THE VECTOR OF METHODOLOGY IN FICTION STUDIES

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This study considers fiction, its certain characteristic features, principles and devices (thematic and narrative), and a number of structural elements correlated within interpretative models. The purpose of this study represents the attempt to establish a vector of methodology, i. e. an interpretative modality aimed at stipulating the direction of approach to the fictional text, and which consists of a set of methods, an ordered system of principles of research used for study in the field of such a particular concern as Fiction Studies. In this respect, my argument will thus consider the general theoretical level of analysis (a matter of literary theory) based on the structuralist narratological evaluation of fiction, as well as the practical applicability of the general principles of approach (a matter of literary criticism) regarding, in particular, the Victorian novels.

1.1 The Theoretical Background

The interest in the approach to novel and other types of the fictional discourse is provided by the remarkable amount of interpretative attention given in the 20th century to the analysis of the fictional text, which is being continually reevaluated according to new experiences in literary theory and criticism.

The starting point of this research is the belief that among the worlds of literary expression, the one which belongs to and represents the aesthetic value of fiction has definitely entered the literary tradition of imaginative writing and is nowadays quintessential to the modern critical (scientific) and popular (of the wider, non-trained public) cognizance of a particular literary/cultural background (e. g. Modernism), along with its importance and individual place in the general context of literary studies.

Fiction represents a particular type of imaginative literature written in prose, comprising literary texts of extended (novel) or limited (short story) narrative organization, character representation strategies, realism in its thematic concern, etc., with antecedents in ancient period and consolidation as a literary tradition during Spanish Renaissance and in English literature in 18th century.

The novels, for example - which represent the most important type of fictional texts - are free from the danger of not surviving years from now in the human cultural depository, or of becoming a handful of dust in a remote corner of an old forgotten library. The criterion is provided here by critical, public and market demand. Today the concept of literacy—an essential principle of their survival—comprises many types of mass

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communications and theories of mass culture. According to this media-culture perspective, during the last years a number of worrying reports have been produced in Western countries on the decline of literacy and the future of imaginative literature. One reason, perhaps, would be the modern exaggerated confidence in computers, TV or cinema. People often watch television instead of reading books, use tapes for learning languages or compact discs for getting acquainted with Dickens. I agree, yet I ask: are books the only reliable vehicle for cultural communication, improvement of modern thought or acquisition of information? The problem, I believe, consists rather in the general illiteracy caused by the deformed vision of the literary truths from the past, the insufficient exposure to books and rather to a form of visual illiteracy of the media. The computer screen, Internet, communication through E-mail display more alphabetic letters than images. Moreover, the invention of television and the computer has not decreased the printing of books. The problem is not to oppose visual and written types of cultural communication. It is that, though the whole of image-oriented culture and media reifies a new form of literacy, they are still unable to satisfy all the intellectual needs of humans.

'*Do not fight against false enemies*', says Umberto Eco in vindicating the role of imaginative literature, because, first of all, '*we know that books are not ways of making somebody else think in our place; on the contrary they are machines which provoke further thoughts. Secondly, if once upon a time people needed to train their memory in order to remember things, after the invention of writing they had also to train their memory in order to remember books. Books challenge and improve memory. They do not narcotize it. This old debate is worth reflecting on every time one meets a new communicational tool which pretends or appears to replace books*' (1995: 89-90).

I am sure that novels in particular and fiction in general do satisfy the intellectual needs of the modern man; moreover, they stimulate them despite the changing rhythm of human existence at the turn of this century and millennium, and despite the complexity of new cultural alternatives.

The argument in this study is that the literary texts which form the basis for fiction are not merely a category that needs to be included in an overall literary system of world culture, or of certain literary periods (e. g. Victorian Age) for the sake of rendering their completeness and aesthetic validity. It is rather that they are different in kind, unique and representative of a type of literary discourse which should be studied as a system in itself, and which may perform the function of breaking down the existing conceptions and theories about certain fiction writing traditions in particular and fictional discourse in general, reorganizing them, and suggesting new ones.

At the same time, being aware of the difficulty and risks of such an attempt—given the huge amount of often contradictory theoretical and

critical contributions on the present level of development of Anglo-Saxon literary history and criticism, and on the general level of world literary conception—it is important to establish a vector of methodology. That is to say, an interpretative modality which determines the direction of analysis and which consists of a set of methods, an ordered system of principles of research used for study in such a particular subject as Fiction Studies.

I believe such an interpretative modality is helpful in any attempt to select theoretical conceptions and critical ideas most applicable to such a research, hoping to achieve pluralism and to conclude with new theoretical and critical suggestions of one's own.

They will receive practical argumentation through the contextual analysis of a number of literary texts that would eventually reveal—although they differ as sharply as the lives they reflect—certain common, typical features which may suggest a unique approach according to some principal elements that can reveal a unique literary structure of the fictional text.

