

READING ACTS

Theoretical contributions to the Literary Practice

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INTRODUCTION

The construction of meaning in a literary work

*Make sure that, reading your story, the melancholic move towards laughter, those who laugh begin doing it louder, the simple are not bothered, the discreet become amazed with the invention, the serious do not disregard it, nor the wise stop praising it.*¹

Cervantes

Although literature suffers modifications, gaining new momentum and forces, it is and will always be an irreplaceable way for men to get to know themselves and their relationship with the world.

Words, as the primary matter of literature, are a double sign where the *signified* (meaning) is the mental configuration that constitutes the internal component of the sign and the *signifier* is the auditory part. Each word, an indivisible sign, is what creates a piece of literature, its verbal message, its imaginary world, and its aesthetic values. Literary words remain open to the reader in its signifying richness, where the linguistic sign carries multiple meanings, rather than one exclusive meaning. A verse can have a literal meaning but that verse is only one part of the whole meaning and that whole meaning is polyvalent because literary language preserves and transcends, at the same time, the literality of words.

That is why we say that literary language is metaphorical by nature, since it describes things in an indirect manner rather than a direct way; it creates a plurality of meanings and its function is, instead of reproducing, representing. Symbolic language allows us to reinvent the objective world; therefore, the representative function is essential in men's life because it entails a particular character independent of signification. That particular language is what makes the representation of the real world and the dreamt one possible, by the means of literature.

Sense in a literary work is not only found in words but in the hidden values and implications. Reading is, in some way, a mystery waiting to be unveiled, given that the work remains open and incomplete and is awaiting a reader that can decipher it in a precise moment of

¹ DE CERVANTES, Miguel, *Don Quijote De La Mancha*, Primera Parte, Preliminares. Edición del IV Centenario. San Pablo, Alfaguara, 2004, p.14.

history and in their own personal way: “...*That man passed directly from the written sign to intuition, omitting the auditory sign...*”.²

With the use of inference, a reader can build the sense in a literary work as the result of a process of production and a process of recognition or comprehension. There is an author that establishes the bases and a reader that rediscovers them infinitely, and intuitively the meaning that the opening of the text reveals through its textual signifier.

Literary phenomena are signs that act as a communicative intermediary between the narrator and the reader, creating an effective element in the contribution to transform, enrich and complete the life of men. In literature, as in every semiotic system, there is an unlimited semiosis, the phenomenon by which a sign gives birth to another sign.

As such, a literary work constitutes the central object of the literary science, but we must take into consideration the theoretical issues that enable reaching it, because the science of literature requires primarily an analysing capacity aside from a special kind of sensibility: “...*The study of literature requires that those who do it have certain theoretical skills...*”.³ The whole theoretical study of literary works is an instrument of analysis in the service of the important and difficult art of reading and interpreting.

In face of the complexity of reaching the signifying potency of a literary work without surpassing the limits of the text and under the assumption that literature is a special sign, we ask ourselves: must literature be founded in Semiotics⁴ in order to reach that goal? And in that case, how can we overcome the diversity of semiotic literary theories and the formal limits that these present?

We intend to offer a series of analysing concepts that will enable us to develop the signifying potency presented by a literary work. In order to do this we have brought together the most significant semiotic theories and we articulate them, beginning with a return to the phenomenological and hermeneutic sources. This way, we can develop a method for literary investigation that will allow us to perform the reading in a creative space respecting the limits imposed by the textual signifier. We believe the opening quote at the start of the Introduction to

² BORGES, Jorge Luis “Del culto de los libros” en *Obras Completas*. Buenos Aires, Emecé Editores, 1974, p. 174.

³ KAYSER, Wolfgang, *Interpretación y Análisis de la obra literaria*. Madrid, Gredos, 1976, Introducción, p.13.

⁴ We use the term *Semiotics* to name the discipline that studies signs because in 1969 the “*International Association for Semiotic Studies*” established that the academic community should use this term to name both the Semiotic and Semiology branches.

be fundamental since we can observe that Cervantes is encouraging, precisely, each reader to find that personal space.

The particularity in literature is its fathomless richness and variety, its fantastic capacity to create worlds and its resistance to becoming incarcerated by fixed rules. Therefore, it is important to find elements in the theories, with a necessary flexibility, that enable the presence of subjectivity. This intervention cannot be whimsical, it must begin with the discovery of indexes, of observable facts, that remit to other facts that are not direct.

We have developed the following steps:

In the first chapter, we analyse the notion of sign from its roots with the classical authors, Plato and Aristotle; the important progress made by the Stoics; the fundamental theory of the sign created by Augustine of Hippo; and the conception of the sign by the modern founders, De Saussure and Peirce. We later apply the synthesis of this analysis to literature.

In the second chapter, we study the literary reality constructed symbolically with the aid of representations and interpretations materialised in literary signs. We present the particularities of these signs using Aristotle and Quintilian's Rhetorics. Furthermore, we analyse the influence of the hermeneutic branch in the interpretation of transposed meaning.

In the third chapter, we propose Semiotics as an analysing device in order to reach that objective. We build a theoretical basis beginning with representative semiotic theories. It is not our intention to perform a recount of each and every theory nor each one of its principles, but rather to express the concepts that point to the goal of this study in particular. We want to go from the macrostructure that represents the theoretical framework to the microstructure of the particular analysis.

In the fourth chapter we present the reinterpretation of some elements of semiotic analysis. These elements were selected for being considered recurring, necessary and sufficient in order to build the significance of the literary text. We will then explain them in particular and as a weave that allows us to construct textual significance.

In the fifth and last chapter we analyse three short stories⁵ that present different interpretation difficulties.

⁵ Our interest focuses on the analysis of the narrative genre, main source of investigation in Literary Semiotics.

We aim to bring the semiotic theories, apparently rigorous and hermetic, closer to the literary works. Also, we try to surpass the formal limits of this discipline based on an interpretative opening of a hermeneutical base.

Being able to see the “shadows” in words helps us become conscious of the possibilities in creative thinking. It allows us to mentally replenish the meaning and thereby develop a healthy distrust in everything that literary language presents us as natural and denoted in order to find the connotation hidden by the metaphorical signifier. The development of this skill is fundamental in the literary field since it enables us to actualise the written text and produce new meanings.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE AS A SIGN

1. The roots of the sign in Plato and Aristotle

The question of why men have always asked themselves about signs, their way of working and the sense of representation of things is highly pertinent. Maybe anthropologist Ernst Cassirer⁶ can answer this question; in his theory, he defines men as symbolic animals and shows how they interact with representations –that is to say, signs– rather than interacting with things directly. By means of the sign, men separate from the gross perspective and abstract themselves. Without abstraction, there is no concept nor sign.

But the roots of the sign fall way back. The relationship between reality and its representations, namely between things and signs, is a concern already present in the philosophers of Classical Antiquity. The question for the sign, for its composition, classification, function and its relation with things is an uncertainty almost as old as men and the world. It is evident that the classicals had already asked themselves about the minimal unit of significance and had observed the existence of diverse types of signs, both simple and compound, and natural as conventional.

The Stoics studied non-linguistic signs and founded the Semiotic bases, but many elements of this discipline were already present in previous authors. The concepts of sign, inference, literal and transposed meaning and the problematic of meaning in the quest for the essence of things and of its way of signifying had already appeared in Parmenides, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle. In these authors we can find the basic principles of Linguistics and Semiology.

The term that the philosophical Western tradition later translated as “*signum*” and “sign” is, in Greek, *shmeion* and appears in the 6th and 5th century B.C. with Parmenides and with Hippocrates as a synonym of *tekmhrion*, test, index, symptom, given that the first difference between both terms comes up in the Aristotelian Rhetoric.

Hippocrates is not interested in linguistic signs and does not seem to apply the term “sign” to the words, which he calls “names” (*onoma*). He finds in the medics that preceded him

⁶ CASSIRER, Ernst, *Antropología filosófica*. México DF, Fondo de Cultura, 1979.

the notion of “symptom” and decides it is an erroneous sign (*semeion*) if not valued contextually. According to Parmenides, the name establishes a pseudo equivalence with reality and with that, hides it; on the contrary, the sign is an evident proof of an indifference principle. Therefore, names (words) are not signs, and signs are something different.

In Plato and Aristotle we can already distinguish in the words a difference between signifier and signified, and overall between signification and reference. Signification shows *what* a thing is and the reference *that a thing is*.

Plato formulates his Theory of Knowledge (*anámnesis*), where he ensures that the mind gets to know by the means of reminiscence the things that the soul had already forgotten. He teaches that the objects in the world are sensorial stimuli that help us reconstruct the truth through memory. Memory allows a return to the transcendental world of Ideas, which represent the superior and true reality, while the things of the world that are perceived by senses can only produce opinions of reality and, in consequence, give us an imperfect knowledge of the truth.

In *Cratylus*, he defines the sign as what refers (leads) to another thing, natural or conventionally, that is what it represents. This way, he defines the sign as the vehicle that allows the externalization of thought.

“...And given that, at the time, the soul manifests what it manifests through this one (the body), it is thereby called ‘sign’ (sêma)...”⁷

The author observes that the form of words is modified with the action of time (diachronic axis of language) and asserts that names are dangerous guides for the knowledge of things, since truth can only be found in those things. He analyses the origin of language: natural or conventional, and develops the method that reaches not only the creation of words, but the ensemble of languages. This creation is the first stage of a whole process that goes from letters to syllables and from syllables to names and to verbs, and from and for them to the discourse, laying the foundation for the first philosophy of language. Language has the same function and functioning as the other imitative arts, although its final aim is the essence of things.

The name for him is not the imitation of forms, colours or sounds, because objects also have an essence and the name is the imitation of that essence. Given that the name is composed

⁷ PLATÓN, Crátilo en *Diálogos II*. Madrid, Gredos, 1999, p. 394.

of syllables and letters, it will be the imitation of the essence of things through syllables and letters.

“...It is evident that the legislator reduced also the other notions to letters and syllables, creating a sign and a name for each one of the beings, and from here, composed the rest by the imitation of these same elements...”⁸

He also brings us closer to an actual definition of the sign by taking into consideration its mobile component, of which Peirce talks about many centuries afterwards:

“...We can affirm that names manifest the essence of the universe in the sense that this one moves, circulates, and fluctuates...”⁹

Aristotle's position contrasts with that of Plato, as he affirms that it is possible to get to know the truth, even if there are different degrees of closeness to it. Between truth and error there are spaces of uncertainty, plausibility or opinions. Rhetoric is the technique and the art of communicating with clarity the arguments and explanations that make the things we want to affirm plausible. In his *Rhetoric*, the author declares that it is possible to get to know reality through the signs that we have of it.

Language, as a dimension of the sign, allows us to express the real or essential definition of entities as represented reality, present in the soul of men. Because of that Aristotle introduces a cognitive conception of the knowledge of categories and also establishes the guidelines of the classical theory of meaning, when he analyses the relation between language, meaning, and the constitution of entities in function of an essence.

In *On Interpretation* he defines words as symbols (*sumbola*) of the soul and letters as symbols of words. For him, names are symbols, marks of recognition. The key passage to his Theory of Language is the following:

“...Spoken words are the symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are signs of spoken words. As with writing, language is never the same for all the races of men.

⁸ PLATÓN, *ibid.*, p.440.

⁹ PLATÓN, *ibid.*, p.455.

But mental affections by themselves, of which words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of humanity, as are the objects, of which those affections are representations, similarities, images, or copies... ”¹⁰

Aristotle talks of symbols, of which words and letters are a particular case. Words are formed by a relationship between three things: sounds, states of the soul and things. The second term serves as an intermediary between the first and the third, which do not communicate directly. Things are identical to themselves, always and everywhere; the states of the soul are also identical and independent of beings, united by a motivated relation where one is the image of the other. Sounds are not the same in the different nations, its relation with the states of the soul is unmotivated, one signifies the other, without being its image.

The terms of a speech must be within a context for the words to be signs of the existence of things. The signifying of something does not have truth or falseness within it, if we do not predicate in particular.

“...The name of the boat does not have just any meaning here, but as a part of a whole. We have said right now that a name signifies this or that thing by convention. No sound is by nature a name: a sound comes to be a name, becoming a symbol. Inarticulate sounds signify something, for example, the ones emitted by wild animals. But no sound of this kind is a name...” (Ibid., p. 257)¹¹

Aristotle talks about “conventional signification” in the sense that nothing is by nature a name except for when it becomes a symbol. Symbols are subdivided in names (conventional) and signs (natural).

He differentiates the *onoma* (sign that by convention signifies a thing), the *rema* (sign that includes in its signification a personal reference) and the *logos* (complete and complex sign).

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle presents the difference between human and animal sounds; these last ones cannot be combined in greater signifying units.

¹⁰ ARISTÓTELES, De la Expresión o Interpretación en *Obras*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1967, p.256.

¹¹ ARISTÓTELES, *ibid.*, p.257.

"...The letter is an indivisible voice, no matter which one it is, but being able to, because of its nature, form part of a compound sound; since animals also make indivisible sounds; but I do not give any of these the name of letter..."¹²

The states of the soul are a psychic entity, something that is not in the word but in the spirit of those who use language; that state of the soul is in no way something individual: it is identical in everyone. That entity is related to a social, and even universal, psychology, more than an individual one. The symbol is clearly defined as greater than the word; he does not analyse non-linguistic symbols nor the variety of linguistic symbols.

In Aristotle, the logical theory of the sign is presented in the *Prior Analytics*:

"...A sign is a demonstrative premise that is necessary or generally accepted. What coexists with any distinct thing, happens either before or something distinct has happened, it is a sign that it has happened or something exists..."¹³

According to Aristotle, the sign is a truncated syllogism that lacks of conclusion. For example: the fact that a woman has milk is the sign that she has given birth. Aristotle notes that for there to be a sign it is necessary to have something aside from that implicit sense but he does not specify what. He systematises the logical processes of language and analyses the rhetoric resources.

In the *Rhetoric*, the sign is understood as a principle of inference and the linguistic term "symbol" is governed by the model of equivalence. He distinguishes two categories of signs: "the necessary sign" (if he has a fever, he is sick) and "the weak sign", which is only probable (if his breathing is altered he has a fever, but it could be altered because he has run). He does not relate the Theory of Language with that of signs.

Aristotle and Plato can be found in many elements that Augustine of Hippo will come back to in his theory and that can be observed in contemporary theories. When Aristotle distinguishes the sign and the symbol, he defines the sign as a principle of indifference, a concept that Parmenides had already talked about and is essential in the Semiotics of Peirce as a method of interpretation of signs.

¹² ARISTÓTELES, *La Poética*, en *Obras*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1967, p.96.

¹³ ARISTÓTELES, *Los primeros analíticos* en *Obras*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1967, p.348.

Aristotle observes that for there to be signs, there needs to be more than the implicit meaning. The linguistic sign for him is formed with the triad: sounds, states of the soul and things, that could be the relationship between signifier, signified and referent. But he observes that the states of the soul encompass more than the meaning or concept, with the collective, social and universal meaning that can be found in the psyche and in the spirit of all men and have a motivated relation with things and unmotivated with sounds, which is the characteristic of arbitrariness pointed out by De Saussure. Aristotle defines words as symbols, as they are classified nowadays, but his theory does not seem to have decided about the classification of the symbol as a type of sign.

2. The sign in the Stoics

The Stoics focused mainly in the study of language and logic and made progress in comprehending the sign. The most important quote is found in Sextus Empiricus:

"...The Stoics say these three things come together: the signified, the signifier and the object. Of said things, the signifier is the sound, for example 'Dion'; the signified is the most minimal thing revealed and that we apprehend as something that subsists as dependent of our thoughts, but that barbarians do not understand, even when they are capable of hearing the pronounced word; while the object is what exists in the exterior: for example, Dion in person. Two of these things are physical: sound and the object, while one is mental, the signified entity, the speakable (lekton), what is true or false..."¹⁴

They distinguish in verbal language: *shmainon* (expression), *shmainomenon* (content) and *tngeanon* (referent), that is to say they repeat the triad already suggested by Plato and Aristotle but with theoretical precision.

They analyse articulation in expressions, from the simple voice, the linguistic articulate element and the word that lives only in relation to a content. The problem they notice in barbarians is that they can perceive but not recognise the psychical voice as a word because they do not know the law of correlation; therefore, they establish the provisory and unstable character

¹⁴ The study of the Stoic's thought is extremely difficult given that we only possess a few fragments of them, which have been taken from other authors. One of the important fragments is the one quoted above: Sexto Empírico, *Contra los matemáticos*, VIII, 11-12 en Todorov, *Teorías del símbolo*. Caracas, Monte Ávila, 1993, p.19.

of the signic function (the content itself can form a word with an expression of a different language).

In their eyes, the content is not an affection of the soul; for them, the content is something “incorporeal”, like a void, a place, time, actions and events. “The incorporeals” are not things but state of things, ways of being, ways of looking at things (*lekton*, speakable, something that you can express).

They speak of complete *lekton*, which refers to propositions, and then incomplete *lekta*, which are the parts, pieces that come together syntactically to form propositions. The contents are incorporeal elements expressed by linguistic forms that suffer combinations so as to produce statements that express propositions.

When they speak of sign they refer to something evident that enables the inevident to be seen. The Stoics talk about signifier and signified and mark an important advance. They compare the pair signifier-signified with the pair antecedent-consequent and observe several differences: while signified and signifier are simultaneous, antecedent and consequent are successive; the signifier is physical and the antecedent is not; the passage from the antecedent to the consequent is a logical operation.

Without doubt they represent a great advance towards Semiotic Theories due to the fact that they do not analyse linguistic signs exclusively. Within verbal language they talk about expression, content and referent, that is signified, signifier and object. The signified is the competence to designate (*lekton*) what allows sounds to refer to things and it depends on thought but cannot be confused with it, even if it is revealed by it. It is the true and the false and it represents the evocation relationship between sound and object. Moreover, in the relationship between antecedent and consequent they observe a principle of infinite semiosis.

Some centuries afterwards, in the *De Magistro*, Augustine of Hippo associates definitively the theory of signs with the theory of language and recognises the genesis of signs, among which linguistic signs are a species, like an ensign or a gesture. This happens sixteen centuries before De Saussure.

3. The theory of the sign in Augustine of Hippo

In the Middle Ages, we can find some relevant reflections concerning the sign if we look at the Christian Philosophers. The most important one is Augustine of Hippo. He situates the

Semiotic issue in the framework of a Theory of Communication, perspective already found in Aristotle, but it is him who organises a complete theory of the sign.

Augustine of Hippo was a man who was sensitive to knowledge. His studies about Grammar, Rhetoric, Philosophy and Theology bring him closer to reading and interpretation. His theory of Signification, developed all along his work, founds a Semiotic that encouraged the prosperous medieval symbolism and influenced the posterior speculations about language. His analysis anticipate in many centuries the sign theories created in the last centuries.

Saint Augustine is not considered a semiologist: his work has a religious objective and in the quest of the latter, he enunciates his theory of the sign. Nevertheless, along his life, he revises several Semiotic questions through a line of thought that gradually evolves. In relation to this topic we can highlight the texts: *Principles of Dialectics*, *On Christian Doctrine*, *De Magistro* and *On the Trinity*. But we can also find valuable elements in other texts.

In *Principles of Dialectics* there is a clear definition of the sign that will enable him to present his theory: “A sign is what is shown by itself to meaning and what, beyond itself, also shows some other thing to the spirit. Speaking is transmitting a sign with the help of an articulate sound”.

He observes that words are only some kind of sign, idea that initiates the semiotic perspective. Augustine of Hippo pushes what was said of words by Rhetoric and Semantics towards the realm of signs, where words are only types of signs, as will say De Saussure some centuries later. He articulates Semantics and Symbolics as two great modes of designation: signification and symbolisation. In addition, he extends the rhetorical category of the proper-figurative to the field of signs.

Augustine of Hippo distinguishes what we can express, which is the meaning (*decibile*), the expression, which is the signifier (*dictio*), the thing, which is the referent, and the word, which is the *verbum* that is not the sound exclusively but also the metalinguistic use of language where the word signifies for itself.

In *On the Trinity* he shows how words do not designate things directly; they only express, and not what is individual but an interior prelinguistic verb that is determined by the traces left in the soul by the objects of knowledge and immanent knowledge, whose only source can be God.

"We must arrive, then, to that verb of men (...) that is not uttered in a sound nor thought as a sound, that is necessarily implicit in all language, but previous to all the signs to which it is translated, it is born from a source of knowledge immanent to the soul, when this knowledge is expressed in an interior word, as..." (1947, p. 254)¹⁵

This human process of expression and signification, taken in its entirety, is analogous to the divine process.

"...The verb that resonates in the exterior is, then, the sign of the verb that shines within and before any other; it deserves the name of verb. What we proffer through our mouths are only the vocal expression of the verb; and if we give this expression the name of verb it is because the verb assumes it in order to translate it to the exterior. Therefore, our verb becomes, in a certain way, a material voice, assuming that voice in order to manifest to men in a sensible manner..."¹⁶

Here, the doctrine of universal symbolism, which will dominate medieval tradition, is formulated.

In *On Christian Doctrine*, we find a theory of interpretation and expression of the Christian texts. In the older part of the text (Books I-II) Saint Augustine speaks many times of the sign. He distinguishes the things that do not signify anything, such as wood or stone, and the signs, like words for example. The signs are perceived by our senses but also awaken an idea in us. They can be natural or conventional. Between the natural signs there is no intention, while acquired signs search to signal something with intention. He also distinguishes figurative and proper signs; he notices that it is possible for a thing to look like a sign in many ways, and evokes the Aristotelian distinction of metaphorical and proper words present in the *Rhetoric*.

He also analyses meaning and signification in *On Order* and *De Magistro*.

Following Saint Ambrose, he inquires over the implicit meaning in words. He thinks, like Cicero, that a translation or metaphor receives attention because it neglects what is close and chooses instead what is distant; the spirit makes itself worthy.

¹⁵ SAN AGUSTÍN, Tratado de la Santísima Trinidad en *Obras de San Agustín* Tomo V. Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1947, p.254.

¹⁶ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p. 289.

The world is divided in signs and things, depending on the object of perception having transitive value or not. The thing participates in the sign as it signifies, not as a referent: it is through signs that we apprehend things.

The sign is a thing that makes you think of something beyond the impression produced in our senses by the thing itself. It does not only define the sign but the reasons of the signifying activity: communicating and signifying, that allow an externalisation of the enunciator's spirit. The only reason to signify, that is to produce signs, is to externalise and transmit to another person's spirit what is in the spirit of them making the sign.

All of the signs present in *On Christian Doctrine* are classified by the author in the following way:

- 1- According to the model of transmission
- 2- According to the origin and use of the sign
- 3- According to social tradition
- 4- According to the nature of the symbolic relationship
- 5- According to the nature of what is designated, either sign or thing

1- According to the model of transmission: given that the signifier is physical, we can divide all of the signifiers according to the sense by which they are perceived. Between the senses used by men to communicate, the sight and hearing are those that stand out.

2- According to the origin and use of the sign: signs are also things, so opposition is not between things and signs but between pure things and sign things. He opposes natural signs and intentional signs. Natural signs are those that, without intention or hope of signifying, enable the knowledge of something beyond themselves. Intentional signs are those that living beings address to each other in order to show, as far as possible, the movements of their souls, which is everything they feel and think. Of the first ones he gives as an example the relation between smoke and fire or animal footprints; of the second ones, words. Intentional signs are things produced as signs and only used with that purpose. In *On Interpretation*, Aristotle makes that distinction but for him animal cries are natural and for Augustine of Hippo they are intentional because they have the intention of signifying. Intentional is not the same as conventional and that distinction is important to Saint Augustine because his project is oriented towards

communication. He opposes signs that are existent to those that are intentionally created with the purpose of signification.

3- According to social tradition: he divides them into conventional and natural. He considers the relationship between words and thoughts arbitrary (conventional); and the relationship between thoughts as things, universal (natural). Language has a conventional, institutional, nature. Augustine of Hippo denies any decisive importance to the opposition natural – conventional (arbitrary). That arbitrariness of the sign naturally leads towards polysemy.

4- According to the nature of the symbolic relationship: proper and figurative signs. The first ones are those that designate the objects for which they were created; while the others designate more than one object (metaphorical sense): they deviate from the original intention for which they were created towards a second intention. This is a rhetorical position that already existed. However, for the first time, “the figurative” is not a word whose meaning changes but a word that designates an object that carries meaning. The distinction between proper and figurative is essential for Saint Augustine. He distinguishes the figurative meaning from lies, due to the fact that the latter are not true in a literal sense, nor do they offer a figurative sense, as they cannot reconstitute the truth in the tropes.

5- According to the nature of what is designated, either sign or thing: he distinguishes the letters, signs of the sounds (signifier), and the metalinguistic uses (signified). Like Aristotle, he considers letters as signs of the sounds, and words can be used as signs of things or as names.

Augustine of Hippo unifies the previous theories and points out the prevalence of the linguistic in *De Magistro*; he unifies the theory of the signs with the theory of language and recognises linguistic signs as a type of sign.

A unique contribution of the author, in relation to Semiotics, is when he points out the tricky character of induction through ostensive inferential communication.¹⁷ In order to explain it, he asks Adeodatus how he would explain the meaning of the term *to walk* and he answers that he would walk, and when he asks what he would do if asked while walking, Adeodatus answers that he would walk faster. Then, Augustine of Hippo explains that by doing that, people could mistake walking with going faster. This means that the accumulation of ostensive signs does not clear by inference the meaning of the term if there is no frame of reference that indicates how it

¹⁷ SAN AGUSTÍN. *De Magistro en Obras de San Agustín*, Tomo 3. Madrid. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 1947, p.621.

must be understood. In such a way, there is a passage to the mechanism of abductive reasoning, which represents the attempt of demarking a system of signifying rules that allow the sign to acquire its own meaning.

Abductive reasoning also allows the interpretation of rhetorical figures, traces, symptoms, indexes and of the particular value that a statement acquires in a text.

De Magistro is a philosophical dialogue that deals with the reason of being of language, the different types of signs and the value of language as a sign of things.

Augustine of Hippo has concerns that are very different to the semiotic ones; if he examines signs and, specially, words and its relationship with signified things, it is in order to prove the secondary role of signs, words, and names, with the goal of directing the spirit towards the Internal Teacher, whose only teaching can be to make us understand signified things. But, since the beginning of his work, the philosopher shows the subject of communication as the goal of language “*what do you think we expect when we speak?*”.¹⁸ He analyses the sign as an articulation between a sound and a meaning that is remembered in the memory. Whoever speaks shows a sign externally. Words are signs of the things that show their meanings. The sign always represents something: “*can the sign be a sign without representing anything?*”.¹⁹ But words can signify, besides from reality, an affection of the soul. There are signs that are not words, such as the gestures with which men communicate, answer, teach and indicate. Not only visible things are shown without words and represent what wishes to be expressed: “*...that the gesture with which he will try to show me what this word means, is not the thing itself but a sign...*”.²⁰

According to the author, nothing can be taught without signs: “*...therefore, nothing can I find that can be taught without signs...*”.²¹ He calls signs all of those things that signify something, between which we can find words, every word is a sign, but not every sign is a word. He clearly distinguishes the difference between signifier and signified: “*do you also know that when we say animal, a thing is that trisyllabic name, which is proffered by the voice, and another is what signifies with it?*”.²² He observes signs that aside from signifying other things signify themselves, like words. The sign is anything that signifies and takes our spirit towards the signified thing.

¹⁸ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p.683.

¹⁹ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p.687.

²⁰ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p.693.

²¹ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p.693.

²² SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p.701.

The syllables in a word have no meaning, but a signifying communication. The use of words comes before words, used in order to teach, to signify. Language is a sign that overcomes words and allows knowledge.

In *On Order*, he points out how designation serves as an instrument for communication: men cannot have a solid society with other men without the use of words, by which he communicates his soul and thoughts to the others. Reason comprehends that it is necessary to name things, with certain sounds provided of meaning, so that, not being able to perceive the spirit sensibly, men can use senses as interpreters to unify their souls.

The profound and varied philosophy of Augustine of Hippo presents fecund ideas for contemporary reflection, one of them being his theory of the sign, but he also establishes the base for an interpretation theory.

The medieval thinkers took the ideas of the Stoics about signs and delved with interest in their study. During these centuries a Scholastic philosophy dominated the Western territory, recognising three sciences: natural science, moral philosophy and logic; this last one being related to the doctrine of signs.

Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages, in their reflections about the sign, looked for elements that manifested the truth of God, which translates in their interest to separate sign and referent. Saint Thomas Aquinas' study of language was linked to his interest in determining the essence of words, which are vehicles of access to the knowledge of reality. Words are like a peculiar realization of the sign and with the particular function of being vehicles of knowledge.

The sign in the eyes of Saint Thomas Aquinas is that by which someone gets to know something of the other. The definition highlights the cognoscitive aspect of the sign; nevertheless, according to the author the sign encompasses a great number of phenomena. He considers words as signs, but also the shoots of a plant that announce spring or the blushing of a face that implies shame. For him, words are signs par excellence; he not only considers sounds, which animals can make, but the symbolic meaning that these words have for those listening: *vox* and *verba*. In this point, the author follows Aristotle, who considers words as symbols that name things. Words are a significant symbol looking to communicate knowledge. In the sign-word, the author observes something that many centuries later Charles Peirce will analyse: that external words, the ones said, derive in a previous word, the internal concept that is an immediate sign of

things. External words have an indirect meaning and interior ones have a direct meaning; both are signs: the spoken things are an audible sign of an interior concept.

Other medieval writers also work the concept of the sign. In his work *Summa Logicae*, William of Ockham presented a conceptualist idea of the sign as a similitude between things and concepts through an unmediated mental relationship. The use of words as a sign is only to substitute external things but the important thing is the act of thought which is the true sign of mental character.

John of St. Thomas, in *De Signis* and *Ars Logicae*, shows that the sign has two faces: an instrumental one, given that it is a means and vehicle of communication, and an interior one, formal and cognitive, since the sign is used to direct the mind towards the knowledge of things, therefore allowing a better adaptation to the world. To him, signs are what enable us to perform these tasks in an indirect manner, because they are mediators; the sign represents the cognoscitive potential of a different thing.²³

4. The sign in De Saussure and Peirce

The modern basis of the sign begins in the 19th century with two thinkers: French linguist Ferdinand De Saussure and North American philosopher Charles Peirce.

De Saussure points out that Semiology's object is the sign and that language is a system of signs that express ideas.

"...It is possible, then, to conceive a science that studies the life of signs within social life. Said science would be part of social psychology and, as such, of general psychology. We will call it Semiology (from the Greek semeion 'sign'). She will teach us the value of signs and the rules that govern it. Given that it does not exist yet, we cannot say what will be of it; but it has the right to exist, and its place will be determined beforehand. Linguistics are but a part of this general science..." (1945, p. 60)²⁴

²³ The concept of sign rises with the classical thinkers and also develops along the Middle Ages, as we have already seen; but it continues with Descartes, the Port Royal grammarians and John Locke, among others, before arriving to De Saussure and Peirce. Due to selection motives of the most representative thinkers, we have not developed all of them.

²⁴ De SAUSSURE, Ferdinand, *Curso de Lingüística General*. Buenos Aires, Losada, 1945. p.60.

According to De Saussure, what the sign unites, instead of a thing and a name, is a concept and an acoustic image. The acoustic image is not exactly the material sound, purely physical, but its psychic trace, the representation that the testimony of our senses give us; that image is sensorial, and if we call it material it is solely in this regard and in opposition to the other term of association, generally more abstract.

The linguistic sign is a psychic entity that has two components, which are the acoustic image (signifier) and the concept (signified). These two elements are inherently united and claim each other. We call the combination of this mental and abstract concept with the acoustic image sign. The linguistic sign defined as such has four characteristics:

1- It is arbitrary: the bond that unites the signified and the signifier is arbitrary and as the sign is the total resulting of the association of these two we can say that the linguistic sign is arbitrary. Entirely arbitrary signs are the ones that perform best the ideal of the semiologic procedure; that is why speech, the most complex and extensive system of expression, is also the most characteristic one. In this sense, Linguistics can be considered the general model of Semiology even when speech is no more than a particular system. The word *symbol* has been used to designate the linguistic sign or, more accurately, what we call the signifier, but there are some inconveniences to admit it. The symbol is never completely arbitrary, is never empty, there is a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol of justice, the balance, could not be replaced by a different object, like a cart. The word arbitrary also needs an observation, must not give the idea that the signifier depends on the speaker's own will, because it is not up to the individuals to change anything in a sign once it has been established in a linguistic group; meaning that it is unmotivated, arbitrary in relation to the signified, with which it keeps no natural bonds.

2- The lineal character of the signifier: the signifier can be of auditive nature, solely unwraps through time and has the characters that it takes from time: it represents an extension and that extension is only measurable in one dimension.

3- Mutable: the linguistic sign changes if analysed from the diachronic axis, where one sign replaces another one through time.

4- Immutable: the linguistic sign is invariable if analysed from the synchronic axis, where signs develop in a simultaneous system.

Relationships between signs: in a state of language everything is based in relationships and in seeing how these work. On one hand, in speech, words contract, in virtue of its concatenation, relationships founded in the linear character of the language, which excludes the possibility of pronouncing two elements at the same time. The elements align one after the other in the chain of speech. These combinations that lean in the extension can be called syntagmas. A syntagma is always composed of two or more consecutive units. Put in a syntagma, a term only acquires value in opposition to the previous or following one, or both.

On the other hand, outside of speech, words that offer something in common are associated by memory and groups are formed in a base where very diverse relationships reign. These coordinations are of a very different species than the first ones, are not based on the extension; its headquarters are in the brain and they are part of this interior treasure that constitutes the language of each individual; we will call these relationships *associative*.

The notion of syntagma not only applies to words but also to groups of words, to complex units of every dimension and species. Considering the relationship unifying the different parts of a syntagma is not enough; it is also necessary to take into consideration the relationship putting together the totality of its parts.

The groups formed by mental association are not limited to the relationship of domains that present something in common; the spirit also captures the nature of the relationships that tie them in every case and creates with that as many associative series as different relationships there are. Any word can evoke everything associated with it in one way or another; While a syntagma evokes the idea of order of succession and of a particular number of elements, the terms of an associative family are not present in any precise number nor particular order.

The value of every term is determined by what surrounds it, not even the word that signifies sun can have a fixed immediate value without considering what surrounds it. If the conceptual part of the value is constituted just by its connections and differences with the other terms of the language, as much can be said about its physical part. What matters in words is not the sound itself, but phonetic differences that allow us to distinguish those words from every other word, as they are the ones that carry the signification.

In language there are only differences; a difference supposes, in general, positive terms between which it is established, but in language we can only find differences without positive terms. Whether taking into consideration the signifier or the signified, language has no

preexisting ideas or sounds to the linguistic system, but conceptual and phonetic differences resulting from this system. What is idea or phonic material in a sign matters less than what surrounds it with the other signs. The proof of this is that a term's value can be modified without touching its meaning or its sound, just with the fact that another neighbour term has suffered a modification.

When signs are compared (positive terms), we can no longer speak of difference; that word would not be proper, given that it is not applied properly to more than the comparison of two acoustic images, like father and mother, or two concepts, like the idea of father and mother. Two signs that contain each one a signifier and a signified are not different, only distinct. Between them there is a relation of opposition. All of the mechanisms of language are based in oppositions of this kind and the conceptual phonic differences they imply.

Peirce takes another step and points out:

*"...A sign is something that is in relation to its object, on the one hand, and with its interpretant, on the other, putting the interpretant in relation with the object, being that relationship corresponding to that which the sign has with the object itself..."*²⁵

Semiosis is a relationship that comprehends the cooperation of three elements: a sign, its object and its interpretant, a tri-relative influence that, for the author, in no case can be resolved in an action between two elements.

A sign or *representamen* is something that represents or refers to something for someone in a certain aspect or character. It is aimed towards someone and creates in the mind of that person an equivalent or more developed sign. That sign is what is called interpretant of the first sign. The sign is in place of something that is its object but not in every aspect, only in the reference on an attribute called fundament or *ground* of the representamen.

To represent is to be in place of another. When one wishes to distinguish between the represented thing and the act or relationship of representing, the first can be called *representamen* and the second representation.

For something to be sign it must represent another thing, which is its object. A sign can have more than one object. That way, the sentence "Cain killed Abel", which is a sign, refers to

²⁵ PEIRCE, Charles, *La ciencia de la semiótica*,. Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión, 1974 p. 93.

Cain as much as Abel and a third element, which is to kill. But the ensemble of elements can be considered an only object, complex.²⁶

If a sign is different to its object there must exist in thought or in the expression a certain explanation, a certain argument that shows on what basis the sign represents that object and the ensemble of object that it's referring to. The objects can be a singular known existent thing, or believed to have existed, or expected to exist or an ensemble of things or a quality of which every singular object can be a combination or reunion of parts and can have another way of being. It is correct to distinguish two objects in a sign: the dynamic one, external to the sign, and the immediate one, interior to said sign. The immediate object is the object just as it is represented by the sign itself and whose being depends on the representation of it in the sign; on the other hand, the dynamic object is the reality that mediates the determination of the sign to its representation.

The signs are in place of its respective objects, not in its entirety but in the aspect called *ground*. This is the particular aspect in which a certain object can be comprehended and transmitted, it is the content of an expression identified with the meaning or with an elemental component of it. It is an attribute of the object in the sense that said object has been selected in a certain way and only some of its attributes have been chosen as relevant for the construction of the immediate object of the sign. As the ground, it is only one of the possible predicates of the object, it is a common character and a connotation.²⁷

Each sign has an object and an interpretant; this last one is what the sign produces in the interpreter, creating in him a feeling, an effort, or a sign, and it is precisely that creation that is named interpretant. We distinguish in it the immediate interpretant, the interpretant just as revealed in the correct understanding of the sign itself which is commonly called the meaning of the sign, and we also consider the dynamic interpretant, which is the real effect that the sign, as such, really determines. Lastly, we must consider the final interpretant, that refers to the way in which the sign represents itself in its relation to the object. The fundamental difference between dynamic and final interpretant is that while the dynamic is only a singular event, the final one is characterised by the recurrence and regularity of interpretation for particular contexts.²⁸

²⁶ Literature works as a complex sign.

²⁷ A clear literary representation of the ground is the figure named periphrastic epithet, used by Homer. This resource allows synthesising in an image the particular character of an individual. Example: swift-footed Achilles.

²⁸ The final interpretant points out the opening and constant potential of the sign.

