The Applicability of Narrative Theory and the Free Indirect Discourse in Latin

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The paper departs from the assumption that literary theories are always designed to understand a particular body or type of literature, and are later applied to other literary phenomena. It is also the case with narratology, despite its claim of universality. Applicability has its limits, and the paper focuses on cases where widely accepted concepts of narratology cannot be applied to special literary phenomena or only with very little heuristic value. The first example is Todorov's theory that a change of equilibrium is necessary for a narrative, which is tested through some short stories about peasants buying industrial products. In such stories the equilibrium does not change, or the change is marginal and insignificant. The second example is Genette's analysis of narrative temporality, which can be challenged when contrasted with several narrative traditions. The most detailed example is free indirect discourse (FID) in classical literature. Although the structure of standardized Greek and Latin seemingly excludes the possibility of FID, scholars have invested much energy in finding examples of it in Latin epic poetry. The paper adds one more example, longer than any discovered before, from the Johannis by the Late Latin poet Corippus, which shows deviations from classical grammar but appears very similar to modern FID.

Keywords: narratology, change of equilibrium, temporality, related speech, Corippus.

Narratology traditionally claims to be universal, a feature perhaps inherited from structuralism, but universality can hardly mean that every concept of narrative theory is usefully applicable in the analyses of every kind of narrative. The different literary traditions obviously have enough in common to be called literature, and therefore their analysis can make use of general literary theories such as narratology; however, their unique features require some special attention. Sometimes such a focus brings negative results, namely that some concepts are not applicable to some materials. I first explain what I generally mean by the application of theory, then focus on some examples in which theoretical concepts are non-applicable or only applicable with very little interpretative gain. The quest for the Free Indirect Discourse in classical epic poetry (especially in Latin) will be shown to be an especially telling example.

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The Applicability of Theory

Once upon a time, theory ruled in the realm of the humanities, but the impression that that period was over already dates back several decades. In 1988 Robert B. Heilman only foretold the threatening coming of "post-theoreticism […] or post-theory,"[1] but by the time Daniel T. O'Hara reviewed Thomas Docherty's *After Theory: Postmodernism/Postmarxism* in 1993, he used the word "Post-Theory" in his own title, indicating that as a denomination for the current era it hardly needed further explanation (Docherty, 1990; O'Hara, 1993). Maybe Terry Eagleton's 2004 book *After Theory* is the most well-known overview of the situation (Eagleton, 2004). The wish to get rid of theory, or to go after theory, as Marshall Brown put it, can be detected as early as the 1960s (Brown, 2019). But even in the present age after theory (or in the age of post-theory), theory is

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[1] "…we can anticipate that post-structuralism will be followed by post-deconstructionism, and the whole works by post-theoreticism (or post-theory, probably, alas, too plain and simple)" (Heilman, 1988, p. 712).

still very much with us. As Derek Attridge and Jane Elliott formulated it in the title of their co-edited volume, there is Theory after "Theory" (Elliott & Attridge, 2011). Maybe the literary theory is not literary theory in the strictest sense anymore, but something that regulates how we deal with literature (or other media of art). The current generation of scholars inherited from the age of theory the requirement that one should make clearly visible the theoretical presuppositions on the basis of which one approaches a given literary work. I would like to emphasize the word presupposition, which implies that every discourse in literary criticism contains theory. Nobody can say anything about any piece of literature (or any oeuvre or genre or movement or period) without thinking something about what literature is, what it does, how it works, and what functions both literature and literary criticism have. And if somebody starts speaking about literature without offering a survey of their basic presuppositions, it does not mean they do not have any. Rather it means they will not discuss them or will not allow them to be discussed, suggesting they regard them (maybe unconsciously) as eternally and undeniably true. In the age of theory, literary scholars had to be conscious of the need to explain theoretical presuppositions, since to claim to know the unshakable truth became morally and epistemologically unacceptable, and those who would not discuss their own theories appeared either unequipped with theoretical consciousness (thus unqualified for academic work) or just trying to cheat. And I can add: if you do not explain your position, your critics will, and they might be less benevolent. One critical remark I read frequently as editor of an academic journal of literary criticism during the peer review process is that theory is not adequately explained. An academic book in the field of literary criticism still usually offers a detailed theoretical introduction before the chapters analyzing various topics, usually various literary works. This gives the impression that first we have a theory and then we apply it to the empirical material.

