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NARRATIVIST PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY, LITERARY THEORY AND THE "MORE-THAN-HUMAN HISTORY"

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Abstract

The paper engages with recent debates surrounding the Anthropocene within the field of professional history. It aims to offer an approach distinct from the history of concepts by focusing on narrative studies and addressing debates on the relationship between history and fiction, with an emphasis on temporality. The starting point is the observation that the so-called paradigm shift in the humanities has paid scant attention to narrativist debates and the legacy of the linguistic turn. Indeed, the article seeks to foster discussion of this legacy and to present a bibliography ranging from literary theory to a historically grounded approach centered on temporality. First, the article explores how the legacy of the linguistic turn has been remembered or forgotten in the context of emerging debates on "more-than-human history" and paradigm shifts in the humanities. It then proposes that historians should be attentive to the potential of incorporating literary theory into Anthropocene debates. Specifically, the discussion focuses on studies that utilize the concept of the *chronotope* to examine temporality, while proposing a distinction in its application to Anthropocene temporality – diverging from the usage established by Mary Louise Pratt. From this basis, I suggest that studying the chronotope offers a better understanding of two themes: (1) multiscalar time and (2) the expansion of debates regarding historical realism. I also believe that a clearer grasp of these themes enables a more evocative approach to what has been termed "the multiple possibilities of the future that exist in the present and the past" – a theme notably discussed by Azoulay and Kellner. The article deliberately avoids dwelling on specific examples of critical analysis regarding novels or short stories, as I believe this approach clarifies the contribution to the historian's craft.

Keywords: Narrativist philosophy of historiography, Anthropocene, Literary Theory, More-Than-Human History, chronotope, fiction, temporality.

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Introduction

In the field of historical studies, the theme of the Anthropocene has generally been addressed by authors who have focused on investigating the limitations of modern political discourse. Historians like Zoltán Simon examine the disparity between political time and planetary time, emphasizing the transformation between experiential space and the horizon of expectations in their interpretations of Koselleck's work (2006) and Hartog's concept of presentism (2019). Simon underlines that the political concepts and institutions inherited from modernity have yet to address the challenges posed by the radical alteration of ecosystems and the threat of mass extinction (Simon, 2020). It is noteworthy that the modern concept of History is restricted to Humanity and that it was temporalized by exploring Nature. It also considers the field's difficulties in offering answers and intelligibility facing the new scenario (Tamm; Simon, 2020). From these references, it is possible to see that research dedicated to investigating the impact of the Anthropocene intends to examine the emergence of new concepts or the re-elaboration of concepts in the historiographic field.

Even recognizing the importance of conceptual references, this paper intends to contribute to the debate on the Anthropocene in History through a broad proposal that incorporates references from narrativism, aimed at thinking about epistemic perspectives that bring together literary studies. It has been noted that literary studies often struggle to be heard in the broader environmental debates, as Ken Hiltner (2014) argues. He affirms that we should study ecocriticism not as the representation of nature in literature, but as a dynamic field with a critical framework that pays attention to the relationship between humans and non-humans and considers performance studies. Indeed, literature must be conceived not as a representation of untouched nature but as a cultural stuff that shapes our perceptions of what is human and non-human.

The paper argues that the discussion surrounding historical and literary narrative provides not only a framework for thinking about the “More-than-Human” History but also an opportunity to reconsider fundamental issues within the field of historical studies as the discussion about historical representation, for instance. Nevertheless, it also intends to discuss how recent studies on the emerging perspectives on historical knowledge, such as Ewa Domanska (2024) and Tamm and Simmon (2021), have treated the scenario after the linguistic turn, especially because many of them do not pay attention to the debate on language. It intends to highlight the topic of literary works that approach the climate crisis to understand the historicity of the literary in times of the Anthropocene and the debates raised in the field of historical studies to think about epistemology, temporality, and historical

narrative in the present. Moreover, it also considers contemporary bibliography that demands a paradigm shift in the Humanities facing the menace of contemporary denialism.[1] By addressing this claim, the article aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the future of historical thought.

The Heritage of the Linguistic Turn and More-than-Human History

We could repeat what Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen affirms: “There are good reasons to say that we are now in a novel situation without any clear paradigms, looking for new ways to go forward, or perhaps, any way to go forward.” (Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 4) It is possible to say that the essays in Kuukkanen’s work do not offer clear paradigms about the current situation of historical studies in general and Theory of History specifically. Hans Kellner comments on Kuukkanen’s book *Philosophy of History: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives,* highlighting that his beautiful image of “conceptual map” is an expression of the absence of connection among multiple studies. “The evidence for this is the variety of and lack of clear connections between the models of philosophy of history to be found today.” (Kellner, 2025, p. 3).

