

# A Semiotic Representation of Arabic Literature



# A Semiotic Representation of Arabic Literature

By

Ibrahim Taha

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



A Semiotic Representation of Arabic Literature

By Ibrahim Taha

This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2025 by Ibrahim Taha

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN: 978-1-0364-5722-8

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-5723-5

# CONTENTS

Preface .....	vii
Introduction .....	ix
Commitment ( <i>Itizām</i> ), Colonization and Subalternity	
<b>Section I: Representation for Knowing</b>	
Chapter 1 .....	2
Writing Literature	
Chapter 2 .....	19
Reading Literature	
Chapter 3 .....	37
Representation, Semiotics and Anthroposemiotics	
<b>Section II: Representation: Ending and Closure</b>	
Chapter 4 .....	48
Closurization: Four Models of Representation	
Chapter 5 .....	69
Open Representation: Post-Ending Activity	
<b>Section III: Feminist Representation: Strategy and Ideology</b>	
Chapter 6 .....	90
Offensive Representation: Feminist Poetics	
Chapter 7 .....	118
Fighting Feminism: Daily Life Representation	

## **Section IV: Minimalist Representation: Maximalist Meaning**

Chapter 8 .....	150
Less is More: The Semiotic Power of Brevity in the Quran	
Chapter 9 .....	177
The Minimalist Story: A Generic Representation	

## **Section V: Palestinian Literature: Representing the “Colonized”**

Chapter 10 .....	196
The Palestinians in Israel: Representing a National Minority	
Chapter 11 .....	218
Representation by Titling in Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s Poetry	
Chapter 12 .....	235
Intertextual Representation in Samīḥ al-Qāsim’s Poetry	
Afterword and Conclusion: Who needs commitment?! .....	244
Bibliography .....	251

## PREFACE

The non-stop wars in the the Middle East are an evident fact. One may identify three modes of *war* in this region: (1) Arab countries with Israel, (2) among Arab countries themselves, (3) civil wars within Arab countries. All these modes consistently have more implications in three chief fields: (1) politics, (2) economics and (3) social affairs, including the status of women. The question is: What are writers expected to write about in such a severe environment of endless war? As naturally involved humans, Arab writers have no other option but to deal with this context, since they are unavoidably involved in their realities, as noted by Max Adereth. All of them, with no exception, have a natural interest in addressing their harsh reality, shaped by non-stop wars, both as individuals and as a national collective. The differences between them are associated with the *ways* they *represent* their respective severe realities.

Literature is a unique medium of language owing much to various disciplines. Texts, the physical phase of literature, are my departure and arrival points for *any* literary study: out from the text and back again. The most efficient discipline that maintains this move out from the text, from language to reality and to theories, is *semiotics*. The key semiotic term involved in this insight is *representation*.

This book continues my consistent semiotic approach to literature, according to which literature is the art of *representation*. By this I mean that the whole “truth” is not limited to textual reality itself, but could be hidden in the *way* it is *re-presented* in a text. Semiotic representation is a *productive* approach, meant to produce meanings from techniques, devices, styles, structures, forms, modes and genres. Semiotics seems to be the most efficient discipline to connect “form” and “content” in a productive way. We thus ask: How can we understand the *way* Arabic literature represents its agenda, whatever that may be? In my recent books *Arabic Minimalist Story: Genre, Politics and Poetics in the Self-colonial Era* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009) and *Brevity in Rhetoric and the Holy Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 2012), I put this insight into practice, using the category of literary genre. In my book *Heroizability: An Anthroposemiotic Theory of Literary Characters* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2015), I suggested an applied model for the production of meaning from the *way* characters in narrative fiction

are characterized and represented. My latest Arabic book *The Capture of Meaning: An Introduction to Composite Semiotics in Arabic Discourse* (Nazareth: The Arabic Language Academy, 2022) presents diverse applied semiotic studies in Arabic literature from various Arab countries.

My primary aim in the present book is to afford readers convenient access to some of my studies, conducted over a period of three decades and published in various journals and books. The studies collected in the book are representative of the above-mentioned view of literature, as discussed in detail in the introduction and in section I. As mentioned above, most chapters of this book already appeared elsewhere in one way or another. My cordial thanks go to the editors and publishers of the following journals and books for permission to reuse material that appeared in them: “A Reading of Reuven Snir, *Rak‘atān fī al-‘Ishq: Dirāsa fī shi‘r ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī Press, 2002)”, *Arab Studies Journal (ASJ)* xi: 2 & xii: 1 (2003/2004): 115–188; “Ken Seigneurie, ed., *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative* (Germany: Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2003), *Middle Eastern Literatures* 10:2 (2007): 188-193; “Writing Literature: Modeling for Knowing”, *Versus: Quaderni di Studi Semiotici* [VS] 125:2 (2017): 321 – 340; “Reading Literature: From Decoding to Remodeling”, *The American Journal of Semiotics* [TAJS] 31: 3/4 (2015): 337 – 360; “Meeting of Ending and History in Modern Arabic Literature”, *al-‘Arabiyya: Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic* 32 (1999):191-213; “Openness and Closedness: Four Categories of Closure in Modern Arabic Fiction”, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 2 (1998/1999): 1-23; “Swimming against the Current: Towards an Arab Feminist Poetic Strategy”, *Orientalia Suecana* LVI (2007): 193-222; “‘Beware Men, They Are All Wild Animals’ – Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight and Repudiation”, *al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature* 27 (2006): 25-71; “Brevity and Meaning: A Cumulative Treble Reading of Q 112”, *The Islamic Quarterly* 56:4 (2012): 299-336; “The Modern Arabic Very Short Story: A Generic Approach”, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 31:1 (2000): 59-84; “The Palestinians in Israel: Towards a Minority Literature”, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 3:2 (2000): 219-234; “The Power of the Title: *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?* by Mahmud Darwish”, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000): 66-83; “Intertextuality in Samīh al-Qāsim’s Poetry: A Philosophy of Blending”, in Meir Hatina and Yona Sheffer, eds., *Cultural Pearls from the East* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021): 91-105.



# INTRODUCTION

## COMMITMENT (*ILTIZĀM*), COLONIZATION AND SUBALTERNITY

In critical crises, people engage all efficient and appropriate means to serve their own concerns, needs and goals, so that their dreams can ultimately come true. This is the very case of Arabic literature from the late years of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Scholars make a distinct case for the role of literature in the rise of national movements. "Levantine Arabic and Hebrew literatures are, therefore, each for different reasons nursing decades-long commitment hangovers. Neither can stand another sip, yet the logic of the struggle with the other demands it. Without commitment, Arabic literature seems to acquiesce to defeat at the hands of Israel. Without commitment, Hebrew literature seems to forfeit a powerful means of maintaining ideological unity in the face of Arab opposition" (Seigneurie 2003, 21).

