Formes identitaires
SECONDARY ICONICITY AND PSEUDOIDENTITY

According to Göran Sonesson there are two fundamental types of iconicity1. The first is what can be called primary iconicity in which the experience of likeness appears before the sign relation and conditions its emergence. An ordinary picture is a typical example of a primary iconic sign. But it is also characterized by the fact that expression and content have no properties in common. Only proportions are in common, which is not necessarily true of other cases of primary iconicity, if they turn out to exist. In primary iconicity there is a great difference between expression and content; they belong to different categories. Only what is less prominent, for instance paper or canvas, can express a more prominent content, for instance a human being.

However, in the case of what can be called secondary iconicity, the sign relation must precede the likeness and be a condition of its emergence. As an identity sign, it may therefore relate two objects that share some properties or in extreme cases share all properties. With primary iconicity there is no need for conventions to interpret the sign. All you need is to be familiar with the depicted object. In the case of secondary iconicity you have thus to be aware of the sign relation, and then you can see the likeness. Thereby, a certain amount of convention is needed to make the sign work, which is contra-intuitive because you expect for instance a twin to be a perfect icon of his own twin. However, a twin is not necessarily a sign of that other twin. In most cases they are just two different individuals. Only in certain situations do they enter into a sign relation, for instance when one of the twins acts as the other.

An example of secondary iconicity is the tailors’ swatch which has some properties in common with the cloth it stands for, but not all, for instance not its size. Also a cake in a bakers’ shop-window is a sign of the cake the customer will order for the next day. More specifically, secondary iconicity is a sign relation relating an object to some properties that the object also has, from token to type, and furthermore to a class of objects or to an object having those same properties. The swatch can therefore also stand for an ordered tailor-made suit. Thus conventions are important for

secondary iconic signs because in a way everything has at least some properties in common.

Pseudoidentity is a special case of secondary iconicity. A mannequin which stands for a human being is a pseudoidentity. Here two different categories come together in the sign relation: the mannequin and what it stands for, the human being. Those differing categories have common properties: three-dimensionality, head, arms, and legs, which are the ground of the sign. But they have also some properties which they don’t share and those are in fact the most important ones. While a human being is alive, a mannequin is a non-living thing made of plastic, wood, or wax. This means that it’s the difference between expression and content that creates the sign relation and not only the properties they have in common.

Actually it’s the asymmetry difference between these two types of properties which makes the sign work. If all properties were the same, it would not be a sign of a human being, rather it would be a human being. However there are some difficult cases, for instance the replicants in filmmaker Ridley Scott’s Bladerunner (1982), in which Harrison Ford has to use some kind of special optical equipment to look into the replicants’ eyes to decide whether they are humans or replicants. These replicants look like humans, they act, they have names and even a memory of their own. They may appear in front of us without being perceived as signs. In which case they are humans, but if we know that they are replicants, they become signs. The only difference is that our knowledge is incomplete. In effect, a “real” human has no likeness to a mannequin, but a mannequin resembles a human being. That relationship is asymmetrical as the mannequin is constructed to act like a human but has almost no identity of its own. The sign is instrumental and its plane of expression will be wiped out in the sign relation. We know that a mannequin is not human, but in certain situations, for instance in a shopwindow, it may stand for a human being. In that case, what is non-living becomes humanized.

In theater or film, actors often become pseudoidentities. In certain kind of plays at least we are not supposed to bother about the actors, as only the characters are important. Actors and characters thus share a lot of properties, but not the important property of personal identity. There are other cases as well in which human beings become signs, for instance in the case of transsexuals. In such cases, a human male becomes a pseudoidentity and a secondary iconic sign of a woman. He shares commun properties with a woman, most of all the property of being a human being, although he also wears female clothes and acts as a human female. Still transsexuals lack the most important property of all, that of having a female sex, just as the mannequin lacks life and the actor the personal identity of his character. In the transsexual’s case, the male properties are hidden, but not unimportant. If there were no male properties there would be no pseudoidentity, no transsexuality, just a woman.

As Sonesson has shown, in a mannequin seen as a pseudoidentity, the properties of the mannequin are wiped out. In a “preferred reading”, the transsexual himself would probably consider himself a pseudoidentity in which the male properties are wiped out. The male part of the pseudoidentity is placed in the substance of expression. It is only an instrument, a vehicle for a femininity that dominates completely. The body is thus conceived as less important than the image of the transsexual, than his/her gender. The transsexual wants to become a full-blown woman and dreams of a sex-change operation. Until then she/he has to be satisfied with it’s pseudoidentity, female clothes, behavior, and maybe oestroge. In a way a transsexual, just like a replicant or an art forgery, is a special sign of that works as intended only when one is not aware of the sign relation. This type of sign can thereby only be a secondary iconicity, and that goes for a fake painting as well, since it is not only the content of the picture which is supposed to be false, but also the canvas and the type of paint that is used. In fact, the “personal identity”of the painting must in that sense be false, and this means it’s a matter of identity, not likeness.

2. THE RHETORIC OF TRANSEXUALITY

Since the early 1960s, the Swedish photographer Christer Strömholm has documented transsexuals that live around Place Blanche in Paris. His pictures have been available in books, magazines, and exhibitions. They have been received as docu-
ments and classified in a socio-realist genre. It has been said that they show a suppressed and marginalized group of people fighting for their sexual freedoms and that they support the transsexuals’ view of themselves as actually being women.

