Redefining Literary Semiotics

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

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Literary semiotics is entering a new period of development. The past three decades have been marked by conflicts of theories and approaches based on the works of the two pioneering founders of modern semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce. On the one hand, researchers working within the Saussurean tradition of *sémiologie* developed models and interpretation strategies based on the assumption that language, considered fundamental to literature, is above all defined by the principle of negative characterization, i.e., that the identity of linguistic signs is based on difference. While both Greimassian discourse analysis and Derridean deconstruction shared this common premise, they nevertheless developed it towards different kinds of applications almost in opposition to each other in what regards methods of text analysis and interpretation. On the other hand, researchers basing their work on Peircean *semeiotics* questioned the relation between texts and "reality" and the specificity of literary semiosis within the framework of philosophy, culture and society. If the structuralists started from language and analyzed literature's social role as conditioned by language, the pragmatists took Peirce's general model of semiosis as their basis and sought to define literature as a specific realization of this model. The two approaches rarely met, and their divergences often produced heated but shallow discussions. The definition of a basic notion such as what a sign actually is was already an obstacle to communication, with either Saussure's binary model considered superior to Peirce's triadic one, or vice-versa.

As the past ten years have made clear, however, drawing a firm dividing line between the two approaches is counterproductive. Language is embedded in and entangled with reality, which is why language defines how reality can be represented in literature to a certain extent; literature, for its part, is always tied to social and cultural practices as well as to our biological makeup, which in turn defines to a certain degree how language

functions and what purposes, if any, literary representation serves. Both the structural and the pragmatic approach thus can claim validity in literary semiotics. The decision of which basic theory to apply depends on the questions research sets out to elucidate; they are not necessarily given by theory, but rather originate in social and cultural determinations at work in a given historical context. On many occasions, complementary approaches may turn out to be the best solutions—literature is, after all, a heterogeneous field of texts, practices, and functions. This has actually been the classic way to "do" literary semiotics and also the one which has produced the most enduring results. Roland Barthes' *S/Z* (1970), Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* (1979) as well as Yuri Lotman's studies on literary texts are both about structures and about their production, use and particular relation to reality.

If the harsh competition between paradigms in literary semiotics is over, a new confrontation is already looming on the horizon. In recent discussions on research in literature, the notion of theory has been the object of critical debate, if not of straightforward attack. The titles of books and anthologies published during the past ten years clearly indicate the general climate of discussion: *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent* edited by Daphne Patai and Will H. Corral (2005) and Terry Eagleton's *After Theory* (2003) mark the positions that are the most hostile to theory, while Jonathan Culler's *The Literary in Theory* (2007) and Antoine Compagnon's *Le démon de la théorie* (1998) seek to defend its validity and interest. The middle ground is occupied by historical reconstructions and questionings such as François Cusset's *French Theory* (2003) and the special issue of *Textuel* "Où en est la théorie littéraire?" (vol 37, 2000), which try to determine what, if anything, went wrong with theory and what the current direction might be. Let us also note that some of the most challenging recent publications dealing with general questions of literature and what one would be inclined to call theory, such as Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (2005) and Jørgen Dines Johansen's *Literary Discourse* (2002) seem to avoid the notion skilfully and instead use less biased concepts such as "Abstract Models" (Moretti) and "Approach" (Johansen) in their subtitles. Characteristically, "theory" figures on the dust-jacket of Moretti's book but is replaced by "history" on the title page. It is as if we had entered the era of generalized "studies" marked by a painful but rightly-deserved hangover caused by years of wild theorising which kept us continuously on the look-out for new vocabularies and novel rhetoric.

The attack on theory, however, appears to be largely based on moral, political and ethical grounds. Terry Eagleton writes in *After Theory* that,

despite the gains made by cultural theory, it has, at the same time, often "been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness" (Eagleton 2003, 101-102). This quote, like many others, has to be read more as polemics than as a contribution to a scholarly debate, since it seems to wilfully ignore several central works within cultural theory and semiotics, such as Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977, about love) and *La Chambre claire* (1980, about death and suffering), Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999, about death, evil, and truth) and Derrida's entire œuvre (metaphysics and foundations, if not all the themes mentioned by Eagleton).

