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THE ROLE OF THE READER

Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts

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Preface

Six of the nine essays published in this book were written between 1959 and 1971. "The Poetics of the Open Work" (Chapter 1) and "The Myth of Superman" (Chapter 4)—written respectively in 1959 and in 1962, before I fully developed my semiotic approach—represent two opposing aspects of my interest in the dialectic between 'open' and 'closed' texts. The introductory essay of this book makes clear what I mean *today* by such a categorial polarity and how I see it as a special case of a more general semiotic phenomenon: the cooperative role of the addressee in interpreting messages.

"The Poetics of the Open Work" deals with various sorts of texts, but all the other essays collected here concern verbal texts. "The Semantics of Metaphor" (Chapter 2) and "On the Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an Edenic Language" (Chapter 3)—both of 1971—examine how the procedures of aesthetic manipulation of language produce the interpretive cooperation of the addressee. The two essays on the popular novel, "Rhetoric and Ideology in Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*" (Chapter 5) and "Narrative Structures in Fleming" (Chapter 6)—both of 1965—deal, as does the essay on Superman, with texts which aim at producing univocal effects and which *seem* not to call for cooperative activity on the part of the reader. However, I realize today, after having developed a general semiotic framework in my book *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976), that even these essays are dominated by the problem of the role of the reader in interpreting texts.

From such a perspective the essay in Peirce and contemporary semantics (Chapter 7), written in 1976, offers many clues for establishing a richer theoretical background for the concept of interpretative cooperation.

In *"Lector in Fabula*: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text" (Chapter 8), written at the end of 1977 for this book, I try to connect the modalities of textual interpretation with the problem of possible worlds.

To make clear (to myself as well as to my readers) the constancy of the theme of interpretative cooperation in the essays collected here, I have written the introductory essay, "The Role of the Reader." Here the textual problems approached in the course of the earlier essays are viewed in connection with the present state of the art—which is taken fully into account only in *"Lector in Fabula."* It might be argued that the analyses made between 1959 and 1971 should be rewritten in a more up-to-date jargon. But afterwit is everybody's wit; it is better that the earlier essays remain as witnesses to a constant exploration into textuality made during twenty years of prehistorical attempts. The few

cuts and the slight changes in technical terminology these essays have undergone are only cosmetics applied to achieve homogeneous translation and do not affect their original structures.

Perhaps "The Role of the Reader" raises a number of questions which the previous research does not answer satisfactorily. But the state of the art (text semiotics, having grown up incredibly during the last decade, has reached a dreadful level of sophistication) obliges me not to conceal a number of problems—even as they remain unresolved. Many of the present text theories are still heuristic networks full of components represented by mere 'black boxes'. In "The Role of the Reader" I also deal with some black boxes. The earlier analyses deal only with boxes I was able to fill up—even though without appealing formalizations. It goes without saying that the role of the reader of this book is to open and to overfill (by further research) all the boxes that my essays have necessarily left inviolate.

The Role of the Reader

INTRODUCTION

The Role of the Reader

0.1. How to produce texts by reading them

0.1.1. The text and its interpreter

The very existence of texts that can not only be freely interpreted but also cooperatively generated by the addressee (the 'original' text constituting a flexible *type* of which many *tokens* can be legitimately realized) posits the problem of a rather peculiar strategy of communication based upon a flexible system of signification. "The Poetics of the Open Work" (1959)[1] was already haunted by the idea of unlimited semiosis that I later borrowed from Peirce and that constitutes the philosophical scaffolding of *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976) (hereafter *Theory*). But at the same time, "The Poetics of the Open Work" was presupposing a problem of pragmatics.[2] An 'open' text cannot be described as a communicative strategy if the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal texts) has not been envisaged at the moment of its generation *qua* text. An open text is a paramount instance of a syntactic-semantico-pragmatic device whose foreseen interpretation is a part of its generative process.

When "The Poetics of the Open Work" appeared in 1965 in French as the first chapter of my book *L'oeuvre ouverte*,[3] in a structuralistically oriented milieu, the idea of taking into account the role of the addressee looked like a disturbing intrusion, disquietingly jeopardizing the notion of a semiotic texture to be analyzed in itself and for the sake of itself. In 1967, discussing structuralism and literary criticism with an Italian interviewer, Claude Lévi-Strauss said that he could not accept the perspective of *L'oeuvre ouverte* because a work of art "is an object endowed with precise properties, that must be analytically isolated, and this work can be entirely defined on the grounds of such properties. When Jakobson

and myself tried to make a structural analysis of a Baudelaire sonnet, we did not approach it as an 'open work' in which we could find everything that has been filled in by the following epochs; we approached it as an object which, once created, had the stiffness—so to speak—of a crystal; we confined ourselves to bringing into evidence these properties."[4]

It is not necessary to quote Jakobson (1958) and his well-known theory of the functions of language to remind ourselves that, even from a structuralistic point of view, such categories as sender, addressee, and context are indispensable to the understanding of every act of communication. It is enough to consider two points (picked almost at random) from the analysis of Baudelaire's "Les Chats" to understand the role of the reader in the poetic strategy of that sonnet: "Les chats . . . ne figurent en nom dans le texte qu'une seule fois . . . dès le troisième vers, les chats deviennent un sujet sous-entendu . . . remplacé par les pronoms anaphoriques *ils, les, leurs* . . . etc."[5] Now, it is absolutely impossible to speak apropos of the anaphorical role of an expression without invoking, if not a precise and empirical reader, at least the 'addressee' as an abstract and constitutive element in the process of actualization of a text.

In the same essay, two pages later, it is said that there is a semantic affinity between the *Erèbe* and the *horreur des ténèbres*. This semantic affinity does not lie in the text as an explicit linear linguistic manifestation; it is the result of a rather complex operation of textual inference based upon an intertextual competence. If this is the kind of semantic association that the poet wanted to arouse, to forecast and to activate such a cooperation from the part of the reader was part of the generative strategy employed by the author. Moreover, it seems that this strategy was aiming at an imprecise or undetermined response. Through the above semantic affinity the text associated the cats to the *coursiers funèbres*. Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss ask: "S'agit-il d'un désir frustré, ou d'une fausse reconnaissance? La signification de ce passage, sur la quelle les critiques se sont interrogés, reste à dessein ambigue."

That is enough, at least for me, to assume that "Les Chats" is a text that not only calls for the cooperation of its own reader, but also wants this reader to make a series of interpretive choices which even though not infinite are, however, more than one. Why not, then, call "Les Chats" an 'open' text? To postulate the cooperation of the reader does not mean to pollute the structural analysis with extratextual elements. The reader as an active principal of interpretation is a part of the picture of the generative process of the text.

