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(In)distinct Languages:
Revisiting the Dualism of Literal and Literary Meaning in Roman Jakobson and Donald Davidson

The dualism between literal and literary meanings has been germane to literary theory since its inception. It also pertains to intricate millennial, philosophical, and poetic reflections on the nature of language and literature. My discussion will focus on Roman Jakobson and Donald Davidson as two prominent scholars from the different and usually considered conflicting traditions of structuralism and analytic philosophy.[1]

I will cut through the various turning points of Jakobson's and Davidson's attempts to formulate a distinction between the concepts of literal and literary

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[1] This is a rift between the Continental and Analytic traditions in the humanities and social sciences. In recent decades, much ink has been spilled to bridge the gap and heal the rift between these respective ways and styles of thinking. Throughout the following argument I refer to some of these erudite efforts of scholarly negotiation.

meanings. This paper offers a theoretical discussion and is far from being an exhaustive account of their positions. My principal aim is not to give an interpretation of the respective theories or readings of these influential thinkers: I will instead propose my theoretical position by constructing constellations between and within Jakobson's and Davidson's concepts.

Manifold meaning and first meaning – disagreeing on disagreement

Let us review two seemingly theoretically antithetical positions that come from deconstruction and semiotics, both of which pertain to pragmatics. In this preliminary discussion, I attempt to describe several irreconcilable polarities and to develop a solution to the entanglement between deconstruction and pragmatics. I say *seemingly* above because pragmatics is considered bereft of abstract concepts due to its intricate involvement in many diverse contexts. However, due to the context-sensitivity of expressions, pragmatic concepts demand the highest level of abstraction.[2] The structure of language consists of relations between expressions, the world, and society. This does not entail that speakers shift across domains and that language's impact on interpretation would either increase or decrease from the standpoint of a momentarily occupied domain. Instead, speakers simultaneously inhabit the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic domains of language use. Therefore, a theory of meaning must be adequately abstract in order to describe the simultaneity and the intersection of domains.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida reminds us of the function of traditional criticism, which doubles as commentary to help the reader reach a sense of meaning outside a text. However, according to Derrida, although they are indispensable for interpretation, such traditional critical instruments grasp nothing but the text itself:

> Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only *protected*; it has never *opened* a reading. (Derrida, 1974, p. 158)

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[2] To grasp this abstractness, Toolan (1996) introduces integrational linguistics.

At this stage of the argument, Derrida famously concludes, "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*". If the object of interpretation is outside of the text, Derrida's enigmatically phrased conclusion, which verges on being a shibboleth, would imply that the exteriority of the text is simultaneously enfolded in it. However, the premise is intuitive: to unravel the meaning of a text, one should first unfold or open it. Nevertheless, the reception of Derrida's claim proceeded in the opposite direction. The outside as a domain which is independent of the text does not exist. The referential outside transpires as an effect of textual mechanisms. Hence, reality does not exist.

This is why Umberto Eco, in *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990), opposes Derrida by arguing that protecting texts actually enables their opening.[3] Eco suggests that protection should be seen along with the notion of literal meaning:

> I feel sympathetic with the project of opening readings, but I also feel the fundamental duty of protecting them in order to open them since I consider it risky to open a text before having duly protected it. (Eco, 1990, p. 54)

According to Eco, literal meaning should be recognized first.[4] But is not literal meaning given in advance? Is it not recognized automatically? Is not literature a deviation from ordinary literal meaning? Returning to Derrida, his argument was not that such opening enables the possibility to "say almost anything". The task of critique is to prevent such commentary from saying anything; it is not to exclude the possibility of opening texts. Opening a text does not allow the interpreter to say anything. Such opening relates to the *invention* of literal meaning, which enacts the function of protection. Yet, protecting and opening a text coexist as compatible interpretive strategies. We can take Derrida and Eco as proponents of two polarized models of interpretation. For Derrida, opening and protecting are simultaneous processes involving a variety of layers of meaning. Eco, to the contrary, views them as a cascade of various levels which interpretation can cross. We shall see below how this dichotomy

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[3] Dasenbrock (2000) elaborates criticism of Derrida. Contrary to him, Dasenbrock locates the interpretation in intention.

[4] Eco reverses the relationship of opening and protecting, starting from his reading of Dante's *The Banquet* (*Il convivio*, 1304–1307). In *The Banquet*, Dante introduces the theory of interpretation, which comprises four senses (*quattro sensi*). In Dante's hierarchy of interpretation, the literal sense comes first, providing a ground on which the other senses (allegorical, moral, and anagogical) are built up. However, it seems that for Dante the literal sense is not pre-given as it is an object of interpretation. In *The Banquet*, Dante displays how the interpretation of a canzone starts from pinpointing the literal sense and then determining the other three senses.

of opening and protecting is related to interpretation conceived as unveiling. As a more moderate account of the literal-literary dichotomy, I will engage with the approaches introduced by Davidson and Jakobson.

Thus, my premises are twofold:

1. Literal meaning is not given but is constituted by an interpretation;
2. Understanding literal meaning is not a prerequisite to understanding other forms of meaning, whether as a more developed or a deviant form of its antecedent.

Theory of meaning can dispense with both the notion of literal meaning and any distinction that conceptually mirrors the opposition between literal and non-literal meanings. Hereafter, I will not defend this thesis but, less pretentiously, argue why it would be worth defending.