With the explanation of the three elements that conform the sign, the signs can be classified according to its own material nature, the relationships to its objects and the relationships to its interpretants.²⁹ According to the second trichotomy, in regards to the relationships that the sign has with its dynamic objects, a sign can be called *icon*, *index* or *symbol*. The icon has a dynamic condition with the object that it represents, its qualities are similar to those of the object, it has a relationship of similarity with it. The index is physically connected to its object and has a relationship of contiguity with it. The symbol is connected to its object in virtue of the mind and its relationship is of arbitrary or convention.³⁰

Unlimited semiosis is the phenomenon by which a sign gives birth to another sign and a thought to another. The final interpretant can originate a diverse chain of signs and can enter in different contexts.

5. Literature as a sign: representation and significance

The modern conception of the sign as a semiotic element and the classical conception of the sign that makes the sign a thing representing another thing are different. This does not mean that the theories are rivals nor that the modern theory must replace the classical conception, only that the two theories do not have the same application scope. Benveniste distinguishes two scopes of linguistic investigation: the semiotic and the semantic one.³¹ The modern theory of the sign corresponds to the semiotic one while the classical theory corresponds to the semantic one. The semiotic sign and the semantic sign are two independent objects of study.

The notion of semantic sign, that is, the sign in a classical sense, is very important and presents several problems. Its importance comes from the applications to which it is susceptible, the History of Philosophy certifies that the notion of sign has served, during many centuries, to organise the ensemble of reflection upon thought and knowledge.

For the classicals, all thought is a sign; when I think of an object I keep in my spirit an idea of that object and that idea that I have in my spirit represents the object. Therefore, the idea

²⁹ The fundamental relationship of the sign according to Peirce is developed, which is that of the sign with the object; the others are: with the *representamen* (qualisigns, sinsigns and legisigns) and with the interpretant (rhemes, decisigns and arguments).

³⁰ We did not try to develop the complete theories of these two thinkers but the central and necessary objects in order to achieve our book's objective.

³¹ This distinction by Benveniste is fundamental in order to reach our goal. It can be found in *Problemas de Lingüística General*, Tomo II, Capítulo II. Madrid, Siglo XXI Editores, 1997.

is a sign, a thing that represents another thing. We get to know the outer world through these signs that are ideas; the word *idea* possesses a greater acceptance because it encompasses, for certain philosophers, sensations.

Based off the concurrence of sensations, signs are inferred; that inference is automatic and unconscious, namely, when I read I am not conscious of the letters, I am only conscious of the ideas of which signs are the letters conformed in words and, however, I cannot access this ideas other than by signs. For instance, when we read a book we do not pay attention to the letters, but to what they represent. On the contrary, if we pay attention to the letters themselves, then we lose sight of what they represent. There is somewhat of a paradox in this: on the one hand, in order to access the represented thing, we must recur to the sign, to the representing thing, since we do not know the represented thing but through its mediator. But, on the other hand, we must abstract the sign, the representing thing, in order to access what it represents. We must act as if the sign did not exist and treat it as if it was nothing. The sign must be present and absent so as to represent the signified thing.

This paradox can be appreciated throughout the world of classical literature: it is the presence-absence paradox of the sign. It is precise for the sign to be present to represent the signified thing; but if it is too present, it ends up hiding the thing that it wanted to show. In order to access the signified thing, we must pass through the sign without stopping in it. This ever possible hiding of the represented thing by the marked presence of the representing thing is in some way illustrated by the irresistible presence towards idealism manifested by the philosophy of the sign or of the idea as a sign.

To begin with, the Theory of Ideas has been a means to explain our knowledge of the outer world, then was a means to deny the existence of this same world, whose only knowledge is mediated by these signs that are the Ideas. We stopped at signs right after they served us to access things. In consequence, we know that the sign has a double character, is opaque and transparent at the same time, shows and hides at the same time the signified thing. In general terms, for the classicals, the sign is a representation, and for the modern thinkers, a signification.

It is literature that manifests the reappearance of the living beings in language. First the existence of language is based in representation, in making signs, naming and designating with other names that mark a deferred presence, the second sign, the rhetoric.

Then, literature comes to point out the being of language but without a starting point and fixed path, a literary work writes its path every day. That is why literature appears as what must be thought, whether analysed by its signified (what it means to say, its ideas) or by its signifier (its linguistic form).

Literature constituted by a signifier and signified is substituted by literature as a sign, which adds the notion of interpretant (potential sign).

According to Foucault, Don Quixote represents that fundamental change:

“...His entire being is nothing but language, text, printed pages, already transcribed story. This weaving of interlaced words; belongs to errant writing moving through the world between the resemblance of things (...) and each episode, each decision, each deed, will be signs that Don Quixote resembles, in effect, all these signs he has copied (...) His adventure will be a deciphering of the world: a detailed journey to highlight, over all of Earth's surface, the figures that show that books are telling the truth. The deed has to be proved, it does not consist in a real triumph (...) but in transforming reality into a sign. Into a sign that the signs of language are formed with things themselves. Don Quixote reads the world to proof books. And there is no other proof than the reflection of resemblance (...) All indexes of non-resemblance, all the signs that show that written texts are not telling the truth, are similar to this game of enchantment that cleverly introduces the difference in the undeniability of similarity. And given that this magic has been planned and descriptive in books, the illusory difference that it introduces will always be an enchanted similarity. In consequence, a supplementary sign that signs resemble the truth.

Don Quixote presents the negative in the Renaissance world; writing has ceased to be the prose of the world, the similarities and the signs have broken their former compromise; the similarities deceive, they lead to visions and delirium, things remain obstinately in their ironic identity: they are nothing more than what they are; words drift into adventure, without content, without similarities to fill them up; they no longer mark things; they sleep between the pages of books amidst the dust (...) He, who by force of reading books had become a wandering sign in a world that does not recognise him, has become now, in spite of himself and without knowing it, in a book that maintains his

*truth, picks up exactly everything he has done, said, seen and thought and allows him, ultimately, to be recognised insofar as he resembles all these signs he has left behind him like an indelible furrow...*³²

The poet is who tries to hear another language, not that of the simple similarities between things and signs, but a language that will not stop its proliferation based on the allegorical signs that present identities and differences.

Just as interpretation was only based on the relationship of similarity between signs and represented things, now, the world will need the signs as instruments for analysis and marks of identity and difference in the murmuring likeness of things. The sign will begin to signify within the interior of knowledge and linked to the sense.

Linguistic signs represent thought, but we do not mean represent as translate, rather than hear; language represents thought like this one represents itself. The difference between classical and modern times is that classical time does not see in the sign an essential act of signification but of representation.

Literature is a sign that represents and signifies men's thoughts, a mental sign that achieves to be externalised. It is something evident (anecdotes) that allow seeing something non evident (meaning). It is a sign that represents and signifies the "state of the soul" of the author as a first stage of unlimited semiosis that launches the creative act. It is a sign that represents and signifies an ensemble of objects that conform a unique and complex object. This object is creative thinking, made up of facts and ideals, realities and dreams.

Literary representation makes use of linguistic signs, which are words, but all of it together is also a sign. A sign formed by a signifier, that is the form of representation, and a meaning, that is what it wants to represent. It has an object as we have seen and its meaning is closer to Peirce's interpretant than Saussure's signified, because it is a potential sign, open to different interpretations.

Literature puts us before a speech where many things are being signified at the same time, without the necessity for the reader to choose one of them in detriment to the others. The author reads the world and represents it with imagination, in their own way, starting from the election of a particular ground. The reader reads the work as a sign of the world and interprets it.

³² FOUCAULT, *Las palabras y las cosas. Una arqueología de las ciencias humanas*. México, Siglo XXI, 1999, p.p. 53, 54, 55.

The world is covered in signs that need to be deciphered and those signs reveal similarities and affinities.

“...To know will be to interpret: going from the visible mark to what is said through it, and that, without it, would remain as a silent word, asleep between things...”³³

In this same paragraph Foucault quotes Paracelsus³⁴ and says:

“... Us, men, discover all that is hidden in the mountains through signs and external correspondences; that way, we find all the herb's properties and what is hidden in the rocks. There is nothing in the depth of the seas, nothing in the height of the firmament, that mankind is not able to discover. There is no mountain high enough to hide its contents from men's sight. This is revealed to him by the corresponding signs.”

Interpretation consists in referring words to things, in making everything speak and giving place to the “second message”. What distinguishes knowledge is not knowing nor demonstrating, but interpreting.

The literary text is a great particular sign that, in order to be interpreted, needs to be recognised as a sign in its three levels of functioning:

- A) The Semantic level: it is the meaning of the literary sign; the text is presented in an implicit manner, by the selection and combination of signs that represent a system of beliefs of reality that could or could not be of the same mind as the author. It is the one that allows to transcend and organise the real world and dreams creating beauty and coherence within the totality. The relationship analysed is between the sign and the object.
- B) The Syntactic level: it analyses the internal relationships within the literary sign. This sign is formed by signs, which are abstract entities in relation to each other. These relations could be seen from a double perspective: the combination of conceptual entities that corresponds to the semantic dimension and the

³³ FOUCAULT, Michel, Ibid. p. 40.

³⁴ PARACELSO, *Archidoxis mágica*, 1559, traducción francesa 1909, p. 21 23, en Foucault, *Las palabras y las cosas* p.p. 40,41.

combination of elements of expression; both directions represent the paradigmatic or associative axis and the syntagmatic axis enunciated by De Saussure.

- C) The Pragmatic level: it studies the relationships between the literary sign and the users. The bond between author – literary work – reader that entails a mandatory evaluative and personal reference.

The three levels are inseparable and are related between each other; they build an all, unique and articulate, which is the literary sign. The Syntactic level complies with the structural problems of the sign, the Semantic level with the connotative uses and the Pragmatic one connects the text from its production to its recognition. In this last level, the circulation of the work is analysed, that is the constant movement of a text that, as an interpretant-sign is dynamic and actualised in every reader and context according to the scope of pertinence of the receptors.

Literature is a sign that represents and signifies the world, it is the sign that enables the synthesis between the classical and modern times in their notion of the sign. But also, its way is very particular because literary language itself is a special sign:

“... there is no difference between these visible traces that God has deposited over the Earth's surface, in order to get us to know the secrets in its interior and the legible words that the Scriptures or the wise men of Antiquity, illuminated by a divine light, have deposited in the Sacred Books. The relationship with the texts has the same nature as the relationship with things; here like there, what matters are the signs. But God, so as to exercise our wisdom, has planted in nature only figures that need to be deciphered...”³⁵

³⁵ FOUCAULT, Michel, *Las Palabras y las Cosas*, op.cit. p. 41.

CHAPTER II

THE PARTICULARITY OF THE LITERARY SIGN

1. Rhetoric: transposed meaning

Once we have studied the sign, it is necessary to analyse its indirect meaning or trope proper of the literary sign in order to study its particularities. The trope is different from the proper sense; it is through him that we are able to discern a secondary meaning, which is more than the substitution of one signifier for another. These two meanings/senses allow us to distinguish the proper from the transposed, saying from implying.

Even though the realm of Rhetoric does not contain Semiotic theories, it prepares them by its attention to the phenomenon of indirect meaning, and it is through Rhetoric that the opposition between proper and transposed is spread in Classical antiquity. Rhetoric, which according to Aristotle “...is the faculty of discovering in a speculative manner what in every case can be proper for persuasion...”,³⁶ has eloquence as its object, that is to speak in an efficient way that can influence others. In Rhetoric language is perceived as an action and the linguistic form is only an element of persuasive communication; linguistic means are used in order to reach this goal.

The development of eloquence as a superior quality of the free subject was linked to democracy and with its disappearance eloquence declined. The new eloquence is distinguished from the classical one since its ideal is the intrinsic quality of speech and not its attitude to serve an external goal. While the first is instrumental, the new one is ornamental. The figure is always defined as a speech whose form can be perceived, but while the figure was only one way between many others in the analysis of speech, afterwards speeches in their entirety start being appreciated by themselves.

But in the Classical and new Rhetoric we can see an even greater change, before and after Cicero, which concerns the organisation of its sphere. Aristotle subdivides the operational processes of Rhetoric in five stages; two of them refer to enunciation (*actio – memoria*) and the

³⁶ ARISTÓTELES, La Retórica en *Obras*, Madrid, Aguilar, 1967, p.256.

three others to enunciation (*inventio* – *dispositio* – *elocutio*). Before continuing we will briefly explain each of them:

1- *Inventio*: the art of finding the pertinent arguments. It is the most studied stage by the philosopher. This stage emphasises, overall, intellectual elaboration, in the way in which the best arguments can be found. What Aristotle believed is that if speech is meant to be irresistible, it must set off the same opinions as the interlocutor. The most powerful weapon of the orator is to convince the listener to accept the conclusions because they come from undeniable facts, of their own convictions. Therefore, the first stage of any rhetorical practice is the topic, the review of common places, the generally accepted points of view, which are universally shared.

On the other hand, as Aristotle observed, a speech, in order to attract the audience's attention, needs to be informative and contain new aspects that surprise and impress. To reach this end, *dispositio* and *actio* become useful.

2- *Dispositio*: it structures rhetorical speech in a manner that is adequate to oratory. Aristotle distinguishes four parts within:

**Exordio*: it tries to predispose the audience in a positive manner.

**Narratio*: it informs about the facts and explicits the thesis.

**Confirmatio*: it arguments in favor of these facts.

**Epilogue*: it presents the final conclusion.

3- *Elocutio*: the election of an appropriate style of argument for the audience and the orator. It determines the formation of phrases through the combination of the most appropriate rhetorical figures, the adornments and the purely formal modifications of speech, which are able to give it a new character, unusual and highly informative.

4- *Actio*: the art of reciting the speech, performance before a crowd, as a theatre actor, taking into consideration gestures and diction.

5- *Memoria*: the essential ability to remember the arguments of the speech and their order. It is from this conception of memory that mnemonic techniques were developed.

In the former instrumental perspective these five stages were equaled at the beginning and corresponded to five aspects of the linguistic act, which were subjected to an external goal, that of convincing the listener.

When the external goal disappears, the elocution (figure) starts occupying an even more important role, given that through it the new objective of speaking or writing with art can be achieved. Cicero points out the importance of conforming the perfect archetype of orator and supreme eloquence. The style is now the characteristic that makes a speaker stand out and everything else becomes secondary. In effect, within the characteristics of an orator, each one can defend a certain part: but speech's supreme force, namely elocution, is only conceded to him.

The pair means – end is replaced by the pair form – background and Rhetoric will take care of the form. The new object of Rhetoric aligns with that of literature.

“...The speech that we appreciate itself because of its intrinsic qualities, its form and its beauty already existed in the Romans; but is not what until that moment the Romans called eloquence, it is more so what we would today call literature...”³⁷

Previously, eloquent speech was measured by its efficiency; later, words will be praised and they will become the object of Rhetoric, which will be the theory of language. The elocution that depends on words will be the sphere for qualities of style; speeches must be clear (*perspicua*) and ornamented (*ornata*). The words are clear when they present things with precision and beautiful when we admire them as such. Clarity is associated with beauty as things are associated with words. From this position we get others such as proper and transposed meaning “...those who taught that clarity demands, overall, terms taken in their proper meaning and beauty demands terms in a transposed meaning (*translatis*) have succeeded...”³⁸

In the use of tropes we can find those that serve particularly the revelation of thought and things, and those appreciated for themselves. In transposed meaning we discover the opposition between words and thoughts. In regards to the tropes Quintilian says: “...some are employed for their meaning, others for beauty...”³⁹

³⁷ TODOROV, Tzvetan, *Teorías del Símbolo*. Caracas, Monte Avila, 1993, p. 82.

³⁸ QUINTILIANO, *Institución Oratoria*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras.VIII, 3, 15>.

³⁹ QUINTILIANO, *ibid.*, VIII, 6, 2.

If the metaphors of the previous Rhetoric, from Aristotle to Cicero, refer to a relation of the type means – end. Later things change and the main pair is form – content. Interior thought is covered by a rhetorical wrapping.

In Quintilian, we can find the definition of figure as a detour “...*change, in a poetic oratory turn, from the simple and common way of expression...*”⁴⁰ “...*a change done on purpose in the meaning or in words separating from their usual simple and common sense...*”⁴¹

If rhetorical production is linked with costumes, the interpretation of texts corresponds to divesting.

Augustine of Hippo, who transforms Rhetoric in a hermeneutic says:

*“...Nobody argues that things are learnt in a proper manner with the help of comparisons and that they are discovered with more pleasure when their search imposes a certain difficulty. In effect, men that cannot immediately find what they are looking for are devoured by hunger; on the other hand, those who have it at one's fingertips tend to languish in repugnance...”*⁴²

*“...If the truths are concealed behind that sort of costume that are figures, it is to exercise the spirit that scrutinises them mercifully and to avoid that its too accessible nudity does not tarnish them before its eyes. (...) Extracted to our glance, we want them more ardently and when we want them we discover them with more pleasure...”*⁴³

In the second period of Rhetoric, that goes from Cicero to Fontanier, thoughts are privileged over words. Rhetoric will analyse beauty in speech.

The division of literal meaning in what is proper and figurative is familiar to Hermeneutics from Saint Thomas Aquinas, with the end of excluding the figures of the poets in the spiritual meaning of the work of God. Moreover, the literal meaning is opposed to the objective meaning; in the latter the meaning is transparent in relation to what it designates, while the other allows us to perceive the meaning itself.

⁴⁰ QUINTILIANO, *ibid.*, IX, 1, 13.

⁴¹ QUINTILIANO, *ibid.*, IX, 1, 11.

⁴² SAN AGUSTÍN, *Contra la mentira*. en *Obras de San Agustín*, Tomo XII. Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1947, p. 196.

⁴³ SAN AGUSTÍN, *ibid.*, p. 204.

The matter of shape in indirect sense is already present in Fontanier's predecessors. Du Marsais analyses the conception of indirect meaning elaborated by biblical exegesis, from Augustine of Hippo to Saint Thomas Aquinas. There are two genres of indirect meaning: the symbolism of words and the symbolism of things. The tropes represent the species of the first genre and the second does not imply a change in the sense of words but evokes a secondary meaning through the objects that words designate in the proper meaning.

In Latin Rhetoric, the relation between tropes and figures does not lack ambiguity; sometimes the tropes are a sort of figure and other times a category of the same logical level as the figures. Fontanier distinguishes the trope as the evocation of an indirect meaning and the figure as a relation between two or more words present.

In order to understand the theory of the tropes in our rhetorics we must go back to the theory of accessory ideas that underlies it and was elaborated by Du Marsais. A word can signify in two senses or can signify an idea or just provoke it. It is precise to distinguish clearly these added ideas to the signified ideas because even though both of them can be found in the same spirit, they do not appear in the same way. The idea that a word signifies is also called principal idea and the provoked idea is called accessory idea.

The trope is no other than the exploitation of existent accessory ideas because it is calling a principal idea with the name of one of its accessory ideas. The accessory ideas are the matter of one of the two syntactic relations possible, while the art of thinking attracts the attention over the comparison between the subject and the attribute; the art of writing teaches us to nuance modification.

The tropes consist of a simple exchange of places between principal and accessory ideas in a word. When a word moves from proper meaning to figurative it changes its signification; the first idea is no longer more than the accessory and the new one becomes the principal one. The trope is a signifier that has two "signifieds", a primitive one and a tropic one. The figure presupposes a signified that can be designated with two signifiers, a proper and a figurative one.

Rhetoric and its tropes are other elements, besides from the sign and its classification, that also present the basis in Classic antiquity for the science of signs. In Aristotle the opposition between proper – transposed is born, which in its origin is not the same as what it ends up being. The author is absent of any semiotic perspective, the transposition or metaphor (term that in Aristotle designates the scope of tropes) is not a symbolic structure with linguistic manifestation,

but a sort of word with a meaning different to the usual one. Transposition is a stylistic means among others, and not a mode of existence in the sense that is articulated with direct signification.

“...If one wishes to elevate or embellish a thing, it is necessary to bring the metaphor of the best, within what is included in a genre; and if there needs to be a censorship or reduction of the worst things; I put, for example, one time that the contraries are inside the same genre, saying that who begs implores, and who implores begs, given that they are both petitions, this is doing what has been said...”⁴⁴

“...Generally, from well conceived enigmas it is possible to extract adequate metaphors; because metaphors allude implicitly to an enigma, so that it is evident that they have been properly transported...”⁴⁵

Quintilian, who represents the synthesis of rhetorical tradition in the Antique world, presents the metaphor as one of the two possible modes of language *“...We prefer to imply things instead of saying them openly...”*⁴⁶ it goes from the proper to the transposed.

“...The trope is the mutation of meaning from one word to another, but with grace. Grammarians and philosophers are in dispute about their genres and species, how many and which they are. Leaving aside said disputes, which are of no use to instruct the orator, we will only put the necessary and commonly received, and we say that some tropes are used for reason of signification and others as ornament. Some consist in the proper words and others in the transposed ones, being its form diverse, not only in words, but in meaning and composition. Those who place the reason for the trope in the use of one word for another seem off track. I do not ignore that even in the tropes that place the reason in meaning there is an ornament within, although not the other way around, since there will be some who only look at the ornament (...) By the metaphor a voice is transferred from its proper meaning to one where either the proper is missing or the transposed is stronger. We do this either because necessity moves us towards that

⁴⁴ ARISTÓTELES, *La Retórica*, op. cit., p.190.

⁴⁵ ARISTÓTELES, *ibid.*, p.191.

⁴⁶ QUINTILIANO, *Institución Oratoria*, op. cit., VIII, AP,24.

or because we want to signify more and with more decency, as I said. And when none of this has the transposition, it will be improper”⁴⁷ (...) “Because the metaphor has to fill a void or occupy the place of another word it must express more than that for which it is substituted...”⁴⁸

The allegory is a prolonged metaphor. That prolongation does not follow the surface of the text, but it works in a determined spot and in depth.

“...The allegory, that we interpret as inversion, shows one thing in words and another in meaning, and also sometimes the other way around...”⁴⁹

As we have said, even though the Rhetoric realm does not contain semiotic theories, it prepares them by taking care of the indirect meaning and it is thanks to Rhetoric that the opposition proper – transposed is spread in the Classical world.

2. Hermeneutics: interpretation of the transposed meaning

In classical Hermeneutics we can also see a Semiotic advance through: divination, the discovery of a secondary meaning and ocular language. It is assimilated to the transatlantic and obscure language of poets.

Hermeneutical tradition is particularly hard to cover due to its depth and variety of forms. Its object has been analysed since Classical antiquity under the shape of an opposition between two language regimes, direct and indirect, clear and obscure, *logos* and *muthos*, and as two modes of reception, comprehension and interpretation.

Hermeneutics searches for secondary or occult meanings, which is why everything becomes a sign, from a starting point and in the strategy of interpretation. Heraclit, when describing the words of the Delphic oracle, says: “..The lord whose oracle can be found in Delphi does not speak nor hide, he signifies...”

Oracles, at first, had a strange and singular style, absolutely ambiguous and periphrastic, which is why the crowd believed in its divine character and was filled with admiration and

⁴⁷ QUINTILIANO Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁸ QUINTILIANO Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁹ QUINTILIANO Ibid., p. 33.

religious respect. Later, learning things with clarity and facility was prioritised, with no emphasis nor use of fiction, and poetry surrounding the oracles was accused of going against the knowledge of the truth, mixing obscurity and shadow with the god's revelation. It was feared that metaphors, enigmas and misunderstandings were escapes and refuges for divination, created so that the divinator could hide in them in case of error.

Artemidorus goes further with words and analyses dreams. He distinguishes the dreams that signify certain things for fear of others; this opposition is similar to that of the proper and the transposed, but applied to non-linguistic matter. He thought that when dreams were mutilated and offered no grip, more elements had to be added, and overall in dreams where meaning was incomplete or its parts had no relation with things. The interpreter, in those cases, had to perform changes or additions in order to be able to interpret them.

Clement of Alexandria marks in Hermeneutic tradition an approach towards Semiotics. He is who defines indirect language as symbolic. A clear example is when he tells that Eteas, the king of the Scythians, had asked the people of Byzantium not to put obstacles in the collection of tributes, following that if they did "their mares would drink the water of their rivers". Clement explains that through this symbolic language the barbarian was announcing a war against them.

Moreover, his analysis of Egyptian hieroglyphics expressed in part the things through primary characters, and in part was symbolic. In the symbolic method, one species expressed things by imitating and the other wrote in a tropic manner, while a third species was allegorical, through various enigmas. Therefore, for example, the Egyptians drew a circle to write "sun", and for the word "moon" they would draw a half moon. In a tropic manner they would deviate meaning and transpose signs so as to consider a certain relation; in part they would replace them for other signs and in part they would modify them in different ways. This is how, by wanting to transmit the praising of the kings with religious myths, they would carve them in bas-reliefs. They would also use enigmas when representing general astrology with snakes due to their sinuous orbit while the sun, in contrast, was represented with a beetle that kneaded a round ball with ox manure and made it roll in front of it.

The author relates the same structures in different substances: language (metaphors and enigmas), writing (hieroglyphics), painting (imitation); this is an important step towards the creation of the Semiotic theory. He observes that the relation between characters and sound is unmotivated while the relation between the sun and the circle is motivated. He also deciphers

tropic writing and supposes that the pictogram designates an object by direct imitation and that it evokes another one by similarity or participation or opposition. What Clement calls enigma or allegory implies three relations: between the pictogram and the beetle, direct imitation; between the beetle and the ball of manure, relation of contiguity (metonymic); between the ball of manure and the sun, relation of similarity (metaphorical).

Clement also prepares the road for Augustine of Hippo towards the sign in two essential regards when he affirms: A) the variety of materials in symbolism can go through any of the senses and may (but not necessarily) be linguistic, B) the symbol articulates with the sign as transposed meaning to the proper meaning and, as a result, the rhetorical concepts can be applied to non-verbal signs.

3. Hermeneutics and the symbol, Paul Ricoeur

There is a symbol when the language produces complex signs where meaning, aside from designating a thing, designates another sense. The symbol signifies something else through literal signifying, thus it has two levels of signification: the literal and the symbolic.

Symbolic activity has always been linked to the sacred. The religious sphere is demarcated by its reference to the sacred, which is shown symbolically. What originates a word is its manifestation rather than the other way around. The capacity of speaking is anchored in the capacity of manifestation that the cosmos holds. Because of this, interpretation is linked to something instead of detached, because it is a memory and its logic of meaning is ruled by divine inspiration. Hence, symbolism of the sacred does not become metaphoric, since it is lacking a creative moment. Metaphors are free inventions or speech fictions, products of productive imagination, guided by the logic of semantic innovation. However, symbolism is linked to cosmic configurations and its logic of meaning is governed by the law of correspondence.

Referring to the parable, Ricoeur affirms that it is a fictional story with a symbolic function, but symbolism is not linked to nature, it proceeds from the heuristic function of fiction instead. Fiction is heuristic when it works as an element of “re-description”. Re-description is what is proper in poetic language. It looks to abolish the reference in ordinary language, which is descriptive, didactic and prosaic, so as to open a new order of reality. Re-discovering means trespassing the direct descriptive reference in order to get to a metaphorical reference.

“What is specific of religious language is the interruption of the extraordinary in the ordinary or daily (...) In other words, the logic of meaning of religious speech –the parable, the proverb and eschatological experiences– lies in the use of ‘liminal –expressions’; which accomplish the rupture of ordinary language. We can then say that religious language, as extraordinary language –extravagant– within ordinary language, is referring to a world that bursts out. But how? In the direction of the liminal experiences that are the ultimate reference to our modes of speaking”⁵⁰

In religious speech, the world of text takes different forms of representation. Paul Ricoeur considers it a fictive speech of *veritative* reference, distant from daily reality. The world of text is religious, is its reference to God as an essential sense that rules everything in the text. The function of religious language lies on opening a new dimension, a new horizon of reality through an indirect or double meaning reference.

In religious language, Ricoeur reintroduces the concept of faith articulated to the concept of comprehension of text; faith is the attitude of letting oneself be interpreted by the world of the Sacred text. The text would work as a mediation through which we understand ourselves.

In a conference about “Hermeneutics and Demythologization” dictated in the Centre Européen Universitaire de Nancy, in the year 1967, Ricoeur pointed out the difference between religious and pagan allegory. The allegory was known in Antiquity; the Stoics, particularly Philo of Alexandria, applied it to the interpretation of Greek myths and Homer and Hesiod fables. Its goal was philosophical, searching to discover the philosophical meaning of the myths in the archaic poetic forms. In religions, allegories have a different function. Interpretation grounds events as its object. It tries to make the event appear not as an irrational irruption but as the compliance of a previous sense that remains in suspense. A relation of meaning with a precedent sense arises and the event becomes intelligible.

The tension between narration and prophecy is the opposition of two literary forms: the chronicle and the oracle, and it prolongs up to the perception of time, which in one consolidates and in the other is desarticulated.

Religious language appears as a polyphonic language sustained by different circular forms. One of the characteristics that make the specificity of biblical speech is the central place

⁵⁰ CALVO MARTINEZ, Paul Ricoeur: *Los Caminos de la Interpretación*. Madrid, Anthropos, 1991, p. 226.

given to the referent *God*. The meaning of this referent is implied in the multiple meanings solidary to the literary forms of narration, prophecy and hymns. The referent God is the coordinator of these diverse speeches.

Understanding the text is having faith in it and following “the arrow of meaning”, understanding its double power: that of reuniting every possible meaning that rises from partial speeches and that of opening a horizon of meanings beyond the limit of denoted speech. It is necessary to think carefully and surpass what is visible in order to find the real meaning.

4. Reading meaning in the literary sign

*“...It is, then, through experiencing the sacred that the idea of reality, truth and signification are formed...”*⁵¹

In the eyes of the oldest civilizations, language was the verb, a spiritual breeze, inspiration in the etymological sense of the term, divine blow, creative energy that makes the man such because he comes from the gods and is who allows the bond between men and the celestial abode. Functional communication is a subsidiary function, smaller than language’s revealing and divine function.

Language does not exclusively cover the conceptual sphere: literary language is the one that moves the strongest towards the non-conceptual zone of language, as a transformative force or creative energy. It is in poetry where the true nature of words, irradiators of forces, is felt. There, words are not only a sign in the place of something else, representing it, but a creative energy of meaning.

The intrinsic nature of language allows it to transform the world. Languages present the relation between thought and words and not only represent known truths, but also allow the discovery of truths yet unknown, by the means of literary language. The deepest work of Philosophy of language is eliminating the veil and penetrating what becomes intuitive beyond signifying and designating.

The great richness of literary language is its reservoir in meaning. Poetic language is born with defamiliarization, with the admiration in which the spirit becomes conscious of its own transcendence. It is the moment in which its judgement is suspended and the spirit opens up to an intuitive encounter with reality.

⁵¹ ELIADE, Mircea, *Mito y realidad*. Barcelona, Editorial Labor S.A., 1992. p. 147.

Language has a complex nature. On the one hand, it is the manifestation of things through phonic signs or the written representation of these signs; on the other hand, it is deeply related with spiritual activity, with its energy. Literature is not just writing but the verb that develops a meaning that needs to be rediscovered.

The writer outlines his message, revealing to us reality's meanings. We can always find a prophetic character in the great works of poetry: poets translate divine messages to men. But not all poetry reaches this same degree of signification; the poet, through words and guided by them, traverses his own path and, when he achieves it, reaches a level close to true wisdom given that he unravels reality's meaning, "*...as a prophet in his community, he once again acquires the value of a teacher instead of a mere words' player...*".⁵²

The literary symbol works from the formal realm and from signification, representing in different ways. The symbol is the possibility of an encounter between the person who gets the energy going and the person who catches and re-actualises it. The literary world presents a plenitude in meaning by the symbol that goes beyond what it first appears to be saying.

The literary signifiers never seem enough because they are not about concepts, but potential significations. The mechanics of literary language allow a meaning to be represented by different signifiers and also allow the signified to become multiple and summon diverse meanings.

The reader must be active and creative, as a critic, and be able to perform different readings: a formal one (structural), a cultural one (anthropological), a poetic one (symbolic) and an hermeneutic one (interpretative).⁵³ As a result, it is necessary to value the relation between a semiotic mode and a hermeneutic one, considering Hermeneutics "*...as an attitude of the spirit that we can call a quest...*".⁵⁴ The search for meaning, the comprehension of a literary work, needs a semiologist-detective and a philosopher-hermeneutic. Technique is not enough for finding the meaning, it is necessary to unravel it from an attitude of spiritual quest of the absolute.

To understand means comprehending the meaning, the field of signification that overpowers individuality. Following Hermeneutics, the world is transforming and we need to

⁵² MATURO, Graciela. *Introducción a una Hermenéutica del Texto*, Buenos Aires, Tekné, 1995, p. 32.

⁵³ In page 63 of *Introducción a una hermenéutica del texto*, Graciela Maturo points out the four indicated types of reading.

⁵⁴ MATURO, Graciela, *Introducción a una hermenéutica del texto*, op. cit, p. 86.

take a distance in order to fully understand it. Interpretation happens when we find the meaning of the text, unveiled by its symbols and internal weave; discovering other levels of signification which hold other codes. The reader goes through a process of symbolisation similar to that of the creator, which implies a certain distance and reflection in order to understand the meaning that the text holds with a creative and personal that allows the appropriation of the plain or connoted meaning.

The literary work becomes a bearer of meaning linking the author and the reader and with language as a mediator. The work consists of a complex verbal system of structures held in different interrelated planes. It is a system of signification forms, where the work appears in potency and is actualised in every reading because it subsists and transmits its meaning and its own consistency, which is the path that preserves its meaning.

Because of that it is useless to try to find strict limits between Semiotic, Semantics and Hermeneutics, given that Semantics takes care of signification, of the content as a mediator of meaning; Hermeneutics of interpretation of meaning; and Semiotic studies the formal part of the sign so as to reach that meaning. In literary reality, form, content and meaning are reciprocally explained and cannot be understood separately.

Literary work transforms a complex human experience and creates its own universe. Just like metaphor replaces the name to reach a new aspect of its object and composes a complex sign that manifests a new meaning of reality, every literary work, as a macrostructure, creates a universe of meaning to which it invites us.

The literary works are systems of signification forms and that is the point where we pass from Semiotic to Semantics, and we do not stop here because, in the recognition of signification forms, literature creates a meaning that makes it legit and necessary. This link between form and content is the one that occurs with metaphors and their cognoscitive function, beyond the shape that it takes. The metaphor pretends to reveal an aspect of the object that in any other way would remain occult or inaccessible. It is in the metaphor where the inseparable form and content link is made evident:

“...The metaphor is no longer a case of rhetorical ornamentation or linguistic curiosity in order to give the most brilliant illustration of the power that language holds in the creation of meaning through means of unthought of links, thanks to which a semantical

*pertinence surges from the ruins of a previous pertinence destroyed by its semantic and logical inconsistency...*⁵⁵

*“...We are not interested in the metaphor as an ornament because if it was only such (saying with nice terms what may be said in a different way) it could be explained precisely with a denotation theory. We are interested in it as an instrument of knowledge that adds, instead of substitutes...”*⁵⁶

Literary language is a very particular case of the sign, because of the deliberate use of the forms, the attention to the means, and the richness of its contents. Daily language is usually simpler or less dense in its content; it does not pay special attention to the means and it uses conventional forms without a particular valoration. Literary language, first, extremes the content and, alternately, rushes the forms. Every language is interpretation, hermeneutical act, but literary language is so to a greater degree. This is due to the effort it puts in the form, which widens the field of observation to the deepest thing and the sublime in human life.

The writer gives shape and the reader that is ignorant of those forms may deform the meaning of the literary work or falsify its interpretation if he does not respect the text's limits. Literary language loves plurality and complexity, it includes the personal factor of the author and the reader, actualises the connotations, awakens allusions, and looks for novelty and surprise, which is why there is a plurality of critiques and different interpretation techniques. Reading literary works is always a delight and a risk.

According to Ricoeur, words are the instrument that enables the knowledge of human beings and the means of comprehension and apprehension of reality. The “*man is language*” and this is the base to his anthropological philosophy. Men interpret (themselves) continuously through the act of saying, which is why every interpretation is open to a future interpretation.

This interest for language is divided, in the eyes of the author, into two paths: the study of the symbol that allows the comprehension of existence (from Semantics to Ontology) and the Philosophy of language as it proposes an encounter with Semiotic.

⁵⁵ RICOEUR, Paul, *Autobiografía Intelectual*. Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión, 1995, p.p. 47,48.

⁵⁶ ECO, Humberto, *Semiótica y filosofía del lenguaje*. Barcelona, Lumen, 1995, p.170.

Through thought and literature's symbolic language, human beings have manifested an indirect apprehension of reality that had not been possible through philosophical and scientific thought.

From a semantic point of view, the symbol gives meaning through another meaning, that is to say, the literal and mundane sense refers to a figurative and spiritual one. The symbol makes people think and no civilization can decipher its final sense. Hermeneutics tries to decipher symbols, understood as expressions with double meaning: a literal and ordinary one which guides the second meaning that the symbol points to via the first one. This conception of the symbol owes a lot to religious phenomenology, that Mircea Eliade elaborates in a singular manner in his *Comparative History of Religions*, where he conceives the symbol as the fundamental structure of religious speech.

The symbol has an excess of meaning which reflection frees and enriches: "*The symbol awakens the mind*", it awakens the interpretation that creates meaning, the symbol gives something to think of. Everything is said in an enigmatic way, it is necessary to start and restart thought constantly. We need an interpretation that respects the original enigma of the symbols and keeps promoting meaning upon it and elaborating it with the responsibility of an autonomous thought.

Interpretation opens the doors of comprehension if the donation of meaning to the symbol and the rational interpretative critique are united by Hermeneutics.

Each symbol unites men with the sacred, moves us closer to Ontology, to the question of being and wisdom. The symbol refers to something within itself, to the signified. Ricoeur distinguishes two ways of considering symbolism: what constitutes it and what it wants to say. In order to go beyond the opposition of system and event we have the words which are actualised with speech and acquire extralinguistic references.

The first form is the mechanism that describes its functioning by Linguistics and Structural Semantics: polisemy, the plurality of meanings and the role of context consists in the creation of isotopies that allow to decide in each case which of the multiple meanings is the actualised one (there may be more than one).

The second form is part of the reference realm: we get out of the linguistic system so as to enter Hermeneutics.

The reader's duty consists in surpassing the distance that separates him from the world of the text in order to start owning, understanding and explaining it in its multiple meanings, due to words' and symbols' polysemic character and its relation with the different contexts.