But theory has never been "immaterially" created. Every theory has been developed for, or through, or on a material, or at least in the cultural environment mostly determined by a kind of literary corpus that influenced its basic ideas and ideals. According to Earl Miner, western literary theory is so interested in concepts of representation (*mimesis*) because when Aristotle developed the basic framework for the western mindset of literary theory, the most influential genre was tragedy, which, as a scenic performance, clearly represents something else (Miner, 1990). Russian formalism is said to have had basic links to the Russian avant-garde poetry of the 1920s. This explains a lot about it, but not why generations of scholars worldwide could make use of those ideas when reading completely different kinds of literature. They likely have to modify the theory to make it

useful elsewhere. I think we can see something similar to the hermeneutic circle here, which I would like to call the "circle of theory": a theory was created to understand one kind of literary phenomenon, and when it is applied to another, it must change. We understand a theory, and through this understanding we start to understand literature, but this experience modifies our understanding of the theory. The theory cannot work fruitfully if it is not changed to fit in with the new material to be analyzed. So the theory we took from elsewhere cannot be exactly the same as the one we actually use. Postcolonial theory has been criticized because it was elaborated for India, despite its claim of being general. But actually, one can regard it as a case of applicability. A theory developed to understand the situation in India can be used to understand other phenomena too, but for that it must be modified. When the topic is the previous French colonies in West-Africa, a very similar field of research is called francophone studies. Francophone studies can be called an application of postcolonial theory, or at least we should speak about the striking similarities of both, and the possibilities of unifying them.[2] But postcolonial theory, or at least its version presented in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) describes in large part those end-of-twentieth-century western countries that have significant immigrant minorities. The studies in the end of the nineteenth-century Central-European cultures, mostly co-existing in the Habsburg Empire, are called *Monarchiestudien* (studies in the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy), and usually make good use of postcolonial theory. Though the differences in time and place are huge, we can apply postcolonial theory to the peak period of colonialism, and to places in Europe that never used to be described as colonies, an area where the various national groups were not immigrants but developed their national-cultural identities in *situ*. And it still seems to work.[3] However, it is questionable if the theory is still legitimately called postcolonial when we apply it to material which is very far from post-colonialism. The theory must change for that.

This method of the humanities, the application of theory that does not leave the theory itself unchanged, seems similar to two notions elaborated by Thomas Kuhn to describe science, namely paradigm shift and normal science. When a new paradigm appears, scientists start to work with it, to find new and new data

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[2] In 2008 *Neohelicon* published a cluster of eleven papers on the relationship of postcolonial studies and *études francophones* (second issue, pp. 5–160). See especially the introduction of the guest-editors (Riesz & Porra, 2008).

[3] In a broader context than that of the *Monarchiestudien,* Alexander Kiossev described the Eastern- and East-Central-European cultures as "self-colonizing" (Kiossev, 1995), in which heuristic metaphor the debt to postcolonial studies is also clearly visible.

in order to make the paradigm more detailed and elaborated, trying it in ever new areas and circumstances, i.e., applying it again and again. It makes the theory more and more sophisticated and evolved. Yet ultimately, too many data are accumulated that do not fit, thus creating the need for a new paradigm shift. Theory may play a similar role in literary scholarship: we can apply a theory to other and other literary material, thus making the theory evolve, until it cannot; then we need a new theory. The basic difference is, of course, that humanities scholars will never deny the validity and innovative force of older theories. They do not think a previously fashionable theory was wrong, only that they do not find its application attractive at the current situation. And sometimes it also happens that a theory is not really applicable. Systemic approaches to literature, two different kinds of which were initiated by Itamar Even-Zohar and Siegfried J. Schmidt, are very informative, but one cannot work with them when it comes to individual pieces of literature. Those schools gradually started doing something that is not literary scholarship anymore, but rather sociology (Kálmán, 2013, pp. 269–271).

The Application of Narratology: Change of Equilibrium

Narratology offers a good example for the application process, both due to its structuralist origin and its claim for universality. My first example will be Tzvetan Todorov's definition of minimal narrative or rather the minimal plot which can be narrated, namely that there must be some kind of change, a passage from one state of equilibrium to another. There is necessarily an initial "stable situation," which "is disturbed by some power or force" and due to this change, after a series of incidents, a new state of equilibrium, similar to but not identical with the original one, will develop (Todorov, 1977, p. 111). An initial static situation and an intention to change this very situation Todorov calls "obligatory propositions" of any narrative (Todorov, 1977, p. 117). To come to this unlimitedly general conclusion, he analyzed the stories of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. That corpus of one hundred stories offers rich material for literary research, but nothing guarantees that the results can be applied to every narrative. Let me refer to a much smaller body of short stories, which is much less coherent: six short stories written by three Hungarian writers in a time span of 30 years. I made a group of these short stories because they stage similar situations with quite similar techniques of narration. These short stories include: "A Peasant Buys a Scythe" by Kálmán Mikszáth, 1885 (see Mikszáth, 1966); "Buying a Pen Knife", "Furcoat Fair", "Negotiation" and "Förgeteg at the Bookbinder's" by István Tömörkény (the four short stories were

published together as parts of the collection, see Tömörkény, 1893, pp. 29–82); and "Buying Medick" by Zsigmond Móricz, 1915 (see Móricz, 1953).