There is only one tenable objection to my objection to the objection of Lévi-Strauss: if one considers even anaphorical activations as cases of cooperation on the part of the reader, there is no text escaping such a rule. I agree. So-called open texts are only the extreme and most provoca-

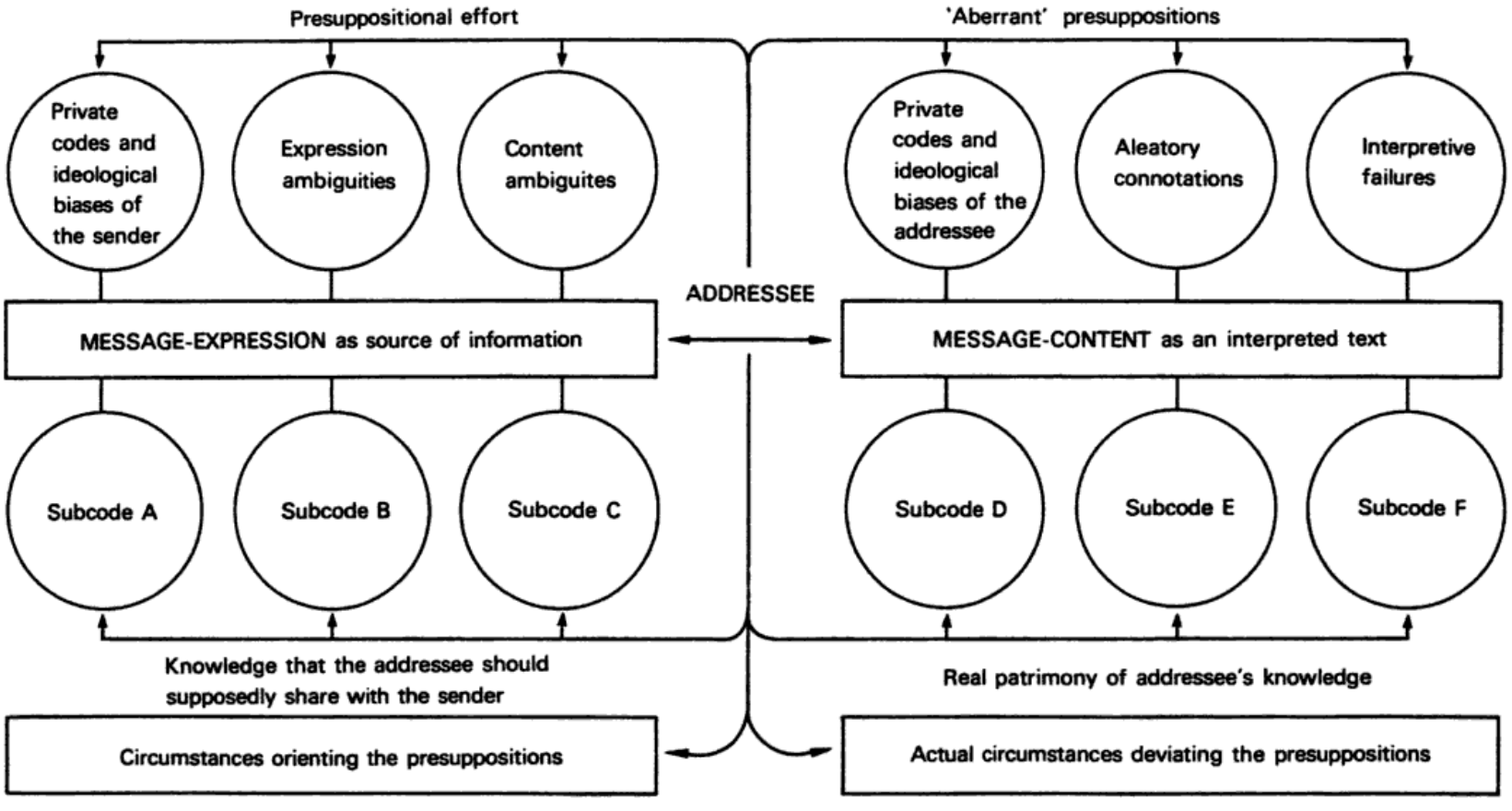


Figure 0.2
Reprinted from *A Theory of Semiotics*, p.142.

minacy. What I call open texts are, rather, reducing such as indeterminacy, whereas closed texts, even though aiming at eliciting a sort of 'obedient' cooperation, are in the last analysis randomly open to every pragmatic accident.

0.2. The Model Reader

0.2.1. Producing the Model Readers

To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them.

At the minimal level, every type of text explicitly selects a very general model of possible reader through the choice (i) of a specific linguistic code, (ii) of a certain literary style, and (iii) of specific specialization-indices (a text beginning with /According to the last developments of the TeSWeST . . ./ immediately excludes any reader who does not know the technical jargon of text semiotics). Other texts give explicit information about the sort of readers they presuppose (for example, children's books, not only by typographical signals, but also by direct appeals; in other cases a specific category of addressee is named: /Friends, Romans, Countrymen . . ./). Many texts make evident their Model Readers by implicitly presupposing a specific encyclopedic competence. For instance, the author of *Waverley* opens his story by clearly calling for a very specialized kind of reader, nourished on a whole chapter of intertextual encyclopedia:

(1) *What could my readers have expected from the chivalrous epithets of Howard, Mordaunt, Mortimer or Stanley, or from the softer and more sentimental sounds of Belmore, Belville, Belfield and Belgrave, but pages of inanity, similar to those which have been so christened for half a century past?*

But at the same time text (1) *creates* the competence of its Model Reader. After having read this passage, whoever approaches *Waverley* (even one century later and even—if the book has been translated into another language—from the point of view of a different intertextual competence) is asked to *assume* that certain epithets are meaning «chivalry» and that there is a whole tradition of chivalric romances displaying certain deprecatory stylistic and narrative properties.

Thus it seems that a well-organized text on the one hand presupposes a model of competence coming, so to speak, from outside the text, but on the other hand works to build up, by merely textual means, such a competence (see Riffaterre, 1973).

0.2.2. Model Readers for closed texts

We have seen that, pragmatically speaking, this situation is a very abstract and optimal one. In the process of communication, a text is frequently interpreted against the background of codes different from those intended by the author. Some authors do not take into account such a possibility. They have in mind an average addressee referred to a given social context. Nobody can say what happens when the actual reader is different from the 'average' one. Those texts that obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less precise empirical readers (be they children, soap-opera addicts, doctors, law-abiding citizens, swingers, Presbyterians, farmers, middle-class women, scuba divers, effete snobs, or any other imaginable sociopsychological category) are in fact open to any possible 'aberrant' decoding. A text so immoderately 'open' to every possible interpretation will be called a *closed* one.

Superman comic strips or Sue's and Fleming's novels belong to this category. They apparently aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their effects so as to arouse pity or fear, excitement or depression at the due place and at the right moment. Every step of the 'story' elicits just the expectation that its further course will satisfy. They seem to be structured according to an inflexible project. Unfortunately, the only one not to have been 'inflexibly' planned is the reader. These texts are potentially speaking to everyone. Better, they presuppose an average reader resulting from a merely intuitive sociological speculation—in the same way in which an advertisement chooses its possible audience. It is enough for these texts to be interpreted by readers referring to other conventions or oriented by other presuppositions, and the result is incredibly disappointing (or exciting—it depends on the point of view). This was the case of Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris,* which, written initially in a dandyish mood to please cultivated readers, aroused as a result a passionate process of identification on the part of an illiterate audience; when, on the contrary, it was written to educate such a "dangerous" audience to a moderate vision of social harmony, it produced as a side effect a revolutionary uprising.

For the saga of Superman and for the *acta sanctorum* of James Bond, we lack comparable sociopsychological evidence, but it is clear that they can give rise to the most unforeseeable interpretations, at least at the ideological level. My ideological reading was only one among the possible: the most feasible for a smart semiotician who knows very well the

novel, but at this point the text collapses—it has been burned out, just as a 'joint' is burned out to produce a private euphoric state.

The 'ideal reader' of *Finnegans Wake* cannot be a Greek reader of the second century B.C. or an illiterate man of Aran. The reader is strictly defined by the lexical and the syntactical organization of the text: the text is nothing else but the semantic-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader.

We shall see in the last essay of this book (Chapter 8) how a story by Alphonse Allais, *Un drame bien parisien,* can be read in two different ways, a naive way and a critical way, but both types of readers are inscribed within the textual strategy. The naive reader will be unable to enjoy the story (he will suffer a final uneasiness), but the critical reader will succeed only by enjoying the defeat of the former. In both cases—anyway—it will be only the text itself—such as it is made—that tells us which kind of reader it postulates. The exactness of the textual project makes for the freedom of its Model Reader. If there is a "jouissance du texte" (Barthes, 1973), it cannot be aroused and implemented except by a text producing all the paths of its 'good' reading (no matter how many, no matter how much determined in advance).

