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THE SOPHIANIC PERSPECTIVE IN KING HARALD'S SAGA - a study concerning the
emergence of the textual meaning from the angle of kenning textemes

abstract

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2018

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Key words: integral linguistics, repeated speech, text, saga, metasemia, kenning, skaldic poetry, creativity, semanticity, textual functions, idiolinguistic signified, poesis, sophianic, literary world.

The goal of my doctoral research is to reveal an Eastern Sophianic attitude in *King Harald's Saga*, creation of the Scandinavian early Middle Age. My research approached the kennings as units of repeated speech, within the conceptual frame of integral linguistics. In my study, both the prose text of *King Harald's Saga* and the scaldic poems are analyzed as ongoing processes, as performing realities involved in the complex structure of the final text known as the *King Harald's Saga*. Since the repeated speech will not exactly match the new situation, the new meaning will have to be revised and semantically expanded. Concerning this aim I have adopted the conceptual apparatus of the theory of discourse poesis elaborated by Mircea Borcilă, according to whom the literary text is seen as an expanded metaphor in which two heterogeneous fields are situated in a semantic tension. The clash, the incompatibility or the tension is solved within a newly created referential field that introduces a shift in the textual perspective and its significance.

My paper begins with a survey of the framework of Coseriu's integral linguistics, focussing mainly on text linguistics. In Eugenio Coseriu's view, the existence of text linguistics is justified by the very existence of the text as a level of speech, by the autonomy of expressive competence and, especially, by the presence of the proper meaning as a characteristic level of the textual-discursive plan. Hence, the specific object of text linguistics, as a hermeneutics of understanding, is this superior level of meaning.

According to Eugeniu Coseriu, all languages are historical techniques of discourse and they belong to the tradition of each distinctive culture. Tradition includes not only the mechanics of speech, but also language already spoken, fragments of readymade discourse that can be re-used, often as idioms distinct from the formal usage of the language. The repeated speech concerns all that is communicated as phraseologies (recurrent lexical idioms such as sayings, proverbs, and catch phrases) within the linguistic community and is a form of communication appealing to previous contexts. In the first chapter, I briefly present a theoretical discussion on the definition of textemes as units of repeated speech as well as on the latter's possibility to contribute to the creation of new meaning at textual level. In order to reveal their contribution to a global meaning, I have completed my analysis with an approach from the perspective of text linguistics. Broadly, this analysis, as generally in my doctoral research, is pursued from the perspective of an anthropological approach to poetics, as described by Mircea Borcilă (2003) who develops the Coserian principle according to which language can be equated with poetry.

Consisting of a base-word and a determinant in genitive, a kenning, generically, is a periphrasis that replaces a noun, but the mental operations involved in the construction of this metaphor – be it an allusion or an analogy – lead to different implications in the emergence of the textual meaning. The manifold studies and exegeses developed around kennings have led to conclusions which converge in certain points: a kenning can be understood as an allusion to an already existing sequence of known facts or mythology; a kenning is always repeated in a more or less identical form as a piece of ready-made discourse and, as a unit of skaldic poetry, it will always evoke a text with a history which belongs to a cultural tradition. Sanda Tomescu-Baciu starts from Lucian Blaga's vision on the relation between myth and metaphor, in the broader context of Giambattista Vico's conception who conceives of myths as transformed metaphors. The relationship between myth and metaphor, as presented by the Romanian philosopher, is extremely fruitful in understanding Norse myths, where «poetry and mystery – magic and runes – are organically bound together by the very existence of the supreme god, Odin, the god of wisdom, runes, poetry and magic, but at the same time also the god of war» (Tomescu-Baciu 2001: 21).