In all these short stories a peasant wants to buy something, mostly some industrial product. This also means that two persons of different social status meet each other: a peasant and a merchant or craftsman. In the last example by Móricz, the peasant wants to buy agricultural product called medick, but in this case the seller is a count, an aristocratic owner of a latifundium. The social contrast is thus the biggest here. Can one interpret a story of shopping on the basis of Todorov's theory of change? Quite probably. At the beginning there is a state of equilibrium, for example a peasant has some money and no scythe, although he needs one, while the merchant has several scythes, but would like to have money instead. Their encounter initiates action, and after the change a new state of equilibrium emerges, in which the peasant has a scythe, while the merchant has money. However, this description of a plot is so trivial, and attributes so little to the understanding of the represented world that it is unhelpful to rely on it. It is similar to a purely described *scenario* as cognitive poetics uses the term; we all know how shopping works and to really tell a story about shopping, something should happen in addition to or challenging the shopping scenario. Moreover, in one of the short stories listed above, the peasant finally decides not to buy anything, and in another his final lines can be interpreted this way too. If after a long negotiation the buyer withdraws, we cannot say that the original situation has changed at all.

I would not, however, deny either the literary merit of these texts or their status as narratives. They are indeed narratives that stage conflicts, but they are not really interested in the result of the conflicts. Why is there a conflict if one of the protagonists wants to buy and the other one wants to sell? Not only because the buyer wants to spend less money than the seller wants to receive, but also because the communication spontaneously evolves into rivalry, in which both fight to save face. This is the most evident in Tömörkény's "Fur Coat Fair," in which a peasant goes to buy a fur coat (actually an especially Hungarian garment, called a *suba*) accompanied by his whole family. In front of them he has to prove that he is an expert in fur coats (so as not be tricked into buying a low quality product) and also that he can afford a good one (therefore in these short stories peasants usually take the money out of their pockets to show it to the merchants). The negotiation has its own ritual. First they only select a single possible item, demonstrating that all others on sale are bad, discussing their merits and shortcomings in detail. Only then do they ask about the price. Then they start negotiating, mostly in vain. The merchants lower their prices only symbolically or not at all. Why is it so? Either because the

sellers of industrial products work with a different economic paradigm, in which negotiation is not a thing, or because after the introductory criticism about the quality of their products they cannot lower the price without losing face. It is also possible that during the selection of the desired piece and criticism of the others, the merchant learns the buyer's needs and possibilities, and sets the price accordingly. These stories are about communication strategies, or about the nature of human communication, but they also contrast the peasants' style, or generally the world inhabited by them, with the world of urban dwellers. They can show these in operation, but for this demonstration they do not need any change in the end: whether the product is ultimately bought or not is immaterial.

Genette's Concepts of Temporality

To take another example, the categories Gérard Genette elaborated in his *Narrative Discourse (Discours du récit)* are widely used—but are they really generally applicable? In Genette's approach, the analysis of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and the theoretical investigation are inseparable. I suspect a background idea that the analysis of the narrative patterns of the *Recherche* will result in a complete narratology because Proust created such a complex narrative that it shows everything a narrative can do. This Proustian focus becomes clearly visible in the analysis of "Summary" in Genette's chapter "Duration," which starts with this sentence: "Now if we examine from this point of view the narrative pacing of the *Recherche*, what we are first compelled to note is the almost total absence of summary" (Genette, 1980, p. 95). And after discussing a passage from Cervantes (famously quoted by Borges, 1966, pp. 51–52) and one from Balzac, he states: "Nothing of the kind in Proust" (Genette, 1980, p. 97). The infrequency of summary in Proust might be the reason why summary is analyzed so briefly. Although theoretical reasoning and analysis of the *Recherche* are inseparable, the latter has primacy. Categories of narrative theory seem to have been elaborated to understand the peculiarities of Proust's masterpiece. When Genette discusses one subcategory of "Pause," he simply puts at the end of the chapter: "the second canonical type of movement—the descriptive pause—does not exist in Proust" (Genette, 1980, p. 105). What is important for every possible narrative strategy is if and how they appear in the *Recherche*. The cases of summary and descriptive pause prove that Proust does not show everything a narrative can do. While the former is only "almost" totally absent, the latter lacks a single example. However, Genette also finds it characteristic of Proust that he restrains from doing things that narratives usually do, as if he testing the possibilities of narrating without seemingly necessary features. But Genette usually does not analyze those features in much detail.