The analytic philosopher Donald Davidson had some controversial and, for some readers, counterintuitive views on concepts such as literal meaning, convention, communication, metaphor, and interpretation.[5] He argues for the notion of literal or, as he later calls it, first meaning. First meaning is not given in advance; instead, it is the object of interpretation. After the interpreter establishes first meaning, she can proceed with developing other senses:

> If you and I try to compare notes on our interpretation of a text, we can do this only to the extent that we have or can establish a broad basis of agreement. If what we share provides a common standard of truth and objectivity, the difference of opinion makes sense. (Davidson, 2005b, p. 181)

The "common standard of truth and objectivity" is not given in advance for the speakers; rather, it is yet to be established. One can start from one's own beliefs and with the assumption that others share similar beliefs. Although one cannot know the content of others' beliefs, it is possible to take a similarity of belief as an undeniable assumption of the process of interpretation. This is a schematic structure that is a condition for any interpretation to start with and that, nevertheless, leaves a vast space open and undetermined. I will complement the similarity of beliefs schema with the more abstract schematic layer of the indeterminacy of a common ground.[6]

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[5] For a discussion on Davidson's views, see Cuervo (2018), Dummett (1989), Hacking (1989), Green (2001), and Talmage (1994). For an important contribution to Davidson and literary theory, see the volume by Dasenbrock (1993).

[6] Or the "interactional risk", as Toolan (1996, p. 53) names it. I underline, contrary to Toolan, that risk is a condition of interaction.

Speakers have a minimal agreement that they would inevitably disagree on both the convergence and divergence of their beliefs (Davidson, 2001b, pp. 278–279). This is a more radical disagreement than agreeing that they disagree. The degree of overlap is diminished. Disagreement is pushed to the limit of the speakers' disagreement about what and how they disagree. Both in ordinary and literary communication, speakers assume the ultimate indeterminacy of a common ground. There is *a* common ground, and yet it persists in its incompleteness.[7] It is necessary to be determined, and it still escapes from a final determination. Speakers accept that they share plenty of beliefs as they concomitantly acknowledge the vagueness of their common ground.

The indeterminacy of a common standard is a usual communicative situation. First meaning and any subsequently ascribed meanings are coevally connected and independent of each other. First meaning is a basis for assigning succeeding meanings which cannot be reduced to first meaning.[8] For Davidson, a variety of meanings emerge from first meaning, which is at the same time reflected in and deflected by them. Different senses are ingrained in first meaning, and, as its offshoot, they are similar and different from it. However, the notion of first meaning is misleading. It implies that there are *second*, *third*, and many other meanings.[9]

Moreover, despite being antecedent, first meaning could be neither the foremost nor the original meaning. This template of multifold meanings should be envisaged as flat and horizontal arrangements instead of deep and vertical ones. This multiplicity of meanings is not cut into the *first*, *second*, *third*, *n*… meanings. Meanings are singular. This means that any of them could equally[10] be either first or any other meaning.[11] First meaning does not precede others. It is neither an anterior condition nor an ulterior justification of interpretation.

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[7] It would be expected to put this in a more rhetorical vein, meaning that it is common to acquire an uncommon ground. With such verbiage I would be conceptually committed to naturalize uncommon ground, losing therewith disagreeing on disagreeing as the radical form of disagreement that I propose.

[8] For a recent argument for such a scalar model of interpretation, see Attridge and Staten (2015).

[9] Regarding the third meaning, see Barthes (1978). Many thanks to Brian Willems for this point.

[10] Equally, here this should be read neither as *mutatis mutandis* nor *ceteris paribus*, but as 'in any circumstances whatsoever'.

[11] Roland Barthes, in *Criticism and Truth* (*Critique et verité*, 1966), argues that in ordinary language ambiguity is resolved in a situation, whereas in poetic language ambiguity is

One does not determine which meaning is first among the multiplicity of meanings and then proceed with an interpretation. Instead, it is a simultaneous process of establishing layers of meanings. In most cases, even the most complex interpretations could be instantaneous, which does not, on the other hand, reduce their complexity and multifarious structure. If an interpretation simultaneously merges a variety of levels, we can draw some corollaries:

1a) A speaker does not need to establish first meaning to apprehend ensuing meanings.

1b) Meanings are not hierarchically arranged in order of their primacy.

1c) Even if something similar to first meaning is required to go on with interpretation, it can be deduced from other layers of meaning.

1d) If it is natural to speak of a heterogeneous variety of meanings; they are not consecutive but concurrent.

Dualism and the interpenetration of words and things – the interval between the mimetic and the semiotic

Theories of meaning are embedded in the dualist hypothesis. There is one fixed aspect of meaning that can be determined independently from anything external to expression, such as the outside world, the speaker's intention, or even another expression. Besides, this stable meaning, usually called the literal or first variable meaning, depends on a multifaceted context and various circumstances that involve other expressions, intentions, states of affairs, and situations.[12]

'Literal' means to identify meaning by knowing words and nothing else, namely by excluding all external linguistic and non-linguistic factors. However:

"pure" (Barthes, 2007, p. 27). The message is not extricated from other parts of communication because it is inherently poetic. On the contrary, the message becomes poetic for its being irreducible to exhibiting other functions. In such an erratic or drifting message, a multiplicity of meanings is accepted as such. In the referential function – following Barthes – multiplicity is attenuated but not minimized to a zero value (Barthes, 2007, pp. 26–28). Hence, the message enacts other communicative functions amid performing the poetic function.

[12] Jakobson argues that language is not "monolithic". It is a "convertible code" with "fluctuations" and "current progressing changes" (Jakobson, 1971a, p. 574). In 'Linguistics and Poetics', Jakobson describes the "unity of language" as a "system of interconnected subcodes" or "several concurrent patterns" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 65).

2. The possibility of determining contextually independent meanings does not necessarily entail that they *are* literal meaning.

2a) To eliminate literal meaning does not amount to cancelling the referential use of language. It also does not mean that expressions lack content. However, a direct reference or the content of an expression is not the literal meaning.