Generally speaking, Seigneurie's volume is meant to investigate the interrelations between narrative fiction in the Levant and reality/history. Making an intensive usage of the term "commitment" as a theoretical background and methodical framework of the essays gathered in this volume may involve some unnecessary generalities. We should be very careful with using this term. If we refer by *iltizām* to ideological writing (political, social, religious, or whatsoever) clearly and firmly attached to historical events/ occasions, and identified with particular solid beliefs, views, and the like, in this sense modern Arabic literature, here and there, still makes use, or takes advantage of commitment terminology. However, if we speak about *connected/attached* literature which is somehow *associated* to reality, in its general sense, one cannot but largely find this definition of commitment implemented, to a large extent, everywhere in world literature.

If commitment, in one definition or in another, does exist, somehow, in general literature, we are advised to be careful of over-use of this terminology. One may truly claim that wide-ranging commitment, in philosophical sense, primarily and fundamentally is not a particular method but a whole and comprehensive philosophy which allow writers to take advantage of various romantic, formalist, modernist and even post-modernist techniques. In such a case, one may speak of new updated version of commitment which, to a large extent, *reconciles* between contradictory

techniques and tools. Being an umbrella for diverse trends, commitment needs not to be focused on as a single methodical framework in modern and post-modern era. Commitment will not vanish, true. It will constantly update itself, undergo ceaseless transformations and get wider and wider by absorbing different innovations from various directions. The dilemma Ken Seigneurie is referring to undoubtedly sounds reasonable. Traditionally, commitment, was distinctly *pure*, while modern commitment gets blurred and confused. Pure commitment has always been identified with crises particularly with political and national questions. “Actual politics” (Klemm 2000, 58) was a distinguishing feature of commitment, as Klemm writes, true. However, “implied struggle” or any sort of slight struggle could also be, in principle, a distinguishing feature of commitment. Ken Seigneurie affirms that all essays gathered in this volume are meant to “explore the literary *representation* of social and political crises” (Seigneurie 2003, 26). Nevertheless, the confusion between *commitment* and *representation* in this context may mislead as outlined below.

*Commitment and Beyond: Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s*, edited by Friederike Pannewick, Georges Khalil and Yvonne Albers, is the most significant contribution to the issue of commitment ever published on Arabic literature, encompassing a wide-range of views on commitment and its changing configurations. However, its insistence on *Illizam* terminology, although the concept has been consistently and dramatically reconfigured from the very beginning of 1950’s, needs to be revised from an additional point of view. In whatever way a piece of literature represents “reality”, it is always a committed one. But if this is the case, why do we need to address the issue of commitment at all? Why should we discuss it again and again if it is a *natural aspect* of literature at anytime and anywhere? In semiotic terminology writing *for a cause* and writing *for a goal* are two different concepts. The cause mostly is determined by the author; it may be constructed in the implied author and reconstructed by the reader in a process of modeling and remodeling. Causes arise from reality, from the author’s awareness of reality. The ultimate goal of the caused text is to suggest a “new” reality, as will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters. Representation by nature/definition is a purposive concept. Someone represents a reality by lingual means so that s/he achieves some goal. The way s/he makes use of the lingual means turns the produced text into a system of signs. Friederike Pannewick is fully aware of the double meanings of *causality* (*reason and goal/cause and effect*) (see Pannewick 2015, 224). It is simply impossible to present and practice an “art for art’s sake” detached from everyday life/reality in its inclusive stance. In his introductory chapter to *Arabic*

*Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, Andreas Pflitsch explains that even though the notion of reality and its representability have profoundly changed, two elements remained constant: the need to ‘write with/for a cause’ and an authorial self perception of being a voice for the oppressed (see Pannewick, Khalil and Albers 2015, 14). “One could argue that rather than being entirely ‘new,’ these current literary trends going beyond the early understanding and practice of *iltizām* are rooted in a longer historical process and an expression of a ‘will to live/irādat al-hayāh.’ Maybe this is a source of hope that the ‘darkness’ evoked by al-Shābbī’s poem, quoted above, will eventually disappear some day” (Ibid., 23). Literature everywhere is about the human passion for survival and well-being as individuals or collectives.

Adorno’s reflections on engagement in the arts resulted in a paradoxical position: Art is and is not autonomous. Such an ambivalent or dialectical position might be common to Adorno and to Wannous, who, although never abandoning his self-conception as a committed writer, came to understand commitment to society and to the individual very differently in the late 1980s and 1990s (see Pannewick 2015, 231). Pannewick, in one way or another, attests that no clear-cut dichotomy can be made between committed and uncommitted literature. “I will argue that although many writers applied the postmodernist techniques developed by the New Sensibility from the late 1960s onwards, the notion of commitment continued more or less unchanged into the Sadat era. The predicament writers thought their country was entangled in—resulting from economic and political ‘liberalization’—made them stick, though with new narrative devices, to the same patriotic mission that has informed creative writing ever since the nineteenth century reform movement” (Guth 2015, 125). Elsewhere he writes: “While the political system itself is only rarely dealt with as straightforwardly as by Ibrāhīm in his *Al-lajna*, the disastrous impact of *infitāh* politics on society is addressed in its multiple forms in virtually all texts from the period” (Guth 2015, 138). Stephan Guth puts his finger on the very point I am arguing here: literature is *naturally* committed regardless of the techniques employed in the literary texts themselves. Therefore, the question *what is the exact applied input of this massive use of commitment?* is still unanswered. Since commitment (*iltizām*), in its dual capacity as a conceptual term and agenda, is principally a matter of description and *not* a practice or applied criticism, it cannot assist the reader in her/his pursuit of textual *meanings*, particularly in the post-modern era. Commitment is not an autonomous method detached from an extensive concept of representation. It is a *descriptive* terminology delineating a specific way of representation. Literature is the art of *representation*. In other words,

“truth” is not entirely limited to reality itself; but could hide in the way it is *re-presented* in a text.

