Narrativity and its modes as culture-transcending analytical categories

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Queries

Q1. Au: 'poets do not write sonnets any more' – on this side of the Atlantic at least, this statement is simply not true. There has been something of turn to form and a lot of poets (e.g. the present poet laureate) use sonnet form (with or without the classical rhyme scheme). The same applies – though perhaps to a lesser degree – to villanelles, sestinas, etc.

Q2. Au: '(i.e. Abbott 2002: 16)' – do you mean 'that is, Abbot'? Or should this perhaps be 'e.g.'?

Q3. Au: Tokyo changed to Edo (see Kornicki's article). Is this OK?

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5   **Abstract:**   This article investigates the value of the concept of narrativity and
its modes for the investigation of the literary forms of non-Western cultures
such as Japan's. Following Ben-Amos (1969), a distinction is made between
'ethnic' concepts of genre, which correspond to the types of text recognized by
the members of a culture, and universally applicable 'analytical' concepts which
10   form the building blocks of ethnic categories. 'Narrative' is shown to be one of
these analytical concepts. This article situates narrative within the life of the mind
through a Venn diagram, defines it in terms of several features whose presence or
absence determine various degrees of narrativity, and outlines a descriptive theory
that recognizes three types of 'modes of narrativity': semantic, discursive and
15   pragmatic. The contribution of the study of the modes of narrativity to Japanese
literature lies in the possibility of combining them in endless ways, creating ever
new culture-specific literary forms.

Keywords: narrative modes, narrativity, ethnic categories, analytical cate-
gories, *kanazōshi*, *sōshi*

20   To capture the specificity of cultural and literary traditions such as those of Japan,
we need standards of comparison. If literary forms were patterned according to
Saussure's (1959: 114–20) conception of language as a system where there are
only differences without positive terms (a conception that makes individual lan-
guages incommensurable and precludes the possibility of a universal grammar),
25   the genres or discourse types of a culture would be entirely constituted by their
opposition to each other, and there would be no solid ground for comparing them
across cultures. To take an imaginary example: if in culture A the literary form
'agu' is defined by its opposition to 'aku', and in culture B 'hsiaga' contrasts with
'tsuga' and 'dinga', we will need to get out of the literary systems of these two
30   cultures and use a set cross-culturally applicable features to situate the 'agu' of
culture A with respect to the 'hsiaga' of culture B.

The ethnographer Dan Ben-Amos (1969) has made a most useful distinction between two types of generic concepts: the so-called 'ethnic' genres, which correspond to the categories yielded by native taxonomies, and the 'analytical categories' made up by specialists for the purposes of description and classifica- 35 tion. As an ethnographer he believes that the ultimate purpose of genre theory is the description of ethnic categories, and he warns against the import and crude application of Western literary concepts to study the genres of other cultures. But, even if one accepts the view that the literary system of a culture should be studied in its own terms, there is no need to give up the possibility of describing 40 this system by means of cross-culturally applicable analytical concepts. The gap between an ethnic and an analytical approach to literary forms can be bridged by viewing analytical categories as the primitive building blocks, or basic features, out of which culture-specific literary forms are made.

It is not easy to reconstitute the list of 'ethnic genres' of a culture. One pos- 45 sible approach is to ask people what kind of texts they like to read (or whatever formulation is appropriate for an oral culture). Another way to collect genres is to look at the organization of a bookstore into distinct departments, such as 'mystery', 'science fiction', 'fantasy', 'horror' and 'romance', or at the labels used by the bookselling industry. (This method seems particularly widespread among 50 scholars of Edo literature.) In some cases, categories designed by literary critics may impose themselves and gain cultural recognition within a learned public. But whatever method is used to establish a native taxonomy, the result will be an unstructured list and not a neat formal model in which a global field is divided into a certain number of mutually exclusive and complementary categories, such 55 as the tripartite division of classical literature into epic, lyric and dramatic. Only analytical categories can be arranged into symmetrical spatial configurations such as wheels, grids, pyramids or trees (Hernadi 1981; Tripp 1981). Several factors make it virtually impossible to establish a comprehensive and definitive list of genres for a given culture: (1) genres can be freely divided into subcategories, 60 and there is no way to tell when we have reached bottom; (2) cultures are made of many groups that consume and are aware of different types of texts; (3) new genres are continually born, and old genres fall out of favor. Even if one adopts a synchronic perspective, generic taxonomies cannot be limited to the categories that are alive at a certain time, since people read texts from many different pe- 65 riods. For instance, poets do not write sonnets any more, but sonnets are still read and recognized, and they are consequently still part of the active generic competence of educated readers. The project of cataloging the genres of a culture is further complicated by the fact that literary forms, or more broadly types of text, evolve over time while retaining the same label, so that it is very difficult to 70 tell whether a given text should be considered a historical variant of an existing genre or the founding member of a new genre. In the study of genre, a purely diachronic approach is as inadequate as a purely synchronic one, and an approach

Q1

that combines both perspectives has remained as elusive in literature as it is in linguistics.