While Eagleton's stance is more polemically cutting than profoundly convincing, it is still symptomatic of a certain *fatigue* of theoretical reflection. It seems that scholars have become tired of the constant problematization with which theory has treated some of the most basic and down-to-earth assumptions of literary texts, such as the one that literature is the expression of an author's conception of the world, has a mimetic relationship to reality and communicates something that can be considered ideas or values. Indeed, some of the more far-reaching arguments about literature put forward in the name of theory question these assumptions so thoroughly that it has become difficult to credit them at all, unless one wants to take an openly naïve stance. Theory has in some strange way made literature appear simultaneously very complex and very futile, at the same time as it has become an indispensable part of what many people teach or learn every day, to the point that it has even become "a taken-for-granted aspect of the curriculum" (Barry 2002, 1). That we should not underestimate the consequences theories have is strongly endorsed by Moretti, who rightly points out that we should assess them "not as ends in themselves but for how they concretely change the way we work: for how they allow us to enlarge the literary field and to re-design it in a better way" (2005, 91). He is not alone; recently, the interest in theory seems in fact to be resurgent among cultural studies and new historicism. In cultural studies in particular, a new political awareness can be discerned (cf., e.g., Hall and Birchall 2006) and, in a recent issue of the *PMLA*, Marjorie Levinson criticises various reading practices and defines new formalism as a set of critical projects that should be disengaged from prior formalist philosophies (2007, 368) and therefore theorized anew. In the ebb and flow of paradigms, the search for empirical grounding seems to be

dominant just now, but a new call for general, philosophical reflection can already be heard.

The present volume answers the criticism addressed towards literary and cultural theory, in which the development of semiotics has been an important factor. What characterizes the current state of literary semiotics is a more profound understanding of the heterogeneity of its research object, inevitably necessitating a variety of approaches. As Jørgen Dines Johansen writes in the preface to the special issue of *Semiotica* on semiotics of literature, "Looking at phenomena from a semiotic perspective means studying them simultaneously as processes and products of signification and communication" (Johansen 2007, 2). Studying phenomena as products and processes is to study them as linguistic and semiotic artefacts with stable features and structures, but also—and at the same time—as taking part in activities of production, reception and interpretation without which these features and structures would not be culturally significant. Just as the features and structures of the text can be analysed from different angles offering complementary results, so the processual aspect of literary semiosis demands diverse theoretical and analytical descriptions depending on the questions set for research. Literary texts produce significations that cannot be reduced to the intentions of the author; they are difficult if not impossible to verify empirically, yet they can also be used for communicating and sharing meanings between readers and between the author and the receiver. In literature, it is the dynamic process of semiosis which makes representation and communication possible, although without being reduced to these functions and with the potential for undermining them.

Keeping this double perspective constantly open offers literary semiotics the epistemological momentum of permitting the analysis of texts in ways that answer the demands set by Eagleton and other critics of theory, while avoiding the naivety of simplistic returns to untheorized realism or ethics and taking into account the conceptual sophistication of earlier research. If literature is communication, it is about different life-worlds and experiences and about the thoughts, desires and emotions animating them. This possibility of "being about" our real worlds is one of the reasons why literature is important, even vital. However, literature is also to a very high degree signification, a dynamic process in which meaning is developed by the complex features and structures of the text and their insertion into varying contexts of production and reception (which is also one kind of production). This makes literature capable of

transcending particular contexts, of being in some sense "more" than any contingent historical interpretation can indicate.

The articles in the first section of this volume are devoted to crucial theoretical and analytical aspects of literary semiotics. Jørgen Dines Johansen's article "Structuralism and/or the Semiotic-Pragmatic Approach to Literature" discusses in detail the motivation in the shift from structural research to a pragmatic paradigm in the recent decades and the place structural methodology occupies in the present context of research. As he demonstrates, structuralism is still present in various analytical procedures, even if not always openly so: even though the more dynamic triadicity of Peircean semiotics is mostly preferred today—which his own semiotic pyramid clearly shows—our habits of thought are dyadic, since we tend to 'habitually' structure our thoughts as binary oppositions, at least to discover the basic features and examples in the text. Instead of opposing the various theories, Johansen considers the particular merit of the different approaches in their variety, ranging from Greimas' actant model and Elli Köngäs Maranda and Pierre Maranda's analysis of the European fairy tale to his own application of Fauconnier and Turner's metaphorical model of blended spaces. As he concludes, we should not attempt to go back in time to formalism and structuralism where we left them thirty years ago, or to artificially graft them onto other theoretical concepts, but gratefully accept and use the insights and the procedures they offer for analyzing particular features of texts.