It is Paul Ricoeur who tries to link Semiotic and Hermeneutics so that the sign system does not lose its subjective anchor. It asks for a dialectic relation between the moment of explanation and that of comprehension "...*explain to understand*...".⁵⁷

Textual Semiotic presents the analytical and explanatory focus of the text, of its structure, and Hermeneutics the interpretation for comprehension. One point of view has as a finality objectiveness, creating a distance between the investigator and the meaning, while the other searches for the appropriation of meaning but what comes before serves as a base. With the help of Linguistics we analyse the relations between meanings, the mutual interpretations between the signs where each sign has value in its difference and opposition to the other signs. With Hermeneutics we find ourselves in the open field of manifestation of meaning where we find extralinguistic realities, the problem of reference.

Interpretation is the point where what is linguistic, what is not linguistic, language and lived experiences meet. Philosophy acts as an arbitration between two different modes of apprehension of meaning and being through language. We part from language as a linguistic structure or system to get to the opening of speech, the process of language.

The sign reaches transcendence when it breaks its closing and opens up to the Other, from ideal meaning to the reality of the thing. Analysis must be open to the semantic aspect as it creates a new opening for integral comprehension of language through Hermeneutics.

*"...According to Emile Benveniste, words are the point of articulation between a system (structure) and the event (act of speech), that is to say, between Semiology and Semantics..."*⁵⁸

The sign-word is the point of articulation. It is within a structure where abundance of meaning orders itself and unfolds but cannot be reached. The word is the point of articulation

⁵⁷ RICOEUR, Paul, *Autobiografía Intelectual*, op. cit., p.53.

⁵⁸ MELANO COUCH, Beatriz, *Hermenéutica Metódica, Teoría de la Interpretación según Paul Ricoeur*. Buenos Aires, Proyecto Círculo, 1983, p. 83.

between the structure and the effect of meaning that presents metaphorical speech with the limiting action of the semantic field.

Understanding a text is following its movement of meaning towards the reference; beyond the author one follows the possible modes of being-in-the-world that the text opens and unveils. As meaning is universal, it actualises all the time. The first meaning can be found in writing to complete it through interpretation.

The literary sign is a special kind of sign that transcends the limit of words through its transposed meaning, identifying it with the literary sign. In order to reach it it is necessary to take its form and background into consideration. A summative vision of the sign that unites the classical-semantic conception (the sign as a representation) and the modern-semiotic conception (the sign as signification) and that also integrates classical Hermeneutics that will help to “interpret to understand” that symbolic language, that transcendence of the sign, through a spiritual attitude of search for meaning.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY SIGN FROM A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

1. Literary Semiotics. The notion of text

In the first chapter we concluded that literature is a sign that links the classical conception of the sign with the modern one; it is a sign that represents and signifies men's thoughts. In the second chapter, we analysed the particularities of that sign in Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in order to understand transposed meaning. We will now try to search for the characteristics of the literary sign in Semiotics as an instrument for analysis.

We believe that literary Semiotics can provide us with analytical concepts that allow us to reach the full potential of a literary work. This is why we delve in the theories of its most relevant representatives looking for fundamental and recurrent elements that let us achieve our goal.

But before diving into the semiotic theories it is important to clear the concept of *text*, from linguistic and semiotic grounds, in order to avoid ambiguities when using the term.

The text is the basic unit of the semantic process, everything that is said or written in a context in opposition to a fixed meaning; it is coded in sentences, not made up by them. It represents opposition and abridgement given that it is the choice of what wants to be said about the broad realm of what can be said. The text is the linguistic form of social interaction. It presents a progression and continuous combination of meanings and it always takes part in a context that is a tabular semiotic structure.

According to Barthes **the text is the meeting point between reading and writing**. It is an intersection between the reader and the author, a production of signifiers from organization and interpretation. Hjelmslev says that the text is a connotative system because it is a secondary system of signification.

Kristeva defines it as a “system of multiple connections”, a structure of paragrammatic networks, that is to say they are not linear, but tabular, which allows a pluridetermination of meaning.

The object of analysis of cultural Semiotics is also the text. Lotman⁵⁹ considers it a “coherent ensemble of signs”, a semiotic process that produces new meanings through its signs.

In the eyes of Ricoeur,⁶⁰ the “meaning of the text” is its internal union, it is not anything that refers to a reality external to language. It consists of its internal articulations and in the hierarchic subordination of the parts to the whole.

For social Semiotics, the text enables a social exchange of meaning. Halliday⁶¹ considers it in its general signification as a sociological event and a semiotic encounter by which the meanings formed in the social system are exchanged. The exchange of meanings is an interactive process. In order to be exchanged between social members, the meanings that constitute the social system must first be represented in a symbolic and exchangeable way, and the one that is the most accessible within the available ways is language.

A text can either be a phrase or an entire book. It is defined for its autonomy and enclosed manner. It creates a system which is not the linguistic one but is still related to it by contiguity and similarity.

So as to complete the explanation of this concept we can say that: a text is basically for the most part of contemporary studies a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic unit of language using its communicative function and **carrying multiple meanings that expect to be interpreted**.

The concept of *speech* is related to the one of *text*. They are used as complementary or synonyms. In German, Dutch and other languages the word text does not exist and taking that term as a basis, the “grammar of the text” and “linguistic of the text” were created, although many times they refer to the written speech. In English and Romance languages they were used with ambiguity. A type of speech is an abstraction that can only be described as a text.

“...The competent users of a language do not limit themselves to the reading operations regarding lineal and global textuality [...] Understanding does not only imply attributing a global meaning but also assigning a meaning by the analysis of a text as a communicational event. That way, the consideration of a text from the point of view of the

⁵⁹ LOTMAN, Iuri, *La Semiosfera I y II*. Madrid, Frönesis Cátedra, 1998.

⁶⁰ Let us remember that Ricoeur studies Hermeneutics instead of Semiotic but insists on the necessity to relate both disciplines, posture that we share.

⁶¹ HALLIDAY, M.A.K., *El Lenguaje Como Semiótica Social, La Interpretación Social del Lenguaje y del Significado*. Bogotá, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998.

discursive mechanism which determines it, from the point of view of its production conditions, will make of that text a speech..."⁶²

The basis of literary Semiotic start with Structuralism's *Course in General Linguistics* (1915). With De Saussure emerges the necessity of considering Linguistics as a system in the foundation of every human practice which denotes a particular meaning. Concerning the analysis of works of literature, Structuralism pretends to examine the stories in order to discover the grammar that gives them meaning.

Many thinkers that belong to this field present relevant contributions. For instance, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss analyses the different cultural forms produced by men: the myth, the arts and literature as superior manifestations of the sign realm. The first Barthes⁶³ clearly absorbs Levi-Strauss' ideas and shows that structuralist activity has two main operations, which are cutting and assembling; he discovers the units and rules of association. He sees Structuralism as a mode that is different to all the other forms of analysis, given that the goal of structuralist activity is related to the recomposition of the object in order to find the functions.

The variations that Louis Hjelmslev introduces to De Saussure's model enable a new field of literary theories to appear. With Hjelmslev literary language is not a dimension different to that of daily language since connotation assumes both forms. Language not only denotes but also surrounds the information with connotative expressivity that, at the same time, can be information by itself.

Jakobson, one of the heads of Russian Formalism, having gone through different theories and connected with Levi-Strauss, will develop structuralist Post-formalism with his theory of poetic function. He connects the studies of Linguistics and Poetics, "poetry is language in its aesthetic form". He thinks that verbal behaviour is ruled by the selections operated in the paradigmatic axes (lexical chains), where terms adequate to the expressive intention are selected to then order themselves in syntagmatic axes (chains of sentences). According to him, "...*Poetics can be defined as the linguistic study of the poetic function in the context of verbal messages in general and in poetry in particular...*".⁶⁴

⁶² ATORRESI, Ana, *Los Estudios Semióticos*. Buenos Aires, Conicet, 1996, p. 247.

⁶³ Barthes' work goes through three distinct moments (the enlightenment for language, scientificity, and the text as a volume of traces in trance of movement), which is why we talk about more than one Barthes.

⁶⁴ Gómez Redondo, Fernando, *La Crítica Literaria del Siglo XX*. Madrid, EDAF, 1996, p. 167.

In the second half of the twentieth century, narrative's development is greater than poetry's: Barthes and his study about Balzac's *Sarrasine*, Genette and his study about *À la recherche du temps perdu* by Proust, and Todorov's analysis of the *Decameron*.

Vladimir Propp with his *Morphology of Folk Tales*, who does not belong to the Formalist currents, is introduced in French Structuralism by Lévi-Strauss, mainly thanks to Propp's definition of function and the place that it occupies in the development of the plot. Propp points out that it is necessary to take into consideration the meaning that comes out of a function in order to define the stories' actions. Some of his ideas will work as a foundation for the theories of Algirdas Greimas, Claude Bremond and Tzvetan Todorov.

The second Barthes presents one of the capital works of narratology with his *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*. The author's theory has a linguistic basis and he proposes to talk about three levels of meaning: functions, as Propp and Bremond; actions, as Greimas; narration and speech, as Todorov.

So as to analyse Balzac's *Sarrasine*, Barthes presents a methodology different to the story's model of analysis. In this new analysis he distinguishes the concepts of lexias and codes and finds different kinds of codes: the hermeneutic one, the semantic one, the proairetic one, the symbolic one, the cultural one,⁶⁵ etc.

Within Russian Post-formalism Iuri Lotman's figure stands out. He creates a bridge between the interior of the text and the external sociocultural elements; the literary work does not appear as a direct reflection of the real world but as a recreation of value. To Lotman we owe the possibility of linking literature with the rest of the artistic manifestations.

Greimas synthesizes previous methods and thus makes up a new structure of speech. He takes Propp's model, corrected with the combination of dramatic functions that Etienne Souriau had proposed, plus Lucien Tesnière's square of "actants" (previously used solely in the realms of sentences); and finally organises his *Sémantique Structurale*.

Gerard Genette offers one of the most important narratological analysis of Structuralism. He distinguishes three levels in the process of narrative communication: extradiegetic, intradiegetic and metadiegetic. With this, he gets over the story-speech dichotomy imposed from Propp to Todorov.

⁶⁵ This classification of the codes as interrelates parts of a whole is very interesting.

After that, we can see how Semiotic is present throughout the whole twentieth century, starting with Ferdinand de Saussure, who takes some ideas from the Philosophy of Language. Practically all the currents of this century have assumed that the signs are not only words but a series of cultural phenomena organised in hierarchic systems with codes and rules of functioning.

As from the different postures, literary Semiotic will have two main lines: one the one hand, as the evolution of Structuralism, and on the other hand, the text is analysed as a product of signs, integrated in another series of systems of signification of which both its meaning and aesthetic dimension depend.

It is important to add the contribution of literary Pragmatic and Linguistic of the text, through Dijk, Austin, Searle, Coseriu and the Theory of Enunciation developed by Benveniste and Orecchioni.

Semiotic, close in its origin to Structuralism's presupposes, studies significations, everything that a literary work represents, from literary language to production and reception elements, belong to its realm, which has been progressively developed through different linguistic directions of the twentieth century.

2. Structuralism. Narratology as reading of meaning

With *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* Barthes presents the foundation for literary Structuralism.⁶⁶ The notion of narrative includes oral and written language, images, gestures, cinema, theatre, art, comics, the news, the press, and conversations, among others.

In order to describe and classify the infinity of narratives, literary Structuralism organises a theory that takes Linguistics as its model.⁶⁷ There, speech is compared with phrases: speech as a great phrase and phrases as small speeches. Narrative participates in the idea of phrases but is not a combination of them: it is a great phrase. Barthes recognises that it is impossible to see literature as an art separated from language, thus the strong bond between language and literature. Structural analysis intends to distinguish instances of description hierarchised in an integrative manner.

⁶⁶ Lévi-Strauss cooperates with important contributions but his vision is mostly anthropological. He is absorbed by Barthes, who takes him to the literary field.

⁶⁷ The link between Linguistics and literature is fundamental for the semiotic contributions.

“...Understanding a narrative does not exclusively mean following the story, it is also the recognition of ‘stages’, projecting the horizontal chains of the narrative ‘thread’ upon an implicitly vertical axis: reading (listening to) a narrative is not only passing from one word to another, but also passing from one level to another [...] meaning is not at the end of a narrative, it encompasses it...”⁶⁸

The goal of this analysis is to find the meaning, which is not at the end of the narrative but in the whole itself; it is like Van Dijk’s macrostructure.⁶⁹

Barthes finds three levels of description in a literary work: that of functions, that of action and that of narration, which are continuously linked. The linguistic function is a unit of content, it is “what is said” in a speech (instead of “how it is said”). It presents two greater functions: distributive and integrative ones.

DISTRIBUTIVE	INTEGRATIVE
They correspond to Propp’s functions	They are indexes
They refer to operations	They refer to meaning
Syntagmatic sanction	Paradigmatic sanction
Metonymic narratives	Metaphoric narratives
Functionality of the doing	Functionality of the being

Some narratives, like folk tales, are functional, while others are indexical, like psychological novels. Between those two extremes other forms can be found. Within the former categories we can find narrative unit subcategories; as some constitute the real “rising action” of the story (cardinal function or middle), others fill in the empty spaces and are complementary (catalysis). Cardinal functions are the moments of tension in the narrative, the climax. In contrast, catalysis represents the moments of rest, although they serve a purpose; they are factual functions that maintain the contact between narrator and reader. As Barthes points out: “*let us*

⁶⁸ BARTHES, Roland y otros, *Comunicaciones. Análisis Estructural del Relato*. Buenos Aires, Tiempo Argentino, 1972, p. 15.

⁶⁹ The macrostructure is the global meaning of the text, which is superior to the sum of its parts.

*say that it is impossible to replace the rising action without altering the story, but it is also impossible to suppress a catalysis without altering the speech”.*⁷⁰

In the indexical category he differentiates the proper indexes (implicit meanings, deciphering activity) and the information (pure data, already elaborated knowledge). Catalysis, indexes and informants have in common the fact of being expansive: the fill in the place left by the resign action, which is the frame.

So as to determine the functions' logic there are three directions:

1. Bremond, the proper logic line: he aims to reconstitute the syntax of the characters' behaviour the moment in which they choose to act.
2. Lévi-Strauss and Greimas, the linguistic line: they try to discover the functions and paradigmatic oppositions.
3. Todorov, who analyses the characters' actions: he searches for the rules of combination of the narrative's basic predicates.

These lines complement each other instead of being contradictory. What Barthes does is adding the analytical dimension. The sequence is a logical succession of “middles” (rising action) united by solidarity. There is an interior syntax to the sequence and one between the different sequences, which are the micro and macrosequences.

Structural analysis defines the character as a “participant” rather than a being. Each character, even the secondary ones, is the hero of its own sequence. They are defined by their participation in the action. Not because of the small acts but in the sense of the great articulations of yearning, communicating and fighting. The subjects represent the privileged class of participants since they activate the actions from the grammatical aspect. This way, the author carries out the level of the actions.

The third level is that of narration, where the narrator is read as a “paper being”, different from the physical author. Barthes presumes: “...*today writing is not the same as telling, it is saying that you are telling and remitting the whole referent ('what is said') to this verbalisation*”.⁷¹

Linguistics cares for the phrase while the analysis of narrative cares for the speech. The language of the story has an articulation and an integration, a form and a meaning. The form of

⁷⁰ BARTHES, Roland y otros, *Comunicaciones. Análisis Estructural del Relato*, op.cit., p.21.

⁷¹ BARTHES, Roland y otros, *ibid.*, p.35.

the narrative is characterised for distending and expanding. The meaning integrates the units in units of a superior order. What is separated in one level, such as sequences, is united in a superior level, that of total meaning. This is disassembling so as to assemble once the interior pieces have been studied. This integration clears the complexities and allows us to comprehend discontinuous, continuous and heterogeneous elements. We operate disassembling to cut and assemble. The narrative's form orients a horizontal reading (paradigmatic, simultaneity axis) while the integration superposes a vertical reading (syntagmatic, succession axis).

The narrative's purpose is to show in the order of meaning (not in a mimetic order). A narrative does not imitate: it represents the superior order of language. It looks to create a significance, a secondary meaning presented through a signifier which is the work of literature. The latter constitutes an active challenge which never had a fixed meaning due to the fact that the readers constantly recreate it with their various interpretations. The narrative does not change: it is the readers and the world that change it.

The place of narrative analysis is that of "a secondary Linguistics, a Translinguistics, beyond the sentence". Each narrative is Saussure's speech (*parole*), language's message. An analysis of narration creates a corpus of stories so as to extract a structure, a form. It then tries to find the formal variations observed through differences in the content.

Analysis of narration tries to find senses (instead of one true meaning).⁷² We inspect the narrative's language so as to find the plurality of meanings. We do not search for the text's secrets because everything is unveiled; alternatively, we try to analyse the codes present through three operations: segmentation (division of the text in lexias, which are units of meaning), inventory (recollection and organisation of meanings) and coordination (weave of meanings through the different codes). The author recognises meaning as the starting point and distinguishes different types of codes:

- a. Narrative (form of the speech as "once upon a time")
- b. Topographic (systematic organisation of the places in the speech)
- c. Historical (indexes of historical, political, and social knowledge, among others)
- d. Rhetorical (language resources)
- e. Onomastic (the meaning in proper nouns)

⁷² The sense is any feature of the story that remits to another thing; it is a correlation, a connotation. The sense is not the signification that words have in the dictionary, but the one they acquire in the interior of a phrase.

- f. Chronological (chronology and dates)
- g. Factual (the ensemble of acts through which the reader keeps in contact with the interlocutor)
- h. Symbolic (narration of transgressions by the symbols)
- i. Metalinguistic (speech that has another speech as its referent)
- j. Anagoric (acts that enunciate the text's meaning)
- k. Semic (the ensemble of connotative meanings)
- l. Of actions (the ensemble of denotative meanings)

These last two are particularly important since they point to the text's connotation and denotation.⁷³

The object, rather than interrogating or explaining, is to interrogate the text in order to reconstruct the general language of the narrative. For the author structural analysis comprises three types: indexical analysis (the classification of the characters' attributes), sequential analysis (the classification of the actions into sequences) and actantial analysis (that of the characters' functions).

Barthes then postulates textual analysis as the way of seeing the text in its difference, its individuality, the text as a "weaving of codes". With this analysis the author, instead of searching for where the text comes from (historical critique) or how it is made (structural analysis), observes how it appears through reading. He does not try to reduce the text to one meaning, but to keep its significance open, its plain production over other texts and codes by the means of intertextuality. For Barthes, structural analysis is applied to oral stories and myths, and textual analysis works for written texts.

The latter aims to produce a mobile structure that goes from reader to reader (rather than describing the literary work or finding a structure). In order to develop it, first, the author invites us to read carefully, to find and classify the meanings and also the forms and codes that make these possible. He looks for what is plural in the text, its significance as a practice which is possible to all men in their struggle with signs. After the reading he divides the text in lexias, reading units and textual signifiers. These lexias are arbitrary and useful when they cover more

⁷³ These two concepts belong to linguist Louis Hjelmslev and are then used greatly by Barthes.

than one, two or three meanings. He searches for the lexias' secondary meanings, the connotations and associations and its relations given the context.

Reading seeks to unfold a text instead of explaining it. To walk it in slow motion or feel "the pleasure of the text". In this pleasure, meanings are forgotten; what matters are the starting points of meanings instead of arriving there. Barthes presents this analysis in the story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar", by Edgar Allan Poe.⁷⁴

In this story's analysis he first recognises the title as the element which transforms the text into commodity and analyses each one of its components in order to show how the title anticipates what will later be told. He then studies the aperitif that the first paragraph represents by trying to awaken the reader's attention. He distinguishes the different kinds of codes seen in the lexias and underlines the analysis of the actions axis (obvious meaning, denotation, anecdotic frame), and the axis of secondary meanings (blunt meaning, connotation). He takes into consideration the narrative's traces, present in enunciation,⁷⁵ and also the Speech Acts theory,⁷⁶ which differentiates constative utterances from performative ones.

The analysis of the codes is essential to Barthes: they are associative fields that impose a certain idea of structure, codes such as "already seen, already read, already done". These are the codes as starting points that serve to destructure. This "unweaving" of the text is what differentiates the structure of structural analysis from structuration, which is the object of study of textual analysis and tries to represent the text as a weave. This undecidability is not seen as a weakness since it is what allows to create the volume of indeterminations that form the significance.

Todorov was Roland Barthes' direct disciple and worked with him in the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which explains why his works follow Barthes' goals: the study of the text with independence from the will of authorship, as a basis to define a grammar of the story.

His most important contribution is the transformation of the narrative levels of "fable" and "subject" to "story" and "speech". He creates a dichotomy that every successor will have to address. He indicates that his object of study are not actions, but the tale of these actions, the mode in which they are organised by a speech called tale. Todorov analyses tales' categories and tries to find an internal order in literature's structure.

⁷⁴ This analysis can be found in *La Aventura Semiológica* by Roland Barthes.

⁷⁵ Theory developed by Kerbrat Orecchioni in *La Enunciación*.

⁷⁶ Theory developed by John Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*.

“...Poetics is, therefore, an approach to literature that is ‘abstract’ and ‘intern’ at the same time. Its object is not the work of literature itself: its concerns are the characteristics of this particular discourse that is literary discourse...”⁷⁷

The literary work is projected over the literary discourse rather than any other kind of discourse. Its virtualities are studied.

In order to understand the abstract structure of the stories he presents two basic notions: meaning and interpretation. The meaning is an element’s function in the work in relation with the other elements and with the whole (it must be in a superior system). Interpretation is the act of finding that meaning.

“...Interpeting is naming the examined meaning of the text (...) it consists in making the text itself talk; in other words: it is about the fidelity to the object, to the Other...”⁷⁸

“...Reading is a walk within the textual space; a walk that is not limited to the concatenation of the letters from left to right and from up and down (this is the only non-plural path, thus the text does not have just one meaning), but that separates the adjacent concepts and reunites the distant ones and constitutes, precisely, the text as a space instead of a line...”⁷⁹

“...The value is within the text yet only appears when interrogated by a reader. Reading is not just an act of manifestation of the text, but a process of valorisation...”⁸⁰

“...We recognise the general semiotic rule that states that ‘me’ and ‘you’ (or rather the emisor and the receiver) are always solidary...”⁸¹

It organises an abstract system of categories that work for textual analysis:

⁷⁷ TODOROV, Tzvetan, *Poética Estructuralista*. Barcelona, Losada, 2004.

⁷⁸ TODOROV, Tzvetán, *ibid.*, p.24.

⁷⁹ TODOROV, Tzvetán, *ibid.*, p.27.

⁸⁰ TODOROV, Tzvetán, *ibid.*, p.171.

⁸¹ TODOROV, Tzvetán, *ibid.*, p.109.

1. Semantic (what the story represents, its contents)
2. Syntactic (the combination of units, its relations)
3. Verbal (the specific phrases through which a story is told)

Its method is like a Grammar that distinguishes three main categories: proper nouns (the agent), adjectives (the attribute that informs about the actions or agent's qualities) and the verb (the actions).

A literary work presents two simultaneous aspects: it is story and discourse. It is a story due to the fact that it presents a reality, events, and characters that can be confused with real life. It is a discourse⁸² because there is a narrator who tells the story and a reader who listens. What matters in the discourse is the way in which the narrator tells.

The story is a convention, an abstraction, it does not exist in the level of the events and it generally has many intertwined threads. We can distinguish two levels in the story: the logic of the actions and the characters and its relations. The succession of events is not arbitrary, it follows an order where a thought provokes an effect. The character can be distinguished by its relationships with other characters and those relationships can either be: desire (love), communication (confidence) and participation (help). We do not mean to say that the human relations of every story can be reduced to these three categories; however, they can be reduced to a small number which has a fundamental role in the story's structure. All the other relations derive from these ones, giving place to: the opposition rules (love-hatred, confidence-revelation, help-opposition) and the passive rule (the passage from active voice to passive voice so as to show the bond between two preexistent relationships, linking them). In the characters' relationships we can recognise different nuances that indicate the personal transformation of a relationship through the rules of action which reflect the laws of life in a society.

The story as a speech presents "the real word directed from the narrator to the reader". Speech procedures can be divided in three groups:

⁸² Discourse for Todorov is the same as story, it refers to the way of narrating. The Russian Formalists name what happens *fabula* and the way in which it is told, *theme*. This pair for the author corresponds to story and discourse.

“[...] The speech’s time , in which the relationship between the time of the story and that of the speech is expressed; the aspects of the story or the way in which it is perceived by the narrator and the story modes that depend on the type of discourse used by the narrator so as to make the story known to us...”⁸³

The speech’s time is linear (succession) while that of the story is pluridimensional (simultaneity). The events are valued for the relationships that they maintain, which give place to new actions, marked by the disposition of events in the story.

The chains, alternation and rotation are ways of reading the story. The first one indicates the juxtaposition of different stories; unity is achieved by the similarity in construction of each story (coordination). The second one is telling two stories simultaneously, crossing them. Finally, the third one is the inclusion of a story in another (subordination). These temporalities belong to the characters but there are others that belong to the time of enunciation and that of perception.

The different types of narrator’s perception about the story are the aspects of the story; they reflect the relationship between the character and the narrator that gives as a result three kinds of relation: when the narrator knows more than the character, when he knows as much as the character in first or third person and when the narrator knows less than the characters.

On the other hand, we have the story modes which are the way in which the narrator tells the story: representation and narration.

REPRESENTATION	NARRATION
Speech	Story
Drama	Chronicle
The story is developed before us by the characters	The author tells the events
Direct speech	Indirect speech
Scenic style	Panoramic style

⁸³ TODOROV, Tzvetán, *Poética Estructuralista*, op. Cit., p.174.

Direct speech is linked to the subjective aspect of language to enunciation, to the plane of performative speech. In contrast, indirect speech, the voice of the narrator, is the wording, it is objective, it is the constative plane of speech.⁸⁴

The narrator is the subject of enunciation, who chooses the order of elements and makes the actions known to us; he also chooses the objective or subjective mode of telling. The “ideal” image of narrator is accompanied by the “ideal” image of reader; they depend on each other in every work of fiction. This way, the story appears not as a simple exposition of the actions but as the story of the relation between a book and its context.

In “Boundaries of Narrative”, from *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* by **Genette**, the author examines external dichotomies and he overcomes them. In his eyes, every story is composed by representations of actions and events that create the narration, and by representations of objects or characters that form the description. All the differences between narration and description are of content; the narration puts the accent is the temporal and dramatic aspect of the story; the description encompasses the objects and beings and thus seems to stop the flow of time and install the story in space. They are like two different attitudes in facing the world: an active one and a contemplative and poetic one. But as modes of representation they are similar operations that use the same language resources; they have no differences in the semiological plane.

He also examines the pair *diegesis* / *mimesis* that Aristotle presents in *Poetics*. He shows that the story (*diegesis*) is one of the modes of poetic imitation (*mimesis*). He distinguishes the simple narration, where the author speaks directly, from literal imitation, where the author speaks from a character’s mouth. Genette believes that literal imitation (perfect imitation) cannot be achieved because it is the thing itself, which is why imitations are imperfect.

In *Figures III*, Genette presents a narratological analysis. He elaborates the concepts of speech and story; he separates a story where nobody speaks from a story where the reader is conscious of who is speaking; lastly, he shows that those differences never appear in a pure state and creates a distinction which transcends the dichotomy through three elements: story (meaning), narrative (signifier) and narration (act of narrating).

⁸⁴ Constative and performative utterances and performative verbs are three fundamental concepts in Austin’s theory that point out the difference between the language that only enunciates and the language that performs by enunciating.

Genette considers Todorov's three categories in order to analyse narrative speech, to conceive the narrative as a verbal form in the grammatical use of the term, as a verb in constant expansion, and uses three categories taken from the grammar of the verb.

1. Time (relationship between narrative and story)
2. Mode (ways and degrees of narrative representation)
3. Voice (way in which the narration is implied in the narrative through the narrator and the narratee)

The narrative is a two-times temporal sequence since it presents the time of the narrated story (time of the events) and the time of enunciation (time of the narrative).

The order of events in the story can either be chronological, linear, or altered by anachronies (temporal jumps), which are classified in *analepsis* (*raccontos* that can be subjective or objective) and *prolepsis* (jumps to the future). Within the anachronies' classification he separates the narrative in principal and secondary. The *analepsis* can be: external (they are the ones that are temporally and argumentatively outside of the primary narrative and they serve to clarify), internal (temporally part of the primary narrative) and mixed (the reach or distance is previous to the beginning of the primary narrative [external] and the amplitude reaches the time of narration [internal]). Internal and mixed *analepsis* are classified, at the same time, in *homodiegetic*, which have a content different to that of the primary narrative and can be: completive (they fill in lagoons in the narrative), repetitive (they allude to narrated events), partial (they add information and the narratives are not united) and complete (they unite the secondary and the primary narrative). The *prolepsis* are divided into external, which cover the function of epilogue and are digressions, and internal, which interfere in the narration. The first ones remain outside of the primary narrative's temporal field, while the second ones are divided into *heterodiegetic* and *homodiegetic* that, simultaneously, are subdivided into completive and repetitive.

What has been developed encompasses the narrative order, centered in the notion of time of the narrative, and confronts its duration with the story in order to show the intensity of infinite velocity and absolute slowness. It distinguishes four possibilities:

1. Pause (description that is part of the story)

2. Scene (great action, the most intense moment of the story)
3. Summary (narrative segment that condenses and synthesizes the events)
4. Explicit and implicit ellipsis (omission of temporal segments. If the omitted moment is mentioned or determined it is the expressed category; in contrast, if they are inferred or not declared, it is the implicit one. The hypothetical cannot be localised and is deduced through the *analepsis*)

He also analyses the problems of aspect, given that an event not only happens but can also be repeated, it is the recurrence of the same event. He distinguishes, like Todorov, singulative narrative (the most common form, where we tell one time what happened one time or n times what happened n times), repetitive narrative (frequent in epistolar processes where we tell n times what only happened one time) and iterative narrative (used in descriptions, we tell one time what happened n times).

The other point is the narrative mode which provides variation to the narrative degrees. We can tell more or less and tell according to different points of view, give more or less details and in a more or less direct way and be closer or further away from the story. We can regulate the information depending on the knowledge of the story's parties. The perspective encompasses the narrator's possibilities and the character developed by Todorov:

- a. The narrator knows more than the character.
- b. The narrator knows the same as the character.
- c. The narrator knows less than the character.

With these modalities, Genette talks about three types of story according to the focalisation:⁸⁵ non-focalised narrative, internal focalisation narrative and external focalisation narrative. Focalisation can either be constant or variable, but the change can point out an infraction which can be *paralipsis* (omission of a thought or an important fact, that neither the hero nor the narrator can ignore) or *paralepsis* (excess of information).

Another important element is the voice. An enunciation can be deciphered when we consider who enunciates and the situation in which it is enunciated. The voice is the aspect of verbal action considered in its relations with the subject. It determines the relation between the

⁸⁵ The focalisation is the point of view through which the events are presented.

narrator and what is being told, the story. There are two basic possibilities: the *heterodiegetic* narrative (the narrator is absent, he tells other people's stories) and homodiegetic or autodiegetic (the narrator is present as a character, he tells his own story, and the second case is the hero); these two levels are distributed in two relations which indicate the narrative level: *extradiegetic* and *intradiegetic*.

A story can be told without mentioning the time and place of action but not without establishing the distance between narrative act and the moment of the events. This way, four types of relations are established:

- a. Ulterior (the events are previous to the actions)
- b. Previous (the narrative pretends to be a prophecy)
- c. Simultaneous (the present of the action is simultaneous to the narrative)
- d. Intercalated (the different instances are articulated and act upon the principal axis of the story)

In *Palimpsests*, he proposes that the object of Poetics, rather than the text, is the "architext" or the "literariness of literature", all of the types of discourses, enunciation modes and genres on which each text depends. The author calls these relations transtextuality and recognises five categories:

1. Intertextuality (relation of copresence between two or more texts, the present of a text within another)
2. Paratext (relationship between the text and the materials which accompany it, such as the title, subtitle, intertitles, preface, epilogue, etc.)
3. Metatextuality or "comment" (it links a text with another without explicitly quoting it)
4. Hypertextuality (a text, hypertext,⁸⁶ inserted in a previous text, hypotext, yet through a relation different from the named ones [transformation])
5. Architextuality (silent relation, fixed in the paratextual mentions as titles or subtitles which refer to an information of its generic qualities)

⁸⁶ The hypertext is a text that remits to another one without being a metatext and without copying it. The "meta" function is the one that allows a sign to speak about another; in a play, speaking about another play, like in *Hamlet*. The copy is when the text is reproduced. The hypertext is one text in another one but with variations; it remits to the first one but with variations like the *Odyssey* and Joyce's *Ulysses*. These concepts can be seen in *Imagen y Metaimagen* by Jorge Alessandria.

In *Fiction and Diction* he proposes talking about two regimes of literariness: the constitutive one (guaranteed by intentions, conventions and traditions) and the conditional one (it corresponds to a subjective aesthetic appreciation of the reader). Besides from the regime, we consider the category of criteria, divided into thematic (text's content) and rhematic (relative to the type of speech).

His theory, without doubt, is complex but reunites elements of great importance for the comprehension of texts in the realm of a narrative's temporal and aspectual fields and the different relations of the text with itself and with other texts.

Propp is introduced to Structuralism by Lévi-Strauss, who finds similarities between the structure of folk tales and myths. Propp distinguishes variable elements in the tales such as the names of the characters and its characteristics and constant elements which he calls functions.⁸⁷ By function we understand: "*a character's action defined from the point of view of its signification in the development of intrigue*".⁸⁸

It determines a broad model of analysis of the narrative, with constant elements, the thirty one functions between the characters and the relations of argument. In this fashion, he develops a morphology that explains the way in which folk tales function. With these functions he expects to summarise the totality of intrigue lines, incarnated by seven kinds of characters. The functions are grouped in different spheres which correspond to distinct categories of characters; these are the spheres of action:

1. Antagonist (elements of damage, combat, persecution, etc.)
2. Donor (provider, preparation of the transmission of the magical means and delivery)
3. Magical auxiliary (transportation of the hero, elimination of evil, salvation, transformation of the hero)
4. The princess and his father (assignation of the difficult task, mark, discovery, identification, punishment of the antagonist, wedding)
5. Dispatcher (hero's dispatch to an expedition)
6. Hero (decision, departure, reaction to the donor's exigences, wedding)

⁸⁷ Greimas' actantial model follows Propp's concept of function.

⁸⁸ PROPP, Vladimir, *Morfología del Cuento*. Buenos Aires, Goyanarte, 1972, pp. 32-33.

7. Fake hero (betrayal)

Propp is convinced that this functional morphology does not vary in folk tales, yet not in literary tales, which depend on the author's creative will. He points out that we need to keep present the meaning that arises from each function in order to define each action in a determined narrative course. He does not see the "motif" as the minimal unit in the narrative process: in his opinion, the smallest unit is the "function", that determines the actions, which are stable, and where the characters are projected as variable categories. When Propp says that functions need to be studied instead of motifs, he distances himself from folklorists and moves closer to the basis of Structuralism.

Many of his ideas were used by Greimas, Bremond and Todorov. The order of functions is fixed and they are thirty one. Some functions can be missing without preventing the development or presence of the others. After the presentation of an initial situation, where we get to know the hero and his characteristics, the functions begin.

1. Absence of one of the family members.
2. Prohibition imposed on the hero.
3. Transgression of the prohibition.
4. Questioning or demand carried out by the antagonist.
5. Information or news that the antagonist receives.
6. Antagonist's trickery over his victim.
7. Involuntary complicity, the victim lets themselves be deceived and helps the enemy.
8. Injury and lack.
9. Mediation or linking moment.
10. Hero's decision.
11. Hero's departure.
12. Donor's first function: testing the hero.
13. Hero's positive or negative reaction.
14. Transmission obtained by the magical auxiliary.
15. Transportation of the hero from one kingdom to another.

16. Confrontation between the hero and the antagonist.
17. The hero is marked, signaled.
18. The antagonist is defeated.
19. Elimination or reparation of the injury.
20. Hero's return.
21. Persecution
22. Salvation, the hero runs away from the harassment.
23. Incognito arrival of the hero.
24. Fake hero's imposture.
25. Hard task for the hero.
26. Accomplishment.
27. Hero's identification.
28. Antagonist's discovery.
29. Hero's transfiguration.
30. The antagonist is punished.
31. The hero gets married and gets to the throne.

All of the functions come from one another, none excludes the other, they are all contained by a single axis. The motivations are the causes and personal intentions incite the characters to perform an act, they are the most changeable and unstable elements in stories.

This theory of the functions is later developed by Claude Bremond, who points out that functions are the minimal units of narrative structures. However, he is unlike Propp as he understands that functions do not create a unilinear chain, but a plural scheme of sequences that construct a "narrative cycle".

According to **Bremond**, there are necessary functions called elemental sequences. Each sequence is a triad formed by the three mandatory phases of every process: one function opens up possibility, another one marks the act, and the third one closes with the result.

He is interested in classifying the narrative's events according to two main types of categories which he names amelioration to obtain and foreseeable degradation. Connections (a syntax) are always established between those sequences which give place to complex sequences. These combinations happen following variables and the most typical are these three modalities:

continuous succession (chains by contiguity), by embedding (a process in order to reach its goal must include another one that serves as a means, which at the same time includes a third one, etc.) and by linkage (the same event, which performs a function from a perspective performs another function from another perspective, which enables delimiting the spheres of action of the different roles).

In every narrative there is succession and integration; if not, there is no narrative: we would only have a description, deduction, lyrical effusion or chronology. This is why a narrative is a narrative cycle, “...a discourse that integrates a succession of events of human interest in the unit of the same action...”.⁸⁹

The amelioration processes could be (or not be) made explicit by the narrator. There is an obstacle which is eliminated as the process of amelioration develops. For this, the means operate against the obstacle. Sometimes the amelioration can be attributed by chance, while other times there is an agent who needs to fulfill a task. This introduces two roles: the helper and the villain.⁹⁰ The helper intervenes trying to solve the agent's problem by his own merit, in three ways: the exchange of simultaneous services (they are solidary), the recognition of a previous service (debtor) and the expectation of a future compensation (creditor). Between the obstacles, which oppose the fulfillment of a task, is the elimination of the villain. It takes two different forms: the pacific one (negotiation that transforms the villain into helper) and hostile (aggression to eliminate the villain). The pacific form can use seduction or intimidation, or also inspires the desire of a service or the fear of a prejudice that can either cause or evade the aggression from the victim's perspective. It is a danger and in order to avoid it some protection mechanisms are created. One of the ways is deception through disguise or pretense. Different forms of deceit can be distinguished depending on the mode of pretension, absence of any relation between it and the victim, pacific intentions, and false aggressive intentions so as to hide the real attack. The harm caused is considered as an inverse service and retribution of the prejudice is sought after. There is an appearance of a rewarder who rewards and one who punishes, paying debts off.

