

THE INTERTEXTUAL PARADIGM

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In "Tradition and the Individual Talent", arguing from a premise that the whole of literature has "a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order", T. S. Eliot builds a synoptic view of literary tradition in which "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it," and consequently, "the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly altered" since "the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is altered by the past."¹ Such a view of literature as a self-regulating organism, a polyphony of voices contrapuntally speaking across the temporalized space of history claims for all works of art a synchronic dimension and calls into question both the notion of originality and the hierarchy of sources. In fact, Eliot advises the readers of poetry against "the prejudice of praising the poet for the uniqueness of his work" and urges them to abandon the search for what is individual in a work of art and what constitutes "the peculiar essence of the man," or what distinguishes him from his predecessors since "not only the best but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."²

What is of interest here, particularly to a student of intertextuality, is not so much the fact of the poet's immediate or remote predecessor speaking through his own text but the reversal of that order – the contention that the later poet's voice can be heard in the text of his predecessor. The Fisher King of "The Waste Land" merges with his medieval prototype and can be recognized in the figure of Jake Barnes in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. A line from a Webster, a Middleton, or a Verlaine in a poem by Eliot will acquire not only a new contextual meaning, it will also bring that meaning to its original context. All these, along with his famous dictum of the extinction of the poet's

¹ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in *Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 23.

² Eliot, 22.

personality, place Eliot's literary theories in close proximity to the basic assumptions of intertextual investigations.

If we assume that a creative act, whether that of inscribing or that of deciphering, is a function of prior reading, that all writing and reading are supplementary processes, and the supplements – whether those of selection or serendipity, or those ghost-like, haunting a new text asking to be fleshed out – are also functions of yet prior reading, then we must also assume that all creative acts are intertextual phenomena and the authors are first of all readers. Eliot acknowledges this fact by defining the poet's mind as “a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.”³ Equating “letter” with “litter”, Joyce compares all literature to a rubbish heap of the past, present and future texts out of which his work is also composed and to which it returns.⁴ Language, according to Donald Barthelme, is a “trash phenomenon” (“it's all there is”)⁵ and a literary fact merely a “rehearsal” of other literary facts and events.⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin teaches us that some texts enter into a “dialogue” with other texts. A “dialogical” text recognizes its own difference, but since a “dialogue” can only be effected through intertextual intercourse, then the generic boundaries become problematical. A contemporary exemplary text, whether modernist or post-modernist, is particularly conscious of its “dialogical” aspects as it tends to accommodate, absorb or transform, turn to its own use a variety of discourses, language registers, genres, styles, citations, full structures and themes through which it fades into other texts. The example of Joyce's *Ulysses* is only too well known. In *The Sot-Weed Factor* John Barth enters into an “ironic” dialogue with American colonial history and its text in the hope of “replenishing” the exhausted form of the novel. In *At Swim-Two-Birds*, in itself an ironic compound of borrowed texts, its author Flann O'Brien postulates a “limbo” of fictitious characters:

The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors should draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before – usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations, and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimbliggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature.⁷

³ Eliot, 27.

⁴ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 111. All other quotations come from this edition.

⁵ Donald Barthelme, *Snow White* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 97

⁶ Donald Barthelme, *The Dead Father* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975), 93

⁷ Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 25.

Written before 1939, it was probably meant to be a joke, though O'Brien does draw upon well known sources for his characters. One of them is Finn Mac Cool, a legendary hero of Ireland and also the eponymous hero of Joyce's famous novel. In another O'Brien's novel *The Dalkey Archive* we meet James Joyce himself. Joyce makes also a brief appearance in Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* of 1979, an intertextual postmodernist construct dedicated to Brian O'Nolan (Flann O'Brien) from whose *At Swim-Two-Birds* he drew the major characters of his novel. Not to know that behind the text of *Mulligan Stew* here is the shadow of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *The Great Gatsby* and a welter of diverse texts will not make for a defective reading, yet intertextual reading does indeed imply its own elitist reader.

