Complexity, Hybridity, and Comparative Literature

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Abstract: In her article "Complexity, Hybridity, and Comparative Literature" Marina Grishakova discusses "implied hybridity" in discourses, aesthetic systems, and media as a form of emergent complexity — as distinct from hybridity resulting from the mixture or blending of heterogeneous elements. Grishakova argues that complexity theories widely used in social sciences and, to a lesser extent, in literary and cultural studies, suggest a possibility to avoid dualistic thinking and offer a flexible conceptual framework for comparative literature studies. Aesthetic systems, as part of society's "imaginary," respond to, and reorganize in response to, impulses received from other domains, but also modify their environments and forge new imaginaries. The difficulty of sustaining the paradoxes of complexity presents a challenge for comparative literature scholars as part of the "positive uncertainty" of the discipline.

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While discussing cyberpunk writer William Gibson's evolution toward realism and the science fiction "feel" of his realist novels *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*, Brian McHale refers to Fredric Jameson's analysis of postmodernism and late capitalism and his observations on the suspension of borders between realist fiction and science fiction, the latter displacing realism or, vice versa, reality overtaking science fiction in contemporary culture: "We are living now in a condition of technological change so fast that we might as well think of our immediate reality in science fiction terms … Science fiction has justified itself by giving us tools for thinking about contemporary experience, as realism once could, but not longer does … Realism is not really well-equipped to deal with change at this pace, and it inevitably lags behind where we are now; it's not paying attention to the right things or looking in the right places. There is, though, a certain danger for science fiction, which is that, in becoming the 'realism of today,' it might end up losing some of its utopian dimension, which is what many of us, Jameson included, especially value in science fiction" (McHale, Grishakova, Tomberg, Pärn <http://www.ut.ee/hortussemioticus/1_2008/pdf/mchale.pdf>). Thus, when pointing to the suspension of borders between realism and science fiction, Jameson and McHale detect symptoms of extensive mutation and hybridization of realist, fantastic, fictional, semi-fictional, nonfictional, and documentary genres which being anchored in the same experiential frameworks, such as the realities of "risk societies" or new technological sensibilities, blend the same generic and narrative conventions. The former serve as catalysts for generic and narrative shifts: complex narrative forms emerge in response to growing social anxiety and out of the necessity to capture complex forms of experience. Fictionalized representations filter into nonfictional genres and vice versa: new generic repertoires germinate in the intermediary generic zones.

As Jan Baetens observes, hybridity has become something like a catchword in contemporary literary and cultural studies (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/15>). New hybrid genres and media modify the ways we see old, presumably homogeneous and non-hybrid phenomena. From this perspective, "hybridity" is a stimulus and a sign of a perceptual and epistemological shift rather than of passing fashion. The hybrid nature of cinema has changed viewers' perceptions forever. Linguistically oriented epistemologies were privileged in analytical philosophy of language and in mainstream linguistic and literary theories of the twentieth century (see, e.g., Esrock). However, the impact of the new, painterly, photographic, and cinematic types of vision was too pervasive to be ignored. According to Rudolf Arnheim, cognition, rather than being a separate process of mental knowing, is ingrained in perception. Arnheim's theory of visual thinking contributed to the acknowledgement of the fact that different types of imagery (mental, verbal, graphic) cannot be neatly separated: rather than being an "impure," secondary effect of reading, mental imagery is an integral part of verbal experience (see also Grishakova, "Intermedial"). However, if new narrative and generic forms foster exchange and propagation of new "hybrid" concepts such as the graphic novel, photonovel, docufiction, and cybertext, we are still operating with dualistic vocabularies and binary oppositions such as literature/media, verbal/visual, fiction/nonfiction, local/universal on the macro-scale. To explore the possibility of non-dualistic thinking, I draw on the work of Bakhtin who is celebrated as a pioneer of "hybridity." Bakhtin distinguishes between two types of hybridity. The first amounts to the combination or mixture of (at least) two distinct languages (speech forms) within the limits of a single utterance (358). The second— which I designate "implied hybridity" — applies in the cases when a single language is filtered through another language or "rendered in the light of another language" (Bakhtin 362): the latter is not actualized and remains outside the utterance. In other words, hybridity as a combination, mixture, or blending of separate media (e.g., introduction of non-artistic materials in poetry or painting) should be distinguished from implied hybridity as a lamination, differentiation, or heterogeneity perceived within what appears to be a homogeneous medium (see in more detail Grishakova, "Intermedial").

