See Mary Garrard's (1982) seminal article "Artemisia and Susanna" in which she mentions this painting briefly in connection with the voyeuristic tradition.

24. This section develops an argument in my book *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (New York and Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Garrard (1982) has argued that many representations of the story of Susannah give the victim of the assault the pose of the Medici Venus, thereby suggesting erotic appeal and availability. This tradition thereby contributes to the "naturalization" of rape, suggesting that the victim herself provokes the rape by displaying her attractions. The Venus pose is iconographically marked by the figure's left hand, extended forward so as to display her breast and the elegance of her body. If this scheme is fixed by the pictorial tradition in which Rembrandt also participated, then it is striking that the woman's hand in this painting is slightly displaced toward the back. As a result, her breast is covered rather than displayed, while her hand is actively involved in fabula agency: it suggests resistance against the assailant. However slight this suggestion of movement may be, it does contribute to the narrativization of the work.

Now, it has been noted that hands in Rembrandt often accompany acts of seeing.²⁵ This is less clearly the case for the Susannah figure here than for the two men, spectators by definition, whose acts of seeing actually lead to the use of their hands. There are three emphatically significant hands: the hand of the Elder in the background, holding firmly onto his seat of power, the left hand of the other Elder, already acting out the transition from seeing to touching, and this man's right hand.²⁶ The latter hand, to which I wish to draw attention, is frankly bizarre. So, I wish to contend, is the man's gaze.

The represented ways of looking, or diegetic focalization, constitute the "line of sight" offered for identification to the external spectator. In this work, the Elder in the background, the representative of social power, is looking at the other Elder, who is looking at Susannah, who is looking at the spectator. I will not go into the question of whether Susannah is appealing to or enticing the spectator; since the representation is strongly narrativized, that question, precisely, cannot be answered without a prior narratological analysis. My focus is on the Elder who is acting out the threat of rape; it is he who presents a figu-

25. This is Svetlana Alpers's view in *Rembrandt's Enterprise* (1988). There, Alpers specifies this view by relating it to role-playing, which she considers typical of Rembrandt's works. Hands, then, dramatize and thus foreground seeing.

26. The transition from seeing to touching is, of course, the hottest issue in the debate on pornography. See Kappeler's *The Pornography of Representation* (1985). The simplistic assumption of an immediate link makes the more sophisticated feminist analysts of culture uneasy, as it tends to make feminism complicit with prudish fundamentalism. Andrea Dworkin's recent *Intercourse* (1987) is a disquieting example. Dworkin in fact comes dangerously close to the biological argument for inequality, thus supporting the most reactionary sexist arguments. On the other hand, an equally simplistic denial of such a link is untenable and damaging as well. My analysis of the Susannah case can be seen as an attempt to avoid either of these extreme positions.

ration of the connection between looking and touching, so the issue of his way of looking is acutely relevant.

True, at first sight the situation looks pretty bad: Susannah, caught between the men and the water, has no place to go. The fabula thus constructed repeats the textual version in the apocryphal section of the Book of Daniel: Susannah is threatened with rape but, we know, resists successfully; and reassured by the well-known, uplifting *dénouement*, the spectator can enjoy the rape scene. The attractiveness and vulnerability of the young female might be appealing to sadistic voyeurism. While such a viewing attitude is indeed possible, I am interested in how, precisely, the work simultaneously counters such a response; how it draws attention away from simple eroticism by complicating, indeed, critiquing it—how, in other words, it does not represent a single, monolithic ideological position, but instead promotes a self-conscious reflection *about* such a position.

For the details continue to bother me, especially the look and the fist of the represented rapist. It is strange that the man does not follow through on the voyeurism; he does not look at Susannah's body. And although his one hand is undressing her, his other hand does nothing to her; it is closer to his own face than to her body. The diegetic status of his behavior changes the fabula, or rather, precludes the traditional fabula's construction. If we try to trace the object of his gaze, we must conclude that he is staring over Susannah's head, or, at most, he is looking at the top of it. To be more precise, he is peering at the pearls braided into Susannah's quite sophisticated hairdo. Why?

This question raises another about the nature of visual narratives. Traditionally, we interpret this kind of image in light of the prior text, its "source," of which the image is supposed to be an illustration. A visual narrative, however, partakes of the semiotic means of narrativization on the basis of its own medium's specific sign system. The Susannah painting, for example, not only represents a fabula constructed in a play of focalization, but also a set of configurations on a surface. The man's fist is thus located on one side of an empty space, delineated on the other side by the top of Susannah's head. This empty space is "filled" by paint, applied in the "rough" mode which, in Rembrandt, contrasts with the technique of "fine" painting. Now, the pearls braided into Susannah's hair, also adorned by a scarf, are so to speak the climax of the "fine" mode in this painting. And this finery is what the man is gazing at. His gaze, narrativizing this division of the canvas into significant areas of "rough" and "fine," connects it to the fabula in which the man figures.