In *Two Rak‘as in Love: A Study of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī’s Poetry*, Reuven Snir (Snir 2002) aspires to track the idea of “commitment” in modern Arabic literature, from the 1950s to the 1990s, through the work of one of the most prominent modern Arab poets: Iraqi poet ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī. In his study, Snir identifies three major stages in the development of al-Bayyātī’s work: an optimistic, or romantic revolutionary stage when al-Bayyātī believed in poetry’s transformative ability; a realistic stage, or a stage of cautiously realistic revolution, when al-Bayyātī felt that his efforts required a continuous revolution, limiting his optimism in poetry’s ability to affect quick and certain change; and a pessimistic stage, or a recognition of failure, when al-Bayyātī’s efforts began to dissolve and he became “addicted” to his inner suffering inso-much as he had grown accustomed to it.<sup>1</sup> During this period, he saw that to await a savior would be futile. In the beginning of his poetic career, al-Bayyātī was driven by the enthusiasm of youth and his belief (naive-

---

<sup>1</sup> Realists believe that authors cannot escape their reality, no matter how hard they try to hide their reality through the use of a mythical, indirect style. Deception and circumlocution eventually bring one back to the beginning, and both beginning and end are not outside the reality in which we live and in which we die. Some realists use criticism to settle accounts, long- or short-term, quickly or patiently, with the text’s owner, rather than only with the text itself. The underlying reason for the transition from the text to its owner is the belief that textual reality, that is, the text’s form and contents, are a basically mental conception. In other words, the text is seen as a perceptual attempt by the author to interpret reality based on what his own mind perceives. In this way the author becomes an actor, no longer neutral, who is responsible for developing reality and improving it in every text that he writes. Even fantasy reality, of the kind developed especially by Latin American writers, is seen by many as transparent attempts to grab the left ear with the right hand. At the end of the day, they are intelligent attempts to circumvent the influence of present reality. Such a temporary respite from actual reality provides critics with ample opportunity to compare this reality with the mythical reality in the text, and after the comparison to place the fantasy reality texts back under the authority of actual reality. If literary texts act as mirrors or cameras to reflect economic realities and social relationships, literary criticism must of necessity to hold the text to account based on this reflection. Therefore, a writer ought to base his writings on his conviction concerning the necessary connection between literature and reality. The sharp divide between signifier and signified which characterizes the realistic perspective leads one to disregard the signifier and to treat it as an instrument. Since instruments are inferior in status to objectives, they are not respected except insofar as they serve the objective for which they were created.

ly, as is usually the case with youthful enthusiasm) in the inevitability of rapid change. The successively difficult circumstances that the Arab world experienced after the 1950s, however, gradually eroded those stores of optimism that had been acquired during the years of liberation, independence, and Arab nationalism, and contributed to the deterioration of an individual's belief in his ability to affect change. al-Bayyātī, like many other Arab writers and poets, began to retreat from his optimistic outlook, and through the use of irony he began to reveal an amount of "flexibility" or "acceptance" of the status quo in his work.

In his book, Snir takes up an issue that lies at the heart of literary activity, the dialectical relationship between literature and reality and analyzes this complex relationship through the work of al-Bayyātī. Snir argues that al-Bayyātī began his poetic career a committed writer, remained committed throughout his life, and died committed. It was possible, however, for Snir to argue this in a page or two, after which he could have concentrated his energies on a discussion of the artistic transformations that took place in al-Bayyātī's poetry as a result of his changing point of view toward poetry's relationship to reality, without employing the term "commitment." Although Snir summarizes some of these transformations in the book's conclusion, he does not devote to them the keen attention that they, in my opinion, deserve. Although I have no problem with either the methodology of this study or its application, I have an essential problem with the term "commitment." Because of the enormity of my enthusiasm for the remaining chapters, I believe it is unfair for the term "commitment" to exist in the background of such thorough and precise textual readings. The concept of "commitment" in literature is based on the link between a literary text and the meaning that the author desires to communicate to an audience, even if that audience is the author himself. Since the emergence of the existentialist movement in the middle of the last century, many have sought to prove that literature in all its forms is an attempt in some way to discuss reality; as Maxwell Adereth has argued, it is not possible for an author to be uncommitted, as he is by definition a social being living in a certain reality and cannot help, whether consciously or unconsciously, but take a position toward that reality. To be "committed," then, is inevitable for an author, by virtue of the fact that literature is by its very nature a *representation* of life.

I agree with Snir when he insists that al-Bayyātī remained committed in the poems that he wrote during the 1970s and afterward, regardless of their introversion or their inclination toward ambiguity. It is essential that one not confuse ambiguity and obscurity on the one hand, with non-commitment or lack of commitment on the other. We should take care not to condense a discussion of literary commitment into a discussion of clari-

ty, or to limit an analysis of commitment to texts that are unambiguous. Analyses of commitment are not free of pitfalls, as it is never discussed according to textual standards alone, and is subject to the concerns of an individual reader. Snir argues that the types of possible relationship between the literary text and reality can be divided into two models of *representation*: “the lighthouse” and “the ivory tower.” Ten years ago, in my book on the poetry of Fahd Abū Khaḍra, I argued that the relationship between a literary text and reality outside the text could be categorized into four models of *representation*. The diversity of these numerous relationships, however, made their insertion into one of only four models a very difficult task. Today, I believe that these models of relationship are innumerable, especially as they are determined by the subjective readings of individual readers. If we continue with this logic, we have to ask ourselves: is it possible to measure the commitment of a text? At this point, Snir’s argument becomes more obscure: Did al-Bayyātī lose his commitment in those poems he wrote during and after the 1970s, or did he simply become less committed? Did al-Bayyātī move from the “lighthouse” model to the “ivory tower”? Did his turn to the tools of symbolism, such as the “lifted mask” of Sufi heritage, indicate a decline in his commitment? Snir’s arguments are unclear in his discussion of what happened to the concept of commitment in al-Bayyātī’s work during his transition from the 1950s to the 1960s.

Arab criticism’s (and Arabic literature’s) occupation with the issue of commitment during the period under observation can be attributed to the political, social, and economic circumstances of the time. The magnitude of problems through which the Arab world has lived since the 1950s has distinguished, in my view, two central types of subjects taken up by Arabic literature. The first is general, everyday subjects; this category includes the different social, economic, political, and religious concerns that preoccupy Arab individuals from one moment to another. Second is particular, intellectual subjects; these include the “major” issues that preoccupy intellectuals of the Arab world, such as the battle between Salafi and secular thought. A detailed review of the critical discourse that features in this period would reveal the fact that the debate, which continues until today, did not revolve around the concept of commitment in principle, but around the priority that an author should give to one of these two categories. We cannot, therefore, categorize the work of Adonis or Maḥmūd Darwīsh (Mahmoud Darwish), for example, as “uncommitted,” even in their most symbolic and ambiguous poems. Is, as the author suggests, the method of commitment that directly refers to a historical event the “original” method of commitment? Is this a “better” method than discussing an event using

symbolic language? Is complexity and uncertainty, the basis of the latter form of commitment, better able to deliver a message to the consciousness of a reader and inspire him to change reality than the language of clarity and simplicity, the basis of the former form of commitment? Is there not more room for “error” in the latter? However we look at matters, the discussion remains relative, subjective, and irresolvable. The debate during this period, as Snir himself points out, focused on *al-adab al-hādif*, (programmatic literature) and *al-adab al-hātif* (proclamative literature), to use the terms of Muḥammad Mandūr. The difference between the two lies in their method of *representation* and tools of practice. On the same page, Snir mentions the “lighthouse” and “ivory tower” models of commitment, as if to argue that an author is able, if he so chooses, to deliver his message even when he employs the latter model. If this is his intent, then the author couples the notion of commitment with every form of symbolic expression, even that which is practiced from the ivory tower, suggesting that commitment is innately present in every human activity, and in literature as one such activity. But is it necessary to mention such a self-evident thought in his study? The debate during this period did not focus on whether literature was committed or not committed, but on the methods of *representation* appropriate for such a critical historical period, during which the 1967 War came to emphasize the great need for this type of debate. During this period there were those authors who employed direct styles of expression, considering them to be the quickest path to the treatment of this period, those who employed the concept of “the mask,” a developed form of allegory that occupies a position between direct and the symbolic expression, as well as those who employed various forms of symbolic expression as the method most capable of embodying the period.