0.2.4. Author and reader as textual strategies

In a communicative process there are a sender, a message, and an addressee. Frequently, both sender and addressee are grammatically manifested by the message: "*I* tell *you* that. . . ."

Dealing with messages with a specific indexical purpose, the addressee is supposed to use the grammatical clues as referential indices (/I/ must designate the empirical subject of that precise instance of utterance, and so on). The same can happen even with very long texts, such as a letter or a private diary, read to get information about the writer.

But as far as a text is focused *qua* text, and especially in cases of texts conceived for a general audience (such as novels, political speeches, scientific instructions, and so on), the sender and the addressee are present in the text, not as mentioned poles of the utterance, but as 'actantial roles' of the sentence (not as *sujet de l'énonciation,* but as *sujet de l'énoncé*) (see Jakobson, 1957).

In these cases the author is textually manifested only (i) as a recognizable *style* or textual *idiolect*—this idiolect frequently distinguishing not an individual but a genre, a social group, a historical period (*Theory,* 3.7.6); (ii) as mere actantial roles (/I/ = «the subject of the present sentence»); (iii) as an illocutionary signal (/I swear that/) or as a perlocutionary operator (/suddenly something *horrible* happened . . ./). Usually this conjuring up of the 'ghost' of the sender is ordered to a symmetrical conjuring up of the 'ghost' of the addressee (Kristeva, 1970).

Consider the following expressions from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, 66:

(2) *Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games. . . .* Look and see *whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to* all, *but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.*

All the personal pronouns (whether explicit or implicit) are not indicating a person called Wittgenstein or any empirical reader: they are textual strategies. The intervention of a speaking subject is complementary to the activation of a Model Reader whose intellectual profile is determined only by the sort of interpretive operations he is supposed to perform (to detect similarities, to consider certain games . . .). Likewise the 'author' is nothing else but a textual strategy establishing semantic correlations and activating the Model Reader: /I mean board-games/ and so on, means that, within the framework of that text, the word /game/ will assume a given semantic value and will become able to encompass board-games, card-games, and so on.

According to this text Wittgenstein is nothing else but *a philosophical style,* and his Model Reader is nothing else but his capability to cooperate in order to reactualize that philosophical style.

In the following paragraphs I shall renounce the use of the term /author/ if not as a mere metaphor for «textual strategy», and I shall use the term Model Reader in the terms stipulated above.

In other words, the Model Reader is a textually established set of felicity conditions (Austin, 1962) to be met in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualized.

0.3. Textual levels

0.3.1. Narrative and nonnarrative texts

To say that every text is a syntactic-semantico-pragmatic device whose foreseen interpretation is part of its generative process is still a generality. The solution would be to represent an 'ideal' text as a system of nodes or joints and to establish at which of them the cooperation of the Model Reader is expected and elicited.

Probably such an analytical representation escapes the present possibilities of a semiotic theory: this has been attempted only apropos of concrete texts (even though the categories provided *ad hoc* were aiming at a more universal application). The most successful examples are, I think, Barthes' (1970) analysis of *Sarrazine* and Greimas' (1976) of Maupassant's *Deux amis*. More detailed analyses of shorter textual frag-

in fairy tales); (ii) some individuals are selected and introduced through a series of descriptions hung to their proper names and endowing them with certain properties; (iii) the sequence of actions is more or less localized in space and time; (iv) the sequence of actions is considered finite—there is a beginning and an end; (v) in order to tell what definitely happened to Clarissa, the text is supposed to start from an initial state of affairs concerning Clarissa and to follow her through certain changes of state, offering to the addressee the possibility of wondering about what could happen to Clarissa in the next step of the narration; (vi) the whole course of events described by the novel can be summarized and reduced to a set of macropropositions, to the skeleton of a story (or *fabula*), thus establishing a further level of the text which should not be identified with the so-called linear text manifestation.

Nevertheless, a counterfactual conditional differs from a piece of fiction only insofar as in the first case the addressee is requested to cooperate more actively in the realization of the text he receives—to make on his own the story that the text has simply suggested.

In the course of the following paragraphs, I shall also examine some cases in which a nonnarrative text seems not to fit my model. We shall see that we can either reduce the model or expand certain virtualities of the text. It is usually possible to transform a nonnarrative text into a narrative one.

Certainly, narrative texts—especially fictional ones—are more complicated than are many others and make the task of the semiotician harder. But they also make it more rewarding. That is why, probably, today one learns about textual machinery more from the researchers who dared to approach complex narrative texts than from those who limited themselves to analyzing short portions of everyday textuality. Maybe the latter have reached a higher degree of formalization, but the former have provided us with a higher degree of understanding.

0.3.2. Textual levels: A theoretical abstraction

The notion of textual level is a very embarrassing one. Such as it appears, in its linear manifestation, a text has no levels at all. According to Segre (1974:5) 'level' and 'generation' are two metaphors: the author is not 'speaking', he 'has spoken'. What we are faced with is a textual surface, or the *expression plane* of the text. It is not proved that the way we adopt to actualize this expression as *content* mirrors (upside down) that adopted by the author to produce such a final result. Therefore the notion of textual level is merely theoretical; it belongs to semiotic metalanguage.

In Figure 0.3 the hierarchy of operations performed to interpret a text is *posited* as such for the sake of comprehensibility. I have borrowed many suggestions from the model of Petőfi's TeSWeST (*Text-Struktur*

Welt-Struktur-Theorie)[8] even though I try to introduce into my picture many items from different theoretical frameworks (such as Greimas' actantial structures). What seems to me interesting in Petőfi's model is the double consideration of both an intensional and an extensional approach.

Petőfi's model establishes rigidly the direction of the analysis, whereas my diagram (Figure 0.3) does not necessarily reflect the real steps empirically made by the interpreter. In the actual process of interpreta-