Once we establish a list of culturally recognized genres, we need analytical categories to describe, distinguish and compare its individual items. But analytical categories are not themselves primitive concepts; they can be composed of a variety of features and they can be realized more or less completely, depending on the number of features that are themselves implemented. The study of genre thus encompasses three levels:

1. *Genres proper*, the categories of native taxonomy. To qualify as genre a text type must have 'currency', or popular recognition within a social group. Examples of genres are 'myth', 'legend', 'fairy tale', 'novel', 'short story', 'epic poetry', 'lyric poetry' or, on a lower level, 'romance novel', 'detective story' and 'science fiction' in Western cultures. In an ideal taxonomy, generic categories would be mutually exclusive, and individual texts would fit snugly into one, and only one, genre. This is more likely to happen with the heavily stereotyped, formula-driven texts of popular and older literatures than with the texts of the high literature of modern Western cultures. At least since Romanticism, literary value has been associated with a text's ability to break with tradition, hybridize existing genres or transgress established conventions. This is why 'genre fiction' is a rather deprecatory label for texts that can be easily classified into one of the genres of popular literature.

2. *Analytical categories* designed by theorists. These differ from the genres listed above in that they appear in combination with one another, rather than in pure form, and the same category may be part of the defining conditions of several genres. Examples of analytical categories are 'narrative', 'fiction', 'prose', 'rhyme', 'meter', 'metaphor', 'pun', 'irony' or 'being about a certain subject matter'. The novel, a type 1 category, can be defined through the type 2 categories of narrative prose fiction of a certain length. Most analytical categories are cross-culturally applicable, but some cultures of high literacy have developed tailor-made theoretical notions for the study of their own genres. For instance, Greek drama has been traditionally defined in terms of *katharsis* (Aristotle's *Poetics*) and Sanskrit drama in terms of *rasa* (Tripp 1981). Both of these concepts describe the intended effect of the genre on the audience.

3. *The individual features that define analytical categories*: for instance, involving characters, setting and events as the distinctive features of narrative; being made of language and lacking formal constraints as the features of prose; referring to an imaginary world and relying on an act of presence as the features of fiction. Since these properties are the constitutive elements of analytical categories, they are crucially dependent on the particular definition of the category. To take one example: if one conceives narrativity as the play of suspense, curiosity and surprise, as does Meir Sternberg (1992: 529), it is these concepts, rather

than the presence of characters, setting and events, which constitute the basic   115
features of narrative texts.

In this article I propose to take a close look at narrative, arguably one of the
two most important of analytical categories (fiction is the other), in the hope
of building a bridge between Western literary theory and the study of Japanese
literary forms. My designation of 'narrative' as an analytical rather than a culturally   120
recognized category may surprise the reader. Do children not ask their parents at
bedtime for 'stories', do we not often preface a narrative performance with the
phrase 'I have a great story to tell you' and does the layman's repertory of genres
not include 'fairy tales' and 'detective stories'? These examples demonstrate the
importance of narrativity as a constituent of genre, but it is significant that none   125
of them includes the word 'narrative'. The child who asks for a story wants a
specific type of narrative, most likely a fantastic tale; the speaker who announces
his intent to tell a story has in mind what socio-linguists call a 'narrative of
personal experience'; while 'fairy tale' and 'detective story' refer to particular
narrative genres defined by a specific subject matter. The general term 'narrative'   130
hardly ever occurs in spontaneous conversation, and nobody would walk into a
bookstore asking for 'a narrative'. It is only in the past thirty years that narrative
has emerged as an autonomous topic of investigation, thanks in great part to
Tzvetan Todorov's coinage of the term 'narratology'. This is not to say that
interest in narrative was non-existent before the official baptism of narratology in   135
a 1966 issue of the journal *Communications*, but earlier work focused on specific
genres, such as the novel and the folk tale. All this suggests that 'narrative', as
a general category whose manifestations encompass, as Barthes noted, 'myth,
legend, fairy tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting,
stained glass window, cinema, comics, news items, conversation' (1977: 79), is   140
much more a creation of scholarly discourse than a category widely recognized
as culturally significant by the members of English-speaking communities. The
foreign translations of *narrative* – French *récit* and *histoire*, the Italian *narrativa*,
the German *Erzählung* and the Japanese *monogatari* – may or may not be common
words in their respective language, but once they are used by narratologists, their   145
meaning is narrowed down into a technical sense, and they become analytical
categories.