When I use Genette's categories, I read another author the same way Genette read Proust. But Proust is not like any other author. One reason he is different may be that many other authors do not write in French. The constant attention paid to the tenses of verbs, for example, cannot be useful when one is trying to understand narratives of a literary culture whose language has few tenses. In the chapter on "Frequency" Genette can simply look at the verb to know if an event is said to have happened once or repeatedly. This question can require much more sophisticated methods in many languages of the world that do not have different verb forms for repeated and singular past actions.

Yet maybe it is not only the problem of theories traveling through different cultures, but also that of applicability to different literary oeuvres or pieces. In an 1928 short story by the Hungarian author Gyula Krúdy, a glass, after being carefully described, is broken, but some pages later a character drinks "maybe from the same glass" (Krúdy, 1965, pp. 302, 304). Genette wrote in detail about omnitemporality (Genette, 1980, p. 78), but that was, for him, something retrospective, created by remembrance, which did not challenge the "normal" working of linear time as we learn it from the Newtonian paradigm. Such a concept is implied by notions like prolepsis and analepsis, i.e., jumps in time forwards and backwards, respectively. But with this concept of time we are unable to read meaningfully a text in which you can drink from a glass that has already been broken. It is a different kind of world with a different kind of time or identity, and likely needs another kind of conceptual approach.[4]

Greek vase painting loved to represent stories omnitemporally, or rather synoptically, showing various elements as if they were or could be present simultaneously. Ulysses' men have human bodies and animal heads when the hero meets Circe. The magician has turned them into animals, but they are not represented as animals at that moment, because the painter also indicates that they used to be men. Although there is no moment in the story when they are half human, half animal creatures, they can be depicted like that to show their past humanity and present animality simultaneously. This can be called synoptical narrative painting. Judit Horváth argues that a similar technique

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[4] Gábor Bezeczky demonstrated that Genette's category of pseudo-iterative narration prevents an analysis that takes Krúdy's concept of cyclic time seriously. According to Genette, when a narrative represents an event in much detail but insists that it happens repeatedly, the mood is not actually iterative, only pseudo-iterative. The richness of detail proves that the narrative mood is singular, while its seemingly iterative features imply the suggestion that "something similar happened many times." According to Bezeczky, however, Krúdy, in his many short stories, represented worlds in which everything is literally repeated, and the repetitive nature of his fictional realities is one of the fundamental characteristics of his worldview (Bezeczky, 1999, pp. 180–190).

can also be detected in ancient Greek poetic narratives, where apparent anomalies or even absurdities in the order of events can be the consequence of a different (non-Genettean) approach to time. In this non-linear time of the myth, every event happens simultaneously, therefore they can be mentioned in any random order. For example, the chorus tells Antigone in Sophocles' tragedy: "Even thus endured Danae in her beauty to change the light of day for brass-bound walls; and in that chamber, secret as the grave, she was held close prisoner; yet was she of a proud lineage, O my daughter, and charged with the keeping of the seed of Zeus, that fell in the golden rain" (Horváth, 2015, pp. 944–950). According to every other narrative of Danae, her father sealed her in a brass chamber to prevent her from being pregnant, but Zeus found a way to her in the form of golden rain. After that her father put her and her son in a wooden chest and dropped it in the sea. Did Sophocles know another version in which the already pregnant Danae is imprisoned in the brass cell? Of course not, since for that the audience would have needed a much more detailed explanation of the alternative story. He simply tells a narrative in which the order of the events is not so important as the relations between the simultaneously seen elements: although she was daughter of a king, and a woman fertilized by the father of the gods, she was enclosed in a brass prison. Was she pregnant at that time exactly? Obviously not, but she is always the woman who bore a child to Zeus, and therefore she can be seen and spoken of like that at anytime (Horváth, 2015, *on Antigone*, see especially pp. 15–16). If we call this narrative strategy an anachrony or a prolepsis, we do not do justice to it, since these notions presuppose a linear, Newtonian time to measure with, which simply does not work here.

When I say that some kinds of narrative cannot be described with Genette's categories, have I proven that the theory cannot be applied to them? Probably not. I merely started applying the theory to those texts, but for that the theory must be modified. The exclusive use of linear, Newtonian time should be abandoned, and we should consider the possibility of other kinds of time, in which a broken glass does not stay broken for ever after, or all the events of a story can happen not after each other, but always. All the events always happen. This does not sound like Genette, but I still try to apply his categories to another kind of narrative, and when I face difficulties, I have to challenge one of his basic presuppositions. This results in the extension or the elaboration of the theory, which basically changes it. Let us, however, consider an area where a basic notion of narratology really does not seem to work.