I believe that the literary discourse of a particular fictional text represents a well structured literary pattern, as well as an ordered and definite system of aesthetic values within the larger system of the novel, for example; the latter, as a system in itself, belongs, along with other literary genres and types, to the system of literature. Literature, in turn, is a system framed within the general system of culture, and should be approached in relation to other cultural systems. Such an analysis should take into consideration the national peculiarities of a literary system (e. g. English), its relation to world literature, as well as the interrelations between national culture and the world cultural phenomenon in general. The problem of such an approach consists of a proper correlation of the elements and principles of each system, given their central and peripheral nature. In Y. N. Tynyanov's opinion ([1927] 1977: 270-281), literature is a system in which a battle is going on between central and peripherical elements, and the mutations happening on the level of whatever element provide and determine the mutations on the general level of the system.

The system of the Victorian Bildungsroman, for example, has a generic nature, consisting of a number of literary systems. The argument of such an interpretative modality—which stipulates the validity of the vector of methodology—arises from the specific apprehension of Victorian Bildungsroman, as to follow the same example, as a fictional system whose elements are also the elements of other minor fictional systems (individual Victorian Bildungsromane, both male and female) that constitute its general patterned system.

What I mean is that each Victorian male writer of Bildungsroman frames his novel as a literary system within a more general fictional system of Victorian male authorship of Bildungsroman, each minor system being expressed through an individual fictional discourse. The Victorian male

writers of Bildungsroman, now a literary wholeness, reveal a complex system of thematic and narrative elements within the general fictional system of Victorian Bildungsroman. The elements of this system are interrelated and correlated among themselves as they are correlated with apparently different literary perspectives of Victorian female authorship.

To follow the theoretical conception of Y. N. Tynyanov (ibid.), the correlation between the elements of a literary work (itself a system), for example that of a male author, and the elements of another literary work (another system), say, of a female writer, within the same, general literary system, implies the existence of a literary principle regarded as performing a 'constructive function'. This function represents one of the many principles of existence of a literary work, and of literature in general, but, foremost, it determines the evolution of the literary phenomenon.

My argument, founded on Tynyanov's theoretical contribution, is applicable to linguistics (as language itself is a system), translation studies, cultural studies, comparative studies in literature, including the reception theory (the study of the process of reception of a literary phenomenon—as a system—by and within other literary phenomena or cultural background, themselves considered as systems).

In terms of the general approach to fiction, I hypothesize that each individual fictional system (text) of individual fiction writers contains thematic and narrative elements whose characteristic features—when they reveal a similitude and certain common aspects with other literary texts—determine actually the existence of different literary traditions/patterns/models of fiction writings (e. g. Victorian Bildungsroman) as a distinct fictional typological system, and reifies its literary significance.

This conception is to be applied both diachronically and synchronically. Diachronically, it would reveal the rise, evolution and consolidation of certain literary traditions. Synchronically, through contextual analysis of certain writers and fictional texts, it will show the universalism of the complexity of the fictional thematic and narrative organization, and will argue that these fictional texts disclose the existence of a number of certain narrative and thematic devices, as well as certain structural elements correlated within one literary model, so as to demonstrate the development, consolidation, and literary validity of certain fictional patterns as types of literary discourses which should be studied as systems in themselves.

The peculiarity of fiction as a literary system implies the interpretative consideration of the following elements:

1 author (because every text is the expression of its creator's sensibility and experience)

2 language (as a means of reification of the text and expression of the authorial point of view)
3 text as literary discourse (the narrative arrangements of the text, including the type of narration, chronotope, narrator, etc.)
4 text as literary work (the thematic arrangements of the text, including characters, motifs, symbols, etc.)
5 reader (because every text is intended to be representative of the human condition),

as well as a number of others which may come into view in the process of analysis and which may occur when approaching discourse.

Their correlation corresponds approximately to Paul Ricoeur's ([1986] 1995: 94) hermeneutic perspectives of the textual arrangement and text analysis with regard to the human experience considered diachronically:

1 the implication of language as discourse
2 the implication of discourse as a structural literary work
3 the relation between verbal and written form in the discourse and structured literary work
4 structured literary work/discourse as the projection of another world
5 structured literary work as the projection of the authorial life which is transfigured through the discourse
6 structured literary work as the self-comprehension of reader.

Although they resemble the interpretative arrangements of certain modern theories and schools, these elements and their correlative perspectives do not determine in any way a critical limitation to, say, narratology or hermeneutics, or to the structure and structural approach to the fictional texts. What I mean is that all these elements represent the 'world' of the literary system of the fictional text, as well as the key-elements of the analysis, and should be equally treated in the process of analysis according to the above stipulated vector of methodology.