This sense of a work of art belonging to and deriving from a community of letters (“litters”) is both expressed by the artists often seeing themselves as thieves, plagiarists, scavengers. Faulkner, claiming that the author is of no importance (“If I did not exist, someone would have written me, Hemingway, Dostoevski; all of us.”) also says that a writer “is completely amoral in that he will borrow, beg, or steal from anybody and everybody to get his work done.”⁸ We all remember T. S. Eliot's claim that only the best poets know how “to steal,” or Ezra Pound's: “Great poets seldom make bricks without straw; they pile up all excellences they can beg, borrow, or steal from their predecessors and contemporaries, and they set their intimate light atop of the mountain.”⁹

The notions of originality and repetition, of authenticity, of texts as stolen goods, of the artist as a thief, a copyist, a plagiarist, is particularly played upon in *Finnegans Wake* whose scriptor (Shem) is accused of all possible “intertextual” crimes: “Who can say how many pseudostylistic shamina, how few or how many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place... from his pelagiarist pen” [181-2] – (the pen of a plagiarist and a pelagian scribe, a copyist of texts already copied), the pen of Joyce himself – the “poorjoist” [113] and the “prosodite” (the prostitute of prose and prosody), the “notesnacker”, the author of the “refurloined notepaper” (*The [twice] Purloined Letter*)..., “the Polyhedron of Scripture.” [107] The last word in “stolen telling” [424] in which “every dimmed letter... is a copy.” [424] In Barthelme's *Snow White*, Snow White, herself a poet, yearns for “some words that were not the words I always hear,” and in reply she hears: “fish slime”, injunctions”, “murder and create”.¹⁰

If there is no virginity in language since all the words have already been used, adulterated, and exhausted, then what looks like a new textual combination is in fact always also a repetition. Absolute newness and

⁸ Malcolm Cowley (ed.), *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), 122-3.

⁹ Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 220.

¹⁰ Donald Barthelme, *Snow White*, 6.

originality may indeed be a romantic phantom; a yearning for prelapsarian innocence, a fallacy of the origin. Yet the admission of stealing and plagiarism may not necessarily mean confusion of impotence and exhaustion of creative energies, but rather a perverse axiological metaphor for a strategy of writing – intertextuality as an ongoing process of textual self-consciousness, a self-reflexive impulse of a text in a dialogue. “Text”, writes Raymond Federman, “is in fact always a pre-text, that is a text waiting indefinitely to be completed by the reading process. It is a MONTAGE/COLLAGES of thoughts, reflections, meditations, quotations, pieces of my own (previous) discourse (critical, poetic, fictional, published and unpublished)... For PLAGIARISM read also PLAYGIARISM”.¹¹ “Playgiarism” is a happy Federman’s pun implying play in thievery; a text lifted (a “stolen fruit” or a “forged cheque” [FW: 181]), displaced and redeemed thereby in an intertextual word play – an intertextual game. It is in such a context that Barthelme’s “rehearsal” can be read as a metaphor for intertextual transactions. Etymologically, “rehearsal” derives from “hearse”, meaning a funeral procession, burying, but also from “harrowing”, “re-harrowing”, raking over [OED] – burying in a text and thus cultivating it for a new crop. This brings to mind Joycean “superfetation” [FW: 275] – the “burrowing of one world in another” which we are told, is one of the keys to the dynamism of *Finnegans Wake*.¹²

Looking for an adequate definition of intertextuality, we always come back to its basic concept formulated by Julia Kristeva who claims that “every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text is an absorption and transformation of another text”. A text is then a combination of intertexts which it in some ways parodies, reaffirms, complements, or transforms, so that our subsequent reading of those intertexts is always modified by this particular intertextual exchange. Intertextuality is a two-way, reciprocal process; inasmuch as the intertext is modified by its transformation in the text under scrutiny, the text under scrutiny cannot remain unaffected by its absorption of the intertext; a text is always a potential intertext. As the intertextual traces are often concealed or half-concealed, distorted, it is obviously the reader’s role to identify and decipher them. For Michael Riffaterre, there must be lexical and structural correspondences between a text and its intertext, their lexis and syntagmas, for the intertextuality to materialize. “Intertextuality”, writes Riffaterre, “is the reader’s perception that a literary text’s significance is a function of a complementary or a contradictory homolog, the intertext. The intertext may be another literary work or a text-like segment of the sociolect (a fragment of a descriptive system)... that share[s] not only lexicon but also

¹¹ Raymond Federman, “Imagination as Playgiarism [An Unfinished Paper]”, *New Literary History* vol. vii (Spring 1976), no. 3: 565-6.

¹² Joseph Campbell and Henry Moron Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 28-9.

a structure with the text”.¹³ Riffaterre focuses mainly upon small intertextual units – subtexts.