Although there is no single trend – or even a single paradigm – in the field of the philosophy of history, there are certain themes that run through studies in the philosophy of history and the field of the theory of history as the heritage of the linguistic turn, for instance (Bevilacqua, 2025). The paper has no intention to do a lengthy presentation of what the “turn” was and only to consider the contemporary debates of its legacy to think about the historical studies. Maybe it could be useful to remember that what is commonly considered the linguistic turn emerged in the 1960s as a movement with Rorty’s book The Linguistic Turn (1967). If we take a look at a conventional narrative of the history of philosophy of history, it emerged with the publication of Hayden White’s (1973) Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of 19th-Century Europe, which has been called “narratvism” a term created by William Dray (1971). Another landmark publication is Frank Ankersmit’s (1983) Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian’s Language. Veronica Tozzi points out that it was “a movement that involves a strong questioning of the assumptions of ‘academic’ historiography” (Tozzi, 2009, p. 25). In general terms, narrativism can be considered a shift regarding the scientific status of historiography, highlighting that historical writing has various literary tropes and features that come from literature. Historians produce texts which are not evaluable only by empirical considerations.

The paths through which the linguistic turn unfolded in the historiographic tradition vary from place to place. However, the heritage of the linguistic turn still seems to be in dispute in the academic space of historians, on a global scale. It is necessary to be clear that within the scope of the Theory of History,

the linguistic turn is widely disseminated, influencing publications and the organization of events.[2] At the same time, it is worth noting that from the beginning the linguistic turn received a wide variety of criticisms from the community of historians, which have already been mapped out in multiple publications across different nationalities and whose contributions have often been characterized as relativist or postmodern. There are many publications allowing for this heritage and providing clear sentences in favor of and contrary to the legacy of narrativism. Ankersmit (2009), for instance, considers narrativism as a heritage to be debated and deeply analyzed, focusing on Hayden White. In another way, Kuukkanen (2015) emphasizes that it is possible to discard the absolutist truth-functional assessment of interpretations in historiography and ponder that historiography can be evaluated by rational standards. Hans Kellner (2025) seems to understand that there is no "after" the linguistic turn, considering that the questions raised by narrativism continue to move the contemporary debate. Kellner is looking for a third way from Practical Past to the impractical past "that respects the openness of lived experience to the innumerable possibilities" of the past as historical sublime.[3] Roth (2025) seems to agree with Kellner about the critique of the idea of an "after" of the linguistic turn, considering that the old question about the status of discipline (if it is art or science) and about justification remains unanswered. He emphasizes that the metatheoretical problems raised by the linguistic turn were ignored.[4] Contrarily, Hayden White's heritage is questioned by contemporary historians dedicated to thinking about the relationship between History and Literature. For instance, Ivan Jablonka ends up emphasizing too much that there was a confusion between history and literature on the part of the authors he calls postmodern. He has a negative vision of narrativism, especially highlighting it as responsible for abolishing the truth in the historical field.[5]

Although there is no doubt that the legacy of narrativism is recognized, the research agenda has changed. Since the 1990s and 2000s, the main topics have been the Anthropocene, the digital Humanities, political theory, and others. In "Mapping Theory of History after the Linguistic Turn: New Realism and the Epistemic Approach", Eugen Zelenák describes what he calls the new agenda and the heritage of the linguistic turn related to his conception of new realism.[6]

The first step to better understand the argument is to follow Eugene Zelenák's reflection when he seeks to address the new map related to the theme of historical knowledge. Zeleňák is focusing on how contemporary debates on historiography led the historical field to rethink its origins. He and many others denominate the movement as the post-linguistic turn to highlight the decline of the linguistic turn and the desire to search for new ways to develop consideration of historiography. He chooses two of them: new realism and the

epistemic approach, especially because “their proponents directly respond to certain views debated within the linguistic turn and narrativism.” (Zeleňák, 2025, p. 11). The first one, new realism engages (again) with an ontology of the past as an independently existence and criticizes anti-realism, which could be called the text-only focus of narrativism, and it grounds historical knowledge in material reality – historical facts and ontology. The epistemic approach focuses on knowledge as a process, moving away from metaphysical debates and focuses on how historical knowledge is built. There are a bunch of different perspectives, and it appraises pragmatism, non-representationalism, and how epistemic communities build and justify historical truth. Indeed, historical truth is not a static reflection of reality, but a dynamic product of social relationships and epistemic communities.