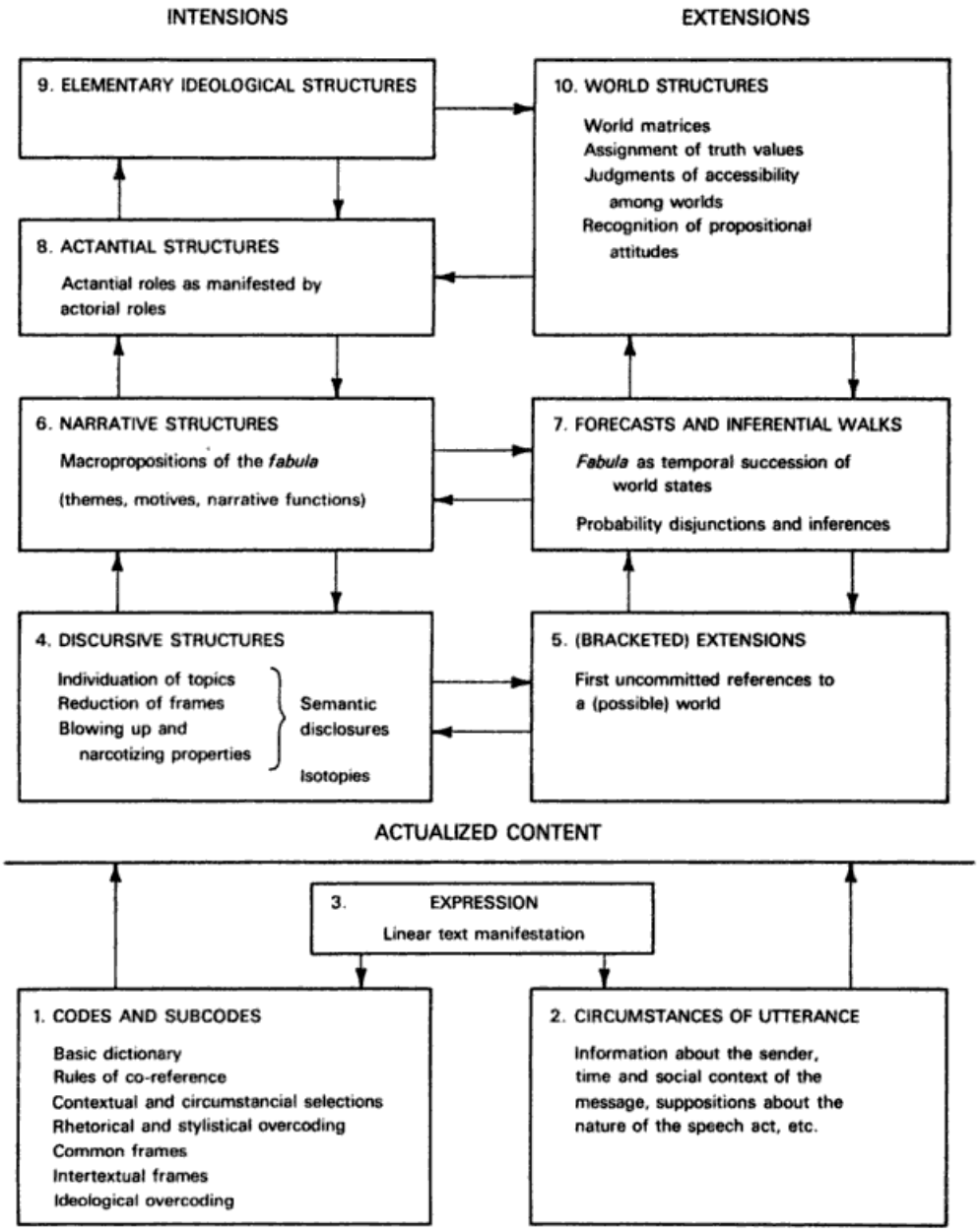


Figure 0.3

tion, all the levels and sublevels of my diagram (which are in fact mere metatextual 'boxes') are interconnected in a continuous coming and going. The cooperation of the interpreter at the lower levels can succeed only because some hypotheses which concern upper levels (and vice versa) are hazarded. The same happens also for a generative process: frequently an author makes decisions concerning the deep semantic structure of his story only at the moment in which he chooses at the lexical level, for merely stylistic reasons, a given expression. Likewise the arrows do not mark any idealized temporal and logical process of interpretation, but rather show the interdependences among 'boxes'.

Figure 0.3 thus considers (metalinguistically) levels of possible abstraction at which the cooperative activity can take place. Therefore, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, instead of speaking of textual 'levels' (a metaphor which inevitably risks suggesting a hierarchy of concrete operations), I shall speak of 'boxes', so referring only to specific points of my visualized theoretical postulation.

The only way in which Figure 0.3 presumably portrays a concrete case of textual interpretation is in the fact that it necessarily starts from box 3 (linear text manifestation) and that one cannot jump from box 3 to the others without relying at least on box 1 (the system of codes and subcodes indispensable to transforming the expression plane into the content plane).

0.4. Linear text manifestation and circumstances of utterance

0.4.1. I call linear text manifestation the text such as it appears verbally with its lexematic surface. The reader applies to these *expressions* a given code or system of codes and subcodes, to transform them into the first levels of content.

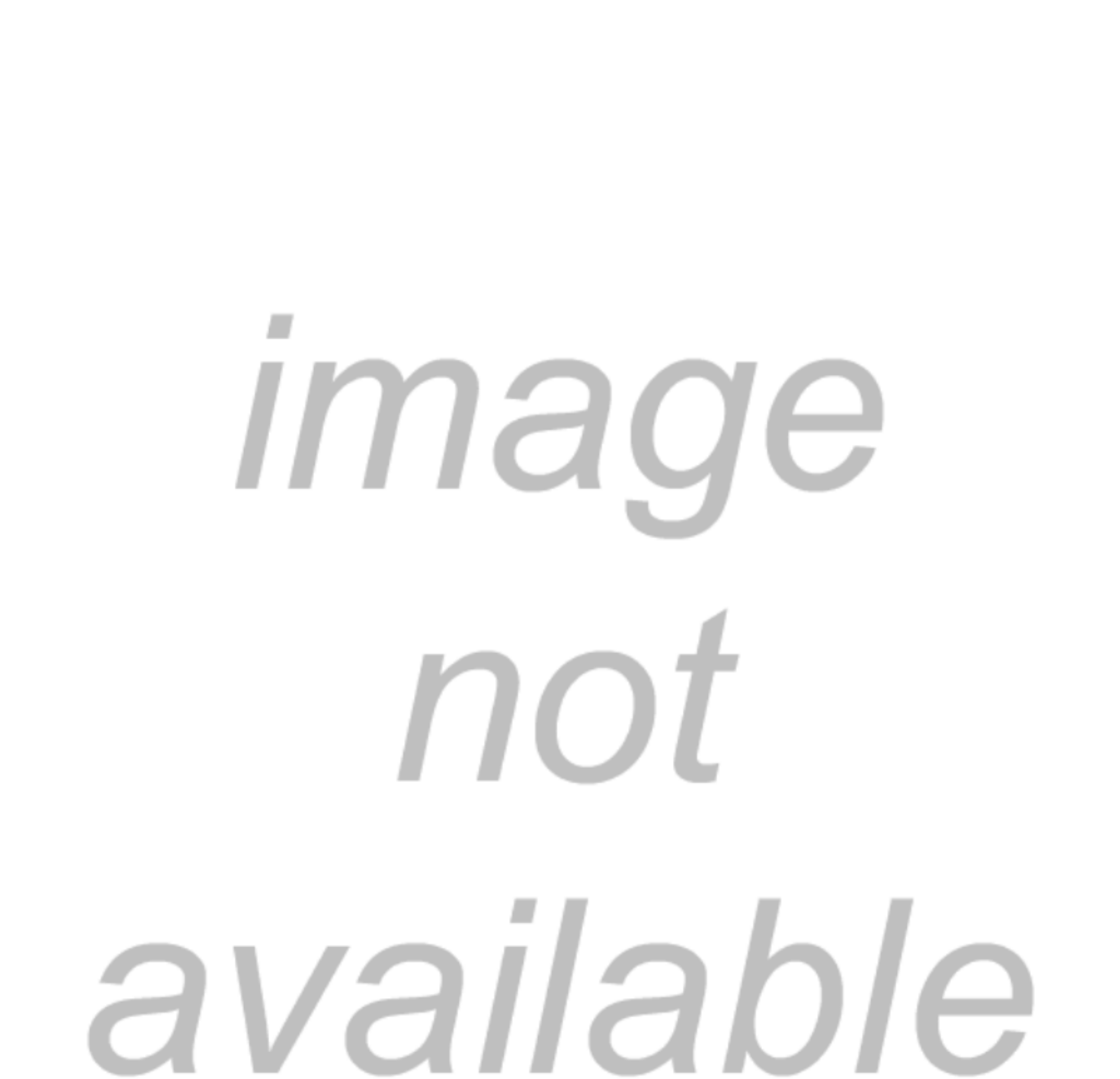
Text (3) is an excerpt from *Der grosse Lalula* by Christian Morgenstern:

(3) Kroklowafgi? Semememi!
Seikronto prafriplo.
Bifzi, bafzi; hulalomi . . .
quasti besti bo . . .

This text has a linear manifestation (expression) to which no content can be ordered, since the author did not refer to any existing code (I am excluding for the sake of simplicity phonic connotations as well as the halo of 'literariness' acquired by this pre-Dada experiment).

Text (4) is an excerpt from *Toto-Vaca* by Tristan Tzara:

(4) ka tangi te kivi
kivi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external circumstances are detected, they are inserted into box 1, to be transformed into pieces of encyclopedic knowledge (contextual and circumstantial selections, frames, and any other type of overcoding).