In artistic practices the two Bakhtinian types of hybridity — actualized in integration, blending, convergence and differentiation, splintering, layering, divergence (in languages, spaces, media) — are two aspects of the same process. They need not be separated into "segregational" dualistic categories.

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The correlative connection between "integration" and "differentiation" lies at the core of complexity theories. Complexity theories combined with narrative research offer a flexible framework for the study of complex, multilevel, and multiaspectual processes in society and have been widely used in the social sciences (see, e.g., Uprichard and Byrne). To a lesser extent, they have attracted the attention of literary and cultural scholars. As Michael Boyden observes, "perhaps the most commanding reason for the relative neglect of Luhmann's social systems theory is that, contrary to other approaches currently fashionable in literary studies, such as Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory or Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, Luhmann's perspective seems to resist easy capitalization in terms of a given political agenda" (59). Drawing on Niklas Luhmann's work, Boyden points out that the functioning of complex systems such as "national literature" and "world literature" is regulated by double contingency rather than by antecedence-consequence relations. He disputes Franco Moretti's and David Damrosch's understanding of "world literature" as a reaction to national literatures and a way of transcending the narrow national perspective. While highlighting a complex, dynamic relationship between the two systems, Boyden refers to Erich Auerbach's thesis on the universalist aspirations of local cultures (for example, self-aggrandizing characteristic of the "universal receptivity" of German or Russian culture). Arguably, the system of world literature arises from within national literatures and modifies them from the inside by simultaneously differentiating itself from them. On the other hand, within the context of the encompassing ideals of the "classical world" or the world of "enlightened Europe," the national appears as a reaction to the universal. The complex dynamics between the national and the universal are not easily accommodated to the deterministic cause-effect logic.

Whereas Bourdieu's and Wallerstein's theories subjugate culture to the logics of the social, economic, or political fields, complex (self-organizing, autopoietic) systems, which are partially autonomous, but overlap with other systems, have an advantage of flexibility and adaptiveness (on this, see also Schmidt <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1569>). Multilevel nonlinear interactions, inter-level effects, and feedback loops are characteristic of complex systems. Complex systems permanently scoop information from their environments and, in their turn, impact on and modify their environments: provisional "couplings" and "decouplings" (see Maturana and Varela) occur between the autopoietic system and the environment. The behavior of complex systems includes a strong element of randomness. The states of non-equilibrium that exchange information and energy with the external world may increase the unpredictability of a system's behavior until the system reaches the bifurcation point, where a branching of the trajectories of development occurs. At this point the system has a choice of following one or the other path of development. Which new path is chosen involves an element of uncertainty and randomness inherent in the non-equilibrium behavior. As a result, the system either submerges in entropy or moves towards a new state of "order"—a higher degree of complexity (see Grishakova, "Around"). Luhmann defines complexity as a systemic pressure to select what possibilities to actualize. In order to function, the system has to reduce the external complexity through selection (177). By reducing the external complexity, new systemic possibilities are created: autopoiesis or functional differentiation within the system, self-referential feedback, and emergent systemic properties which cannot be deduced from the properties of the initial elements, increase the system's internal complexity.