Frederik Stjernfelt's "Iconicity in the Literary Text: An Extension of the Ingardenian Viewpoint" proposes an analysis of Roman Ingarden's phenomenological theory of literature. By looking at Ingarden's theory from the perspective determined by semiotic pragmatic theory, Stjernfelt convincingly shows how epistemological changes profit from and even demand new readings of earlier works. Exploring the issue of diagrammatic iconicity in literary texts from a Peircean perspective, he goes on to demonstrate how schematic aspects influence concepts such as realism, truth and "ideas" in the literary work, whether this achieves the "reality effect" à la Greimas and Barthes or the "typical" realism in the Marxist tradition of Georg Lukács. Arguing that even if Ingarden's theory is a theory of fiction, it may still generate a range of the iconic ways in which literature interacts with reality, he presents what he calls five literary "pseudo-truths;" namely, truth as empirical or typical resemblance, as internal or external (ontological) consistency and truth as the manifestation of metaphysical qualities.

In their discussion of "Greimas in the Realm of *Huckleberry Finn*: Or Why do Men have Bodies whereas Women and Children Don't?" Paul

Perron and Peter Marteinson propose a Greimassian structural analysis of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Their discussion demonstrates the heuristic value of such a classic analytical approach by opening up the intricate structures of the canonical work and the critical issues of gender and power in which they take part. As they point out, describing the semantic universe posited by Greimassian semiotics would be a mammoth task; instead, they propose an analysis of Twain's novel as a micro-semantic universe, in order to explain how this semiotic methodology could be made fruitful for the analysis of a canonical North American text. Finding that, although subjects appear and disappear amidst events, discussions and violence, nobody undergoes transformation except for Huck Finn himself, the authors conclude that from this classic structuralist perspective, it is not so much the subjects and events in the situation analyzed that matters but their actual amplitude.

The second section consists of articles addressing the relationships between texts and what is commonly called "reality" or life-world. Christina Ljungberg's article reflects on subjectivity and performance in literary texts and their modalities in literary works by Carol Shields and Paul Auster. As Ljungberg shows, the subject position is, in itself, a place defined by the role-playing of a socially and historically situated subject in a particular context—but the positioning of this situated subject can be diagrammatically manipulated and experimented on. Moreover, given that the subject is enmeshed in the various contexts in which she or he is performing according to previously scripted roles and rituals, the 'objective' element in subjectivity opens yet larger contextual spaces to consider. Hence, subjectivity is coterminous with intersubjectivity and therefore implies constant negotiation of position, place, and boundaries, which emphasizes its fluid and transitory character.

Vincent Colapietro's article "Pointing Things Out" explores the different ways in which literary texts are reflectively related to the life-world by indexical aspects of semiosis. Convincingly demonstrating how the pragmatic theory of semiotics opens up new ways to understand the age-old question of literary studies, namely, the text-world relationship, he explores how literature "calls us to the things of this world" with examples from Richard Wilbur, Herman Melville, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, among others. Colapietro then goes on to show that although art is undeniably other than life, they are inextricably bound together as we would never be able to understand a fictional world if we were not familiar with the 'real' world or life-world. In other words, without the pervasive presence of indexical signs, literary texts would be incomprehensible; it is thanks to these signs that literary worlds are at all possible and graspable,

at the same time as it is literary texts that return signs to their distinctive materiality and objects to their historical context. This seemingly obvious relationship is not only easily overlooked but is also much more complex than is often assumed.

Indexicality is also the central notion in Sirkka Knuuttila's and Harri Veivo's articles. Knuuttila discusses the notion in relation to semiotics, cognitive poetics and neurosciences, showing how these complementary approaches help us to understand the role of emotions in text-reader relations. Knuuttila's article proposes a three-fold examination of emotions, analyzing first the somatic and evaluative aspects of emotions as indexical signs, then reviewing empirical studies of reading based on neuropsychological research on emotions, and, finally, exploring the indexicality of figurative images and their relation to the reader's implicit memory. The scope of the article is particularly broad as Knuuttila makes a wide sweep from psychoanalysis to neuroscience and from Roman Jakobson to Robert Musil and Antonio Damasio, showing how literary semiotics functions as an interdisciplinary field and profits from insights originating in paradigms that are otherwise often kept apart.

Veivo's article remains within the more precise framework of Peirce's theory of semiotics, discussing indexicality in relation to another less analyzed notion, that of the dicent. While indexicality describes the relationship between the text and its object(s), the dicent and the related notions of rheme and argument characterise the text's rhetorical dimension towards its interpretant(s). In Peircean theory, these relationships are interdependent as the text-object relationship plays a decisive role in the determination of possible interpretants. Drawing on this premise, Veivo discusses the two notions together and proposes a text-focused and analytical reflection on indexicality and its role in the structures of rhetoric in Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* and in e.e. cummings' poem "the seeker of truth." The article demonstrates how indexicality, when related to the rhetoric dimension of texts, concurrently structures texts and various opportunities for interpretation. Illustrating the central yet little researched functions of indexicality, the four texts in the second section together indicate various ways in which work on this particular notion can renew literary studies.