This type of thinking suggests an ethical reflection within history and must be oriented beyond its perception as disciplinary history, without abandoning its foundations.[7] But it is not exactly the exhausted previous one; contrarily, the paper would like to suggest the current relevance of narrativism to approaches transcending humanistically oriented history. Besides the influence of narrativist philosophy, and specifically Hayden White, in contemporary philosophy of history, historians dedicated to thinking about the decay of the anthropocentric paradigm have paid little attention to the debates on language. Talking about his “map” on contemporary philosophy of history, Kuukkanen affirms “… language plays a far smaller role in posthumanist adaptations (Domańska, Tamm and Simon) as well as in applications of large-scale models to history in a more traditional form (Tucker), if in any notable role at all.” (Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 7) He quoted Frank Ankersmit’s affirmation: “We seem to be moving from the literary approach to a new substantive philosophy of history, decentering the human from the perspective of the Anthropocene. Well, quite a revolution.” (Ankersmit apud Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 7)

Indeed, a name that cannot be forgotten is Ewa Domanska and her research on the relationship between posthumanistic studies and historical studies. Ewa Domańska’s book, *A história para além do humano (*2024), affirms: history is a form of anthropocentric knowledge rooted in Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures. In general terms, Domanska draws our attention to the remarkable topics in the new scenario of the Humanities. She manages to synchronize an agenda in the field of the Theory of History with the most recent discussions about the field of Humanities, especially the debates on New Materialisms, Philosophy oriented to objects, and the critique of modernity as science, as Bruno Latour (2017) points out in her “The Paradigm Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences”. She uses Thomas Kuhn’s term of “paradigm shift” from The Structure of Scientific Revolutions to indicate that science advances not by accumulation but through periods of revolutionary changes. She argues that we are living a

deep transformation of concepts, methods, and assumptions in the humanities, especially by the decadence of the anthropocentric references in the Social Sciences.

The paper agrees with her consideration that when progressive representatives of theorists of history write of the future of theory and philosophy of history, they forget trends that are transforming the broader view of the humanities. For instance, Berber Bervenage’s (2013) propositions on the “paradigm shift” and “the dialogue between philosophers of history and the non-academic engagements with the past” are much more a change of focus than a new proposition for the academic way to make history. Several aspects allow me to concur with Ewa Domanska's postulations that we need a history that allows us to reinforce a more open type of knowledge that embraces contemporary challenges to “reinforcing a feeling of ‘shared humanity’ and species solidarity…” (Domanska, 2021, p. 185). She emphasizes that recent debates about life sciences, much more than innovations internal to the academic disciplines of Natural Sciences, have enabled greater openness to the discipline of History. Therefore, for her, we must think of historical knowledge as aimed at the future. “History is also becoming more future-friendly, that is, oriented towards creating knowledge about the past which has significant value for the future.” (Domanska, 2021, p. 185) This argument does not occur voluntarily; however, it occurs through a critique of the theory of knowledge mobilized by the Humanities, in general, centered on the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm. “In terms of epistemology, the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm has promoted interdisciplinary approaches and epistemological relativism, the theory of the situational subject of knowledge (i.e., its subjectivity) and reflexivity, and has emphasized the pertinency of interpretation rather than its truth.” (Domanska, 2021, 188) Or, in another passage, she argues that these changes “… are viewed by many with scepticism; there has indeed been a definite shift from the constructivist and interpretive paradigm to the ecological paradigm, which is marked by criticism of anthropocentrism …” (Domanska, 2021, p. 182)

Domanska's theoretical approach is focused on proposing a transition from “From Textualism to (New) Materialism” (Domanska, 2021, p. 189), as a way of recommending renewed attention to the new agenda of themes and debates arising from what she considers a change in the field of humanities. However, perhaps it is in this place that his most specific contribution is established, marked by the search to overcome studies associated with the debate on narrative. “Hence today’s interest in ontology, the empirical matter. Hence also the absence or occasional presence in the avant-garde scholarship I am reading today of concepts like discourse, text or narrative” (Domanska, 2021, 189) Her argument is built on readings of what has been called New Materialism, especially Diana Coole and Samantha Frost with their

book *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (2010). It is possible to agree with one of the central theses of the book that "The dominant constructivist orientation to social analysis is inadequate for thinking about matter, materiality, and politics in ways that do justice to the contemporary context of biopolitics and global political economy." (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 6) Neverthe-less, a series of linked reflections seems to have been left aside, and even invested in criticizing everything that has been produced in the field of Humanities, especially in the argumentative construction of different authors. Ewa Domanska comprehends this debate in multiple aspects: firstly, we agree that "…the vertical model of knowledge is being replaced by the horizontal model as what are known as flat alternatives and/or relational approaches grow in importance." (Domanska, 2021, 191) Furthermore, it is possible to see that we are experiencing a new theoretical situation in which "In this context the idea of hierarchy is being replaced with that of symmetry" (Domanska, 2021, p. 192).

Marek Tamm and Simon in "More-Than-Human History" consider that the Anthropocene must open space for new theoretical perspectives, especially with regard to temporality. They go through the notion of multiscalar time (a proposition that has existed for many years in historiography) and make an appeal for a new research agenda.[8] Both authors presuppose a new agenda for the work of historians but end up emphasizing a thematic expansion as in the following excerpt: "What we can do here in place of a conclusion is to offer a few intriguing themes deriving from the challenges we touched upon in this chapter, themes that most certainly gesture towards the possibility of the new philosophy of history." (Tamm & Simon, 2021, p. 214) This excessive thematic approach has resulted in limited engagement with perspectives from other fields of knowledge, particularly those traditionally associated with the arts, that also address the challenges posed by climate change. It is noteworthy that debates conventionally framed in terms of the relationship between History and Literature, or History and Fiction, have proven especially productive in advancing discussions on the Anthropocene. This is the next step in the argument of this article.