I will recast this purported duality within the framework of the dualism of mind and body. In *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Gilbert Ryle rejects the dualism of mind-body as a category mistake. Throughout the book, he offers myriad examples with wit and profound insight. His small and penetrating thought experiments showcase the inept status of Descartes' myth of the dualist solution to the mind-body problem. I will consider here parts of Ryle's argument in *The Concept of Mind*'s chapters "Descartes' Myth" and "Imagination". Ryle views category mistakes as a particular use of linguistic expressions.[13]

I will underline two warnings. We must be careful to avoid switching from mind-body dualism to category-language dualism. It is not evident from Ryle's analyses if language triggers or produces a conflation of categories, or whether it simply expresses the mistake that has already occurred in the realm of categories. Both solutions are highly problematic since they conceive language in a precisely Cartesian manner as an imperfect incarnation of operations and products of the mind. Since I contend that category mistakes are meaningless, I will not defend them as meaningful. The antithesis of meaningless-meaningful is rather something to be explained rather than taken as an explanatory framework.[14] Ryle projected illegal crisscrossing among categories into language alone. Students of literary language are familiar with metaphor, prosopopoeia, and personification, all of which are allegories that are neither category mistakes nor meaningless conjunctions of expressions. Toggling between or shifting across semantical domains creates meaning as they activate multiple layers of signification. This multilayered activation is not only peculiar to literature: it foregrounds a fundamental mechanism of language.[15]

In the famous imaginary scenario, Ryle envisages a foreign visitor who searched for 'the University' while perambulating through the university build-

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[13] Later developments, starting with family resemblances and continuing in the remarkable achievements of fuzzy set and prototype theory, persist in using notions of literal meaning.

[14] See the interesting discussion by Magidor (2009).

[15] According to Mukařovsky (1977), foregrounding occurs in both poetic and standard language.

ings. The visitor sees departments, buildings, offices, facilities, but he claims that he does not see the university itself. The visitor's mistake lies in considering the university as an "extra member of the class of which these other units are members" (Ryle, 2000, p. 18).

In another example, a child observes a division march. He sees equipment, gear, vehicles, and soldiers, but he persists in contriving the division as a unique entity distinct from its constituents. However, the child does not watch the constituents "*and* a division" but rather the "constituents *of* division". (Ryle, 2000, p. 18) Ryle then imagines a spectator watching a game never seen before. The spectator discerns all the parts of the game except for the team spirit, presuming that *l'esprit de corps* is an external supplement to all the other parts. In conclusion to this assay of examples, Ryle says that the team spirit is not as same as the elements of the game, and yet it is not a third element.

The dualities of mind-body and literal and literary meaning are neither the same nor similar *per analogiam*; however, these two dualities are homological and bear similar relations between dissimilar entities. Ryle defined the mind-body problem as an issue of the linguistic misuse of expression. These mistakes arise from the false use of words (Ryle, 2000, p. 19). One assigns a different ontological status to an expression that refers to the mind as it points to another reality. Instead, expressions referring to the body, the physical, the mind and the mental do not denote two different realities. They express two different senses of existence. In literary theory, the homological conception of the two-stranded domains of the mind-body problem poses interpretative problems. In interpretation, the reader understands the meaning of the textual constituents and assumes that meaning must be supplanted with some additional meaning. Literary and additional meaning are simultaneously similar and different from each other.

The meaning of a literary text is not its literary meaning or the meaning of words in their ordinary use; nor is it something third that could gain a special status. Ryle applies the same line of reasoning to the imagination. He denounces "linguistic oddity" to ascribe "an other-worldly reality" to images of objects, persons, acts, and entities.[16] The imagination is not a separate faculty but a way

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[16] Ryle's critique of the imagination as having content in the mind (e. g. analogon, mental image) is strikingly similar to Jean Paul Sartre's argument expounded in *L'Imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (1940). Both Sartre and Ryle start with a rejection of a parallel between imagination and perception and with a critique of Hume.

of interconnecting other faculties. Due to this entanglement, content refers to reality or is experienced as real without being that reality or being real. Literature toggles between the mimetic and the semiotic[17] threshold, whose transgression triggers a referential illusion or a category mistake that fuses signs and worlds. Reference is not a seamless passage from signs to the world since one does not cleave to the other. Instead, a temporal interval is inserted between which hinders conflating a fiction for truth. Maintaining the temporal gap is concomitant to melding the thing and the word, whereby they never coalesce.

Instead, "[t]he University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organized. When they are seen and when their co-ordination is understood, the University has been seen" (Ryle, 2000, p. 19). One does not see content directly independently of its signifying arrangement. The history of literary theory is determined by the notion of poetic language as a separate entity that is opposed to ordinary language. 'Poeticity' and 'poeticalness' are assumed to be kind of a ghost in the literary machine; besides the words used, there is the extra property of 'being poetic' or 'being literary'. 'Poeticity' and 'poeticalness' are the famous notions that Jakobson developed in 'What Is Poetry?' (1933–34) and 'Linguistics and Poetics' (1960).[18] However, these terms were introduced by Jakobson to avoid a category mistake in explaining poetic language as dependent on some hidden process that could be somehow extracted or extrapolated from the wholeness of a linguistic structure. As Jakobson writes:

> For the most part, poeticity is only a part of a complex structure, but it is a part that necessarily transforms the other elements and determines with them the nature of the whole. In the same way, oil is neither a complete dish in and of itself nor a chance addition to the meal, a mechanical component; it changes the taste of food and can sometimes be so penetrating that fish packed in oil has begun to lose, as in Czech, its genetic name, sardinka (sardine), and is being baptized anew as olejovka (olej-, oil- + ovka, a derivational suffix). (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 378)

To paraphrase Jakobson in Ryle's terms, "poeticity is just the way in which all that the reader has already read is organized". Poeticity is like the oil in which sardines are packed; it is neither a "complete dish" nor an "addition to the meal", but it still changes "the taste of food". Literary language "is only a part of a complex structure" which has transformative effects upon itself. It *is*

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[17] I do not believe that the reader moves from the mimetic threshold to the semiotic domain (Riffaterre, 1978), that is from the reference to external objects to the interaction of signs. Instead, interpretation conjoins in tension the mimetic and semiotic.