Free Indirect Discourse and Classics

Twentieth century narratology usually describes three ways in which the speeches of characters can be reported in a narrative.[5] Direct discourse is a literal report of a character's speech in quotation marks.[6] In the case of indirect discourse, readers cannot distinctly know what a character has literally said; nonetheless there is a limited set of variations, and they can take it for granted that one of those variations was in fact uttered. The third possibility is called free indirect discourse; the narrator usually does not signal that they are quoting a speech in any way, nevertheless the style or words referring to the situation of the speaker (e.g., adverbs or pronouns like *here or this*) make it evident. In this case, however, the reader has no choice but to reconstruct at least approximately what was said or thought by the character in question. The discourse of the narrator inseparably merges with that of the character. In the literature of European modernity, free indirect discourse seemed the most important phenomenon.[7] Its importance is a consequence of the role it played in modernist novels.

Structuralist narratology may have found free indirect discourse interesting because, from the viewpoint of a structuralist concept of language, the significance (or the very existence) of a "message" the sender of which is not or only approximately identifiable is hard to explain.[8] Be that as it may, it seems likely that this narrative technique had its eminent position in the literature of modernism because it appeared to be relevant from the viewpoint of a problematic relation to language.

It was not so long ago that scholars of classical texts became interested in narratology and started using it as an approach to literary works written in ancient Greek or Latin. It goes without saying that a new theoretical toolkit can be refreshing, but it is also true that the basic notions of narratology were developed through analyzing, and to analyze modern European novels; ancient narrative texts such as epic poetry or historiography are rather different from those. Ancient novels might be similar, but again we should keep in mind that the notion of the ancient

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[5] Apart from the possibility that a speech is not reported, but transformed into a non-verbal event, which Gerald Prince calls "narrativized discourse" (Prince, 1982, p. 47).

[6] According to Prince (1982, pp. 47–48), this type has two subcategories: normal and free direct discourse. When the narrator does not say that what follows is the speech of a character, or happens to omit the quotation marks, the result is free direct discourse.

[7] Michael Toolan has called styles applying this technique of quotation "the most fascinating styles" (Toolan, 1988, p. 122); for a detailed description of the topic see pp. 122–137.

[8] What might have made it important was that (to use Thomas Kuhn's terminology) the articulation of the paradigm (in this case the structuralist concept of language) has problems at this point, which must inspire normal science to the point where the necessity of a scientific revolution is perceived. (cf. Kuhn, 1962, pp. 23–34)

novel and academic interest in it do not go back further than to the 1920s, and the term was coined to express the similarity between a collection of ancient texts and modern novels.

What happens when we try to use the trinity of reported speech to understand ancient texts? There is no problem with direct and indirect discourse, since we have a pair of notions already developed by ancient grammarians, *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*. However, if you use only two parts of a three-element system, you do not use the same system. Any true structuralist can tell that making use of a binary opposition instead of a tripartite structure is completely different. If in ancient texts we only have direct and indirect discourse, we are doing not narratology, but ancient *grammatica*. The problem is that ancient Greek and Latin are languages in which it seems near impossible to create something like free indirect discourse, however badly we need it for our narratology.

Irene de Jong, a student of Mieke Bal, undertook a complete narratological analysis of the *Iliad*, but free indirect discourse is not mentioned in her book, not even as a theoretical possibility of relating a character's speech (see especially de Jong, 1987, pp. 114–118). The title of the book is *Narrators and Focalizors. The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad;* focalization is theoretically about view and not voice, even if we try to conclude who is seeing from verbal clues. The focus of the book is on how the story is presented, not how the characters' speeches are presented. Nevertheless, it is telling that she does not even mention free indirect discourse. There is common agreement upon the fact that among all the remnants of ancient Greek poetry no single example can be found that can be described as FID (Auhagen, 1998, p. 53).

