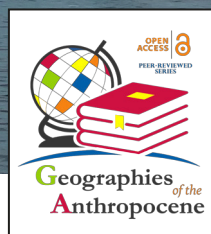


NARRATIVES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE ERA

Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Editors)

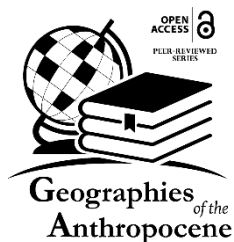
Preface by Kirill O. Thompson

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Edizioni



Narratives in the Anthropocene era

Charles Travis
Vittorio Valentino
Editors



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Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Eds.)

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humanists, intersecting disciplines of Geosciences, Geography, Geoethics, Philosophy, Socio-Anthropology, Sociology of Environment and Territory, Psychology, Economics, Environmental Humanities and cognate disciplines.

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17. Prolegomena to containment tourism.

Happy and smart self-deconfinement sheet or “links to free oneself”

Charlie Galibert¹

Abstract

The anthropocene at the time of confinement feeds on stories and fictions. Literary, scientific, ideological, common sense, the anthropocene arouses and generates a *world of representations of the world*. With the support of this duplication resulting from the imaginary in reality from Plato, man is the being of representation: of the interiorization of external reality, of the exteriorization of interior reality. The imagination is the fuel that nourishes our reflection on the world and the form that thought takes. We can therefore use all forms: concepts (science), notions (common sense), and works (art). Covid 19 has given rise in less than a year to a catalog of complex stories, more or less concerted or disconcerting, which is part of a possible new axis of reading of the imaginary universe. This narrative of confinement (tales, fables, legends, mythologies, medical, health, scientific, political, conspiratorial, literary fictions) borrows from what Terry Pratchett (2006) calls the *narrativium* : the story which constitutes the basis of the human relationship with the world in all its forms: cognitive, affective, oral, gestural, written, behavioral, reflective, active, creative - the *imaginary*. The author invites reader to read this narrative catalog at the stage of our current planetary confinement, one unprecedented even in the history of the anthropocene, between apocalypses and millenarisms, resignations, the risk of totalitarianism, calls for a paradigm change or the refoundation of the World, between fake news and suggestions of a new spirituality.

Keywords: Anthropocene, imaginary, representation, narration, Covid 19, confinement.

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1. Introduction

"Would our gift for seeking the truth have helped us survive?" maybe... sometimes... but not as much as our gift for reassuring us with dreams, illusions, fables. Ostriches have a very remarkable longevity. And then it's over.

(Nancy Huston, 2020, 'Les mythes,' in Pablo Servigne and Raphael Stevens, *Aux origines de la catastrophe*, Paris, Les Liens qui nous libèrent, 142-147).

As Nancy Huston so aptly writes, "humans are animals" who tell their story, animals which cannot survive without stories" (Huston, 2020, 143). Non-humans are in the *presentation*, not in the *representation*. Their world is not a stage, ours is. It is not so much the reality that is represented, it is the representation that constructs, brings about, reality. The world is representation.

In support of this original duplication of the imaginary in reality, Plato even provides, in the *Cratylus*, a fanciful but instructive etymology of anthropos: Man was named "Man", because "reconsidering what he saw" (*an athron ha opope*). Man is the being of representation (the being of the representation of Being) of the interiorization of external reality, of the exteriorization of interior reality.

And in the *Timaeus*, he even proposes a reversal of the predominance of reality over imagination by the idea that, for man, at the beginning of everything, lies the imaginary and the imagination. "Suppose that giving a career to our imagination, we make a tale (*muthos*) (...). If therefore in many points, on many questions concerning the Gods and the birth of the world, we do not manage to make ourselves capable of bringing coherent reasoning from all points to the last exactitude, do not be surprised. But if we bring you some that do not yield to any other in plausibility, we must congratulate us, reminding us that we are only men, so that we only have to accept in these matters a *plausible tale* and that we must look no further"(Plato, *Timaeus*, 29, c-d).

