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Introduction.

Unlimited? Methodological issues and challenges
of literary analysis.

Literature versus Texts.

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INTRODUCTION. LITERATURE VERSUS TEXTS

“Once near a border, it is impossible not to be involved, not to want to exorcise or transgress something. Just by being there, the border is an invitation. Come on, it whispers, step across this line. If you dare.”

KASSABOVA, Kapka. *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe*. Graywolf Press, 2017.¹

Although the two notions do not overlap completely, we have taken the liberty of using Youri Lotman’s definition of border as the starting point of our exploration of the definition of limit. Both should be understood as “a place of incessant dialogue”², a space where One and Other meet and define each other. More recently, and in keeping with an option that combines philosophical reflections with a series of empirical observations placing the limit at the heart of contemporary issues, Monique Atlan and Roger-Pol Droit published the essay entitled *Le Sens des limites* (2021)³, which proposes that the concept be considered from both a historical and a conceptual perspective. Atlan, a journalist, and Droit, a philosopher, suggest in fact there may be a crisis of limits that has almost reached an impasse, so much so that the debate seems to be dominated by one-upmanship. On the one hand, the increasingly radical temptations to erase limits are met with equally radical inducements to reinforce them, be they sexual or related to identity, species, ecology, nationalism, economics, etc. “While *Homo illimitatus* aims for fusion with the great All of ever more [and, in so doing, ‘cancels out the idea of the other’], *Homo limitans* targets separation, isolation, the Nothing of ever less [and, in so doing, ‘excludes’ the idea of the other]” (65). Because this is indeed the issue at stake: the limits of otherness correspond to those of identity. In other words, when the notion of limit is viewed in abstract terms, as an idea rather than as an empirical phenomenon, it becomes a tool that can be used to define the other and, consequently, the self. As such, it serves not so much as a concrete or abstract dividing line but rather as a space in its own right, a place for encounter and experimentation; it is a “thought-structuring tool” (184), a “negotiation zone” (212), a “workspace, a physical area, an interface that offers a platform for organising exchanges, by filtering them” (197).

In this instance, the filter is there to hold back many elements and only let through those deemed to be useful, necessary or quite simply desirable. This is the angle this publication has chosen to take, of the limit as a space for experimentation that offers a platform for thought. The same applies to the creativity of researchers

¹ All quotations in this introduction, with the exception of this one and the Damrosch quotation, are our own translations.

² Lotman, Youri. (1999). *La Sémiosphère*. Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 1999, p. 38.

³ Atlan, Monique et Roger-Pol Droit. *Le Sens des limites*. Éditions de l’Observatoire, 2021.

grappling with singular research topics because we firmly believe that limits are “stimulating” (94).

An ‘experience of limits’

Borrowing Philippe Sollers’ formulation, we intend to consider literature, its actions and subjects, taken together, as an “experience of limits”⁴, undertaken both by the writer at the time of creation and by the readers when they come face to face with the texts. Literature simultaneously witnesses and influences its time; it reflects, maps and analyses in fine detail all that it observes. Furthermore, it should be seen as an integral part of the discourses of its time, able to reflect on current questions (political, technological and cultural), revisit past realities (historical or patrimonial) and then re-examine them in a contemporary context. This involves, *inter alia*, discussing the many hurdles facing reality when limits are redrawn, crossed or exceeded. Take, for example, speculative fiction, more specifically novels dealing with the posthuman – which have been hugely popular for decades and are now a playground for endlessly negotiating the boundaries between the human and the non-human, but also the complex link between dystopia and utopia. Although this thematic aspect is of course not to be ignored, it is also important to look at how the experience of limits pushes the – generally text-based – literary object into a corner and forces it to investigate new forms of expression, be it experimenting with formats or decompartmentalising and moving beyond models deemed to be outdated or, at the very least, unsuitable for dealing with the realities they claim to address.

In this sense, limits do indeed stimulate literature in terms of how it is thought about, written and analysed. Because to talk about “literature” in an academic context, and be certain you are understood by your peers, requires a consensus on a more or less fixed, identified and *delineated* idea of what the analysis is about. If, on the one hand, the diversity and reinvention capacity of the texts can expand their sphere of action in terms of representing, symbolising and questioning reality, on the other, these same texts are likely to be exported to terrains other than the written word, other media and means of expression, which inevitably requires the persons examining them to rethink the framework used to circumscribe the literary object. Using the term “literature” confines the object of literary studies to an abstract notion befitting conceptual discussion but which threatens to eliminate the diversity of proposals that lead the researcher, let alone the reader, to renegotiate the scope of this concept and, by extension, the ways of approaching it. Anyone who studies literature does so based on cases, texts and works that entail, most often implicitly, an evaluation of how they fit into the literary category and the effectiveness and appropriateness of the methods of approach.