The last section addresses questions of literature not only at the specific literary level, but also in relation to other fields of art. Ilias Yocaris's article "Exemplificational Systems and 'Expressive' Use of Language" takes up the notion of exemplification defined by Nelson Goodman and sets out to show its analytical value in stylistic analysis. For unknown reasons, both Goodman's work and the notion of style have not

been thoroughly reflected upon in literary semiotics, although both are directly relevant to work in this field. Yocaris's article fills this gap by showing how Goodman's work can be used to develop new ways of understanding how literary texts are constructed and how they work. His detailed analysis of literary texts by Honoré de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire, Victor Hugo and Marcel Proust vigorously expose the complex relations stylistic features create and their bearing on interpretation.

While Yocaris discusses Vincent van Gogh alongside literary examples, Gabriele Jutz focuses on cases in which devices of literary representation interact with other forms of art, especially experimental cinema and digital and visual arts. Her discussion focuses on issues of performance, materiality and the media-specificity in the production of meaning. While drawing on Goodman, Barthes, Derrida, John L. Austin and Judith Butler, Jutz shows shortcomings in earlier works and calls for a balanced understanding of performativity that takes into account both its iterative and singular aspects and thus provides a way to understand the role materiality plays in semiosis. The theoretical discussion is based on the analysis of Su Friedrich's experimental film *Gently Down the Stream*, Ben Tibbs's digital typeface "Taktile" and Christian Dotremont's logogrammes, which all explore the complex productive relationships between the materiality of the artefact and the systematic aspects of language and other codes of representation.

Louis Armand's article "Semiotic Machines / Experimental Systems" completes the volume, functioning as a reply to the opening texts. Armand discusses a large selection of literary authors and theoreticians from the early twentieth century up to the present in the large framework of modernity, technology and philosophy. The connections are surprising and the arguments thought-provoking as the text moves with ease from William Gibson to John Dewey and Alain Robbe-Grillet, claiming, among other things, that all language is technological and thus experimental. If this introduction and the first article assume the stance that the current state of theoretical reflection in literary semiotics is more constructive than conflictual, Armand's text exemplarily reminds us of the productive ambiguities that remain at the heart of all theoretical undertakings.

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SECTION I

Structuralism and/or the Semiotic-Pragmatic Approach to Literature

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Prologue: The Sixties and the Seventies

Let me start by briefly looking back at the situation within literary studies, and the humanities in general, in Denmark in the late sixties. It was, indeed, the heydays of structuralism (and within literary studies the inspiration from Russian formalism and Prague structuralism was strong): the canonical texts were, it almost goes without saying, Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916 [1906-11]), Hjelmslev's *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (1953 [Danish 1943]), and Greimas's *Sémantique structurale* (1966). It was generally felt, at least among postgraduate students, that the structuralist approach to text studies would, in the near future, solve most theoretical and methodological problems and succeed in, finally, making the study of texts, and specifically that of literary texts, scientific.

However, what was the situation in Denmark like in the middle seventies in the humanities and within literary studies? It was very different, indeed! Only about seven years before most influential students and younger scholars seemed to agree on one, single approach (but, of course there were always dissenting voices). Then, suddenly, the situation was changed, open, and a plethora of theories were competing: structuralism was dethroned, but, of course, still around, and still practiced. However, poststructuralism (French and American) was claiming a lot of interest as it was supported and applied by many of those who had half a decade before pledged their allegiance to structuralism. But other approaches were claiming our interest, as well: the semiotics of Nelson Goodman, the semiotics of the Moscow-Tartu school, and last but not least, Peircean semiotics. And, in addition to tough fights within the different semiotic species, there were other influential approaches to text

studies, first and foremost Marxist studies and psychoanalysis. Hence, there was a lot of discussion, and tension, because not everybody felt, for instance, that a poststructuralist and a Marxist approach were compatible, while others defended this possibility, indeed even the logic of their becoming bedfellows. And how well did Marxist studies and psychoanalysis match one another?

I am not going to stroll further down memory lane. I will, however, reflect a little on the reasons given for deserting the continental structuralist paradigm. What was argued was that

1) Although it was recognized, even by structuralists, that signs were used for communication, strict structuralism sought to transform text into systems, into "un micro-univers sémantique" as Greimas put it.

2) This meant, among other things, the suppression of enunciation in the objectification of the text (Greimas: l'objectivation du texte).