Arts, literature, and other aesthetic systems fostered by productive creative impulses fashion society's "radical imaginary" (Castoriadis 146): their functioning is partially independent of political, national, geographical restraints. They respond to, and reorganize in response to, the impulses received from other domains but also modify their environments and forge new imaginaries; or, as Lotman observes, artistic texts create their own contexts (see Lotman, "Text"). Relative independence of cultural or aesthetic systems is supported and maintained by text transfer and translation (see Pym). Intercultural transfer routes become increasingly specialized and relatively independent from the direct control of societies and political regimes. There is a certain degree of randomness in a self-organizing network of transfers: "Texts do not always go exactly where and when their senders or receivers want them to go; they can be intercepted, delayed, detoured, blocked and destroyed … Many nineteenth-century Japanese prints reached Europe as packing-case filler, since they were considered of no value in Japan. In Europe, they helped to revolutionize *fin de siècle* aesthetics" (Pym, 137). Instead of "systems" or "communities" which govern transfer, it would be more productive, in

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Anthony Pym's opinion, to think "of winds, of forces that sweep across particular cultures" (138) — favorable or unfavorable transfer conditions. As Pym suggests, acts of transfer are guided by intercultural regimes. The latter are networks of relations, organizing principles, rules, and negotiation procedures which function in culture. Translational and literary (aesthetic) regimes work "against the grain": they are flexible and relatively independent from pragmatic and rigid political and ideological systems. No totalitarian system is hermetic enough to suppress text transfer: "There is no absolute control. There should be no conspiracy theory of absolute power over transfer or non-transfer. When living in Rhodesia supposedly under siege from an international embargo, I worked alongside geologists who exchanged journal articles with other experts, in the Soviet Union. And Austrian locomotives pulled trains full of wheat from South Africa to Zambia, marked 'Swaziland-Malawi.' If the interests are great enough, information and food can slip through most forms of official closure" (Pym 137).

Implied or internal hybridity of seemingly homogeneous spaces, discourses, or media — hybridity as emergent complexity, as a pressure or urge for differentiation — is less remarkable than the hybridity resulting from the mixture or blending of heterogeneous elements. The second aspect of hybridity has attracted considerable attention in postcolonial and multicultural studies. However, in practice, the two hybridities are entwined as two aspects of complex processes. Thus, the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer) departs from the narrow national principle of building literary/cultural histories and focuses instead on the areas of "intercultural convergence," "conjunctures," or nodal points where different cultures met and merged such as multicultural cities (Prague, Bucharest, Riga, etc.), sites of intercultural hybridization, or diasporic communities. However, the node may function also as a point of dispersal or difference and from this perspective, occasional encounters — "couplings" and "decouplings" — within seemingly homogeneous cultural spaces which often differentiate themselves into heterogeneous social or experiential layers are of no less interest than multicultural mixtures.

Some recent ensemble films are set in marginal zones in the new, re-mapped Europe where simultaneous differentiation and integration processes inject a high degree of uncertainty and non-equilibrium into seemingly stable systems. Thus, the 2003 film *Lichter* — directed by Hans-Christian Schmid — portrays a space on both sides of the German-Polish border at the river Oder and a group of illegal Ukrainian immigrants trying to cross the border. Some of them perish in this attempt, others fail and return to where they started, one is arrested, but saved and brought over the border by a police interpreter who sympathizes with him (instead of thanking the benefactor the saved person steals her camera and walks away). The film introduces seemingly incommensurable private or social worlds which clash or overlap at some point owing to the unexpected criss-crossing of human stories. What ideally appears as the Western world of well-being and prosperity is opposed to the world of desperate outcasts and the intermediary world of an impoverished Polish province. These worlds are traversed and differentiated by personal trajectories and experiential spaces. A Polish taxi driver is desperately looking for money to buy a communion dress for his daughter and tries to smuggle the immigrants across the border to get the money. By the time he gets the money, it is too late. A young German architect occasionally meets his former Polish girlfriend among the prostitutes entertaining businessmen after a business meeting. Insofar as the worlds intermingle, their distinctive (cultural, political, national) features start blurring: a dimension of immediate human contact emerges beyond the separating lines of nationality, statehood, or social hierarchy and introduces new separating or integrating lines. The film's characters are driven not only by elementary vital instincts to survive, to escape humiliating poverty, to be happy and successful, but also by mutual attraction, compassion, repulsion, domination, or submission which challenge their identities and address the experiential aspects of their existence. This move — transgressing inner human borders despite the inability to cross a political border between states — contests the essentialist categories of national or social origins.