To paraphrase Bertrand Gervais⁵, there are two main ways to read a literary text. The first is progression, which is governed by the desire, indeed the need, to know how the fictional work ends, to know the denouement of its “narrative

⁴ Sollers, Philippe. *L'Écriture et l'Expérience des limites*. Éditions du Seuil, 1968.

⁵ Gervais, Bertrand. « Les régies de la lecture littéraire. » *Tangence*, n°36, 1992, pp. 8-18.

tension”. The second is comprehension, which entails the desire to understand the narrative, poetic, discursive and reading devices used to give the text its meaning. Described as “literary reading” (by Gervais, but also by education specialists, primarily Jean-Louis Dufays⁶), this reading model is what we will focus on in this issue. It will examine “literary reading” in the light of the methodological issues it raises, especially when the singularity of the texts alters, even slightly, the definitions commonly accepted of what is meant by literature or, more specifically, the literary (as a register or phenomenon that can be analysed). This applies to texts on paper – as the two aforementioned reading models imply – or to a plethora or diversity of other media that remove it from the book format.

Commonly accepted... Besides the onus of the theories and habitus concerning both conceptualisation and literary analysis we have inherited from academia, this acquisition of principle that permits us not to systematically question our preconceptions every time they come face to face with a new text is also related to the element of subjectivity inherent in every text we read. Although this subjectivity may be entirely personal, it also seems appropriate to draw a connection with the analytical skills and knowledge, both theoretical and methodological, readers will have acquired, which inevitably lead them to read a particular text and then a specific aspect of this text.

The aim of this thematic, or more precisely methodological, special issue is to refocus attention on the singularity of works and establish “literature” as less of a point of departure and more of an in-depth reflection, which triggers the analysis of specific as well as borderline cases. In this respect, the different contributions in this issue have sought to draw conclusions not so much from the results of the analyses carried out, but from the analytical process per se, and from the resistance of so-called “literary” texts and/or topics to the analysis methods, resulting in the need to reconsider them, and likewise sometimes to reassess the characteristics of the literary sphere itself. It is therefore not our intention to provide clear, accurate and rigid responses to the methodological challenges of literary analysis; this would be futile and counter-productive, since we assume that these challenges are constantly evolving and need to be tested in situ, i.e. in relation to the texts and their ability to unsettle those who analyse them.

Expanding the range of disciplines

It is a strange paradox that young researchers striving to become literature experts often seem to come to the conclusion in their work that it is impossible to clearly define their research topic. Perhaps this is specific to research in the humanities or artistic output? Or research that involves interpretation, i.e. an essentially creative activity that requires the adaptation and development abilities of those who embark on the task?

Research probably depends less on the topic than on the angle from which it is observed, identified and approached. The angle lies at the intersection of two

⁶ Dufays, Jean-Louis et al. *Pour une lecture littéraire. Histoire, théories, pistes pour la classe*. 3^e ed. revue et actualisée, De Boeck, 2015.

paths, which together situate it in space and determine the scope of the material it covers. To take this metaphor further, the angle from which a research topic is approached therefore results from the intersection of the methodological paths taken (the Greek μέθοδος, *methodos*, means a route to a desired end) to analyse it, and the range of disciplines they open up. Hence, when the text is created via different media, one may ask, for example, to what extent it retains its textual identity. Is it transposed? Is it altered? Is literariness redefined by the increasing predominance of the visual aspect? For researchers investigating the trajectory of a text once it has been translated, what stance should they take with regard to the translated text? To what extent is it independent from the original work and how can the distribution and reception processes be identified? Another example: how do we define a methodology for dealing with texts whose content already challenges certain conceptual limits? To what extent does a topic that blurs the boundaries between categories contaminate the formal aspect of the literary text? Will hybrid texts such as this necessarily require a hybrid approach?