3) Then there was the trouble of showing the exact transformations between the three levels of generation (le parcours génératif) in the Greimassian model, e.g., between the basic semantic level, the narrative level, and the level of discursive semantics.

4) In classical French and European structuralism there was also an effort to narrow down the sign concept. This restrictive view of what should count as a sign was expressed in exemplary fashion by Greimas: "Si on admet, […], que l'exclusion du référent est un préalable nécessaire à l'exercice de toute sémiotique, on doit reconnaitre que l'indice, […] entre dans la catégorie des non-signes" (Greimas and Courtès 1979, 186).[1]

5) The will to build a putatively complete and closed theory, although in a sense laudable, made many scholars turn their backs to the project because:

a. They didn't want to pledge their allegiance to what, to them, appeared to be an almost Byzantine theory building.

b. They refused to get involved in discussions that seemed primarily to concern terminological questions.

c. The structuralist paradigm seemed self-contained and self-sufficient. It seemed as if it had no ambition to link with other approaches and other theories.

d. The self-imposed limits of the structuralist approach made it doubtful whether it could, indeed even wanted to, deal with important dimensions of the texts.

Whether this criticism was justified or not is, I suppose, still an issue, but I will not go further into this. However, another important reason for the scepticism concerning the structuralist project was a change of focus from the study of sign systems to that of sign processes, and consequently, from the study of texts as paradigms to studying them as syntagms and as utterances embedded in a historical context.

Exclusiveness vs. Inclusiveness in the Study of Literature

In order to situate the change from the structuralist to what I call the semiotic-pragmatic approach to literature, I started by looking at the situation within the humanities in general and within literary studies in particular in the second half of the sixties and the mid and late seventies. I would, however, like to follow these two different conceptions of literary studies a bit further back, and, at the same time, concentrate fully on literary studies. Let me start with two quotations from Roman Jakobson:

> The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness (literaturnost), i.e. that which makes of a given work a work of literature. (Jakobson 1921, quoted from Erlich 1965, 172)

and

> Poetry, which is simply an utterance oriented toward the mode of expression, is governed by immanent laws. (ibid.)

At the face of it, then, the study of literature should be directed toward the expression, e.g. a study of its linguistic devices, disregarding its content and communicative context.

However, even the formalists recognized the purposeness of literature. According to Shklovsky (1965 [1917]), it fulfilled the function of so-called strange-making or deautomatization, i.e., an unfamiliar, literary expression was supposed to make the reader perceive the world in a novel fashion by blocking his automated response. Hence, we have a purpose
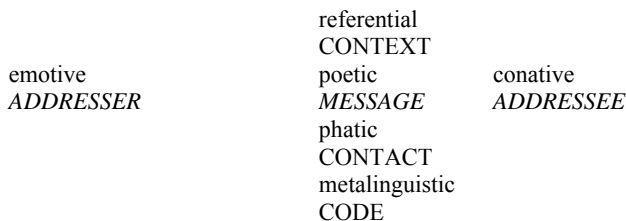
linked with the alleged effect of the reception of literature by a reader. And by the mid-thirties Jakobson becomes more moderate in his definition of poetry:

> The distinctive feature of poetry lies in the fact that a word is perceived as a word and not merely a proxy for the denoted object or an outburst of emotion, that words and their arrangement, their meaning, their outward and inward form acquire weight and value of their own. (Jakobson 1933-34, in Erlich 1965, 183)

And in the same year Jakobson claimed further:

> Neither Tynjanov nor Mukařovský nor I—none of us has ever proclaimed the self-sufficiency of art. What we have been trying to show is that art is an integral part of the social structure, a component that interacts with all the others and is itself mutable since both the domain of art and its relationship to the other constituents of the social structure are in constant dialectical flux. What we stand for is not the separatism of art but the autonomy of the aesthetic function. (Jakobson 1976, 174 [1933-34])

It may be doubted that Jakobson in the first years of Russian formalism held the view that he expresses in the quotation above, but eventually he came to hold it. Indeed by the sixties he drafted a model of linguistic communication:

	referential CONTEXT	
emotive *ADDRESSER*	poetic *MESSAGE*	conative *ADDRESSEE*
	phatic CONTACT metalinguistic CODE	

(Jakobson 1960)