Before that, however, it is worth highlighting that Ewa Domanska's path is bolder. Domanska uses a peculiar procedure: she is constantly reading authors from the fields of Anthropology and life sciences so that they come into contact with the production of historians. When she highlights in her article the concepts that deserve relevance, such as "entanglement, flat alternatives and the idea of Symmetry" (Domanska, 2021, p. 191), her intention to overcome an older vocabulary used by studies associated with textualism in the Theory of History becomes clear. What seems problematic in Domanska's conception is the emphasis given to the refusal of what she considers textualism, which often seems to be confused with the heritage of the linguistic turn. It is worth

noting that, in this same article, she highlights some suggestive historians from the legacy left by the linguistic turn. She emphasizes that Ethan Kleinberg's proposals (a Jacques Derrida reader) and Hayden White's Practical History are fundamental to finding a new path for “The Paradigm Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences,” as she calls the change in social sciences and historical studies. Despite this, there is a refusal to provide a suggestive bibliography regarding the debates surrounding this paradigm shift, arising from studies in arts and philosophy, which has been almost entirely ignored in the field of historical studies.

I believe that the mobilization of these authors can present a new path beyond those associated only with the Practical Past theme or related to deconstruction. They still remain linked to the debate regarding the impact of language in the field of humanities, according to the central argument proposed by Richard Rorty, but now embracing the new horizon that opens with the theme of the Anthropocene. So, I think that we must continue to believe that the reflection on language and realism must be put in the scene. If we continue to think with Veronica Tozzi Thompson that “narrativist theorists, almost without exception, have both acknowledged and contributed to pointing out the limitations of an epistemology traditionally conceived in terms of the natural sciences” (Tozzi, 3), the paradigm shift in the Humanities cannot be forgotten in the discussion. Domanska, and also Tamm and Simon, have a merit to decenter both historiography and philosophy of history as exclusively human or just focused on our conventional images from Western humanity. Specially Domanska criticizes the “interpretivist-constructivist paradigm”, a broad framework that combines interpretivism (the conception that social reality can be understood by interpreting meanings and actions) and constructivism that she rejects as that social reality as not simply discovered but constructed through language culture, history by social interaction. She is arguing for a new paradigm when the knowledge critiques and/or rejects humans’ central position in the world using intuition and illuminations about the future. Nevertheless, she also rejects narrativism and postnarrativism (which does not reject the importance of language or the linguistic turn but maintains the insight that history is linguistically mediated while shifting attention to argumentation rather than narrative), and the paper suggests that her work will benefit from insights coming from literary theory, especially impacting the writing of history.

Literary Theory and the “More-than-Human” History

The article is perceiving the multifaceted and non-hierarchical relationship between Anthropology, History and Literature in contemporary Literary Theory, to think about philosophy of history and Theory of History. It intends to provide arguments about temporality and narrative, particularly attentive to the critique of anthropocentrism, implying ways of thinking about what has

been called “More-than-Human” History. In general, the proposition calls into question the concept of Nature as a background and resource for man’s moral intentionality, which could tame and dominate Nature (Tsing, 2015).

When we pay attention to publications from recent decades, in the field of philosophy and literature, we can find new openings for the historical studies focusing on what has been called the critic to the anthropocentrism particularly paying attention to the debate on language forgotten by historians as Ewa Domanska (2024; 2021) and Simmon (2019). Firstly, I highlight Val Plumwood’s book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* when it outlines the link between our current moment of climate challenges and the stories we tell about the world in which we live. She is the first to emphasize that the climate crisis is largely the product of a particular story we tell ourselves, and that a different story is likely to help change the attitudes and behaviors that got us here. Many scholars of the climate issue within the Humanities began to work on Plumwood's statement. In *L’Evénement Anthropocène: La Terre, l’histoire et nous,* Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressouz cry out for a work that “rethink our worldviews and our ways to inhabit the Earth” (Bonneuil and Fressouz, 2016: 12). Both start from the limitation of scientific works to reach the general public and highlight the importance of narratives, especially historical narratives, to mobilize public opinion. Greg Garrard, Gary Handwerk, and Sabine Wilke make similar claims in an essay in the Environmental Humanities collection called “Imagining Anew” (2014). They consider that the humanities have a central role in the aesthetic discussion about the ability to attract attention to the issue of environmental devastation. They follow the path outlined by other theorists that engagement in the narrative can both generate modes of destruction and enable the existence of ways of living that are more responsible for the planet. For these scholars, the relationship between the humanities and environmentalism is a study project on narrative: which types of narratives can foster responsible actions weathering the storm of the climate crisis?