[18] These texts belong to different periods of Jakobson's work.

a component of a complex structure, but its transformative effects are seen only indirectly as a transmutation. Just as a sardine immersed in oil loses its "genetic name", language is in a continuous transformation engendered by altering and transposing its layers. Transformations and transpositions shuffle layers. But this should be neither dubbed nor defined as literary language. It is a mechanism that could explain both literary and non-literary language.

However, Jakobson's notion of poeticity oscillates between being a necessary part of the complex structure and its effect. This effect is retroactively turned into a primary cause. One conflates categories, a sardine for the oil, a part for the whole, and, *in ultima linea*, a portmanteau word ('olejovka') for the thing ('sardinka'). The point of metonymical shifts is not to lead logical thinking astray, to coin a category mistake that is to be rectified and logically re-framed. There is no category mistake nor misuse of language. The order of words ('sardinka', 'olej', and '-ovka' and the order of things (sardine, oil) mutually interpenetrate and simultaneously change.

Communicating always anew – rejecting the dichotomy of a prior and passing theory, and the irrelevance of first meaning

In the philosophy of psychology, Davidson defended the thesis of anomalous monism according to which mental events possess features of causal dependence and nomological independence.[19] Anomalous monism states that while all events are physical, they cannot be explained in physical terms: "The anomalism of the mental is a necessary condition for viewing action as autonomous" (Davidson, 2001d, p. 225). The mental is said to *supervene* the physical. This supervenience entails the causal determination of the mental by a physical domain without linguistic identity between these two kinds of events. Davidson calls this a heteronomic

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[19] Davidson's work has garnered immense scholarly and intellectual attention. In the monumental Volume XXVII of The Library of Living Philosophers, edited by L. E. Hahn, Davidson explicitly denounces deconstruction and poststructuralism, while acknowledging thinkers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas. From the bulk of the discussion of Davidson's thinking, I highlight John McDowell's book *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994) as a lasting example of engaging in a critical reading of Davidson's work.

generalization which entails laws that could not be explicated without "shifting to a different vocabulary" (Davidson, 2001d, p. 219). The determination of the mental by the physical does not entail a reduction: "Even if someone knew the entire physical history of the world and every mental event were identical with a physical, it would not follow that he could predict or explain a single mental event" (Davidson, 2001d, p. 224). Davidson argues for the absence of a "law-like connection" (Davidson, 2001g, p. 239) between physical and psychological terms.

Parallel to anomalous monism, a radical interpretation assumes that a speaker's beliefs and meanings are interlocked. Beliefs cannot be known without knowing the meaning of sentences, and meaning is not accessible without knowing what the speaker believes (Davidson, 2001f, p. 137). The mental domain of beliefs shares a nomological irreducibility with the verbal domain of meanings. Mental events cannot be reduced to "deterministic laws", and verbal events are irreducible to linguistic rules. Interpreters always "start from scratch […] deliver[ing] simultaneously a theory of belief and a theory of meaning" (Davidson, 2001a, p. 144, 2001g, p. 238). There is a triangular causal connection between sentences (intersubjectivity), beliefs (subjectivity), and the world (objectivity). However, no law, either in the case of beliefs or rule-generating sentences, can fully explicate how an interpreter arrives at an interpretation. Davidson permits formal and empirical constraints in the form of the theory of truth and the principle of charity. However, these "constraints cannot uniquely fix the theory of interpretation", and there is always "the remaining indeterminacy" (Davidson, 2001c, p. 257). The indeterminacy of meaning is the linguistic equivalent of the anomalism of the mental. Indeterminacy in interpretation does not entail that beliefs and the world do not causally determine sentences. Determination *is* the object of radical interpretation, but no law or rule regulates or constrains the process of *determining* how sentences, beliefs, and the world are entwined. Speakers enter communication presuming that they share nothing, even the beliefs they could share. If we want to start a genuine discussion on the indeterminacy of meaning or interpretation, we must reject conceiving indeterminacy as an object of containment. Davidson envisages indeterminacy as a challenge for developing semantic, philosophical, and psychological concepts. But the conceptual space, such as reality, language, meaning, truth, or mind, in which these concepts are applied remains intact.[20] By taking indeterminacy into

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[20] For an elaborate critique of this topic, see Taylor (1985).

account, he asks how to adjust concepts to retain the standard metaphysical and ontological model of the world and mind. Indeterminacy appeals to altering not only concepts but the standard metaphysical and ontological framework wherein they are developed. The structure of sharing is twofold. On the first level, the speaker starts from her own beliefs and presupposes that others could share something similar. However, she realizes that the zone of overlap between shared beliefs is not large enough to have any significant influence on the transaction. With that, she slides up the second level. Since it is not possible to determine what speakers share, the best thing would be to abandon the idea that they share anything at all. Speakers waver between sharing *something* and sharing *nothing*. Communication recommences.

The nomological irreducibility of the mental[21] applies to verbal events. As Davidson demonstrates in 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs' (1986), *passing theories* cannot be reduced to *prior theories* in order to understand language. Prior theories comprise three principles of first meaning: (1) first meaning is systematic; (2) first meaning is shared; (3) first meaning is governed by learned conventions and regularities (Davidson, 2005c, p. 93). Davidson retains the notion of first meaning, but he abandons its reducibility to the three principles of prior theories. Davidson argues for first meaning and rejects its nomological reducibility on the principles of prior theory: "there are no rules for arriving at passing theories" (Davidson, 2005c, p. 107). Speakers arrive at first meaning by a passing theory to which cannot be consigned a nomological form. As will be seen regarding Jakobson's communication model, a speaker uses passing theory every time she needs to decide on the function of a message. Meaning in Jakobson's model depends on a communicative function that is neither determined in advance nor inherent in an expression alone. These analyses lead us to the following conclusions:

1. Davidson's distinguishing between prior and passing theory was a methodological prerequisite to provide a theoretical insight into the nature of first meaning. Prior theory is too weak even for the construction of first meaning. Its construction is the achievement of passing theory. This being true, we dispense with the need to distinguish between prior and passing theory. Davidson's analyses downplay distinguishing between the prior and the passing theory.[22]

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[21] This is Davidson's construction.