It is important, in this light, that we help move the debate away from “the necessity of expression” toward “the means of expression,” or from the concept of commitment in principle to the models of *representation* in practice. After Snir leaves his introduction of the theoretical framework and moves on to the chapters, he begins an admirable study of al-Bayyātī’s artistic tools and stylistic techniques, a study that has no need for his theoretical introduction. In inserting this deep textual study into the framework of commitment, Snir has pulled Arabic literature back into a stage that it had presumably left behind. Snir displays an extraordinary ability to read Arabic literature as an aesthetic object, and not only as an intellectual or historical exercise. Yet his desire to avoid “isolating” it from its historical context makes him cling to the concept of commitment, because it appears to be the simplest theoretical method for understanding this context. In his introduction, Snir argues that al-Bayyātī’s work will provide a clear, linear

path through the history of modern Arabic literature, and on this basis, the author tracks some of the intellectual and cultural transformations that have taken place in Arab society since the 1950s. His insistence that the concept of commitment be the theoretical framework for studying this complex dialectical relationship between different historical and cultural transformations and the artistic transformations in al-Bayyāṭī's poetry, however, diverts the reader's attention from the ultimate goal to which the author professes to aspire.

Scholars with an interest in Arab reality and Arab politics insist on commitment terminology in their approach to literature. But insistence on the concept of commitment can create the deceptive impression that there exists an uncommitted literature, free of meaning, message or purpose. Commitment is specifically identified with ideological or political texts, namely texts involved in an immediate and definite extra-literary context. Such involvement makes those texts an engaged medium. "Becoming an essential part of the vocabulary of Arab intellectuals and writers, commitment (*iltizām*) has been employed to indicate the necessity for writers or artists to *convey a message* rather than merely create an *imaginative work* for its own sake" (Snir 2023 [b], 24).<sup>2</sup> Two fundamental questions should be raised: (1) What is the exact meaning of *imaginative work*? (2) Does an *imaginative work* really not convey any message? Is it free of any purposive meaning?

In concluding my discussion on committed literature, particularly the very end of Klemm's indispensable survey of commitment (*Ittizām*) (Klemm 2000), Klemm appropriately refers to the war of 1967 as a decisive turning point in the way Arab literary circles think of *Ittizām*. "Hence by the early 1970s at the latest, the fervent appeals to write *adab multazim* lost their persuasive power among the critical forces of leftist literary circles. Due to the political and ideological fragmentation which followed the war of 1967, many of the proponents of commitment *lost their belief* in the political role of the writer and the effectiveness of the literary word. Idealism with regard to politics and belief in the effectiveness of the literary word was simply a stage in their development. They left this stage behind and now saw things clearly and more realistically. Many writers *outgrew* the limits of literary commitment as it was propagated by political literary circles, and looked for new and individual solutions to the problem, asking

---

<sup>2</sup> For decades, Reuven Snir has proposed that modern Arabic literature be studied on three levels: Synchronic, diachronic and generic (see Snir 2023 [a], 286 – 287). However, his proposal does not give special weight to a text's representative capacity to represent (as a medium).



themselves how literary writing could be significant in the present world” (Klemm 2000, 58). Klemm uses conclusive terminology to indicate the pivotal change in the way literary critics deem the whole concept of commitment, using phrases such as “loss of belief” and “divorce.” She states, “If the step to divorce literature from actual politics is not – or cannot - be taken, *Iltizām* is given whatever definition may suit the prevailing political endeavors” (Klemm 2000, 58).

The expansion of the commitment’s limits of concerns, as stated by Klemm, is meant to encompass all varieties of “the colonized,” to use worldwide postcolonial terminology. Edward Said had concluded these indefinite and loose limits as follows: “the colonized” has since expanded considerably to include women, subjugated and oppressed classes, national minorities, and even marginalized or incorporated academic subspecialties. Around the colonized there has grown a whole vocabulary of phrases, each in its own way reinforcing the dreadful secondariness of people who, in V. S. Naipaul’s derisive characterization, are condemned only to use a telephone, never to invent it. Thus the status of colonized people has been fixed in zones of dependency and peripherality, stigmatized in the designation of underdeveloped, less-developed, developing states, ruled by a superior, developed, or metropolitan colonizer who was theoretically posited as a categorically antithetical overlord. In other words, the world was still divided into betters and lessers, and if the category of lesser beings had widened to include a lot of new people as well as a new era, then so much the worse for them. Thus to be one of the colonized is potentially to be a great many different, but inferior, things, in many different places, at many different times” (Said 1989, 207).

The “colonized” and the subalternity are key concepts in cultural studies, which encompass such post-post-colonialist critical theories as cultural materialism, neo-Marxism, feminist criticism and general cultural criticism. It is a literary-critical orientation characterized by ideological statements. Ideological criticism is based on adversarial tensions, real or metaphorical. This has led, in many literary-critical endeavors, to impose a greater burden on texts than they could bear. Cultural studies of all orientations share the idea that literary texts in general should be studied within their relation to other cultural discourses, such as political discourse in the case of post-colonial criticism, historical discourse in the case of cultural materialism and new historicism, socio-economic discourse in the case of neo-Marxism, and feminine discourse in the case of feminist criticism. The truth of the matter is that cultural criticism of all types, because it is Leftist, presents a true challenge to the dominance of right-wing thought in America. This American dominance threatens to erase individual national

cultures and attempts to impose a uniform global regime in which it has sole control. In the face of this imperialist orientation an alternative must be sought: "The lifeline tied to a rock outside the labyrinth door is the text. Yes, a return to the text and confirming its authority as a literary text first and as a cultural product second, rather than the reverse, is the door for leaving the labyrinth" (Hammūda 2003, 278).