What about the fist, in this connection? That this fist is meaningful is arguable not only by its very deviance; the fist is also present in a few studies (one of which is reproduced as Figure 2) whose rele-

vance for this particular painting is obvious, although denied by Benesch (1973).²⁷ In a sketch dated about 1637 (Benesch #155; private collection, Berlin), the combination of strongly concentrated gaze and clenched fist is already present. The gaze is not, however, malign, nor does the fist have a raised thumb, as in the painting. The face does, however, express a keen interest, which we tend to relate to the gaze (whose object, of course, we cannot see). Compared to this sketch, Figure 2, a drawing also dated 1637 (Benesch #157; Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria), has the same combination of gaze and fist but a much closer resemblance to the painting. In addition to the recognizable turban, which makes the man in the painting look so utterly ridiculous—another, more obvious aspect of the critical undermining of the scene's ideology—and the other hand, indicated as grasping, the gaze is now clearly malicious and directed a bit lower.

The keen concentration and excitement which the fist seems to suggest in Benesch #155 is replaced in Figure 2, as I see it, by a more technical concentration. This man, although malicious, also suggests an expertise in looking. As the thumb becomes part of his technological apparatus of looking, the act of looking gains a technical dimension. But if this technology of looking comes with an increase of malice, then the meaning of the combination is that the two themes are closely related. It is in this direction, I contend, that we must look for the critical dimension of the painting; the gaze-and-fist, there, can be read as a *mise en abyme* of the visual narrative.

In order to see the "fine" quality of the work on Susannah's hairdo, the shine on the pearls, the braid, one needs a magnifying glass. We might even go as far as projecting into the empty fist such an additional, technological tool for looking: empty yet tensely clenched, the fist invites such a projection to the extent that the meaning of the fist in Benesch #155 is lost, without being replaced by any "logical," that is, narrativistic, alternative meaning. The gaze, the closed and tense mouth, all suggest that this man is *not only* a criminal rapist but *also* an expert in visuality. The sign of the gaze-and-fist, then, is both the token of a criminal connection between looking and touching and a token of pictorial representation, thus raising questions about the complicity of the pictorial tradition and the misuse of the female body.

Such an interpretation of the gaze-and-fist must not be taken to imply an accusation that Rembrandt not only partakes of the voyeuristic tradition but, by implicating his art, promotes it. On the contrary, drawing attention to the work of visual representation from *within* the

27. Benesch's catalogue of Rembrandt's drawings mentions that a suggested connection with the Berlin painting cannot be maintained for stylistic reasons leading to an earlier date (1973: 45). For Figure 2 the connection is not denied.

Figure 2. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, 1606-1669. Dutch. *Old Man in a Turban* (Study for an Elder). Pen and gall-nut ink on paper, 17.3 X 13.5 cm. Felton Bequest 1936. Reproduced by permission of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

representation of its abuse confronts the spectator with the troubling interrelation between visual culture and gender politics in the West. Thus, a new narrative is produced, one in which self-reflection plays its unsettling part, cutting through the realist illusion that promotes enjoyment of the represented body without further ado. The real spectator is free, of course, to ignore this self-reflective detail, this *mise en abyme* of visual representation as embedded in power. It is possible to ignore the fist, to displace the look, to further undress Susannah. A simplistic view of visibility, according to which the spectator only takes in what is visually there, can work only if one denies the deviant details as well as the narrativization of the painting. In other words, a narratological perspective helps to complicate the visual model as well as the eternalizing view of women as pure victims. If this woman is the victim in this painting, it is because the visual culture into which this work is inserted is impregnated with gender politics; but by addressing that issue, the work itself undermines the "naturalness" of that situation.

Conclusion

I have tried to make several general points about narratology today with the help of this patchwork of my research over the past ten years. My first point concerns the range of narratology. These three brief examples of narratology at work within other fields, although of course too fragmentary to offer full analyses, have, I hope, suggested that if one does not confine narratology to "narrative texts," the discipline's range of relevance is extended without losing the specificity of its perspective. While narrative texts may profit from an in-depth narratological analysis, other dimensions of such texts also need clarification, and objects which do not traditionally fall under the rubric of narrative may benefit even more strongly from such an approach.

My second point concerns ideology. The connections I have tried to establish between a narratological perspective and ideological issues, moreover, counter the view that narratology's formalism entails its futility in the face of social concerns. Rather than opposing structural analysis, then, feminism can use such an approach to counter simplistic arguments based on an untenable binary opposition; one need not be "for" or "against" erotic art, but one does need, first, to understand it, and second, to differentiate among such works, so as to avoid a new censorship while still being combative where necessary.

My third point, less developed but implicitly argued, concerns history. I disagree with those who claim that narratology, being a systematic theory, is by definition ahistorical; that is another of those unwarranted dichotomies. On the contrary, to the extent that a careful analysis of narrative structure counters interpretations based on prejudice, convention, or ideology, and the more precise such an analysis is, the better it helps to position the object within history. Thus, in the Book of Judges example, the standard view of the status of women in that work is arguably anachronistic; the narratological analysis, by contrast, helped to make other possible meanings both visible and more plausible in light of ancient history. The gendered quality of the rhetoric of science, on the other hand, made apparent through narratological analysis of the quotations, became understandable in light of the gap left by prior historical developments. And, finally, Rembrandt's painting was not detached from its iconographic background, that is, from the long history of the Susannah tradition, but, on the contrary, received its critical dimension in relation to that background.

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