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The Hybrid Form of Literature (2007)

Following in the wake of his book, *História. Ficção. Literatura* (2006), Costa Lima here attempts to outline the contours of the notion of 'discourse'. Critically evaluating a diverse range of ideas, including Eugenio Coseriu's refiguring of Saussure's *langue-parole*, J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts, and Foucault's *L'Ordre du discours*, Costa Lima locates a space for 'discourse', which draws on his own re-elaboration of control in both its positive and negative aspects, and implicitly reconfiguring his own early ideas, especially those articulated in *Social Representation and Mimesis* (1985), in order to demonstrate that the 'impossibility of developing a sufficient characterization of literature' derives from its hybrid form: being neither reducible to one or another discursive form, literature's hybridism comes from its inability to fit within the constraints of the conceptual order, whose protocols shape particular forms of discourse.

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THE HYBRID FORM OF LITERATURE

Many of us are capable of recollecting what Augustine of Hippo said about time: “If no one asks me, I will know [what time is]; if I wish to explain it to whoever asks me, I’ll cease to know”ⁱ. But it is not common practice to reflect on the extension of words, which thus undertake a phantasmal character. Their universe is so wide that it leads us to acknowledge the phenomenon which we call ‘communication’ as euphemism; its true name would then be the circulation of phantoms.

The intellectual community that I here address is well aware that the word “literature” has a similar statute. Forty years ago Professor Victor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva had already stated that “given the heterogeneous character of literature, none of the following notions – fictionality, the ‘order superimposed’ to the necessities of the daily linguistic communication and ‘multiple significations’ can solely and in themselves properly define literariness.”ⁱⁱ

I quoted this very same passage by Prof. Aguiar e Silva in my book *History, Fiction, Literature*, in a specific section where I sought to establish the consequences of the impossibility of developing a sufficient characterization of literature. But the argument there reached can, and must, be reworked. It can and it must because it doesn’t sufficiently clarify a term that, because of this very insufficiency, holds the appearance of a verbal phantomⁱⁱⁱ. I am talking about the word ‘discourse’. To this word we will dedicate all the time that we deem necessary to establish that the heterogeneity referred to by Prof. Aguiar e Silva is due to the fact that literature is not a specific discursive form.

The field of language cannot be accounted for dualistically and it is from the acknowledgement of such a restraint that the notion of ‘discourse’ stems out as a viable one. This notion will be here examined through three distinct approaches, although only the third refers specifically to ‘discourse’: Eugenio Coseriu’s about the Saussurian pair *langue-parole*, J. L. Austin’s theory of speech acts, and the Foucauldian’s *L’Ordre du discours*. In each case I will limit my analysis to the basics.

Even though the geniality of the Saussurian intuition was, to the now almost forgotten Romanian linguist, indisputable, the dichotomic pair *langue-parole* bore the defect of rendering homogenous, in each pole, two aspects that should be distinguished as “normal system” and “functional system”. The normal system of the verbal code is covered by “grammar and dictionary”, whereas the functional system is constituted by the repository of the functions, expressed by oppositions at the core of a certain *langue*. Both aspects correspond to Saussure’s assertions –“Saussure indicates that an idea of ‘language’ can be attained, rather faithfully, through grammar and dictionary”^{iv} and “language is form, not substance”^v, since in language “all is opposition”^{vi}. Without spending too much time on both characterizations, we can nevertheless declare that the distinction supposes that the social which is deposited in the *langue* contains a static aspect – grammar and dictionary – and a dynamic one which makes it peculiar –“there is nothing but differences in language”^{vii}. Although we can suppose that Saussure attributed to these two aspects unequal value, the first of which in clear disadvantage, what we intend to do in this exposition is to stress that it was in differentiation that Coseriu founded his distinction between norm and system. On the static (or the inertial) aspect he founded the “normal system”, while in the aspect of the differentiating oppositions the “functional system” was built^{viii}.