Needless to say that this, rightfully famous, communication model is pragmatic *avant la lettre.* Here Jakobson, using Bühler's model as a point of departure, succeeds in representing some very important features of linguistic communication. In fact, he succeeds in comprehensively linking different dimensions of speech with each other, thus pointing to and advocating a plurifunctional study of texts that, at least to a great extent, is able to pinpoint the different functions and forces by which the texts are overdetermined. He himself, however, still concentrates on the poetic

function, and he still sees the specific feature of literary texts in the articulation of the expression of the texts, first and foremost by means of parallelisms. What happens in the poetic use of language is, according to Jakobson, that the paradigmatic relations of similarity and difference are projected onto the syntagmatic relationship of the elements in the linguistic chain. And although this principle is not new—the varieties of repetition were intensively studied, indeed, in ancient rhetoric (see, for instance Bullinger and Lausberg), and it may not be by accident that Jakobson, in formulating this view, was inspired by the poet and classical scholar, Gerald Manley Hopkins (professor of Greek and Latin at University College, Dublin)—it was, nevertheless, extremely important that this insight became linked with contemporary linguistics.

There is no doubt that this pinpointing of parallelism is valid and important for understanding the poeticity of literary texts. It should be stressed, however, that this is not the only feature that characterizes literature. Jakobson would, I think, wholeheartedly agree on this point, among other things, because in "Linguistics and Poetics" he very loosely sketches a theory of literary genres by combining the poetic functions with other functions. As he shows, in epic literature the poetic function is combined with the referential, in lyrical text the poetic function is linked with the emotive, and in drama it is linked with the conative. Hence, I think it is fair to say that Jakobson changed his point of view: from looking at literature as consisting exclusively of a set of devices, he came to see it as the result of the interplay of linguistic functions.

The Semiotic-Pragmatic Approach to Texts

In the seventies, poststructuralism meant a shift in interest from systems to processes, but poststructuralism was not the only trend that changed focus. About the same time, both within linguistics and within the study of literature, a pragmatic turn took place that also had other interests than those of structuralism.

Both pragmatics and pragmatism are vague terms, and they have multiple origins which derive definitely from antique rhetoric. The semiotics and pragmaticism of C.S. Peirce are very important, and so is the semiotics of Charles Morris with its tripartition of semiotics into syntactics (sign-sign relationships), semantics (sign-object relationships), and pragmatics (sign-person(s) relationships). Although there are certainly differences between rhetoric, Peircean semiotics, and that of Morris, they have a very important characteristic in common, namely the fact that they study sign action, "signs in use," as Peirce says.

The semiotic-pragmatic approach is double-faced. On the one hand, it studies the general contribution of the different kinds of signs singled out by Peirce, namely iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs, to the production of meaning, and, on the other, it looks at and analyzes concrete texts as utterances. In my opinion, Peirce's semiotics and pragmatics constitute a sound basis for such a study, because it is possible to integrate and show the interplay between the factors that interact in the processes of signification and interpretation. I have attempted to create a diagrammatic representation that shows this interaction, it is called the *semiotic pyramid* (Johansen 1989; 1993; 2002) (fig. 1):
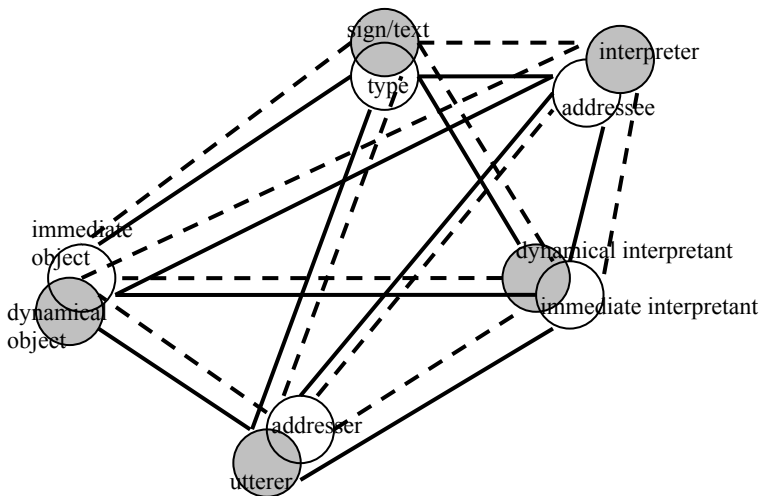

Figure 1. The Semiotic Pyramid.

