Text and discourse as semiotic web (in Virginia Woolf’s Orlando. A Biography)

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Since the 1950ies, the researchers’ interest in text and discourse (particularly in poetic discourse through the semiotic square of the ‘master tropes’, Jameson apud Chandler 2002) has been growing stronger through the issues it has raised. The paper deals with concepts such as text, discourse, metaphor and self from a semiotic perspective (having as theoretical background Chandler 2002, Cmeciu 1999, Danesi 2002, Eco1979/1991, 1996, Lakoff’ and Johnson 1980, Petru Ioan 1995, Vlad 1982, Wasik 2003), taking Virginia Woolf’s Orlando. A Biography as ‘cultural object’ for analysis. Starting from Gide’s mise en abyme and from Lakoff’s conceptual metaphor and Danesi’s meta-form, we propose two other narrative techniques, that is mise en hauteur and mise en surface, and the notion of (meta)meta-phorization, which names a process of meta-phorizing the text.

We consider Orlando as a complex and complete text whose content starts from an identifiable, codified and encoding unit/centre (linguistically rendered by a name) and communicates itself through a web of discourses circumscribed within borders. Two distinctions could be made here: dimensions of text/book, which refer to market requirements (the text as commodity) and textual dimensions, which envisage hyper-, hypo-, inter-, para- and metatextual elements; the latter taking the unweaver/reader to strategies such as mise en hauteur and mise en surface.

The act of producing meaning against a large time-space canvas and the attempt of somebody ‘to catch in words’ the most ‘life-like’ significations and to render them as reliable for/to somebody else is suggested by the metaphorical act of weaving. Discourse seen as ‘practice’ (according to Foucault) focalizes and investigates two roles: of the weaver and of the unweaver. The fabric of warps and wefts, through its game of forward and backward movement, brings to the foreground the maker/producer of discourse as the manifestation of conscious nesses oriented towards specifically spatio-temporal created (and invented) worlds and the reader as reproducer and interpreter of threads read in a ‘reverse’ way. It is this distribution of roles between addressee and addressee which gives cultural value to the text.

The analysis of metaphors which communicate different selves in Orlando...reveals the becoming of the creative Self within a process of metaphorizing through a game of metaforms and meta-metaforms (Danesi) which register the shift from constructing the self to recovering a self or metamorphosizing selves while living in and experiencing different cultural spaces and memories.

References