If we take Plato seriously, the world that the sciences call true reality, may well be a mind game. The *muthos* - the tale, the myth - would be what gives to believe in reality, what gives to think. Reality is nothing but a

plausible tale, the zero degree of the imaginary. Realism is always-already a tale, which its supporters want to pass off as the primary text, but in the end, there is a tale at the beginning.

Because the opposite is true. The real is the imagination separating from itself - *poïesis*. At the beginning is poetry. There is no remainder: everything is already literature. Myth and literature, imagination and language, produce the real world as a moment or a crystallization of the mind, and not the other way around. Society is first established as the creation of imaginary social meanings which connect men and give birth to their action. There is an “imaginary institution of society” (Castoriadis, 1999). With a touch of negative thought, one could say that there is only literary reality and that there is only literature that is human confinement in the imaginary. The study of human societies is that of the human imagination. We are all Platonists: the real is the imagination separating from itself, a tale. The “folle du logis” is “la mère retrouvée du logos”.

2. Literature of absolute confinement and relative confinement of literature

The legacy of Covid 19, global viral confinement, confinement, has given rise in less than a year to a catalog of complex narratives, plausible tales more or less concerted, more or less disconcerting. This catalog of a *literature of absolute confinement* (in relation to the *relative confinement of literature* in the imaginary) is inscribed as a possible new axis of access, introduction and reading, to the fundamental imaginary universe of human representation, and therefore of course of the literary universe.

The narrative of confinement (covering tales, fables, legends, mythologies and medical, health, scientific, political, conspiratorial, literary fictions, etc.)², its narration, overlaps with what Terry Pratchett (2006) calls

² The reader will experience with rare happiness and astonishing power the richness of individual creativity in a situation of confinement through the remarkable experience of expression, essentially literary, opened by the Corsican publisher Albiana, under the title of *Décameron 2020*, which in the space of two months has put online nearly 400 texts of some 150 “confined islanders” (<https://www.albiana.fr/blog/decameron-libero>), since published in a sumptuous book (*Décameron 2020, Collaborative project in the time of confinement Read, dream, write, live* ; Collective, 16.5 x 24 cm - 736 pages, ISBN 9782824110707; <https://www.albiana.fr/litterature/1791-decameron-2020-litterature.html>)

the *narrativium*³, this narrative which constitutes the basis of the human relationship with the world in all its forms: cognitive, affective, oral, gestural, written, behavioral, reflections, actions, creations - and that, in all continuity, we can name the imaginary. Faculty of the pure possible that history has of course socialized, the imaginary conjoins the *plausible tale* evoked by Plato as the very image of the world and the openness-of-man-to-the-world evoked by phenomenology.

The anthropocene in the time of confinement feeds on stories, narratives, fictions. Literary, scientific, ideological, of common sense, the Anthropocene arouses and generates a world of representation of the world. A representation of the world is indeed essential for humans to read their life, orient themselves in it, make it acceptable, rational, livable. The imaginary is the fuel that feeds our thinking about the world and the form that thinking takes. It inseparably contains common sense, science and art. We can therefore use all forms: from concepts (science) to notions (common sense) through works (art).

Without claiming to be an exhaustive inventory, this narrative catalog of the planetary confinement stage, unprecedented even in the history of the Anthropocene (*Covidian stage confinans* as a sub-stratum of *the Poubellian*?) includes apocalypses and millenarisms, resignation, risk of totalitarianism, call for change. of paradigm and refoundation of the World, triumph of the negative and fakes news, suggestion of a new spirituality.