The origins of this interpretative modality are founded on the primary and elementary apprehension of the fictional text as a cultural phenomenon which represents a specific type of literary discourse framed within a specific type of communicative situation. The multitude of linguistic theories provides a multitude of theories in other studies and disciplines, among which those concerned with the approach to literature, and particularly to fiction. Roman Jakobson (in the study **Linguistique et poetique**, 1963) identifies six elements in communication:

Code

- the sender (not necessarily the same as the addresser)
- the receiver (usually but not necessarily the same as the addressee)
- the context (the referent or information)
- the message (the particular linguistic form)
- the contact (the medium or channel)
- the code (the language).

Corresponding to each element of this taxonomy is a particular function of language:

	Referential	
Emotive	Poetic	Conative
	Phatic	
	Metalingual	

- the emotive (to communicate inner feelings and states)
- the conative (to attempt to determine/affect the behavior of the receiver)
- the referential (to carry information)
- the poetic (to focus on linguistic form)
- the phatic (to open the channel for practical or social reasons)
- the metalingual (to focus on the language or dialect in order to clarify them or change them).

The system of the fictional text also represents a literary discourse as to be communicated to the reader; in other words, it is involved in a literary communicative situation. The structure most relevant to my argument, though simple, is provided by Guy Cook (1995: 128):

Society

Author	Text	(Performer)	Reader
	Texts	Language	

Corresponding to each category are the following theories:

Author	literary scholarship and biography
Text	linguistics, formalism, stylistics
Performer	acting theory
Reader	psychoanalysis, feminism, reception theory, reader response theory, post structuralism
Society	Marxism, feminism

Texts	structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction
Language	linguistics, stylistics.

Literature may be also approached through other theories and principles of research, for instance those provided by Bakhtinian criticism, semantics, poetics, rhetoric, hermeneutics, phenomenology, pragmatics, schema theory, and others.

Among these schools and conceptions, a congenial basis for fiction studies is provided by M. M. Bakhtin ([1937-1938] 1975: 234-407), especially those principles and ideas of Bakhtin's theoretical conception that seem most fruitful when discussing the rise, evolution and consolidation of fiction (in particular novel) in world literature, especially with regard to his principle of chronotope.

The purpose of modern fiction studies, however, is not simply to add another theory or basis for research to the list, which could be developed from a simple compilation of different elements of these known and widely disseminated categories of literary theory. I rather believe that from this multiplicity of schools and approaches, rendering a loose structure of complex and often contradictory theories that may thwart one's attempt to provide new conceptions and ideas, it is possible to pick out threads of thought which contain principles and ideas applicable as elements of a set of methods to the analysis of fictional texts.

I hope to show that these conceptions and ideas can contribute to a valid analysis of fiction, for, though it seems that they belong to different and often incompatible schools, they would eventually reveal similar and mutually efficient principles of research.

I thus seek to emphasize the dangers of such a rigid categorization, while also using it as a guide to describe and approach to the fictional text. That is to say, I hope to conclude that compartmentalization of the existing conceptions and schools is important in the implementation of any analysis, along with its contribution to attempting a selection from the existing theories and schools of those elements and ideas which are most applicable to the research undertaken in a particular study of the fictional phenomenon.

Above all, it should be considered the importance of focusing on some particular literary texts, for I believe that any theoretical contribution has no validity and efficiency unless it is well rooted in the reality of the fictional discourse that would eventually provide its practical argumentation. I also understand that the principle of tradition in culture, for instance, implies the truth that everything is first of all tradition and then within the tradition new revolutionary trends and movements aimed to challenge and supply the established norms and conventions, accepted as general truths, appear. The one who says only new things, as a kind of manifestation of some satanic vanity to speak, says actually nothing: the true novelty,

effective and valuable in every cultural and scientific context, has its roots in tradition and does not scorn what has been created before.

In this respect, the approach to fiction will be determined to cyclically move from theory (the existing theoretical categories of literary analysis) to practice (the direct approach to particular texts following the appropriate conceptions and points of concern according to specific features of the chosen texts), and then again to theory, or rather new theoretical arrangements which one may hope to suggest.

Furthermore, the fiction represents a narrative discourse of the narrator who mediates the events representation within the story, the latter being determined by the history consisting of a succession of events. In this respect, I consider the following correlation of fictional elements:

Society[1]

Author[2] Narrator Text = Narration Narratee[3] Reader
- history: the events
which are narrated

- story: the discourse
which narrates the events

(Related) Texts[4] Language[5]

In terms of the above suggested structure, and in terms of Cook's communication model, the primary interest is the author, narrator, character,

[1] I understand it as performing the function of creating and maintaining social relationships (say, author - reader, writer - native/foreign reading public) within this literary communicative situation, including certain perspectives of cultural context (say, the condition of Victorian novel, the romantic attitude, the consolidation of realism as a literary tradition, and so on).

[2] I consider Author as the real author, that is the actual producer and sender (addresser) of the literary text in the form of a narrative discourse (narration). He possesses a point of view which is transmitted to the reader (the real reader as the actual receiver/addressee of the fictional message) through the voice of the narrator. The latter may be also identified with what Wayne C. Booth terms the implied author: always present in the narrative, he is always a creation, an idealized version of the real author, who presents the message of a literary discourse to the reader.