A group of scholars claims that it was inadequate narratives that generated the historical climate of fear in the Anthropocene; Ursula Heise (2016) considers that researchers and artists have a central role in promoting new narratives. They, however, disagree about the potential for a “salvific” narrative to be able to put humanity’s destiny back on track. At issue, for this group of thinkers, is the ability of narrative to stretch to accommodate non-human perspectives and vast possibilities of time and space. They suggest that narrative, with its emphasis on citizens' stories, simply cannot represent geological time, planetary space, and the experiences of nonhuman and even inorganic creatures. Here, there are excesses, impasses, and many differences about what can or should be understood as a salvific narrative about the past, influencing the future of Humanity or, at least, hindering our

perception of what we can understand as the future of the catastrophe. Claire Colebrook articulates this argument in *Death of the PostHuman* (2014), when she defends what she calls a "post-Anthropocene point of view" (Colebrook, 2014, p. 24). Humans need a new way of imagining and interacting with the world that takes non-human perspectives seriously, precisely because the Anthropocene was created by human blindness. We should "look positively at the inhuman" instead of "repairing a human vision linked to the current direction of the world" (Colebrook, 2014, p. 32). For Colebrook, this means seeking alternatives to established ways of imagining narratives and communicating. Colebrook's understanding of narrative is more suggestive than that of scholars such as Heise and Plumwood. She argues that global climate change requires alternatives to the forms of conventional, human-focused narratives and knowledge that "were necessary to think of man as a species emerging in time" (Colebrook, 2014, p. 10) on the way to the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species.*

Timothy Morton offers a distinctive contribution to Anthropocene debates by advancing a series of insights that illuminate the role of narrative in conceptualizing ecological crises. Like Colebrook, Morton is searching for forms of narrative representation that can move humans beyond anthropocentrism. He argues that thinking about the Anthropocene is the great challenge, "philosophy now has the task of updating human thought with this new reality" (Morton, 2013: 37). Both Colebrook and Morton emphasize that art that understands itself as a response to the Anthropocene cannot maintain the status quo. Instead, art in this era may "just be an uncomfortable collaboration between humans and nonhumans, not a purely human exploration of access to nonhumans…" (Morton, 2013, p. 50). Morton argues that a more responsible way of living in the Anthropocene depends on new representations of that world. But his stance differs from Plumwood, Heise and their peers when they argue that art deals with what is beyond the reach of the human imagination – what, in fact, I prefer to call the human scale. Morton's proposal highlights "hyperobjects" or "things that are massively distributed in time and space in relation to humans", such as climate change, nuclear radiation, plate tectonics, the biosphere and evolution (Morton, 2013, p. 1). It is worth remembering that global warming imposes the need to think simultaneously on three scales: the history of the Earth as a geological and biological system; the history of life on Earth and the evolution of species, including the human race; and the more recent history of the technical-industrial and economic development of the capitalist system (Chakrabarty, 2013, p. 1). Or, as Timothy Morton (2013) argues, the challenge of art is to engage with the "immense finitude" of these "hyperobjects", which operate on a scale that is difficult to estimate (Morton, 2013: 5). Morton has a paradoxical relationship with realism mainly because hyperobjects are real, but it challenges our conventions to comprehended realism. In other words, he

reinforces the critic of representation and its relationship with realism. He acts as the same way of Hayden White's (2007) trying to understand how a historical narrative produce meaning from real events and the relationship between historical realism and possibilities imagine the future.

These readings may be organized into the following typology. Whereas Heise and like-minded scholars advocate the search for a salvific mode of narrative, critics of narrative anthropocentrism, such as Colebrook and Morton, contend that critical attention should instead be directed toward exploring the limits of the human imagination. Timothy Clark (2015) can be placed between this last group. Like Colebrook and Morton, Clark ponders the precepts that make a narrative credible to people, and this option, in itself, is a specific challenge to the theme of the Anthropocene. For Clark, research should not assume a direct link between a narrative and its ability to change the attitudes, values, and behaviors of readers' lives, nor that there is a morally correct narrative to combat behaviors that produced the Anthropocene. It is about investing in narratives that allow new perspectives and self-reflection on values facing the real threat of catastrophe. There are varied perceptions of what we define as the privileged form of narrative, influencing the considerations of what we should understand as the Anthropocene.

Amitav Ghosh's (2016) considerations present a change in these arguments. According to him, the canonical forms of Western modernism, such as the realistic novel and abstract art, were of fundamental importance in establishing the primacy of the "current/everyday affairs" of humans in relation to their involvement, both short and long term, with cosmic forces. The novel has been little concerned with environmental issues since its birth in modernity due to faith in Science and the desire to fully control Nature. The phrase "novel about climate change", for him, is an oxymoron, as he understands the novel as incapable of representing global warming. He argues that climate events are a major problem for fiction writers, as the very form of the novel, in its interest in individual human lives, depends on a certain predictability that conceals the "unheard-of and the improbable" (Ghosh, 2016, p. 27). The fault lies not with the authors but with the form itself.