We must restrict ourselves to a sample of questions, since they are so numerous and varied, and since they raise others. One thing is clear, however. Undertaking humanities research requires definitions of the notions and concepts used, the theories they are taken from, the methodology adopted, the research topic and the choice of corpus and objectives. As this work proceeds, the “defining” exercise becomes less and less like an “exact and concrete determination of the distinctive characteristics of a being” and more like a “determination of the limits of an object”⁷, be it the research itself or what it is about. Where does literature begin and where does it end? Raising this question means accepting that it can be broken down into a host of discipline-related questions and sub-questions.

The limit is hence more than a fashionable idea. It also serves a purpose. It seems to drive, justify even, changes in the conception of the notion of literature but also the way it is perceived, read and analysed... and vice versa, insofar as the conception of literature appears to evolve through the different ways in which it is read. Basing ourselves solely on Western literary theory in the last century, it is apparent that studies are moving from a belief in the unifying potential of a fluid definition of literariness, which Marghescou refers to as a “hunch that appears to be indisputably obvious and does not require explanation or theoretical justification”⁸, to a much more contextual definition that is less about saying what literature is but rather *recognising* it through its output. The field of world literature has taken this fully on board and benefits from this need for a defining gesture to address its ever-changing body of work. David Damrosch thus explains that:

A work enters into world literature by a double process: first, by being read *as* literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin. A given work can enter into world literature and then fall out of it again if it shifts beyond a threshold point along either axis, the literary or the worldly.⁹

⁷ These definitions come from *Trésor de la Langue française informatisé*.

⁸ Marghescou, Mircea. *Le Concept de littérature. Critique de la métalittérature* [1974]. Kimé, 2009, p. 19.

⁹ Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 6.

Criticism thus plays a decisive role: the literary object only exists because criticism grants it an existence that is both empirical (which enables it to be studied) and conceptual, because only an object recognised as literary is literature. Thus, critical doxa moves from more “textual”, poetic and immanent considerations to external, sociological and institutional criteria in its contemplation of the literary object. It is important, however, not to reduce this observation to positions of principle that would place criticism on one or the other side. Indeed, analysing texts, especially at a time when criticism is expected to contribute insight that is both original and reliant on the theoretical models that enabled its emergence, increasingly entails testing the limits, primarily through a combination of approaches or taking these approaches down different paths.

Consequently, being aware of their limits, it is difficult for the researcher to ignore, even partly, the basic principles of classical narratology, that of Russian formalists including Victor Chklovski (1893-1993), subsequently reinforced by landmark works by Käte Hamburger (1896-1992), Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017), Julien Greimas (1917-1992) and Gérard Genette (1930-2018). The methodological toolbox they introduced is still operational, even if it has to be incorporated into a larger, more contemporary group of theories that has been adopted, in particular, by the “postclassical” tradition propounded by theorists such as Monika Fludernik (1957) and David Herman (1962) and put into practice by Raphaël Baroni (1970), who “pleads the case for an opening up of literature, whose value can only be appreciated if a dialogue is initiated between it and other types of discourse, other media and, most importantly, other forms of relationship with the world”¹⁰. To this *basic principle*, it is certainly worth adding other contributions that gradually take the text beyond its own form: those of Julia Kristeva (1941), Harold Bloom (1930-2019) and Michel Riffatterre (1924) to the field of intertextuality (the text resonates with other texts), those of J.L. Austin (1911-1960) and John Searle (1932) to the speech act theory (the text obeys a context of enunciation and reception), the watershed contribution of H.R. Jauss (1921-1997), Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) and the Constance School in moving towards the aesthetics of reception (the text is part of a series of contingencies that influence its reception), and the vast repertoire of sociological studies heralded by the Marxist Georg Lukács (1885-1971), the most well-known of which are probably those of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) and Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) (the text reflects and influences the society that sees it emerging). When we speak about *basic principle* here, we are referring to the way in which these theories and their corresponding methods have infiltrated analytical processes: even when they are not experts on the subject, literary researchers at least have an inkling of the basics.

In 1919, when Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), founder of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ), formulated the concept of “*literaturnost*”, literariness in English, he paved the way for more than a century of debate on the limits imposed by a concept with blatant links to formalism. Similar to what Jakobson incidentally called the “poetic function” of language, literariness describes the internal characteristics of a text, its

¹⁰ Baroni, Raphaël. *Les Rouages de l'intrigue. Les outils de la narratologie postclassique pour l'analyse des textes littéraires*. Slatkine Érudition, 2017, p. 22.

form and its structure, that is, what makes it literary. Besides the tautology of the definition, the formalist went on to state, in his book *Questions de poétique*¹¹, that literariness can mainly be analysed using tools borrowed from linguistics. Although the concept does indeed have the merit of refocusing attention on the text and its construction, it removes the strictly literary dimension from the guaranteed “specificity of the literary text” because linguistics is required for its study. This provoked an immediate response from Stanley Fish and “reader-response criticism” that a literary work should be examined more in relation to its reception and the reader, paving the way for the diverse range of studies that have subsequently appeared¹².