All the different versions of Marxism are based on the necessity of searching for means to reconcile the esthetic (the literary) with the ideological (in social relations and between surface and deep structures). In order to achieve reconciliation between these two aspects, or in order to find a way to bridge the chasm between them, it was necessary to modify the theory of reflexivity in its traditional sense, noted above. This is what Lukács, Althusser, Macherey and later Jameson did, in this order. And so in Marxist criticism literary texts, considered a cultural pursuit in surface structure, become of necessity connected to economic power of production in deep structure. But when literary texts are compulsorily subordinated to aims and needs defined by deep structure, they lose their ability to exist independently and to boast of their literary nature. Walter Benjamin was perhaps one of the staunchest defenders of Marxist criticism in the extreme form that we have presented. This has led many Marxists to search for a more flexible equation, and to adopt an approach subsequently called neo-Marxist criticism, as a branch of cultural criticism. Whereas the function of traditional Marxist criticism was to analyze what was in the text as a result of the reality reflected in it, the new approach explains what exists there, according to the modifications proposed by Frederick Jameson. Now analysis means treating the text's data as necessary facts, while explanation means treating them as if they were metaphorical, so that they could be manipulated according to one's individual perspective. And here lies the crux of the matter. For explanation means freedom of interpretation, and freedom of interpretation gives the reader the ability to interact with the text. The freedom to interpret does not mean absolute independence, although the text can be interpreted in a way that is far removed from its intent. This transformation is due to the fact that neo-Marxists do not require that the economic, social and intellectual deep structure be present in a text necessarily and in an overt manner. However, the text may contain hidden elements that can make the act of interpretation a foreordained choice.

Cultural studies after the theories of reception and deconstruction<sup>3</sup> have operated as political reactions to the ideas to which the capitalist industrial world has given rise, and as a response to the latter's characteristic consumer mentality. They have been led by the Left globally, whose orientation has been towards the idea of resistance. There are thus two classes or two parties in mutual conflict: The force which controls wealth and the working, pro-

---

<sup>3</sup> Among the deconstructionist orientations, which attempt to obliterate the text, there is one which argues that criticism creates a more creative text than the original text being criticized. This is the view of many, such as Barthes, Ṭhāb Ḥassan (Ihab Hassan) and Derrida. This is a condescending type of criticism, which grants the reader the right and the ability to compete with the criticized text, to go beyond it and to exchange it through over-interpretation. The deconstructionists use the same idea in order to confirm the concept of the text opening onto more texts. For through its intertextual relations, a text opens onto many other texts, from which it borrowed or into which it was transformed. It is as if a separate or independent text is an illusion, because at the end of the day it is something written on top of something written previously. This opening enhances the reader's standing and his role in the interaction with the text's opening orientation. According to reception theories, a text is an entity filled with holes and gaps, which only the reader/receiver can fill with his abilities and accumulated experience and knowledge. Through this ability of his to fill the text, the reader becomes a second writer, who gives the text a feeling of accomplished completion. The role of the original writer is thus reduced the moment in which he finishes the actual writing, and the act of reading is, in the final analysis, an act of erasing the writer and his writing, and as a result also an act of erasing the real context in whose space the author moves before the act of writing. This naturally goes against both logic and experience. If intention is present in the text, in one form or another, and its traces can be followed, the reader should pay attention to them before he goes beyond them to significances. Ignoring the intentions revealed in a writer's language and style means ignoring the textual meanings which constitute the basis on which reader-derived meanings can be based. When one erases the textual foundations on which one's judgment is based, an absurd situation results, a zero state in which reading nullifies writing, and is itself nullified. Opponents of intentionality try to convince us of the power of absence in presence, the absence of extra-textual context. They try to deny any role to reference outside the text. This absence, through the act of constant detachment of the text from its contexts, leads consequently to an infinity of meaning. This is precisely what the leading proponents of deconstructionist thought had in mind. As Stanley Fish said: If you ask me about a text's meaning, I would recite it to you exactly as it is (see Fish 1970, 130). Or as Harold Bloom stated: "The meaning of a poem is just another poem" (Bloom 1973, 94). And as Paul de Man noted every erroneous perception will lead you to more situations of erroneous perception (see de Man 1974, 51). This is what Hillis Miller meant when he said, because the text is misleading and deceiving, it leads you to believe that it is interpretable, until you discover that this is impossible (see Hillis Miller 1980, 113).

ductive force. This has given rise to two cultures: High culture and popular culture. According to the later versions of cultural studies mentioned above, a text cannot be independent of or isolated from the cultural, political and ideological context in which it was born, and therefore it is up to the reader to create a meaning for the text which is governed by the conflict between the aforementioned two classes. Proponents of the various cultural orientations attempt to disseminate very disparate values, such as conservation, green thinking, improving the lot of the laboring classes, fighting global famine, and championing the downtrodden everywhere.

So we see that cultural studies, among whose founders were Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, is an outcome of post-colonial reality. Global thought thus moves from bottom to top, from the structure of political, social and economic variables to the highest intellectual structure. If cultural studies of all the types mentioned above are a response to global circumstances, so much the greater is our need for a theory of literary criticism which fits the unique character of our own overwhelming circumstances. According to Muḥsin Jāsim al-Mūsawī (Muhsin al-Musawi), cultural criticism can repair the relations between Arab intellectuals and their society, and answer the needs and aspirations of the Arab nation (al-Musawi 2005, 195). We are in dire need of a comprehensive theory that will promote cultural literary criticism connected to the movement of Arab societies, as Muṣṭafā Nāṣif says (2000, 14).

The shift from a one-sided *political* meaning of *Iltizām* to a broader concept of *the subaltern* paved the way for a widest terminology of *representation*, originally coined by Aristotle. Later on, the concept has been adopted by semioticians and redefined as a system of signs standing for something else (Mitchell 1995, 11- 22). The first two concepts, *Iltizām* and *subaltern*, primarily refer to political, ideological, social and cultural “content” of literature, to use formalistic terminology. *Representation* aims to answer the two major questions of any literary text: what does it represent? And how does it represent? This combination of ‘what’ and ‘how’ reflects the methodical approach of all chapters of the book.

# **SECTION I**

## **REPRESENTATION FOR KNOWING**

“Tell me how you think and I shall tell you what you think” (Wittgenstein in Deledalle 2000: 147).