Small-scale changes, eventually accumulating and intensifying, may provoke large-scale shifts within the apparently homogeneous zones. As Juri Lotman pointed out, peripheral or marginal spaces are the area of accelerated semiotic processes, which eventually intensify, shape, or displace core zones of culture. The central zones generate and impose their own metalanguages on the environments — languages which often prove to be inadequate and unable to capture the complex

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dynamics on the "margins." The margins appear to be more dynamic and resistant to the pervasive order of the center: they function as the catalysts of change (see Lotman, "On the Semiosphere" 212).

Veiko Õunpuu's 2007 film *Sügisball* (Autumn Ball) has been labelled "Estonian Wasteland" by film critics (see, e.g., van Hoeij <http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=79845>). The film action is transferred to Lasnamäe, known as the Russian district of Tallinn, although the role of the Russian minority is relatively marginal in the film: it forms an almost invisible background. The inner borderland is represented from the obverse side, from the viewpoint of Estonian marginals, freaks, or bohemians who live there and who are themselves the "borderline personalities" whose behavior challenges the stereotypes. Õunpuu highlights this all-too-human aspect of the film in his interview with the web-based *Filmmaker Magazine*: "I actually tried out a very 'anti-Marxist' idea that the quality of our existence is not conditioned by our social status and a position in the hierarchies of the world," and further: "It is a film about this kind of solitude that we all share but what is emphasized to the extreme in the cases of the film characters" (Õunpuu qtd. in Dawson <http://filmmakermagazine.com/1371-veiko-ounpuu-sugisball/>). The film portrays life in Soviet-time apartment blocks, light grey "boxes," which, as symbols of solitude and isolation, become its main leitmotif.

The format of the ensemble, kaleidoscopic, or "multiprotagonist" film (see Israel) such as *Lichter* (Schmid), *Autumn Ball*, *Life is Sweet* (Leigh), *The Idiots* (von Trier, 1998) is well suited to rendering complexity, open-endedness, and uncertainty. Ensemble films include multiple subplots, feedback loops, and character constellations, substitute serendipity for cause-and-effect logic and feature multiple interactions. Owing to the episodic cumulative structure, they can exploit the advantages of simultaneous presentation: the opportunity to introduce various perspectives and their collisions by bringing unrelated characters together within a single setting. In such films, chance and coincidence function as the main springs of plot development. In *Lichter* and *Sügisball*, this poetics is a perfect match for the complexity of human action in complex circumstances.

In order to narrow the focus of my study, I look at implied hybridity of discourse to suggest that "literature" itself is a hybrid formation *par excellence*. If Baetens traces the non-literary and non-poetic within poetry, I am interested in the germination of fiction within the non-fictional or "literariness" within the non-literary. Instead of safeguarding the "distinction of fiction" (see Cohn, *Distinction*), I find it more interesting and productive to trace the "proliferation of fiction" and to reveal the inherently hybrid nature of the "poetic function." In its triple meaning, as "lie," "invention," and as a literary artefact, fiction is contingent on the inevitable incompleteness of human knowledge. It is the conjectural, hypothetical character of knowledge and experience that makes the overlapping and layering of fictional and real-life experience possible. Poiesis refers to craftsmanship, but also to meaning-making (begetting, bringing forth) in the face of the unknown, in the situation of the uncertainty of meaning. Hayden White noted that "what cannot be explained is in principle capable of being understood" (30). Arguably, fiction allows understanding (i.e., grasping the meaning or impact of) things which are not entirely explicable.