In ancient Latin texts we can hardly ever hope to find such phenomena because the strict rules of the *oratio obliqua* in standardized Latin seem to exclude automatically the possibility that the quoted text and the text of the one who quotes should ever be welded together. If we accept Auhagen's definition, namely that "FID is *oratio obliqua,* which is not dependent on any *uerbum dicendi*" (Auhagen 1998, p. 56), then Latin as a language clearly offers very poor chances for FID, since the accusative and infinitive that express indirect reported speech are necessarily subordinated to a verb. There is, however, one loophole, namely the reported question. A single narrative pattern has been found in classical poetry that can be interpreted as something like FID. When a character faces a situation in which a choice must be made, and they pose some questions in their mind about what to do, the narrator can report those questions as a series of reported questions in the third person singular with verbs in subjunctive mode. The questions of the character's mind and the narrator's discourse are welded together. Usually there is no verb indicating quotations, but emphatic

words and the act of questioning belong to the character, while the third person guarantees that it is the narrator who is speaking. It was Virgil who developed this narrative technique (Perutelli, 1979, p. 80), but both he and Ovid made use of it only marginally, usually in one or two lines. The longest example occupies only three lines (Verg. *Aen*. 9.399–401).

Valerius Flaccus seems to have experimented with this technique and developed a version with optative clauses too.[9] He also wrote longer passages, and in one of them shifted the reported questions to main clauses with verbs in indicative mood, but for that he had to break with the otherwise strict rules of Latin grammar about moods and tenses.[10] The bold experimentation with the forms of narrative, characteristic of Valerius Flaccus or silver Latin poetry in general, resulted in a genuine example of FID.

When I tell this story this way, the development seems teleological, as if the main goal of Latin poets had been to have the tripartite structure of reported speech offered by structuralist narratology. As if they felt frustration about having only two ways to report speech, and there was a void in their poetic system to be filled. This story lends great importance to a rather marginal phenomenon of classical poetry, and makes it an equal member of a tripartite system, although we have about a dozen examples of it in contrast to thousands of the other two. And we can also make a contrast between the single narrative pattern of a hesitant character asking questions to themselves and the numberless other situations in which characters can say or think something. But it is a theoretical trinity, therefore the number of the actual examples does not really count. The application of the theory to the classical material seems to do justice rather to the modern theory than to the material it is supposed to explain.

FID in Corippus

The situation may have changed in late antiquity when some less prestigious Latin texts tended to express indirect discourse not through an infinitive with subject accusative but a subordinate clause, which might have made possible the confusion of voices characteristic of FID. Prose writing was more open to innovative usage; however, poetry tried to stick to the classical grammar, albeit many times in vain. In the passage I discuss below, it is not the late or vulgar Latin grammatical structures that create an opening for free indirect discourse, but the language of the supposedly classical Latin poetry itself that opens the door to poetical opportunities of a new kind. I will analyze the grammatical structures of a longer passage from Corippus' *Johannis.* He was an African poet of the 6th century

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[9] *Arg*. 1.66–76, 3.241–242, Auhagen 1998, pp. 60–61.

[10] *Arg*. 1. 278–293. cf. Ferenczi, 2003, pp. 185–187.

who opted for classical usage, therefore we find very few places we might call errors, in the sense that despite the traditionalism of the usage, contemporary grammatical forms appear in the text. However, we should remember that already Valerius Flaccus had to break the classical grammatical rules to blend the voices of character and narrator to a degree that can legitimately be called free indirect discourse.

At the time of the narrative, Africa, reconquered previously by the Byzantine Empire, was under attack from nomadic incursions. At the beginning of the epic, Emperor Justinian is reflecting on whom to name as chief of the military expedition he is about to send to Africa. His activity is designated by an active verb, and the subject of the sentence is the emperor himself: *princeps uoluebat pectore curas* (Corippus, *Johannis* 1.48), "The emperor was turning his problems over and over in his heart." A quick change to passive structures makes Iohannes the subject:

> Cuncta reuoluenti solus uirtute Iohannes
>
> consilioque placens fortis sapiensque uidetur.
>
> Gentibus ipse feris concurrere posse putatur
>
> solus et infensas acer prosternere turmas.[11]

(1.52–55)

[To him, taking everything into consideration, only Iohannes, whom he liked because of his virtue and cleverness, seemed strong and wise. Only he was thought to be able to fight wild nations and fiercely destroy the enemy troops.]

This is correct indirect discourse expressed through infinitives; the dative (*reuoluenti*), subordinated to the passive verb *uidetur*, indicates that the thoughts expressed here belong to Emperor Justinian. In the next line, however, the situation is modified; it becomes uncertain who is speaking or reasoning:

> Quippe uiri decus et praeclari signa laboris
>
> uictaque bella placent regni grauiora superbi:
>
> expulit ut Persas, strauit quo uulnere Parthos
>
> confisos turbis densisque obstare sagittis;
>
> tempore quo lati manarunt Nitzibis agri
>
> sanguine Persarum...