The same distinction will be repeated in the field of *parole*. So, in the phonological area of the Spanish language, “an only phoneme /o/, in the system, [will give place to] two typical variants, two types of *o*, in the norm and, finally, to an infinity of distinct realizations (individual and occasional variants) in concrete speech, in linguistic acts”^{ix}. In other words, the system is the specific trait – in my own formulation, it is the invariable (constant) dynamized by the differences on which it depends – of each pole, accompanied though by variations, structurally less relevant but not negligible, constitutive of the norm. This is why we qualified the grammatical and lexical repertoires as static, emphasizing the fact that they belong to a dynamic phenomenon that spatiotemporally halts, as they are “traditional realizations” of the differentiating structure. In short, I merely observe that that which happens, in the phonological area, reemerges in the morphological and in the syntactic ones^x. The proposed trichotomy – system, norm and speech – seeks to reduce the distance that to Coseriu seemed excessive between the social and the individual.

Why have we attempted to rescue Coseriu’s contribution here at all, if not because of his intuition of the necessity of emphasizing an intermediate field between the structural definition of *langue* and its variable actualization in the *parole*? If, in his approach, the word ‘discourse’ doesn’t come up at all, it is exactly because his exam is restricted to intralinguistic mechanisms, while *discourse has as its horizon the several ways through which the verbal code relates to the world*. Thus, if we cannot extract anything concrete from “System, norm

and speech', its reading has still become precious for having enabled us to determine the *position* that discourse occupies: we won't grasp its contours without correlating a certain language to a certain world.

In the case of speech-act theory, although the word 'discourse' will not be present either, the formal conditions to the formulation of the concept are given. Nevertheless, it never takes form. Let's try to understand why the formulation of the concept doesn't happen, while presenting the basics of Austin's theory. The contribution of the British philosopher concentrates on two points: a) the distinction he establishes between constative and performative statements. In constative statements speech describes a state of affairs, which will be truly or falsely exposed. But language, contrary to general belief, has many other functions. Already in the first lecture of the course giving origin to *How to do Things with Words* Austin observed "that many utterances which look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straightforward information about the facts: for example, 'ethical propositions' are perhaps intended, solely or partly, to evince emotion or to prescribe conduct or to influence it in special ways."^{xi} The example of ethical propositions, evoking the Kantian distinction between the determinant judgment, proper of the scientific realm, and the metaphysical judgment, renders explicit the position of the author as an analytic philosopher. This position will interfere both positively and negatively on his findings. Positively, because it hurls him so high as to surpass the common grammatical point of view: "many especially perplexing words embedded in that apparently descriptive statements do not serve to indicate some specially odd additional feature in the reality reported, but to indicate (and not to report) the circumstances in which the statement was made or reservations to which it is subject to or the way in which it is to be taken and the like."^{xii} Negatively because supposing, in absolute discordance with the three Kantian critiques, the privilege of the "determinant judgment", he relieves himself from the task of extending his analysis from the internal functions that the word plays in the phrase to the exam of discursive forms. In any case, it is the positive aspect which is highlighted: performative statements are those in which saying is not only verifying, since it is a way of doing.

It is from the above distinction on that Austin disarrayed the multi secular treatment reserved to language, which had been maintained dominant in the post-Saussurian linguistics. In a sentence such as *I give and bequeath my watch to my brother*, as occurring in a will, the aim "is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it."^{xiii} As a consequence, the purpose is no longer judged true or false in order to become happy or unhappy. Whether or not the proposition is realized in a conventionally adequate ambience (in this case, a will) and in the presence of the law authorities (a judge or someone else invested as a qualified and trustworthy substitute) is what truly matters.

It is not at all mandatory to our goal that we follow the author in his refined development of the consequences of performative and constative acts – be they true or false, happy or unhappy. We can move to his second basic finding: the distinction, in every speech act, among locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects. The first is no more than the expression of an enunciation: the conventional combination of sound and sense, according to the morfosyntactic rules of the language in use. The second, on the other hand, is decisive. . . . The elocutionary act is not a logical or psychological consequence of the intellectual content expressed in the uttered phrase; which is accomplished only through the existence of some kind of *social ceremony*, attributing to a certain formula, employed by a determined person, in determined circumstances, a *particular value*.^{xiv} The perlocutionary, on the other hand, implies the unpredictable consequences that any such speech act might have. In my understanding it seems valid to say: the more intense an interpersonal relationship is and the less acquainted we are with our partner, the more viable the perlocutionary effects turn out. It seems clear that the distinctive trait between the aspects 2 and 3 resides in the existence or not of conventional procedures accepted as legitimate, carried on by agents in particularly adequate circumstances.^{xv}