It is understandable to say that the novel has been little concerned with environmental issues since its birth in modern times due to faith in Science and the desire to control Nature completely. Nevertheless, the paper argues that Ghosh's statement must be nuanced, as he has a narrow view of what it means to narrate climate change as merely the depiction of natural events that cause devastation for the characters. It is notable in this discussion, especially in Ghosh, the absence of authors of narrative theories. The paper argues that Anthropocene studies would benefit from a stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of narrative theory and literary theory. This engagement will not only illuminate the specific ways in which narrative has

formally adapted to the new times, spaces, and perspectives of the Anthropocene, but also speculate about what the possibilities might be for structuring a new epoch. Especially when we pay attention to narratology (as Ursula K. Heise, Tymoth Morton and Colebrook considers) the debate about temporality is much more qualified. For instance, Gerard Genette (1972) distinction between story (the events that happen) and discourse (the way discourse is presented) helps to do a clear perception of multiscale time in narrative. Literary production over time acts in performativity in the work and manifests itself as a becoming, being part of the work in performance. Temporality, therefore, is not only related to descriptive or explanatory language but also to the performative qualities of the arts. It is not about environmentalism, but about maintaining attention to the complexity of transits, in a scenario of catastrophe, between what defines historicity and the articulation to the local in our planetary era (Chakrabarty, 2021: 18). Reading from the planet does not mean giving up the particular, but to highlight the complexity of the world and its entanglement of humans and non-humans.

To develop these propositions in an evocative manner, the much-discussed concept of "more-than-human history" ought to pay closer attention to insights from literary theory. In this way, it would be possible to move beyond arguments grounded solely in concepts – as the excessive repetition of the Anthropocene concept sometimes compels us to do – and instead draw upon literary figures and artistic images to capture the historicity of the past and the ways we imagine the future. In the tradition of literary theory, Bakhtin’s (1973) proposition of choronotope intends to provide a literary way to connect time and space in order to read novels. The paper's intention is to provide new uses for the chronotope beyond its common use just to read one or another scene in the novels. Although it is an interesting proposition, scholars dedicated to research on climate crisis and Anthropocene have not paid attention to this kind of literary proposition. In the historical studies, Simmon (2019) considers that the “unprecedented change” is not a theme for rethinking historical imagination and it is much more a challenge for our experience of time. In comparative literature, Amitav Ghosh (2016) argues that the climate crisis is not only an environmental problem with its material stuffs, but a failure of imagination due to the conventions of the nineteenth-century realist novel.[9] Nevertheless, he does not work with literary studies or chronotope as a possibility to do novel’s readings or what he is calling by the great derangement.

One suggestive way is Mary Louise Pratt’s book Planetary Longings. Drawing on the Bakhtinian legacy, speaks of the Anthropocene as a “chronotope” articulated from the point of view of a future of extinction, thus challenging not only accepted ideas of progress, but the very place of the human in “planetary

imaginaries". (Pratt, 2022: 26). She mobilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope" as a way to understand how literature, culture, and history organize experiences of space and time (the cornerstone of Bakhtin's concept). "Hence, it is also illuminating to think of Anthropocene as what narrative theorist Mikhail Bakhtin called a chronotope, a particular configuration of time and space that generates stories through which a society can examine itself." (Pratt, 2022, p. 120) Nevertheless, Pratt's book is not a single application of "chronotope"; she proposes an extension of this literary concept to analyzes environmental crisis and politics providing a critic to the concept of globalization. Pratt has interesting insights about some contemporary novels, such as Diamela Eltit's *Los vigilantes*, Mario Bellatin's *Salón de belleza,* César Aira's *La Villa* and others. Besides that, Pratt's use of chronotope regarding the environmental crisis considers how the decolonial approach can help us to design new possibilities. The paper intends to advance the debate in a specific way by the use of chronotope in the historical studies, not only to read novels through the Bakhtin framework (1973) but also to be much more sensitive to the multiple layers of time, especially the deep time of entanglement between humans and non-humans. The choronotope (and its proper relationship between space and time as images and rhetorical figures) seems to be an alternative and a more adequate way to figure the slow passage of time of the deep time in our "More-Than-Human" History. Chronotope is also informed by cultural politics of the present, and it informs our perceptions of the future. Nevertheless, chronotope is not only useful to perceive new horizons but also to explore the unrealized potential in the past. I am also promoting the idea of potential history proposed by Ariella Azoulay (2013). Nevertheless, the paper agrees with Hans Kellner's "Impractical Past" (2025) considerations about the multiple possibilities of the future that exist in the present that was disciplined by the desublimation of the past of professional history. He argues in favor of "sideshadows" to help us perceive the non-events, the undeveloped potentialities. Hans Kellner embraces the legacy of the linguistic turn, emphasizes the work with language to be undertaken by historians, and expands the horizons of possible futures with his "Impractical Past." I believe it is possible to argue that chronotopes are not rigid like concepts; rather, they are closer to literary images capable of opening up futures within both the present and the past. The Cronotope provides an openness of figuration of the past (and not a concept) and another kind of debate not only with Human Sciences, as Ewa Domanska (2024; 2021) and Simmon and Tamm (2021) do, but a debate with literary theory. In general, they are looking for new concepts; as Ewa Domanska affirms "The humanities need a new metalanguage, which cannot be created without rehabilitating the concepts that exist within tradition, on the one hand, and generating new ones, on the other." (Domanska, 2021, p. 185) The paper prefers to focus on looking for new images about the future that cannot be reduced to concepts as so common in the decolonial approach to do with the potential history.