(1.56–61)

[Since the achievement of the man, the signs of his great work, and the more difficult wars he won against a haughty kingdom pleased, the way he expelled the Persians, the wound with which he destroyed the Parthians who trusted that they could resist with

their masses and frequent arrows, when the wide fields of Nitzibis were washed by the blood of Persians…]

The connective *quippe* may suggest that the narrator has here begun to speak in his own person, and that it is he who goes on to explain why it was Iohannes that the emperor found to be the only person suitable for the task. With the verb *placent* Iohannes' deeds become the subject of the sentence, which might separate this utterance from those of the previous speaker/thinker, although the absent noun in the dative that would express who is pleased by these deeds can be easily supplied, especially if one recalls the phrase *reuoluenti placens uidetur,* read only a few lines before. The clause *expulit ut Persas* does not seem to suit classical grammar but might also be explained, according to the rules of classical Latin if we regard it as a modal clause: "the emperor was pleased by his wars, i.e., the way he drove the Persians out".

In fact, these lines cannot be regarded as a quotation; the emperor's ideas appear in the form of nouns (*decus, signa, bella*), which means that the narrator has transformed the ideas into nouns instead of quoting them. These nouns figure as the subject of a verb (*placent*) that does not refer to the process of reflection but to the emperor's emotions or the motives that led to his decision. We cannot, therefore, decide whether the following subordinate clauses in the indicative mood are thought by the emperor or added to the emperor's thoughts by the narrator as an explanation. This ambiguity, which is an essential and, to a modern reader, familiar requisite of free indirect discourse, cannot be created without the separation of the main clause from the speaker caused by the verb *placent*. If all this was told in indirect quotation, subordinate clauses expressing the character's thoughts would be in the subjunctive mood, while the additional remarks of the narrator would stand in the indicative. These subordinate clauses continue up to line 67, where we hear Justinian reflecting again on Iohannes' deeds:

> Principis ante oculos discurrunt cuncta fidelis
>
> fortia facta uiri. Pensat uersatque labores:
>
> Theodosiupolin ut densus uallaverat hostis...

(1.68–70)

[All the brave deeds of the faithful man were running before the eyes of the emperor. He considers and ponders over his works: how the numerous enemy sieged Theodosiupolis…]

In retrospect this makes it more probable that it was the emperor's thoughts that were being related previously, but we cannot be certain. At this point, however, there follows a sequence of grammatically incorrect subordinate clauses with the conjunction *ut* and verbs in the indicative mood which clearly relate the emperor's thoughts.

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[11] I quote the Diggle—Goodyear edition: (Corippus, 1970).

It is precisely the incorrect grammar that makes it possible for a new narrative to start at line 79, where the conjunction *ut* is omitted. The context suggests that this narrative still relates thought, but no grammatical sign attaches it to the character's voice. On the other hand, the continuation of the sequence of past tense indicatives (which continue to relate Iohannes' campaign against the Persians) renders the change of the speaker almost invisible. We can rightly regard the sequence of subordinate clauses beginning with *ut* as a sort of indirect quotation, even if it applies late Latin grammar. It is at the moment when the sequence of subordinate clauses stops but the narrator goes on telling the same story in main clauses that free indirect discourse is really created. To clearly show the shift between the two different types of discourse I quote the passage with conjunctions and verbs in italics, emphasizing the moment of the shift by an empty line:

Theodosiupolin ut densus uallauerat hostis
obsidione graui: noctis celer ille per umbras
ut ueniens dubiae succurrit moenibus urbis
hostes per medios portas ingressus amicas:
territus utque pedem muris subtraxit ab illis
ingens Mermeroes, densisque ut saeuior armis
ardua sidereo cingentem moenia muro
inde Daras ausus, ductor qua signa regebat,
appetere et bello Latias temptare phalangas.

Sed postquam primam vigilans ex hostibus urbem
eripuit ductor, fugientes inde secutus
occupat ante vias...

(1.70–81)

[That the dense enemy embraced Theodosiupolin with heavy siege: that he, coming fast through the shadows of the night, brought help to the walls of the uncertain city, entering the friendly gates through the middle of enemies: that the great Mermeroes withdrew his steps in fear from those walls, that Daras, even wilder through his condense army, dared attack him, who circled the high city walls with shining wall, and challenged the Latin phalanx to war where the general was leading the troops.

But after he first liberated the city from the enemy through his hard work, following the flying troops, he blocked the roads…]

If the previous ideas were thought by the character, the continuity of the narrative suggests that the following ones will also be thought by him, despite the fact that no linguistic element supports this hypothesis. From now on, however, we receive some hints suggesting that the character cannot himself think this discourse. The narrative relates, for instance, an event that might almost have happened, but did not:

Iacuisset et ille
prostratus campis, ni uiuum prendere uellet
ductor magnanimus.