Narratology has developed mainly as the study of the various forms of literary
fiction, and for a long time its field of inquiry was regarded as unproblematic. But,
in recent years, the concept of narrative has invaded virtually every discipline in   150
the humanities, including anthropology, medicine, advertising and law. Another
expansion saw the concept of narrative being applied to media supported by
signs other than language, such as painting, film, computer games and even non-
representational art forms such as music and architecture. Meanwhile, the term
'narrative' has become very popular in English to designate phenomena that have   155
little to do with storytelling: one speaks for instance of the 'grand narratives' of

culture and history, of 'narratives of identity', of 'narratives of race, class and gender', meaning by that not a corpus of stories told about or by a certain group, but rather, collective beliefs, explanations, ideologies, modes of self-presentation
160   and even stereotypes and prejudices. These new developments, known as the 'narrative turn' in the humanities (Kreiswirth 2005), make it imperative to rethink the concept of narrative, and to work out a definition, so as to protect narratology from degenerating into an unfocused 'theory of everything'. In this paper, I would like to present an overview of the tasks that face narratology, as it tries to cope
165   with the expansion of its field of inquiry. I see these tasks as threefold: situating, defining and describing narrative.

Situating narrative

The first task consists of situating narrative *vis-à-vis* other concepts. I will do this through the kind of diagram that is used in set theory, known as a Venn diagram
170   (Figure 1). Until the so-called narrative turn, the main interest of narratology was narrative as a form of art; more recently, under the influence of cognitive approaches, the emphasis seems to have shifted to narrative as a way of thinking. But, if all narratives can be said to represent a mode of thinking, only some of them are created as a form of art. As for 'narrative as an analysis of reality',
175   this formula describes in a broad sense all narratives, since we base them on our experience of being-in-the-world, but it applies much less literally to artistic narratives, which tend to create imaginary worlds, than to narratives produced for the sake of information.

    If we start from the idea of a 'mode of thinking', we can draw a large circle
180   that encompasses all of human mental activity. This activity can either remain
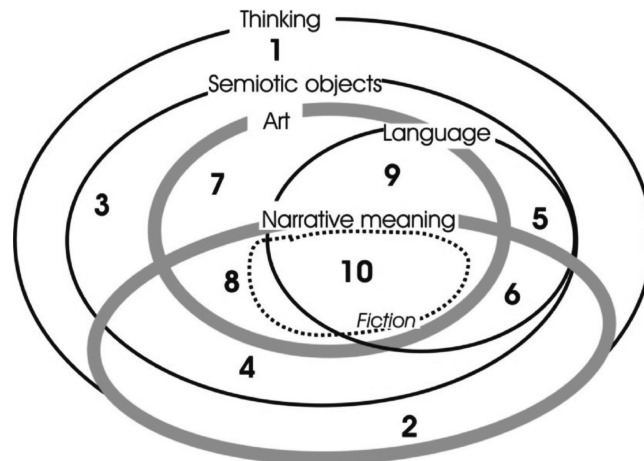

Figure 1 Situating narrative.

internalized or become externalized as a semiotic artifact such as a text, an image or a linguistic utterance. Within the outer circle I consequently draw another circle that represents the types of mental activity that produce semiotic artifacts. A third concentric circle represents the semiotic artifacts that are produced or received as artistic objects. This neat concentric pattern is broken up by two exocentric 185 circles, which intersect some of the others. One of these circles is language, the other narrative. The circle for narrative intersects all the other circles, and we end up with ten different zones. Let me go over them one by one.

Zone 1 contains modes of thinking that are not narrative. Some cognitive scientists have contested the existence of such a zone. For scholars like Mark 190 Turner or Roger Schank (see Schank and Abelson 1995), all mental life is an activity of telling oneself stories, and all memories are stored in narrative form. I happen to disagree with this position. If I can judge by my own experience, some memories are static images rather than stories that develop in time. We can, for instance, remember a place in great detail but not remember why we were there. 195 I also believe that some types of thinking, such as mathematical thinking, consist of manipulating abstract symbols. Narrative, by contrast, deals exclusively with concrete entities, which are named characters, events and settings.