0.5. Bracketed extensions

As far as the reader recognizes the existence of certain individuals (be they animate or not) furnished with certain properties (among which the possible properties of performing certain actions), he probably makes some indexical presuppositions, that is, he assigns those subjects to a possible world. In order to apply the information provided by the lexicon, he assumes a transitory identity between this world and the world of his experience (reflected by the lexicon).

If, by chance, in the course of his decoding, the reader discovers some discrepancy between the world as pictured by the social lexicon and the world as pictured by the idiolectal lexicon of the text (for instance, a stone—inanimate—has the property of speaking), he practically 'jumps' at box 10 or puts the extension into brackets, that is, he suspends his disbelief, waiting for more semantic information, to be actualized at box 4 (discursive structures).

0.6. Discursive structures

0.6.1. Codes, overcoding, frames

At box 4 the reader confronts the text linear manifestation with the system of codes and subcodes provided by the language in which the text is written (box 1). Such a system is presupposed by the present research in the format of an encyclopedia, structured as the Model Q proposed in *Theory* (2.12).

This begins the transformation of the expression into content, word by word, phrase by phrase. In a frenzy of lexicological optimism, one could say that the virtual context of every verbal expression is already established by the lexicon and that the reader has nothing to do but pick up there what must be correlated to the expressions. Everyone knows that things are not that simple (see *Theory,* 2.15): even a comprehensive theory of the 'amalgamation' between sememes meets with the problem of 'contextual meaning'.

I do not believe, however—as many text theorists maintain—that there is an incurable gap between lexical meaning and textual meaning. I do not believe, since semantic compositional analysis proved to be unsuccessful in explaining complex processes of textual amalgamation, that it should be completely substituted by an autonomous set of textual rules providing the final interpretation of lexical meanings. I believe, on the contrary, that, if a text can be generated and interpreted, this ought to

happen for the same semiotic reasons for which lexical meanings are graspable and for which a sentence can be both generated and interpreted. The only problem is to insert into semantic compositional spectrums also contextual and circumstantial selections (*Theory*, 2.11), to add overcoded rules (*Theory*, 2.14), and to consider within the sememic representation also *textual operators* (see 0.6.2). The essay on Peircean semantics (Chapter 7) should encourage such a perspective.

In 0.6.2 we shall see that even a textual category such as 'frame' is based upon the model of a sememic representation in terms of case grammar. We shall also see, in 0.7.4, that there is a strong structural similarity between this type of sememic representation and the more abstract structures. Therefore, we can assume that *a sememe is in itself an inchoative text whereas a text is an expanded sememe.*[9]

That is why it is not so realistic to consider the boxes of Figure 0.3 as 'real' steps in text interpretation: they are virtual poles of an interpretative movement which is far and away more continuous and whose timing is rather unpredictable.

Having said this, we can proceed with examining the various codes and subcodes of box 1.

0.6.1.1. *Basic dictionary.* At this sublevel the reader resorts to a lexicon with the format of a basic dictionary and immediately detects the most basic semantic properties of the sememes involved, so as to make a first tentative amalgamation. If the text says that /once upon a time there was a young princess called Snow White. She was very pretty/, the reader detects by a first semantic analysis of «princess» that Snow White is surely a «woman». The sememe «princess» is virtually much more complex (for instance, «woman» entails «human female», and a human female should be represented by many properties such as having certain body organs, and so on). At this point the reader does not know as yet which of these *virtual* properties must be *actualized.* This decision will be helped only by further amalgamation and by textual operators. At this sublevel the reader also actualizes the syntactic properties of the lexemes (singular, feminine, noun, and so on) and can begin to establish co-references.

0.6.1.2. *Rules of co-reference.* On the basis of the first semantic analysis and of the detection of syntactical properties, the reader disambiguates anaphorical and deictic expressions (various shifters). Thus he is able to decide that the /she/ of the text quoted above must be referred to the princess. We shall see in 0.6.2 that one cannot disambiguate most of these co-references without resorting to textual operators. The reader in any case outlines here the first tentative *co-textual* relations. At this level the reader operates every transformation from surface to deep

Alphonse Allais), the title of the first chapter introduces a /Monsieur/ and a /Dame/. In the first lines of the text a given Raoul and a given Marguerite are introduced. Resorting to an onomastic dictionary, the reader interprets them as two human beings, respectively male and female. An overcoded rule tells him that (irony or other figure excepted) the title of a chapter usually announces the content of it. The reader thus co-refers /Monsieur/ to Raoul and /Dame/ to Marguerite and detects that they are adult and presumably belong to a bourgeois milieu.

The text continues by saying that Raoul and Marguerite are /married/. The text does not say that they are married to each other, but the Model Reader has no doubt about this. He is in fact resorting to overcoded stylistic rules. Allais knows that his Model Reader does not need more information about this marriage. When a speaker wants to trick us with such a sort of overcoding, he makes it explicit. To quote a joke of Woody Allen's: "I desperately wish to return to the womb. Anybody's."

0.6.1.5. *Inferences by common frames.* In *Un drame bien parisien,* chapter 2, Raoul and Marguerite, very jealous of each other, are quarreling. At a certain point Raoul pursues Marguerite, and the French text says as follows:

(5) *La main levée, l'oeil dur, la moustache telle celle des chats furibonds, Raoul marcha sur Marguerite. . . .*

The reader understands that Raoul raises his hand to strike, even though the linear text manifestation shows neither the fact nor the intention. In fact, the English translator of the story (see Appendix 2) translates "hand raised to strike." It is a correct interpretation. However, were Raoul a senator at a legislative session, a raised hand would mean a request to speak. Since he is a husband quarreling with his wife, we make the only possible inference (supported also by the other characteristics of Raoul manifested by the text: remorseless gaze, bristling moustache . . .). But the inference was possible only because the reader was resorting to the conventional *frame* «violent altercation».

According to current research both in Artificial Intelligence and in text theories, a *frame* looks like something half-way between a very comprehensive encyclopedic sememic representation expressed in terms of a case grammar (see *Theory,* 2.11.1) and an instance of *overcoding*. Probably this notion is still an empirical one (and as such it is used in Artificial Intelligence) to be better defined within the framework of a semiotic theory (by distinguishing between coded and overcoded frames). But for the present purposes it can be used without further technicalities. A frame is "a data-structure for representing a stereotyped situation like being in a certain kind of living room or going to a child's birthday party" (Winston, 1977:180) and frames are "(cognitive) knowledge repre-

sentations about the 'world' which enable us to perform such basic cognitive acts as perception, language comprehension and actions" (van Dijk, 1976b:31). In this sense the frame for supermarket determines "units or chunks of concepts . . . denoting certain courses of events or courses of actions involving several objects, persons, properties, relations or facts" (van Dijk, 1976b:36; see for a previous attempt Petőfi, 1976b). Thus the supermarket frame would involve virtually the notion of a place where people enter to buy items of different types, pick them up without mediation of any vendor, pay for them all together at a terminal counter, and so on. Probably a good frame of this sort involves also the list of all the commodities one can find in a supermarket (brooms: *yes;* cars: *no*). In this sense a frame is already an inchoative text or a condensed story—but also an encyclopedic representation of a sememe can be such; see the essay on Peirce (Chapter 7) and the example of the encyclopedic representation of lithium: I am presently uncertain whether this text represents an enlarged case-grammar-like encyclopedic analysis or the frame «producing lithium».[10]

0.6.1.6. *Inferences by intertextual frames.* No text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts. Intertextual knowledge (see especially Kristeva, 1970) can be considered a special case of overcoding and establishes its own intertextual frames (frequently to be identified with genre rules). The reader of (5) is convinced that Raoul raises his hand to strike because a lot of narrative situations have definitely overcoded the situation «comic quarrel between husband and wife». Even iconographical frames (thousand of hands raised to strike in thousands of pictures) help the reader to make his inference: intertextual knowledge (the extreme periphery of a semantic encyclopedia) encompasses all the semiotic systems with which the reader is familiar. The case (Joyce's Minucius Mandrake) studied in Chapter 2, on metaphor, is a good instance of a textual riddle that can be disambiguated only by means of intertextual information. (In my interpretation both the common frame «trial» and the textual frame «Mandrake hypnotizes» enter into play.) In Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris,* the first introduction of Fleur-de-Marie immediately reechoes the literary topos of *'la vierge souillée'*. Every character (or situation) of a novel is immediately endowed with properties that the text does not directly manifest and that the reader has been "programmed" to borrow from the treasury of intertextuality.