The other process is that of degradation, when the process of amelioration is over the story comes to an end. If the narrator wishes to continue it, he introduces new opposition forces

⁸⁹ PROPP, Vladimir, *Morfología del Cuento*, op.cit., p. 90. The concept of narrative cycle is important because it represents the textual weave formed by the relations between functions.

⁹⁰ The helper and the villain are similar to the subject's helper and opponent established by Greimas in his actantial model.

and the process of degradation through unmotivated factors begins, manifesting as bad luck or disgrace. But an agent's initiative, who will then become a benefactor, aggressor, debtor or creditor, can arise. The degradation process can either have obstacles or not. These work as a protection of the previous satisfactory state. These protections can be successful or they can fail. In the latter case, compensation amelioration processes such as fault, obligation, sacrifice, suffered aggression and punishment begin.

The fault is a task performed the other way around. By mistake, the agent uses means so as to reach a result opposed to his goal or destroy the advantages that he wanted to keep. The driving force⁹¹ is blindness, which is why the form of protection is either a warning or disenchantment. If the narrator wishes to pursue amelioration there will be a reparation of the fault.

Obligation requires the benefactor to pay off a debt or perform a burdensome duty. He can voluntarily accomplish it or refuse to do it negotiating or by force. If the narrator desires to continue, the path of amelioration is to transform the fulfilment of the duty into a sacrifice that demands a reward.

Sacrifice is a voluntary conduct in order to achieve a merit or a reward: it gives a service without an obligation. The suffered aggression is different since damage is intentionally proposed as an end; it uses fault to drive the victim into a trap and forces him perform a task that is bad for him. The ways in which the victim can be guarded are running away, negotiating or replicating. The narrative can end or there can be a reappearance form such as vengeance and provoke in the aggressor the same prejudice that was caused.

All damage, from an avenger's perspective, is a crime that needs to be punished. The accused reacts with an attitude of submission or defense. In order for the situation of action to be punished to disappear, one of the opposition roles has to change its calcification. The victim is disqualified by forgiveness, the avenger disqualifies himself for the corruption obtained by seduction or intimidation. The culprit is disqualified for dissimulating his bad action (he passes for an innocent person while the innocent is taken as guilty). If the protections are vain we reach the end of the action-punishment narrative. If the narrator wants to continue he uses a random technique of amelioration such as performing a good action that provides a reward.

⁹¹ The driving force corresponds to the sender in Greimas' model.

The circle of every narrative is amelioration, degradation, restitution; new degradations bring new restitutions infinitely.

The chain of actions in elemental and complex sequences is free because the narrator chooses to continue the story (or not) and how to control it every moment.

“...It is possible, then, to outline a priori the comprehensive network of feasible choices; to give a name and assign its place within a sequence of every form of event finalised by these selections; to organically link these sequences in the unit of a role, to coordinate the complementary roles that define a situation's outcome; to chain outcomes to a narrative which is unpredictable (due to the interplay of combinations) and encodable (thanks to the stable properties and the finite number of coded elements) at the same time...”⁹²

Narrative Semiotics finds, for the author, its possibilities in Anthropology, since it enables the definition of the bases of a classification of the types of narratives. Moreover, it defines a frame structured by the study of identical patterns of behaviour in its structure but infinitely diversified by combinations and options according to culture, context, personal style, genre and school.

Greimas takes previous models in order to develop his *Structural Semantics* with the purpose of building a universal grammar for narrative texts. He starts from the Semantic analysis of phrases so as to describe the greatest number of Semantic micro-universes. He is different from Bremond because in his eyes the narrative process is static while Bremond thinks it is dynamic.

Bremond searches to foresee or anticipate narrative behaviours whilst Greimas just wants to explain them. In order to do so, he organises the actantial model: he adapts the first pair of Propp's terminology, which talks about actors, and Souriau's for the purpose of marking a syntactic organisation of the actant's speech: subject / object. Propp talks about hero and wanted person and Souriau talks about thematic force and agent of value; in both cases the relationship that unites narrative forces is desire, the quest as a driving force for action.

For the second pair in the actantial model he takes into consideration the concepts of sender / receiver, already pointed out by Jakobson. Greimas, at the same time, links them with

⁹² PROPP, Vladimir, *La Morfología del Cuento*, op.cit., p. 108.

two of Propp's actors, the father and the dispatcher, and with them creates the sender. On the other hand, he takes two of Souriau's categories, the attributor of the good and the receiver of that same good, in order to configure the receiver. The link between sender and receiver is knowledge, as the two elements center around the object.

In the third pair, helper / opponent, Greimas considers similar pairs in Propp (donor helper / aggressor or villain) and in Souriau (aid / opponent). The relationship is centered around the subject and it is one of power.

Greimas organises the thirty one functions in twenty, ordered in a binary manner, and activates syntagmatic relations (in the interior of the story the elements implicate one another) and paradigmatic relations (the elements exclude one another).

The author analyses the validity of Lévi-Strauss' system and distinguishes narrative statements, where he includes actants and narrative syntagms. According to Lévi-Strauss, every myth has three structural components: framework, message and code. Greimas looks to interpret these three components in a Semantic theory and he also intends to attribute a place to each one in interpretation.⁹³

The framework (narrative model) is the constant structure of myths. These, as narratives, are double: the ensemble of structural properties of every myth, that is to say, its narrative model and at the same time the content's structure which is present in the narration. The story, in order to have meaning, needs to be a significative unit with temporal dimension, relations of anteriority and posteriority, initial and final sequence and an articulation of the sequences.

The message is the myth's particular signification and, like the framework, is found between two isotopies⁹⁴ which give place to two different readings: at the discursive level (the narrative as a succession of events) and at the structural level (structural articulations of the content).

The code is a structure formed by combinable semic categories, it is the taxonomic model. The change of an element in the open chain changes the whole sequence because it recognises the existence of necessary relations and narrative syntagms of necessary chaining. Within the narrative syntagms there are three types: performance syntagms (tests), contractual

⁹³ Greimas' goal for interpretation is mainly semantic rather than semiotic.

⁹⁴ Isotopy: redundant set of semantic categories that makes a uniform reading of the story possible.

syntagms (establishment and breaches of contracts) and disjunctive syntagms (departures and returns).

He distinguishes: formal characteristics, grammatical properties (actants) and substantial or narrative properties (the roles). The actantial structure of the narrative model is part of the framework. The actants can be: subject / object, sender / receiver, helper / opponent, and the roles are part of the writer's job. The framework and the code are the two components of a mythological theory of interpretation.

To analyse the text it is divided in sequences and each one is analysed by looking for elements and syntagms contained, so as to catch the chaining of the constitutive functions of the narrative syntagms.

An isotopy is the repetition of the same phenomena in a syntagmatic series, that is to say an ensemble of ideas that evolve. They give the text its coherence through the progression of the text's meaning.⁹⁵ The analytical procedure consists in finding the nuances of meaning that conform the content of the text.

In *The Semiotics of the Text*, he deeply analyses Maupassant's "Deux Amis", where he shows the enlightening value of the key concepts of the Semiotic theory, and presents a practical introduction to Semiotic analysis and its application.

Elements of analysis:

- *Separation in sequences and textual organisation.
- *Disjunctions: temporal, spatial and actantial.
- *Engagements and disengagements.
- *Intercalated sequences.
- *Pivot sequence.
- *Symbolic figures and axiological and ideological analysis of the figurative plane.
- *Discursive isotopies and its semantic analysis.
- *Actantial scheme.
- *Semiotic square.

⁹⁵ The concept of isotopy enables the development of sense within a text, an author's work or in the literary thematic in general.

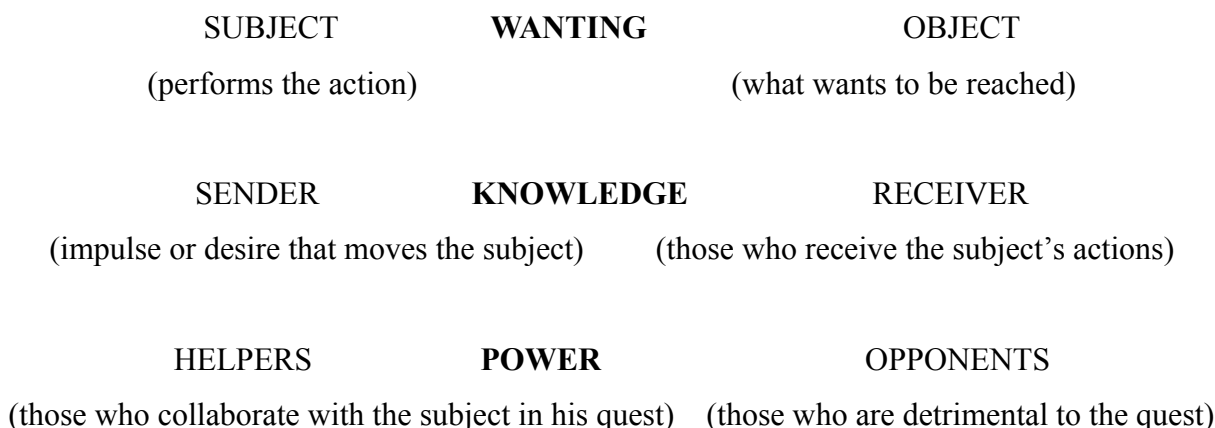
1. Separation in sequences and textual organisation: division of the text in thematic sequences and analysis of the discursive and narrative planes.
2. Temporal, spatial and actantial disjunctions: these are the cuts produced in the mentioned planes and they serve to find the segmentation criteria. The thematic contents are immersed in temporal -- spatial coordinates that indicate the historical anchoring of the story. The concept of aspectuality is fundamental in the notion of time.

“...Aspectuality is the superficial form under which time is presented in front of us and can be deciphered in a paradigmatic axis (associations) or a syntagmatic axis (chaining) taking into consideration the aspectuality of time, that is to say its duration or punctuality...”⁹⁶

3. Engagements and disengagements: they are modes of production of discursive units, proceedings that create variable distances between the enunciation and the utterance and establish autonomous discursive units. The engagement links different planes whilst the disengagement separates them.
4. Intercalated sequences: they are insertions of a wider sub-story or intercalations.
5. Pivot sequence: it is the *mise en abyme*, the vacillation between two possibilities and the necessity to choose. An example is the anagnorisis, analysed by Aristotle, where the pivot transforms a state of not knowing into a state of knowledge. In this case the anagnorisis is simple but it can be complex when the deceiving is replaced by the true.
6. Symbolic figures and axiological and ideological analysis of the figurative plane: the symbolic place, which in a denotative level is represented through elements that create a true significance delves into a connotative level because it implies universal and recurrent values in society's collective unconscious. The connotation plane is influenced by the values (the axiological dichotomies of good and bad) and ideologies.
7. Discursive isotopies and its semantic analysis: a discursive isotopy grants discursive coherence. It enables semantic lineality and relates the speech with the phrase. An isotopy connotes a profound meaning in the interpretative level but relies in a lexical or syntactic form.

⁹⁶ GREIMAS, A.J, *La Semiótica del Texto*. Barcelona, Paidós, 1993, p. 85.

8. Actantial model: it is formed based on Propp and Bremond's functions. It is an actantial model, which are empty molds filled with the different functions that the actants perform.



This scheme is highly used in actuality, specially in theatrical Semiotics, by Anne Ubersfeld among others.⁹⁷

9. Semiotic square: it is applied to literary Semiotics, theatrical Semiotics, Semiotics of art⁹⁸ and advertising Semiotics.⁹⁹ The semiotic square is the “explanation of a concept”; it comes from the opposition between contraries and contradictories established by Aristotle.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, it is the graphical representation of the conception of value that De Saussure develops. This conception implies defining a sign for what the others are not, namely, for its relations of opposition within the system.

A semiotic square implies three types of relations: contraries, contradictories and complementaries. The contraries are opposites that can coexist; the contradictories are opposites that cannot coexist; and, finally, the complementaries imply each other mutually.

⁹⁷ Among the works where the author develops this theme we have *Semiótica Teatral* (Madrid, Cátedra, 1998), *El Diálogo Teatral* (Buenos Aires, Galerna, 2004) and *Diccionario de Términos Claves del Análisis Teatral* (Buenos Aires, Galerna, 2002).

⁹⁸ The author who represents this line the best is Omar Calabrese. Among his works: *Cómo se Lee una Obra de Arte* (Madrid, Cátedra, 1999) and *la Era Neobarroca* (Madrid, Cátedra, 1994).

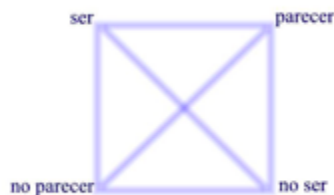
⁹⁹ A representative of this approach is Jean Marie Floch, author of *Semiótica, Marketing y Comunicación* (Buenos Aires, Paidós Comunicación, 1993).

¹⁰⁰ ARISTÓTELES, *Libro III Lógica, Categorías en Obras*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1967.

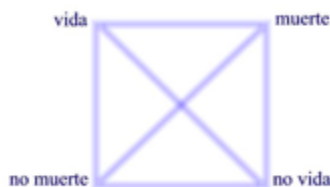


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Examples highly used by Greimas:



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Greimas intends to develop the reader's receptive competence,¹⁰⁴ able to reach, with the help of Semiotics, new figurative isotopies based on the explicit isotopies given by the enunciator. That is to say that Semiotic activity aids the reader in developing the capacity to infer the text's secrets.

Greimas does not mention a subjective competence nor a theory of "infinite possible readings". He rather thinks that the enunciator develops a competence of producing

¹⁰¹ Contraries – contradictories – complementaries.

¹⁰² Being – seeming – not seeming – not being.

¹⁰³ Life – death – non-death – non-life.

¹⁰⁴ The receptive competence is the capacity that allows the reader to understand and produce the text, and they transform it into an active component in the process of interpretation.

pluri-isotopic texts: “speaking in parables”,¹⁰⁵ which the reader will translate in his interpretation; a methodological way of reading through the construction of general representations.

This analysis presents the existence of a cognitive dimension in narratology, which duplicates the narrative and gives it autonomy. This dimension is opposed to the pragmatic one formed by descriptions and behaviours of actants. The cognitive dimension grants unity to the narrative organisation of discourses. The text presents a seeming to be in its discursive developments and what it is in its semiotic, semantic and narrative organisation. The text is always presented as “a text to decipher”.

Following Greimas principles, Courtes’ contribution in *Introduction to Narrative and Discursive Semiotics*. There, he shows the possibility of structuring significant, grammatical and semantic narrative schemes. He also treats the exploration of meaning not only limited to communication, but also signification: “...*Semiotics is defined as a metalanguage regarding the universe of meaning that it gives itself as object of analysis...*”.¹⁰⁶

The approach to signification is reached according to unequal levels, of which literary Semiotics is interested in Narrativity, that considers syntactic and semantic units. He distinguishes, in the profound level, the semes as distinctive features and, as Greimas, divides them in nuclear semes and classemes, and the sememes as effects of meaning by the combination of semes. He observes how the semes are organised according to the semiotic square and in the superficial plane the sememes (effects of meaning) are organised in accordance to its mutual relations depending on the actantial scheme.

He defines the concept of role as the actant’s attributes and the evident or implied behaviours. The role is divergent to the actant because it is not individual: it is a figurative anonymous and social entity; whilst the actant is a subject who assumes different roles. The actants are syntactical units modalised by wanting, knowledge and power, which give place to diverse actantial roles (like Greimas).

The narrative’s analysis is addressed in two opposite and complementary directions:

*The narrative as a significant totality, the narrative as an all with a hierarchy of contents.

*The narrative as a succession of narrative statements (Propp’s functions) so as to reach the global statement.

¹⁰⁵ Texts have transposed senses because they are special signs, see chapter II.

¹⁰⁶ COURTES, Joseph, *Introducción a la Semiótica Narrativa y Discursiva*. Buenos Aires, Hachette, 1980, p. 34.

There are two contextual forms in the narrative: paradigmatic (culture or common knowledge to a social group, general knowledge) and syntagmatic (relations of the isotopies between the content units, semantic coincidence).

He observes that men, in order to produce cultural objects, start from simple elements and follow an itinerary with impositions and elections. This itinerary distinguishes three main stages:

1. The profound structures, which present the way of being of men and society and the conditions of existence of semiotic objects.
2. The superficial structures, semiotic grammar, which orders the contents in a discursive manner.
3. The manifestation structures, which produce and organise the signifiers and define the particularities of each language.

The author is mainly interested in elaborating the first two stages.

His vision is particular. He believes that Semiotics, instead of studying signs, takes care of everything that comes before them. Because of this, he studies the mediation instance¹⁰⁷ between signified and the signifier, between the profound level and the plane of manifestation, where complementary articulations are inserted.

This way, he distinguishes profound structures, superficial structures and manifestation structures; these last two as engendering. Men are not only seen in his communicative relations (with his equals), but in relation to the world in which he lives and where he imagines meanings.

Courtes analyses “Cinderella”¹⁰⁸ and, rather than interfering with the definitive meaning, he wants to show the narrative and discursive organisation that underlies a short story that, in spite of the superficial variations, allows the creation of a syntactic – semantic scheme.¹⁰⁹ The analysis that he does is very clear and applicable. He distinguishes between an initial state where he presents a disjunction (disengagement); a mediation which is the transformative doing executed by the development of the competences of wanting, knowledge and power; and the final state where conjunction (engagement) is achieved.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ The mediation instance leaves its traces in the process of enunciation.

¹⁰⁸ COURTES, Joseph, *Introducción a la Semiótica Narrativa y Discursiva*. Buenos Aires, Hachette, 1980.

¹⁰⁹ A syntactic – semantic scheme is what we want to organise, a structure that takes into consideration the sign in its totality: signifier – signified.

¹¹⁰ Courtes’ theory follows the fundamental bases of Greimas’ theory.

3. The text as a production of meaning

The other line in Narrative Semiotics is mainly elaborated by Kristeva and Eco. Kristeva, who was Barthes' and Goldmann's student, proposes a new science: the so-called "Semanalysis", which contains elements of Linguistics and Psychoanalysis. In her eyes, Semiotics' object is the production of models, that is to say of representation systems. Semiotics is viewed as a sort of thought that is alive and whose goal is to understand how meaning is produced in a signifier within society.¹¹¹

She uses the notions of genotext (*signifiante*) and phenotext (types of texts), giving a new orientation to the text, which is the base of all her thoughts.

*"...We will call text all language practices through which genotext operations unfold in the phenotext, trying the latter to represent the former, and inviting the reader to reconstruct signifiante. The concept of text will be applied, for the most part, to a type of literature called Modern, which breaks classical representation codes; and also to antique texts that, unconsciously and without a lot of insistence, practice this transposition of the genotext to the phenotext..."*¹¹²

The concept of *signifiante* is essential for this new Semiotics or Semanalysis.

*"...We will designate signifiante as that job of differentiation, stratification and confrontation which is practiced in language, and deposits in the talking subject's line a significative communicative chain that is grammatically structured. Semanalysis will study in the text signifiante and its types..."*¹¹³

The text is a translinguistic object that has nothing to do with language; thus, the literary text can be connected with other contextual circumstances that interfere with the production of

¹¹¹ The production of sense leaves its traces in the signifier and represents the mediation between signifier and signified developed by Courtes.

¹¹² KRISTEVA, Julia, *Semiótica II*. Madrid, Fundamentos, 1981, p.284.

¹¹³ KRISTEVA, *ibid.*, Tomo I, p.9.

signifiante. The literary text is seen as a system of multiple connections, as a structure of networks which represent a tabular model, since it presents the pluridetermination of meaning,¹¹⁴ rather than being linear.

The text has a meaning which is represented by a signifier and jumps from one space to another, from the generation to the phenomenon. The difference between genotext / phenotext unfolds every linguistic statement in two planes: that of the linguistic phenomenon (the structure) and that of the signifying engendering (the germination).¹¹⁵

This jump is also performed by readers in order to discover what is behind the engendering equation. This way, the text is presented as a “remembering”,¹¹⁶ a revisiting of the circuit in its manifested part so as to reach the latent meaning. The reader must try to read what is denoted in relation with a secondary message, a signification (connotation) in order to explain (conceptualise) the mental operations organised by the reader.

One of the most famous analysis by the author is her study about text in novels, where she presents the notions of closed text, operativity of synchronic and diachronic lines, disjunctive function and the mode of textual productivity. There, she defines novelistic text as a transformation due to the fact that it can be the object of diverse readings and interpretations.¹¹⁷ As linear reading, which is the most common one, and transformational¹¹⁸ reading, which supposes that each part corresponds to the totality of the text; she finally presents it as an infinity of structural possibilities.

She does not agree with Structuralism’s actantial scheme and replaces it for a new scheme without radical oppositions between subject and object, sender and receiver, helper and opponent. She presents them as a series of contradictions of a whole, where terms can suffer transformations.

Her theory is Semanalysis and the object is “the text”, not as the totality of literary discourses, but as every signifying production which occupies a place in History. This practice

¹¹⁴ The pluridetermination of meaning depends on the conception of text as a weave of diverse codes which open the interpretative possibility to different significances.

¹¹⁵ These concepts with their own variations are related to De Saussure’s indivisible concept of the sign: signifier – signified.

¹¹⁶ That “remembering” reminds us of the Platonic conception of “the manifested is the wrapping of the latent”.

¹¹⁷ The conception of multiple readings is the one we tried to exemplify at the beginning, in the Introduction, through Cervantes’ quote, who so clearly evidences the potency of reading.

¹¹⁸ Transformational reading crosses the text and is more than the sum of its parts; it is equivalent to Van Dijk’s macrostructure and it is the one we are trying to build.

works with the signifier, with the different textual forms, and searches for a textual axis to distinguish the particularities. The text is produced in the language, in the linguistic matter, and because of that it corresponds to a theory of signification that aims to decompose the sign and find the *significance*. The text will be analysed not as a linguistic phenomenon but as an engendering inscribed in the linguistic phenomenon that is the written text.

Like this, the notion of text expands into phenotext (surface, signifying structure) and genotext (background, productivity of meaning).¹¹⁹ The phenotext has a communicative function while the genotext is the production of meaning.

The text is presented as a “dynamised object” and these objects are presented as signifiers, which are studied by Semanalysis. The textual work is seen as a “double punctuation”, where the reader discovers heterogenous and intercrossed meanings that prevent linearity by breaking it in order to enclose it, open it, and get to know it.¹²⁰

Literature, which turns into thought, becomes aware of itself as a social sign in the twentieth century. Semiotics penetrates all of the objects belonging to society’s and thought’s domain, and enters this way Social sciences. **Umberto Eco**’s figure is central in this new vision: “the subject is the sign” and cannot exist outside of it. The sign’s civilisation is that of the subject, communication and speech. Communication as the subject’s speech is reduced to the pair statement – enunciation, denotation – connotation. Moreover, communication is always between the subject – speech and the object – reality. Thought participates as the principal representation mode.

*“...Ultimately, beyond the sign theoretically defined exists the cycle of semiosis, the life of communication, and the use and interpretation of signs; there is a society that uses signs to communicate, to inform, to lie, deceive, dominate and liberate...”*¹²¹

Eco sees Semiotics not only as a theory but as a continuous practice, given that the semantic system changes and the signs are presented as a social force that modifies the system that it manifests.

¹¹⁹ These concepts are equivalent to the classic ones of form and background.

¹²⁰ The author, like Eco, works on the production of senses that the text presents and that are recognised by the reader in the moment of interpretation.

¹²¹ ECO, Humberto, *Signo*. Barcelona, Labor, 1988, p.20.

In *The Open Work*, Eco comes closer to the artistic field and presents the work of art as “an ambiguous message, a plurality of meanings that coexist in a signifier”. For him, the text is an object with defined structural properties which coordinate interpretations.

A work’s openness is in the ambiguity of its message¹²² and this is a constant in all the works of every time. The work as an obtained form, as the final destination of production and the starting point of recognition,¹²³ which by circulating gives life to the initial form but from different perspectives.

The structure of a literary work is what it has in common with other works; it is the general model, the model of an open work. The piece designates an uncertain meaning instead of a closed one and allows an infinity of possible readings. Art tends to openness because it augments a message’s possible meanings, that is its openness. Openness is the guarantee of a surprising pleasure for contemporary civilisation, given that men are able to see the world through the possibilities that it presents. The quest for connoted meanings begins to be the mode of seeing the world.

*“...The work comes off as an open structure that reproduces the ambiguity of our own being – in – the – world; at least, as described by Science, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology...”*¹²⁴

Eco conceives the text as a machine that awaits for a reader to put it into action. In *The Role of the Reader* he postulates the notion of “model reader”. He thinks that it is possible to trace a reading theory that explains the mechanisms that the reader executes when faced in front of a text. An interpretative structure that is united to the production mechanism of the text as an interpretative cooperation, that relates the categories of textuality and structure with those of infinity and openness. It then becomes free of interpretation subjectivities. There are unsaid elements that the text incorporates to its structure and that the reader has to actualise, but not in an arbitrary manner, as not just any interpretation is good: there are limits.

¹²² The ambiguity of literary messages justifies the reader’s openness to interpret them.

¹²³ The procedures of production and recognition are key in a creative and open interpretation. They are developed by K. Orecchioni’s Theory of Enunciation.

¹²⁴ ECO, Humberto, *Obra Abierta..* Buenos Aires, Planeta, 1992, p.322.

*“...Unsaid means not manifested on the surface, in the plane of expression: yet precisely these are the elements that need to be actualised in the stage of content actualisation...”*¹²⁵

A text provides the reader with a set of signifiers and blank spaces that he needs to fill up. The text gives the interpretative initiative and searches to be interpreted; it looks for a reader that helps it function.¹²⁶ It is the model reader who makes a text's potential content be constantly actualised¹²⁷ in function of levels of textual cooperation. These levels are: the “intentions”, which are ideological, actantial, narrative and discursive structures; and the “extensions”, which are world structures. According to Eco, the text is a signic product integrated in other signifying systems on which its meaning and aesthetic dimension depends.

*“...Men take appropriation of the world and continuously transform nature into culture. But action systems can be interpreted as sign systems, provided that each system of signs is inserted in the global context of the systems of action; each one like each of the chapters (which is never the only one nor the most important) of praxis as communication...”*¹²⁸

He considers language as an “absent structure” as language comes from men and transforms it into such. He speaks of “signic function” instead of sign, given that a sign cannot constitute a fixed semiotic entity (in its place, it relates independent elements like expression and content).¹²⁹ The “signic function” is the result of fusing various codes. A code is a set composed by a hierarchy of subcodes of diverse values, with a distinction between the strong and stable ones and the weak and passing ones. The signs that integrate these codes constitute a social force. Literature is considered a “supercode”, as it generates other meanings from the relation of different codes into a particular product which is the work/piece.

¹²⁵ ECO, Humberto, *Lector in Fábula*, Barcelona, Lumen, 1999, p. 74.

¹²⁶ From this posture the reader develops a creative interpretative competence.

¹²⁷ This potential actualised content is the *significance*.

¹²⁸ ECO, Humberto, *La Estructura Ausente*. Barcelona, Lumen, 1999, p.414.

¹²⁹ The sign is the one that links expression – form – signifier and content – form – signified.

Abstract senses occupy the first plane (not concrete information); it is the triumph of the “encyclopedia” over the “dictionary”.¹³⁰ Interpreting is different from decoding: it is inferring¹³¹ a case based on a rule and a result. The sign not only needs substitution to exist, but also a possible interpretation. It is necessary to start from a sign in order to go through all of the stages of semiosis and widen its comprehension.¹³²

The literary sign’s main characteristic is its capacity to stimulate interpretations, to open up to something different from its signified and signifier. The signified is an expression of what is susceptible of being interpreted. The literary signifier has a particularity which is its metaphorical richness.¹³³ But metaphors for Eco are elements that “add” rather than substitute. This is the resource that links the signifier with the signified and thus teaches to observe the similarities between things; that is why it is an instrument of knowledge. The metaphor is always open to new semantic relations that enrich meaning but it presents a textual signifier that we need to take into consideration.

Each time a meaning is interpreted, translated into another sign, something else is discovered, and the metaphor is an instrument that allows a better understanding of the code because it gives a deeper and more encyclopedic interpretation. Language is, by nature, a producer of secondary meanings, of connoted meanings, starting from metaphorical signifiers. It represents the textual implicature that remits to the “symbolic mode” as a special modality of production and textual interpretation.

A language is a system of codes and subcodes actualised in every concrete reality that enables a signifying interpretation of the signs. Therefore, semiotic interpretation of any kind of text is a labyrinthic adventure with different itineraries; but, as indicated in *The Open Work*, interpretation is not subjective: it is, rather than inventing, bringing to light what is there, even if it is hidden.¹³⁴

4. Linguistic contributions

¹³⁰ Whilst the “encyclopedia” provides meanings actualised in every context, the “dictionary” gives fixed meanings; these terms are used by Eco throughout all his work.

¹³¹ That inferring is characteristic of the semiotic method and it refers to the abduction alluded to by Peirce.

¹³² The comprehension is broadened with new meanings; some signs lead to others and the semiosis is infinite.

¹³³ Men’s language is connoted; the literary sign has a transposed message, as was pointed out in chapter II.

¹³⁴ This notion is fundamental to find the potency presented by the textual representant and to avoid inventing when interpreting.

The contribution to Literary Semiotics is important in Linguistics. **Teun van Dijk** defines “literary competence” as a human being’s capacity to generate and decipher literary texts. He points out the notion of competence depends on that of acceptability; he also affirms that the only texts considered literary are those admitted as such in a culture.

Competence does not only depend on individuals: it is the result of pragmatic and contextual planning. According to van Dijk, aside from being an aesthetic object, a text is a product of reception, which is why formal constituents and contextual elements are relevant.

He sees the text as an organised group of sentences that possesses a textual macrostructure (profound structure formed by textual microstructures) and a textual suprastructure (surface structure).¹³⁵ He postulates a “literary textual Grammar” whose categories and rules belong to a “general textual Grammar” with “complementary extensions” that take care of the modifications and specific categories of a poetic text.

Literary Pragmatic elaborates the concept of “literary use”; the literary work is valued as of the system of relations that contains and signifies it. It is a performance Linguistics that deals with the conditioning factors and social consequences of language, of the sender – receiver iterative mechanisms, of conversational implicatures, of presumptions and of Speech Acts. The goal is to define what constitutes the literary and to mobilise the communicative factors that make it possible. What is important is to establish a system of literary conventions that enables us to determine if a linguistic product is literary.

Austin and Searle develop the theory of Speech Acts. They represent a linguistic branch of philosophical implications. Austin’s theory is based on the division between constative utterances, which enunciate, and performative ones, which perform actions.

He distinguishes three different planes in language:

1. Locutionary: emission of sounds. It is the plane of saying.
2. Illocutionary: it determines the action performed when something is said. It is linked directly with performative verbs. These verbs are those that “do when said” and the main example is “to promise”. When we say “I promise you”, we are performing an action. The fulfillment of that promise will depend on authority, sincerity and context adequation of the emitting subject. A clear case is the verb

¹³⁵ The profound structure encompasses the sense, the connotation of the literary text; the superficial structure, the external structure, denotation.

“to baptise”, since in the saying there is a doing, despite the fulfillment in accordance with the speaker’s authority. This is the plane of doing or performance.

3. Perlocutionary: it is the consequence or the effect produced in the listener or receiver.

Applied to literature, “performative utterances”¹³⁶ are analysed, which can be subject to changes that deviate language from its normal use and determine a series of expressive modes called “semantic bleaching”. Literary language has no systematic linguistic particularities, but a “parasite use” of language when taken in its figurative form. Literature is seen as a special use of language. Austin promotes an analysis that reconstructs external situations where the characters’ and narrators’ linguistic acts unfold.

In Searle’s eyes, a literary text constitutes a “mimetic use” of language. This specific use, “existence axiom”, alludes to the condition of existence and identity. Many of the paradoxes that come out of these axioms are related to the fundamentals of literary fiction. Speech in the real world can only reference something that exists, while speech in fiction references what exists in the real world and in the world of fiction. According to him, literature also represents a language parasite without illocutionary marks.

The Theory of Enunciation presents elements that are important to literary language, one of them being the distinction between statement and enunciation. A statement is the finished product, the text, what is said; while enunciation is the process of creation of the statement, which can be known through the traces or marks that show the speaker’s presence in the interior of his own speech.

*“...We can define the problematic of enunciation (ours) in the following way: it is the quest of the linguistic proceedings (shifters, modalizers, evaluative terms, etc.) with which the speaker leaves their mark in the utterance, inscribes themselves in the message (implicit or explicitly) and situates in relation to it (problem of ‘enunciative distance’)...”*¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Performative utterances implicate a deviation, literary language’s figurative form, its special use.

¹³⁷ KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, Catherine, *La Enunciación*. Buenos Aire, 1983, p. 43.

Literary discourse is defined by the “unfolding” of enunciation instances in two pairs: author – narrator and reader – narratee. The author and the reader are real but linguistically virtual; the narrator and the narratee are fictional but linguistically real.

Kerbrat Orecchioni suggests that it is the character who speaks, rather than the author; and he believes that it is ingenuous to attribute the characteristics of the narrator to the author. He does not deny the author’s existence; instead, he thinks that its function reflects the functioning of social and literary discourses. The author constitutes an undeniable instance that the text presupposes and can be reconstructed by the reader starting off deciphering: “from textual indexes, extratextual information and intertextual excerpts”.

As much in production as in interpretation, the subject is not free. Different factors interfere: psychological, ideological, social and cultural, which strongly condition the discourse, overall subjected to the restrictions of the code. The signifying intention of the sender only exists when the receiver recognises it.

Interpretation¹³⁸ is the recognition of an implicit hypothesis produced by the sender and recognised by the receiver. It is the reconstruction of the semantic – pragmatic intention and it needs the sender to have the intention of signifying and the receiver the intention of recognising.

Reading is a cultural behaviour that varies with social changes and times. Traditionally, reading is reconstructing as accurately as possible the original meaning. However, some contemporary currents consider reading to be the grasp of significance by the application of oneself’s systems of interpretation.

A bad reading is one that applies an uncontrolled arbitrary analysis to the text. In this case all the texts would say the same and there would be a loss of their plural meanings. Reading, as Eco points out, does not imply a total submission to the sender’s code, but is also different from a liberation of individual whims so as to find what one wishes to interpret arbitrarily. What is important is to find in it key points of meaning in order to elaborate a science of interpretation with reading rules that take into consideration the plurality of meanings.

Every utterance contains propositional content (what is said) and illocutionary content (what the statement points towards). That is to say, each utterance, aside from its informative

¹³⁸ Interpretation as the reader’s creative production starting from elements that the narrator leaves in the text in a potential way.

content, gives an argumentative orientation, marks a direction, and this way recognises a literal sense (denoted) and a derived sense (connoted).

Meaning is plural and constructed; the subject intervenes in the construction of meaning from the production as from interpretation, they utilise all their competences. Connotation function is basic; it is the synonym of comprehension, as it presents semantic additional values. The difference between connotation and denotation is semantic because it depends on the nature of the information. With denotation, the meaning is explicit, manifested, literal; while in connotation it is suggested, intentional, latent, and implies a semiotic mechanism of discovery.¹³⁹

Denotation is based on a lexical or syntactic signifier and gives explicit information about the referent. Connotation uses the material of denotation but in a different way: its information may not refer to the immediate referent and enrich the content with additional or suggested values. There is informational content and semantic transformations and incidences. Connotation is the development of secondary meanings based on the basic system present in human language. Connotation always supposes a plurality of meanings.

Coseriu points out that it is literary texts that are presented as constructions of meanings, which is why when we analyse a literary work we ask ourselves for sense instead of meaning: we look for a superior level of content. The author remembers *Don Quixote* and questions the meaning of the fight against the windmills; that second question is asking for the sense.¹⁴⁰ Cervantes communicates his vision of the world, a universal meaning and the position of the man in the world through what happens to Don Quixote. The topic of this piece is men's freedom and his tragedy in the struggle to obtain it. Sense is a superior level of content, it is necessary to understand the meanings and denoted designations in order to reach connotation.¹⁴¹

Coseriu sees language in poetry as the full functionality of language (rather than a deviation), where language is a goal in itself instead of an instrument to fulfill one.¹⁴²

Literature seen in its relation to language allows to interpret sense from diverse relations: the relation of content of some signs with others (connotation, evocation), the material relation of the sign with the designated thing (evocation contrary to signification), the relation with

¹³⁹ That mechanism of discovery and creativity is creative abduction; this theory can be found in HERRERO, Ángel, *Semiótica y Creatividad, La lógica abductiva*. Madrid, Palas Atenea, 1988.

¹⁴⁰ The question to build sense leads to the depth of the literary message, to its hermeneutical interpretation.

¹⁴¹ Denotative comprehension is necessary to reach connotative interpretation,

¹⁴² Coseriu has a different vision about poetic language, as we have seen, to that of Austin and Searle.

experience (with culture), and the relation with other texts (evocation of what has been said in other texts or the sense of other texts).

We expect to build a sense when we interpret a piece, which is why we try to find the signals that prove that the true sense has been reached.

Text Linguistics study the sense (signified) and structuration (signifier) as the most adequate form for the interpretation of texts. Linguistics as literature's complement is Text Linguistics. Only a profound reading can stimulate the quest for senses, linguistic reflection and creative interpretation.¹⁴³

5. Recurring elements

Barthes is a central figure to Literary Semiotics. He is the first to recognise the impossibility of separating literature from Linguistics. Like Propp and Bremond, he analyses functions; like Greimas, actions; and like Todorov, story and discourse. He differentiates the two fields of expression in language, namely denotation and connotation. He distinguishes the author from the narrator. He studies the different types of codes and its relations in the quest of a common sense and insists that reading is a slow pleasure that allows one to catch the plurality of senses. He lays the foundations that other semioticians will continue elaborating.

Todorov analyses the dichotomy between story and discourse; he hierarchises discourse and studies its procedures: time, aspect, voice and mode. He analyses the narrator as a subject of enunciation and also links literary studies with Linguistics.