[22] The construction of a passing theory requires reconfiguring a communicative situation to arrive at first meaning. Therefore, we can dispel with first meaning as a necessary

2. Davidson's passing theories function within the framework of the first level of sharing. To this extent, they are not passing theory at all; instead, they are a version of prior theories. This subordination of the passing theory to the prior theory leads to a trade-off between the indeterminacy of interpretation and the shared beliefs. The ideal of similarity of beliefs curtails a seeming uncertainty of interpretation. He divests first meaning from the properties of stability, fixity, and a law-like structure, displacing them thereby onto shared belief.

Not clothed and still (not) nude – the material transparency of the sign

In the concluding paragraphs of 'Linguistics and Poetics', Jakobson argues that "poeticalness" is not a mere "supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 93). Jakobson recounts an anecdote of a missionary and his African flock: "A missionary blamed his African flock for walking around with no clothes on. 'And what about yourself?' they pointed to his visage, 'are not you, too, somewhere naked?' 'Well, but that is my face'. 'Yet in us', retorted the natives, 'everywhere it is face'".

Just as for the African flock, the face is everywhere, "[s]o in poetry, any verbal element is converted into a figure of poetic speech" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 93). Poeticalness is not restricted to one segment of language; instead, it is "a total reevaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 93). Due to this reevaluation, the entire language is converted into the face. The natives' pun means that although the missionary covers his body by putting his apparel on, he remains naked underneath. The missionary's garment does not conceal but signifies nudity. Nudity is given through signification, although it is not visible. The presence of nudity is signified by its absence.

The face is, following structural linguistic terminology, unmarked, and it can be naked. The body is marked and covered with clothes. The missionary's reply opens one more possibility: if one part of the body may be naked,

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condition for arriving at other meanings. One should not appeal to prior theory to create its passing countenance.

is it *really* naked? Maybe the face is not naked because it is already covered with a cultural convention which permits it to be unclad. Markedness and unmarkedness should not necessarily be manifested as the presence or absence of a material sign.[23] The ubiquity of the face can be read as saying that the other parts of the natives' bodies are clothed in the same way as the missionary's face is clothed without being covered by a visible veil. Even if the face is uncovered, that still does not imply that it is naked. Being stripped is irreducible to being nude. The missionary can leave his face uncovered because it is not naked. We deal with a cluster of oppositions that do not overlap: covered/uncovered, clothed/naked, not clothed/not naked.

La pensée sauvage has its linguistic equivalent in the notion of the zero sign (*signe zero*). Signs can be something as opposed to nothing. This means that one sign can have value even "without material support in the sounds" (Jakobson, 1971b, p. 211). Jakobson shows that various linguistic systems "can be decomposed into binary oppositions where one of the terms designates the presence of a certain quality, and the other (the term that is not characterized or unmarked, in brief, zero term) indicates neither its presence nor its absence" (Jakobson, 1971b, p. 213).[24] The presence of a garment on the missionary's body signifies neither that he is clothed nor that he is not naked. Instead, he is covered and not naked. Hence, the uncovered face does not signify its nudity; the being uncovered of the face is related to the body's being covered. The absence of the natives' clothing signifies neither that they are not clothed nor that they are naked. They are uncovered and not clothed. Nudity as a thing is never given directly but only through signs of the presence or the absence of clothes. Whereas nudity is apprehended as not clothed, being clothed is accessed as not naked. Therefore, following this analysis of the entanglement of nudity and clothing, the sign simultaneously signifies without enclosing upon signification and escaping from ultimately disclosing the signified world. Signification enfolds the world (mimetic), whether fictional or real, to the extent that the sign folds upon

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[23] Jakobson, according to Andersen (2001), follows an exclusionist logic, building linguistic opposition on the ground of the logic of contrarieties. We show, however, that marked and unmarked terms crisscross and contrive both conceptual mixtures and transversal divisions.

[24] "(…) se laissent décomposer en oppositions binaires, dont l'un des termes désigne la présence d'une certaine qualité et, l'autre (terme non caractérisé ou non marqué, bref terme zéro) n'annonce ni sa présence ni son absence".

itself (semiotic). Yet, these mimetic and semiotic operations are simultaneous without ever merging.

As Battistella put it, "languages frequently implement semantic opposition not in contrast between two overt signs, but in contrast between something and nothing – between a zero sign and an overt one" (Battistella, 1990, p. 77). In English, for example, nouns in the singular are indicated with the zero suffix /ø/, while the plural is indicated with the overt suffix /-s/. Every use of language functions as a zero sign; it signifies without being manifestly explicated or without materializing itself. There is no need to exclude poetic language from this unadvertised and behind-the-scenes performance. The face does not inhere the direct and unequivocal directness of its expression. No use of language is steeped with the innocence of the naked face. Poeticalness needs no visible or palpable token promulgating how a sentence or text should be interpreted. The immense variety of uses of language are not explicated in the structure of signs. One should not bloat sentences with verbal quotations marks in order to determine whether interpretation would proceed poetically or literally:

As I said, the linguistic study of the poetic function must overstep the limits of poetry, and, on the other hand, the linguistic scrutiny of poetry cannot limit itself to the poetic function. The particularities of diverse poetic genres imply a differently ranked participation of the other verbal functions along with the dominant poetic function. (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 70)

In its structure, every sign is a zero sign since no interpretation is part of the meaning of the sign. In *What Is Poetry?* Jakobson writes: "The borderline dividing what is the work of poetry from what is not is less stable than the frontiers of the Chinese empire's territories" (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 369). If "poetry is unstable and temporally conditioned" (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 378), the difference between poetry and non-poetry could be replaced with poeticity as an erratic quality that blurs boundaries and infringes the threshold between poetic and non-poetic language. However, we must put aside a discussion about salient and self-contained entities. There is only a mobile and shifting cutting edge between various layers of meaning.