Although we can't further extend the critique of our summary, it is correct to say that emphasis on conventional procedures, those which are considered adequate to elocutionary acts, is what lessens Austin's contribution to the wider investigation of discursive forms. It is by no means occasional that the English author will still have to say on lesson 2: "A performative utterance will . . . be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy."^{xvi} For, adds Austin, "language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use."^{xvii} Through the qualifiers *hollow* or *void* and *parasitic* the author sticks to the old tradition – not only British! – of refusing to comprehend fictional discourse. Let us not insist on his evident shortcomings^{xviii} but rather concentrate on what is minimally decisive, namely, to verify that Austin surpassed the exclusively internal linguistic approach, such as we saw it performed by Coseriu; that he did so in favor of the study of language in its interrelations to the world. With which we arrive at the second basic presupposition to the analysis of discursive forms: it becomes possible only where the analysis of a verbal utterance (and, as an extension, a non-verbal) is not used up in the description or declaration of what there is, but conceives of the verbal as integrating the productive act. The

limitations that we find in the author come from the analytic philosophy which, unquestioned, led him to privilege the scientific procedure. And wherever a certain discursive procedure is privileged, the consequence will be the impairment of the comprehension of discursive forms as a whole.

At first sight, it seems altogether more complicated to understand why *L'Ordre du Discours* isn't satisfactory after all. If Coseriu's contribution was restricted to showing the necessity of a third term for the studying of language, that would reduce the abstraction severing the speaker from his/her code, without having, for that matter, to surpass an intralinguistic approach; if the evident advancements reached by Austin had depended on his conceiving the study of language less as the science of the use of the parts that constitute the signs than as a science of culture, in which the word will not only describe but will also act out what it declares, his limitation resulted from his point of departure – the privilege of a discourse modality, the scientific discourse, that would cause the tuning up of his analytical tools to just another type of discourse: the common and daily one. Where is it then that Foucault's contributions seem to fail? They are certainly jeopardized by his way of conceiving the action of society *vis a vis* individual agents. Such handicap is coherent with the presupposition from which he departs: "I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality."^{xxix} For "discourse isn't simply that which translates the struggles or the systems of domination but that with which one struggles, the power one seeks to empower oneself with."^{xxx}

Considering that Coseriu's essay was originally published in 1952, that Austin's conferences in Harvard were held in 1955, being published for the first time in 1962 and that Foucault's inauguration class in the *Collège de France* took place in December 1970, we believe that it is between the decades of 1950 and 1970 that the great thematic change in language occurs, converting 'discourse' in a key word. Such an apprehension may also pay us the additional service of helping to better understand the difference between Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and Foucault's approach: while Lévi-Strauss takes the leap which characterizes his analysis of myth from an intralinguistic point of view, Foucault had already departed from the conception of language as inter-related to the world – as it will become evident since his first major book, *History of Madness in the Classical Age* (*Histoire de la Folie à l'Âge Classique* [1961]). This difference in conceptions explains the very concerns which are at the center of the translated passages above, the second of which marks his difference from the Marxist analysis prevalent at the time: *discourse isn't only the medium through which a "class consciousness" is communicated, but, as organized language, it has power as its immediate horizon*. This explains why Foucault was able to suppose that all societies actualize means of control of discursive production. The intuition is just and not only admissible. But it is the very idea of control that is maintained partial. *To Foucault, control is, before hand, a negative element*. From which follows that to focus on discourse implied the analysis of mechanisms of exclusion – that is, *prohibition* (in a certain discourse, not all can be said), *division* and *rejection* (the madman discourse as paradigm ["During centuries, in Europe, either the madmen's speech wasn't heard or, if it was, it was understood as a word of truth"^{xxxi}], *the system of exclusion provoked by the "will to truth"*, originator of a "police discursive"^{xxxii}, with the function of rendering rarefied their socially legitimate detainees^{xxxiii}, i. e., limiting the exercise of the accepted discourse to those who possess its *ritual*. Hence the goal he intended to pursue in the *Collège de France*: "I believe we must resolve ourselves to accept three decisions which our current thinking rather tends to resist, and which belong to the three groups of function I have just mentioned: to question again our will to truth; to restore to discourse its character of an event; to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier...."^{xxxiv} Foucault, therefore, proposed to concentrate on discourse in the attempt to abolish it or, in case this being impossible, to undermine it. How to explain his effort if not because the control exerted by society was marked by repressiveness? From the point of view of institutional power, whatever is uttered is acceptable, i.e. allowed to be propagated only if it follows the established ritual, so that the "will to truth" is repeated and reinforced.