The modal systems of the possible worlds of fiction are analogous to the life-world structures or symbolic worlds of human interaction: "When we read a text of narrative fiction, we take some statements as establishing hard facts for the story world and others as describing what is merely possible or what exists only in the minds of the characters. In other words, a fiction is not just a nonactual possible world; it is a complete modal system centered around its own actual world" (Ryan 646). A certain totality of accepted facts taken for granted — what Umberto Eco refers to as "encyclopedia" — circulating in a life-world is surrounded by the spheres of the possible, hypothetical, indefinite, or unknown. These are regions which fiction addresses: fictional worlds are incomplete (Doležel 22) or "handicapped" (Eco 74) worlds. Fictional characters inhabit their worlds without knowing their condition and destiny in the very same way humans inhabit their actual world. Fictional worlds are irreversible in time: once the life of the character is complete we cannot change it. In the same way, human knowledge is entwined with the irreversible experience of time and therefore open-ended and changeable. It includes zones of conjecture and uncertainty, the "guessing fields of experience" (Metzinger 231). The human propensity for fictionalization and narrativization of real-life experience originates in the necessity for coherence and meaningfulness. Peter Goldie lists certain

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"fictionalizing tendencies" which introduce provisional coherence and closure in chaotic experiences — emplotment; finding agency, or imputing natural, non-agentive events to an action by agency; looking for narrative threads and closure; the tendency to impose genre on life and to flatten out the character of a real person — as manifestations of an "inability to accept the absence of meaning or agency" (19). Owing to the "leakage" of realist epistemologies, vernacular discourses slide into fictionalization and become hybrid. In what follows I describe certain forms of "leakage of reality" and implied hybridity in non-fictional discourses and narratives — or "fictionality beyond fiction" as a specific semiotic quality of discourse.

"Ventriloquism" or speaking for another is an analogue of fictional mediation and thus legitimization or authentication of the other's speech. People often use their pets to communicate with each other in an indirect, mediated way, for instance by talking to and simultaneously "for" a pet, but addressing another person. In families with pre-verbal or minimally verbal children, a mother may address a father who is ignoring their little daughter by using a "baby talk register" directed simultaneously to the daughter and to the husband—on behalf of the daughter (Tannen 22). "Speaking for another" is also used by caretakers or family members who help disabled persons who cannot tell their own story (see Hydén). This kind of "voice support" is also characteristic of psychotherapeutic relationship between a therapist and a patient.

Dorrit Cohn considers fiction as a representation of consciousness *par excellence*: no other discourse provides access to another person's consciousness (see, e.g. Cohn, *Transparent Minds* 3-18). However, fiction also reveals the absence of a direct access to consciousness whether one's own — what Metzinger refers to as "autoepistemic closure," the inability of consciousness to observe itself (57) — or another's and reminds us that any consciousness is a mediated consciousness that we "read" either through external semiotic (linguistic, bodily, etc.) mediation or through another consciousness. The author, or, rather, the authorial narrator, also performs a "ventriloquist act" when "animating" the characters: "The author does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree), but he speaks, as it were, through a language that has somehow become objectivized and materialized, that he merely ventriloquates … He can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions" (Bakhtin 299). Thus, when literary characters are placed in the real world — for instance, as Twitter users — they become the ontological equals of real people (see Aciman and Rensin).

"Mystification," intended or unintended, is another type of implied hybridity within non-fictional discourse. The 1938 radio adaptation of H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* directed and broadcast by Orson Welles caused widespread panic. Owing to the fact that a major part of the broadcast was presented as a series of simulated news bulletins, listeners imagined that the Martian invasion was actually occurring.