The narrative complement of zone 1 is zone 2. It contains stories that never leave our head, the stories that we tell ourselves in the privacy of our mind. These 200 narratives may be personal memories, interpretations of our life experience, imaginary stories that children invent to entertain themselves at bedtime or even ideas for novels that we want to write. Some psychologists, for example, Jerome Bruner (2003), think that our sense of identity comes from privately organizing our life experience as a story, in other words, from constantly working on our internal au- 205 tobiography. Others have contested this idea. For the philosopher Galen Strawson (2004), some people are private novelists and others take life as it comes, experiencing it as a series of isolated episodes, without shaping them as a story with a global arc that provides thematic unity and coherence. But the idea that at least some purely mental representations take narrative form is now widely accepted 210 among cognitive scientists.

Zone 3 contains semiotic objects that do not tell stories, do not use language and are not produced as art. In this category we can place traffic signs, computer programs (assuming that computer code is not a human language), equations and passport photos. The narrative correlate of zone 3 is zone 4. I find it the 215 hardest zone to fill, because it is very hard to convey stories without language. My examples will therefore come from visual media that include a language channel: computer games that enact a story, documentary films, the news on TV and some advertisements.

In zone 5, language-based non-narrative and non-artistic texts, we find shop- 220 ping lists, physics papers and works of philosophy. The narrative correlate is zone 6, which contains a wide variety of examples: in the oral domain, stories of personal experience told during conversation, gossip, testimonies during trials,

interactions between doctors and patients; and in the written domain, history,
225   biographies and some autobiographies.

Zone 7 contains art forms that are not language-based and do not tell stories.
Most of painting, architecture, and music fall into this category. But painting
occasionally manages to tell stories without language, and there is a whole school
of musicologists who study the narrativity of music. Other nonverbal art forms
230   that occasionally achieve some degree of narrativity are mime and ballet. All of
these mildly narrative forms of art belong to zone 8. This is also where we will
classify fiction film, if we accept in zone 8 media with multiple semiotic channels.

In zone 9 we find non-narrative forms of literature and folklore. These forms
comprise some lyric poems (but not all), concrete poetry, aphorisms, proverbs,
235   descriptions and verbal portraits. Some experimental novels, which no longer tell
definite stories, or consist almost exclusively of stream of consciousness, could
also be placed in this category. The narrative complement of zone 9, labeled 10,
is the rich domain of novels, short stories, drama, epic poetry, fairy tales, legends
and jokes. The broken circle delimits fictional forms of narrative. It includes the
240   vast majority of literary narratives, as well as some films and all drama. Theorists
have debated the applicability of the concept of fiction to non-narrative art forms,
but I find most of these attempts unconvincing and lacking in cognitive value. It is
important to know whether a text or a movie is fictional or non-fictional, because
we will interpret it differently in each case, but the question does not matter for
245   painting, architecture and music.

The reader may wonder why two circles on the diagram – those for art and
narrative – are represented by fuzzier lines than the others. This is because the
sets that they delimit are themselves fuzzy sets, allowing different degrees of
membership. An object can be more or less artistic, and a text can be more or less
250   narrative, or, to use the technical term, present various degrees of narrativity. This
fuzziness ought to be respected by the second of the tasks that face narratology:
defining narrative.

Defining narrative

The term narrative, as it is used in narratology, is slightly ambiguous. Sometimes
255   it stands for a type of meaning, sometimes it stands for a type of text. A for-
mula popular with narratologists (i.e. Abbott 2002: 16) describes narrative as a   **Q2**
combination of story and discourse:

$$\text{Story} + \text{discourse} = \text{narrative}$$

In this formula, 'narrative' clearly stands for a type of text. On my diagram, by
260   contrast, 'narrative' stands for a type of meaning and for a mode of thinking.
This is why the circle for 'narrative' goes beyond the circle for 'semiotic objects':
if narrative is a mental construct, this construct can exist independently of any

semiotic externalization. But the two positions are not as incompatible as it may seem. The equation proposed by classical narratology:

$$\text{Story} + \text{discourse} = \text{narrative} \tag{265}$$

can be reformulated as:

$$\text{Narrative meaning} + \text{semiotic encoding} = \text{narrative text}$$

The juxtaposition of these two formulae yields the following equivalences (or definitions): 'story' = 'narrative meaning', 'discourse' = 'semiotic encoding', 'narrative' = 'narrative text'. Defining narrative, then, is a matter of describing 270 the type of meaning that a semiotic artifact must suggest to the mind in order to be accepted as a narrative text.