Although poeticity is "an element sui generis" (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 378), it "cannot be mechanically reduced to other elements", and its separation "remains a special case". Poeticity, or poeticalness, is not a separate element or a unique property inherent to linguistic expressions. Poeticity does not exist in itself; instead, it is a toggling between the naked and the clothed, the mimetic and the semiotic. It engenders the difference between the thing and the word.

Diaphanousness and diagrams –
propagating fictions to retrieve the truth

Jakobson uses the metaphors of clothing and nakedness in a technical way. In discussing old Indic and Medieval Latin literary theory and their distinction of the "two poles of verbal art", Jakobson concludes: "in Latin *ornatus difficilis* and *ornatus facilis*, the latter style evidently being much more difficult to analyze linguistically because in such literary forms verbal devices are unostentatious and language seems a nearly transparent garment." (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 89) Jakobson concludes by quoting Peirce: "This clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous." (Peirce, 1938, p. 339) We may rephrase the reply to the missionary in Peirce's terms: just like the native's body, the missionary's face is clothed in something more diaphanous.[25] Poetic diaphanousness is like a zero sign; it is simultaneously present and absent. The sign is never naked, and it is never stripped from poeticalness since its diaphanous veil shrouds every use of language. Jakobson recounted a similar anecdote:

> Once, when a world wrestling champion lost to an underdog, one of the spectators jumped up, charged that the bout had been fixed, challenged the victor, and defeated him. The next day a newspaper carried an article saying that the second, as well as the first bout, had been fixed. The spectator who had challenged the victor of the first bout then burst into the newspaper's offices and gave the editor responsible for the story a slap in the face. But both the newspaper article and the spectator's pique later turned out to be prearranged hoaxes. (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 370)

This anecdote is told to support the thesis that it is not possible to draw a distinct line between poetry and non-poetry (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 369). Behind an event that is concocted, another contrived event discloses and unravels the fictitious nature of its predecessor. All events are clothed or fixed as well as being seemingly naked or real. But the hoax character of events cannot be dispelled. The pellucid clothing of events, or their fictitiousness, can never be dismantled entirely. A counterfeit is only exchanged for something more diaphanous. Due to this diaphanousness, "prearranged hoaxes" appear as real events. Just like the natives in the anecdote, and Peirce in the discussion of

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[25] For the relationship between Peirce and Jakobson, with a focus on the theory of markedness, see Andrews (1990).

representation, Jakobson concludes, "when an actor tears off his mask, make-up is sure to be forthcoming" (Jakobson, 1987e, p. 370). Every use of language, and not only poetic use, is like acting: it is a devised and intriguing event. Every speaker is like an actor: she cannot be disclosed without discovering that her face is but another mask. The translucent, almost invisible, diaphanous clothing is poeticalness. Poeticalness reveals the essence of the sign, which denudes or lays bare a world as it clothes it in itself. This signifying attire is neither mimetic (laying bare the world) nor semiotic (laying bare the sign). It is a simultaneously material and transparent line. It enables the discernment of the sign and the world, whereas they become indiscernible in the very act of signification.

Jakobson abandons de Saussure's thesis of the arbitrary nature of the sign. Instead, the sign is a diagrammatical structure that refers to without corresponding to its object. In 'Linguistics and Poetics', the diagrammatical structure is manifested in a sequence which is, in its poetic function, structured by the projection of the principle of equivalence, "from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 71). In 'Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry', the diagrammatical structure is reconceptualized as linguistic fiction. In linguistic fiction, presentation diverges from the presented state of affairs. If the sign may be conceived without clothing, then every sign is structured either as a sequence or as a linguistic fiction. By transposing the vocabulary of clothing metaphors onto Jakobson's technical vocabulary, it might be said that in clothed sequences "equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device" (Jakobson, 1987b, p. 71). Naked sequences are constituted without such projection. But there cannot be naked sequences, only zero sequences in which the projection of equivalence is not explicit, or when it is disguised as the principle of contiguity.

In 'Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry', Jakobson distinguishes between material and relational and between lexical and grammatical aspects of language. This difference enables speakers to present the "one and the same state of affairs" (mimetic) in different ways (semiotic) (Jakobson, 1987c, p. 123). Jakobson calls these different ways of presentation "linguistic fictions" (Jakobson, 1987c, p. 123). From the standpoint of 'Linguistics and Poetics', language can detach its manner of presentation from the context. In 'Linguistics and Poetics', this detachment is defined as a projection of equivalence from the metaphoric to the metonymic axes.

Presentation and the state of affairs may both coincide and diverge. Poetic linguistic fiction refers to a state of affairs with a different presentation. Jakobson compares linguistic fiction with grammatical structure: "Peirce vividly conceived that 'the arrangement of the words in the sentence, for instance, must serve as icons, in order that the sentence may be understood'" (Jakobson, 1987d, p. 419). Diagrammatization and the diagrammatical character of the message are salient features of poetic linguistic fiction. Diagrammatical structure is hierarchically above the lexical elements of language.[26] The lexical elements perform the mimetic operation of turning language into a transparent medium. Due to alterations in the structure of the sign, diagrams and linguistic fiction engender a two-tiered operation of the concomitant bringing about and laying bare of the world. However, if our analyses of the shifting frontier between the clothed and the naked, the marked and the unmarked, hold, the mimetic operations also rely on the configuration of the sign, which concomitantly covers and discloses the world with the signifying integument. The diagram is the intersection of two fundamental operations of language: while one function lays bare the world, the other brings it about. The language simultaneously refers to and creates the world. Also, the diagram is the cutting edge between presentations and states of affairs, merging them and still hindering their conflation. As a diaphanous boundary of simultaneous distinction (between presentations and states of affairs) and indistinction (between signs and things), diagrams insert fictions that dispel both mimetic (a reality independent of signs) and semiotic (a reality created by signs) illusions.