The encyclopedia of the *narrativium* devoted to confinement stretches from the universal literature of “*Ubu Roi*” to the universe of Kafka, from the “*Dictionary of nowhere and elsewhere*” by Guadaluppi-Manguel (1981) to “*The Encyclopedia of Science-Fiction*” by Versins, from “*Voyages of Marco Polo*” to *The Lancet* review from the improbable “*Codex Seraphinianus*” by Luigi Serafini to “*Revelations from the Great Ocean*” by

³ « Our minds make stories, and stories make our minds. Each culture's Make-a-Human kit is built from stories, and maintained by stories. A story can be a rule for living according to one's culture, a useful survival trick, a clue to the grandeur of the universe, or a mental hypothesis about what might happen if we pursue a particular course. Stories map out the phase space of existence (II: 327). Humans add *narrativium* to their world. They insist on interpreting the universe as if it's telling a story. This leads them to focus on facts that fit the story, while ignoring those that don't. (I:233) ; <https://wiki.lspace.org/mediawiki/Narrativium>

Reunion Islander Jules Herman, from the *Quanon conspiracy* to obscurantists in the *science-unique solution*.

We now have a *narrative of confinement* covering a considerable narrative imaginary, both heir to the literary history bequeathed by tradition but also innovative and creative, but also, within the very literary representation that existed before this. new story, all the literary stories devoting the time spaces of our life, like so many more or less autonomous spheres, independent of each other, closed, confined: work, friends, family, intimacy, love, worries, wars, disasters ...Georges Perec's (1978) image of "*La vie mode d'emploi*" which tells the story of the life of a building through the people and families who live in and follow one another in its apartments, presented in a romantic way in the form of a puzzle under construction, could make the link between the literature of confinement (the stories of confinement) and the confinement of literature (literature as an expression of our lives since its historic birth with Robinson Crusoe (1719).

The "compartments" of our lives are represented in universal literature with such richness that they can be said *to border on infinity*! Confinement thus plays and composes oxymorally with the infinity of possibilities. A kind of infinite library that contains all the books already written on all possible subjects as well as those yet to be written, real and imaginary, all possible and imaginable libraries, including those yet to come. This idea exists for good, it was written by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges in 1941. It is called "*The library of Babel*" (<https://www.oeuvresouvertes.net/spip.php?article1017> ; 1941, Mar del Plata, Uploaded June 29, 2011 © Jorge Luis Borges, June 9, 2014, accessed August 24, 2021)⁴.

3. Ambition of the Containment tourist guide

To say that the *idea of confinement* opens on to *literary infinity*, which infinity opens on to all the ways out of an unhappy, aversive, stressful confinement, is to make it clear that the most confined, the most confined, the most reduced (like the broom closet in which Harry Potter lives at the

⁴ For an exegetical comment:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Biblioth%C3%A8que_de_Babel.

beginning of the Dursleys' saga) (Rowling, 1997, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*) can become, with a wave of a literary magic wand, the most deconfined, the most open, the largest, as well as the smallest room can become the greatest voyage (Xavier de Maistre, *Voyage autour de ma chambre*, 1794).

And since the history of literature is the very history of the possibility of getting out of the worst confinements, whether external or internal, hated or hated, suffered or chosen, flee or desired, we might as well take advantage of it to unfold, if not its hair like *Rapunzel*, at least a few ladders (or tie a few sheets) that will allow us to escape from confinement to the universes of freedom.

My present contribution proposes, in a perhaps iconoclastic and incongruous way, to share with the reader common readings capable of deconfining the more or less connected and interconnected monads to which the current situation of confinement / deconfinement / reconfinement is reduced to us, to make a piece of route in the universal adventure of the narrativium of literature to shed light on *the narrativium of confinement*, in the form of a *short guide to reading confinement*.

Anthropology is the science of meeting and reciprocal exchange between people and different societies, and the story of this discovery. However, the contemporary world of confinement / deconfinement would rather be an apology for intolerance, the refusal to meet and listen, under the domination of two fundamentalisms: that of standardization (technological, media, cultural, civilizational) and that of withdrawal. on oneself (identities, communitarisms).

The reader can choose in this journey levels of difficulty and progressive initiations, according to his tastes, his penchant for the express visit or the slow discovery, his appetite for the straight line or the labyrinth, his desire for historical, philosophical, artistic detours. . When it comes to the fabrication of the human through the art of encounter and discovery, the anthropologist is an empathetic and permissive guide who imposes no choice. Even if the tourist in confinement is, optimally, the one who learns something new, who is surprised, and who comes back different at the end of the trip. In-depth speleological exercises, shortcuts, bridges, equipped rest areas, are offered to the reader who thus becomes his own guide.