It is easy to capture the central theme, the subject matter of narrative in one short formula: as Monika Fludernik (1996) has stressed, narrative is about human experience. One could also say that it is about conflicts between the individual 275 and the world or about conflicts among several individuals – this is to say, about interpersonal relations. But these formulae are too broad, because most art can be said to be about human experience, conflicts and relations. In narrative, however, the representation of these ideas is developed much more extensively and much more concretely than in lyric poetry, in painting or in music. 280

Here I would like to propose a more formal definition, made of several conditions (listed as 1–8 below) that support a fuzzy-set conception of narrative. In a fuzzy-set model, there are prototypical and marginal members, and definition becomes an open series of concentric circles which spell increasingly narrow conditions. In the definition I will propose here, each new condition presupposes the 285 preceding ones. As we move down the list (adapted from Ryan 2007: 29–30), the texts that satisfy these conditions present a higher and higher degree of narrativity, and they will be more and more widely recognized as stories. My definition organizes the conditions of narrativity into four dimensions (A–D):

A. *Spatial dimension* 290
    1. *Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents*. In other words, it must have characters and a setting. This condition says that a narrative cannot be a representation of abstract entities and of entire classes of concrete objects. It must be about Jack and Jill, not about 'the human race', 'reason', 'atoms' or 'the brain'. 295
B. *Temporal dimension*
    2. *This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations*. This means that narrative cannot be a static description of a world or a society, as we find, for instance, in ethnography.
    3. *The transformations must be caused by non-repetitive physical events*. This elim- 300 inates descriptions of your daily routine, like getting up, eating breakfast, going to work and sleeping. Such descriptions are often part of a story,

but they serve as a background, and they cannot be a focus of narrative interest. Stories are about exceptional happenings, not about repetitive events.

C. *Mental dimension*

4. *Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world*. (The intelligent agents can be anthropomorphic animals or even objects.) This means that narrative cannot be exclusively about natural forces and cosmic events. The description of an earthquake qualifies as narrative only if it involves human beings who are emotionally affected by the events.

5. *Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents*. This condition means that a narrative cannot be entirely about the mental life of characters; it must contain physical action. The actions of characters, like all actions in life, are meant to solve problems. If there are problems, it means that there must be some sort of conflict in the narrative world: desires that are not fulfilled, incompatible goals, violated obligations, unkept promises, etc.

D. *Formal and pragmatic dimension*

6. *The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure*. A story cannot be a list of causally unconnected events, for example, everything that I did between two and four o'clock on a certain day. This eliminates chronicles and diaries. The condition that specifies a need for closure means that, when a character takes actions to solve a problem, the narrative cannot stop before an outcome is reached.

7. *The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the story world*. This means that some events must objectively happen in the story world. A story cannot be made entirely of advice, hypotheses, counterfactual statements and commands. A recipe, which describes how raw ingredients are transformed into a dish thanks to the actions of a cook, cannot be a narrative, because it consists of commands, not of statements of fact.

8. *The story must communicate something meaningful to the audience*. In other words, a narrative must have a point, for example, explaining something, bringing pleasure or transmitting valuable information. This is the most controversial of the conditions, because it straddles the borderline between definition and poetics, and because it needs to be complemented by a full theory of the different ways in which narrative can achieve significance. In contrast to the other conditions, it is highly dependent on the context and on the particular interests and tastes of the user: a sequence of events like 'Mary was poor, then Mary won the lottery, then Mary was rich' would not make the grade as the content of a fictional story, but it becomes very tellable if it is presented as true fact and concerns somebody you know personally.

When I call narrative a fuzzy set, I mean that when people are asked 'is this a narrative', or 'does this text tell a story', they will give different weight to the various conditions. For instance, there are people who consider a diary to be a narrative. For these people, condition 6 is not essential. Other regard recipes as a kind of story: this means that for them 7 is optional. I once asked in a presentation   350
if the following text about the Big Bang is a narrative:

> The universe started out as cold and essentially infinite in spatial extent. Then an instability kicked in, driving every point in the universe to rush rapidly away from every other. This caused space to become increasingly curved and resulted in a dramatic increase of temperature and energy density. After some time, a   355
> millimeter-sized three-dimensional region within this vast expanse created a superhot and dense patch. The expansion of this patch can account for the whole of the universe with which we are now familiar.
>
> (Greene 2003: 362)

Most people said no, but a few said yes and one person said no and then changed   360
his mind. The difference, of course, lies in whether or not people believe that a narrative needs anthropomorphic characters. But if people differ in opinion as to where to draw the line between narrative and non-narrative texts, it seems to me that they basically agree about what requirements are relevant to narrativity and about their importance relative to each other. If we ask 'is *Finnegans Wake* more   365
narrative than *Little Red Riding Hood*?', we will get much broader agreement than if we ask 'is *Finnegans Wake* a narrative?'