Common frames come to the reader from his storage of encyclopedic knowledge and are mainly rules for practical life (Charniak, 1975). Intertextual frames, on the contrary, are already literary 'topoi', narrative schemes (see Riffaterre, 1973; 1976).

Frequently, the reader, instead of resorting to a common frame, picks up from the storage of his intertextual competence already reduced

intertextual frames (such as typical situations: the Oedipean triangle as proposed by Freud is one among these); genre rules produce textual frames more reduced than common frames. The intertextual frame «the great train robbery» made popular by a number of early western movies encompasses fewer actions, individuals, and other properties than does the common frame «train robbery» as referred to by professional outlaws.

0.6.1.7. *Ideological overcoding.* In *Theory* (3.9) I have described ideological systems as cases of overcoding. Let me say, for the present purpose, that the reader approaches a text from a personal ideological perspective, even when he is not aware of this, even when his ideological bias is only a highly simplified system of axiological oppositions. Since the reader is supposed to single out (in box 9) the elementary ideological structures of the *text,* this operation is overdetermined by his ideological *subcodes.*

This means that not only the outline of textual ideological structures is governed by the ideological bias of the reader but also that a given ideological background can help one to discover or to ignore textual ideological structures. A reader of Fleming's stories who shares the ideological judgments expressed by the text at the level of discoursive structures is probably not eager to look for an underlying ideological scaffolding at a more abstract level; on the contrary, a reader who challenges many of the author's explicit value judgments is to go further with an ideological analysis so as to 'unmask' the hidden catechization performed at more profound levels.

But ideological biases can also work as code-switchers, leading one to read a given text in the light of 'aberrant' codes (where 'aberrant' means only different from the ones envisaged by the sender). Typical examples are the medieval interpretation of Virgil and the proletarian interpretation of *Les Mystères de Paris.* In both cases the code-switching took place in spite of the explicit ideological commitment of the author.

Finally, an ideological bias can lead a critical reader to make a given text say more than it apparently says, that is, to find out what in that text is ideologically presupposed, untold. In this movement from the ideological subcodes of the interpreter to the ideological subcodes tentatively attributed to the author (the encyclopedia of his social group or historical period being verified in singling out the ideological structures of the text), even the most closed texts are surgically 'opened': fiction is transformed into document and the innocence of fancy is translated into the disturbing evidence of a philosophical statement.

Sometimes a text asks for ideological cooperation on the part of the reader (Brecht); at other times the text seems to refuse any ideological commitment, although its ideological message consists just in this refusal.

0.6.3. Topics and isotopies

Frames and sememic representations are both based on processes of unlimited semiosis, and as such they call for the responsibility of the addressee. Since the semantic encyclopedia is in itself potentially infinite, semiosis is unlimited, and, from the extreme periphery of a given sememe, the center of any other could be reached, and vice versa (see also the Model Q in *Theory,* 2.12). Since every proposition contains every other proposition (as shown in Chapter 7, on Peirce), a text could generate, by further semantic disclosures, every other text. (By the way, this is exactly what happens in intertextual circulation: the history of literature is a living proof of this hypothesis.)

We have thus to decide how a text, in itself potentially infinite, can generate only those interpretations it can foresee (it is not true that, as Valéry claims, "il n'y a pas de vrai sens d'un texte": we have seen that even the more 'open' among experimental texts direct their own free interpretation and preestablish the movement of their Model Reader). In fact, "a frame may contain a great many details whose supposition is not specifically warranted by the situation" (Winston, 1977:180), and "it seems obvious that when I organize a party, or when I read a story about such a party, I need not actualize the whole supermarket by the simple fact that I briefly go to the supermarket to get some peanuts for my guests. . . . In a situation in which 'getting peanuts for my guests' is *topic* . . . the only aspect which is relevant is the successfulness of the act realizing my purpose" (van Dijk, 1976b:38).

Many of the codes and subcodes listed in 0.6.1 do not strictly concern text interpretation. They may also concern single lexemes or sentences (except perhaps for the operations of co-reference). But even at the level of simple sentences, each of these operations risks proving unsuccessful, as many exercises on grammatical ambiguities are still demonstrating: outside a textual framework, green colorless ideas can neither exist nor sleep furiously, and we cannot understand who (or what) are flying planes.

When we find an ambiguous sentence or a small textual portion isolated from any co-text or circumstance of utterance, we cannot disambiguate it without resorting to a presupposed 'aboutness' of the co-text, usually labeled as the *textual topic* (of which the expressed text is the *comment*). It is usually detected by formulating a *question.*

Consider, for instance, the following famous vicious example:

(6) *Charles makes love with his wife twice a week. So does John.*

This short text allows a malicious reader to make embarrassing inference about the morality of this friendly 'triangle', while a more virtuous

one can interpret it as a statistical statement about the sexual rhythms of two different couples.

Nevertheless, let us try to see (6) as the proper answer to each of the following questions:

(7) *How many times a week do Charles and John make love with their own wives?* (Topic: sexual rhythm of two couples.)
(8) *I do not really understand the relationship between those three. What's going on—I mean, sexually?* (Topic: relation between a woman and two men.)

At this point (6) can be easily disambiguated.[12]

The topic as a textual operator is not, however, merely a matter of the reader's initiative. A satisfactory semantic representation should consider the relation with the textual topic as one of its compositional features. This appears very clear in the compositional analysis of a 'syncategorematic' such as /so/.

Returning to (6) and to the questions (7) and (8) that disambiguate it, we should consider (as stored within the encyclopedia) a compositional analysis of /so/ according to which a first semantic marker sounding more or less like «in the same way as» should be supported by the selection «referring to the topic». In this way the sememe presupposes the co-text and the text is nothing else but a normal expansion of the sememe.

Consider now an expression like /on the other hand/ in the following texts:

(9) *Mary loves apples. John, on the other hand, hates them.*
(10) *Mary loves apples. On the other hand, she hates bananas.*
(11) *Mary loves apples. John, on the other hand, is fond of bananas.*
(12) *Mary is playing her cello. John, on the other hand, is eating bananas.*

According to the expressions under examination, one could think that /on the other hand/ marks an alternative to the subject and her action in (9), the action and the object in (10), the subject and the object in (11) and everything in (12).

The problem becomes clear when (9)–(12) are seen as the proper answer to four different questions:

(13) *Do Mary and John love apples?* (Topic: people who love apples.)
(14) *What kind of fruit does Mary love?* (Topic: fruit Mary loves.)
(15) *What kind of fruit does John love?* (Topic: fruit John loves.)
(16) *What the hell are those kids doing? They were supposed to have their music lesson!* (Topic: John and Mary's music lesson.)

and isotopy (as denounced by the same etymological root); nevertheless, there is a difference between the two concepts for at least two reasons. The topic as question governs the semantic disclosures, that is, the selection of the semantic properties that can or must be taken into account during the reading of a given text; as such, topics are means to produce isotopies. Since the relevant semantic categories (upon which to establish an isotopy) are not necessarily manifested, the topic as question is an abductive schema that helps the reader to decide which semantic properties have to be actualized, whereas isotopies are the actual textual verification of that tentative hypothesis.[15]

Thus the abduction of the textual topic helps the reader to select the right frames, to reduce them to a manageable format, to blow up and to narcotize given semantic properties of the lexemes to be amalgamated, and to establish the isotopy according to which he decides to interpret the linear text manifestation so as to actualize the discoursive structure of a text. But there is a hierarchy of isotopies, and we shall find that this category also works at the next level.