"Sustained fabulation" is practiced, for instance, by "professional liars," such as Jean-Claude Romand, the object of a journalistic investigation and a character in Emmanuel Carrère's *The Adversary: A True Story of Monstrous Deception*, who, after failing a medical exam, forged a compensatory fantasy: he pretended to be a doctor and a successful researcher for eighteen years and killed his whole family when he was threatened with exposure. Cases of sustained fabulation have also been described in fiction. For example, general Ivolgin in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* develops a story of conjuring friendship with the Emperor Napoleon and becoming his page when he was ten years old. The story is interspersed with Romanticist and sentimental clichés ("face clouded by darkness," "eternity spreading the dark wing over him," "our tears mingled"). Prince Myshkin, who initially betrays his distrust ("If that's how it all really happened"), later acknowledges the general's right to fabulation as a sort of inner or experiential truth (as his reply "You did well" reveals):

"This is all extremely interesting," the prince said, in a very hushed tone. "If that's how it all really happened..." ... "Oh, Prince!" exclaimed the general, intoxicated with his own story to a point where he might now be unable to hold back even the most extreme indiscretions. "You say: 'It all happened!' But there was more, I assure you, there was much more! I repeat to you, I was a witness of that great man's nocturnal tears and groans; but absolutely no one saw that, except me! Towards the end, it's true, he didn't weep at all, there were no tears, he merely groaned sometimes; but his face seemed more and more clouded by darkness. It was as though eternity were already spreading the dark wing over him. Sometimes, at night, we spent whole hours alone, in silence — the Mameluke Rustan would be snoring in the next room; that man slept awfully soundly … On one occasion it all

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became too terribly painful, and he suddenly noticed the tears in my eyes; he gave me a look of tender emotion: "You feel sorry for me!" he exclaimed. "You, a child, and perhaps there's another child who feels sorry for me — my son, *le roi de Rome;* all the others, they all hate me, and my brothers will be the first to sell me into slavery!" I began to sob and rushed to him; at that point he himself broke down; we embraced, and our tears mingled. "Write, write to the Empress Josephine!" I sobbed to him. Napoleon gave a shudder, thought, and said to me: "You have reminded me of another heart that loves me; I thank you, *mon ami*!" He sat right down and wrote the letter to Josephine with which Constant dispatched the next day. "You did well," said the prince. "Amidst cruel thoughts, you led him to kind feeling." (585)

The use of "non-existent" or "non-human entities" as agents in human action: literary and filmic characters often live their second life as real-life entities, placed within real-life referential frames (e.g., Sherlock Holmes's apartment on Baker Street, Don Quixote's road in Spain or Romeo and Juliet's balcony in Verona). The main character of the popular TV series *House* "gives advice": the memes signed by him are circulating on the internet; there exist Dr House fanclubs and people use him as an avatar in social networks.

"Thought experiments" present imaginary situations describing hypothetical, virtual objects and events which might have happened or which are unlikely to happen, inferences and conclusions which might be drawn from these imaginary situations. Although fictions are usually told in the past tense as if imitating the accounts of events which have, indeed, happened in the past: "a fictional work … is presented at the entry level as an account of a series of events as if they were happening or did happen … It is hard to follow a narrative at all, to imbibe what it is intended to convey, without using this perspective as a baseline for all further responses to the work" (Goldman 287) they, like thought experiments, are imaginative constructions. They "advance understanding by exemplifying features and playing out their consequences" (Elgin 43). However, fictional narratives reach consequences not through the austere logic of argumentation, but by throwing in and elaborating on supervening details, displaying new circumstances and alternative paths. The reality status of fictions is suspended, they are open-ended and open for further interpretations. Every new occurrence changes a reader's interpretation of events: the assumptions about how the world functions are subjected to permanent reconsideration guided by discursive and narrative processing. Fictional narratives work as experiential labs where various hypotheses and inferences about the functioning of the world are imaginatively tested but finalizing judgments are suspended.