A definition of narrative provides a tool that enables narratologists to measure and compare the degree of narrativity of different genres and texts. But this does not mean that readers need to ask themselves 'is it a well-formed story' when   370
they process a text. The people who consider the text about the Big Bang to be a narrative understand it just as well as the people who do not regard it as a story. And the people who answered 'no' to my question are not more right or more wrong than the people who answered 'yes'. There may be many different ways to draw the boundaries of narrative, but these differences of opinion do not   375
carry significant cognitive consequences, because when we read a text, we do not ask 'is it or isn't it a narrative', nor even 'to what extent does this text fulfill the conditions of narrativity', unless of course we are narratologists. Asking people to decide whether or not a text is a story is one of those artificial situations in which results are produced by the act of investigation.   380

This leads to an apparent paradox: how can we regard 'story' as a mental construct without claiming that the understanding of narrative texts depends on conscious judgments of narrativity? The paradox can be resolved by regarding the pattern constitutive of story as the product of basic mental operations that we perform not only when we read a novel or watch a film, but also when we   385
interpret events and human behavior in everyday life. These operations focus our mind on the individual features of narrative. When we read about, watch a

visual representation of or directly witness something happening, we construe a story in our mind through mental processes such as: distilling the text (or our perception) into discrete events and individuated participants; trying to order the events in chronological order; construing causal relations between them; inferring the motivations of the agents; and asking how the events affect their participants. In narrative texts, all these operations converge to produce a coherent whole, while in everyday life we may perform them independently of each other. But, as long as we ask of a text, or of events that we observe in life, 'who did what, for what reasons, and what was the result', and as long as we are able to answer these questions, we read texts and we read life as stories, whether or not we are aware of it.

Describing narrative

The description of narrative represents the main bulk of narratology. It has developed in two main areas: story and discourse. Early work in narratology (Bremond 1973; Greimas 1983 [1966]; Propp 1968; Todorov 1969) focused on the type of meaning that constitutes story. Another aspect of the description of story is the analysis of its possible configurations, a project that was initiated by the Russian formalists. In earlier work, I called the various structural types of story 'modes of narrativity' (Ryan 1992). Here they will be called 'semantic modes of narrativity', to distinguish them from other types of modes which will be described below. The following categories illustrate what I mean by this term:

- *Simple narrativity*: the text presents only one instance of the basic configuration of story.
- *Multiple narrativity*: the text is a collection of autonomous simple stories about different characters existing in different worlds. (Linguistic comparison: a sentence consisting of multiple juxtaposed clauses.)
- *Complex narrativity*: The characters of the main plot engage in multiple subplots, so that story patterns appear on both the macro- and micro-level. (Linguistic comparison: a sentence with a main clause and multiple subordinate clauses.)
- *Framed narrativity*: the text consists of a story that contains another, autonomous story. (Linguistic comparison: a sentence that quotes another sentence.)
- *Proliferating narrativity*: the text does not have a global plot; it consists of multiple little stories involving a group of characters.
- *Diluted narrativity*: the plot is interspersed with extensive non-narrative elements, such as descriptions, philosophical considerations and digressions.
- *Braided narrativity*: the text follows the separate, but occasionally intersecting destiny lines of several characters.

- *Embryonic narrativity*: some elements of the definition are missing. For instance, the text sets the stage for a narrative action, by creating a world with characters and a setting, but fails to develop the initial situation into a plot. It is left to the reader to imagine a temporal development. Alternatively, the text presents events occupying various points in time, but fails to suggest causal relations between them.

The study of story has remained a neglected area, compared to the enormous amount of work that has been devoted, under the influence of Gerard Genette (1980), to the description of discourse, that is, to the various ways to present a story. I call these phenomena the discursive modes of narrativity, or more simply, the *modes of narration*. Here are some examples inspired by Genette:

- *Grammatical person of narrator*: first-, second-, third-person narrative; 'we' narrative.
- *Ontological status of narrator*: individuated vs. anonymous narrator.
- *Truth-value of narratorial discourse*: reliable, unreliable.
- *Diegetic status of narrator*: homodiegetic vs. heterodiegetic (does the narrator tell his own story or the story of other characters?); extra-diegetic vs. intra-diegetic (does the narrator tell the main story or is he or she a character within the diegesis who tells an embedded story?).
- *Type of focalization* (i.e. 'who sees'): internal (narrator adopts a character's point of view), external (narrator looks at characters 'from the outside'); variable.
- *Speed of narration*: summary vs. scene.
- *Temporal ordering*: chronological narration, analepsis (flash back), prolepsis (flash forward).
- *Representation of thought and language*: direct, indirect, free indirect quotation.