How to read (or misread) intertextually? *Finnegans Wake* contains the following sentence: “In the buginning is the woid, in the muddle is the sound dance and thereinafer you’re in the unbewised again, wund vulsyvolsy”. [378] Any reader of Joyce can recognize here the interplay of two powerful intertexts: Giambattista Vico’s *The New Philosophy* and *The Bible* (John 1:1). The three syntagmas meaning the beginning, the middle, and “thereinafter” with “vulsyvolsy” (“ricorso”), “waltzing” the sentence back to its beginning in the “woid”, are a gram of Vico’s cyclical history – the matrix informing the theme and structure of Joyce’s book. “In the buginning was the woid...” is of course a travesty of “In he beginning was the word”; it parodies the divine nature of the origin, of the creation of language and all communication. The “woid” – the word (voice) lapsed in the void is the fallen word, and hence God identified with Word in the intertext (“and Word was with God and the Word was God”) becomes fallen Divinity – God of the Gnostics (another intertext perhaps?). Divinity resounds in the “bug” of the “buginning”, not only through its reference to the “beginning”, but also through its association with HCE, the hero of the novel, whose name Earwicker derives from “earwig”, an insect, a beetle, a “bug” that is supposed to creep into people’s ears, its verbal form also suggesting secret communication [OED]. (Besides, according to the medieval tradition, Mary conceived through the ear.). In the text of *Finnegans Wake*, Earwicker is both the first man Adam, the fallen man, and also the All-Father, the divine principle whose voice in the thunderclap spelling God’s wrath is also voice of the lapsed divinity – a garbled signifier audibly manifesting its inarticulateness as it falls into the “void” – the “woid”; incoherent and nonetheless frightening in its roaring stutter, echoed in the stutter which riddles HCE’s utterances. The “bug” can also be read as a homophone of “Bóg” – God in Polish – which reasserts its sacral aspect, and through the phonetic association with the river Bug (also a homophone of “Bóg”) it androgynizes itself as it now enters into the intricate river symbolism of the text – the feminine sphere of the word belonging to ALP – the Goddess, the mother, the wife, the sister, the lover, etc. In fact, the voice of HCE can often be heard in that of his wife ALP.¹⁴ The androgynous deity – it can also

¹³ Michael Riffaterre, “The Interpretant in Literary Semiotics”, *American Journal of Semiotics* vol. 13, no. 4: 41.

¹⁴ Neither this reading would be lost on Joyce himself. A meticulous reader of word maps, he knew enough of the Slavic languages not to fail to see the shadow of divinity in the name of the Polish river Bug. The pan-Slavic form “Bog” (God) appears on page 449, and besides, he lists such Slavic rivers as the Vistula (199), the Niemen (202), the Wieprz (204), the Prut (209), the Dniester (210); all of them in the vicinity of the river Bug. [Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980)]

be read as the gnostic spirit trapped in the endlessly circulating contaminated materiality of the fallen language – the shadow of yet another intertext entering here the intertextual game. Thus, the sentence under scrutiny, parodying its intertext (“In the beginning...”), establishes itself as the subtext, a matrix, a simulacrum parodying the whole text, the “circlewheeling history” [186] of *Finnegans Wake* – its desired to name the ineffable, to unveil the word in the “woid”, to de-void the Word. As the fall presupposes the rise, there is yet another reading of the same sentence, possibly using Vico’s *The New Science* as an interpretant (an interpreting intertext), in other words, the reading of Joyce’s text filtered through Vico’s notion of genesis and the birth of human speech as the imitation of God’s voice in the thunder. Accordingly, it can be perceived not as a parody of its biblical intertext, but as reshaping itself towards its articulation – the manifestation of an emerging order or a yearning for such an order: the “word” collapsed into “woid” yearning to redeem itself in its biblical intertext, and also the Gnostic soul arising from materiality in longing for the perfection of its prelapsarian condition. Such a reading strips Earwicker of his divinity in that his characteristic stutter would now signify imperfect humanity. Yet, his desacralization is only apparent since throughout the text of *Finnegans Wake* stuttering is also always identified with the voice of God – the voice of stuttering God. He will forever remain both human and divine. The fall and the rise – the basic elements of life and death, death and resurrection that inform the Joycean cosmos – remain not in a juxtapository but in a supplementary relationship to each other. The rise is inscribed in the fall. We can say that Joyce’s text contains both the parody of its origin and a denial of such parody or a desire of self-fulfilment in the parodied intertext. Hence, the ultimate meaning is always deferred here and, paradoxically, seized at the moment of difference. The validity of such a reading finds its substantiation in the dialectics of the novel subsumed in the trope-like notion of the unity of the contraries: “Direct opposites, since they are evolved by the common power, are polarized for reunion by the coalescence of their antipathies. As opposites, nonetheless, their respective destinies will remain distinctly diverse”.¹⁵ Apparently, Joyce borrowed his notion from Giordano Bruno, which indicates yet another intertext brought into play here.