Triangulation and detachment – blending literal and literary language and phenomenological intervention

In explaining literary language, Davidson introduces the notion of triangulation.[27] In the primal triangle, the speaker and interpreter interact with each other and with the objective world. While "the triangle is a necessary condition of language", language, on the other hand, "reaches far beyond what

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[26] Similarly, Davidson shows that metaphors have an iconic effect which depends on literal meaning, but literal meaning is to be arrived at by interpretation.

[27] For a recent account of triangulation, see Myers and Verheggen (2018).

can be immediately experienced" (Davidson, 2005d, p. 161). Interactions usually start from that fragment of common and immediate knowledge; they are a backdrop against which it is possible to generate the most complex sentences and thoughts. Davidson argues that detachment from the primal triangle emerges already in ordinary communication. The difference between ordinary and literary communication is a matter of intensity or degree because literature "deviates startlingly from the original triangle" (Davidson, 2005d, p. 161). But deviation from the primal or original triangle constitutes both ordinary and literary communication. If deviation is a matter of degree, then every detachment from the original triangle is an intersection of the ordinary and the literary. The possibility of literature is comprised in the primal triangle, just as language ordinarily goes beyond the primal triangle. Interactions deflect from the primal triangle: "What we want to talk about is what's new, surprising, or disputed" (Davidson, 2001a, p. 153). Thereby, it is not necessary to differentiate between triangles.

In literary triangulation, only the text is immediately accessible. While in the primal triangle speakers converse directly, there is no direct interaction between the author and reader in the literary triangle. Nonetheless, the reader attempts to restore the hypothetical primal triangle as the author's presupposed background. According to Davidson, this hypothetical background enables a variety of interpretations (Davidson, 2005b, p. 181). If, as Davidson claims, the triangle "models" both first and alien language learning (Davidson, 2005b, pp. 176–177), is there a triangle with immediately given causal connections? The primal or original primordial triangle, as Davidson calls it, must be *imagined* to be given. Communication, be it ordinary or literary, depends on the *imaginary triangle*, and the primal triangle can be inferred from the fictitious antecedent independently from its real existence. If the difference between the primal and subsequent triangle(s) is not mandatory, one does not imagine a primary triangle to delineate the actual triangle. Instead, the actual triangle alone is imagined.

Similarly, Jakobson's model of communication is two-tiered. It consists of two diagrams with a double and reversed orientation of communication; one is heading toward the context and the other toward the text itself (Bradford, 1994, p. 56ff).[28] The literary triangle enables the separation of the text

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[28]　Beside Bradford's book, there are important comprehensive accounts by Holenstein (1976) and Waugh (1976). For a penetrating insight into the relationship between poetic and

from the other elements of the triangle. Jakobson describes this detachment as switching the message's set from the context to the message itself. Davidson's primal triangle is like the toggling of the message among the elements of communication. Jakobson separates the subjective conditions of message transmission (expressive and conative function) from the objective content of a message transmitted by the referential function. Just as for Jakobson, in the poetic function the message folds upon itself, veering thereby from the context; so, for Davidson, literature swerves from the primal triangle:

> On the one hand, it is clear enough that the elements of the triangle remain; there are the writer, his audience, and a common background. But the distances between the elements have lengthened; the connections have become attenuated and obscure. (Davidson, 2005b, p. 177)

The stretching of distances between the elements and the interrupting of connections is present in the immediate causal relation. Although the direct causal link is a condition for language, to know language is to go beyond that link. In the supervenience of the mental on the physical, the two domains are causally related. Yet, the mental is nomologically irreducible to the physical. Whereas every mental event is physical, its effects cannot be enclosed in a deterministic system. Due to this anomalism, every event is simultaneously autonomous and determined. This simultaneity enables a separation from the points of the primal triangle. Literature does not diverge from the primal triangle, but the capacity for literature is a condition to concoct the primacy and originality of the triangle, while this triangle arises from this detachment.[29]

Detachment is present in Jakobson's model of communication. He locates the message in the center of the model, wherein the communicative function of the message depends on the foregrounding of one of the six elements of communication. The message is simultaneously determining and determined. In performing the referential function, the message must detach itself from the other elements of communication. Jakobson's model demonstrates that detachment from the triangle occurs in every communicative function. Akin to Davidson's theory of triangulation, in performing a poetic function the message swerves from the pragmatic and semantic delimiting of the communicative situation. According to Davidson, the reader restores the primal

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referential function, see Ricoeur (1977). For an unorthodox reading of Jakobson, see Attridge (1987, 1988) and Cureton (2000).

[29] For a shift in the notion of radical interpretation, see Preyer (2011).

triangle by starting from the text. Similarly, for Jakobson, in the poetic function the reader reconstructs the context by relying on the message alone. This being true, we can dispense with the notions of the primal triangle and the context. Meaning is always in the middle.

Let us reconsider this discussion between Jakobson and Davidson from the phenomenological theoretical angle developed by Martínez-Bonati (1981). He introduces three types of sentences: real authentic sentences (RAS), real inauthentic sentences (RIS), and imaginary authentic sentences (IAS). A RAS is defined as "a product of a speaker's communicative action", which causes the listener "to perceive it and comprehend it" (Martínez Bonati, 1981, p. 78). Martínez Bonati shows that already in this stage of communication "the scope of the communicative situation" may range from the narrow to the broad. A RAS can detach itself from the communicative situation, and the situation, on the other hand, can be extended far beyond the limits of the co-presence of the speaker and hearer. However, this capability for detachment and extension should not undermine the notion of the immediacy of the communicative situation.