In order to analyse narrative discourse, Genette takes Todorov's categories (time, mode and voice) and performs a rich and exhaustive analysis of time. He also takes from Todorov his analysis of the types of narrator and organises a classification, where he adds the concept of focalisation. As Barthes, he recognises the distinction between author and narrator and includes the figure of narratee. He especially focuses on the relation of the text with the types of discourse, modes of enunciation and genres, as he looks to delve into transtextuality. He contextualises the text in its structure and meaning.

Propp studies the functional morphology of folk tales and establishes the thirty one functions. His contributions are picked up by Bremond, Todorov and Greimas.

¹⁴³ It is fundamental for interpretative knowledge to develop a creative literary competence based in the text.

Bremond recognises, as we previously said, Propp's functions, but he sees them as an interweaving instead of a chain. He distinguishes between primary and secondary functions, he studies the narrative cycle and he analyses the narrator's possibilities through the processes of amelioration, degradation and reparation.

Greimas, like Barthes, is essential to Literary Semiotics. They both organise their own elements, besides from those of other authors, in rich and applicable frameworks. He works with Propp's functions and Barthes' actions and organises the actantial model. He introduces the concept of isotopy which is related to Genette's transtextuality. He uses the text's separation into sequences very similar to Barthes' lexias. He mainly analyses time and space through the concept of disjunction and organises the semiotic square, deeply linked to De Saussure's concept of value and the logical distinction between contraries and contradictories studied by Aristotle.

Courtes, such as the other mentioned authors, works on the exploration of meaning and the denoted and connoted field of literary works. Besides from profound and superficial structures, he recognises the structures of manifestation. He especially investigates the mediation instance between the signifier and the signified. He uses the semiotic square and Greimas' actantial model. He works with contextual forms through the possible relations of the signs established by De Saussure: paradigmatic and syntagmatic, to which he includes Greimas' concept of isotopies.

Kristeva analyses the meaning of signs in social life as pointed out by De Saussure and observes the plurality of meanings in a literary text. She studies the phenotext (signifier) and the genotext (signified) as a tabular model and also analyses the denotative and connotative fields of language. She recognises the importance of the reader as creator of the open literary work. She fundamentally studies the *signifiante* as the reconstruction of the text's meaning created by the reader; which she recognises as a work of differentiation, stratification and confrontation of the plural connoted meanings in the text. She sees the work as a sign and looks to decompose it in order to find its *signifiante*.

Eco, as Kristeva, recognises the text's openness and its plurality of meanings which all coexist in a signifier. Furthermore, he recognises the shared work between the author's production and the reader's recognition (interpretative cooperation). He analyses in a broad and uncertain way the literary work and its multiple readings from the recognition of a potential meaning which is constantly actualised, and that is signification. He studies the different types of

codes' importance and sees the literary work as a sign that stimulates interpretations due to its capacity of connoting over what is denoted. Because of this, he draws closer to Hermeneutics, in the same way in which Ricoeur is closer to Semiotics. They both see the necessity of a bond.

In some linguistic theories we can also find elements to analyse a work of literature, given that through Barthes we may see how hard it is to separate literature from Linguistics, hence the necessity of the study of a linguistic of the text.

Van Dijk thinks of literary competence as the capacity of deciphering texts. A piece is more than the sum of its parts: it is the macrostructure or global sense presented by the means of a coherent relation with the suprastructure.

Austin and Searle develop the Theory of Speech Acts and work largely on the illocutionary plane, which implies what we do by saying. They analysed the figurative form of literary language and its performative utterances.

The Theory of Enunciation observes the splitting between author – narrator and reader – narratee. It presents reading as a reconstruction based on two procedures: the model of production and the model of recognition. It values the plurality of connoted meanings and the personal work behind finding them.

Coseriu sees the literary text as a construction of meaning, a connotation superior to the level of denoted contents. Like Eco, he insists on the necessity of finding signals in the text that show that the found meaning is the true one.

In the development of the different Semiotic and Linguistic theories we can observe recurring elements such as: denotation (obvious or explicit meaning) / connotation (obscure or implicit meaning); narrative units divided into nuclear and complementary; the text as a weaving of codes (tabular model); syntagmatic and paradigmatic reading; distinction between story and discourse; functional and actantial model; concept of value / semiotic square; disjunctions (spatial, temporal and actantial); place of the author and the narrator; isotopies; the text as the sum of genotext (interior, background, signified) and phenotext (exterior, surface, signifier); and textual *significance* as a sign of openness due to its plurality but with interpretation limits.

In the next chapter we will use these concepts through new articulations in order to propose analytical tools based on the mentioned theoretical premises but with a Hermeneutical approach. This way, the reader will be able to find a creative space in the text but starting off the textual signifier.

That creative space is *signifiance*, that personal sense which exists in potency in the textual signifier and that the reader can transform in act when recognised creatively.

CHAPTER IV

LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE. CONCEPTS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Elements for Semiotic analysis

Our aim is to analyse the elements that allow us to transform literature in an act to reach *significance*.

We recognise in Semiotics a method of personal analysis and we believe that this is the discipline that enables us to discover the literary sign's potency and build its meaning.

"...Semiotics' most important factor resides in the fact that it allows theorists to create a metalanguage –a language or critical discourse– which is useful to analyse forms and structures of representation as coded parts inside a system's logic (...) Because of this, Semiotics is also considered a formalist analytical method, given that it links the expression of the meaning contained inside the analysis with the elements of formal composition. Its theoretical premises allow the possibility of reading real and hypothetical levels of meaning either 'above' or 'beneath' the sign, as solving the relations between both of them inside a text. The intention is to unite and make reservations of meaning accessible inside the textual form configurations..."¹⁴⁴

In order to overcome the diversity of theories we search for the recurring and essential elements of each of them. This way, we try to articulate what is particular and distinctive of each of them and what is common between the variety. Because of this, the selected elements fulfill these requisites: they are evident, they can be reached individually but they are also part of a whole and allow its application from the most simple to the most complex.

Starting off the relation between a classical semiotic conception of the sign-representation and a modern conception of the sign-signification, we wish to integrate different semiotic theories and linguistic theories that are close to this discipline. Moreover, as we saw in the

¹⁴⁴ TRIFONAS, Peter Pericles, *Barthes y el Imperio de los Signos*. Barcelona, Gedisa, 2004. p. 102.

second chapter, we want to come closer to the classical current of Hermeneutics, which is fundamental for the interpretation of sense in the literary signs.¹⁴⁵

Only this way will we be able to overcome the formal limits of Structuralism and reach the text's significance from a creative interpretation that allows us to come closer to the text's interior, to that space of pleasure that only art offers.

We consider the fact that the literary text is presented as a particular sign where signifier and signified are inseparable and form a unit that tries to represent an essence or, as Aristotle points out, "impressions of the soul". That sign represents a reference from an expression and content as a relation between antecedent and consequent in infinite semiosis.¹⁴⁶ The literary sign has meaning and spirit, and it articulates Semantics and Symbolics through a relation between the proper and the transposed and, as indicated by Augustine of Hippo, "it makes us think of something beyond impression". We can only get to the profound meaning if we listen to ourselves and then recognise within us the truth of what the author said. As Augustine of Hippo observes, it is an internal and personal process to recognise the true meanings.

When we see the piece as a sign that contains a signifier and a signified it is necessary to take into consideration syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations so that the sign can flow between the succession and simultaneity of mental associations.¹⁴⁷

The sign goes "beyond" due to the fact that it has mobility; it is an open final interpretant which tries to represent, through the election of a particular *ground* or attribute, a referent and create different types of relations between that representation and the object that produces it.¹⁴⁸

Abduction will help us translate this double character sign: "opaque and transparent, that unveils and hides at the same time the signified thing". A sign with indirect, transposed and symbolic meaning. A sign that expresses thought through tropes that, as indicated by Quintilian, contain meaning and beauty, although it is necessary to remove their layers in order to reach the interior.

So as to reach that depth, Hermeneutics interrogates the symbolism of the tropes characteristic of figurative language and removes accessory ideas to reach the main ones. It does it with a spiritual attitude of quest of meaning, which is essential if the encounter between author,

¹⁴⁵ This integration tendency is backed up mainly by Eco and Ricoeur and is contrary to those who postulate an insuperable opposition between both currents.

¹⁴⁶ Notion of the sign analysed in the first chapter in the theories of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics.

¹⁴⁷ Concepts elaborated by De Saussure and analysed in chapter I.4 of the thesis.

¹⁴⁸ The concept of interpretant belongs to Peirce and was analysed in chapter I.4 of the thesis.

text and reader tries to give place to the personal so that interpretation becomes creative and profound.

Some important concepts can be recognised to attain our objective.

Before reading the text, it is interesting to break down the title without forgetting that it is the index-sign that represents it. Through a deep analysis of the words that compose it we can deduce the denotation level and that of connotation or at least one of them. We will approach the text with a paused reading, as Barthes points out in his textual analysis: “we will walk through it in slow motion” and stop at what it shows and hides from us. We read and enjoy that double pleasure.

In the text we can find signification units which allow us to build levels of interpretation. Between these units we can recognise nuclear and complementary ones.

It is important to distinguish the different levels of interpretation: denotation and connotation. The denoted level contains the facts, while the connoted one, the meanings. The latter is composed of three planes: perceptual, cognitive and evaluative, as the three stages of development of men’s thought in the quest for abstraction (the world of senses, the world of reason and the world of the spirit).

Denotation and connotation are the center of every interpretation. While denotation allows us to get to know meanings through a systematic reading, connotation enables to achieve *signifiante* through a paradigmatic reading.

A text is, etimologically, a weaving, and really this is what texts present: an interweaving of diverse codes which create a tabular model.

Space and time locate the story and have a double denoted (physical) / connoted (symbolic) function. The analysis of disjunctions, as cuts between these levels, helps to profundise this vision.

Characters are analysed as active forces, from the functions they develop and from a double dimension of character / role.

Textual isotopies are arrows of meaning or literary signs that symbolise the piece’s meaning. They are divided into internal and external. The internal ones allow us to reach the text’s inner meaning and the external ones, global meaning.

All of these analytical elements bring us closer to the creative space where *signifiante* is found. Each of them starts off the explication of the textual signifier and then opens up to the

understanding of meaning so as to achieve an interpretation that takes into consideration the whole literary sign. These concepts enable the development of a creative interpretative competence and they highlight elocutionary knowledge; they expand the potency and mobility of the literary sign. This way, we interpret the text's meaning and reach its *signifiante*. Moreover, we attain the personal pleasure, which is new and unexpected, of "completing" the literary work by recognising its potency and the part that us readers take in the creative process.

These concepts can be summarised in ten analytical instruments:

1. The title-index.
2. Reading as the discovery of signs.
3. The units of meaning inside the text.
4. The reading of different codes.
5. The levels of interpretation: denotation and connotation.
6. The narrative discourse: time, mode and voice.
7. Narrative space and time.
8. Characters as active forces.
9. Meaning nuances.
10. *Signifiante*.

All of them start off the textual signifier and only from this place can they open up to personal interpretation. They are independent because they analyse different aspects of the narrative, though together they cooperate in the construction of *signifiante*.

1.1. The title: index-sign of the literary work

If we analyse¹⁴⁹ the title before reading the text, we allow it to work as an "index sign" that anticipates the levels of interpretation. As every index-sign establishes a contiguity relation between the referent and its representamen. It indicates the referent because it represents it. The title enables an anticipation and, after doing the reading, a verification of the efficacy and precision of its indexes.

In his analysis of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar", Roland Barthes points out that the title's function has not been studied correctly and nonetheless keeps many simultaneous

¹⁴⁹ Interpretation implicates the hermeneutical quest for the sense behind the denoted sign.

senses and a double action: enunciative and deictic, as it is an enunciation (rather than an analysis) and also, as we indicated, it is an index.

The title shows what will be said but with an appetitive function: the reader is prepared and it looks for their attention.

Once the text has been read, coincidences and the meaning's nuclear presence in the title are observed. This is done through an operation of syncretism; the author represents the denoted meaning, the connoted one, or both.

It is a relevant element of identification, a marker that can also be considered a condensed text.

The narrative categories are represented in many titles: character, action, space, time. Sometimes this representation is explicit and other times it is implicit through a symbolic, metaphorical or mythological register.

The semionarrative importance of the title is due to the fact that it presents elements that, confirmed by the story, constitute an orientation for reading, with semantic and pragmatic incidences. In many cases they invite the "competent" reader to adopt an attitude of reflection that puts into play their cultural memory.

1.2. Reading as the discovery of signs

Reading as "*an excavation of the text in order to extract its meaning*".¹⁵⁰

The text is read as slowly as needed. When required, one stops at the sign that it presents so as to discover and classify its meanings. We search for semantic bridges to activate its plurality. Reading as "*...a way of resisting the text's power over a reader, questioning its motivation and, ultimately, facing its meaning...*".¹⁵¹

Barthes points out that: "there are dead readings (subject to stereotypes, mental repetitions, prompts) and there are readings that are alive (which produce an interior text, similar to a virtual writing of the reader)".¹⁵² Furthermore, Eco observes that:

"...All discourses enact the symbolic mode, all that has been said is constructed according to the isotopy of what has not been said, even when stating that it will rain

¹⁵⁰ TRIFANOS, Peter Pericles, *Barthes y el Imperio de los Signos*, op.cit., p.33.

¹⁵¹ TRIFANOS, Peter Pericles, *ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁵² BARTHES, Roland, *Variaciones sobre la escritura*. Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2003, p. 85.

*today. It is the contemporary heresy of deconstruction that acts as if a divinity or malevolent subconscious made us talk through a secondary meaning and everything we said was inessential because the essence of what we say is somewhere else, in the symbolic that we often ignore...*¹⁵³

Reading is an operation through which one meaning surges over the others in accordance to the approach, the selected concepts, and the selection of the level in which the text is studied. Reading's dynamic character enables, as pointed out by the Theory of Enunciation, a coproduction of the text to the extent that the effects of meaning are recognised.

Reading fiction allows the reader to access topics, ideas and values that are interesting to them and favour their development as they permit to create a link between literary texts and human acts. This exercise requires the stimuli of curiosity and the intention of attention coming from the reader; also, that they feel pleasure for reading and are seduced by the text and its story.

Through reading the text is completed, activated and developed. The reader is helped by the group of codes constituted by the signs that they find in accordance with their reading competence which is invoked in the act of reading. An interaction of phenomena is produced where textual information, intertextual knowledge, fragmentary elements, global textual information, the interpretation that arises from the piece, and the reader's value system, participate.

Reading, as shown by Eco and the Theory of Enunciation, is catching the *significance*, finding the key points of meaning and performing an interpretation. The piece is presented as part of a coded universe and the revelation of these codes brings us closer to the text's sense.

1.3. The signification units within the text

We can find in the text continuous segments that represent each a reading and signification unit.

¹⁵³ ECO, Umberto, *Sobre literatura*. Barcelona, Océano, 2002, p. 167.

A lexia¹⁵⁴ has a textual signification that arises within it and a secondary signification which can either be an association or a relation that allows to filter, as finely as possible, the textual connotation to which it is referring.

These associations and relations compete in two ways of reading and possible analysis: paradigmatic and syntagmatic.¹⁵⁵ While the former refers to the mental associations that are based on the signification units and depend on the cultural competence of each reader; the latter makes reference to the textual network that is weaved throughout the different units in order to organise the story in a coherent manner. They are two basic axes for comprehension, which are that of selection and that of combination.¹⁵⁶

Generally, these units are short fragments of an arbitrary cut of the textual signifier, originated by the mobility of the reading itself where a possible fragmentation of the textual weaving occurs. They are the units that the reader cuts from the text and which produce a mobile structure of the connotations that produce the text's plurality. We can substitute them for words that serve as semantic units.

Once classified, the units are divided into nuclear (cardinal) and complementary (catalysis) The units which play a significant role in the text's construction are the nuclear ones, as they represent the actions that constitute the central moments of the story and guarantee its progression. A function is nuclear when it "*inaugurates or concludes an uncertainty*" and produces moments of risk and openness towards new alternatives in the development of the story. These units are organised syntagmatically and present a structural configuration through the sequences that act as relatively autonomous blocks. They also imply an election in the group of the described actions and are characterised for articulating the narrative's strong moments and making the story advance.

The complementary units have a complete nature as they fill up the narrative's space. They are not always irrelevant in the narrated events' economy and many times they condense elements that announce or justify the nuclear units because they reinforce the story's internal logic and the purely narrative coincidences. When suppressed, they do not alter the story directly, but they introduce significant modifications to the level of speech.

¹⁵⁴ In his textual analysis, Barthes calls lexias the minimal signification units that Greimas denominates sequences.

¹⁵⁵ The relations established by De Saussure between the signs (paradigmatic and syntagmatic) represent two different ways of reading.

¹⁵⁶ These two comprehension axes, aside from being analysed by De Saussure, are studied by Jakobson in *Poética y Lenguaje* and related to two rhetorical figures: metaphor (combination) and metonymia (selection).

The organisation of these units and its distinction between nuclear and complementary enable the creation of the narrative scheme.

1.4. Reading different codes

Eco indicates that the code is characterised for its capacity of semantic representation, its conventional character and its communicative virtualities. The code summons a sender and receivers that require communicative competence in order for semiosis to work; hence, its functioning has a social dimension of insertion in a determined space and time, with cultural nuances.

The plurality of codes which form a narrative text must be understood as a projection of the heterogeneity of artistic languages without forgetting that the narrative is irreducible to an only code. Due to the plurality of heterogeneous codes we can explain the diversity of signs that arise from a story and participate in its narrative communication. The receiver's capacity is fundamental in the inference of the senses.

It is impossible to establish a definitive and irreversible norm of the sign systems that structure a text because that would translate to a static conception of literature, far away from the artistic dynamism that characterises it. Nevertheless, this does not stop the attempt to define a group of narrative composition elements, which are generally stable and allow systematic cohesion, besides from actively interfering in the narrative message's codification.

All codes are cultural; they present associative fields which represent the world with different voices. Each code participates in the volume of the text with its voice, which is its *significance*.

We have selected some of the most relevant codes so as to produce an integral vision:

*Narrative code: signs that indicate the story's frame, the form of narrating through classical formulas which create the narrative atmosphere in the discourse to help the story's sense.

*Topographic code: signs that indicate the story's places, its spatial location.

*Chronological code: signs that indicate chronological information, dates and temporal location.

*Onomastic code: meaning of personal nouns, as fundamental signs of indexical representation.

*Historical code: cultural signs that suppose a social and historical knowledge.

*Phatic code: features that mark the contact between narrator and narratee.

*Rhetorical code: signs that are presented as stylistic resources of language and as subjective units that indicate meaning.

We want to specially highlight these three last codes, as we consider them deeply fundamental:

*Code of Actions and Behaviours: signs that uphold the anecdote, the story, the argument. They present the story's actions that create denotation and establish its relations.

*Semic code: signs that show the connotative meanings, the senses which come out of the actions and characters and, instead of being presented clearly, need the reader to infer.

*Hermeneutic code: signs that allow the text to be questioned, the general language of the story to be reconstructed and its symbols to be found.

1.5. The levels of interpretation: denotation and connotation

As proposed by Todorov, the story is different from the discourse and corresponds to the reality evoked by the text, its events, characters and represented scenarios. It is the succession of events that constitute the meaning or narrative content; it is the collection of narrated events.

The story corresponds to the plane of content and can advance through different means of expression without suffering significant alterations nor losing its essential properties, given that it has an "autonomous layer of meaning". It is a specific structure, independent from the means of expression used to transmit it. It is the content to which the discourse will give shape and keep a relation of deep solidarity.

There are two levels of interpretation: denotation and connotation. While denotation is formed starting off the relation between the elements presented by the code of actions; connotation enables to link the elements of the semic code through the Hermeneutic code.

Denotation comes from the syntagmatic reading of the units of meaning and connotation from paradigmatic reading. This way, the story presents an anecdote and an inferred message

which reflects a meaning that becomes unveiled within the plurality of meanings that the text holds.

The denoted plane is subject to reference: its meaning is expressed in an explicit and irrefutable manner, whereas its comprehension is easy and general, it presents the informational content.

In contrast, in the connoted field the meaning is suggested. Its contents are floating semantic values actualised for every individual (based on the exercise of inference) and are only imposed if they are redundant and not in contradiction with the denotative content.

Connotation is fundamental in order to achieve *signifiante*. Meaning is plural and constructed and the subject intervenes in that construction both in the production and the recognition, as it moves the ensemble from its linguistic, cultural and ethical competences. Connotation is a system of secondary meanings, of significations, that contemporary society develops constantly in all areas and finds a fertile and interesting field within literature.

1.6. Narrative discourse: time, mode and voice

The discourse is the way in which the narrator communicates the story to the reader; they enunciate the events with the means of expression that allow them to convey the content through diverse substances.

It is a group of statements that manifest certain verbal properties whose description can be analysed as the product of an act of enunciation and as a manifestation of language in effective communication.

The discourse matches the verbal material which makes the story possible. It is the body of linguistic elements that support it and it belongs to the plane of expression. It is the product of a narrator's act of enunciation, directed to a narratee.

The main characters of the narrative process are: the character, namely the one spoken about; the narrator, who speaks; and the reader, that is the person being spoken to. The narrator splits into the author, as "a real person", and the narrator, as "a paper being"; whereas the reader splits into the reader, "real person who reads the text", and the narratee, which is the "fictional reader created by the narrator".

It is in the level of speech where the processes of composition individualise the narrative mode: the elaboration of time, the narrator's voices and the representation modalities of information. It is in this level where registers as marks of the linguistic code are activated. Speech analysis observes the description of the technical-narrative signs which structure the diverse fields that have been mentioned.

The narrator is present in the statement through the traces of the enunciation process that they themselves leave in the speech. They are the subject of enunciation, who chooses the elements' order, the objective or subjective way of telling, and they are also the subject through which we will come to learn the facts. Their function is imperative.

The discursive procedures are divided into three groups: time, voice and mode. Firstly, time either points towards the time of the story or the time of the discourse. While the discursive time is linear, the time of the story is simultaneous. Secondly, the voices indicate the narrator's form of perception, its relation to the character and allow the narrator to know more, equally or less than the character. Moreover, the narrator can be present in the evoked discursive level as a character or only in the discourse absent in the story. Lastly, the third discursive procedure is the mode of the story, that is the way in which the story is told. It indicates the subjective or objective point of view of language and the degree of depth of knowledge of the characters' behaviours and thoughts.

The style of the story can either be panoramic or scenic. The panoramic one implies a vision behind the character, while the scenic one indicates a vision with the character. Furthermore, a story can have a focalisation: internal, external, constant or variable. The focalisation is the point of view from which the events are presented. The story's degrees suggest that more or less could be told, and that different points of view may be used, in a more or less direct manner and with a more or less distance.

1.7. Narrative space and time

Space and time constitute two of the most important categories of the narrative due to the functional articulations that they establish with other categories and because of the semantic incidences that characterise them.

Space integrates: the physical components, which serve as the stage where the action and the characters unfold. It encompasses the geographical, the decorations, the objects and the psychological, which evidences a certain human atmosphere that makes the physical place more than that. Many times the space can be understood as a social sign.

The narrative perspective infers in the space specially when the omniscient narrator activates an internal focalisation of a character, then the space becomes deeply conditioned.

There is a tense interactive relationship between the space, the character and the action that reflects a body of relations between them. Also, the space is affected by the time and the relation between both is defined as chronotope and indicates the fusion in a whole which has meaning and concretion.

Time is a central category in the stories that reveals linguistic implications as a direct consequence of the importance of time as a grammatical category subject to aspectual modalities. Aspectuality is fundamental in the notion of time and refers to the duration or punctuality of an event.

Time has a double dimension: as a story component and its manifestation to the discursive level, both articulated in the narrative time. The narrative time results from this articulation between the time of the story, which is multiple and lived by the characters, and the discursive time, which is linear.

The time of the story refers to the chronological succession of events that can have semantic value as lived time or psychological time filtered through the subjective livings of the character.

The discursive time comprises three areas: order, speed and frequency, where anachronical signs are included (analepsis and prolepsis, which imprint particular characteristics on the narrative).

Greimas speaks of spatial and temporal disjunctions as shifts in planes indicated through signs called: disengagements and engagements, which produce an antithetical meaning. These disjunctions look to find segmentation criteria that imply deep changes. These segments are part of a puzzle that allows to reach the denoted and connoted meaning through textual markers.

1.8. Characters as active forces

Characters are the narrative's fundamental category. They are a diffuse unit of signification, built progressively as a support of redundancies and semantic transformations. This category is constituted by the sum of information of what is and what is done.

The character is a dynamic sign. It is identified by its name, its characterisation and its speech. These elements lead to the presentation of fundamental meanings that configure a semantic of the character and connect it syntactically with other characters of the same text or in function of intertextual associations with characters from other texts.

The character is subject to procedures that determine its functionality and importance in the text. It can be: protagonist, secondary or minor character. There is also a variation in the intensity of its characterisation. We say that it is *round* when it evolves and *flat* when it does not suffer changes.

Frequently, the character serves as a metaphor, metonymy or oxymoron of the story; it is a stylistic sign of representation.

The characters are involved in tensions and confrontations that outline the discursive plurality and present a scene of convergence and polemic in several discourses. They show different axiological possibilities, social attitudes, cultural and ideological profiles, etc.

The fundamental importance of the character is based on the fact that it is a vital functional unit for the concretion of the narrative process, supporting the action.

Todorov points out in his narrative Grammar three categories for the character: the proper noun (the agent), the adjective (the quality) and the verb (the action).

The character is an active force, hence the actantial model¹⁵⁷ is useful for analysing it. This scheme is based on the category of agent. The agent is the syntactic foundation for the narrative action. It is a blank page that can be filled with different functions. The agents are six: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent.

The actantial model allows to describe the syntactical organisation of any narrative text based on the relation of the subject and the object. This model presents the character as an active force.

¹⁵⁷ Let us remember that this model elaborated by Greimas comes from Propp's functions and Bremond and Todorov's influences.

The agent-subject establishes three types of relations. The first one is based on wanting and relates them with the agent-object. The second one is based on knowledge and allows them to get to know the motives that move them to act and its purpose and relates them with the agents-sender and receiver. Finally, they establish a relation of being able to do or not through their relation to the agents-helper and opponent.

These relations help to paint a complete picture of the character based on their actions, values and possibilities.

1.9. Meaning nuances

The term isotopy, incorporated by Greimas, suffered several reformulations since its origin, although it always kept the same main axis. It designates reiteration along the syntagm or recurring elements that assure the text's semantic homogeneity.

The concept of isotopy or threads of meaning¹⁵⁸ has a deep relevancy in the construction of the text's semantic coherence, both in its interior and in its relation with other texts.

The problem of a text's plurality is directly linked to the participation of different isotopies that the text possesses as meaning nuances that express the constance of a certain meaning in a text subjected to interpretative coherence rules, where the reader's encyclopedic competence is fundamental. Each reader activates their knowledge and values in the Reading act, subject to the restrictions imposed by the text itself, which discipline the act of interpretation.

Different representation strategies have the same core, which translates an underlying and unifying sense. The reiteration of figurative semantic traces, that may be replaced by an abstract semic category, allows a uniform reading.

A text has external and internal meaning nuances. Some of the forms of transtextuality that Kristeva points out, like hypertextuality, metatextuality and intertextuality are forms of expressing isotopies in different texts, which is why they are external isotopies.

In order to understand the internal coherence of a text it is necessary to decompose its internal isotopies. This can be achieved using Greimas' Semiotic square, which lets us visualise

¹⁵⁸ We prefer to name the isotopies *threads of meaning* as this concept implies that they are arrows of meaning of the same origin that propagate without dispersing.

the logical development of a semic category. It articulates the contrary / contradictory opposition and analyses the relations of implication that weave internal logical webs.

This way, we reach the text's inner sense and its thematic and ideological connections with other texts. It is important to find the particular elements that enable the unraveling of meaning and deepening into each reader's "long-term memory" so as to really enrich the text and complete the creative process.

1.10. *Signifiante*

A text holds space for *signifiante*, as it is a place where different meanings collide, where the reader lives the plurality of the text. They are who apprehend the multiple voices that sound and remit to diverse cultural quotes. This intellectual job is the one that allows the development of the interpretative creative competence.

We are not searching for a particular meaning, but we aim to keep the text's potency open, its possibility of giving new meanings. Our goal is to develop a receptive and productive competence in the reader that permits them, with the help of Semiotics and Hermeneutics, to reach new meanings from the development of the ability to infer, decipher and discover the secrets of the text, that each reader translates in their interpretative doing. We interrogate the text through its signifier and we interrogate ourselves as readers: what is the text telling us? Which is its truth? What relation do we have with it? From where do we interpret it?

It is a job of differentiation and confrontation that produces a signifying chain with multiple connections that enable the reader to actualise the piece's engendering and transform themselves into the mediator between the literary text and life.

This actualisation is not arbitrary, as not just any interpretation is good; there are limits and these are given in the text, which does not mean they hinder the openness of senses. The text is a signic product and its main characteristic is its capacity of stimulating interpretations, of remaining open to what is different and susceptible to being interpreted.

Language is, by nature, a producer of secondary meanings, of connoted meanings that remit to a "symbolic mode" of production and textual interpretation.

“...What Semiotic key can be offered not for interpretation but for the identification of that textual strategy that has decided to dominate the symbolic mode?

The suggestion has been given to us some time ago by an enthusiast and necessarily determined searcher of secondary meanings: Augustine of Hippo. When something, in the Scriptures, even presenting itself as semantically comprehensible, appears to us out of place, excessive, inexplicably insisted, then it is precise to look for a secondary meaning that is hiding. The attention towards the symbolic mode comes from the verification that there is something in the text that has meaning and even then, may not have been there, and we ask ourselves why its [...] economically unfortunate presence is there, it is what makes us suppose that it is there to tell us something different...”¹⁵⁹

Signifiante allows us to find in the text the place of men in the world, a vision of the world and a universal meaning. Then, we reach a superior level of content where a new meaning present in the text through signals is built.

The plurality of meanings lets every reader be anchored in a particular unit of meaning and then come to the individual pleasure of what is new and surprising.

The text has multiple readers and meanings.

“...The text always contains meaning but contains, in some way, recurrences of meanings. Meaning comes and goes, goes through another level again, and so successively; we would have to come close to a Nietzschean image, that of the Eternal recurrence, the eternal recurrence of meaning. Meaning returns but with a difference and not as identity...”¹⁶⁰

Starting from the selected concepts we can start to construct *signifiante* as a “creative personal space”. In that construction, there is a participation of several elements: the index-title, reading as the discovery of signs, the segmentation into units of meaning, the reading of different codes, denotation and connotation as levels of interpretation, the narrative discourse as an enunciation process, the spatial and temporal frames, the characters as active forces, and the

¹⁵⁹ ECO, Umberto, *Sobre Literatura*. Barcelona, Océano, 2002, p. 163.

¹⁶⁰ BARTHES, Roland, *Variaciones sobre la literatura*. Barcelona, Paidós, 2003, p. 188.

analysis of the meaning nuances. All of these concepts weave a network of mobile meaning, of production and recognition that allows one to take into consideration the literary sign's potency, but always based on the textual signifier.

“...Reading literary works forces us to an exercise of fidelity and respect in the frame of the freedom of interpretation. There is a dangerous critical heresy, typical of our times, according to which we can do whatever we want to a literary work, reading in it anything that our uncontrollable impulses suggest to us. It is not true. Literary pieces invite us to the freedom of interpretation because they propose to us a discourse with many levels of reading and they confront us with the ambiguity of language and life. But in order to play this game, under which every generation reads literary works in a different way, we have to be motivated by a profound respect towards what, in other works, I have named the intention of the text...”¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ ECO, Humberto, *Sobre literatura*. Barcelona, Océano, 2002, p.p. 12,13.

CHAPTER V

THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT: READING ACTS

1. *Signifiante* as construction of meaning

Literary words invite the pleasure of enjoying words devoid of usefulness. The pleasure starts in the limit of the borders, what seduces is what is there but invisible to the eye; the excitement is produced by the hope of seeing what is hidden,¹⁶² of knowing the games of language, of developing a creative reading. Intellectual activity is associated with the pleasure obtained in the construction of secondary meanings. Barthes invites us to find pleasure in breaking down the texts and being “aristocratic readers”.

“...You expect something to happen but nothing happen, since what happens to language does not happen to the discourse: what ‘happens’, what ‘leaves’, the crack in the edges, the interstice of jouissance, is produced in the volume of languages, in the enunciation rather than the continuation of utterances: not devouring, not swallowing but chewing, breaking down carefully; to read today’s authors it is necessary to rediscover the leisure of previous readings: being aristocratic readers...”¹⁶³

Meaning is found in between lines, given that a text always needs its shadow. There is leisure when there is discovery, when the taste of reading is discovered, when the mind follows its own ideas without having the individual’s complacency. *Signifiante* is that individual leisure, new and unexpected.

What is important is to transform the text into an object of pleasure, and in that quest for pleasure in reading, Semiotics can be, as pointed out by Barthes: “the joker of contemporary knowledge, as the sign itself is so of every discourse”.

Meaning is never arbitrary because it is in the text, in its global macrostructure, what happens is that it is not found in any particular place, even when it is everywhere. Finding senses

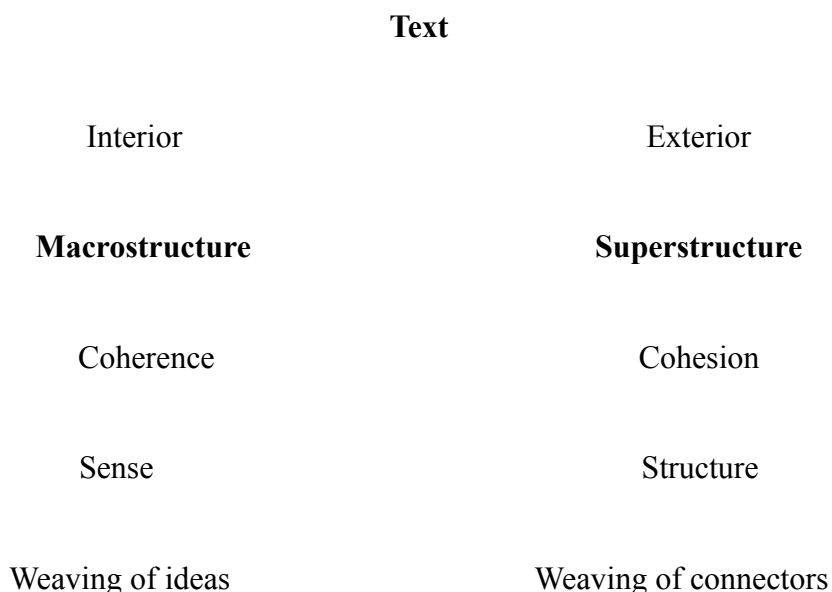
¹⁶² This refers to the transposed language, characteristic of the literary sign, mentioned in chapter II.

¹⁶³ BARTHES, Roland, *El Placer del Texto*. Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1998, p. 23.

does not mean inventing, but rather bringing to light what is occult, which is what seduces and incites to be discovered and to happily enjoy that discovery.

Peirce, the father of Semiotics, recognises “abduction” as a fundamental method of this discipline. This is the essential instrument to any interpretation, inferring to unveil the messages and see what is behind them. Interpreting is thinking, recognising and producing creatively from the approximation to the literary work as a sign.

In this task, Linguistics of the text helps to reach the *significance*. The macrorules¹⁶⁴ allow to reach the global macrostructure starting from the microstructures. These rules not only make the metalinguistic aspect of language better, but also their enunciative character, which is why its applicability exceeds the limits of language and Linguistics and also encompasses literature. Every text has an “interior” and an “exterior”, a macrostructure and a “superstructure” and grasps meaning when covered integrally. From its ideas, its contents and its background to its external structure, receptacle or form.



Coherent Text

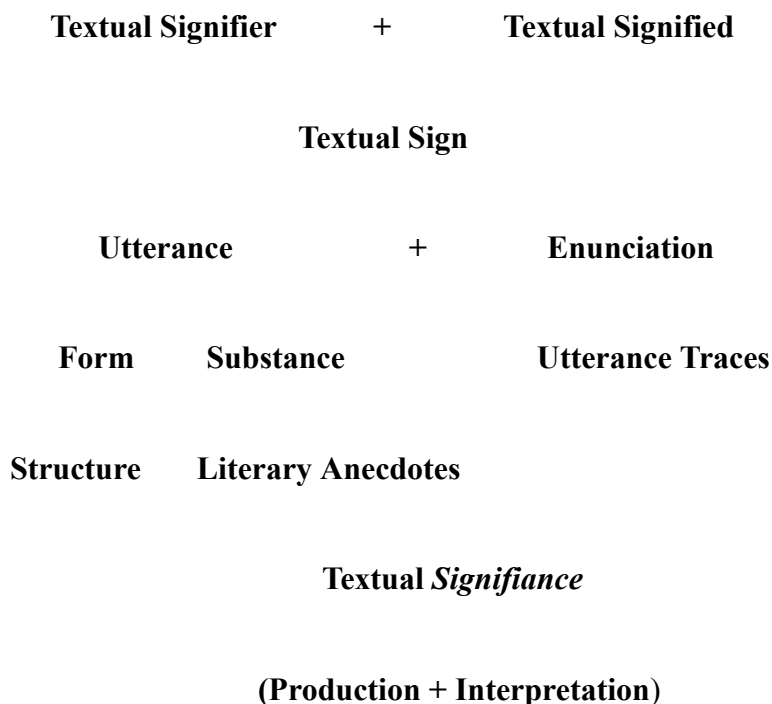
Because of this there is an importance, for example, of the vision that Eco and Ricoeur have of the metaphor. They present it not only in the field of discourse (the form) but also in the

¹⁶⁴ Linguistic rules developed by Van Dijk in *La ciencia del Texto* (suppression, generalisation and construction).

field of the content (the background). That is to say that when a metaphor is used, a different thing is being said, rather than the same but in a different manner. This expresses that all the forms of discourse and specially literary discourse, of which metaphors are one of its fundamental figures, are deeply related to its substances, hence the structural possibilities of speech and signifying are two inseparable and internally united facets.