Intertextuality, often referred to as literary semiotics, since it derives from the science of sign, may be considered a part of comparative studies. Unlike the comparative studies, however, disregarding sources, origins, and influences, it cuts across all boundaries, closures, and generic fields. In order to generate its own semiosis, a text may answer any random call of an intertext from far beyond any horizon of expectations or presuppositions. Replacing the source-hunting with its own text-hunting, it is also in danger of a happy

¹⁵ Campbell, 89.

paranoiac intellectualization. In other words, it calls for a system of constraints, rules, a model or, to use Peirce’s term, some “ground” on which to play is game. It is in this respect that Michael Riffaterre’s studies deserve scrutiny. Riffaterre replaces the reading along the text/intertext linear axis, the common intertextual practice, with an intertextual model based on the tradic sign (sign, object, and interpretant) that C. S. Peirce proposed for semiotics. In its skeleton outline, Peirce’s model assumes that a sign stands to somebody (the reader) for something (sign’s object) in some respect or capacity, creating in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, the interpretant.¹⁶ In Riffaterre’s semiotic triangle Peirce’s sign is the text (a subtext or a segment of the text) which is perceived as the “homolog” of an intertext (object). The object of the literary sign (text) is the first intertext, whereas the interpretant is the second intertext which “the text brings to bear on its relationship with the first text” (object). The interpretant is “equivalent to, or more developed than, the text. It therefore also stands for the object but from another perspective indicated by, and derived from, a feature of the literary sign (i.e. a lexical or a syntagmatic component of the text). This derivation is encoded in the text, enabling the reader permanently to retrieve the interpretation that generated it.”¹⁷ In other words, Riffaterre builds a semiotic system of literary interpretation that posits a “three-way relationship” among the text, the primary intertext, and the secondary intertext (interpretant). The function of the latter is to mediate between the text and the intertext – it translates, interprets, or defines the intertextual transformations. (Our second reading of Joyce’s “In the beginning...” through a feature from Vico’s *The New Science* may be taken as an approximation of the working of Riffaterre’s triadic model.) Riffaterre also postulates that all three units should be variants of the same structural matrix: they should share not only the same lexis but also the same syntagmatic organization, which results in a circular, oscillatory reading positing circular hermeneutics in that it contains the semiosis that Peircean interpretant generates within the field of intertextual self-reflexivity. Riffaterre concerns himself with small textual segments-subtexts, and his model provides for exemplary intertextual reading, as his interpretations of a Vonnegut’s subtext and a line from Achillini prove.¹⁸ It also arrests that natural intertextual

¹⁶ The most commonly cited Peirce’s definition of the sign reads as follows:

“A sign or *representamen* is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody that it creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something: its *object*. It stands for that object not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of that representamen”.

[*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hatshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2: 228].

¹⁷ Riffaterre, 44.

¹⁸ This analysis of Riffaterre’s model is based on his essay “The Interpretant in Literary Semiotics”. For a critique of Riffaterre’s and Peirce’s triad see: Thais E. Morgan, “Is There an

tendency, particularly that of deconstructive class, towards unbridled polysemy.

Intertextual reading seems to be predicated upon circularity in that the texts are interchangeable, depending upon the perspective of perception. A reading based upon the Peircean triadic model in which the interpretant is not treated instrumentally but as a sign in its own right, producing in its turn a subsequent triad, may yield a spirally unfolding paradigm which would accommodate texts larger than intratextual subtexts, separate texts, and channel their inevitable transformation. It would constitute a compromise between closed intertextuality and the waywardness of deconstructive semiosis. However, in order for such a paradigm to materialize, intertextuality should perhaps open itself up to more than mere discursive textual investigations. Except for such studies as, for example, Genette's palimpsests, intertextuality is mainly discourse-oriented, and accordingly, we are sometimes admonished against confusing it with thematics, source-influence relationships, imitations, etc. If we assume that what meets the eye in a literary text is only a surface manifestation of the multiplicity of unseen but equally tangible signifieds shaping themselves into a total teleology, that a code is inseparable from text or texture from structure, a paradigm generated by a thematic matrix would activate into an intertextual play elements intrinsic to the unified poetics of form and content, of discourse and structure.

Jorge Luis Borges claimed that he could recognize the voice of Kafka (of *The Castle*) in the texts of his precursors from diverse literatures and periods: Zeno, Han Yu, Kierkegaard, Leon Bloy, Lord Dunsany. Since Borges' claim implies intertextuality, his conclusions deserve to be quoted in full:

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have enumerated resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This second fact is the more significant. In each of these we find Kafka's idiosyncrasy to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive this quality; in other words, it would not exist. The poem "Fears and Scruples" by Browning foretells Kafka's work, but our reading of Kafka perceptibly sharpens and deflects our reading of the poem... The fact is, that every writer creates his own precursors, his work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation the identity or plurality of the men involved is unimportant. The early Kafka of *Betrachtung* is less a precursor of the Kafka of somber myths and atrocious institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany."¹⁹

Note 1 cites T. S. Eliot's "Points of View" as the source of Borges' notion of literary tradition implied here. The fact that Kafka writes his precursors in as much as his precursors write Kafka is a veritable intertextual notion, so is

Intertext in This Text? Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality", *American Journal of Semiotics* vol. 3, no. 4, 1985.