[3] The term was coined by Gerald Prince to describe a kind of person, different from the reader, who is addressed by the narrator. It reveals a similitude with the implied reader (a concept coined by Wolfgang Iser) who has his roots in the structure of the text; he is thus a construct and should not be identified with the real reader.

[4] I see them as possessing the function to create and maintain inter-cultural and/or inter-literary, that is intertextual, relationships (synchronically and diachronically): Victorian literature - Ancient literature, for instance, English novel - picaresque novel, Victorian Bildungsroman - German Bildungsroman, Victorian male Bildungsroman - Victorian female Bildungsroman, **Great Expectations** as Bildungsroman - **Jude the Obscure** as Bildungsroman, and so on.

[5] The function to produce and determine the existence of the literary text.

reader, narrative fictional discourse, a number of narrative categories (say, narrative point of view, narrative time vs. narrated time, chronotope, narrative distance concerning the relationship between author, narrator, character and reader), and related texts, and the issue of whether these elements are valid and efficient in the approach to a fictional text.

For this reason, and for reasons of space, one may pursue to a lesser degree linguistics, stylistics, deconstruction, semantics, poetics, phenomenology, pragmatics, schema theory. The exclusion of some of these schools does not imply that they have had no contribution to the founding of the approach, nor does it imply that they are theories which disregard the relationship author - literary text - reader, or that they do not focus on a particular type of literary discourse—in other words, systematized or patterned types of literary texts, one of which may be considered as Bildungsroman, for example. One may also avoid the approach to the fictional text through heavy reliance on biographical analysis, which may simply lead to biographical fallacy—even though many novels are highly autobiographical. It is also inappropriate to pursue only those theories whose interest is primarily in the relation of the literary discourse to its historical, social and political context (Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic approaches)—even though no author, reader, and literary discourse can be entirely separated from their historical and social context, simply because they exist in it and through it, and it is more or less rendered in the process of literary communication.

A modern and congenial vector of methodology in the approach to fiction is provided by the particular interrelationships of Rhetoric, Structuralism in general, and Narratology in particular, which offer general systematized and normative principles of analysis of those literary texts that have narration (story) as the dominant organizational element, such as the fictional texts.

Traditionally, rhetoric is regarded as a corpus of principles embodied as the art of discourse structuring combined with a theory about the discourse. Its system, although its essence changed diachronically from Antiquity through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, generally represents a concern with language, style and structure of the discourse in their connection with communication and argumentation. From the ‘creation of persuasion’, for Aristotle, Cicero and others, that is the domain of philosophy, it became *ars* or *scientia bene dicendi*, for Quintilian for instance, that is closer to the literary domain. Later, during the Middle Ages, as *ars ornandi*, the final literarization of rhetoric was produced (the art of distributing the ornamentation in a literary discourse, which constitutes a major principle of discourse structure), this phenomenon being comprehensively described by Vasile Florescu (1973). Because of the modernity of its system and the principles formulated, rhetoric is widely

applied nowadays to different spheres of human activity and thought: marketing, advertising, political and religious propaganda, linguistics, literary theory, narratology, and so on.

The story, novel, fiction, a literary or non-literary text in general represent the continuity of a communicative situation which does not lack the argumentative principle. To approach rhetorically a text of fiction is to analyze it as a discourse meant to be communicated to the reader, the latter being involved in a universe of meanings and conceptions built by the writer who, through argumentation, will sustain (or impose, as it happened perhaps in the Victorian novel) his point of view. In this respect, rhetoric becomes the theory (rather than art) of communication with the reader and the way the writer builds his discourse to be communicated. However, this simplest way of rendering the link between rhetoric and narratology as the analysis of the narrative structure characteristic to a work of fiction is based on the well-known principles that constitute the scheme of every act of communication, for instance the famous one proposed by Roman Jakobson, which points to the existence of the formula Sender - Message, Context, Contact, Code - Receiver. In this respect, the Sender, as the author of imaginative literature, creates a Message (literary discourse) which traverses a code, and addresses the Receiver (reader) who understands the message.

The interest is in the rhetoric applied to fiction analysis, or to the discourse of narration (narratology), may follow the ideas of W. C. Booth ([1961] 1976) about the rhetorical dimension of literary texts and of fiction in particular, operating with such concepts as discourse, communication, persuasion, argumentation, sender/receiver, delivery of message, organization of the material into sound structural form, style and language, text and context, and others. Such concepts supply the theoretical background of both disciplines, rhetoric and narratology, hence their interrelationship and a possible juncture when approaching the narration in literature (of course the concern of my study is chiefly with the analysis of narrative/narration in Victorian fiction, hence the appropriateness of using concepts and terms belonging to the domain of narratology).