Thus, since the inception of modern thought on the essence of the literary object, there has been a broadening of the angle of approach. Thomas Aron, while reflecting on the concept of “literariness” and its development (still in Jakobson’s texts but also in those written by Todorov¹³ and Marghescou¹⁴), noted that the fragile epistemological basis of the concept raised many questions that, over time, have become increasingly complex as the object itself has evolved:

It is, in part at least, because the answers to these questions are far from unanimous that the study of literary texts today cuts across several disciplines: poetics, semiotics (which can be further divided into, for example, literary, textual, poetic and narrative semiotics), discourse analysis, narratology, discourse semantics, sociocriticism, etc., not to mention stylistics and rhetoric [...].¹⁵

These remarks date back nearly forty years, so naturally need to be updated: in response to ever-more complex factors that facilitate an approach to reality, the growing number of disciplines (of all types) is accompanied by an even more impressive increase in the number of combinations that are meant to shed new or original light on a subject. Literature is no exception: even before the notion of literariness came into play, literature could only be studied and taught by placing it back in its historical context, as though this was a compulsory route, even when it was not yet a discipline in its own right (evidence can be found in Germaine de Staël’s *De la littérature*, 1800, and, to a lesser extent, in her book *De l’Allemagne*, 1810). While it is obvious that a historical framework (chronological but also political, social and cultural) remains a vital component of literary studies, it is increasingly used as a gateway to explore other approaches. Taking this further, the convergence of disciplines can take unexpected paths, as shown, for example, by Arnaud Rykner’s article on the quantum system that can be observed in the texts of Marguerite Duras¹⁶, the interdisciplinary project led by the University of Sherbrooke, which

¹¹ Jakobson, Roman. *Questions de poétique*. Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 222.

¹² Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class?* Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 303-321.

¹³ Todorov, Tzvetan. *Théorie de la littérature*. Éditions du Seuil, 1965.

¹⁴ Marghescou, Mircea. *Le Concept de littérarité. Critique de la métalittérature* [1974]. Kimé, 2009. Already mentioned above.

¹⁵ Aron, Thomas. *Littérature et littérarité. Un essai de mise au point*. Les Belles Lettres (Annales littéraires de l’Université de Besançon, n°292), 1984, p. 11.

¹⁶ Rykner, Arnaud. « L’univers quantique de Marguerite Duras et la critique des dispositifs », in : Ahlstedt, Eva et Catherine Bouthors-Paillart (dir.). *Marguerite Duras et la pensée contemporaine*. Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 2008, pp. 181-193.

combines mathematics and literature for educational purposes¹⁷, and the article by Maria de Jesus Cabral, which reflects on the specific position of literature “at the confluence of disciplines”¹⁸, those related to medicine in this instance. The fact that she uses the term “confluence” is representative of an approach that favours the convergence of different disciplines to the point of blurring, or at least softening, the boundaries between them. She goes on to discuss the different methods that permit this dialogue (co-, pluri- and multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, etc.) and to opt for the term interdisciplinarity, which targets an “integrated approach”¹⁹ capable of initiating a process of “bringing together at least two disciplines with a view to presenting a concept, situation or issue from a completely new angle”²⁰.

The main effect of this “integrated approach”, as opposed to others that are more akin to simple juxtapositions, is that the disciplinary field in question is enhanced by the contributions of other disciplines with which it comes into contact. The fact remains, however, that interdisciplinarity – as the word clearly indicates – can be found *between* disciplines, whereas a transdisciplinary approach seeks to cross disciplines, going beyond their limits and bringing to the scientific process the same decompartmentalisation it observes in the situations it studies. In both cases, putting them into practice requires scientists to try them out in the field rather than in a lecture theatre: the ingenuity, methodological in this instance, lies therefore in not simply determining the ideal angle of approach, but in combining the most favourable and most appropriate angles (because more than two routes are now explored) to best understand, with accuracy, depth, nuance and precision, the text that is being analysed.