Yves Citton (2009) evokes the need for a “literary society” in order to help us understand our human condition as well as the behaviors and passions of our fellow human beings: “a certain attitude made up of patient, attentive, loving, interventionist exploration , reconfiguring, messages that circulate between us and within us. Literary studies are all the more necessary to teach us to cultivate our sensitivity to the nuances crushed by the urgency of communication, to give us the means of a critical analysis of the texts that program us, to allow us to develop modes of non-consumption of cultural objects as well as non-oppression of oneself and others”(Yves Citton, 2009, 175).

This disconcerting guide *buissonnier*, willingly *maquisard* and *brown* aims to make the tourist of confinement aware of a journey in the infinite diversity of the imagination which, let us remember, founds, from Plato to Castoriadis, reality, less from a knowledge than questioning, surprise, wonder, as a means of access to walk in the imagination.

The short guide below extends from the larger one (our planet Earth itself, as well as its astronomical, mythological, civilizational, societal, literary representations). As regards literary universes, these also stretch from the largest to the smallest, from the great cosmogonies and imaginary universes to miniature worlds, passing through the relativization of the categories of the large and the small, of the realistic and strange.

4. Containment tourist guide or small Guide to Literary Survival in Containment:

4.1. From the biggest...

Thematic:

With our earth spinning at 30 km / second in space towards Alpha Centauri, our greatest confinement is in a galaxy in the middle of an infinity of galaxies, a concentrate of space-time in infinite space-time. Our planet Earth can thus be understood as the greatest variant of confinement!

- Stephen Hawking, “A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes” (1981) is a popular science book dealing with the science of the laws that govern the universe, cosmology:

<http://excerpts.numilog.com/books/9782081404342.pdf>

(accessed August 24, 2021).

- The different ways that the peoples of the world have used to represent their own cosmogony (myths and images of creation)

https://www.google.com/search?xsrf=ALeKk01LMCURJgenvXvfIzgCv9xvob5O1g:1588499980471&source=univ&tbm=isch&q=mondes.+mythes+et+images+de+l%27univers+images&client=firefox-b-d&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi92b7It5fpAhXqz4UKHVh0A_IQsAR6BAgLEAE&biw=1366&bih=654 (accessed August 24, 2021).

- "*The Last and the First*" is a science fiction novel by British author Olaf Stapledon, published in 1930. It chronicles the adventure of humanity over the next two billion years. During this period, no less than eighteen different human species will grow and disappear in turn:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Derniers_et_les_Premiers (consulté le 24 août 2021).

- Human civilizations : https://www.scienceshumaines.com/vie-et-mort-des-civilisations_fr_37964.html (accessed August 24, 2021).

- Societies : Roy Lewis : « *Pourquoi j'ai mangé mon père* » (1960) :
The novel : http://ekladata.com/_z2tD2bon0e6df13iIUEIdF4UuQ/Lewis-Roy-Pourquoi-J-ai-Mange-Mon-Pere.pdf (accessed August 24, 2021).

A reading sheet

http://blog.ac-versailles.fr/lespetitesquerelles/public/DOSSIER_SUR_POURQUOI_J__AI_MANGE_MON_PEREdocx.pdf (accessed August 24, 2021).