Narratology as the scientific literary discipline is largely a creation of the French Structuralism, and the notion of 'narratology' was put forward by Tzvetan Todorov ([1969] 1975) to argue for the necessity of a theory of narration that could be applied to various fields it could belong to (myths, films, imaginative literature, folk literary productions), calling it '*a science that does not exist yet*', '*the science of story*'[6]. Now it is widely regarded as the '*theory, discourse or critique of narrative/narration*' (Cuddon 1992: 570).

The antecedents of such an approach are found in Antiquity, where Plato (**Republic**, III) and Aristotle (**Poetics**, Chapters 5, 24, 26) generally

[6] My translation from Romanian.

render the existence of the opposition between dramatic poetry and narrative poetry, or the dramatic mode (*mimesis*) and the narrative mode (*diegesis*), these modes belonging to and representing means of telling a story, or *lexis* for Plato, as opposed to *logos*, representing everything that is to be told. The difference between the two scholars is that Plato distinguishes three modes of poetic discourse—*mimesis* (the drama, that is the construction of the dramatic representation within stage conditions), pure *diegesis* or narrative form (represented by the dithyramb, a Greek choric hymn describing the adventures of Dionysius), and the mixed mode (the epic, where the author tells the story in his own name, that is the pure narrative form of the story, combined with the imitative principle of drama, that is the direct rendering of events by the poet who assumes the role of the character and speaking in his name—Homer's dialogues, for example), while Aristotle hypothesizes about the existence of only two, ignoring the pure form. Yet, both of them have a common point in showing the opposition between the dramatic (more imitative) and narrative mode of a literary discourse as story.

The later rise and consolidation of novel and fiction writing didn't reveal any serious attempt at approaching the narrative issues, and it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the ancient distinction took new and interesting perspectives. In the Anglo-Saxon world, it was Henry James, in a series of Prefaces (1883) to his novels, and especially P. Lubbock (**The Craft of Fiction**, 1921) who, influenced by James, made the distinction between two different modes of events representation in novels, or 'points of view': the 'dramatic' viewpoint, reminiscent of the classical *mimesis*, that of 'showing', characterized by the absence of the author, the discourse and its events being directly presented to the reader, and the second, called 'panoramic', following the ancient *diegesis*, that of 'telling', where an omniscient author controls the events and mediates their comprehension by the reader. The first technique concentrates on the importance of the discourse as text and its relation to the receiver, as for Lubbock for instance, while the second revives the importance of the author, as for E. M. Forster and W. C. Booth. Later, distinctions will be made between narrator and author, while the mode, or point of view (belonging to the author of the text), will be opposed to 'voice' (a characteristic of the narrator).

A further contribution to the development of theoretical studies on narration was provided by French structuralist scholars, in the 1960s, especially by Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov and Gerard Genette, whose conceptions originated in the Russian Formalism and were prefigured by the rise of linguistic studies at the beginning of the century and, later, structuralism and its theoretical contributions. From then on, even if they proposed to define a unique model of structural analysis of the story, based on linguistics' deductive method, aimed at building a unique pattern for the multiplicity of discourses/stories having narration as their main principle, they supplied a multiplicity of often contradictory approaches, terms,

principles and opinions, which may threaten one's attempt to define, as in my case, the essence of fiction belonging to a certain historical period and cultural background (synchronically).

Firstly, Barthes, for instance, stresses on the importance of approaching functions, actions and narration (or the manner in which the story is told), and proposes the multiplicity of story forms (myth, painting, drama, dialogue, etc.) as the object of study, while Todorov emphasizes the programmatic concern with story as history and story as discourse, and concentrates on the literary, verbal story. Secondly, given the fact that narratology is the study of story, or narration as history (T. Todorov), the latter being crucial and indispensable for the existence of the former and generally implying the temporal succession of events, each resulting from the previous one, opinions regarding the concepts of story and history have been raised: T. Todorov sees history as a sufficient factor for the existence of the story, in which case narratology approaches the universe rendered by the discourse, or the content of the story; others stress on the story as narrative discourse (G. Genette), the story as verbal (use of language) representation of history, that is the study of the text and/or the form of the story.

Yet, though they are all different, distinct, and often contradictory, one may notice some common features across all approaches, chiefly because of the (relative) unity of concerns and the object of study that make narratology a distinct theoretical discipline. Narratology, either concerned with the content of the discourse or with the discourse as text, will attempt to describe the literary relations which mark the existence of narration in fiction, or novel—an aspect that can offer the possibility of turning from highly general to more particular issues. Thus, the novel should be regarded as a narrative discourse containing a story which can be analyzed as a mode of history (events, actions) representation. The narrative (narration or story) consists of events that are narrated, and the discourse becomes the factor that narrates them.

The ways in which the events are organized according to the principles of time and space (chronotope) represent the types of narration – the most common ones are the linear narration (the events are chronologically and logically structured, as in traditional, realistic fictional texts) and non-linear (with deviations of temporal and spatial representation of events, as in modern, experimental writings).