The researchers’ intuition, their knowledge (however approximate) of the aforementioned basic principles of criticism, most often serves them as a starting point, a marker, to better guide their reading not only of literary texts but also of the critical resources they will need to leverage. These resources include the veritable plethora of *studies* that enable the use of more inclusive thinking better aligned with modern-day realities. These studies reflect Jean-François Lyotard’s postmodern diagnosis of the end of unifying (and blinkering) Grand Narratives, or Metanarratives, in favour of a more or less harmonious coexistence of “social aggregates comprising a mass of individual atoms”²¹. These works, constructed from fully fledged disciplinary fields in their own right, which cannot be reduced to the all-encompassing term “cultural studies”, complicate the analytical process in that they entail the re-evaluation of the academic habitus and the theoretical markers that it has sanctioned. Although not precluded, these markers are challenged, amended and expanded to incorporate an influx of approaches, points of view, resources, and more generally, intellectual considerations more in line with an extension of the

¹⁷ <https://www.usherbrooke.ca/litt-et-maths/>. Note that, of all the university courses seeking to develop a methodology of interdisciplinarity in both their teaching and their research, those offered by Quebec’s universities stand out for their profusion of offerings and publications.

¹⁸ De Jesus Cabral, Maria. « La littérature au confluent des disciplines. L’exemple des rapports avec la médecine. » *Cadernos de literatura comparada*, n°37, « Interdisciplinaridades », 2017, pp. 11-35.

¹⁹ Clary, Maryse et Pierre Giolitto. *Profession enseignant - éduquer à l’environnement*. Hachette, 1994.

²⁰ Fourez, Gérard et al. *Approches didactiques de l’interdisciplinarité*. De Boeck Université, 2002.

²¹ Lyotard, Jean-François. *La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*. Éditions de Minuit, 1979, p. 31.

literary corpus. Thus, these studies tackle, often head-on, decolonial and/or postcolonial realities, broach the question of gender, expand the work of the French Theory, question human exceptionalism through animal studies or posthuman studies, reveal ecopoetic approaches, postulate the need for disability studies and, more generally, remove the text from its textuality (also by adding input from visual studies) to bring it face to face with the realities to which it reacts, in one way or another. This confrontation of the text and, even more so, of literature with contexts other than its own encourages us to rethink how we define its essence.

Finding one's way through a no man's land

We can now see emerging two distinct axes through which we can contemplate the links between literature, the analytical method and the experience of limits. **The first – “Experiencing the limits of literariness”** – groups together contributions that reveal the way in which the texts studied move away from an overly rigid vision of literature and consequently prompt a reappraisal of the notion of literariness. These articles therefore consider the singularity of works, i.e. their ability to be classed as literature, while broadening the category. As a result, researchers must adopt a theory and methodology that is appropriate for the text and follow the path it indicates.

The articles by Maxime Deblander and Manon Houtard question the methodological challenges posed by the expansion of the notion of a literary work. Deblander opts to analyse the critical mythology that has been built up around Arthur Rimbaud in order to better understand the poet's disruptive gesture in the light of his wider life trajectory, even if this means revisiting the position afforded him by tradition. Houtard focuses on the activity of surrealist groups in Belgium, an activity that refuses to be labelled on principle and that often goes beyond the content of texts, whose aim of impacting the mind and life inevitably raises the question of what does and does not fit in with the literary and/or poetic approach of surrealism and, more importantly, what should and should not be analysed.

Pauline Basso's contribution examines the specific case of Michel Butor's *La Grande armoire* (2016), a book comprising text and photographs relating to a large, very real wardrobe in which the writer had accumulated many objects, keepsakes and mementos of his various activities over his long life. The book not only situates these objects in an approach that is, at once but never fully, literary and museum-like, artistic, but also suggests the wardrobe should be seen as a literary object in its own right, prompting anyone who analyses it to redefine or decompartmentalise the conceptual frameworks used in their approach. Likewise, although in quite a different vein, Thomas Dedieu takes literariness beyond the textual material. He works on a corpus of video games on the subject of the Holocaust and the challenges surrounding its memory. His article demonstrates how the methodological tools borrowed from literary studies can be used to analyse the narrative, diegetic and representational devices at work in these video game productions, and how they not only engage but also fire the imagination. For Vera Höltschi, too, the textual material is found beyond the bounds of literariness. In this

instance, the methodological challenge is to explore the boundary between verbal language and body language in the ballet adaptations of Goethe's *Faust*. How is the hypertext transformed by the body movements we see on stage?