¹⁹ Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors", in *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions, 1964), 199-201.

the fact that all these writers may not know one another. What is of interest here, however, is the fact that Borges is using Kafka's text to read texts apparently not resembling each other. In other words, Kafka is used here as an interpretant to flesh out from his text a paradigm common for them all, of which the matrix could be as much Kafka's "somber myth" as a Zeno's paradox. Given the interchangeability of texts, we may now assume Kafka's text as an intertext discovered in Lord Dunsany's "Carcassonne" and select Zeno's "paradox against time" as an interpretant of the intertextual transaction occurring therein. As its subsequent intertextual combination would articulate a variant of the same paradigm (the paradigm functioning as an interpretant, or a sign is subject to transformations), its matrix would by necessity remain indefinable, unless in very general terms, still recognizable enough to accommodate a new text. Thus, we could supplement Borges' "Kafka paradigm" with such works as Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* or Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*, or such unlikely works as Coover's *Spanking the Maid* or Potocki's *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* – not so unlikely any more, in fact, as they would bear on Kafka's *The Castle*.

What obtains in Borges' text can be reformulated in terms of the Peircean triad, paying now particular attention to his concept of the "ground". A sign, "a representamen", stand for its object "not in all respects but in reference to a sort of idea which I have sometimes called the *ground* of that representamen". [see note 16] It is then apparent that the "ground" participates in the process of signification which is inscribed in the triad and thus in the semiosis which that triad generates. In Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1902) Peirce defined a sign as "anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which it itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign and so on *an infinitum*",²⁰ and all this transpiring, we should add, not in all respects, "but in reference to a sort of idea", that is, within a certain "ground".

The interpretant ("secondary intertext"), being produced, determined by the sign ("text") as that sign's ("text's") "equivalent", selects, indicates, defines or "interprets" for that sign ("text") its object ("primary intertext"), merging them, so to speak, into one entity. It marks its difference transforming itself into a sign ("text") for which that new entity is an object ("primary intertext"), and in order to explain for itself its own semantic relationship with that object ("primary intertext") it must now produce an interpretant ("secondary intertext"). It is an endless process but one that delimits its signification with a system of determinants, as it builds itself into a ground, a paradigm: each subsequent sign being a configuration of a prior sign, entering with that sign

²⁰ John K. Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 58.

into a signifying process, produces a ground, an idea (in fact, a sign) and since these signs are presupposed, prefigured or otherwise determined by yet prior system of signs, then the ground they produce must be a variant of the ground for the whole signifying process. A text sending forth its interpretant may modify or contradict its intertext, but as that interpretant transforms itself into the text, it also acknowledges and reinforces the ground from which it derives and of which it is a variant. The ground is the paradigm – a signifying process transforming itself into its own variants defined by the signification that it produces. It allows the signs to enter into any signifying variety of configurations but it also provides them with a field of rules on which they may play their game.²¹ But inasmuch as the ground is the function of these configurations, it is the signifying process which sets these rules as it generates the ground. We are dealing here with a self-reflexive system capable of regulating itself as it is presupposing and absorbing new elements, which will result, to borrow from Eliot again, in the “alteration of the whole order, if ever so slightly”. It sets in motion those particular feedback activities that involve intertextual reading. To discover Kafka’s “idiosyncrasy” in the welter of heterogeneous texts is only a part of the game. For the intertextual reading to complete itself, it is necessary to discover the traces of these “intertexts” in Kafka and through Kafka in other texts, so that a ground common for them all may be established, with any of these texts being able to substitute Kafka as a matrix for that ground therein lies, it seems, the plenitude of intertextual reading.

²¹ According to John K. Sheriff, Peirce’s “ground” and Wittgenstein’s “language games” are “similar, if not exactly the same. Language games as rule-governed activities provide the frame of reference for all use of linguistic signs, ‘When a language game changes, then there is a change in concept, the meaning of words changes’. The meaning of a poem or any other sign always involves a ground (Peirce sometimes substitutes the term “idea”) or a language game that it produces or modifies. These games are public, shared, part of one’s culture and controlled by rules; the choice of a language game that determines the meaning of sign is, however, private and not controlled by rules”. (Sheriff, 58).