The advantage of this pentagonal sign model is, I think, that it is linked with and points to what is influencing semiosis without being fully integrated into it. This is why the transparent circles represent what is internal to the sign action (for an important modification see below), whereas the gray circles indicate what, in an important sense, is external to it. They are all dynamical entities that are simultaneously influencing the internal elements and are indicated by them: the text points to, i.e., indicates the type, and the type, as norms and rules, is supposed to have influenced the text. The immediate interpretant indicates the dynamical

interpretant, since the latter is supposed to be selected from among the immediate ones. However, we never know what the immediate interpretants are supposed to be, before they have been manifested in a dynamical interpretant. Hence, the immediate interpretant indicates the dynamical, and is, at the same time, influenced by it. Because it is a hypothesis as to what is indicated by the sign, or text, the dynamical interpretant does in fact posit the immediate object. However, the immediate object certainly indicates the dynamical object, and it is also supposed to be influenced by it. The addresser is supposed to represent the utterer within the text, and hence it indicates its producer; but the utterer certainly influences the way he or she appears in the text. Finally, the interpreter is most often represented in the text as well, because the addressee is a position within the text, that is, it is created by the utterer, a point of view and role that the real receivers, i.e., the interpreters are invited make their own—not necessarily in order to benefit them, because it is the utterer who will most often profit if the interpreters accept the addressee's understanding of the utterance. And because this sign conception is dialogic, the model represents both parties, the solid lines represents the utterer's point of view, the dotted lines that of the interpreter.

The semiotic-pragmatic approach to texts may, in continuation of the dialogic sign conception, be characterized by holding the following points of view and by the attempt to analyzing texts accordingly:

1. The communicative and interactional aspects of signhood are in focus; both sign production and sign interpretation are regarded as activities involving actual dialogue.

2. The text's groundedness in the lifeworld is taken for granted and so is the purposeness of sign production. Purposeness implies that facts and values are most often, perhaps always, interrelated in speech and texts.

3. To engage in dialogue is to commit oneself to follow certain rules and procedures—and to presuppose that the other party does the same. At the same time, the parties are also expressing and defending their own vested interests.

4. Signs are uttered either in order to persuade the other party to share one's viewpoint (this is valid both for genetically produced sign sequences such as, for instance, mating rituals in animals, and for human dialogue).

5. Or signs may be uttered to persuade a third party to trust and prefer one's arguments over those of the other party (also male animals fly their colours to be preferred over others by the female).

6. The objective is to give the listener/viewer probable reasons for adhering to one position rather than to another (in order to procure assent and collaboration). In order to achieve such an objective through human dialogue, the discursive, narrative, structural, and figurative resources of speech are explored.

7. In human beings, signs are produced with the purpose to globally influence another party, i.e., to provoke responses involving cognitive, imaginative, emotional, and bodily reactions, both conscious and unconscious.

8. The importance of effectively making one's point is due to the fact that dialogue is normally about decisions concerning actions and interactions, and about decisions that can be debated. Hence, the *raison d'être* of dialogue implies that it is possible to choose among different possible decisions, and consequently choose different causes of action.

9. Thus, humans are seen as having a freedom of choice, but also to be responsible for the choices they make.

10. On this view, as it has been expounded above, semiosis is conceived as purposeful, often intentional, sign production and sign interpretation. Sign interaction is most often carried out in order to either agree that something is the case, and that one should respond to this fact by acting in a certain way, or to clarify that the parties disagree on what the case is and, accordingly, on which course to take, or, finally, they may agree on what the case is, but disagree on what course to take.

According to this point of view, dialogue is not only about action, it is just as much about knowing, about acquiring knowledge by perceiving, and by reasoning through dialogue, but these activities are themselves mental actions. Different types of texts, or different discourses, contribute to make different aspects of dialogue possible.

There is a discourse preoccupied by establishing what is true, i.e., in Habermas's words, a *theoretical discourse* (Habermas 1971). Such a discourse is eager to ensure a word to world fit, i.e., what is asserted should constitute a true account of a state of affairs, or express valid

generalizations. Closely related with but different from theoretical discourses is what I call *technical discourse.* Technical discourse is dependent on theoretical discourse, for it builds on the best available knowledge concerning what goes on in the parts of nature that are investigated. Technical discourse is distinct from theoretical discourse, however, because whereas the latter is preoccupied by discovering what is true about a given state of affairs in the world, technical discourse discusses how the environment can be transformed into resources, or how threatening natural events may be avoided through specific action, e.g., by inventing and using technology. Hence, technical discourse is about means, achievement, and success.

Technical discourse is most often linked with the outer world. However, whether we like it or not, it is quite common to look at other people as resources, and, in a sense, we *are* each others' resources. The problem is, of course, when interaction between people is guided by the success criteria of technical discourse, achievement or success, because in such cases speech may become manipulating, and coercion and force may govern interaction.

The subject of *practical discourse* (cf. Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*) is, however, precisely the discussion concerning how people should interact, and how societies should be governed. What is up for discussion is the rightness of norms, or *normative rightness*, as Habermas calls it (Habermas 1979). Obviously, the cases in which using manipulation, coercion and force are warranted, and especially the limits for using them, are precisely central to what practical discourse is about.