The description of story and discourse could be compared to what is known in linguistics as semantics and syntax. But a complete grammar of language – this is to say, a complete semiotic theory – comprises a third component, known as pragmatics. This component describes how language is used in concrete contexts, and its best-known area of development is speech act theory. Even though we no longer regard linguistics as a 'pilot discipline' in the humanities, as did the founders of structuralism, I believe that it is imperative for narratology to include a pragmatic component. In both linguistics and narratology, pragmatics is an ill-defined territory, and it is better defined by what it is not than by what it is: for linguistics, everything that is not covered by syntax and semantics, in narratology, everything that does not fit easily into story or discourse. The pragmatic component of narratology covers such question as: what properties makes a story appealing to an audience (i.e. its tellability); the strategies through which narrators control the attention of the audience (suspense, curiosity, surprise); the creation of emotional effects (empathy for characters, horror, laughter, the

Aristotelian *katharsis*, the Sanskrit *rasa*); and how generally valid lessons can be derived from stories about particular existents (didacticism, exemplarity).

470   The pragmatic component of description produces its own repertory of modes of narrativity. Rather than starting with an explanation of what I mean with pragmatic modes, I will introduce them through an example. As early as Plato two ways of presenting stories were recognized: the diegetic mode, which consists of telling about events, and the mimetic mode, which consists of enacting

475   them, of showing them directly. The diegetic mode is typical of language-based narrative, the mimetic mode of visual forms such as drama and film. Narratology has long recognized the importance of the distinction between diegetic and mimetic presentation, but it does not really know where to place these categories within its theoretical system. Through the notion of pragmatic modes

480   of narrativity, I propose to create a special folder for the concepts of mimetic and diegetic narration within the directory of 'narrative theory'. This folder contains phenomena that cannot be categorized under 'story' or under 'discourse', and its purpose is to recognize other ways of presenting and experiencing stories than the standard narrative situation of 'telling somebody that something

485   happened'.

   But it would be wasteful to create a folder for just two files, so to justify its existence we need to look for other phenomena to put in it. Here I propose to illustrate the notion of pragmatic modes of narrativity through a list of dichotomies. In most of these dichotomies, the first item can be regarded as the unmarked case,

490   because the texts that present this feature will be much more widely recognized as narrative than the texts that illustrate the right-hand category. In fact, if we collect all the left-side categories, we will come up with the prototypical narrative situation, while the right-side categories represent marginal forms.

- *External/Internal:* is the story encoded in material signs or does it reside in the
495   mind exclusively? An example of purely internal narrative is the constructs of memory, or what we hold in our head prior to announcing: 'I have a weird story to tell you. This morning, as I was waiting for the bus', etc. etc.
- *Diegetic/Mimetic*: is the story told to the audience or is it enacted and directly shown?
500 - *Non-fictional/Fictional*: is the story offered for belief or for make-believe? Do we read/watch/listen to it for the sake of information or for the play of the imagination?
- *Autotelic/Utilitarian*: is the story presented for its own sake or is it subordinated to another goal, such as making a point in a speech or a sermon, or explaining
505   an idea through an example?
- *Autonomous/Illustrative*: does the text tell a story that is new to the user, and is it able to represent its logic, or does it depend on the user's familiarity with the story to be understood as narrative? (The illustrative mode applies mainly to images and music.)

- *Receptive/Participatory*: is the role of the user limited to receiving an account 510
  of events, or does the user play an active role? (Examples of participatory
  narrative are street theater and computer games.)
- *Representative/Simulative*: does the text represent one specific story or is it
  a generative mechanism that produces a different story every time it is
  performed? (Simulative applies mostly to computer systems such as story- 515
  generating algorithms and computer games.)
- *Determinate/Indeterminate*: does the text trace a narrative arc that connects a
  fixed beginning to a fixed end or does it let the user imagine a story taken from
  an open field of possibilities? (The indeterminate mode is typical of pictorial
  and of musical narrativity.)   520
- *Complete/Incomplete*: does the text tell the whole story or is it just one install-
  ment in an ongoing story (for instance, part of a serial or news about ongoing
  events such as a war)?
- *Literal/Metaphorical*: this distinction depends on how many of the points of the
  definition a text fulfills. When we speak of 'grand narratives' or of 'narratives 525
  of race, class and gender', we certainly mean narrative in a metaphorical way.
  Another example of a metaphorical use is speaking of narrativity in instrumen-
  tal music or in architecture, two forms of art which lack the representational
  dimension necessary to narrative.

To these dichotomies I would like to add one trichotomy: 530

- *Retrospective/Simultaneous/Retrospective*: does the act of narration follow the
  events (the standard case), is it simultaneous, as in sports broadcasts, or does
  it precede the events, as in promises and prophecies?