In Eugenio Coseriu's view, there are two subcategories of repeated discourse: repeated speech and proverbial words. Proverbial words are small fragments from literary or nonliterary texts that are extremely familiar within the linguistic community and can even be reproduced by heart. As far as the first aspect is concerned, Coseriu came to the conclusion that within repeated speech certain forms do not belong to the idiomatic technique in any way, since they are not equivalent to the units that can be combined through the above-mentioned technique. These are forms corresponding to complete texts (or text fragments with complete significance), such as quotations and proverbs. In such cases, one cannot establish an opposition within the idiomatic technique itself, only an opposition between one given text and another. As for proverbial words, Coseriu holds that the allusion is achieved by relating to famous quotations from historically identifiable authors. The border line between famous quotations and repeated speech cannot always be clearly drawn. Generally, the criteria according to which they are set apart lie in the fact that famous quotations should belong to unmistakably identifiable authors, and the knowledge about these authors and their works is supposed to be largely spread among the members of a given linguistic community. The study of repeated discourse as a category of elocutional linguistics creates the premises of a semantic analysis of its constituent elements as Coseriu underlines that the historic character of speech does not have to make us forget its universality.

The fact that a kenning appears every time in different macro-texts generates multiple interpretations and represents, each time, an act of re-creation. The vision on the Viking ship as a sea animal, for instance, is manifest in skaldic poetry in the shape of a established metaphoric structure with metonymical variations on the surface that prove the skald's spontaneity and originality. "The steed of the waves" (marar blakkr) or "the elk of the fjord" (fjardar elgr) only represent a few of the metonymical variations built upon the structure "the ship is an animal" (Birgisson 2012: 285). Due to the reinsertion and reconfiguration processes which can be applied to them, the textemes make possible the creation of sense materialized through the change of their originary textual functions and the gain of new semantic functions (relations), despite their conventional (repeated nature). Likewise, the myth of the creation of the Earth from the skull of the giant Ymir, well-known to the world of the medieval North, along with the myth of the giant who builds Asgardr, are responsible for the representation of heaven as enclosure, fortress, closed space, even in some Christian poems.

What defines the creativity in a kenning is not the set of linguistic operations by which it takes shape, but the functions (textual functions) which it materializes in constructing metaphors that contribute to the global meaning. The idiomatic content analyzed from the perspective of a configurational semantics represents the idiocultural signified, a name suggested by Simina Dan Terian (Dan-Terian 2011: 109), while the idiocultural class is a paradigmatic configuration characterized by the presence of a common idiocultural signified. From the perspective of our research, the analysis of kennings in of *King Harald's Saga* is aiming to explain possibility to create a new meaning by introducing, in a new text a reference to already existing texts. In this case, the very familiar texts represent the basis for evocations while frequently resorting to those texts allows speakers to create new meanings. In order to achieve my goal, I have appealed to a corpus of examples of kenning metaphors identified in poetic texts on which Snorri Sturluson elaborated the *King Harald's Saga*.

Since the repeated speech will not exactly match the new situation, the new meaning will have to be revised and semantically expanded. Concerning this aim I have adopted the conceptual apparatus of the theory of discourse poesis elaborated by Mircea Borcilă, according to whom the literary text is seen as an expanded metaphor in which two heterogeneous fields are situated in a semantic tension. The clash, the incompatibility or the tension is solved within a newly created referential field that introduces a shift in the textual perspective and its significance. The kenning metaphors in the disanalogy have become, for us, the knots of these networks of meaning, drawing the metaphors in analogy around them,

which, due to their allusive character and evocative function, contribute to both the creation of meaning and the articulation of the sophianic perspective.

In Lucian Blaga's view, the sophianic is defined as a «fundamental, but diffuse sense that the transcendent is revealing itself from its own initiative, and that man in this temporal world can become the vessel of that transcendence» (Blaga, 1969: 168). Hence, we call sophianic any spiritual creative or artistic or philosophical nature that gives expression of such a sentiment or any ethical concern, which is led by such a feeling. To acquire the royal status, king Harald is called upon to cross this threshold, which recreates the mythical pattern of marriage between the gods and the giants. In the context of our analysis, the sophianic emerges through the mystical correspondence between the word, gesture and ritual, correspondence expressed in the cosmic drama of personal transfiguration.

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