

CALL FOR PAPERS

JOURNAL DES ANTHROPOLOGUES

Social sciences and literature: actuality, stakes and future of a common passion for reality

Long after the "linguistic turn", a few social scientists seem to have recently launched a "narrative turn", aiming at reshaping, partly thanks to the Internet, both the distance between producers and receivers of social sciences, and the strict separation initially established (and constantly questioned since) between interviewers and respondents, subjects and objects of investigations. Thanks to their work, new writers are emerging as authors of their own history, or at least of stories inspired by their perception of it. And the participative websites that publish them try not only to renew our disciplines, through an opening to the ordinary, the "invisible" and the "invisibility" that characterize our societies, which are marked by increasing democratic deficit, but also to be politically active within those disciplines and beyond, by promoting a "politics of authors" able to give voice and dignity to those who are deprived of them.

But doing so, do not proponents of this narrative and narrator politics give social sciences a function, which is generally given to literature? And don't they rely on literary power – without actually acknowledging it – when they implicitly export some current social sciences questions – their audience, their public use, and their social and political efficacy – to the field of literature and its changing public and private practices? And which "value" can we give to the testimonies, which are not only considered as pure sociographic material but cannot actually be said to be literary texts?

Simultaneously, according to confirmed (or self-appointed) specialists, "reality" would be making a comeback in literature. The fact that writer – and former journalist - Svetlana Alexievitch was recently awarded the Nobel Prize ("for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time") is seen as a spectacular example of that. It is the first time that the literary documentary tradition is offered a prize by this academy.

This context offers the opportunity to re-examine in depth the relationship between our disciplines and (contemporary rather than past) literary texts and practices. Social scientists indeed build their scientific object through questions and hypotheses, but they also experience some kind of unknown, he/she is unable to create an immediate truth. It is the cut between one's initial aim and the final results that one changes oneself into an author. The same process, but somehow reversed, going from subjectivity towards freedom and subversion, allows the writer to reach what Jacques Bouveresse called "the knowledge of the writer."

Can social scientists approach subjectivity without drawing from the stock of contents, styles, forms and questions we find in literature? And, conversely, can writers' practices be fed and reinvented by drawing on sociology, anthropology, geography, philosophy or history? In that

sense, the aims, objectives, approaches and results of literature on the one hand and social sciences on the other hand might then seem to be compatible or complementary?

Therefore, if contemporary forms of literature and social sciences productions seem to share the same passion for what's "real", what "real" are they talking about? And how does this common passion reshape the very territories – held apart, in the French tradition – which delineate both perspectives? In a dialogical and international perspective, we would like to address the following questions to social researchers and teachers as well as to writers (including non French-speaking ones), authors of graphic novels, and even to filmmakers and authors of live performances.

1) How does a writer use concrete or abstract scientific material to work out his/her language, style or the structure of his/her works. Is his/her approach complementary to the social scientist's one who questions his/her research object and intends to "trap" reality in order to unmask it? If the writer lends his/her voice to others than himself, can't a sociologist, for example, without denying the cut between objectivity and subjectivity, walk in the shoes of the writer and enter "a writing" process, and as close as possible to that of the writer? To what extent?

And why would one choose one perspective rather than the other? Are there examples of successful reconversion (from science to literature or from literature to science), and for which reasons, with which kind of ruptures, and with which benefits?

2) Is there so much difference today between the work of an anthropologist, a reporter and a writer who decide, for example, to investigate the everyday life of invisible or ignored aspects of society? Wouldn't it be relevant to think how writers' practices could shape social scientists' practices and visa versa (though with differing objectives, and a different emphasis on objectivity and subjectivity)? And should we not, right now, support interbreedings and alliances between the two, especially since they've already been taking place in scholarly as well as literary publications? Therefore, why not provide our students with a combination of both perspectives, since they will need to write texts anyways when they leave university and get a job? If we follow that lead, let us then think about the theoretical and practical processes, which will allow us to manage to put that pedagogy into place.

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Schedule and instructions for authors:

Abstracts (between 1000 and 1500 words) should be sent to the coordinators by mail **before June 1st 2016** and, if accepted, the full articles, (40 000 typed characters including spaces) before **September 1st 2016** (with a copy to the *Journal des anthropologues* editorial staff: [afa](mailto:afa@hyperlink) [HYPERLINK "mailto:afa@msh-paris.fr"@msh-paris.fr](mailto:afa@msh-paris.fr)) to the following coordinators:

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