Chronotope in history helps us with our potential histories, not to "come to terms with the past" as especially Adorno highlights, but to manifest the desire for the future beyond the elaboration of concepts typical of Human Sciences.

Indeed, I also would like to provide a critique of Pratt's book not by its inefficacy, but by the overture of her insights to historical studies and what has been called "More-than-Human" History. Originally, Bakhtin highlights the inherent connection between temporal and spatial relationships in narrative, particularly in his essay Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel (1973). In other words, Bakhtin's question is about how and what chronotope organizes a novel, and the critic also does this, highlighting the historicity of artworks, mainly novels. Pratt's concern is about the temporal and spatial imagination that organizes colonial modernity, arguing that chronotopes historically create ways of inhabiting the world as we know it. She connects the idea of chronotope with the concept of planetarity and opens new doors in Chakrabarty's reflections on the humanities. Pratt's idea of the end still remains so tied to the propositions of the catastrophic events as a representation of the relationship between climate crisis and temporality. Besides that, Pratt's book does not pay attention to the multi-scalar time and the slow geological time. I suggest that the chronotope can provide new ways to think about the "More-Than-Human" history not only about the connection between space and time but also about historical realism. Talking about realism, Ghosh (2016) considers that events are unbelievable because realist storytelling turns away from gigantic events. Ghosh (and also Pratt) is tied to the concept of historical realism as a condition to represent climate crisis as unheard-of events or catastrophe. Reading contemporary literary theory about climate crisis and the Anthropocene allows us to perceive a remarkable aspect for the studies of historical narrative: it is not just about emphasizing that each version of the past will be partially delimited by the question posed (which is a hermeneutic proposition), but that narrativizing the past, giving it the form of a story or giving it form to a sequence, has an ethical value that is undervalued by professional history. For instance, Tamm and Simmon's essay (2021) on "more-Than-Human" History does not conceive a specific reflection on narrative to think about what they call an emergence of a new paradigm in a direction toward new possibilities of the historical field.

The paper seeks to reaffirm that Anthropocene studies would benefit from stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of literary theory, especially about the relationship between narrative and temporality. It will allow us to understand how narrativism and its connection to new paradigms provide careful attention to the relationship between humans. Furthermore, the paper suggests a critical distance from the rhetorical strategies commonly associated with postmodern writers or postmodernism. As Amy Elias (2001) considers, metafiction constituted a central feature of postmodernism, yet

historiographical scholarship has tended to overemphasize this aspect of literary production as metafiction. Many authors consider our new epoch as if it is a primary Ewa Domanska's intuition, but she does not qualify it beyond the shifting from interpretativist paradigm to ecological paradigm. Contemporary literary theory does not focus on metafiction as a way to question historical realism to do a profound crisis with the idea of history, as Amy Elias (2001) suggests. I prefer to argue that contemporary climate novels question historical and narrative realism, focusing on the challenges of the representation of these hyperobjects. It also puts in question the conventional idea of historical representation, not using metafiction but multiscale procedures to highlight that these hyperobjects cannot be represented, as Tymoth Morton affirms. The non-representation claims about the presence of language in the narrative are also a contemporary question to the historical field excessively tied to the idea of historical realism. Especially under conditions in which there is no discernible plot or when ellipsis becomes a central feature of the narrative, it becomes more difficult to perceive this intention to question the past as historical construction. If we look at recent studies on literary theory, this analysis disagrees with an author like Amitav Ghosh, for whom thinking about the climate crisis means presenting characters vulnerable to abrupt changes in Nature. Moreover, this option does not reinforce the use of metafiction in narrative, but it suggests new possibilities for the future beyond historical realism, providing new options to the historian's craft.