The distinction between narrated events and the narrating discourse made possible a series of formulations which marked the inner structure of the narrative in literature. Russian Formalism made the distinction between *fabula* (the sequence of events, or history, as they apparently happened in the story) and *syuzhet* (narrative ordering of the plot, or story itself), while one of its major representatives, Vladimir Propp ([1928] 1970), pointed out the existence of seven 'spheres of action' and thirty-one 'functions' or elements of the narrative; the functions are structured in a logical sequence and are the

basic units of the narrative 'language' and refer to the actions constituting the narration.

One may also point out that Russian Formalism prefigured the structuralist analysis of the narrative belonging to Claude Levi-Strauss (**Anthropologie Structurale**, 1958), who provided an interesting theory about myth, advancing the idea of the unity of myth structures due to the recurrence of some certain universal and constant themes, some relations underneath the surface of their narrative, or the existence of basic individual units, called 'mythemes'. Bearing in mind the Russian Formalism's distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet*, A. J. Greimas (**Semantique structurale**, 1966) proposes instead of 'sphere of action' the term *actant*, a structural unit that makes possible the semantic approach to sentence structure. He distinguishes six actants, or roles, which are not types of narrative or characters, placed in binary oppositions and corresponding to three basic patterns of the narrative: (1) subject/object corresponding to desire or search, (2) sender/receiver of communication, and (3) helper/opponent of auxiliary support or obstacle.

Yet the most accessible and famous theory is Genette's, who, in **Narrative Discourse** (1972), distinguishes between *historie*/*recit*/*narration*, terms which follow the distinction between narrated events and the narrating discourse, and which correspond, respectively, to the sequence in which events occur/the chronological order of events in the narrative/the act of narrating or producing the discourse. He then discusses various categories of narrative analysis: time, mode and voice, the first two being linked to the relation of the story to history, and the last corresponding to the relations narration - story and narration - history. Also, each of these three categories consists of a number of subdivisions, such as order, duration and frequency for time; distance and perspective for mode; time of narration, narrative levels and narrative persona, or narrator, for voice. Genette's approach is thus rather relational, regarding the narrative as a product of the interaction of its various levels and of all aspects of the narrative as dependent units. The problem of time, for instance, which concentrates on the distinction between the time of history and the time of story, will approach the relations between the order of the narrated events and the order of their presentation (narration), the relations between the duration of narrated events and the duration of the story they belong to, and the relations between the frequency (number) of the event occurrences and the number of its narrations within the story. On the other hand, the problem of voice is linked to the relations between author, narrator and characters. In this respect, Genette provides an interesting approach to the narrator (the one who tells the story or narrates, but distinct from the author), the kind of voice he uses, the relationship of narrator to narratee (the one to whom the narrator addresses the discourse, but distinct from the reader), and the position of the narrator in relation to his story (the viewpoint, or the outlook from which the events are related or

perceived). The narrator, in Genette's opinion, is of three kinds: the 'heterodiegetic' (absent from his own narrative), the 'homodiegetic' (the narrator is inside the narrative, the story being told in the first-person), and the 'autodiegetic' (the narrator is inside the narrative and the main character).

The narrator possessing a 'voice' becomes a means of expression of the authorial 'point of view' which represents the structural organization of the writer's main ideas and thematic concerns.

The applicability of point of view to fiction analysis was remarkably discussed by Y. Lotman (1970) in the light of semiotics and in abstract scientific terms, and by B. A. Uspensky (1970) in terms of the structuralist approach, offering a typology of point of view of the artistic text. In their opinion, the relation of point of view vs. text (literary discourse) appears as a relation of creator (author) vs. his creation (including characters, events, etc.). In other words, to follow Uspensky's conception, the point of view is the position of the author from which he perceives and evaluates the world of his vision, hence the multiplicity of the points of view employed in a literary discourse (omniscient, detached, limited, etc.), the relationships between them, and possible transitions from one to another.

The reader, or the person to whom the story is addressed, also represents a number of distinct types, such as the 'virtual reader', whom the narrator has in mind while composing the discourse; the 'ideal reader', who understands everything that is said; the 'implied reader/actual reader' who responds to a text in different ways and at different levels of consciousness, producing meaning or modifying it by his own experience and knowledge; as well as contemporary, fictitious, hypothetical, informed, and intended readers. Distinction should also be made between reader and narratee, the latter being the person who is addressed by the narrator.

The reader as the receiver (addressee) of the literary text introduces an extra-value of meaning in it, when the text performs a didactic function; similarly, when the text performs an aesthetic function, it allows the reader the interpretative initiative, thus helping its process of functioning (Eco [1979] 1991: 83). In other words, Umberto Eco reasons, a literary text considers its own receiver as an indispensable condition of its capacity of concrete communication and of its potentiality of meaning and significance embodied in the message—that is to say, the reader is the persona for whom the text is produced and aimed at being communicated so as he would actualize its literary universe in spite of the fact that the reader may not be someone concrete or exist empirically.