4.2. *The relativity of our knowledge and our life*

- "*Flatland*" (Abbott, 1884) is an allegory which illustrates the 2-dimensional world (point, line, surface) visited by an inhabitant of the 3rd dimension (volume), the sphere, and the misunderstanding of it. born

The book : https://lehollandaisvolant.net/files/abbot_flatland.pdf
(consulté le 24 août 2021)

The movie : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyuNrm4VK2w>
(accessed August 24, 2021)

- Miner, 1957, « *Body Ritual among the Nacirema* »

Article presented to a very serious American anthropological journal mocking the language of anthropologists by presenting the magical body treatments of a North American tribe that is none other than ... the Americans ("*American*" backwards)

Original:

[https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Miner-1956-](https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Miner-1956-BodyRitualAmongTheNacirema.pdf)

[BodyRitualAmongTheNacirema.pdf](https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Miner-1956-BodyRitualAmongTheNacirema.pdf)

(accessed August 24, 2021)

[http://www.sens-de-la-](http://www.sens-de-la-vie.com/forums/viewtopic.php?topic=72&forum=12)

[vie.com/forums/viewtopic.php?topic=72&forum=12](http://www.sens-de-la-vie.com/forums/viewtopic.php?topic=72&forum=12) (accessed August 24, 2021).

Comments, analysis:

<http://coulmont.com/blog/2007/03/09/nacirema-anthropologie/>

(accessed August 24, 2021)

- A pastiche quite close to nacirema but relating to the micro world of soprani was written by Georges Perec:

- <https://static.mediapart.fr/files/2018/04/30/perec-fr-tomato-1.pdf>

(accessed August 24, 2021)

4.3. *Some imaginary worlds*

They include the great literary sagas (from "The Odyssey" of Homer or "The Epic of Gilgamesh" to "Lord of the Rings" by Tolkien, "Dune" by Herbert, "The Iron Throne" by JRR Martin, the 40 volumes of Terry Pratchett's "Disc World")

<https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ALeKk01RH3ty1WGK9BmEuxqozQ0u4ZXtsg:1588511977202&source=univ&tbm=isch&q=40+volumes+du+%C2%AB+Disque+Monde+%C2%BB+de+Terry+Pratchett&client=firefox-b-d&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj-iv2g5JfpAhWF2eAKHRV3BPoQsAR6BAgJEAE&biw=1366&bih=654> through the 27 volumes of "Men of good will" by Jules Romains...

- The "Gormenghast" trilogy is a good example. It tells the story of a huge castle constituting a universe in which a character will slowly climb the steps that will lead him to power and to his fall:

- Presentation:
<https://charybde2.wordpress.com/2014/03/04/note-de-lecture-la-trilogie-gormenghast-mervyn-peake/>
- Extracts:
https://booknode.com/la_trilogie_de_gormenghast_tome_1_titus_d_enfer_065566/extraits
- The BBC made a miniseries:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faoFmLRzk2Y>
- The "Codex Seraphinianus" is the encyclopedia of an imaginary world composed and illustrated (1981) by Luigi Serafini:
https://blog.kolesnik.info/pictures/files/Codex_Seraphinianus.pdf
https://booknode.com/la_vie_mode_d_emploi_01052/extraits
<http://escarbille.free.fr/vme/?txt=vme26>

4.4. ... to the smallest

“*Le Petit Poucet*”: original text of Perrault’s tale:
<https://francois-combe.pagesperso-orange.fr/00-Telechargements/Le%20Petit%20Poucet.pdf>
Text read: <http://clpav.fr/lecture-poucet.htm>

Other moral tales that illustrate the role of the little ones, the weak, the left behind (and for a fairy tale!): Puss in Boots, Donkey Skin, Cinderella ...

- “*The Shrinking Man*”
Novel by Richard Matheson (1956) whose author then wrote the screenplay for the film of the same title. Tells through the story of a shrinking man how the familiar can become alien:
https://booknode.com/l_homme_qui_retrecit_015958/extraits

A reading sheet of the film for school use: https://web.ac-reims.fr/dsden10/exper/IMG/pdf/lhomme_qui_retrecit.pdf

- “*Peter Pan*”, or the child who did not want to grow up, shows the essential importance of the little ones!
<http://touslescontes.com/biblio/contes.php?iDcontes=635>

4.5 The Ends of the World

Maxime Chattam, in "*L'Autre Monde*", tells the story and the quest of 3 teenagers surviving after the apocalypse in 7 books
[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autre-Monde_\(s%C3%A9rie\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autre-Monde_(s%C3%A9rie))