# CHAPTER 1

## WRITING LITERATURE

### From Author to Writer

Fear of the possible danger that readers may associate the meaning inherently attached to language with the personality of the writer and her/his authorial voice impelled Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, each from his own viewpoint, to speak of death of the author. Both called for the replacement of the writer – the real, the imagined, the implied, the represented – by a lingual and structural author: language alone was to be the sole authority responsible for the meaning. Barthes (1968) challenged the idea that a text could be attributed to any single author, and asserted that “it is language which speaks, not the author.” Barthes would have language speak and the author voiceless. A year later Foucault argued in his essay “*What is an author?*” (1969) that the author was a structural component that existed only as a *function of a written work* (see Foucault 1979, 148 - 149). Responding to Barthes, David Lodge said: “I do feel a kind of parental responsibility for the novels I write, that the composition of them is, in an important sense, my past, that I do think, suffer, live for a book while it is in progress” (1990, 15).

True, the reader may not reconstruct accurately the writer’s original meaning, but the writer is there, not physically but *anthroposemiotically*. Her/his personal views on the world blend with her/his emotions and cognition. Perhaps the death of the *author*, the direct authority, does make sense, but not that of the *writer*.<sup>1</sup> From an anthroposemiotic viewpoint the writer cannot be eliminated. S/he is the soul behind words with whom readers communicate. Communication is sharing, not necessarily agreeing. Only when speaking about *knowledge* rather than *knowing* in literature can one in fact speak about the death of the author. As semiotic human agents<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Like Foucault, Pease distinguished author and writer. The “word ‘author’ derives from the medieval term *auctor*, which denoted a writer whose words commanded respect and belief” (1995, 106).

<sup>2</sup> “While there is no consensus on the terms ‘agent’ and ‘agency’, most biosemioticians appear to agree that core attributes of an agent include goal-directedness, self

identified with their capacity for model-making, that is, knowing, writers do not die. Following Kim's assumption that "everything must be a text" (Kim 1996, 113), writers in fact remodel the texts of reality, projecting their own cognitive properties onto them so that they can produce new meanings. The writer thereby uses the real modeled text, the immediate environment and the global, to try to change the world by attributing new meanings to it. Since the remodeled texts, the literary ones, are naturally semiotic, produced by human faculties, writers can by no means die, expire, or, be "obsolete" (Kim 1996, 122).

Traditionally, *encoding* corresponds to the writer's capacities, emotional system, cognitive schemata, culture, language, narrative components, possible worlds, and literary conventions. *Decoding* concerns the reader's role, meaning and significance; the ground on which author and reader meet, how they meet; interpretation and communication processes. However, both writers and readers encode and decode. Both use literature as a way of *knowing* the world. While representing the world in which the writer lives, s/he involves her/his own view in this world in the way s/he represents and interprets. My argument recognizes the urgent need to reexamine the dichotomy between *encoding* to *decoding*, in a way that takes into consideration the very fact that writers and readers are naturally observers for evolutionary needs.

It is commonly believed that writing literature is an *act of representing life* due to the nature of the writer as a *homo symbolicum* "representational animal" (see Mitchell 1995, 11). The writer becomes thus a representing author and is *represented* in her/his literary text. The *represented author* corresponds to what is traditionally referred to as the implied author. *Representation* may be influenced by the real author and her/his information attached to her/him (see Bortolussi and Dixon 2003, 76). In this sense, the concept of *death of the author* sounds completely incredible. Referring to its referents by communal conventions, the act of writing is a *thirdness* mode of *representation*, and as such it is inescapably a *symbolic* system. "Representation implies *classification*, that is, the organization of the meanings captured and conveyed by signs, codes, and texts into *categories*. This makes the world much more understandable in human terms" (Danesi 1999, 25).

The issue of writing literature has been consistently investigated from a variety of viewpoints: human, social, cultural, national, ideological, emotional, cognitive and semiotic. The departure point of the current discussion

---

governed activity, processing of semiosis and choice of action, with these features being vital for the functioning of the living system in question. I agree that these four features are constitutive of biosemiotic agents" (Tønnessen 2015, 140).

is cultural, referring to writing as a *natural semiotic activity*. Natural implications here involve cognitive, emotional and evolutionary vocabulary. Anthroposemiotic terminology thus seems the expedient means to describe the subject matter. To do that, I'll approach it through three macro questions: *how* do literary writers actually write? *What* do they really do? *Why*? Answering these three interlinked questions, I start my investigation from the very end of my argument and say that in order to write literature, as naturally anthroposemiotic agents, literary writers have to *observe* closely both the immediate *environment* and the global *universes*, to be able to *model* them culturally in forms of *learning*, i.e., *knowing* for *natural purposes*. The primary task of the anthroposemiotic approach to literary writing is therefore to describe the *way* writers know the world rather than to know what they know about the world.

## How Do Writers Write?

Writing literature is an act of remodeling the world. So to write literature writers should conduct four interdependent decisive actions: get involved with the society (environment), observe it, blend the individual with the whole, and change the image of it. The anthroposemiotic approach to writing literature promotes the notion that *mind*, *body* and *environment* are tightly *interconnected*. In this sense, all human beings have animal facets, therefore every anthroposemiotic approach to literature involves some biosemiotic implications, while the reverse is impossible. Anthroposemiotics is the only branch of biosemiotics that *engages cultural semiosis with the natural*. This involvement requires intensive use of symbolic relations – the third type of relation and the most sophisticated, while animals' knowing is characterized by the two first types of relation, namely the iconic and the indexical (see Kull 2014, 47 – 48). Literature is the symbolic paradigm where culture and nature meet to reshape our human mind.<sup>3</sup> Such an absolute interaction between mind, body and the environment, when literature is being written, associates literary meaning with a *live activity*. Literary texts thereby become forms in which their referents are not independent in a given physical world but are blends of the human mind's images and real images in a specific environment. In this sense, literature serves to acknowledge the coexistence of nature and culture in any human self, as

---

<sup>3</sup> “The main idea behind Embodiment is that mind derives and takes shape from the fact that we have a body that interacts with our environment” (Violi 2003, 202). Or, as Vehkavaara puts it, “the human mind and sociality are essential parts of the biological life of the human species” (2007, 258).



Sebeok puts it.<sup>4</sup> Anthroposemiotics in the current account refers to human cognition as an active mediator between human nature and the environment.<sup>5</sup> Human cognition, at the end of the day, is the only factor responsible for the processes of knowing required for natural purposes in its broadest sense. Generally, anthroposemioticians recognize some of the cognitive insights and implications and include them in their arguments, especially those that make an intelligent connection between human cognition and the world. Blending Theory and Situated Cognition, for instance, are the most prominent.<sup>6</sup> It is commonly believed that there are two approaches to the issue of literary writing: writers *create* texts and those are individuals, and writers *produce* texts and those are human agents.<sup>7</sup> Since literary writing is a double-faced identity integrating natural and cultural aspects, I believe that these two approaches can find the way to a condition of living together in harmony. Three major processes should be causally connected when the issue of literary writing is investigated: (1) consuming, (2) producing, (3) creating. These are what turn the verbalized culture as a product in the mind into a state of created text. Humans take great advantage of culture, which they consistently make and change for natural purposes. And that is why nature and culture are not opposites. Culture, including society and history, cannot be simply neglected when literature is being written, likewise the individuality of the writer, the single creator of the text. Literary writers are therefore creators and producers of texts in that order. They create cultures for natural purposes. The writer's cognitive system as a unitary and

---

<sup>4</sup> The self "is a joint product of both *natural* and *cultural* processes" (Sebeok 1986, xi italics added).