(1.95–97)

[He also would have lain destroyed on the field, if the magnanimous leader did not want to take him alive.]

In the epic tradition such "might have beens" usually belong to the narrator's voice, because only a so-called "omniscient" narrator could know what would have happened if a minor circumstance had been modified slightly in contrast to what actually happened. [12] We might perhaps suppose that the possibility of an alternative course of events had emerged in the mind of the emperor, though the conventions of the epic genre do not support, or perhaps even exclude such a supposition.

The following scene, however, cannot belong to the emperor's voice. A scene, first of all, is not the sort of phenomenon which can occur in the discourse of a character.

Tunc astans mediis dominum benedixit in aruis
Vrbicius sapiens, quem primum maximus orbis
imperialis apex famulum rebusque fidelem
tunc habuit lectumque inimicas miserat oras
noscere, quae saeui fuerant discrimina belli. [13]

(1.99–103)

[Then the wise Vrbicius, standing in the middle of the fields, blessed the commander; he was then the first servant of the highest peak of the imperial world, and his confidant in all matters, who was picked to be sent to know inimical shores, what is the wild war depending on.]

It is impossible to imagine the emperor thinking of himself as *maximus orbis imperialis apex* (the highest peak of the imperial world). Usually it is the narrator, and not a character who makes a new character appear and (as it happens in the following lines) speak. We should not forget, however, that Vrbicius himself is the source of Justinian's knowledge of what Corippus did in the Persian war, since he was the person the emperor had sent there to witness and report everything. Therefore, he might appear in the thoughts of the emperor as the very source of the information

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[12] For the "might have beens" in the epic tradition see (Nesselrath, 1992)

[13] Here again: an indirect question with a verb in the indicative mood.

on the basis of which he will make up his mind. The emperor himself, however, cannot appear in his own thoughts in the third person singular, and it is highly improbable that he imagines Vrbicius delivering a speech far away from Constantinople.

From the point of view of narratology, it would be interesting enough to interpret this passage as a discourse which is the direct discourse of a character at the beginning, and then changes through free indirect discourse somewhere imperceptibly into pure narratorial discourse. But after Vrbicius' scene the text continues as follows:

> Hos uersans princeps animo tunc saepe labores
> hunc solum Libyam oppressam defendere posse
> matura pietate probat. Nec plura moratus
> iussit ab extremis acciri partibus orbis
> ductorem.
>
> (1.110–114)

[Then the emperor, frequently pondering upon these deeds, proved with mature piety that he is the only one who can defend the oppressed Africa. Without any further ado he ordered to summon the commander from the end of the world.]

This utterance declares that everything we have previously read about, including the events that almost happened but did not, the flattering periphrasis of the emperor's own person, and Vrbicius' appearance as an acting character, was all simply thought by Justinian. The whole relatively long passage must have been narrated in free indirect discourse.

In the final essay of his compendium of Roman epic, Erich Burck evaluated Corippus' achievement highly on the basis of his autonomous mastery of the art of traditional Roman epic. This mastery covers, as Burck affirms, traditional language, patterns of presentation, motifs, and contents; Burck also praises the African audience for its ability to appreciate this poetry (Burck, 1979, p. 398). As a result of the analysis above, the autonomous employment of the traditional forms is not the only merit of the *Iohannis*. Or we can say that the forms he masters are not always so traditional. Sometimes it seems remarkable experimentation with novel poetic possibilities. I do not insist that experimentation with new methods of presentation is generally characteristic of this epic. I have not found any other example of free indirect discourse in it. But I regard this single example as sufficient to arouse our interest in the poetics of this sixth-century poet, an interest based on a technique of narrative so important for us, but rare and marginal in classical poetry, the language of which seems to have been practically unsuitable to it.

This example shows that late Latin grammar opened up possibilities that were hardly imaginable earlier. However,

narratologists who are determined enough to find all the options narratology theoretically describes as realized in every literary system tend to succeed. And this drive to find the complete systems everywhere might explain why the best examples of FID in Latin poetry, offered by Valerius Flaccus and Corippus receive high appreciation as brave experimentation, although they could also be criticized as grammatically corrupt passages.

This final, most detailed example I have considered also shows that sometimes it is not the theory that is applied to a new kind of literary material, but rather the material that is applied to theory. In such cases we do not learn much. Our analysis does not promote the understanding of a literary work or a literary tradition, since we are more interested in proving the universality of our theory, which deforms the understanding of literature and makes us create probably false and useless narratives about literary development. Therefore, the moral of the present research is that we should not worry about applying theory if it implies necessary modifications, but we should try to avoid sticking to the pure forms of our theories.

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