The text is a whole (content-receptacle), organised from the production and the recognition. The text is completed in the recipient, which is a mobile receiver who decodes and codes infinitely. The circulation between the production and recognition of meaning is eternal and infinite like semiosis, given that the senses are plural and constantly actualised. Moreover, the text is not only the product, its utterance, but also the gestation process, its enunciation. Production, recognition, utterance, enunciation, form and background lead to the construction and interpretation of the *signifiante* that texts have.

A linguistic signifier plus a linguistic signified result in a textual sign that contains an utterance (literary work) which has a form (its stable structure) and a substance (the literary anecdotes). This utterance plus the enunciation (the narrator's traces in an utterance) result in the *signifiante* (alive and personal meaning) as a double process of production and interpretation.



Significance is the text itself, not as a finished and sealed product, but as a production in process, present in other texts, other codes and other circumstances, as an interpretant in the midst of semiosis, a sign in infinite potency.

“Interpretative competence” helps to find what is plural in the text, its openness and its limits. A text can have several meanings, but not all the meanings, as the text itself holds a parameter for acceptable interpretations.

Interpreting a text is explaining its form and understanding its background, understanding why these signs behave in a particular manner when interpreted from the text’s intention which is way more significant than the author’s intention or the interpretant’s intention. A text, as defined by Todorov, is only “a picnic where the author takes the words and the readers the meaning”.

For the text to reach its openness, the reader must suspect that every sign is hiding a secret, they must look for “the unsaid”, the void that the text keeps as a universe open to the interpretant’s infinite connotations, which are found beyond and under the literal meaning. The reader’s mission is to conjecture about the text’s intention, to be its “model reader” and imagine a model author that matches the text’s intention. Any interpretation that can be confirmed in a fragment of that same text is accepted as valid. On the contrary, the text would be used instead of interpreted,¹⁶⁵ with no respect for the cultural and linguistic background.

A text is presented as a machine created to produce interpretations from different readings. That way, degrees of acceptability for the interpretations will be recognised, according to their possibility of being (or not) confronted with the text’s intention present in the textual signifier.

A text’s *significance* is always open and awaiting a new reader. However, it is not presented simply: it is a secondary knowledge that seduces for what is occult and this is the essence of the pleasure it produces, but also its biggest difficulty. As a result, whoever wants to reach it will need to support a summative vision in the text’s approach as a whole from its structure, its meanings, its symbols and its potency.

We analyse three stories to explain its movements and understand them as a language in creative trance. These are “La Galera”, by Manuel Mujica Lainez; “The Circular Ruins”, by Jorge Luis Borges; and “The Devil’s Drool”, by Julio Cortázar.

¹⁶⁵ Fundamental distinction pointed out by Eco in all his works between interpreting and using a text. It can be seen mainly in *Interpretación y Sobreinterpretación*.

The order in which they will be analysed tries to present the analysis in narrative texts of varying difficulty, going from the most to the least canonical. The goal is not only to analyse these stories, but for them to serve as an excuse to see the applicability of the elements in any literary narrative text.

Before starting the analysis it is necessary to take into consideration the conjunction that we try to achieve: the Structuralist technique which provides the Semiotics to explain the profound Semantics of a narrative text must be fused with the profound and critical interpretative transcendence generated by Hermeneutics. We believe that only this way may the text's live meaning be reached with the adequate objectiveness that allows personal commitment.

2. Analysing “La Galera”, by Manuel Mujica Lainez

1. The title: index-sign of the literary work

Before reading the story we stop at the title as the piece's index-sign.

Sometimes titles provide many elements, sometimes only a few, but they always serve as an “aperitif” to the text's comprehension. A title, generally sparks the desire to read, given that it creates a special atmosphere that somehow reflects the text's meaning.

We analyse its signs separately starting from mental associations to then articulate its parts in a syntagm and get to a global meaning. Even the most ingenious title hides a border that is interesting to discover.

The first thing that comes to mind with the title “La Galera”,¹⁶⁶ due to the age in which the story takes place, is the image of the means of transportation formed by a big carriage with four wheels and, generally, a coach roof. We can also think, of course, of the tall hat used by gentlemen, even though that is not the case. But if we keep on looking into it and search for the term in the Real Academia Española's dictionary, we find a great surprise in the fact that one of the definitions is “women's prison”.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ In Spanish, a *galera* refers both to a stagecoach and a top hat; but also to a women's prison.

¹⁶⁷ Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1992, vigésima primera edición.

When we read the story we know that this is the main idea both in denotation and connotation, as the story's "stagecoach" is definitely an infernal prison for Catalina. She is not free to decide anything, from the minute she walked into the carriage her life is no longer under her control. She is incarcerated both physically and mentally, as the remorsees keep her hostage and encircle her with shadows that will drive her to death.

In the story, we observe that "la galera" is referred to as a place built to torment those who occupy it and as an enclosed place of confinement that keeps prisoners.

2. Reading as the discovery of signs.

We slowly walk the story searching for its borders. Reading stops, especially, in the rhetorical questions and the adjectives which create a special atmosphere: cruel, torturers, shaken, jolted, hit without mercy, imprisoned, lunatic, grey, harassed, misty, ghostly, spectral, dead, nauseous, thick, blind, runaway, alone, still, mute. All these images get to the biggest degree of syncretism in the infernal stagecoach.

The created atmosphere is sensational from the abundant adjectivisation to the loss of the exact time and space. The weather is uncertain, covered by the mist that grows with the story. The atmosphere's mist and the grey that covers the protagonist help the reader to get into an oneiric climate where everything is possible because all is shadow.

Reading gallops in an infernal atmosphere towards death and the reader gallops with it in that fantastic atmosphere where the surreal's irruption seems normal. As every fantastic story it leaves in the reader's hand the possibility to decide on the story's ending, namely what they will interpret: did Lucrecia's ghost really appear to take revenge on her sister and abandon her to an unavoidable death? or is Catalina's conscience that weight in gold that turns her into stone and does not let her continue the trip?

The fear of believing to see her dead sister paralyses her and she feels like Lucrecia came back to take her place and the things that belonged to her. Maybe her sister behaved with her with the same coldness and harshness with which she treated her before. Could Lucrecia's image be the materialisation of a feeling of guilt that, like in Dostoyevki's *Crime and Punishment*, makes life unbearable?

3. The units of meaning inside the text.

Let us remember that the division is not rigid whenever a clear and complete narrative scheme can be assembled. Each element has a particular sense and is related to the rest of the syntagm like the links of a chain.

- Temporal and spatial location.
- The others and Catalina.
- The infernal *galera*.
- Catalina and her arrogance.
- The treasure and ambition.
- The other companions.
- Participation of nature.
- Infernal atmosphere.
- Recount of the journey.
- Treasure – power.
- Recount of her fortune's origin.
- Gallop and
- Her and her memories.
- Sister's appearance.
- Fear.
- Build-up of smoke.
- Stagecoach's breakdown.
- Everybody's descent.
- Ascent of the others.
- Prohibition of the ascent due to the weight.
- Substitution.
- The stagecoach gallops to destiny.
- Loneliness and possible death.

These units of meaning have two possible readings: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. The former allows us to connect the units and reconstruct the denoted message. The latter enables the

display of mental associations over each unit and cooperates in the construction of the connoted message.

The previous thematic units can be divided into nuclear and complementary.

The nuclear:

- The infernal *galera*.
- The treasure and ambition.
- Sister's appearance.
- Substitution.
- The loneliness of death.

These are the units of meaning that weave the story's central conflict. The *galera* is Catalina's inferno, which she obtained as a result of killing her sister for ambition. Her sister appears to substitute her and punish her with a cruel and lonely death.

The rest of the units are complementary as they fill the story, they give ambiance to it, they justify the actions in the internal coherence of the story and, mainly in this text, they add up to the infernal atmosphere that ends in death, as the text gallops to its destiny.

4. The reading of different codes.

The text is an interweaving of codes that are segmented to then coordinate in a common meaning. The sum of the codes is not what gives the global meaning, but rather its internal crossing. The units of meaning find a place in the codes. These weave a net through which the text passes and is transformed into such. Each code is one of the voices that speaks in the text and together, as the individual voices in a choir, they create a totality.

Classification of the codes:

*Action and Behaviour code: murder – robbery – trip – stagecoach breakdown – substitution – abandonment.

*Semic code: ambition – suffering – inferno – punishment – death.

*Hermeneutic code: we interrogate the text while looking for symbols. The interrogations take us to a symbol: *galera* = inferno = conscience = prison. This symbol is the transversal axis of the whole story and it uses different images that repeat that central idea as deforming mirrors.

Since we meet Catalina until we abandon her, the *galera* is there to punish her. Little matters if Lucrecia is real or a product of her imagination, as the galera is who really takes revenge on Catalina martyrising her and finally driving her to a certain and cruel death.

*Narrative code: the narrator uses narrative formulas to frame the story. In this case we begin by creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and ... through a rhetorical question: *“How many days, how many cruel torturous days have you been traveling this way, tossed and shaken, hit without mercy against the stagecoach’s box, imprisoned in the hard seats?”*¹⁶⁸

*Topographic codes: they are the places that enable the spatial location. The narrator names a part of the path from Cordoba to Buenos Aires. The stops are: Guardia de la Esquina, the Carcarañá, India Muerta, the Arroyo del Medio, Pergamino, Arrecifes, Areco and Luján. Even though the stops are named until Luján, the main character does not even reach Arrecifes. In two moments of the story, there are mentions that recall different parts of the trip; it is important because the quotes show Catalina’s loss of spatial awareness: *“One hundred and forty-two leagues live between Cordoba and Buenos Aires and despite Catalina calculating that they have already have traveled more than three hundred, there are actually only eighty between the point of origin and Guardia de la Esquina, which is the next stop [...] The names mix up in Catalina Vargas’ mind, as do the profiles of the estates that watch over the desert”*.¹⁶⁹

*Chronological code: they are the dates that indicate the temporal setting. The story is set in 1803. The mentions of the time that passed during the trip are uncertain for the protagonist who has lost sense of time and space: *“Catalina has lost count. Five and ten and fifteen could be the same; a month may have gone by since they left Cordoba, dragged by eight crazy mules”*.¹⁷⁰

*Onomastic code: they are the proper names. Catalina – Lucrecia. Catalina, which comes from the Greek *katharón*, means pure, chaste. Lucrecia comes from the Greek *liké*, twilight, and *kreas*, meat, body. Twilight body or twilight of dawn. It is important to see what Lucrecia means in Latin: “the one that brings profit”, “the chaste and pure”. As observed, both names bear the same meaning.¹⁷¹

*Historical code: they are the signs that refer to cultural, historical, political and social knowledge. The story is situated in 1800s Buenos Aires, which is why characters of that time are

¹⁶⁸ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, “La galera” en *Misteriosa Buenos Aires*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1985, p. 177.

¹⁶⁹ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁷⁰ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁷¹ Diccionario etimológico Argenta. Buenos Aires., Ed. Argenta, 1990.

named: *“The little lady will complain to Don Antonio Romero de Tejada, Head Postmaster; and, if necessary, she will even go to the Virreina del Pino, misses Rafaela de Vera y Pintado”*.¹⁷²

Moreover, local color elements are presented for the estates' interior, the *pulperías*, the countrymen, its entertainments such as cards and dice, the inns, the dances and chants of peons and slaves. The passengers' roles also complement the social image: the Franciscan friar, a marriage from Upper Peru, a young Afro-Argentine woman, the officer and the royal courier.

*Factual code: the speaker maintains contact with the interlocutor through rhetorical interrogations that look for the reader's complicity to calm Catalina's conscience: *“And so what? Was it not in her right to do it? Was it fair that her sister's madness kept her from what she deserved? Did she not proceed correctly by protecting herself, by protecting her last years?”*.¹⁷³

*Rhetorical code: rhetorical figures. We list some as an example:

Adjectivation: it is abundant, it is used to create images that are meaningful to the internal sense of the text (was pointed out in the analysis of reading).

Personifications:

“The carriage squeaks and creaks”, “Outside the sun maddens the landscape”, “The heat battles the trembling box's prisoners”.

Comparisons:

“The Black men held onto the stirrup, clinging like leeches”.

“Catalina gropes beneath her skirt, which displays as many shades of filth as blotches”.

“The sky, gleaming with stars, marvelous like a queen's mantle”.

“She wears a grey cloak similar to hers, and like her, covers herself with a hood”.

“The gold coins that were pulling at her skirt as if they were made of marble, as if her entire dress had turned into a block of marble”.

“The stagecoach gallops like a blind, runaway beast”.

Metaphors:

“Where the solitary willows bathe their braids”.

5. The levels of interpretation:

¹⁷² MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁷³ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, pp. 179, 180.

Denotation: the syntagmatic reading of the units of meaning and the action code allow us to clearly organise the denoted message.

Catalina Vargas is an older miss who decided to face a stagecoach trip from Cordoba to Buenos Aires. The trip is very uncomfortable and this results in the protagonist not being able to rest while the other travelers do so. She is also restless due to the gold coins that she carries under her skirt.

The action takes place in 1800s Buenos Aires. There are local color elements and characteristic places that indicate the trip's route.

The narrator does a recount of the origin of Catalina's fortune. She ended her sick sister's life by mixing venom in her medicine and destroyed the will to keep her goods.

The trip makes Catalina more and more uncomfortable. She has no notion of the time passing by and is only awaiting her arrival to Buenos Aires so she can complain to the Virrey and show off the power that her recently acquired fortune grants.

A new passenger comes out of nowhere and appears in the stagecoach. She is dressed just like her and can only be seen by her: it is her sister Lucrecia's ghost. Suddenly, a wheel breaks and Catalina faints. When she wakes up, she is seated over the roots of an ombu tree observing how everyone gets into the stagecoach to leave for the final stop. Even her sister, who everyone can see, gets inside. Catalina wants to join them but she cannot, as the weight of the coins will not allow her to. The stagecoach leaves and she is left to the birds, in the solitude of the night.

Connotation: the paradigmatic reading of the lexias and the semic code allow us to create the connoted message, which is the most interesting one as it represents a profound sense.

From the beginning, Catalina is differentiated from the other characters; the trip is uncomfortable for everyone but for her it is infernal. The *galera* is a prison that martirises her, that does not let her sleep, that drives her crazy and makes her lose notion of time. The only thing that keeps her is the obsession of arriving in Buenos Aires to enjoy her fortune and show off her power.

Catalina is arrogant and ambitious, she wants to stand out, she feels like she is worth more because she has money and power. She does not seem to care about the means by which she obtained her money. In her eyes, the end justifies the means and her sister's life was but a nuisance in the way of her goal, which is why she wanted to destroy her.

Her transgression was so big, namely killing her own blood, that everything seems to have turned against her: the *galera*, the sun, the travelers who are not paying attention to her, the nightmares of her tortured conscience, the smoke, and, lastly, the new passenger that comes to take her place.

The personification of her conscience paralyses her of fear; her sister's figure surges as a demotic spectre with "wild eyes", covered in nauseating smoke, as if having risen from hell itself.

In the beginning, the carriage squeaks and creaks, though now it vibrates, it seems to be lighter, like a big weight was taken off, and it hectically gallops, wobbling, zigzagging towards its destiny.

It is interesting to ask ourselves why Cataline killed her sister: while Lucrecia had gotten married, she had not; while Lucrecia had a fortune that gave her power, she did not. Maybe she had always been waiting to take everything that belonged to her sister and she did not mind having to poison her and destroy the will to do so.

Her sister's madness was incurable and that justified her. Moreover, no one could keep her from "what she deserved", and what did she deserve?: everything that her sister had ever had and she had not, everything that she had envied and coveted. And now that she was older, it was only going to serve her "to protect her last years".

She cared about the power that money would give her because it was the element that she coveted the most. That money would allow her to show off her power and get compliments and even to get a visit from the Virrey del Pino. She dreamed of that moment a lot and maybe it was her whole life's purpose, to get rid of her sister to occupy her place. Maybe because of that she did not build her own life, and now that she seemed to have reached her goal, now that the gold pressed against her, the *galera* was punishing her.

Her conscience's prison martirised her because it was her sister's gold; that sister that she did not want to remember, because only forgetting her would she really kill her. Like in Pirandello's *The Life I Gave You*, Catalina wanted to forget, to turn that into a nightmare, into a bygone dream, that had not been real. Her sister had not existed and there were no crime stains, as she was the only one with real existence.

But when she is battling herself to achieve the triumph that forgetness would bring her, the pipe's smoke of one of the travelers punishes her again, as if the sufferings and torments that

conflict her were not enough. Then, her pride forces her to react but she discovers the cloudy and spectral presence of Lucrecia, curiously addressed like her, between the smoke. She seems to have returned from the afterlife to take back what belonged to and was stolen from her.

Nobody sees Lucrecia, there is no moment when “the others” see the two sisters at the same time: it is one or the other. The passengers do not see Lucrecia until they stop seeing Catalina. Her sister’s eyes looked wild, the disease that accompanied her before dying was madness. Few things are more terrifying than a mad spectre that arises out of nowhere.

The circle is closed and the absence is filled, the cruelty is made up for with the revenge between these sisters who cannot share nor live together, it is one or the other. Lucrecia is now who punishes: she abandons Catalina to a scary and lonely death.

The *galera* then continues its trip, it gallops swiftly “*like a blind runaway animal in the middle of a cloud of dust*”.¹⁷⁴ It already fulfilled its purpose, reestablishing the order of the one for one that seems to be the sister’s internal code. The damage was repaired with the corresponding punishment to such ambition, that ambition that brought so much gold to Catalina, that paralysed her and stopped her from saving herself from the *galera*’s abandonment. The gold, like in the case of King Midas, only brought death.

6. The narrative discourse.

As we have previously indicated, the narrative process has three main characters: the character (the person spoken about), the narrator (the person who speaks) and the reader (the person spoken to). Two of the named protagonists (the second and third) are divided into: an author and a narrator and a reader and a narratee. The narrator or implicit author is who organises the text, the responsible one, an identity that is not “the man author”. The narrator almost always has their own paper, which can be one of the characters or emitting judgements of value. The narratee must not be mistaken with the real readers. The real person is who reads the text, while the narratee is the narrator’s fictional receptor.

In this story the narrator emits their ideas sometimes and sometimes appears to be Catalina Vargas’ conscience, which in order to justify her actions frequently interrogates the narratee, who lends their ear to the character’s stream of consciousness.

¹⁷⁴ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 182.

The author is Manuel Mujica Lainez and the reader, each of the people who read the story. The characters are Catalina, the *galera* and Lucrecia.

In the beginning the narrator is omniscient in third person, then they intervene with exclamations that highlight the protagonist's thirst for power, continues with interjections to God asking for Catalina, the exclamations come back to emphasise the power that will be given to her due to the fortune and then begin the justificative questions about the way in which she obtained that fortune. The exclamation comes back when they think about Lucrecia and the bad atmosphere in the *galera*, and the interrogation about Lucrecia's appearance and Catalina's lack of mobility. The narrator through exclamations and interrogations seems to reflect the protagonist's clouded and punished conscience.

In the two last paragraphs we have the omniscient narrator in third person, like in the story's start.

The abundant infernal adjectivisation works as subjectivemes that reflect the narrator's vision. The discourse presents a tormented conscience, that of the character – conscience / narrator that searches for an Other that justifies it so that the weight is not that heavy.

The relation between the narrator and the represented universe has different points of view or representation modalities. That vision can either be panoramic (it covers whole years and events in many places) or scenic (the events happen before the readers and in the same time span). Furthermore, the story's vision can be objective (it informs) or subjective (the story is known through a committed narrator). In this story the vision is panoramic and subjective: we know Catalina in her present, past and future and through her own conscience, hence we can speak of an omniscient narrator.

There are different degrees of depth in the narrator's vision: description of the observed behaviours, transmission of the character's thoughts and information of processes that the character itself ignores, due to unconsciousness. In this case they go through the three degrees of depth: behaviours, thoughts and unconsciousness.

The narrator can be present in the level of the evoked universe as a character or only in the discourse. In the *galera* they are only in the discourse, even though they seem like another character that knows more than the others.

The narrator can use diverse linguistic means, first, second or third person singular or plural, which indicates nothing about the narrator's presence or distance. We can talk about

discursive affinities with the dialogic typology of the “I” and the “you”, and of affinities in the story with the narrative typology of the third person singular, but the equivalence is not absolute. In this story the third person singular is used.

7. Narrative space and time.

As we Space as a physical place presents the protagonist’s trip from Cordoba to Buenos Aires, which has one hundred and forty-two leagues even though she has lost sense of what has passed. She thinks that she has already done more than three hundred leagues, when in reality only eighty have passed. After Guardia de la Esquina comes the Carcañá, India Muerta and Arroyo del Medio. The last stop is Pergamino and the next are Arrecifes, Areco, Luján. The places are not clear, they get mixed up in Catalina’s mind, where everything is uncertain.

On the other hand, the closest space is the stagecoach, which is ambiented as a hell that squeaks and creaks; it is a place “built on purpose to martyrise those who occupy it”. Outside is the maddened sun and the dust that surrounds the *galera* and throws it to the uncertain. Furthermore, at any moment there could be an indigenous raid.

The *galera*’s glasses are covered in blood, the *galera* is closed, sealed off smelling of “kept food and unwashed clothes” but “if they opened the windows the dust would choke them”. The heat martyrises the prisoners suffocated by “the fog that everything covers” and “the smoke that rises in nauseous puffs augments the air’s density”.

The *galera* has an infernal atmosphere. In the final external space there is only solitude, *pampa* and *caranchos* birds.

Along the story we can perceive spatial disjunctions that delimit the inside from the outside of the stagecoach. Also between the place of origin (Cordoba, place of death) and where it is going to (Buenos Aires, place of power for her).

In the time of the story we can observe that she does not register the time passing by. There is uncertainty and chronological order is broken. The trip happens mostly at night and the afternoons serve to rest, although she cannot sleep in the inns due to her fear of the countrymen and slaves having fun in the surrounding areas.

When the trip is interrupted it is explained that half an hour will be enough to fix the malfunction, then she faints and loses notion of time. When she wakes up, everyone gets ready to leave, but she is already far away from the place.

The uncertain time matches other elements of the story, Manuel Mujica Lainez presents us a tormented conscience.

The narrative time is linear with some disjunctions marked by anachronisms towards the past when the fortune's origin is narrated and towards the future when she dreams of the power that the gold will grant her in the new city. Both anachronies serve to complete Catalina's profile. Through the anachrony to the past or *analepsis* we get to know what she is capable of, whilst the anachrony to the future or *prolepsis* shows us why she killed: to take possession of her sister's fortune, to reach power and be complimented by others.

8. Characters as active forces.

The main characters are Catalina, the *galera* and Lucrecia; the others, as described by the narrator, are somber "puppets", merged with one another so that the main characters' figures stand out and they focus all of the attention in the story. "*The travelers are dozing, shaking their heads like puppets*".¹⁷⁵

We describe the main characters by their functions through the actantial model.

Subject (Catalina)

Object (fortune)

Sender (ambition)

Receiver (her and her thirst for power)

Helpers (poison)

Opponents (sister, conscience)

Through this model we get to know Catalina for her actions in the story. She is the subject because she is the one who performs the act of killing in order to reach the object of desire that is her sister's fortune. The motive that makes her not care about the cost of obtaining the goods is her ambition and the receiver is her and her thirst for power. She has non-human

¹⁷⁵ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 177.

helpers: her sister's disease and the poison that she mixes in with the medicine. These elements help her to get rid of Lucrecia and keep her goods, as they calm her conscience when she thinks that "the disease is incurable" and the poison "merely hastened the end" and made Lucrecia and, of course, Catalina, suffer less.

The *galera* is another central character of the story.

Subject (*galera*)

Object (punishment)

Sender (revenge)

Receiver (Catalina)

Helpers (Catalina's conscience, fear, solitude, *caranchos*)

Opponents (Catalina)

The *galera* is the prison, the conscience, the dead sister. From the start its object is to martyrise Catalina, moved by the necessity of revenge wanting to restore order and punish whoever altered it. The receiver of that punishment is Catalina who, by the ending of the story, is close to death. The helpers are Catalina's conscience, which does not allow her to have peace at any moment, thus everyone but her can sleep. Moreover, another helper is the fear that pushes her to forget her sister, does not allow her to scream when she sees her and paralyses her when she wants to go back to the stagecoach. The fear is what throws her "alone, unable to move and mute" to the solitude of the plain at night and before the scavenger birds awaiting the darkness to little by little tear life from her, as she did with her sister. That fear is symbolised by the weight of the gold coins which represent the weight of her conscience. Those coins numb her and stop her from escaping the punishment.

She killed her sister and the *galera* is the one in charge of restoring the order with a punishment as painful as the committed sin. The stagecoach continues its path as a "blind runaway animal".

9. Meaning nuances.

They are arrows of meaning, recurring ideas, that can either be internal to the story or external (contextual).

The internal ones create and increase a propitious atmosphere to find *signifiante*. They are the redundancies, the repetitions, the ideas that evolve and give the text signifying coherence in a progressive manner until getting to the global sense.

The sense of the text is the inferno as the place of punishment, which is represented by the galera. The nuances of meaning that take to this macrosense are:

How many cruel, torturous days? (uncertainty, torture and death)

Catalina is unable to sleep (place without peace)

The stagecoach squeaks and creeks (inferno)

The infernal *galera* (inferno)

Built with the purpose of martyrization (inferno)

The blood of the tormented mules (pain)

Suffocation of confinement (confinement)

The sonorous lament of the horn (pain)

The prisoners in the “box” (confinement)

Half-vanished, nightmare (uncertainty)

Foggy passenger, spectral (spectre)

The fog that invades everything (fog, uncertainty)

Wild eyes (madness)

Sweating out of fear (fear)

The smoke rises in nauseous puffs (uncertainty, inferno)

Runaway animal (madness)

The *caranchos* birds (carrion)

These images are very close to Dante’s inferno, they look like a painting where all of the elements point to create an only meaning. Like in Picasso’s “Guernica”, everything is pain and death in the *galera*. Everything is uncertainty, confinement and torture, characteristic of a place without peace, characteristic of hell. This atmosphere is present throughout the whole story and it is what enables the global sense’s coherence.

The *galera* is the inferno, the prison that will drive Catalina to death and away from life and the gold.

We can draw the semiotic square in order to clearly represent the text’s meaning.



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Life is contradictory to death, life is in Catalina's dreams and implies the gold that will give her power and fulfill her thirst. But, instead of being in her dream luxurious world, she is in the *galera* which is contradictory to the gold as it stops any pleasure, any enjoyment, as it only gives her pain, confinement, mediocrity, bothers, dirt and suffocation; it is the prison that she deserves but rejects. The *galera* implies death. That will be Catalina's final stop: arriving to her own death, as cruel and merciless as the one she skilfully weaved for her sister.

The external meaning nuances connect this text with other discourses that share the same meaning. As two of the recently named pieces in this analysis: "The Inferno of the *Divine Comedy*" by Dante and the "Guernica" by Picasso. Many other texts pursue the same theme and use recurring ideas that create a coherent atmosphere which points to an only sense: death and pain.

10. Significance.

We have developed the previous analytical concepts with the finality to find possible senses. Each concept was interpreted from its textual signifier towards its openness. There have been recurring elements and gaps of meaning that allow us to find our own creative space. These gaps produce us aesthetic pleasure as they hide more than they show and invite us to participate in the creative act.

By analysing the text's senses we do not intend to establish their truth, but their plurality, the possibility of analysing them as a "potential sign", the discovery of the unsaid, what is in the text awaiting to be found.

¹⁷⁶ Life – *galera* – gold – death.

In order to reach *significance* it is necessary to read and come back, name by name, from the signifiers to the signifieds, through a creative interpretative competence that enables us to learn to think the signs that represent reality instead of only the things that are in the world and waiting to be represented.

The literary text is a sign that starts from the linguistic signifier and opens towards the sense, which awaits to be deciphered. The reader must develop the connotative capacity as a special way of observing and generating a particular vision of the world.

We believe that the recognition of a sole topic in a text, for different readers with different life circumstances and in different epochs, is not fruitful. This would ruin the plurality of the text, its actualisation in a secondary meaning or interpretant.

If we follow Peirce's third triad, the one that defines the sign, we may say that every text is a *representamen* or first sign, which represents a referent and expects plurality, to be actualised in an interpretant starting from all the ideas that the *representamen* will produce. The text as a sign is completed with that secondary sign in which the interpreter and the circumstances take part.

A text's *significance* is not only one; it is multiple because the text itself is so. The sense must surge from its interior and be discovered by each reader. We must take into consideration that men are social beings immersed in a space and time that define them, without overlooking the particularities and differences of each man in the act of interpretation.

The risk and tribute we must offer to the complexity of the task of *significance* reconstruction is that of taking a particular point of view in detriment of another possible one. We choose a particular sense to anchor and find our own creative space. The text is plural and each reader can stop at a different sense that does not need to be nuclear. In this election what is important is to justify the analysis through the textual signifiers.

The literary text is a translinguistic object, hence it can be connected with other circumstances which give sense. It is a structure of nets and multiple connections that allow decomposing the sign and finding individual pleasure, new and unexpected. This job is similar to the Socratic maieutic method and searches, as midwives, bringing to light, birthing ideas and developing this way an individual and cultural thinking of openness and plurality where the limits of interpretation are only held by the inside of the text.

This story today, in our society, and to us, in a personal manner, speaks about power, of personal frustrations, of human pettiness and of the punishments imposed by one's own conscience. As well, of what men are capable of to obtain power. Moral ethics were supplanted by an ethic of efficacy and material pursuit. Money is power's sibling and both dominate the world like they dominated Catalina's soul, who wanted to socially stand out without caring about the personal cost. But human beings, even when they seem to forget, have a conscience that dictates what is right and what is wrong. She is the worst judge because she is relentless, she torments with memories and possible punishments, she brings every instant the committed evil.

That memory that men want to escape from in spite of their conscience is a sense that deserves to be highlighted in the story.

“Catalina Vargas goes half-vanished. Her fingers grip the pouch where her sister's gold oscillates. Her sister! She must not be remembered. That was a nightmare dreamt a long time ago...”¹⁷⁷

We are particularly interested in anchoring this sense and interrogating the text. What is the memory? Life? Is forgetting dying? Does oblivion cancel out reality and bring peace to the conscience? Is life only remembering a distant dream?

In that case, this story is deeper than it seems. It hides the motif of life as a dream and death as oblivion. But it does not keep just this sense: many others are hidden between the story's pages and may be discovered as long as it is read with openness of sense and the recognition of its potency.

This idea of life as a dream dreamt a long time ago brings us closer to our second story's analysis: “The Circular Ruins”.

¹⁷⁷ MUJICA LAINEZ, Manuel, *ibid.*, p. 180.

3. Analysing “The Circular Ruins”, by Jorge Luis Borges

1. The title, index-sign of the literary work.

The word *ruins* makes us think of destruction, decadence, fall, dead life. Life that exists but without a vital heat, destroyed by time, mutilated.¹⁷⁸

The circle –as Jung points out–¹⁷⁹ indicates eternity, perfection, totality. Being inside a circle also implies limitation. For Hermeneutics¹⁸⁰ the circle is the self, the center of conscious and unconscious men which integrates: the social world, the persona, the ego, the shadow, the *anima*, the *animus* and the archetypes of the collective.

The idea of circularity is also linked to the concept of time, as the instant that repeats eternally.

The title is accompanied by an epigraph: “*And if he left off dreaming about you*”.¹⁸¹ These words introduce the concept of dream which is not present in the title.

The protagonist dreams a man and gives him life but as circularity is mentioned we can deduce that there is more than one dreamer, a chain of dreamers and dreamed ones. This way, the ending would be anticipated by the word *circular* which implies repetition and chainings.

Asides from the concept of circularity we have that of ruins. The dictionary of symbols allows us to enrich the signification of the terms. In the case of ruins we have life without vital heat, mutilated life; maybe the story wants to represent that that is the life that dreams grant.

Analysing the title beforehand serves as an aperitif to the story as it invites us to read with greater intrigue. It is interesting to compare the deductions to which one got once the story has been read.

2. Reading as the discovery of signs.

The text is filled with interrogations that serve as indexes that something is being said aside from the evident.

¹⁷⁸ CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo, *Diccionario de Símbolos*. Barcelona, Labor, 1991.

¹⁷⁹ JUNG, C.G., *Arquetipos e Inconsciente Colectivo*. Barcelona, Paidós, 1997.

¹⁸⁰ GADAMER, Hans, *El Giro Hermenéutico*. Madrid, Cátedra, 1998.

¹⁸¹ BORGES, Jorge Luis, “Las ruinas circulares” en *Obras Completas*. Buenos Aires, Emecé Editores, 1974, p.451.

There are elements spread out in the story which create indetermination, such as: grey, infinite, days, that sensation is reinforced by spatial and temporal imprecision that seems to mark a now and an always.

Adjectivisation fills the text with meaning: sacred, taciturn, infinite, contaminated, infrequent, grey, dizzy, covered in blood, circular, ancient, paludic, pale, invincible, incessant, propitious, burnt, dead, sepulchral, strangers, impossible, supernatural, magic, previous, inhabited, torn, visible, frugal, consecrated, chaotic, last, stellar, precise, certain, rising, first, vast, illusory, sallow, rebellious, viscous, vain, intolerable, grained, rudimentary, useless, old, incoherent, vertiginous, arduous, bizarre, licit, powerful, reasonable, perfect, planetary, active, hot, secret, closed, garnet, human, minuscious, fourteen, lucid, older, fortnight, pulmonary, innumerable, difficult, integrous, asleep, gnostic, red, incompetent, rough, exhausted, stranger, alive, tremulous, atrocious, vehement, earthly, instructed, torn, desert, pedagogic, right, deficient, happy, audacious, certain, impatient, inextricable, surreal, identic, absent, abnormal, thought, secret, rough, some, long, remote, light, pink, panic, concentric. The greater part of adjectivisation accentuates the atemporal, infinite and sacred character of the event, accompanied by the idea of circularity and dream.

Stopping at these elements and delving into their syntagmatic and paradigmatic signification allows us to recognise many meanings and perform a deep reading that helps to develop elocutionary thought.

The story presents a vision of the world, men and creation characteristic of Borges' literature, where everything is one with many faces. There is a dreamer, a temple and a time but in reality each of the three elements has various faces and turns around the infinite cosmic wheel. "The dice are tolled" and luck dictates which face that precise man will have in that moment, whether they will be brave or a coward, dreamer or dreamed one. The wheel continues and everything happens fourteen times, infinite times.¹⁸²

The man is presented almost as a fiction character and precisely not as Pirandello's "characters". In the story the only materiality that accompanies the man is another man's dream, who is, at the same time, dreamed by another one.

¹⁸² The author uses this number as a synonym of the infinite; we can see it, for example, in "La casa de Asterión": "*no hay un aljibe, un patio, un abrevadero, un pesebre; son catorce (son infinitos) los mares y los templos*".

The man dreams a man but needs the god to give him life. The man is limited given that he is part of a machine where he is not the first motor. His centre is thought as it makes him different to the other living beings and brings him closer to the gods, but not as much as to forget humiliation and the fear of being no more than an appearance, another man's projection.

3. The signification units inside the text.

We have:

- Uncertainty
- Uncertain location
- Indexes
- Temple
- Dream
- Fear of the others
- Purpose of dreaming
- Temple as world
- Nourishment
- Evaluative dream
- Quest
- Result of the evaluation, categorisation of men
- Election of a taciturn boy
- Progress of the dream
- Lack of dreams
- Impossibility of dreaming
- Comprehension of the purpose's complexity
- Replenishment of energy
- New try
- Dream
- Correction of the dream
- Complete dream
- The dream has no life

- Dream with the effigy
- Presentation of the god of Fire
- Term
- Delay
- Time
- Experiments
- Birth and distancing
- Memory loss
- Weariness after the achievement
- Story about his son (oarsmen)
- Remembrance
- Fear
- Indexes of fire
- Circular time
- Fire
- Discovery (closing of circle)

We make two readings. Firstly, a paradigmatic one starting from the mental associations that each unit of meaning enables and, secondly, a syntagmatic one linking the units to analyse the syntax of the whole, the denoted message and how it can be connoted through mental associations.

Within these thematic units there are some nuclear and some complementary ones.

Nuclear:

- Purpose of dreaming
- Election of a taciturn boy
- Impossibility of dreaming
- Dream
- The dream has no life
- Presentation of the god of Fire
- Birth and distancing
- Discovery

A visitor gets to some circular ruins with the purpose of dreaming. From his dreams he chooses a boy that is similar to him. In one moment he stops being able to dream, until he restarts and takes conscience of the difficulty of his purpose. He starts dreaming again but his dream has no life. He comes before the god of Fire and they make a pact, life for distancing. The dreamer separates from his dreamed one and fulfills his promise. He keeps the secret about his nature until in the end he discovers that he is only another piece of the gear dreamer – dreamed one.

The rest of the units fill the text and create a special atmosphere. They show multiple indexes and increment the ideas about the world, time and the creation of men, which are the story's axis.

4. The reading of different codes.

We analyse the codes that intersect to weave the story's sense. Each code is like one of the text's voices and together they build the textual macrostructure.

***Action and Behaviour code**

Arrival – Purpose of dreaming and dream – Election – Loss of sleep – Reunion – Incomplete dream – Encounter with the god – Distancing – Discovery.

***Semic code**

Uncertainty about the man's arrival, nobody saw him – He has the purpose of creating but his "human" limits will not allow him to – He does not achieve it until making the deal with the god – He brings forth his creation – Detachment from the creation and loneliness – The man faces his truth after the discovery of his own inconsistency.

***Hermeneutic code**

Borges used his formation in Philosophy, Kabbalah and religions as creative matter for his fantastic stories. This story brings the reader closer to their own essence as human beings and forces them to ask themselves about their origin, as it makes them take a position faced with the uncertainty of their place in the world as a mere appearance. Borges' stories are an excuse and personal way of presenting the big topics of humanity as a game where human beings are only another piece (not the first nor the last one).

*Narrative code

The text presents an atmosphere of indetermination; the indefinite pronouns (nobody, none, somebody, etc.) are presented many times and are used to create an atmosphere of uncertainty that transforms the action, from the beginning, into a generic and not personal problem.

*Topographic code

The spatial location is uncertain: South, North, infinite homeland, circular temple in ruins, other temples that look the same. It presents a place that is multiplied in the whole universe.

*Chronological code

The time is uncertain because it represents all the times. The instant is repeated infinitely throughout History, which is why we speak of a day, a month, a night, a thousand and one nights, after a while, a fortnight, centuries of distance and many time.