Conclusion

Narrative is a mental construct defined by relatively strict conditions, as I hope 535
to have shown, but it is also a Protean phenomenon that manifests itself under
myriads of appearances. This is why I have presented my three types of mode in
the section devoted to the description of narrative, rather than in the part devoted
to definition. Modes are analytical categories that relate to cultural genres not
as defining conditions, or as what John Searle would call 'constitutive rules', but 540
as typical features corresponding to Searle's notion of 'regulative rules': conven-
tional properties that capture the regularities of independently existing behaviors.
Among my three types of mode, the semantic modes of narrativity have the closest
association with genres. For instance, one may say that 'simple narrativity' is typ-
ical of fairy tales, 'complex narrativity' of novels, 'braided narrativity' of TV soap 545
opera and 'multiple narrativity' of collections of stories such as *The Decameron*
or *The Canterbury Tales*. Most of the discursive modes do not give birth to cul-
tural genres because they name techniques that often combine on the micro-level,

rather than describing the text as a whole. Generic labels, by contrast, are macro-level categories. But certain narrative techniques, for logical reasons, become constitutive of genre. First-person narration, for instance, is a necessary feature of diaries, autobiography and narratives of personal experience, and third-person narration offers a guarantee of objectivity in history, chronicles and biographies. On the other hand, it is only habit that makes classical epic poetry begin *in medias res*; this particular type of chronological reordering is therefore a regulative, rather than a constitutive rule of epic poetry. As for the pragmatic modes of narrativity, their natural affinities tie them to media rather than to genres: 'mimetic' appears in drama and film; 'diegetic' presupposes language; illustrative and indeterminate are typical of paintings and music; participatory and simulative are properties of digital narratives; simultaneous occurs mainly in radio and TV broadcasts.

I have based my lists of narrative modes on my familiarity with Western literary forms, but the value of the concept of mode for other literary tradition lies in the open character of the lists, and in the combinatorial versatility of their elements. As Laura Moretti shows in her contribution to the present issue, the description of some texts representing the category known as *kanazōshi* necessitates the addition of 'interrupted narrative' to the modes of narrativity. Moreover, by deconstructing *kanazōshi* into a variety of normally incompatible narrative modes that combine freely within the covers of a book, Moretti shows that this widely used label lacks a solid macro-level identity. It is only in its individual parts that *kanazōshi* can be captured by culture-free narratological concepts. The resistance of *kanazōshi* to being reduced to a necessary core of global properties may be interpreted in two ways: either the notion of genre is valid for Japanese literature, but *kanazōshi* does not qualify as genre, or the case of *kanazōshi* casts doubt on the cross-cultural validity of the notion of genre. The dilemma transposes the opposition between analytical and ethnic categories from the level of individual genre labels to the meta-level of the notion of genre itself: proponents of the second interpretation will say that Japanese culture does not divide literature into genres but into something else, of which *kanazōshi* is an example. My preference goes to the first interpretation: I regard genre as an analytical category whose individual members are characterized by global properties, and, according to this view, *kanazōshi*, as described by Moretti, is not really a genre because it lacks a positive identity. But the label exists; what does it denote? My suspicion is that *kanazōshi* is an analytical category designed by literary historians, and that it corresponds not to an individual type of text, but rather to a type of collection that accepts heterogeneity, as do, in Western cultures, anthologies, 'readers' or even the daily compilations of news, comics, advertisements, editorials, interviews and personality profiles that we find in newspapers.

This view of genre as analytical does not preclude regarding individual genre labels as culturally defined categories. Let us take the example of *sōshi*, a term used by Japanese booksellers of the seventeenth century. According to Peter Kornicki in this special issue, *sōshi* embraces both fiction and non-fiction, in contrast to most

Western genres, which are either fictional or non-fictional as a whole. But *sōshi* seems to have a stronger generic identity than *kanazōshi*, because it possesses a global feature: the label describes texts of a popular nature. The modes of fiction and non-fiction also combine, without blending, within individual texts, as Kornicki's reading of *Musashi abumi* demonstrates: the book freely crosses from the documentary (non-fiction) mode, with a reasonably believable account of the 1657 fire of Edo, into the mode of fiction, with a burlesque, obviously invented tale of the narrator's trip to hell.

Q3

As these examples suggest, narrative modes can be combined in endless fashions, creating ever new and highly culture-specific literary forms, some corresponding to established genres, others founding new genres and still others unique in their culture. I am therefore confident that studying the modes of narrativity in a variety of literary traditions, both oral and literate, will not only enrich our understanding of particular texts, but will also make a significant contribution to narratology by revealing previously undescribed avatars of story. Looking at Japanese literature through the prism of narrative and of its modes should give researchers the necessary tools to capture the specificity of its native categories.

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