Whereas theoretical and technical discourse primarily deal with the outer world (although, all human activities may be viewed from these perspectives as well), and practical discourse is concerned with the social world, literary discourse deals both with the outer and the social world. It is about a world in which people interact, and hence it mimes both theoretical and practical discourse. However, in addition, it is also closely linked with the inner world. The inner world, subjectivity, because each of us has privileged access to our own, is not shared as easily as are the natural and social worlds. Hence the necessity of the principle—Habermas calls it the *validity claim* - which is supposed to govern the expression of subjectivity, namely *sincerity*. What literary discourse offers in relation to subjectivity is a way of sharing it by proxy. While a fictional text may mime an actual world, or model its own world according to, or in contrast with, such a world, it simultaneously *expresses* a subjectivity, and this subjectivity is realized, at least partly, in the reading process by the reader. But in expressing subjectivity in literary discourse, the author is, in a

certain sense, always *insincere,* because he or she is pretending to be somebody else. Such a kind of insincerity is, however, accepted by the reader for two reasons: first, because he or she is not in anyway deceived, except in very rare cases, he knows that it is fiction. Second, in reading, the reader experiences a dialectic between self and other similar to that of the author: by immersing himself into the foreign subjectivity expressed in the text, he becomes more acquainted with his own.

Finally, there is also a principle validity claim that ought to govern speech itself, namely that of *understandability.* In fact, it is and should be the first of Habermas's so-called *universal-pragmatic validity claims* for the very simple reason that, in order to ascertain whether the other validity claims that may be contained in a text are fulfilled, it needs to be understandable.

Habermas contends that when we engage in dialogue with one another, we claim that our speech is governed by these claims, i.e., what is stated is to our best knowledge *understandable, true*, and conforming to what we consider to be *normatively right*, and *sincere*. Furthermore, we might want to claim that, when discussing how to explore natural resources, the course proposed is efficient in furthering our objectives and as beneficial to the environment as possible. Furthermore, in case of using strategic means to further the achievement of others—and pedagogy, for instance, does involve a certain measure of manipulation—we also want to claim *success* as a criterion. The validity claims may be mapped onto the semiotic pyramid in this way (fig. 2):
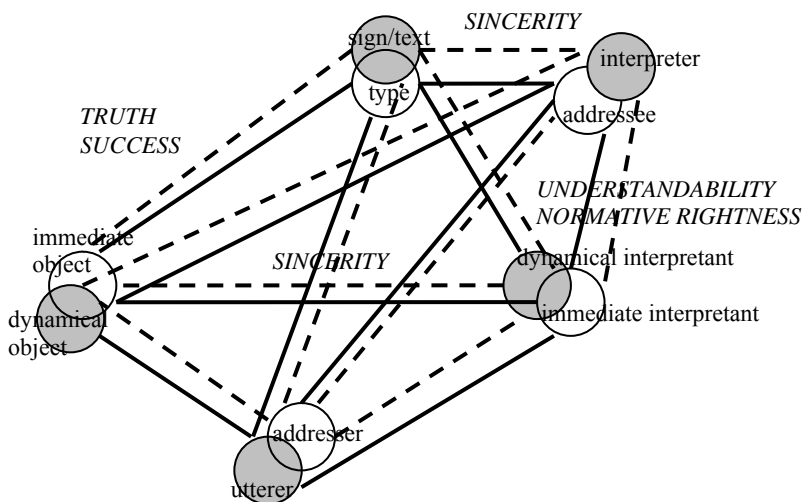
Figure 2. The Semiotic Pyramid and validity claims.

Obviously, the ten points that are claimed to characterize the general approach of the semiotic-pragmatic study of texts and Habermas's proposal that speech and dialogue is, or rather is supposed to, abiding by the validity claims, means that texts should not only be studied as to their internal aspects, but certainly also in respect to the way they function in interpersonal and social interaction. However, after having stated the points and objectives of the semiotic-pragmatic approach to texts in general and literature in particular, I would like to return to the question whether structuralism has a role to play within the wider framework sketched above.

The Place of Structuralism within Semiotics

There is no plea here that we should return to structuralism in the tradition of Saussure, Hjelmslev and Greimas. It has served its purpose as a general paradigm of linguistics and text theory, and I think that, as a general theory, its shortcomings have been demonstrated, not only by poststructuralism, but also, for instance, in the hermeneutical reflection of Paul Ricoeur, by linguistic pragmatics, and by discourse analysis. And the