*Onomastic code

There are no proper names, only dreamer, dreamed one (the visitor and his students) and the god of the Fire. This is the narration of the question of men (Adam) rather than a particular man. The lack of proper names, in this case, is what Semiotics calls sign zero: the absence of name represents, also, a meaning. In this case the meaning is presenting a universal reality instead of a singular event.

*Historical code

The narration is not set in any particular context as it is the story of men. However, we can speak of a remote time (zend language, greek, leprosy).

Culturally, there is a reference to the gnostic cosmogonies, the demiurges and Adam to reinforce the narrator's intention. The signs at the ending are named to narrate the end of times.¹⁸³

*Phatic code:

The narrator gets close to the narratee through explanations within parentheses and exclamations. Both are generally used as foreshadowings that anticipate the story's central connotation and that, as indexes, awake the reader's interest.

¹⁸³ An example of that final time is the image presented in the last paragraph of the story "*dawn without birds*".

There is also a very relevant exclamation that appears to bring together the narrator, the author, the narratee, the reader and the character in only one: the ashamed man in the moment of discovering his truth says “*what an incomparable humiliation, what vertigo!*”.¹⁸⁴

*Rhetorical code

The use of adjectivisation that gives a deep meaning to the text (unanimous, sacred, taciturn, infinite, violent, contaminated, infrequent, grey, dizzy, circular, invincible, propitious, sepulchral, unknown, inhibited, torn, burnt, dreamed, etc.) and takes into consideration the accumulation of the three mentioned units of meaning (circle, dreamed and fire) through different signifiers.

Personification

“*he knew that the incessant trees had not managed to strangle, downstream, the ruins of another propitious temple*”

Metonymia

“*unknown leaves*” (the place is unknown).

Comparisons

“*the man, one day, emerged from the dream as from a viscous desert*”

“*at night he did not dream or he dreamt as every man does*”

Verbal play

“*in the dream of the man that dreamt, the dreamed one woke up*” (syncretism).

Metaphors

“*far more arduous to weave a rope of sand than to mint the faceless wind*” (images of something that is impossible).

“*he waited for the moon’s disc to be perfect*” (a propitious time for creation).

“*first (after a long drought) a distant cloud on a hill, light as a bird; then, to the South, the sky tinged with the pink hue of a leopard’s gum; then the smoke that rusted the metal of the nights; afterwards, the panicked flight of the beasts [...] in a dawn without birds*” (all are signs that herald the end of time – not by water and flood, but this time by fire and burning).

5. The levels of interpretation.

¹⁸⁴ BORGES, Jorge Luis, “*Las Ruinas Circulares*”, op. cit .

Denotation:

A man got to an uninhabited temple without being seen by anyone. A few days afterwards everyone knew where he had come from. The temple was in ruins because it had suffered the rigor of the fire.

The man had one objective: to dream a man and impose him on reality. It was hard for him to organise his dreams to make sense. He dreamed of himself in the middle of a burnt temple surrounded by students to which he gave Anatomy, Cosmography and magic lessons. He was trying to find one of them that really deserved to live. Between the students there were the passive ones and the contradictory ones. He ended up choosing the one that had the features most similar to his.

Suddenly, he stopped dreaming and any attempt to recover the image was in vain. Then, he recognised the difficulty in his task and started all over again, after regaining his strength. He performed a ritual to be purified and started dreaming again.

Slowly, he built a man that was complete but asleep. When he no longer knew what to do he prayed to the effigy in the temple. The statue, who was the god of the Fire, helped him and gave life to the dream. But the dreamer had to send his disciple, once he was ready, to another similar temple. He took as long as he could to finish his task and, when he was ready, he let him go but not before making him forget about the years of preparation.

After an uncertain time, two oarsmen arrived and they told him that, in another ruin, there was a magic man who was unaffected by fire. He was tormented when he realised they were talking about his son and that he had most likely discovered that he was a dream instead of a man.

He started interpreting the signs that anticipated a fire and the fire finally came and the ruins were destroyed by the god of the Fire, as had already happened a long time before. He considered running away but he decided against it, awaiting death as a relief to his old age. His surprise was big when he realised the fire was not touching him either, given that he was only an appearance, like his son.

Connotation:

From the title and the epigraph we can observe the idea of circularity and the necessity of being dreamed by another.

A man arrived at some ruins without being seen by anyone. Even though the man was hurt he could not feel his own flesh. The temple was in ruins because it had suffered a fire provoked by the god of the Fire, the one that does not receive men's offerings. His wounds healing and the fact that the temple was not being adored by men were indications that the visitor was not a man.

This special being has a very particular purpose, namely creating a man and giving him life, but creating him from a dream. His sole mission was to dream and so he did. Of every dream he would choose a taciturn boy and this is the same adjective that had been used to describe him; moreover, it is mentioned that both have similar features.

Men's wish to create life is eternal, in the different cosmogonies creation is seen through words, naming allows creation. In the story the man creates by dreaming, thinking, but his creation has limits because he only gets a body without life "the dream Adam".

The man needs the god's help to animate the dreamed being. This necessity marks the limits of creators (men). The man-dream receives the breath of life and, after being prepared and forgetting all that came before, he is sent to another temple to complete the circle.

Borgesian time is labyrinthic as is space, both form the mental and physical face of the same reality. In that symbolic reality the man is lost as in a labyrinth. Time is strictly infinite because it cannot conceive a beginning or an end.

For Spinoza, who highly influenced Borges, God is an infinite substance that has an infinite number of attributes, of which we have space or extension and time or thought. Also, there are an infinite number of other attributes, but we feel only those two, while the others belong to the universe. The universe is presented as eternal, reiterative and complex, and the symbol that best identifies it is the labyrinth.

Cyclic time, according to Aristotle, is the immediate consequence of the movement of the celestial bodies which pass periodically through the same points of the firmament and those movements are repeated infinitely. Everything is moving in an Eternal recurrence, where each thing is reborn according to fixed intervals. This experience arises the fleeting sensation of something that has already been lived; whoever has seen the present has seen the past and the future. Universal History is that of an only man that repeats the History of Humanity with different faces in the eternal wheel of time.

The universe is eternity, it is time, it is the continuous present that makes us forget the past and brings us closer to that future that will become present. That process is eternal but not linear. The infinity of time can only be represented by circularity. That circularity is the sense that underlies every story through: a man with different faces (dreamer – dreamed one), a space with different places (the god of Fire's temples) and a time with different instants where everything seems to have already happened.

When we work on the connoted level it is interesting to see the different stages that we encounter: first, perceptive connotation, what we intuitively discover; then, cognitive connotation, where each person's cultural knowledge is very useful to deepen the comprehension starting from cognitive knowledge about a topic and its surroundings. The last step is evaluative connotation, which enables to individualise the comprehension through a scale of personal and spiritual values.

In this story there are multiple possibilities as it speaks about creation, men and the gods. Borges tells us:

*"...I do not know which medieval Kabbalist said that God used to occupy all the space; then retired to a small portion of space. So, that space started living by itself and that space is the universe, that space is us, here. That is to say, God had been a bit distracted about us, not fully, and we are that dream that is living its own life..."*¹⁸⁵

6. Narrative discourse.

The narrator is an omniscient third person. The character is the dreamer-dreamed one man. The relation between the narrator and the represented universe is panoramic, that is it takes up the past and the present because it represents the man's story as circular, reiterative and infinite.

The story's vision is subjective, which is why the use of modality markers is abundant. Behind the story is a skilled narrator that brilliantly organises deep concepts through a fluid prose that has an abundant use of relative pronouns that present subordinate clauses to develop descriptive typology.

¹⁸⁵ STORTINI, Carlos, *El Diccionario de Borges*. Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1986, p. 64.

The narrator appears in the explanations between parentheses and anticipates the ending: “(he would have done better to destroy her)”. And in the exclamation that represents the man’s humiliation for not being the motor of his own life: “what an incomparable humiliation, what vertigo!”.

In this omniscient narrator we can observe a vision with different degrees of deepness: they know the character’s behaviours and thoughts; they know way more than the character, so much that they can present indexes that show, from the story’s beginning, that they know the secret that not even the protagonist knows.

This narrator is not present in the evoked universe, but only in the discourse through the third person singular.

7. Narrative space and time.

The space and time are circular and labyrinthic, repeated infinitely.

The location is uncertain and circular:

“he came from the South”

“his homeland was one of the infinite villages up the river in the mountain’s violent flank”

“circular enclosure [...] that circle is a temple that yesteryear fires devoured”

“another temple’s the ruins, also of burnt and dead gods”

“the uninhabited and torn temple suited him as it represented a minimum of visible world”

“circular amphitheatre”

“in that circular temple and in other similar ones”

“he would send him to the other torn temple whose pyramids persist downstream for some voice to glorify him in that deserted building”

“he sent him to the other temple whose remains lay white downstream, many leagues away from the inextricable jungle and marshes”

“his son executed identic rituals in other circular ruins”

“a North temple”

All the quotes point towards the same, nothing is precise. There is a disjunction between the South, where the dreamer is at the beginning and end, and the North, where the dreamed one was sent; but the intention is to accentuate the circularity rather than differentiating the spaces. Everything is condensed in the quote: *“because there was a repetition of what had happened centuries ago. The ruins of the god of the Fire’s sanctuary were destroyed by the fire [...] concentric fire”*.

The time is also undetermined and mentioned this way:

“the unanimous night”, “a few days after”, “midnight”, “centuries away”, “nine or ten nights”, “one afternoon”, “many time”, “one day”, “one month”, “a fortnight”, “before a year”, “night after night”, “one afternoon”, “twilight”, “term of two years”, “one time”, “the next day”, “that night”, “twilight of the afternoon and dawn”, “after some time (years or lustres”, “a thousand and one nights”, “there was a repetition of what had happened centuries ago”, “dawn without birds”.

The unanimous night is the night of all the times, one and every night. All the subsequent pronouns are indefinite to create a time beyond chronological time, a time without finitude (a fortnight).

He first dreams at night, then also in the afternoons to stay close to his dream. This way, the dreamer’s life becomes an endless night where the only mission is to dream.

One night his son was ready and he sent him to another temple. In that moment there is a disjunction marked by the change of the moment of time that the story refers to.

“twilight of the afternoon and dawn”, “at night he did not dream or he dreamt as every man does”, “his life’s purpose was complete”.

Some time goes by, which can be counted in years or lustres; a couple of rowers wake him up to speak to him about a magical man, who was his son. And then there is the repetition of what had happened centuries ago and the sanctuary burns in a dawn without birds (a singular morning).

Even if the time is not precise, there is a remote past represented through signs, as the end language and leprosy.

8. Characters as active forces.

The main character is the newcomer – dreamer that wishes to dream a man and impose him to reality. He is motivated by his pride and his necessity to justify his existence. The receivers are the dreamer, his son and the circularity. The god of the Fire acts as a helper and an opponent. This god seems to have been created to give life to the man and show him his limitations. He helps him to give life to the dream, as he had previously helped another one to give life to the dream that allowed the newcomer's existence; although at the same time it shows the limits of the possibilities of other men, who are also dreams.

SUBJECT	OBJECT
Newcomer – Dreamer	Dreaming a man
SENDER	RECEIVER
Justifying his existence and his pride	The dreamer, his son and circularity
HELPERS	OPPONENTS
God of the Fire	God of the Fire

That newcomer – dreamer got to the temple without being seen by anyone. He was a taciturn and grey man that had an invincible and supernatural purpose: to dream a man. Only that seemed to justify his existence, sleeping and dreaming.

He dreams of many students of which he chooses one that is taciturn, sallow and rebellious, with features similar to that of the dreamer. His objective was the hardest that a man can perform and, without the help of magic or a god, impossible. The difficulty was giving life to the dream and it is the god of the Fire who helps him and makes a pact with him: nobody would know that the creature was a dream, only the god and the dreamer. Once prepared, the dreamed one had to go to another temple to continue the circle of creation after forgetting what had happened. The dreamer “*had an unsettling feeling that all of that had already happened*”.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 454.

He had created a son that only existed for him; he imagined him performing identical rituals, he had fulfilled his life's purpose. When he heard that the temple where his son was had burnt down he felt an ambiguous sensation similar to the one that seizes him by the end, when he recognises that the fire cannot hurt him either due to the fact that he is only the appearance of another dreamer:

*"the fire was the only creature that knew that his son was a ghost. That memory, calming at first, ended up tormenting him"*¹⁸⁷

"with relief, with humiliation, with fear, he understood that he was also an appearance, that another one was dreaming him".¹⁸⁸

It is interesting to analyse that double feeling of tranquility and torment that the man gets when he realises that both him and his son are another man's dream. Tranquility because of the immortality so deeply desired by the man, for knowing that death would not reach him; and fear for the lack of a life of his own, for the humiliation of not being a man and being merely a projection, a dream that, for existing, needs of somebody else's will to create, engender and dream. The man's existence is seen through thought, through another man's dream, and this, without doubt, takes away his completeness and covers him with insecurity, uncertainty and unease.

9. Meaning nuances.

There are three recurring ideas in the story: dream, circle and fire. The idea of dream is the most constant one, it is not present in the title but it is in the epigraph.

The word dream and other, semantically similar, are used in the text forty times: slept – dream – dream – to dream – dream him – sleep and dream – dreams – dreamt – dream – dream – dreamer – dream – dreamed one – dream – vigil – dreams – to dream – dreams – slept – dreamt – dreamt – dreamt – dreamt – dreamt asleep – dream – dreamt – dreamt – dreamed one – dreamer – dream – dreamt – dreamed one – dream – dreamt – dreamt – dream – dreaming him.

¹⁸⁷ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 454.

¹⁸⁸ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 455.

It is not casual that the author used this meaning forty times in four pages. The text continually says that everything is dreaming and that dreams are the only reality known by men. The accumulation of the lexical family of the noun “dream” creates a special atmosphere. There is even verbal play that points to the same thing: “*in the dream of the man that dreamt, the dreamed one woke up*”. The awakening appears in the text as a metaphor of birth.

Circularity is the other recurring idea already present in the title and metaphorically in the epigraph. Afterwards, the idea is repeated many times: circular – circle – circular – circular – circulars – concentric.

This concept is frequently linked to the fire, which is the third important idea: Fire – cinder – fires – fires – burnt – burned – Fire – Fire – fire – fire – god (of the Fire) – fire – fire – fire – concentric fire – fire.

The alchemists keep the sense given to the fire by Heraclitus, namely an agent of transformation, everything comes from fire and goes back to it. It is associated with fecundity and the possibility of reproducing in successive lives as a symbol of transformation and regeneration. To feed, the fire consumes other lives. It is ultraliving since it implies the good of vital heat and the evil of destruction (by fires). Going through fire means transcending the human condition, destroying temporal chronology.

Fire is the principle of life in the story and life is circular and obtained through the dream. Men have no life of themselves nor can engender complete lives without a god’s intervention, who contains in themselves the essence of good and evil, of creation and destruction.

That multiple god creates a simulacrum of a man who dreams another simulated man and that projection is infinite, although all men are one with different faces, one that is dreamer and dreamed one. Life appears as repetition rather than creation, in the circle of life everything repeats, the man, the time and the place:

*“he was a taciturn, sallow and sometimes rebellious boy, with sharp features that repeated those of his dreamer”*¹⁸⁹

*“so unskilled and rough and elemental like that Adam of dust was the Adam of dream that the magician’s nights had fabricated”*¹⁹⁰

*“he would animate the dreamed ghost”*¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 452.

¹⁹⁰ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 453.

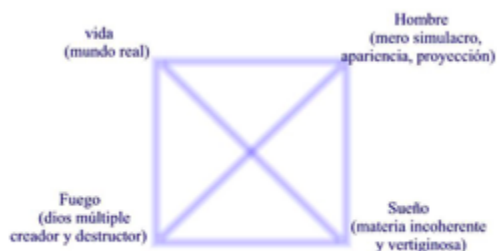
¹⁹¹ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 453.

A circle that represents men's life, an only man who is no more than a spectral and fabricated appearance that is repeated infinite times:

*"because there was a repetition of what had happened many centuries ago"*¹⁹²

*"he had the unsettling impression that all of that had already happened"*¹⁹³

The central meaning comes from these nuances and can be represented in the semiotic square.



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Life is contradictory to the dream because it is the real world in face of the incoherent matter of appearances. In the other extreme, the contradictory line is between the man as a mere simulation and the god of the Fire as a creator and destroyer.

Life and the man are contraries as are the fire and the dream, given that they are made from opposite matter but can still coexist.

Life and fire, the man and the dream implicate each other as life gives and takes from the god and it is the man who dreams.

In this case it would be more interesting to speak of a semiotic circle rather than a square, as the four elements orbit continuously around a wheel where the contradictories never meet.

The nuances of meaning that were pointed out and exemplified in the semiotic square are repeated internally in this story and Jorge Luis Borges' complete work. But, also, they are timeless literary themes. They are recurring topics in literature and Philosophy from Aristotle and the notion of a cyclic duration of time, where each peripeteia is destined to be repeated infinitely and mandatorily. For him, time is cyclic, it is the immediate consequence of celestial

¹⁹² BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 455.

¹⁹³ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *ibid.*, p. 454.

¹⁹⁴ Life (real world) – Man (mere simulation, appearance, projection) – Fire (multiple god, creator and destroyer) – Dream (incoherent and vertiginous matter).

bodies moving and passing through the same firmament points periodically and also repeating each time the celestial configuration becomes identical to itself.

With the following philosophers the duration of the repetition augmented until the infinite and, as a consequence, the linear conception of time was lost.

Aristotle's conception is linked to that of the Eternal recurrence where each thing is reborn according to fixed intervals, as the celestial circuit requires.

This theme is developed especially in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*.¹⁹⁵

10. *Significance.*

The quest for *significance* in this story takes us to a theme as old as the origin of creation and as deep as men's eternal fear of being no more than a simulation dreamed by someone else. Dream is presented as life's oxygen; to stop dreaming is to die.

It is important to remember that the text does not have an only truth: it is presented to the reader like an impressionist painting to take distance from so as to really be able to recognise the forms. The story reflects a sum of brush strokes that separately present an anecdote but together form a meaning. It is impossible for the sense to be an exclusive one for all the readers and in different contexts. Recognising that plurality is fundamental as long as the "interpretation limits" imposed by the text itself are taken into consideration; senses are not invented, they are discovered. Precisely in the hidden borders is the reader's authentic pleasure.

The story talks about a man's great purpose, his mission of giving life, a mission that seems to surpass its limits. The man creates through his thoughts, his dreams; he creates another man who thinks, he creates by educating, as a teacher to his disciples, and distinguishes those who, even contradicting him, would stake their reasons. He creates a man who knows how to love the gods and plant flags on new summits, that is to say the connection between earth and sky: dominate the earth but defend the sky.

The man is limited to creating only with a god's help, who imposes obedience in exchange for creating another man who will be able to wake up, be born and exist. A man who has been engendered by someone else and who nurtured from his soul.

¹⁹⁵ In the chapter "Snow" of *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann performs a very interesting study of the intensity of chronological time and internal time. (Obras Completas. Barcelona, Janés Editor, 1951)

But at some point that man creator of dreams discovers that he is also someone else's dream and so the story repeats until the end of times; but it will only be the recommencing of an eternal being in the world as mere appearances.

Let us remember that for Borges eternity in that world is the worst punishment possible, as it stops men from reaching the absolution of their works and relief and forces them to an eternal recommencing in a world where everything seems to be predetermined and hostile.¹⁹⁶

A text's *significance* surges from the analysis of its elements. This method shows by each one of its components how they all weave a deep internal sense that presents the why of the story: showing through fantastic literature the limits of human nature and the eternal recommencing of time.

We find the creative space that the following signifier opens to be very rich:

*"sometimes he had the unsettling impression that all of that had already happened"*¹⁹⁷

This idea is related to the Eternal recurrence and the ever-existing, yet with different faces, as if we were the same as time and space but located in a turning wheel without knowing where it will stop, because it is guided by a superior being. Everything happens without us recalling what came before, we do not die, we simply forget.

Why is death related so many times with sleep and oblivion? If we remember Homer in the Iliad it is interesting to see that Hypnos and Thanatos are twin brothers. The former is the personification of sleep while the latter is the winged male spirit of death. It is important to remember that the legend says that Hypnos, in love with Endymion, would have granted his lover the gift of sleeping with his eyes open in order to be able to look at his lovers, in some way to live, to participate in life while he seemed to be asleep. Dreaming and living at the same time, participating in life as if it were a dream that never ends because it always recommences. Waking up from the dream would be like dying, although it is hard for this to happen because they are both children of the night which protects them and guides them to recommence.¹⁹⁸

The place of time in the relation between sleep and death is a cyclic relation, the recommencing of a ritual.

¹⁹⁶ SARTORI, Carlos, *El Diccionario de Borges*, op.cit.

¹⁹⁷ BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Las Ruinas Circulares*, op.cit., p. 454.

¹⁹⁸ HOMERO, La Ilíada en *Obras Completas*. Buenos Aires, Joaquín Gil Editores, 1946.

Chronos, son of Uranus (the firmament) and Gaia (the earth), helps his mother avenge his father, gets rid of his sibling and takes over the universe. With his sister Rhea they conceive Zeus, who gets to rid himself from his claws and become the sovereign of the universe.

Chronos is always represented as a withered old man who has a sickle as a symbol that time destroys it all, and wings and an hourglass to indicate the fugacity of time. He devours his children to represent how time swallows days, months and centuries as it produces them; it is also presented as a double force, creative and destructive, like the story's god of the Fire. It reminds us of Hestia, the goddess of Fire, who was the daughter of Chronos and Cybele.¹⁹⁹

Time and the quest to seize it is another one of the most popular literary themes. The story that follows, "The Devil's Drool" by Julio Cortázar, analyses the thematic of the misconnection between men's desire to capture time and the reality that prevents it, even with the help of fiction.

4. Analysing "The Devil's Drool", by Julio Cortázar

1. The title, index-sign of the literary work.

The first thing that we think of when we speak of devil's drool is to be able to avoid getting stuck.²⁰⁰ They are like spider webs but stickier. Hence, if one does not see them and gets caught, it is complicated to set free. Moreover, they are white and light and carried by the wind until they catch or are caught by something.

When reading the story we can observe that the main action is to catch. Michel takes a picture because he wants to catch or seize that real moment in an image; the blonde lady hopes to catch the boy for the man in the grey hat; and, finally, the woman catches Michel in the picture.

The devil's drool in the text is also called *threads of the Virgin* because it works as a primordial thread that contains good and evil. The boy's action of escaping thanks to the distraction produced by the picture saves him but is fatal to the photographer as he will have to pay with his own life, with his own freedom, by getting caught in the fiction of a photograph with the devil's drools, with the woman's hands.

¹⁹⁹ CIRLOT, *Diccionario de Mitología*, op. cit.

²⁰⁰ *Babas del diablo* in Spanish (present in the original title) refers idiomatically to a thin spider thread.

The second time that the boy is saved he seems to learn to fly over the island with the lightness of the threads of the Virgin, returning to paradise. Meanwhile, Michel gets caught in the devil's drools like a camera catches a live moment; he is transformed into a rigid image by the paralysis of time, the loss of reality and the petrification of a memory.

2. Reading as the discovery of signs.

If we walk the text in slow motion we will come across a suggestive title and an aperitif that searches to awaken the interest for knowing a story, which we know will be bizarre and different from the beginning.

First the narrator presents a metalanguage of the act of narrating, he tells us that he is dead but also alive and he is the one who has to narrate the strange event. He locates himself in the time and place where the events took place and, with multiple doubts about the act of narrating, the story begins. The key of the story seems to be the topic of photography and the photographer's mission.

The narrator puts everything in doubt and creates a rich atmosphere for fantastic literature. From the beginning everything is confusing, while Michel – narrator narrates the episode of the boy and the blonde lady, between brackets he himself narrates how the clouds pass.

It is important to delve into the quotes referring to the art of photography and that of looking. Michel does not speak of seeing, but rather looking as “undressing things of so many foreign clothes”. That function of stripping away appearances, which is essential to Semiotics, seems to be fundamental in the story. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish the parallels between literature and photography that the narrator establishes as different ways of representing reality.

Over the ending, fiction and reality invert and it is the picture who catches the photographer. Then he, who wanted to catch life in a picture, is caught by it and dies in life but lives in the fiction of a static eternal time.

By delving into the story we can note other relevant themes to analyse: the remembrance of the past, the stillness of static things, the necessity of narrating the strange events, questioning daily things which we perform automatically, each person's truth and the authentic truth, present

time and its lie, the relation between images and bodies or referents, the biography of a common boy who sexually initiates by forcefully being corrupted, literature as a factory of exceptional events, men's impossibility of changing the imposed order, the unmeasurable time of nothingness and of being in the world without being. All of these topics enrich the anecdote and the central theme with elements that are interesting because they make the man be in the world. A reading which takes into consideration these pauses will be way more fruitful and personal.

3. The units of meaning inside the text.

The text has three parts which, at the same time, present different units of meaning.

These parts are:

- 1) Presentation of the narrator and his function.
- 2) Story and photography.
- 3) Alteration between life and the picture.

In the first part we can find the following units:

- Doubts about the ways of narrating.
- Limits of language.
- Limits of machines.
- Decision of him being who narrates.
- Alive or dead?
- Doubts about where to start narrating.
- Necessity of telling.
- Spatial and temporal location.
- His presentation as a photographer.
- Doubts about narrating.

In the second part we can find the following units:

- Michel's complete presentation.
- Location in Paris and characteristic places in the city.
- Memory of Apollinaire's poems.

- Photographing to combat nothingness.
- The necessity to teach kids how to take pictures.
- Difference between the artificial picture and the picture that catches the simple and essential.
- Ways of seeing the world: that of the picture and that of men.
- Analysis of the word *now*.
- Park where the action happens.
- Couple and pigeons.
- Observation that it is not a couple.
- Pause to observe the boy.
- The boy seems to be scared and nervous.
- The blonde woman.
- Supposed discovery of what is going on.
- Analyses of what looking is.
- Memory of the boy's image and the woman's body.
- Description of the woman's body.
- The quest for understanding instead of describing.
- Description of the boy.
- Boy's desires (that he imagines).
- Boy's lack of money and his desire to discover the city's mysteries (which he imagines).
- Comparison between the boy and any other boy his age.
- Relationship between the boy and the woman.
- Woman's insistence.
- Desire.
- Michel's waiting to take the picture.
- Man in the grey hat static in his car.
- Possible new observer.
- Woman's games and boy's fears.
- Picture (expression that summarises).
- Possible outcome and boy's regret.
- Michel's literary fantasies, searching for exceptions.

- Discovery of the woman and the boy that they were photographed.
- The woman gets mad and argues with Michel.
- The boy runs away.
- Comparison of the boy with the threads of the Virgin or the devil's drool.
- The woman offends Michel.
- Man in the grey hat's intervention.
- Description of this man as a clown.
- Michel decides not to give them the picture.
- Michel leaves and they remain staring.

In the third part we have:

- Michel's room.
- Picture development.
- Amplification of the woman and the boy's picture.
- Description of the image.
- Michel's translation job.
- Analysis of the vision of the picture's objective.
- Interruption of the translation job in order to look at the picture.
- Memory of what had happened.
- Happiness for having helped the man.
- Conjectures about the boy's current state.
- Michel does a good deed.
- Foreshadowing: fatal act (amplification of the picture and hanging it in the wall).
- The picture's tree trembles.
- There is nothing left of Michel, the chair and the typewriter fall.
- The boy seems to give into the woman's proposal.
- The man in the grey hat, who was left out of the picture, comes closer.
- Michel's comprehension of what had to happen.
- Acknowledgment of the man's role as master.
- Impossibility to act.
- Inversion of the order, they are alive and he is the prisoner.

- Apparent acceptance of the boy.
- Michel's scream.
- Woman and man's surprise.
- Passage of a great bird, the boy escapes again.
- The woman's figure was starting to fade and the man was left.
- Michel's cry.
- Passage of the clouds, only sky and clouds are left in the picture's amplification.
- Rain as reversed crying.
- Pigeons and birds.

The story reminds us of *Hopscotch*, as it presents a story and a literary theory. On the one hand, it can be read as a fantastic story that tells the story of a photographer who wishes to catch reality through pictures and ends up caught in one of them. However, on the other hand, we can analyse the scarcity of words at the time of narrating and the quest of literature and photography as metalanguages to perpetuate reality, stripping away the "false attires" and revealing it in its true sense.

According to the reading that one selects, the units of meaning will change.

In any case, the three mentioned parts are the story's frame.

4. The reading of different codes.

We analyse the different codes to show how all of them point, with more or less intensity, to the reinforcement of the same sense through different elements which have the same objective.

*Action code.

Narrating – Walking – Choosing – Photographing – Saving – Discussing – Revealing – Observing – Translating – Observing – Being caught – Screaming – Helping – Crying – Staying prisoner in another time.

*Semic code.

Looking, narrating and photographing things that have been "stripped" in order to translate reality – Saving oneself from a real event by fiction – Getting caught in the fiction when trying to catch it – Catching and being caught.

*Hermeneutic code.

The symbols help to decipher the *significance*. In this story we find: the typewriter, the photographic machine, the clouds and the birds.

The objects²⁰¹ represent extensions of men that help in the mission of creating art, but only if they are used by men; by themselves they have no mobility, they remain still, lifeless. The narrator's vision is Humanistic in face of contemporary Scientism.

The clouds²⁰² represent thoughts and that is why they have different manifestations: they are grey, they move, they are covered by a black cloud, there are frayed, foamy clouds, with sharp or silver borders, clouds that run and white clouds. They reflect the different states of thought in an artist's creative activity. The clouds symbolise the world between the formal and the informal, always changing, they hide the identity of the superior truth. They bring creative fertility, fecundity of thought.

The birds appear as pigeons, sparrows and a great bird. They symbolise²⁰³ spirituality, the soul, the giant bird is the symbol of creation. The pigeon is also a symbol of the soul (after death). To summarise, the clouds and the birds represent the creative spiritual truth like the wind²⁰⁴ that is also constant in the story and indicates the creative and fecund breath.

*Narrative code.

The first paragraph is impersonal and refers to the way of narrating. It is confusing because it mixes grammatical persons to paint an incoherent atmosphere where we can expect the intromission of fantasy, “...If you could say: me saw the moon go up, or: to us me hurts the back of the eyes, and overall: you the blonde woman were the clouds that keep running in front of my your her our your their faces...”²⁰⁵

*Topographic code.

Typical locations in Paris are presented: the Seine, the *Conciergerie*, the *Sainte-Chapelle*, *Saint Louis* island, the *Quai d'Anjou*, the *Quai de Bourbon*.

We also find the park where the action happens and Michel's apartment located in number eleven of the *Rue Monsieur-le Prince*, particularly his room where he is in the beginning

²⁰¹ ECO, Umberto, *Kant y el Ornitorrinco*. Barcelona, Lumen, 1999.

²⁰² CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo, *Diccionario de Símbolos*, op.cit.

²⁰³ CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo, *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo, *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ CORTÁZAR, “Las babas del diablo”, en *El perseguidor y otros cuentos*. Buenos Aires, Centro Editor de América Latina, 1967, p.55.

and ending of the story. In this place is where the metalepsis²⁰⁶ between fiction and reality happens.

*Chronological code.

The narrator starts narrating the 7th of December, just one month before the 7th of November. This is the date in which he takes the picture. He develops the pictures many days afterwards: “...*what follows happened here, almost right now...*”,²⁰⁷ that is to say that it was the 7th of December. Nevertheless, later he says that at least two days went by until he was caught by the picture. Time since he was caught became impossible to count, an eternal present.

*Onomastic code.

Only one name, that of Roberto Michel. His name is ambiguous as is his double nationality and his double profession, he evokes the French and the Spanish.

The rest of the characters are generic, the boy, the blonde lady and the man in the grey hat only serve as an excuse to tell a story that concerns many in the same circumstances.

*Historical code.

There is a Remington typewriter named and a Contax 1.1.2. photographic machine.

It presents touristic locations in Paris such as the Seine, the *Conciergerie*, the *Sainte-Chapelle*, etc.

He names the French author Apollinaire and the Spanish writer José Norberto Allende, professor in the University of Santiago.

When the narrator compares the boy's escape with the devil's drool or the threads of the Virgin, he uses a popular knowledge image for the comparison.

*Phatic code.

Every time the first person in plural is used it includes the narratee in the act of narration, which is why it says:

“set on telling it, which is what we are doing now”

“one of all of us has to write”

*“let us tell it slowly”*²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Metalepsis, concept used by Alessandria in *Imagen, Metaimagen e Hiperimagen*, indicates a character's jump between fiction and reality.

²⁰⁷ CORTÁZAR, Julio, “Las babas del diablo”, op. cit., p.63.

²⁰⁸ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.55.

Also, all of the aperitive formulas that aim to arouse the reader's appetite work as a link that does not enable the communication between the sender and the receptor to be broken (narrator – narratee):

"maybe narrating is like a response, at least for someone to read it"

"when something weird happens [...] it is necessary to tell what has happened".²⁰⁹

*Rhetoric code.

Use of rhetorical devices. Let us remember that they participate not only in the form, as they are also cognitive elements.²¹⁰

Descriptions are used to draw the boy and the man in the grey hat, although not for the blonde woman as her image is not of interest, but rather what she represents. The use of parentheticals is to clear some details to the narratee, to anticipate events and to inform them of the narrator's spiritual state, of his thoughts.

Metaphor:

"you the blonde woman were the clouds" (the blonde woman represents creative fertility).

"structure of drool and perfume" (to catch).

Antithesis:

"I am dead and alive"

"I have started by this ending, the one behind, the one in the beginning"

"but the threads of the Virgin were also called devil's drool"

Comparisons:

"let narrating be like a response"

"the photographer always operates as a permutation of their personal way of seeing the world"

"getting lost like a thread of the Virgin"

"a memory petrified like all pictures"

"you can see rain over the image like reversed crying"

²⁰⁹ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.56.

²¹⁰ We refer to the study of the metaphor (form – background union) performed by Eco and Ricoeur. We have already analysed it in chapter II.

5. The levels of interpretation.

Denotation:

A man decides to narrate a story in his typewriter and doubts about how to do it. He appears to be dead and wants to tell this event because he feels like the strange things should be known.

His story is located one month earlier, in Paris. He is a photographer and his name is Roberto Michel and he is French-Chilean, aside from working as a translator. While he narrates what happened, he sees clouds and birds pass by.

That Sunday, November 7th, he had walked through the quays of the Seine and taken pictures of la *Conciergerie* and the *Sainte-Chapelle*. While he was waiting for the good light he would get at eleven o'clock to take better pictures, he walked to *Saint Louis* island and followed the *Quai de Bourbon* until he got to the island's tip, where he could see a park and a couple. He suddenly realised that it was not a couple, as the young boy was only fourteen or fifteen years old and the woman who was with him was older. The boy seemed to be scared and the woman was being very insistent. Michel started to conjecture that the woman trying to convince him to have sexual relations for money, and then discovered the figure of a man in a grey hat sitting in his car and thought that the scene was even more disgusting.

Michel was thinking of all these possibilities when he decided to take a picture to catch that moment forever. As soon as the woman realised she got mad and demanded the film roll. While she and Michel discussed, the boy ran away until getting lost, like the devil's drool.

Michel decided not to hand her the roll and walked away. He got to his apartment and developed the picture and amplified it until transforming it into a poster, almost like a cinema screen, and hung it in one of his bedroom walls. While translating one of José Alberto Allende's works to the French language, he would look at the image and get happy about having helped the boy.

Suddenly, the woman's hand caught Michel and his work remained unfinished forever, whilst the chair and the typewriter fell to the floor. The boy fell for the woman's compliments this time, as the man in the grey hat observed; the event would be now fulfilled and Michel could not stop it, given that the order had been inverted. They were free while he was a prisoner in the

picture. Then Michel screamed, the woman and the man were surprised and in that moment a great bird flew by and the boy was able to get away one more time.

They disappeared from the image as lumps being erased while Michel closed his eyes and cried. Only the clear sky remained in the image and some clouds passing by. It rained, it got dark, it cleared, the sun came up, and the pigeons and sparrows would get close; only that remained of the picture that had caught Michel forever.

Connotation

From its title the story indicates the act of catching, catching words by narrating, catching life in a picture and ending up being caught by it.

The theme of photography is central, it is presented as a different way of looking, of seeing beyond. Photographers change their particular way of seeing the world, the innocent way for a deeper and more insidious manner that the machine proposes. The machine strips things away from appearances, leaves the essences, gives things its truth back, and catches expressions that condense life, essential fractions.

Because of that, in the story the notion of time is very important; the present (the now) seems to be non-existent as it is inundated by the future, anticipating in the main character's thoughts.

The picture is presented, at one moment, as a possibility to catch life. But, as it petrifies time, it destroys life. When the picture comes to life and acquires movement, the order is reversed and it is the images going towards the future instead of Michel, caught in the static present, like the picture was before.

In the story there is metalanguage, metanarrative and meta-image; the meta function presupposes a notion of semiotic potency. There is metalanguage when one language speaks of another, metanarrative when there is a narrative within another narrative, and meta-image when one image speaks of another. The image is separated from reality by the frame, when jumping from one world to another there is metalepsis. Between meta-image and image there is a possibility of jumping the frame, of going from the meta-image to the image or viceversa, but this is impossible between the world of the image and reality and is only achieved through

metalepsis. One clear literary example is another story by Cortázar, “The Continuity of the Parks”, where a reader is chased by the killer of the novel he is reading.

This game manifests the importance of the limit between two worlds: the one in which the story is told (world of speech) and the one being told (world of the story). Metalepsis in images, like in this story, shows the desire of being inside the image or of the image coming into my real world; the frame is the principle of reality that demarks the limit between both worlds.

These images are iconic because they represent reality. When the meta-image – image relation shows no similarities, this meaning detour is meaningful to reach the sense. In the case of photography, the relation between sign and object is not only of similarity, as there is also spatial and temporal contiguity between the image and the referent. In the story, temporal contiguity is ruined because the time was moving in the picture, things had been inverted, the characters of the picture were going towards a future as if they were alive and Michel was stuck in the other time of the picture.

Michel gets caught in an unmeasurable time, with only clouds and pure sky in the picture’s amplification. Maybe the protagonist – narrator has gotten stuck by nothingness and nothingness is an eternal state of thinking about the past but without the possibility of a future, as there is no life, idea that causes Michel and the clouds to cry.

The clouds in this story are also very meaningful: “...*thought, as a semiotic process, demands a support structure, but its apparent ‘immateriality’ transforms that support into something similar to a cloud...*”.²¹¹ The shape of the clouds, widely used in comics to symbolise the act of thinking, rather than being the product of an arbitrary convention, ironically translates an experience, which is that thought is an internal production of the signs, whose matter is as evanescent as that of the clouds.