It is the very conception of control of discourse that, without being false, is nevertheless partial. It is this partiality that corrodes and undermines Foucault's reflection. The problem of the control exerted by society consists in that it is as necessary as it is harmful, *with no possibility of determining a priori when one steps out of the positive margin into the negative one*.^{xxxv} Foucault simplified the question, stressing only its negative aspect. To move a step forward we must admit that the terrain of the individual agent would be Adamic (if not Edenic) if it were not marked by the *references* installed by his society. It is not a matter of, from a point of view that might be called realistic, yielding to society a power of which we cannot release it. It is rather about understanding that without the references to what is legal/illegal, legitimate/illegitimate, human society would simply become impossible. To Foucault, on the contrary, discourse is an evil phantom and the way we get rid of it is by eliminating it, starting with our own . . . discourse – or would he think that *L'Ordre du Discours* did not

meet the ritualistic demands of an inauguration lecture? The conception of control is thus the critical point of the reflection to be immediately developed about discursive forms from now on.

We start with the supposition that social control takes on a double character, a positive one and a negative one, considering the following elements: (a) human actions cannot have a mere “*événementiel*” character, regardless of the modality of power commanding a certain society. Extremely summarizing the argument we might say that, starting with William James (1889) through Alfred Schütz (1954) and up to Erwin Goffman (1974), it has been emphasized that the quotidian of every society, no matter how simple, is organized by modes of behavior, frames, considered adequate to certain situations, no matter how insignificant they are. The way I behave in a street open to public circulation, or in confined precincts, such as an elevator, or in a public square, a ballroom, a religious temple, a museum or a courtroom is necessarily different and specific. To each of the frames thus constituted corresponds a way of speaking and acting, not accounted for by an unlimited repression of society. To the totality of these frames actualized in our daily life there is a discourse of unlimited dimension. It is the quotidian discourse itself. Such frames are not necessarily rigid, nor are they commanded either by some “will to truth” or by the necessity of rendering rarefied their agents, but simply by the disposition of establishing a certain standardization of conduct, without which social relation itself would be impossible. But what have we done, when we extracted from the totality of the quotidian frames a common trace, if not to explicit a *concept*? It could be argued that to extract concepts from the quotidian conducts will be to pass, a little too swiftly, from a descriptive to an abstract generalizer. We could answer: although vague, unable to define to itself a particular goal, the quotidian does fit in a concept. In fact, it is the totality of the variable frames, a totality where we constantly move from one frame to the other, without failing to have, in any instance, an *aim of passage*, which characterizes the more complex and the more simple discursive form. It presents these features precisely because our quotidian discourse has as its sole objective to serve as an occasion of cognition and access to particular discursive forms, with their own dimensions and precise goals (political, administrative, religious, philosophical, scientific, etc discourses); (b) if discourse fits in a concept and in the concept of discourse the formulation of an envisaged goal is viable, such goal corresponds or seeks to correspond to a *seminal disposition*. *Seminal dispositions* are thus understood as those which answer to the basic necessities of individuals, being capable of, in their totality, to be or not to be actualized in the society under analysis. Certainly there is a seminal disposition that cannot be absent from any society: the one concerning the creation of the necessary means to the survival of the group. For this reason we cannot imagine a society where the minimal mastering of survival techniques – like building a shelter, gathering food, mastering the knowledge of medicines for all sorts of the most frequent diseases – have not developed. It is from this rudimentary field that more sophisticated techniques of mastering a certain object develop. It is certain that between that elementary field and this more sophisticated one there is an abyssal distance, demanding the accurate exam of particular societies. What allows us to assert that, in general, the first seminal disposition constitutive of a discourse with a precise goal is *techné*. And *techné* imposes itself upon human society because humans are *needy animals*. Science, therefore, doesn’t respond to a second seminal disposition, being instead more prone to be defined as a differed technique, i.e., one not intended to provide immediate answers to contingent problems. Which is the same as saying: technique and science are common means aiming at the domain of aspects or portions of the environment. Their poles are, on the one hand, the obtainment of mere material survival, and on the other the progressive domain of a certain object, i.e., of a certain portion of the external and/or internal world. It is because human society is constituted by biologically needy beings that it more easily converts its assets in repressive reason, causing control to pass from a positive to a negative stance. If, in order to reach the stage where it is at now, society had to internalize mechanisms of control – standing out among them, as Gehlen pointed out, the capacity to differ the satisfaction of its desires – more easily it envisions itself in the right to regulate the access to that which has made it grow, to reduce its beneficiaries, to establish a limit to the procedures considered legitimate and “true.”