The second axis – “Texts that push the boundaries of expression” – brings together contributions that focus on texts whose content, directly in keeping with the complexity of their context of emergence, is constantly adapting and, thereby, renewing both the thematic and the poetic dimensions of its expression. Exploring new territories without leaving those of textuality, these works call for a broadening of the spectrum of methods that can be used to approach them.

In her contribution, Asseline Sel challenges the well-known risks of anachronism by examining how, and to what extent, the methodological concepts of nation and nationalism can (or cannot) be applied to Shakespeare's body of work. She specifically focuses on *Henry V* (1599), a play that lends itself particularly well to a study of these concepts because of the identity and cultural assertions it contains.

Laure Kazmierczak approaches literary works through the eyes of a translator and questions the difficulties of translating texts whose meaning lies beyond or falls short of the communicable. This applies to symbolist texts, particularly those of Maurice Maeterlinck.

Adrien Chiroux looks at works of fiction in which the subject has been redefined through the *Zeitgeist* inherited from, inter alia, the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Jung. Having explored the methodological toolbox that is generally used to investigate the pact that binds an author to his or her narrator, he points out the need to rethink of the memoir categories.

Claire Lozier explores the methodological limits in the analysis of the motif of insularity in Houellebecq's work. Her integrated approach brings together three fields in constant dialogue: geography, the literary trope and sociology. Barbara Fraipont, on the other hand, takes a zoopoetic approach to investigating the porous boundaries between humans, animals and nature in Eva Meijer's novel *De nieuwe rivier* (2020). Both opt for a resolutely transdisciplinary approach to a work of literature that invites us to rethink the relationships between the various components of the living being. As does Amaury Dehoux, whose corpus of contemporary works questions the ontological limits of human beings. *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem* (1986) by Maryse Condé and *The Possibility of an Island* (2005) by Michel Houellebecq are novels which feature beings challenging mainstream definitions of the human (the animist witch and the posthuman respectively). In his article, Dehoux demonstrates the extent to which these two works also shift the boundaries of the contemporary novel by decompartmentalising the biographical form with which the novel is usually associated.

The final word in this introduction goes to Jean Starobinski and also serves as a springboard for the analysis that follows. His theories and ours are very similar, as he reflects on the profession of researcher in an excerpt that is admittedly long, but every line of which both opens up and refines his thinking:

There is nevertheless a whole no man's land between the old disciplines (deemed too conservative) and the innovative methodological projects that promise to tighten up interpretative language. This space can be put to good use because there must be room for concern and reticence. This concern is valuable because, unless it accepts outright the assurances of some new "school", criticism can justifiably question its very purpose and its legitimate uses. It must not exclude itself from the task of questioning, which is very much part of the process. Before any widespread transfer of knowledge, writers who have gone down the criticism route must have familiarised themselves with the world of particularity: to have focused on, even lost themselves in, exceptional works, taken a step back and then returned to them. To have moved from one art form to another, compared books, paintings, films and operas that have caught their attention along the way. To have cast more than a fleeting glance at everything that, today as always, is not part of the cultural world. To have wandered aimlessly, waiting for the realisation of a goal that they are no longer willing to give up.²²

The limit here would be this no man's land in which many people nevertheless move around and "wander", this space that accommodates both to the literary text seeking (or in the grip of) renewal and to the scientific process forced to adapt its tools. We must proceed tentatively, just as we must experiment in stages: letting ourselves be guided by the text and not be concerned that we do not know in advance the detours through which it will take the analysis (unlike certain academic selection paradigms, which assess projects on the promise of results supposedly known before the research has even begun). The contributions in this special issue reveal that experimenting means also demonstrating creativity but not necessarily in the sense of Yves Landerouin's *La Critique créative*²³, which proposes academic criticism be reshaped like a work of art, a type of fiction about fiction. It means rather articulating, reiterating faith in researchers' subjective expression, which, however objectified it may be by analytical rigour and the ad hoc use of theoretical and methodological resources, finds a place for enunciation in their approach to texts, in their literary reading of these texts, even if it means that literariness can no longer be taken for granted.

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²² Starobinski, Jean. *L'œil vivant II. La Relation critique*. Gallimard, 2001, pp. 32-33.

²³ Landerouin, Yves. *La Critique créative. Une autre façon de commenter les œuvres*. Honoré Champion, 2016.