Conclusion

The paper seeks to reaffirm that Anthropocene studies would benefit from stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of literary theory, especially about the relationship between narrative and temporality. It will allow us to understand how narrativism and its connection to new paradigms provide careful attention to the relationship between humans and non-humans, expressing as insufficient Marc Bloch's definition of history as "the study of people in time" in his Historian's Craft. Literary theory does not deny the historicity of artworks. It helps us to demonstrate what it means to be human not only in a cultural sense but also as a species, as Chakrabarty (2015) considers. Still, it also seeks to explore how historical studies can contribute to thinking through the impasses of our time – often framed in apocalyptic terms as the "end of the world" – while opening space to imagine alternative futures not only in the present but also about the past (following Hans Kellner's (2025) proposition). Historical studies in the Anthropocene are not only related to concepts or looking for new concepts as a way to build a new conception of history, an aspect highlighted by Tamm and Simon (2020), but also to the

performative qualities of the literary and their reverberation in terms of epistemology and criticism of historical knowledge.

The most specific contribution is that all the authors highlighted in this critical reading oppose a "representationalist" view of the past or of the possibilities for envisioning the future. This entails a valuable approach to writing about the past—specifically suggesting that historical writing can incorporate rhetorical strategies from literature to create a depiction of the past capable of addressing these hyperobjects, as Tymoth Morton underlines without believing in the representation of the past. Morton can contribute to the historians because he does not believe in the realistic historical representation of the multiscale temporality of the hyperobjects. Drawing on literary theory (and also the chronotope) also aids in critiquing the historical realism that still pervades historical writing, especially regarding the climate crisis. It is worth noting that Hayden White’s work emphasized the opposition between historical realism and Utopia, considering that the so-called "objective" historical realism is largely a construct. Thus, I believe it is possible to highlight that literary theory and its critique of historical realism in the Anthropocene can help us imagine more promising futures and a complex temporality. When the paper mobilizes the writings of Domanska and Simon it is to state that the contribution of literary theory can help support the argument of their writings that "Thus, knowledge about the past becomes more a future-oriented knowledge that facilitates adaptation and is relevant insofar as it supports the continuation of life of various species (in both social and biological context)" (Domanska, 2021, 193). Indeed, it is understood that, beyond the expansion of the bibliography suggested by the article, an emphasis on the relationship between chronotope and historical realism can help imagine new futures.

Notes

[1] This article therefore seeks to examine temporality in the Anthropocene while also considering its implications for understanding and confronting contemporary forms of denialism. Climate and environmental denialism are understood here as central components of the interventionist agenda promoted by far-right political movements.

[2] For instance, the second conference of the International History Theory Network was held in Ouro Preto, Brazil, with the title “The Practical Past: on the advantages and disadvantages of history for life.” (2016).

[3] Hayden White commented that it was the task of nineteenth-century historical practice to effectively desublimate our knowledge of the past, thereby creating the profession of history. Hans Kellner (2025) emphasizes that “This meant not only that the poetic figuration and stylistic energies of romantic historiography and its notable predecessors would be purged in the name of the ‘real’, what actually happened, but

also that the trappings of bureaucratic, scientific, sensible endeavor were established and institutionalized." (Kellner, 2025, 45) "This is what it meant to be desublimated." (Kellner, 2025, 49)

[4] Paul Roth's work (2020) as anti-foundationalist points out that other factors as providing the primary constraints and bases for evaluation to the historical discourse.

[5] Although "History as Contemporary Literature" moves in a field opened by the linguistic turn, he issues very harsh opinions about the legacy of that debate. "Nowadays the linguistic turn is dead, but it has left the smell of the debate to linger over its body: the belief that history cannot possibly be a literary genre without immediately forfeiting its standing." (Jablonka, 2018, 87)

[6] "Eelco Runia and Frank Ankersmit reflected on experience, Herman Paul focused on virtues of historians, Giuseppina D'Oro and Jonas Ahlskog elaborated an approach emphasizing human agency, Ewa Domańska explored approaches transcending humanistically oriented history, Marek Tamm discussed issues related to memory, Zoltán Boldiszár Simon and others analyzed temporality and challenges of Anthropocene for history." (Zelenák, 2025,10)

[7] If we assume that one of the founding questions of Hayden White's work is "How should I live?" or "What is the correct way to act?", we will understand that anyone who seeks to develop answers to such questions, mobilizing historical knowledge, will face the complexity of ethical thinking. White, in "Historical Discourse and Literary Theory" (2014), argues that facts appear in some form, through some media, and that the form has its own content, contributing to what is presented — which is why some pasts can be communicated more accurately in some formats than in others.

[8] The notion of history we need includes all forms of life (multispecies history), extends deep in the past and supports the interaction and integration of multiple time scales (multiscalar history), and takes seriously the role of transformative events and disruptions on a deep timescale (noncontinuous history); at the same time, the new philosophy of history has to come to terms with an extremely broad set of interrelated questions inherent in the new notion of history. (Tamm & Simon, 2021, 213)

[9] Amitav Ghosh's proposition and his critique to realism seems so similar to Hayden White's work on History and Utopia (2008) and his critique to the historical realism.

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