0.7. Narrative structures

0.7.1. From plot to *fabula*

0.7.1.1. Once he has actualized the discursive level, the reader knows what 'happens' in a given text. He is now able to summarize it, therefore reaching a series of levels of abstraction by expressing one or more macropropositions (see van Dijk, 1975).

In order to understand this progressive abstractive process, let us retain an old opposition, still valid as a first approach to the question: the difference proposed by Russian formalists between *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot or discourse).[16]

The *fabula* is the basic story stuff, the logic of actions or the syntax of characters, the time-oriented course of events. It need not necessarily be a sequence of human actions (physical or not), but can also concern a temporal transformation of ideas or a series of events concerning inanimate objects.

The plot is the story as actually told, along with all its deviations, digressions, flashbacks, and the whole of the verbal devices.

According to these definitions the plot should correspond to the discursive structure. One may also consider the plot as a first tentative synthesis made by the reader once all the operations of actualization of the discursive structures are accomplished. Perhaps, in this more restricted sense, in this first synthesis of the actualized intensions, some lexical elements as well as minor or (apparently) irrelevant microsequences get dropped out. Let us suppose that certain sentences can also

be reformulated by a very analytical paraphrasis. Because of all these uncertainties, I have not recorded the phase of actualization of plot by a special 'box'.

What is certain is that, through an imprecise series of mediatory abstractions, the reader comes to elaborate a more precise series of macropropositions that constitute a *possible fabula.*

It is a common naiveté of many current text theories to believe that these macropropositions must constitute a *synthesis* of micropropositions expressed at the level of discursive structures. This is true in many cases (the whole of *Oedipus Rex* can be summarized as «find out the guilty!»), but there are a number of narrative situations where the macropropositions must *expand* the discursive structures. To give only a few examples, what is the *fabula* carried on by the first two verses of Dante's *Divine Comedy?* According to the medieval theory of four senses, there are at least four *fabulae,* each of them expanded beyond the first surface level. The narrative structure of */Dieu invisible crea le monde visible/* is—as every linguist knows very well—«There is a God. God is invisible. God created the world. The world is visible». Take also Corneille's /qu'il mourût!/ and try to *expand* the *fabula* expressed by this short speech act.

I referred to "a possible" *fabula* since this concept (at least in the form traditionally accepted) is a problematic one. According to the power of abstraction that the reader is able to manage, the *fabula* can be established and recognized at different levels. *Fabulae* are narrative isotopies. *Ivanhoe* can be both the story of what happens to Cedric, Rowena, Rebecca, and so on, and the story of the clash between Normans and Anglo-Saxons. It depends upon whether one has to reduce the novel for a screenplay, to write book-jacket copy, or to find three lines for an appealing advertisement to be placed in a quarterly of Marxist studies.

Is *Oedipus Rex* the story of detection, incest, or parricide? I think that (while there is a traditional story concerning parricide and incest) Sophocles' tragedy is the story of a detection concerning another story, namely, the traditional story of parricide and incest. However, one can decide that the basic 'stuff' one is interested in is the traditional story that the plot reveals step by step through the various phases of the detection. Therefore *Oedipus Rex* has a first-level story (detection) and a second-level one. Obviously, as far as the process of further abstraction goes, the reader is approaching the deepest intensional levels (box 8). A first intermediate level before entry to box 8 is the reduction of the *fabula* into a series of narrative structures à la Propp. A shallower level is the assimilation of the *fabula* to the binary disjunctions proposed by Bremond (1973) or a first reduction to standard *themes* or *motives.*

0.7.1.2. It seems that there are texts without a narrative level, such as questions, commands, minimal conversation pieces. In fact, if one is

ordering me /come here/, I can summarize the content of the expression as «There is someone wanting me to go there» or something like that. Once again, the macroproposition is longer than the microproposition manifesting it.

As for conversational texts, consider the following:

(17) *Paul: Where is Peter?*
Mary: Out.
Paul: I see. I thought he was still sleeping.

From text (17) one can extrapolate a story telling that (i) in the world of Paul's and Mary's knowledge (probably identifiable with the 'real' one), there is a certain Peter; (ii) Paul believed p (= Peter is still sleeping) while Mary assumed she knew that q (= Peter is out); (iii) Mary informed Paul about q and Paul did not believe any longer that p was the case and presumed to know that q was the case.

Once this has been ascertained, all the other problems concerning this dialogue (presuppositions about the fact that Peter is a male human being, that he is known both to Mary and to Paul, that the conversation takes place within a house or any other closed space, that Paul wants to know something about Peter, and that the time of the conversation is probably late morning) are a matter of semantic disclosure.

In text (17) the *fabula* can be the one I have tried to extrapolate, but a more abstract macroproposition may be «Paul is looking for Peter», «Paul is asking Mary about Peter», or «Mary gives Paul unexpected information». Later it will become evident that each of these three summaries involves other boxes (the third summary, for instance, involves box 10).

In the same way all the examples of conversational implicature given by Grice (1967) carry on a virtual story. The pragmatic value of implicatures consists only in that they oblige the addressee to outline a story where there apparently was the accidental or malicious flouting of a conversational maxim:

(18) *A: I am out of petrol.*
B: There is a garage round the corner.

(Story: A needs petrol and B wants to help him. B knows that A knows that usually garages sell petrol, knows that there is a garage round the corner, and knows (or hopes) that this garage is open and has petrol to sell. So he informs A about the location of the garage. Will or will not A follow successfully the suggestion of B?) As you see, this story has also a potential rate of narrative suspense.

0.7.1.3. One should accept either a large or a more restricted definition of *fabula*. A restricted definition of a narrative structure as a description

that at such an elementary level the *fabula* becomes a matter for box 8, a pure opposition of roles; or for box 10, a world structure.

But, if the text does not tell a consistent *fabula*, there is another way to approach it from a narrative point of view: the text narrates the various steps of its own construction. It is possible to read a scientific essay this way, as does Greimas (1975), where he analyzes a *"discours non figuratif"* such as Dumezil's introduction to *Naissance d'Archange.* Greimas discovers in this scientific text not only an *"organisation discursive"* (corresponding to box 4) but also an *"organisation narrative,"* corresponding to a part of box 6 (as far as narrative functions as loss or victory are identified) and to boxes 9 and 10. The text thus appears as the story of a research, with its temporal steps, the modification imposed on the starting situation by an acting subject (the researcher—or Science in person).

0.7.2. Forecasts and inferential walks

0.7.2.1. However, the role of the reader does not consist only in choosing the level of abstraction at which to produce the macropropositions of the *fabula.* The *fabula* is not produced once the text has been definitely read: the *fabula* is the result of a continuous series of abductions made during the course of the reading. Therefore the *fabula* is always experienced step by step.

Since every step usually involves a change of state and a lapse of time, the reader is led to make an intermediate *extensional* operation: he considers the various macropropositions as statements about events taking place in a still-bracketed possible world. Each of these statements concerns the way in which a given individual determines or undergoes a certain change of state, and the reader is induced to wonder what could happen at the next step of the story.

To wonder about the next step of a given story means to face a state of disjunction of probabilities.