Generally the reader is involved in the literary discourse, but he has also to be detached from it, for only if distanced the text can be appreciated aesthetically and not confused with reality. This theory of the aesthetic distance between reader and work of art (a novel, say) implies, according to Hans Robert Jauss, the existence of the 'horizon of expectations' of the

reader, and the degree to which a work departs from it constitutes the measure of its literary value: one may say, for instance, that Dickens' novels, after reading, were less enjoyable than someone had expected, thus the myth of Dickens in English literature being destroyed by one's individual psychological relationship with novels, or the attitude of a person to works of fiction, which is actually the essence of aesthetic distance.

The reader may also be 'passive' in his responses to a novel, or 'active'. The Victorian novel, for example, as the realistic or classic one, can be termed—following R. Barthes' distinction between two basic kinds of text, which he stipulates in **S/Z** ([1970] 1987)—'readerly' (*lisible*), in which the reader's response is more or less passive, for this kind of text renders a recognizable world with easily recognizable characters and events, the reader accepting the meaning without any much effort. The second type is termed 'writerly' (*scriptible*), which focuses on how the text is written, especially through the use of language, as J. Joyce's **Ulysses** or V. Woolf's **Mrs Dalloway**, making the reader into a producer, who has to work things out, look for and provide meaning. A relationship is thus established between author, narration, and reader, which may possibly guide one's attempt to understand and interpret fiction.

However, the complexity of this theoretical background of the structuralist approach presents some clear weaknesses regarding the lack of rigor in the grammars to which structures are supposed to be analogous, in other words, '*there is often a marked arbitrariness in the choice of an object of study—a set of texts for example—as well as in the definition of units, the rules of combination, and the selection of significant features*' (Cook 1995: 146), to which I can add the failure to combine theory with practice (or the reality, as in my case, of fiction in its literary productions), making possible the existence of some difficult, often 'monstrous' conceptions about narrative situations which do not even exist, or the description of some phenomena which lack stable forms or equivalents in reality.

Hence the necessity to follow a number of other, besides structuralism and linguistics, modern disciplines and modern trends in criticism and literary theory—say, formalism, the theory of Bakhtin, psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, reader-response, narratology, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, phenomenology, stylistics, and so on—in order to select those conceptions and principles which are most applicable to the approach of the reality of narration, in other words, which are applicable to the analysis of the fictional text as a literary work and narrative discourse. Even the Artificial Intelligence and its schema theory, claiming that a new experience is understood by comparison with a stereotypical version of a similar experience held in memory, may be helpful. The schema theory explains omission and inclusion in terms of events essential to the plot, for they may provide new meanings and

interpretations even if not mentioned (for instance what happens to Heathcliff after leaving Wuthering Heights and returning later to revenge).

Hence the importance of focusing on some particular literary texts, as well as the use of appropriate conceptions and points of concern (from those briefly stated above) according to specific features of the texts chosen. In this respect, I believe, a particular text of fiction can be better approached by concentrating on its narrative structure, the narrative strategies applied and expressed by the novelist, narrative point of view, narrative time vs. narrated time, or the narrative distance concerning the relation between author and narrator, narrator and literary discourse (narration), narrator and character, the relation between characters, narration and reader, narrator - character - reader (relations which are defined by the principles of ethics, intellect, religion, space and time—Bakhtin's chronotope), and other issues belonging to the domain of narratology and making the unity of approach possible.

1.2 The Practical Argumentation: Narrative Perspectives in the Victorian Novel

The English novel in the 19th century originated as a literary discourse of the growing middle-class audience (still uneducated, uncultivated, not ready to receive or/and perceive the artistic message), and it became the logical reading-matter for this social level. The Victorian audience sought and found in contemporary novels instructions for living amid the complexity and change of the social background, instructions closely linked to a number of topics of special interest to them—family relationships and marital virtues, religion and morality, social change and reform, and many others. In turn, novelists made sense out of their enormous variety of experiences and choices, appealing to their audience with the semblance of the real world. The novel itself, unburdened by tradition, was flexible—hence adaptable to the portrayal of the multitude of changing situations in Victorian life. To an era of existential uncertainties and frustrations, commercialism and chaotic industrialism, escapism, especially in poetry, has become a psychological necessity, and realism—especially in prose and as a kind of justification for the conscious reader as escapism—was the actual satisfier of his unconscious needs.

In the Victorian novel the emphasis is also placed on social aspects, thus the shift from rendering the inner experience and exploring the psychological states of the character made possible new interesting approaches to the narrative discourses of Victorian writers, especially regarding the relationship author - character - reader. The character's personality is important for the Victorian author, although it often seems that

the characters function within a highly organized and structured society, and are determined by the background.