Jean Pierre Andrevon wrote in 2010 a post apocalyptic novel, "*Le Monde, enfin*"

An old man rides his horse across France, emptied of its inhabitants like the entire planet, following a devastating pandemic forty-five years earlier. On his way, he passes through overgrown towns populated by wild animals, as well as some communities of octogenarian survivors. At the twilight of his life, sifting through his memories, he wants to see the sea one last time.
<https://www.noosphere.org/livres/niourf.asp?numlivre=2146565903>

- Matheson "*I am a legend*," (1954),

I Am Legend is a novel by American author Richard Matheson published in 1954 and adapted for cinema in 1964, 1971 and 2007.

The novel chronicles the tragic fate of the last man on Earth, the only human being not to have suffered the consequences of a pandemic.

4.6. The infinity of the finite world, the finite of the infinite world

- The "*Guide to nowhere and elsewhere: for the use of the intrepid traveler in many imaginary places of universal literature*" by Gianni Guadalupi and Alberto Manguel, Editions du Fanal, 1981.

In this large volume - large format, 420 pages - we find descriptions of countries, cities, islands, invented by authors, whether they are authors of Antiquity, or modern ones.

It is as well the places evoked by the Greek poets, that the country of the wonders of Alice, the middle earth, Narnia or Earth sea which are depicted to us, cartography in support. The big names of the imagination, creators of worlds are present: Rabelais, Peake, Tolkien, Vernes, Swift, etc ...

- Pierre Versins and "*The Encyclopedia of Utopia, Science Fiction and Extraordinary Voyages*" (1972) <https://resf.hypotheses.org/977>

4.7. *The origin and the end ...*

Containment is symbolically close to the image of the microcosm, which can take on figures as varied as that of the island, the egg, the uterus, at the origin of the world.

Where do we come from ? Who are we? Where are we going ? is precisely one of the most famous works of Paul Gauguin, painted in Tahiti in 1897-1898, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%27o%C3%B9_venons-nous_%3F_Que_sommes-nous_%3F_O%C3%B9_allons-nous_%3F

This large canvas introduces us to fundamental questions of philosophy, with which we will end this quick overview of liberating confinement opening up to all possibilities.

4.8. *Philosophy*

Confinement can thus be seen as a kind of foundation of thought and freedom.

- Pascal's two infinities: <https://www.bacdefrancais.net/pascal-deux-infinis.php>

- Kant was concerned with providing a decisive answer to the following three questions: "What can I know? " " What should I do ? "" What am I allowed to hope for? Which constitute par excellence the program of all philosophy. At the end of his life, he will add to them: "What is man? " https://www.scienceshumaines.com/la-philosophie-en-quatre-questions_fr_28877.html

<http://www.perspectivesvoyageuses.com/article-philosophie-que-puis-je-connaître-que-dois-je-faire-104217869.html>

- Nietzsche has this famous formula which gives every reason to hope: "Become what you are": <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie/quatre-malentendus-nietzscheens-44-deviens-ce-que-tu-es>

- Sartre https://la-philosophie.com/homme-condamne-etre-libre-sartre#Sartre_et_la_philosophie_de_la_liberte

It is up to the reader to continue, thus becoming an actor in his self-deconfinement.

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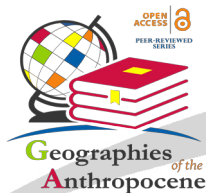
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"The Anthropocene has still the rank of a scientific hypothesis. Yet, it has already sedimented in our imagination with its stories of climate change and mass extinctions, global pandemics and energy crisis, technofossils and oceanic plastic, social justice and new minerals that are changing the face (and the bowels) of the planet. Investigating this imagination from multiple angles, *Narratives in the Anthropocene Era*, brilliantly edited by Charles Travis and Vittorio Valentino, is an indispensable tool for situating these stories into the conceptual horizon of the environmental humanities".
(Serenella Iovino, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

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