Writers, particularly in the nineteenth century, the age of positivism and natural science (— for example Stendhal, Balzac, and Tolstoy — described themselves as analysts of society, "doctors" who gave a diagnosis to society by subjecting it to a close scrutiny. Catherine Z. Elgin observes this kind of systematicity in Austen and Tolstoy and argues that Austen is conducting a peculiar thought experiment through long-term observation of interconnected lives of three or four families in a country village: "The relations among the members of the three or four families are sufficiently complicated and the demands of village life sufficiently mundane that the story can exemplify something worth noting about ordinary life and the development of moral personality. By restricting her attention to three or four fictional families, Austen in effect devises a tightly controlled thought experiment. Drastically limiting the factors that affect her protagonists enables her to elaborate in detail the consequences of the few that remain" (46).

What is interesting and important in all these cases, however, is not hybridity as such but, hybridity as a form of complexity, differentiation, and an urge for autopoietic organization. The states of "fluctuation" and uncertainty within systems may or may not generate new levels of complexity and foster coagulation of new autopoietic orders, such as new literary or social subsystems or islets of fictionality within non-fictional discourses.

Russian Formalism in particular advocated the autonomy of literature and of the literary artifact. Concepts like "literariness," "poetic function," or "poeticity" become associated with this trend: arguably, the Jakobsonian "literary work" is an opaque, tightly structured, and self-sufficient Kantian object of "disinterested contemplation" (Scholes 21). At the time, the Formalist interest in the specificity of literature (or, to refer to Cohn's thought in her *The Distinction of Fiction*) was meant to defend the latter from the direct encroachments of ideology and politics. Yet a closer look at Roman Jakobson's and other Formalists' evolution reveals a more complicated and changing understanding of what the "literary" is and Jakobson's elaborations reveal the hybrid nature of poetic function: as one of six communicative functions (along with referential, expressive, conative, phatic and metalingual), it is

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present, to a certain extent, in various communicative acts. In "What is Poetry?" Jakobson highlights the transformative value of "poeticity." While entering into various combinations with other functions, "poeticity" is able to transform them: "the poetic function, poeticity, is, as the 'formalists' stressed, an element *sui generis*, one that cannot be mechanically reduced to other elements. It can be separated out and made independent, like the various devices in, say, a cubist painting. But this is a special case; from the standpoint of the dialectics of art it has its *raison d'être*, yet it remains a special case. For the most part poeticity is only a part of a complex structure, but it is a part that necessarily transforms the other elements and determines with them the nature of the whole. In the same way, oil is neither a complete dish in and of itself nor a chance addition to the meal, a mechanical component; it changes the taste of food" (750). It is easy to notice that the Jakobsonian "poeticity" is limited neither to poetry nor to the literary work in general: it extends to visual arts and reaches beyond the arts while entering the sphere of everyday communications. As such, it amounts to a specific semiotic quality of communication, an equivalent of Jan Mukařovsky's "aesthetic function." The aesthetic function actively intermingles with and modifies other functions. It can facilitate the apportionment of one function as the dominating one and foreground this function, substitute a lost function (for example, the function of the practical use of objects of a religious cult, which become purely aesthetic objects) or free the object from its accompanying functions (thus, theatricality can free specific gestures from everyday meanings). Ranging on a scale between "invention" and "poeticity" (*poiesis* as craftsmanship), fiction enters the zones of indeterminacy and "guessing fields" of everyday experience. On the one hand, it reveals a pressure for selection and closure, on the other it hybridizes and transforms factual discourses and injects an increasing urge for differentiation. The difficulty of sustaining the paradoxes and aporias of complexity presents a challenge for comparative literature scholars as part of "positive uncertainty" (see, e.g., Le Juez <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss7/2>) of the discipline.

In conclusion, rather than being solely a result of external pressure, complexity is inherent in media and aesthetic and cultural systems as expressions of a society's imaginary. While responding to impulses received from other domains, aesthetic systems reveal an urge for inner differentiation and hybridization that modifies their environments and forges new imaginaries. The dualistic modes of thinking and presumably "neat" categories are not able to capture complex processes. This is where comparative research comes in and can be helpful in reassessment of conceptual tools and intention of new terminological vocabularies.

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