A RIS represents a RAS spoken in another communicative situation. A RIS is *inauthentic* because it is not a sign that conveys a meaning, and it is not related to the communicative situation of its uttering. A RIS shifts the interpretive focus from the meaning to the sign itself; the content of a RIS is the sign itself. Similarly, RIS and IAR are not linguistic signs since they "recreate" or imitate their situation or object. This is a class of sentences that Martínez Bonati calls pseudo-sentences which *iconically* evocate their situations and meanings: "The virtue of the pseudo-sentence is to make present an authentic sentence from *another* communicative situation (whether real or merely imaginary)" (Martínez-Bonati, 1981, p. 79). But RIS and IAR are not limited to particular kinds of discourses, either non-literary or literary. While a RIS evocates *other* communicative situations, an IAR is *authentic* since it recreates *its proper* communicative situation.

Producing an IAR emerges from the ordinary capability to utter a RIS. Understanding pseudo-sentences (RIS and IAR) depends on the capability "to imagine it […] in the context of [their] communication situation" (Martínez-Bonati, 1981, p. 79). However, contrary to the employment of a RIS in ordinary communication, the situation in literature is "immanent to the sentence" (Martínez-Bonati, 1981, p. 81). An IAR does not restore a pragmatic linguistic communicative situation; instead, it "*communicates language*" to readers. Martínez-Bonati's conclusion was a point of disagreement with Roman Jakobson: "the poetic function of discourse is not a function of discourse on a par

with the other functions but the phenomenon of a whole discourse that is onti-cally different from real discourse" (Martínez-Bonati, 1981, p. 153). The poetic function is "the phenomenon of a whole discourse". Yet, Jakobson does not argue for the ontic difference between non-literary and literary discourse (Jakobson, 1987a, pp. 43–44). The poetic function does not neutralize other functions; instead, it reconfigures and metamorphoses them: "The poetic function is the dominant, organizing feature of context-referential, contact-phatic, code-metalingual" (Bradford, 1994, p. 57).

Similarly, Davidson argues that literature invites readers to engage themselves in the process of the creation of a "new language" (Davidson, 2005a, p. 157). Martínez-Bonati demonstrates that the creation of an IAS is rooted in the ordinary uses of language, such as uttering a RIS ("He said: 'Pedro is my friend'."). Understanding such sentences is enabled by the literary capacity to imagine and create an originary communicative situation. However, what is common to Davidson, Jakobson, and Martínez-Bonati is their attempt to normalize literary language. The imaginative capacity enhances speakers to detach themselves from the communicative situation. This capability is the condition of imagining the communicative situation (Martínez-Bonati), the primal triangle (Davidson), and the context (Jakobson). Although the primal triangle is not sufficient for apprehending messages, it is reassessed by the imagination. Whereas an IAR devises its own situation and purports a language instead of imparting a message, its interpretation is anchored in the mundane employment of the imagination. The message folds upon itself in the poetic function; it swerves from the context as well as the pragmatic transaction. Yet, the poetic function is not limited to literature since it pervades and imbricates other regions of language use. As is ingrained in its literal countenance, this normalization of literary language con-currently endows and bridles literary language from its special design and effects.

Conclusion

One needs to dispense with the duality of literal and non-literal meaning. This is not to claim that there is no fixed, stable, context-independent meaning and a variable, mutable, and context-dependent meaning. The fact of immutable and mutable meaning does not enhance the dualism of literal and non-literal meaning. As we reject this original duality, we can dispel with the duality of literal and literary

meaning. Meanings divide, incessantly differentiating between and in themselves, creating multilayered and multipronged structures. Even though for some methodological reasons distinguishing between literal and literary languages is justified, it does not entail the theoretical commitment to defining these languages as two separate entities. The epistemology and ontology of both linguistics and literary theory are encumbered with the presumption of these two different existences.

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Języki (nie)odrębne. Jeszcze raz o dualizmie znaczeń, dosłownego i literackiego, u Romana Jakobsona i Donalda Davidsona

W artykule poddano analizie relacje między językiem dosłownym a językiem literackim, występujące w strukturalizmie i filozofii analitycznej. W rozważaniach istotna była konfrontacja koncepcji języka poetyckiego Romana Jakobsona i Donalda Davidsona oraz ich związku z ogólną ideą języka, jaką można znaleźć w ich pracach. Rozważając ponownie argumenty Jakobsona i Davidsona, autor proponuje porzucić dualistyczne hipotezy, zasadzające się na opozycji między językiem dosłownym a językiem niedosłownym oraz między językiem dosłownym a językiem literackim. Twierdzi, że pojęcia znaczenia pierwszego i dosłownego są niezbędne w innych typach interpretacji. Hipoteza dualistyczna wymaga modelu kaskadowego, który ukazuje przejście od dołu do góry przez hierarchicznie ułożone poziomy znaczeń. Zamiast tego autor zarysowuje wielowarstwową strukturę języka z dwoma poziomami: mimetycznym i semiotycznym i wskazuje na konieczność zastąpienia modelu kaskadowego palimpsestowym modelem współbieżności, łączenia i mieszania warstw znaczeniowych.

Słowa kluczowe: literatura, język literacki, komunikacja, znaczenie dosłowne , Roman Jakobson, Donald Davidson

(In)distinct Languages: Revisiting the Dualism of Literal and Literary Meaning in Roman Jakobson and Donald Davidson

The paper traces the relationship between the literal and literary language that is found in structuralism and analytic philosophy. The paper's gist provides a comparative account of Roman Jakobson's and Donald Davidson's notions of poetic language and their relation to the general idea of language as it is given in their work. In reconsidering Jakobson's and Davidson's arguments, I propose abandoning the dualistic hypotheses of the oppositions between literal and non-literal language, and between literal and literary language. I contend that the notions of first and literal meanings are necessary for other types of interpretation. The dualistic hypothesis requires the cascade model, which displays a bottom-top transition

across hierarchically arranged levels of meanings. Instead, I outline the multilayered structure of language with two thresholds: mimetic and semiotic. Therefore, the cascade model should be replaced with the palimpsest model of concurring, merging, and blending layers of meanings.

Notka o autorze

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