This story connotes a profound meaning, way richer than the fantastic event that it narrates. The story speaks of time and men’s necessity to catch it, consequently falling in their own trap.

It reflects the necessity of knowing how to look and strip things away from appearances in order to reach their essences. It is a deeply semiotic story as it invites readers to discover what is hidden and in order to do so it uses the meta-function, proper to Semiotics, which enables signs to speak about themselves.

²¹¹ CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo, *Diccionario de Símbolos*, op. cit.

6. Narrative discourse.

The narrator is the first person and he is the story's protagonist. Sometimes he uses the first person plural or the third person singular. The relation between narrator and the represented universe reflects a scenic vision. Even though the narrator performs a retelling of his life, he is only installed in a moment, namely the day in which he took the picture of the woman and the boy, and the fatal consequences of this event. He narrates it from the beginning until the end, which seems to be his present. He does not tell us anything about his life or that of the characters in the picture unrelated to that specific event. Of the boy he gives us a panoramic but imaginary vision.

The point of view is subjective, as the person who narrates is the same as the one who lives the events, so we only know the story through his eyes. This narrator is present in the level of the evoked universe as a character and present in the discursive level as narrator. When narrating he describes behaviours that he observes in the blonde woman, the man in the grey hat and the boy. He also transcribes thoughts, mainly feelings that he supposes that the boy feels or will feel; this way, he communicates processes that the character itself ignores as they are unconscious or unknown.

The narrator in the first part of the discourse reflects on the act of narration and the limitations imposed by language's norms. He also questions himself about the purpose of narrating and the necessity about retelling bizarre events. In that moment, the author's presence is felt in the narrator, given the fact that showing life's strangeness and transforming it into fantastic stories is characteristic of Cortázar, as is his fondness for Paris and its iconic locations.

Each time he uses the first person plural he seems to insinuate the narratee's inclusion in the action. There is a very meaningful quote: *"...I know that the hardest thing will be to find the way to tell it, and I am not afraid of repeating myself. It will be hard because nobody knows exactly who is really narrating, if it is me or that which has happened, or that which I am seeing (cloud, and sometimes a pigeon) or if I am simply telling a truth that is only my truth, and then it is only the truth for my stomach, for that desire to run away and end in some sort of way with this, whatever it is..."*²¹² The narrator's matter is put into doubt, whether it is Michel, the event

²¹² CORTÁZAR, Julio, *Las Babas del Diablo*, op. cit., p.56.

that occurred or the clouds; and also the veracity of what is being told, as it could only be the narrator's truth. He feels like telling the story may give him the answer that he did not find in the facts.

At the beginning he uses the third person plural to speak of himself, he takes distance from the story and along it mixes in the first person plural.

All the story alternates the first person singular, the third person singular and the first person plural to speak of Michel, and the third person to speak of the other characters. The use of the first person plural is to include the narratee. The third person singular is used sometimes to separate the man Roberto Michel from the photographer. In the story there is an abundance of metalanguage in relation to the action of narrating in the discourse, he asks himself about the who, the what, the how and the why behind the act of narrating and seems to answer with the idea that narrating is understanding.

"he did not describe anything, but rather tried to understand"

"maybe narrating is like an answer, at least for someone who is reading it".²¹³

The narrator is a participant observer who reflects the new paradigm of Science, where the observer not only observes but also modifies reality.

7. Narrative space and time.

The story is circular, in the beginning and ending the narrator – protagonist remains in the same situation. All the story that Michel tells is a recount to justify why he is in that determined place.

The action is located in Paris, the narrator names representative places from the city such as the Seine, *Saint-Louis* island, the *Quai d'Anjou*. The two main places are the park where the event that is caught in the picture happens and Michel's apartment, located at 11 *Rue Monsieur-le Prince*.

When the protagonist wants to start narrating and for that purpose tries to organise the story he says: *"let us go down the stairs of this house until Sunday the seventh of November, just*

²¹³ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.56.

one month ago".²¹⁴ Which is the house? Maybe time? This image, aside from incorporating an abstract concept of time, situates us chronologically.

The time in the park slits, the couple seems to have been stuck suspended while Michel's thought runs, anticipating possible situations. After taking the picture he goes back to his apartment and says: "*what follows happened here, almost right now in a room on a fifth floor*".²¹⁵ This implies that the narrator is in the apartment, but the word "now" is very special, as the narrator himself says, it is "a stupid lie".

He continues to explain that he let many days go by before revealing the pictures taken on Sunday, and then amplifies and hangs it in his bedroom's wall. When remembering the scene, it is possible to see that at least two pass until the picture catches Michel. The order is inverted, the picture comes to life, starts moving, walks towards the future and the protagonist becomes a prisoner of another time, of his room and of the camera's lens which is rigid and does not allow him to intervene. In an instant the possible outcome appears to consummate: the boy's corruption, Michel's scream, a great bird flying by and the boy escaping.

There is a disjunction between the real space and the fictional one of the picture, and between the real time and the picture's petrified time. However, both space and time start mixing up, as the woman comes out of the picture to catch Michel, who simultaneously goes inside the picture and is trapped by the lens, hence time eternalises for him.

Spatial and temporal disjunctions are manifested through elements that act as engagements and disengagements. At the beginning, the narrator is in a place with clouds and has a Remington typewriter over a table, plus he sees pigeons and sparrows pass by. These elements act as engagements that allow us to recognise the place in the beginning and at the ending as the same place.

The amplified picture in Michel's room is first a disengagement because it separates fiction from reality, although it ends up becoming an engagement that enables metalepsis, by breaking the frame. The same action is performed by the lens.

²¹⁴ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.56.

²¹⁵ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.63.

8. Characters as active forces.

The main character is narrator Robert Michel, who describes himself as Franco-Chilean, translator and photographer. Both translation and photography look to substitute some signs for others. Translating is not simply replacing one language's words for another but discovering the author's intimate expression and bringing it closer to the new readers, reflecting the work's spirit, its sense. This job does not seem so different from his taste for photography. Michel seems to be a man who knows how to see beyond the evident and tries to demonstrate it by catching senses through translations and photographs.

The actantial model presents Michel like a subject who tries to reach an object which is taking the picture, motivated by wanting to catch the essential with his camera. This action helps the boy and compromises him, as he ends up being the caught one. The camera is a helper and the woman and the man, opponents.

SUBJECT (Michel, narrator – protagonist)

OBJECT (taking the picture)

SENDER (catching the essential and eternalising it)

RECEIVER (the boy and Michel)

HELPERS (the camera and the typewriter)

OPPONENTS (the woman and the man)

The other important character is the amplified picture that wants to catch Michel moved by revenge and the desire to be liberated. The receivers are the characters in the picture and Michel. The blonde woman (her hand) is the helper and the photographer's scream is the opponent, which fails at saving Michel but ends up saving the boy.

SUBJECT (amplified picture, poster)

OBJECT (catching Michel)

SENDER (revenge and desire of freedom)

RECEIVER (Michel y the picture's characters)

HELPERS (the blonde woman, her hand)

OPPONENTS (the scream)

The picture's characters are excuses to show a moment in life, different and deserving of perpetuation, precisely for its strangeness. Within those characters the blonde woman, who seems to be the protagonist's antagonist, stands out. That woman, who at the beginning and ending of the story vanishes, transforming into clouds, is the actantial model's subject in the anecdote, where a woman wants to convince a boy to prostitute himself, moved by the obedience to her master and money. The receivers are her and the man. As a helper we have the perfume and the devil's drool, whilst as opponents, the picture and Michel's scream. This woman, once caught in the picture, helps Michel, moved by revenge in her quest for freedom. She is helped by the amplified picture, the man and her hand; and as the opponent we have Michel's scream.

SUBJECT (the blonde woman)

OBJECT (prostituting the boy)

SENDER (obedience and money)

RECEIVER (the man and the woman)

HELPERS (woman's nets: her hand
and her perfume as a drool that catches)

OPPONENTS (picture, scream and great bird)

9. Meaning nuances.

The story presents a recurrent theme: the relation between life and time and men's quest for catching certain meaningful instants, through writing or a picture, within many other possibilities: *"...I picked up the camera, pretended to study a focus that did not include them, and I stayed on the lookout, sure that I would finally catch the revealing gesture, the expression that resumes everything, the life that movement sets to rhythm but a rigid image destroys by sectioning time, if we do not choose the imperceptible essential fraction..."*²¹⁶

In that quest to catch the meaningful instant, the story is torn between the reality of the picture which varies and real life: *"...he put the amplification in one of his bedroom walls and the first day spent some time looking at it and remembering in that comparative and melancholic operation of memories in face on the loss of reality; a petrified memory, as any picture, where nothing was missing, not even and overall nothingness, the true agent setting the scene"*.

²¹⁶ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.61.

*“...Suddenly the order was inverted, they were all alive, moving, deciding and being decided, going towards their future. And I, from this side, prisoner of another time, of a room on a fifth floor; of not knowing who that woman and that man and that boy were, of being no more than my camera’s lens, something rigid, incapable of intervention...”*²¹⁷

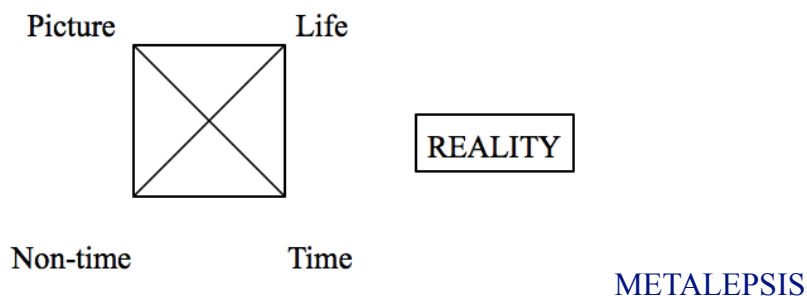
Michel wants to catch time in his camera and alter reality’s order, but reality will not let itself be caught, and even in the picture tries to fulfill what was supposed to happen.

Time does not let itself be caught by the picture and follows its course, time still flows in the picture and it is Michel who ends up caught in his attempt to catch it.

The story also presents the theme of corruption, capturing youth’s chastity with its *“structure of drool and perfume”*. The photographer intervenes to save the boy, which is why at the end we have the great bird (pigeon) as the symbolic figure of good and purity to save the boy, who finally seemed to learn to *“fly over the island”* as someone who learns to live. But it is Michel who ends up stuck in the unmeasurable time of the picture’s amplification, where only clouds, pigeons and his cry remain.

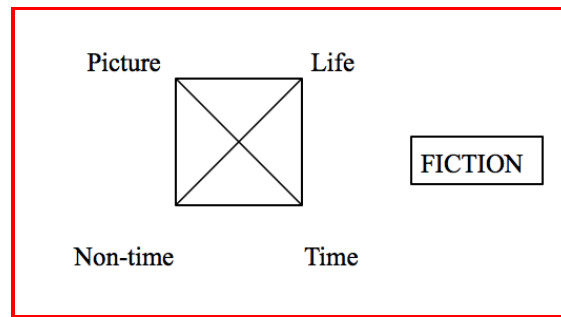
Each time that men intend to catch eternity, the result is devastating. Let us remember The picture of Dorian Grey, by Oscar Wilde; “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar”, by Edgar Allan Poe; and “The Secret Miracle”, by Jorge Luis Borges, to give some examples.

The semiotic square that summarises the disjunctive is the following:



The alteration of this model which represents reality shows the fiction that fantastic literature presupposes and that allows the story’s strange outcome.

²¹⁷ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.66.



10. *Significance.*

This whole analysis shows us that the story says way more than it seems to if we “strip” it. There is an interesting idea that defines Cortázar’s preference for fantastic literature as the essence of the literary.

“...Michel is guilty of literature, of unreal creations. He likes nothing more than imagining exceptions, subjects out of the ordinary, monsters that are not always disgusting (...) and when something bizarre happens, when we find a spider inside the shoe or when taking a breath feels like a broken glass, then it is mandatory to narrate the event...”²¹⁸

The story that Michel narrates comes from his fantasy, from the world of imagination instead of the world of facts. Nothing of what he fabricates about the encounter between the blonde woman, the man in the grey hat and the boy is confirmed in the story. Everything is part of the photographer’s thoughts who, like a writer of fantastic literature, wants to find what is different and transform it into fertile matter for his creation.

Michel creates a fiction which he does not know if it matches reality or not, but still exceeds it. He himself ends up caught by his fiction, he intends to amplify the picture enough for the characters to look real, come to life and trap him, as he had previously done with them. Of him, there is nothing left when he is trapped: only the typewriter and the clouds, with him at the beginning, remain, symbolising the job of writing and thinking.

²¹⁸ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.62.

From the beginning of the story the author stops at the analysis of the act of narrating and its possibilities. He sees narration as a response for the author and the readers:

*“...I do not describe anything, I rather try to understand (...) maybe narrating is like an answer, or at least for someone who is reading...”*²¹⁹

Describing strange things allows us to understand or at least recognise them and enables others to find in the narrative the answers to their own questions. Moreover, if the reader finds the answer to the text, he surely reached its *significance*. It is only necessary to recognise the keys that allow creation:

*“...that woman invited invention in, giving maybe enough keys to guess the truth...”*²²⁰

Creating stories to show a truth that is not only the narrator nor the author's truth, but mankind's, is possible in good literary works. Then the readers can displace and condense their own truths in these literary and universal truths presented by texts. This story talks explicitly about the value of narrated truths and the truth which is not personal stands out.

Which is that universal truth presented by the story?

What relation do I have with that truth?

From where do I interpret it?

What does the text's truth tell me?

What does catching “the essential fraction” mean?

What does art in its different manifestations search to catch?

Can the artist be caught by their own nets?

Why does catching have a double antithetical connotation: the threads of the Virgin – the devil's drool?

Can time be caught?

What is nothingness?

Is nothingness existing without being in an unmeasurable time?

The questioning that the story permits is infinite due to its depth.

We are interested in anchoring the unit of meaning that describes what looking is:

²¹⁹ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.56.

²²⁰ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, p.61.

“...I believe I know how to look, if there is something I know, and that all looking oozes falsehood, because it is what throws us outside of ourselves, with no grants [...]. Anyway, if we anticipate that probable falsehood beforehand, looking becomes possible; maybe choosing correctly between the looking and the looked-at is enough, stripping things away from so many false attires. And, of course, all of this is rather difficult...”²²¹

Looking is presented as a special way of seeing, a way that enables us to strip things away from what is superficial and to get to the essences. Every act of looking reveals the underlying falsehood, the exterior of things to reach the nuclear. The development of the capacity to look is fundamental in the semiotic activity, as it looks for the obtuse and in order to reach it moves the veil of what is obvious or denoted to find the obtuse or connoted. This capacity teaches inference, finding what is hidden, making the implicit explicit, logically presupposing, making emerge what is unsaid, undercover between lines. Without inventing, in any case there is an invitation to perform an interesting interpretative recreation starting from the textual matrix.

The narrator of this story wishes to catch “the imperceptible essential fraction”, “the expression that condenses it all”, it tries to do so through writing and photography and uses the typewriter and the camera as extensions, magnificent prostheses that allow the doing of what the body cannot do.

In that quest to catch the strange (time), the narrator is caught by the lens (magnifying extension)²²² that he had used and that paralyses him in a still time. Michel is caught by the devil’s drool and is unable to escape, unlike the boy in the picture “*getting lost like a thread of the Virgin*”. Michel is unable to escape the “unmeasurable time”, the nothingness where he may only “*think without distracting himself, write without distracting himself and remember without distracting himself*”. Writing, thinking and recreating is the mission of a writer isolated from *life* and caught by the threads of fiction. Maybe that destiny is what caused Michel’s final sadness. At the beginning of the text, he had narrated, with a certain arrogance, that he could decide the way in which he wanted to look and could achieve it by not using his camera and changing his attitude.

²²¹ CORTÁZAR, Julio, *ibid.*, pp.58, 59.

²²² This type of extension belongs to the complete classification of men-extensions that Umberto Eco does in *Kant y el Ornotorrinco*.

The story is deeply semiotic, it has many elements that enable the deciphering of its signs and reaching its truth that, as we analysed, is way more profound than the story it narrates. The anecdote is the excuse to develop the metalinguistic function; language, the special way of looking that artists have and the way of narrating are referenced. The discourse analyses itself as object-language, as metalanguage that is used to develop a secondary language²²³ that allows the narration of the fictional story.

We observe that each developed analytical concept explicits, independently, the fundamental elements of the narrative but simultaneously establishes a cooperation between them

The title invites inference and anticipates the reading. Reading as a discovery enables us to find the signs that will design the different codes. The units of meaning create a structure or frame and make a syntagmatic – paradigmatic reading of the found signs possible. The separated and intercrossed codes are nuclear in the analysis due to the fact that they organise the signs that will later be developed with an hermeneutical openness in each of the following concepts. The levels of interpretation are organised starting from the code of actions and the semic code; the discourse through the narrative code; time and space through the chronological and topographic code; the characters by the onomastic code; and the meaning nuances by the hermeneutic code.

All of this reflects a recurrence of meanings in the analysis that allows to fully comprehend the global meaning that each text represents symbolically and helps to interpret the *significance* as a new meaning where the reader will be able to stop to create their own place in the text.

²²³ This classification of an object-language and a secondary language is elaborated by Barthes in *Mitologías (El mito hoy)*.

CONCLUSIONS

THE POTENCY OF THE LITERARY SIGN

Literature is a written discourse which has the capacity to rediscover the world to its readers.

Paul Ricoeur.

We study the literary sign in order to build a literary work's potential meaning without going beyond the limits imposed by the textual signifier.

We have first analysed the sources of the concept of sign and seen that it is literature who achieves to unite the sign's classical and modern theory, given that it represents and signifies the world to the readers. We then searched for the transposed and hermeneutic sense of that sign to understand its reference and metaphoric sense. Once the classification of the linguistic sign was accomplished, we considered it convenient to delve into the semiotic literary theories so as to find analytical concepts that would allow us to reach our objective. Afterwards, we organised the elements which make the achievement of the potency of the literary sign possible, without forcing its limits.

We finally reached some conclusions. The literary work is an interpretant sign that is in potency and awaits to be put into act by a reader. This sign is one of the most complex ones because its language is poetic. A metaphoric language tends to insinuate rather than showing. This is literature's essence, which produces aesthetic pleasure.

The literary sign hides a sense, which is mobile (instead of still); a sense that is constantly actualised in the relation between an author, an open piece and a creative reader. That dynamic sense is the piece's *signifiante*. The tool to find that *signifiante* comes from Literary Semiotics, as this discipline's object of study is the sign in motion.

We have seen how the great classical thinkers have also questioned themselves about the sign; Logics, Rhetorics and Hermeneutics have tried to elucidate its sense and value for the acquisition of knowledge and the training of the interpretative capacity.

This capacity is essential when facing the piece. For its development, we believe that Ricoeur's vision²²⁴ is fundamental; he tries to overcome the dichotomy between Semiotics and

²²⁴ RICOEUR, Paul, *Del Texto a la Acción*. Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001.

Hermeneutics and conceives **explanation and comprehension** as two different possible attitudes in face of a text.

Explanation as what is proper of Natural Sciences and comprehension as the attitude that characterises Human Sciences. While the former is based on empirical observation, on causal relationships and is justified with inductive logic; the latter, in contrast, implies for the investigator an intromission in the field of the other's psyche, and for that makes use of the interpretation of texts.

With Semiotics the reader stays in "the place of the text", in the interior of its enclosure, in its immanence, only attends to the play of its internal oppositions. This procedure is legitimate as it allows the text's explanation; an explanation not derived from the Natural Sciences but rather from the field of the Sciences of Language. This epistemic-methodological model of Structuralism is then what enables the adoption of an explanatory posture applied to the text. However, we recognise that it is not enough to exhaust it in all its implications. *"...But before pointing out the limit of this explanatory behaviour, it is necessary to take care of its fecundity..."*.²²⁵

The goal of structural analysis is to transcend surface-level Semantics to reach deep Semantics, the dynamic one in the narrative. This way, a necessary instance is created between a naive surface-level interpretation and a critical, deep and creative interpretation.

Then, we overcome the antithesis and look for the complementarity of structural analysis and hermeneutic interpretation; the latter as a subject's autocomprehension through the signs of their own culture or the text's semantic possibilities. We see interpretation not as a subjective operation "on the text", but as an objective operation, "an act of the text".

To show the relation between Semiotics and Hermeneutics Ricoeur resorts to Peirce's notion of interpretant as sign of an object that results of the relation established between another sign and the same object: *"...the object is the text itself; the sign is deep Semantics noted by structural analysis and the series of interpretants is the chain of interpretations produced by the community of interpreters and incorporated to the text's dynamic, as the operation of meaning upon itself..."*.²²⁶

²²⁵ RICOEUR, Paul, *ibid.*, p. 136.

²²⁶ RICOEUR, Paul, *ibid.*, p. 146.

The literary text will always have a present, be autoreferential and refer to the world, but it will also be able to transcend its happening and “open up” to other possible worlds, where it will find a “model reader” to which it will be directed and who will represent its potential universal reading. The text is then seen as a “potential piece”, subject to an indefinite number of possible readings.

This is the dialectic that exists between explaining and interpreting, validating and conjecturing. “...*The structural model may be the paradigm of explanation*²²⁷ (...) and *Hermeneutics that of interpretation with modes of validating the conjectures because (...) the text is a limited field of possible interpretations*”.²²⁸

We wish to affirm that it is not possible to understand the significant patterns that an interpretation can apprehend in depth without some sort of personal commitment similar to that of the reader that confronts the deep Semantics of the text and makes it theirs. The solution is not denying the place of personal commitment in the comprehension of literary phenomena, but restricting it. The comprehension is totally mediated by the ensemble of explanatory procedures that precede and accompany it.

We believe that it is possible to integrate explanation and comprehension to reach a new concept of interpretation.

We explain the text to creatively comprehend it and, this way, discover new signs that will be able to reach a new *significance*. Reading with a spiritual attitude of quest, reading looking for the secondary message, enables us to develop a subtle capacity of observation that draws a universe behind the words, with its richness and poverty, with its truths and secrets, with its loves and hates, and overall with its values and beliefs.

A literary work always feeds on a plurality of voices: that of the author, the narrator, the next, the narratee and, mainly, that of its multiple and active readers whom Cervantes referenced in the introduction to the most representative piece of Spanish language.

²²⁷ RICOEUR, Paul, *ibid.*, p. 193.

²²⁸ RICOEUR, Paul, *ibid.*, p. 188.

APPENDIX

THE LIE IN LITERATURE AS A SEMIOTIC MATTER IN “EMMA ZUNZ”, BY JORGE LUIS BORGES

Lies are frequent in literature. Deception appears motivated by different stimuli: lying for lying, lying to help, lying for revenge, lying to conceal or hide, lying to embellish, lying to justify, lying to get someone's attention, etc. But within every lie there is always a **substitution of one sign for another**. This substitution is the one that transforms lies into a semiotic matter.

When Umberto Eco defines Semiotics and the sign he says:

*“...Semiotics takes care of anything that can be considered a sign. Sign is anything that can be considered the signifier substitute of any other thing. That any other thing may not necessarily exist nor subsist in the moment in which the sign represents it. In that sense, Semiotics is, in theory, the discipline that studies everything that can be used to lie...”*²²⁹

Lie manipulates non-referent signs. The sign of the lie is what is shown to the other transformed. The most used sign to lie is words. The lie consists in using signs diverting them from their conventional sense. The lie's author has a representation of reality and prepares another one for the others.

The semiotic function is the possibility to signify something that does not correspond to a real fact. “...Each time that a possibility to lie manifests, we are facing a semiotic function...”. When there is lie there is signifying and every time that there is signifying it can be used to lie.

The semiotic importance of lies implicates understanding why and how a lie semiotically matters as a sign, as a representation, independently to the truth or falsehood of the fact.

Each time there is a representation, there is a sign and there is a lie because one sign is being substituted by another.

It is important to analyse as a sign of lies the shown actions instead of the effectuated ones during the lie's preparation, which are hidden carefully. In *The Lie in Political Advertising and in the Publicity*, Guy Durandin distinguishes as false actions six types of deceptions:

²²⁹ ECO, Umberto, *Tratado de Semiótica General*, op.cit., p.20.

1. Imitating the actions for the adversary with the goal of dissimulating the true actions being prepared.
2. Performing real actions to mislead while awaiting psychological effects.
3. Organising manifestations that seem spontaneous accompanied by verbal lies.
4. Inducing the adversary by provoking them to commit negative acts.
5. Committing a crime to accuse the adversary.
6. Setting up a scene and creating a denotative document about it.

A lie is an operation in which the author has a determined representation of the referent and creates another one for the receptors. In this creation there are different sorts of transformations of reality within which three stand out:

- A. Suppressions: their aim is to convince one that something that exists does not exist; like omission, negation and material suppressions.
- B. Additions: their aim is to convince one of the existence of something that does not exist, they invent.
- C. Distortions: they touch an existing subject but in a fake manner, they can exaggerate, minimise, deform.

These transformations modify the nature of the whole by changing an element.

It is interesting to see how all these elements applied by Durandin to propaganda are of practical application to literature. In order to demonstrate it and perform “a new reading act” we will work with the story “Emma Zunz”, by Jorge Luis Borges.

This story tells the story of a young girl who plans on punishing a man, who provoked her father’s death, at the expense of her own degradation. The ending is very meaningful for our analysis as it says the following:

“...As it were, the story was unbelievable, but it prevailed upon everyone because it was substantially true. Emma Zunz’s tone was real, her decency was real, her hate was real. And the outrage which she had suffered was also real: only the circumstances, the time, and one or two names were false...”

There is a clear lie achieved by the substitution of one sign for another. In this case the signs seem to split and keep a real signified but they alter the signifier. Emma is motivated to lie for her revenge. In this revenge she prostituted herself with a Swedish sailor who “...*was a tool for Emma as she was for him, but she served for pleasure and he did for justice...*”. Then she presented the facts as if Aaron Loewenthal, the man who had provoked her father’s death and ruin and was the current owner of the factory where she worked, was who had violated her and covered by that false excuse killed him.

Emma manipulates signs, lies, intentionally puts one sign in the place of another. She deviates the facts from their real setting, signifies something that does not correspond with reality. There is masquerade and pretending, there is proof of a fact that was real but deformed.

Emma uses the types of deceptions previously named:

1. She imitates an action for the adversary and dissimulates the plan that she is preparing. She makes Loewenthal believe, through a phone call, that she wanted to communicate him something about the strike without the rest of the employees knowing and, consequently, would go to his office by sundown; she also pretends like her voice is trembling, as would the voice of an informant.
2. She performs real actions to mislead, like projecting the Sunday plan with her friends.
3. She organises manifestations that seem spontaneous and are accompanied by lies: “...*she picked up the phone and repeated what she would then repeat many times, with those and other words: an incredible thing has happened... Mr. Loewenthal made me come with the pretext of the strike... Abused me, I killed him...*”.
4. She does not induce Loewenthal to commit any act because she did not speak to him, she did not tell him everything she had planned, the accusation she had prepared. Still, Aaron’s reaction was his furious face and his injuries.
5. She permits being violated, dishonored to blame her father’s killer and has a motive to kill him.
6. When the body fell dead, she prepared the scene to have proof: “...*she disorganised the divan, unbuttoned the corpse’s coat, removed his splashed glasses and left them on top of the file cabinet...*”.

In this story the sort of transformation of reality that dominates the scene is not suppression nor addition, but distortion. It is the way of lying which consists in talking about an existing thing but altered.

These lies implicate false qualifications and there are three categories: lying about the identity, lying about other characteristics of an object and lying about the motives behind an action. The last one of the categories is the one present in the story; the truth is deformed by lying about the motives that take Emma to kill Mr. Loewenthal.

She sets the revenge, organises the crime with premeditation. But there is an important background between the truth and the lie: Emma is truly violated, the horror of her dishonoring is true given that it is faithful to reality. Moreover, not only her father's memory motivates her to kill Loewenthal, but also the punishment of her own violation. But this truth is distorted as that was not the man who violated her, nor in that moment, and neither were those the circumstances that took her to kill him.

Which were the motives that led Emma to lie?

1. Hiding a plan.
2. Accusing the enemy of a fact he did not commit in order to avenge one that he did commit and for which he was not discovered.
3. Taking revenge without being punished for feeling like an instrument of justice.
4. Making the event believable.

In reality Emma had been violated by Loewenthal when he had blamed her father for the embezzlement and provoked the loss of her most cherished affects and her goods. She had also suffered other indignities like the prison's sentence, the anonymous letters and her father's humiliation when he left.

Emma wishes to avenge those violations in her name, her father's name and her family's name, but ends up avenging a second violation:

"...More than the urgency of avenging her father, Emma felt that of punishing the violation she had suffered because of him. She could not but kill him after that meticulous disgrace..."

Emma's revenge seems to have a deep psychological root.

"...In that time out of time, in that perplexing disorder of unconnected and atrocious sensations did Emma think but once in the dead that motivated the sacrifice? I believe that she thought about it once and in that moment her goal became endangered. She thought (she could not but think) that her father had done to her mother that horrible thing which was now being done to her..."

Close to Electra's conflict, Emma has not taken hold of her sexuality and lives sex with guilt and disgust: *"...Then they spoke about boyfriends, but nobody expected Emma to speak. In April she would turn nineteen, although men still inspired an almost pathological fear in her ..."*

Surely her father's figure was special to her and what had happened had marked her destiny deeper than expected:

"...She wanted it to be the next day. Immediately, she understood that this wish was useless as his father's death was the only thing that had happened in the world that would keep on endlessly happening [...] The serious events are outside of time, be it because in them the immediate past seems like cut off from the future, or because the parts that conform them do not seem consecutive..."

We may abandon psychological analysis, which is deeply useful for this story, given that what interests us is to analyse the imaginative development of the plot of the planned lie in face of the simplicity of the events.

Imagination, characteristic of men, is crucial when lying, which is why men lie and not the rest of the living creatures. To lie men jump from the world of facts to that of ideals and install themselves with a premeditated plan in that plane.

In lies, verisimilitude, the credibility of the events, is always sought after, which is why the starting point is something certain. In the ending of the story, the veracity in the face of lies in the tone, the violation, the shame and the hate of the protagonist is highlighted; even though the mask lies through falsehood in the circumstances, the chronological facts and some proper names.

Lie manipulates the non-referent signs, the subject substitutes the linguistic signs in order to deceive an object motivated by different causes that look to provoke a determined effect over someone.

SUBJECT

(Emma)

OBJECT

(destroying Loewenthal)

SENDER

(revenge)

RECEIVERS

(Loewenthal, her and her father)

Emma wants to destroy Loewenthal because she is motivated by her necessity to avenge her father's death and her own violation. The first receiver of that act is the factory's owner due to the fact that she is assassinated by her and the second receiver is her given that in order to destroy him and avenge her father she dishonored herself in front of everyone and cast a shadow over her reputation.

Inside the text there is another lie that has the motive of being different as it looks to cover up or dissimulate her father's suicide "*...he had ingested by mistake a strong dose of veronal and passed away the third of the current month in Bage hospital...*". This is a lie that looks to favour its receiver, embellishing the referent through the change of some signifiers as "by mistake" but without changing the meaning/signified of death.

When Emma finds out about her father's death she can plan the deceit that will lead her to take revenge because she had kept a secret; nobody, not even her best friend, had found out that she knew the name of the thief who had provoked his father's ruin, although she had known for six years. That secret was a special bond with her father and at the same time served to establish a power dynamic between her and Loewenthal, as he had no idea that she knew the truth behind the events.

For her plan to be perfect she pretended, both the previous day and that day, that nothing had changed: she worked, in response to the comments about the strike she took a stand against violence, when she finished working she went to a women-only club with her friend and they both signed up, she projected the Sunday plan with her friends, she talked about common topics, she prepared her dinner, she went to sleep and she slept.

The day of the murder she read *La Prensa*, she called Loewenthal with a trembling voice, she worked until midday, she organised Sunday with her friends, she had lunch, she lay down, she went over the plan and she broke Fain's letter which informed her about her father's tragic ending.

In the afternoon she went to the dock to find an "innocent helper" that would allow her to fulfill her plan, she looked for the shortest and grossest one "*for the purity of horror not to be mitigated*", for the fact to be especially true, she gave herself to him, received the money and broke it just as she had done with the letter, filled with sadness and disgust she abandoned the place without being seen.

She revised her plan, got to the factory where Loewenthal lived, she repeated the words that she would say to him before making him confess his crime and killing him. This way she would show the triumph of God's Justice over human justice but she killed him more moved by her own violation than her father's death. She prepared the scene and phone called the police, then repeated the words that she had practiced so many times in her head.

Everything, from the smallest detail, was planned. She had to lie to restore a sacred order amidst the disorder of earthly justice. She believed to be one of God's instruments in a fair cause and because of that was capable of anything without doubting that things could go wrong, given that she was possessed by a mystic fanaticism of justice. She lies convinced of doing what is right, of putting things in order, which is why she does not question herself even once.

Her lie distorts reality, transforms her crime into a fair cause that allows her to respond to a suffered abuse.

Emma can plan her revenge and lie because she kept a secret, there is a secret that was not revealed, a being beneath the seeming, a hidden essence. A subjacent truth, what the thing is beyond what it seems to be. Deceitful appearances work as signs that can be used to lie, as they create a mask that hides the real fact. What is hidden is the truth and the false appearance, the lie. There is a game between the seeming and the being where the first one envelops the second one and imposes itself as real.

The secret and the lie generally go hand in hand, by omission or by deceit signs are substituted to change reality for another thing. Lies also lead to a following eternal secret so as to remain undiscovered. This is the case of Emma, who will never be able to tell the truth about her

father's ending or Loewenthal's real personality because she would then show indexes that could cause her downfall.

That secret is the great weight of lies. It is an act that not only belongs to the moment in which one lies, but it seems to remain suspended in time beneath a veiled pact of eternal silence. That silence is possibly the one that imposes its weight over human conscience; by not being able to open up to anyone, the perpetrator of the lie stays trapped with their deceit and their secret.

That is the case of Catalina Vargas in "La Galera", who after having killed her sister, having changed the real testament and having stolen her fortune, cannot find peace, and as much as she tries to forget, she always remembers the event. She cannot talk about it with anyone because she would then lose her freedom. However, her conscience punishes her and triumphs over the secret and the lie which seemed to have socially won.

Emma's ending is not revealed, so we do not know who triumphs in her case. The triumph of conscience is a theme in literature; let us remember Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment*, where a man commits a crime, covers it up, frees himself from men's justice, but is unable to overcome the weight of his secret and his lie, that will lead him to confess his crime. Another example is "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe, where the conscience is symbolised by the beat of the dead man's heart that will make the protagonist confess the truth to the police.

The materialisation of that feeling of guilt is common. In Catalina it is the gold coins that impose a weight which does not let her get up and compel her to stay abandoned in solitude and die in La Pampa. In Poe's story it is the heartbeat that haunts the killer until it drives him crazy. We do not know what materialisation of conscience will haunt Emma but we can predetermine that it will be powerful because in her case she marked her own body with the humiliation of the opprobrium that giving her body to a low being that produces her disgust in order to have proof and be able to commit a disguised murder to reestablish the supposed order of justice to the things that seemed to have lost it. Possibly the traces of the opprobrium in her body speak for her conscience.

This way, lies always work in conjunction with secrets. In Emma's case the secret is the culprit and motivates her to the effect and another one will be the consequence that will mark her future of silence and guilt.

Are the lies and the truth contradictory in the semiotic square? No, they are contraries because they can find each other and coexist. In fact they do, which is why a credible lie always starts from a real fact, a true event and what is true is defined by its opposition to the lie.

In the lie, true signs are changed for deceitful signs. These signs are representations of a real referent. If the truth did not exist, it would be impossible to understand the lie. Only by annulling one of the contraries, the existence of the other becomes possible.

Verticality represents the logical relations of implication where the lie implicates the non-truth and the truth implicates the non-lie. The truth and the lie can coexist but the lie and the non-lie or the truth and the non-truth cannot. The opposition of the contraries is semantic while the opposition of the contradictories expresses a logical contradiction.

Why is the lie so important for Semiotics? Because it manipulates signs, it transforms things and shows connotative representations of them, deviating them from their conventional meaning and imposing a distorted one.

Is Emma lying? Is she altering the facts? Psychoanalysis speaks of psychic realities from different perspectives, not of a lie. The ending of this story seems to have this sort of view, it does not point out the event as a lie due to the fact that it is substantially true. Even if reality is altered, it is only altered from what is circumstantial and not from the essential.

In this case it is not the signs that are altered, but the signifiers; as the signified parts are real and that unfoldment is what makes this story's ending so special.

Is Emma lying? It is true that she changes elements but she does not alter the nuclear fact of her violation. Nonetheless, she lies because she alters the signifier and it is Lacan who brings to light the power that signifiers have over reality. She creates deceitful signifiers and imposes them in front of everyone's blindness. She uses a mechanism of substitution of the signifier and subjects are moved because of these linguistic signifiers. The signifier appears to be autonomous with respect to the signified and marks the signifier's supremacy through the subject's domain by it, and that signifier proceeds from the logic of the unconscious. She alters the name of the abuser because in her mind it is Loewenthal who has violated her years ago.

The role of lies in literature has an important meta function as all literature is a fictional creation, a special representation of reality, then the meta level of a lie resignifies as real or true what stays outside of the lie in the story and enables the comparisons between lie and reality, between fiction and lie in fiction.

A game is established between truth and fiction and is translated into a dialectic between believing and disbelieving and one is urged to believe as true what is simply fiction. This way, Emma's acting feels as real and true, because her lie and her secret function as a meta potency that enables us to forget that the lie is constructed inside a fiction. The story is in its whole a literary illusion but the lie in it makes it more real.

The lie inside fiction carries all the weight of the fiction of deception and therefore gives more verisimilitude to the story's reality.

This is one of the semiotic resources that literature uses to impose verisimilitude in its creations, for them to seem real even though they belong to the realm of fiction, as lies do.

Literature in its whole is a great sign because it represents reality from the world of ideals, where everything is possible and men are the only ones to establish the norms.

In that world of dreams, of utopies, everything is a sign and consequently everything says more than it seems, everything connotes over the denoted, everything modalises a language that through anecdotic excuses presents, with solvency and profundity, the great themes of the world.

In that world, lying must be included as one of the possible manifestations that men construct to escape from the real world.

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