<sup>5</sup> "Within mind-space, we can approach concepts, ideas, images, look at them, touch them, take them apart, see them from different perspectives, and so on" (Danesi 1993, 139-140).

<sup>6</sup> The primary aim of Situated Cognition, for instance, "is to develop a cohesive and coherent theoretical, an approach for comprehending the complex relationships of all aspects of our human cognitive engagement with our worlds. We are engaged not just as individuals, but as socii, and we are engaged in the worlds of each other and of ourselves and of things that surround us in concrete social and material situations: worlds that necessarily include us and are in formation with us as we form ourselves in part through cognitive/transformational engagement with each other, our surroundings, and ourselves" (Kirshner and Whitson 1997, 2).

<sup>7</sup> Representing the first approach, Edward Said wrote: "Literature is produced in time and in society by human beings, who are themselves agents of, as well as somewhat independent actors within, their actual history" (Said 1991, 152). Two years later Mark Rose wrote: "Authors do not really create in any literal sense, but rather produce text through complex processes of adaptation and transformation" (Rose 1993, 8 italics added).

collective producer is responsible for a range of acts: observing, listening, smelling, empathizing, sympathizing, adapting, changing, filtering, reorganizing, and the like. That is, the individual cognitive system cannot be merely individualized. As stated by Love, pure “individuality is never absolute” (Love 2002, 4). As an adapting medium, the human cognitive system reproduces what has already been consumed by the same system and/or by others. Human beings are social animals,<sup>8</sup> naturally work together, affect each other for natural purposes, share their feelings, thoughts and souls and exchange meanings (see Danesi and Perron 1999, 208). As a part of a whole, as a social animal, the human being is a collective consumer and cultural producer by definition. If the “target of biosemiotics is the semiotic behavior of all living things” (Sebeok and Danesi 2000, 15), not only cannot natural activities be excluded from any biosemiotic investigation: cultural capacities and historical activities cannot either.

Writers never stand alone; they are integrated members of their societies, sharing with others social conventions and norms, as clarified by Peirce.<sup>9</sup> Culture therefore is the product of natural human conduct down history. As a cultural piece created by a human, any literary text should be analyzed taking into account the creator her/himself. Referring to human beings as sociocultural agents, some scholars refer to human action as goal-directed, using “mediational means” (Wertsch 1991, 12). The “mediational means,” such as language, Wertsch wishes to emphasize, are meant to “shape the action in essential ways” (Ibid.). Language then is the tool the modeling human mind uses “to explicate how human action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings” (Ibid., 119). The conception of the situated action by various cultural tools and social rules of language use makes the relation between the human action and its semiotic tools possible and valid. Language is not only a primary type of meditational means humans take advantage of, but also a tool of *representation* that ultimately guarantees a close relation between cognitive processes and the sociocultural settings in a conversational act. As emphasized above, human cognition links human beings to their environment for natural needs. This precisely makes it responsible for the processes of knowing required for survival purposes,

---

<sup>8</sup>“If literature is a ‘representation of life’, then representation is exactly the place where ‘life’, in all its social and subjective complexity, gets into the literary work” (Mitchell 1995, 15).

<sup>9</sup> “Meantime, we know that man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man’s experience is nothing, if it stands alone. If he sees what others cannot, we call it hallucination. It is not ‘my’ experience, but ‘our’ experience that has to be thought of, and this ‘us’ has indefinite possibilities” (in Misak 2004, 245).

and makes it possible to speak of “individual(s)-acting-with-mediational means” (Ibid., 12).

Again, how can the writers’ act of observing, responding and interacting, as social animals, with the environment, be translated into modeling and remodeling? For blending, metaphor and analogy are the most remarkable apparatuses, as argued by Danesi.<sup>10</sup> Through metaphor, literary writers visualize the concepts and the images of the world.<sup>11</sup> Metaphor thus connects minds and environments. As one of the primary ways of blending and integrating, analogy connects two input spaces to produce an emergent, that is, a third input space. Analogy is a typical instance of metaphor (see Anttila 1989, 88; 99). Metaphors and analogies, which all literary writers naturally exploit, facilitate a state of cross-space mappings which ultimately is called blending/integrating.<sup>12</sup> What takes place in fact is a mental/psychological process of compression. When observing, literary writers absorb the environment and project their own inputs, blend them, to produce new input space. They utilize the lingual metaphoric and analogical capacities of human cognition to compress two input spaces, or more, to achieve some sort of interaction between the writer and her/his environment.<sup>13</sup> The interaction between the human cognition and the environment by lingual capacities such as metaphors, analogies and other tools of iconicity, produces an emergent, what is called a *model*. This cognitive process of mapping/compressing/blending is in fact a *modeling process*. The produced model (emergent, third input space) that emerges has to be different one way or another from the original features of each single input space.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> “By making new connections and relating concepts, metaphor guides the rational part of the mind in its quest to give structure to the world of matter” (Danesi 1993, 135).

<sup>11</sup> “Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical, with the source of the metaphors originating in our kinesthetic and perceptual experiences of the material world” (Kemp 2012, xvi).

<sup>12</sup> “Analogy is generally defined as ‘structural similarity’. At the level of maximum generality, an analogical relationship obtains between two or more ‘wholes’ or ‘systems’ each of which has the same number of ‘parts’. [...] The (analogical) relation holding between the systems is that of similarity” (Itkonen 2005, 1). Speaking specifically on an analogy, Gentner and Bowdle refer to it as “a mapping between two represented situations in which a common relational structure is aligned” (2008, 109).

<sup>13</sup> “Blending is a compression tool par excellence. Selective projection from different related spaces and integration in the blend provides an exceptionally strong process of compression” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 114).

<sup>14</sup> “It is both more than the sum of its inputs and different from them” (Schneider and Hartner 2012, 3).