The novel, as the most characteristic literary form of the 19th century, represents a story, a series of connected events and incidents combined to form a connected whole. The Victorian novelist is concerned with character, the amount of character representation varying according to the type of the novel, yet in general the author is concerned with both the portrayal of the character and the plot, and the novel usually concentrates on the hero's adventures and incidents happening in his life against a complex social background along with the presentation of his general experience of life. **David Copperfield**, **Great Expectations**, **Pendennis**, **The Ordeal of Richard Feverel**, **Jane Eyre**, **Wuthering Heights**, **The Mill on the Floss** and others constitute literary discourses that differ as sharply as the lives they reflect, and a number of them, or actually all of them, are among the best works of English fiction and, as independent entities, they have received much criticism from different points of view.

The Victorian novel is a narrative discourse opposed to the dramatic mode in so far as it constitutes the literary discourse of a narrator who mediates the events representation of the story. Discourse implies the reality of the literary text or the narrator's use of language, while narrative implies the existence of a story marked by a history consisting of a succession of events. In Victorian fiction in general the succession of events is determined especially by the 'cause-and-effect' ('effect-and-cause') structure of the linear narration controlled by the authorial omniscient point of view reified through his narrator's voice (with certain exceptions, of course, the most notable one being the non-linear, in particular concentric, narrative organization of **Wuthering Heights**).

The actual Victorian author acts self-consciously as narrator, or rather an all-knowing maker or 'omniscient narrator' whose point of view (or viewpoint as a technical aspect of fiction which is important for the critical comprehension of the work's issues and meanings) allows the freedom to recount the story and comment on the meaning of actions, to move in both time and space, to shift from the exterior world to the inner selves of the characters, knowing, seeing and telling everything.

This kind of narrator can be considered 'fallible' or 'unreliable'—as opposed to the 'reliable' type—the reader questioning the statements of fact and judgment, even if it seems that in Victorian fiction the narrator's perception and interpretation of the told story coincide with the opinions of the author who is the controlling force in the narration. The narrator is often the main character, of the type which Genette calls 'autodiegetic', like David, Pip, or Jane, for instance, such a character being the first-person narrator telling the story as he or she experienced it. Some of these narrators in Victorian fiction can be called 'naïve', or 'immature narrators', for sometimes they do not comprehend the implications of what is told (in this

case they become unreliable, for their incomprehension of the things described makes the reader not only question the statements but also leaves him without the guidance needed to make judgments). The unreliable narrator, hence naïve or immature, usually belongs to the literary works of the 'self-effacing author', yet I believe that the Victorian author is less objective in his narrative point of view, and often speaks in his own person, intruding into the narrative and not being merely an impersonal and non-evaluating agent through whom the story is told.

In other novels, for example in **Wuthering Heights**, the author assumes the voice and position of another, minor character (the sympathetic Lockwood who tells the story of the mysterious Heathcliff, this artistic rendering of the point of view representing an important narrative technique in 19th century fiction—also in **Moby Dick** or the detective stories about Holmes); and can introduce other characters who, in turn, have their voices and may narrate (Nelly Dean), thus the point of view being restricted to a marginal character within the story. Also, as in **The Mill on the Floss**, the author can start telling the story in her own voice, then becoming merely a witness and allowing her characters the (relative in Victorian novel) freedom to speak in their own voices. Also, the author can tell the story in the third-person, presenting it as understood by a single character, whose 'limited point of view' restricts the information to what this character sees, hears and thinks (restricting to the personal interior responses of a 'point of view character', which may result in interior monologue); the author may then 'panoramically', through a method of narrative exposition, present events in summary rather than in detail, or, *vice versa*, the author may present the actions and conversations in detail objectively, with little authorial comment, such a (method of) viewpoint's employment in a narrative being called 'scenic' (with the self-effacing author as its typical device).

The Victorian narrator expresses a complex or mixed system of possible points of view of the Victorian author-realist, who attempts to achieve verisimilitude of the text with the real world, yet generally he assumes the position of a reporter (not creator) who recounts external events and records speeches of his characters. However, he also reifies a narrative voice talking not to himself or nobody, but addressing an audience, ready to control it as he often controls the character, and to impose his own system of values (it seems that Dostoyevsky is the first 19th century writer who tried to withdraw from the narrative discourse, introducing in novels dialogue and the polyphonic construction, and perhaps George Eliot in **Middlemarch**).

Regarding the form of the narrative in the Victorian novel one should not consider it a simple one, but rather a complex narrative with plot, in which the events narrated are not only chronologically recounted, but are arranged more or less according to a principle determined by the nature of plot and the type of story intended. The Victorian narrative structure is mostly linear, conventional and traditional, it consists of a huge range of

incident and action; has a beginning, continuity of the narrative movement, climax involved in the narrative, and often an ending; its concern is also with the representation of characters (or portrayal of individuals) and their relationships; and deals with problems of time (the time of infancy or that of maturity, or the relation between narrative time and narrated time, the latter aspect often providing in Victorian novels different deviations and digressions on the narrative level), space (provincial background or urban environment, for example), description (the picturing of a scene or setting).

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