In fact, such disjunctions occur at every sentence of a narrative step, even within the boundaries of a single sentence: *"La Marquise sortit à cinq heures . . ."*—to do what, to go where? But the condition of a neurotic reader compelled to ask Whom? What? at every occurrence of a transitive verb (even though witnessing a profound affinity between sememic structures and narrative ones) is usually neutralized by the normal reading speed.

The 'relevant' disjunction of probability ought then to take place at the junction of those macropropositions the reader has identified as relevant components of the *fabula.*

In many cases the right clues to establishing these junctions are given either at the text linear manifestation level (subdivision in chapters and

paragraphs and other graphic devices; in the *roman-feuilleton,* the temporal distribution by instalments) or at the surface intensional level (explicit warnings or connotative hints, innuendos, allusions preparing states of suspense). It is, in other words, the plot to display all the devices able to elicit expectations at the level of the *fabula.*

To expect means to forecast: the reader collaborates in the course of the *fabula,* making forecasts about the forthcoming state of affairs. The further states must prove or disprove his hypotheses (see Vaina, 1976; 1977).

The end of the text not only confirms or contradicts the last forecasts, but also authenticates or inauthenticates the whole system of long-distance hypotheses hazarded by the reader about the final state of the *fabula.*

In Figure 0.3 this dialectic of forecasts and proofs is scored at box 7, half-way between boxes 5 and 10, which concern extensions. This dialectic is in fact unpredictably distributed all along the interpretative journey, but it definitely concerns the world structure of the text, that is, the deep extensional level, and only at that level can it be rigorously analyzed.

0.7.2.2. In order to make forecasts which can be approved by the further course of the *fabula,* the Model Reader resorts to intertextual frames. Consider text (5) (see 0.6.1.5). As Raoul raises his hand, the reader understands that Raoul wants to beat Marguerite (semantic disclosure) and expects that he will actually beat Marguerite. This second interpretative movement has nothing to do with the actualization of discursive structures: it represents a forecast activated at the level of *fabula* (by the way, it will be disproved by the course of the story: Raoul will not actually beat Marguerite).

The reader was encouraged to activate this hypothesis by a lot of already recorded narrative situations (intertextual frames). To identify these frames the reader had to 'walk', so to speak, outside the text, in order to gather intertextual support (a quest for analogous 'topoi', themes, or motives).[18]

I call these interpretative moves *inferential walks:* they are not mere whimsical initiatives on the part of the reader, but are elicited by discursive structures and foreseen by the whole textual strategy as indispensable components of the construction of the *fabula.*

Frequently, the *fabula* is made *also* of presupposed macropropositions already actualized by other texts, which the reader is invited to insert into the story so that they can be taken for granted in its following steps. It is a common styleme in many traditional novels for a text to say "Our reader has surely already understood that . . ." while untold phrases con-

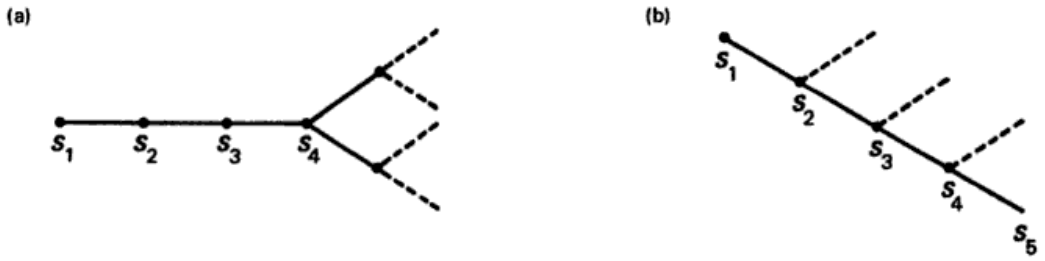

Figure 0.4

I shall try to represent two kinds of liberality in openness by the two diagrams of Figure 0.4 (where the nodes *s* represent states of the *fabula* at which a forecast is in some way elicited). In case (a) the sender leads the addressee step by step to a state of pluriprobability (many courses of events are given as equiprobable). The end of the text is not its final state, since the reader is invited to make his own free choices and to re-evaluate the entire text from the point of view of his final decision. Such a situation is typical of many avant-garde texts (fictional and nonfictional) and of post-Webernian music.

A typical instance of such a diagram is the episode of Minucius Mandrake analyzed in Chapter 2: the episode does not end, or may end in various ways. Likewise the reader can imagine various possible outcomes after the end of the text linear manifestation of *Gordon Pym* (the final note of the author does not reduce, but even enhances, the openness).

In case (b) the sender offers his addressee continual occasions for forecasting, but at each further step he reasserts, so to speak, the rights of his own text, saying without ambiguity what has to be taken as 'true' in his fictional world. Typical from this point of view are detective novels.[19]

Obviously, the diagrams in Figure 0.4 represent two abstract types of cooperation, a sort of straight opposition between *open* and *closed* narrative structures. In reality the practice of generating and interpreting texts represents a graded continuum of possible interaction α . . . . . ω, where α is the offer of a maximal freedom, and ω the most repressive request of conformity. A text can rank at a given position γ (as far as the intentions of its author are concerned) and obtain a result δ or μ according either to a failure in its strategy or to the cultural and psychological background of the addressee.

0.7.4. The sememe and the *fabula*

This dialectic of proposals and expectations rules *also* nonfictional texts. Consider this minimal textual stimulus:

(20) *Robin is a bachelor, as . . .*

which can arouse at least four possible choices (only one will be obviously authenticated by the further textual course):

(21) *he is serving under the standard of Batman.*
(22) *he has a homosexual relation with Batman.*
(23) *he got a B.A. at the Gotham City College.*
(24) *it is a seal* (this choice being verisimilar only for a lexicalist).

I realize that there is a difference between the expectations displayed vis-à-vis a *fabula* and those aroused by the manifestation of the lexeme /bachelor/. In this second case the interpreter only expects to ascertain which of the already *coded* senses of /bachelor/ (young knight, unmarried, B.A., unmated seal) will be textually actualized. But are we sure that in the course of a story something different happens? A story actualizes pre-overcoded narrative functions, that is, intertextual frames.

The way in which semantic disclosures and narrative forecasts are strictly interdependent, and co-dependent on the same storage of encyclopedic knowledge, is demonstrated very well by the following (rather elementary) example.

In Cyrus S. Sulzberger's *The Tooth Merchant,* the narrator begins by saying that he was sleeping in Istanbul in a brothel with a prostitute, Iffet,

(25) *when suddenly there was a scream at the door followed by a thump on the stairs. "Aaaaaaiiiiieee, the American Fleet," moaned Iffet, hauling the flyblown sheet about her head as the police burst in.*

We have the chance to have also at our disposal the Italian translation of this text. A translation is an actualized and manifested interpretation—therefore an important witness for our purposes. The Italian translation reads as follows:

(26) *quando fummo risvegliati di soprassalto da strilli giù in basso, seguiti da uno scalpiccio su per le scale. "Ahiahiai, la flotta americana!" gemette Iffet coprendosi la testa col lenzuolo. Irruppe invece la polizia.*

The translator (hereafter our Model Reader) has made the following first inference: that the narrator is speaking in the first person, that he was sleeping, and that he is able to report about the scream means that he has been awakened by the scream. From a short surface microproposition, the Model Reader has extrapolated a more analytical macroproposition: *x* was sleeping, then there was a scream, then *x* woke up, then *x* heard the scream. The reference was to the common frame «to be suddenly awakened by a noise» (involving a very subtle time order, with relations of contemporaneity). In fact, why at the manifestation level was the scream 'sudden'? Sudden with respect to whom? This /suddenly/ is a hypallage; it is not the scream which is sudden, it is the experience of it undergone by the narrator (*rhetorical overcoding*).

The English text says that there was a scream at the door. Which door? The one of the room where the narrator was sleeping[20] or the one down-

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The Role of the Reader

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By Umberto Eco

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