The human mind thus produces models by connecting things: the individual with society, the part with the whole, the imagined with the actual, and the like. Blending Theory in this sense describes the way writers model and remodel the world, the way they seek to know the world for natural reasons. Making approachable “human-scale understanding” and possible “new meaning,” as Fauconnier and Turner put it, blending theory has a natural and evolutionary epistemology, no doubt.<sup>15</sup> Treating the very act of writing literature as a special human competence for natural purposes necessitates two interdependent primary activities: *awareness*, which generates *modeling*. Awareness must produce modeling, otherwise writers become meaningless and entirely irrelevant. It is possible that most living organisms have some degree of awareness, which is not a property of humans alone; however, it is crucial for human beings. That is why only humans *know* about that urge of such awareness (see Damasio 1999, 137). Involved with the Umwelt, writers need such awareness to move forward from actions of mirroring the environment to modeling it. Dealing with specific human properties such as interacting, observing, mapping, blending, changing, modeling, remodeling and knowing, anthroposemiotics seeks to investigate writing literature by connecting culture to nature, modeling to life, as Sebeok and Danesi rightly argue (see 2000, 13 - 20). Embarking on the discussion, one may say that modeling is actually meant to give *form* to *natural* action to infer meanings from the modeling systems (see Sebeok and Danesi 2000, 1-11).

Blending the individual with the whole, literary writers therefore do not reflect the environment or mirror it in a naïve sense; instead they change it and produce a new model of it. Modeling thus means the way writers view the world and interact with the environment.<sup>16</sup> It means that writers do not live with harmony with their environment – or more accurately they *should* not live in harmony with it – if in the end they want to produce knowing. They are social animals – true, but their survival within the environment requires first and foremost an ability to challenge the environment, to complete what it lacks, to change what is needed, to rearrange it. Changing the

---

<sup>15</sup> “We do not establish mental spaces, connections between them, and blended spaces for no reason. We do this because it gives us global insight, human-scale understanding, and new meaning. It makes us both efficient and creative” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 92).

<sup>16</sup> For psychologists, the emergent “structure arises in the blend that is not copied there directly from any input. It is generated in three ways: through composition of projections from the inputs, through completion based on independently recruited frames and scenarios, and through elaboration (‘running the blend’)” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 48; see also 89).

familiar laws and rules of the langue by parole, writers of literature try to transfer messages by creating new models of language, not by the pure semantic features of language. In this sense, writers are concerned with the way meanings are produced rather than the meanings themselves. Writers, especially modern and post-modern, move from focusing on values *within texts* to values *within us*, in Iser's phrase (1978), from *knowledge* to *knowing*, in Kull's (2009). By going beyond the natural survival of all organisms, i.e., changing its laws, humans always aspire to determine new laws. Literature persistently changes the known laws of language. Writers need always to revise their thinking and consider new approaches to remodel the world in a way that produces new processes of knowing. "Because knowing is always an *activity*" (Kull 2014, 50, italics added) it needs more than mere information: it needs a living mechanism that consistently changes and renews. Literature as an evident paradigm of symbolic learning is primarily meant to change, "to replace and reorder" (Kull 2014, 54).

To model the world, writers apply *all* three types of signs as originally proposed by Peirce.<sup>17</sup> Again, a state of thirdness is not possible without some states of firstness and secondness, but the reverse does not hold. Kull treats the relations between the Peircean signs (iconic, indexical and symbolic) and the activity of knowing as different types of learning. The iconic is identified with learning to *recognize*, the indexical with learning to *connect* and the symbolic with learning to *replace* and to *reorder* (see 2014, 52 - 55). In literature, all these forms of learning can by no means be separable.<sup>18</sup> Every single word in a literary text is meant to identify a specific signified in the world. Since words in lingual texts do not stand on their own but must work together, they themselves are in fact interconnected therefore require some connecting activity. However, since lingual signifiers in literary texts undergo a sophisticated cognitivization, connecting is not a mechanic activity, and that is why they perform as a whole not as individuals. The original signifieds change when they blend. In literary models, writers combine all possible lingual signifiers within the borders of a text to form

---

<sup>17</sup> "The uniqueness of anthroposemiosis lies in the fact that the human species is endowed with three modeling systems that work interdependently and interactively in the production of models and, thus, of knowledge" (Sebeok and Danesi 2000, 171).

<sup>18</sup> Following Pierce's belief that "the most perfect of signs are those in which the iconic, indicative, and symbolic characters are blended as equally as possible," Nöth emphasizes the interdependence of all three types of signs: "icons are not a separate class of language signs besides indices and symbols" (Nöth 2000, 25).

an entire composite system.<sup>19</sup> When writing, writers consciously or unconsciously behave emotionally, cognitively, socially, and perform many anthropological functions. All these possible functions and activities produce full engagement of the writer with both realities, the real and the textual. This ensures her/his move from the state of author to writer, from sender to partner, from producer to partner who knows and wishes to share. The sharing I refer to in this paper is not only mechanical, but mainly natural.

Since writers are naturally semiotic and social animals, they share experiences with others and their writing therefore aims to share. By observing the environment, listening to sounds emanating from it, s/he can learn about behavior and acquire some information that assists her/him and us to know how to model new and other worlds. Writing literature is a mechanical tool for sharing watching, for communicating on the basis of questioning. Writers question readers and readers answer through questions. Writing literature is not merely about the self or about others: it is about sharing. Both the individual and the community are present within the text in one way or another.<sup>20</sup> Since signs are never singles, as Kull maintains,<sup>21</sup> meanings result from a process of interaction and a complex of relationships, as argued by Malle (2006) and Zlatev (2012).<sup>22</sup> Writers of literature aspire to change the

---

<sup>19</sup> “Composite modeling is the activity of representing complex (non-unitary) referents by combining various signifiers in some specifiable way. Drawing, narratives, theories, conversations, etc. are all examples of composite forms of representation. These are constructed with distinct signifiers that fit together structurally, but which are, as a whole, different from any of their constituent signifiers taken individually” (Sebeok and Danesi 2000, 29).

<sup>20</sup> Caracciolo says that a “meeting of minds between author and reader would not be possible without the reader’s recognition that there is a basic similarity between the author’s experience of the work and her own” (2012, 198).

<sup>21</sup> “Sign, however an absolutely necessary element of any semiotic system, still cannot be taken as a fundamental semiotic unit, because sign cannot exist as a single sign — sign is always a part of a bigger system, sign is always accompanied by another sign(s). This is not because signs always just happen to be placed not far from each other and in multitude, but because it belongs to the very nature of sign to be ‘a part of,’ to be a *meron*. At least in some traditions in semiotics, this bigger system can be called ‘text’” (Kull 2002, 329).

<sup>22</sup> “Meaning points to the place of an element within a larger whole. The meaning of a word can typically be understood only within a network of other terms; meaning of an utterance can only be understood within the context in which it was expressed; and the meaning of an action can only be understood in the context of other actions and their relationship to the world” (Malle 2006, 64). Meaning, Zlatev argues, is a function of ‘process’. “In line with the point about the relational character of meaning, a basic cognitive sciences tenet is that meaning is not ‘inside’ brains, minds,