According to our belief, philosophy corresponds to a second seminal disposition: it is very likely that it will not be socially motivated until the community has reached a reasonable technical or scientific development. It is so to the extent that philosophy is the search for the answer to another kind of basic question, which isn’t likely to be posed while certain communities have not yet solved their elementary problems: what sense can we make in the world we live in.

As to the third seminal disposition, it refers to the modes through which we deal with illusion. As human beings are, biologically, “needy creatures” (A. Gehlen), illusion has a statute similar to the above mentioned. Not being endowed with claws and powerful means of attack, not having developed instincts to its fullest, humans, unlike other animals that have survived, don’t possess a territory of their own. Since the world is for them “free or open” (*umweltfrei oder weltoffen*), as Gehlen would further say, they must develop techniques to guarantee survival, develop them through a deeper knowledge of science, question themselves again and again about their

significance and deal with the fantasy that they are more than just finite beings. This illusion takes on two paths: through religion humans seek to provide for themselves a world beyond temporariness. Through art they seek to interrupt the corruption provoked by the passage of time, either by immobilizing an instant of plenitude, or by accepting the nonsense of the absurd which surrounds them, not because this would allow them to overcome the absurd but because it would show how to live with it. Art seeks to interrupt the corruption of time through the experience of beauty; if the momentary and the fleeting is what is proper of humans, *beauty* will try to establish a *joy for ever*. Humans will search for a mode of coping with the absurd, when their own imagination fails and reveals its incapacity to collaborate with understanding, through the Kantian experience of the sublime. As the reader of the *Third Critique* will be able to acknowledge, through the sublime (*Erhaben*) Kant tried to rehabilitate the experience of the super-sensible. But this very reader will also acknowledge that Kant did not succeed. For this reason I consider the sublime paradigmatically embedded in the words from *The Unnamable* (1949) by Samuel Beckett: *You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on*.

Although originated from the same seminal disposition, the answers provided by religion and art couldn't be more at odds with each other. The religious answer is either communally effective or it is nothing. And this has some direct impact on how the religious community deals with its sacred books. Even if they are the sources of private meditation, one can't ignore that religious meditation has a communal destination. Therefore the religious treatment of illusion will not yield to capital variations on the interpretation of the sacred. All exegetic deviation is easily interpretable as heterodox, if not heretic. In order that its face remain turned toward the community, i.e., in order to be kept valid, the religious answer is always only one step away from turning into dogma. Religious dogma isn't, thus, an excrescence, motivated by some specific kind of leadership or a situation of crisis; it is rather a consequence of the mode of existence of religious discourse.

The response of art to the illusion that originates it runs in another direction. Art doesn't articulate any community to some object or text. On the contrary, wherever a certain art object or text is rendered mythical or approaches a sacred status its character of art will be jeopardized. It is not that art rests under the domain of liberality; it is rather that art deals with illusion in a distinct mode. While religion, with its communal vocation, is always on the verge of dogmatizing its assertions, art maintains self-questioning as its foundation. And this becomes even more flagrant when art no longer arises out of a religious source. Thus, in the origin of the modern genre par excellence, the novel, Cervantes makes it arise out of the questioning of a genre that had until recently counted upon the high esteem of society, the chivalric novel, as he makes its protagonist, when destroying *maese Pedro's* puppet theater, reveal the frailty of the convention upon which fiction depends on. By the same token, the theater within the theater, a procedure that doesn't begin with Shakespeare, shows that while religious illusion moves toward dogma, illusion in art moves toward what Wolfgang Iser very appropriately would have called *self-disclosure*.

Let's just add a few indispensable observations:

1. What we call seminal dispositions cannot be taken for some kind of archetype, i. e., forms that can be actualized in all human societies. Much to the contrary – with the exception of the emergence of rudimentary techniques, without which the very survival of society would be jeopardized – from the least coarse of all techniques, all products arising out of the seminal dispositions must find favorable social conditions for their development. Otherwise one wouldn't be able to explain why the ancient world has only offered us the knowledge of Greek historiography – better saying, Athenian. Or why the Assyrian and Babylonians would legate us only with the chronicles of their kings. Only the specific knowledge of their social institutions would explain us why they didn't project the amplitude of their object. As to the Hebrews, as the books from the Old Testament demonstrate, they anticipated the Greeks in the endeavor of fixating the outline of the past. Nevertheless, maybe even as an effect of the Diasporas, they concentrated on the synagogue, on the reading of religious texts, so that they maintained their identity as a people and interrupted the historiographic impulse, which we only see fully actualized among the Greeks. We could even impart, following Christian Meier, the hypothesis that the birth of the political and of the writing of history are related to the emergence of the democratic city.^{xxvi}

2. Although we have separately described the discursive forms derived from the seminal dispositions, it is not likely that they have appeared in such a pure and autonomous way. We know that magic motivations could be hiding underneath the scientific development – as with astronomy, among Egyptians – or behind that which today seems to us no more than a plastic phenomenon – the painting in the caverns, etc – just as we cannot ignore the proximity between the *Divine Comedy* and Christian theology.

3. These seminal dispositions are apprehensible in their diversification, and as such they may undergo discussion by means of concepts – the concept of technique, of science, of philosophy, etc. *Each discursive form thus concretized differs from the others through the adoption of a specific protocol with which the argument is treated.* As an effect of this particularized protocol we cannot confound a technical handbook with a scientific demonstration, even when the latter is delivered in a natural language, or when its steps are identical to a philosophical argument; or these with the stages of a theological discussion; less still can any of the above referred fail to be distinguished from a poem or from the chapter of a novel. These protocols are regulators of the argument to be developed not only because, as Foucault asserted, all societies establish procedures meant to render rarefied the habilitated agents, but because legibility is at stake. In other words, the ambiguous character of social control, its positive and negative aspects, is concretized in the protocol of a discursive form. The practice of the exam of its constitutive protocol can anticipate the degree of positivity and/or negativity there present – for instance, the praise of *Casa D’Este*, in *Orlando Furioso*, is so exaggerated, when their representatives are compared with the founders of the Roman Empire, that the readers will be torn between two alternatives: they either perceive a submission far beyond the ordinary or they can expect its reversal, what in fact is what takes place. To exist without a protocol or with a disorganized one is the very goal proposed to the argument which is lost or which has been rendered difficult. As a consequence, the concept, although a powerful auxiliary to the exercising of power, cannot be confounded with power! To intend it is simply an irrational attitude, if not just hypocritical. And here we arrive to what most matters: literature in itself does not fit in a concept. The concept most capacious of accounting for it would be the concept of fiction. But if we consider literature and fiction, what should we do with regard to genres such as biography, autobiography, essays and the letter? The root of fiction, as it has been asserted since *Vaihinger*, although we won’t follow his steps on this matter, is the *as if (als ob)*. The genres we just referred to become something else if they follow a fictional pathway. The simplest letter will nurture the formulation of desires and fantasies. But if the author converts them in true facts being described the letter loses its identity as a personal and private form of communication or attests to the craziness of its writer.

As we cannot define it conceptually, in order to speak of literature we must recur to a metaphor. It might be the measure to distinguish true literary work from books that are called ‘literary’ only for their success in the market, or as a result of the incompetence of their designators. We have chosen to define literature through the metaphor of the *thick word*. The thick use of the word is the contrary of its conceptual use – while the former allows for varied receptions, the latter allows only for univocal adequacy. Distinguishing in this fashion the conceptual use, I seek neither to diminish it nor, as it is done so frequently, to consider it the maximum actualization of the articulated word. Although I regret not being able to discuss it in depth, I will extract the following words from Hans Blumenberg’s posthumous essay: “The concept is not, in truth, a surrogate (*surrogat*), but, to the frustration of the philosophical expectations posed upon it, neither is it the consummation of reason’s intention, but just and only its passage, its route.”^{xxxvii} What still implies in saying: “The concept is not capable of everything that reason demands. There is not only a hiatus between the high degree of formation of the concepts and the demands of reason but it is necessary to consider whether the perfection of the concept does not impair or inhibit considerably the consummation of reason’s demands.”^{xxxviii} In spite of its brevity, the allusion to Blumenberg had the advantage of allowing us to emphasize that we do not consider literature’s lack of conceptuality as a *handicap*. Just the opposite, this lack allows us to see in the thickness of the word the means to respond to the demands of reason that the concept cannot fulfill.

As we have conceived it, the literary work has at its disposal an exclusive horizon: while the works belonging to discursive forms, according to the protocol that brings them out, are either kept alive or set aside, distinguishing themselves as relevant parts of the history of a discipline at the most, the thick word habilitates the works in which it appears to envision another future. Just like occurred with Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), nothing prevents that a work, written within the confines of a certain discipline, in Burton’s case the medicine of humors, will lose validity in its original field and become, in some other time, valued as literary, such as happened to the *Anatomy* during the British Romanticism. We should just remember that this metamorphic possibility doesn’t mean that a work can be simultaneously literary and otherwise. The most immediate example would be Nietzsche’s: the recognition of his literary excellence is achieved either by putting in parenthesis his pretension of doing philosophy or it is subordinated to it. If I read Nietzsche as a philosopher, the aesthetic experience that I extract from him will not suffice; if, on the contrary, I highlight his aesthetic strain, I set aside his project of revolutionizing the established truths. So, to call literature a hybrid form doesn’t mean to consider it inclined, as literature, to be envisioned within a specific discursive form. Literature’s hybridism lies not in its being this and that at the same time, but rather in its metamorphic power.

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- ^{ix} *Ibid*, p72.
- ^x *Ibid*, p75 (‘morphological’) and p83 (‘syntactic’)
- ^{xi} Austin, J. B.: *How to do things with words* (1962), Oxford University Press, London – Oxford – New York, 1976, p2-3.
- ^{xii} *ibid*, p3.
- ^{xiii} *Ibid*, p5-6.
- ^{xiv} Ducrot, O. & and T. Todorov: *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (1972), translated by A. J. Massano et alii: *Dicionário das ciências da linguagem*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisboa, s. d., p 402, my italics
- ^{xv} Austin, J. B.: *How to do things with words* (1962), Oxford University Press, London – Oxford – New York, 1976, p14.
- ^{xvi} *Ibid*, p22.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid*, p22.
- ^{xviii} Given the importance that it will have for our task, let’s ask ourselves in the margins about the reason of the qualifier ‘parasitic’. To Austin it seems adequate because, in a play, in a soliloquy, in a fictional dialogue, the enunciated doesn’t have a serious and consequent function, i.e., it doesn’t result in effective pragmatic consequences. Therefore, such enunciations belong to a particular convention. But is a convention proper to the fictional only a particular convention, i. e., non extensive to effective interactions? We would answer: no, it is a convention susceptible to more or less intense and frequent changes. It would suffice to compare a dialogue from the *Ulysses* by Joyce with another of, say, Somerset Maugham, to verify the change in treatment. In fictional discourse, the conventions applied appear to be in a permanent state of rupture. If the same were true of usual discourse, chaos would be installed. Since Austin’s focus is the latter, convention in fictional seems to him only parasitic.
- ^{xix} Foucault, M.: *L’Ordre du discours*, Gallimard, Paris, 1971, p10-11.
- ^{xx} *Ibid*, p12.
- ^{xxi} *Ibid*, p13.
- ^{xxii} *Ibid*, p37.
- ^{xxiii} *Ibid*, p41.
- ^{xxiv} *Ibid*, p53.
- ^{xxv} Costa Lima, L.: *Vida e mimesis*, Editora 34, São Paulo, 1995, p295.
- ^{xxvi} Meier, C.: *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen* (1980), Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1983.
- ^{xxvii} Blumenberg, H.: *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit*, A. Haverkamp (ed.), Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2007, p10.
- ^{xxviii} *Ibid*, p11.