A paratext is a text indexically accompanying another text, expression to expression. It may be rhetorical to the text which is next to it. The paratext of the photobook Vännerna från Place Blanche (The Friends from Place Blanche) (1983), by Störmholm, contains written information about Place Blanche, as well as an historical overview of that part of Montmartre where transsexuals have been living for a very long time. This means that such a paratext is anchoring Störmholm’s pictures, in Barthes sense, to a referential time and space. It also contains an interview with Jacky, a transsexual with strong self-confidence, who does not have any doubts about transsexuality being a third gender and who feels safe in the transsexual identity. That paratext is thus an argument for an individual’s rights to his own life and to sexual rights in general.

As head of a famous photographic school (the Kursverksamhetens fotoskola, in Stockholm), Störmholm has advocated a photographic method based on close contacts between models and photographers. Preferably, according to Störmholm, a photographer should live with his models to get to know them better and be able therefore to avoid using telephotolenses to get closer to them. In that sense, a personal relationship should develop so that the photographer will be allowed to take pictures even in the most intimate situations. His models should also be shown the printed pictures for approval.

Sonnesson has developed a four-tiered model for pictorial rhetoric based on “deviations from expectations” of the lifeworld or the artworld (Sonnesson 1996, 1996-1997: 49ff). According to Alfred Schütz, the lifeworld is “the world taken for granted”, a world in which we live with regularities, indexicalities, and schemes, that are presented in a subjective-relative manner and from a certain point of view, that is, the I-here-now position. Originally a concept put forward by Husserl, it has been expanded somewhat by Schütz, Sonnesson, and others. The lifeworld is thus a preferred world and a privileged interpretation of our terrestrial environment which determines what is above and below, etc. It’s reality without an innocent eye; an automatically interpreted and natural, intersubjective, socio-cultural world. It’s the position from which other worlds such as art, media, and natural sciences, can be observed, but also it’s a position that is exposed to rhetoric (Sonnesson 1996-1997: 55ff). For its part, the artworld consists of works of art, interpretations of them, and actors, such as artists, critics, curators, collectors, and beholders.

Sonnesson’s four dimensions of visual rhetoric are as follows:

1. Integration. If two objects, who are not expected to be seen together, are nonetheless united, the closer they are integrated together the more the rhetorical effect will increase;
2. Identity/opposition. The more unexpected is the identity or opposition between two parts involved in visual rhetoric, the more rhetorical is the effect. A union of parts that cannot unite was called an oxymoron in the rhetoric of Antiquity;
3. Degrees of fictionality. Different parts of this visual rhetoric can be either in praesentia or only suggested in absenctia;
4. Relationships between modes of construction, functions, and channels of circulation. For instance, if a work of art (a function) is a photograph (mode of construction) and is being distributed in the same channels of circulation as advertisements, then it is rhetorical, since a work of art is expected to be a painting and to be seen in an art gallery or a museum.

Thereby, if we take into consideration transsexuals in relation to these four rhetorical dimensions, we discover that they may be highly rhetorical with regard to integration, since in transsexuality masculinity and femininity are united in the same body. That kind of integration may lead to likeness. But there is also a strong rhetorical effect at the level of opposition, since males and females are anthropological opposites. This means that transsexuals can be regarded in that sense as oxymorons. Moreover, with regard to degrees of fictionality, again there is some rhetorical effect since what is seen up-front are the female properties and what is most often only suggested are the
male ones. Regarding his model, Sonesson has in effect claimed that if (at least) two dimensions are rhetorically active then that it is visual rhetoric. Thereby, in that context, transsexuals are potentially rhetorical signs.

We find also a case of rhetorical effects between paratext and printed pictures in Strömholms’s book, Vännerna från Place Blanche. Integrated closely to Strömholm’s photos, the paratext on Place Blanche, etc., transfers values from itself toward those selected pictures. In Barthes’ sense, that paratext is anchoring Strömholm’s pictures and thereby making them in effect more referential and socio-realistic. Such anchoring can be viewed (and discussed) therefore in terms of “linguistic imperialism” if we take into consideration that the “human interest” values that are thus transferred from that written language to those printed pictures deform the rhetoric implicit in the photos themselves. We came to the conclusion supra that transsexuals were potentially rhetorical, yet the paratext accompanying Strömholm’s photobook says that they are not. In that paratext, in fact, transsexuals are treated almost as ordinary women fighting for their rights. This means that this paratext supports the transsexuals as pseudo-identities with their male properties diminished and their female ones projected on the male. This is just like a mannequin in a shopwindow showing clothes for a customer or a doll taking on the role of a little baby for a little girl playing a game of mothers and fathers. Human properties are projected on the mannequin and the doll, whereas mannequin and doll properties are of no interest.

Our rhetorical analysis put forward supra the possibility of an oxymoron in relation to the anthropological opposites between male and female. This suggested that the male properties could not be ignored in a rhetorical relationship. Instead they may even become fundamental. The pseudo-identity and the oxymoron seem in effect to be two different sign relations at work within the same substance. If a transsexual is a sign, then a picture of a transsexual can semiotically be thought of as a sign within a sign. A primary iconic sign thereby comprises a secondary iconic sign. And this can be considered as a rhetorical relationship in itself with a high degree of integration. However it may also be an example of a metasemiotic function.

3. THE METASEMIOTIC FUNCTION

As is well known in semiotics, Roman Jakobson (1974) divided signs according to their different emphasis in different parts of the communication model. Concerning photographs, the referential function is probably the most common. In photography, a picture refers to a reality beyond the sign. The sign itself is not stressed, the expression of the sign is just an instrumental vehicle for content and referent. There is also an emotive function accentuating the sender, a conative function highlighting the receiver, and a phatic function highlighting the channel. Especially well known moreover is the Prague’s School notion of aesthetic function. It proposes that artistic effects result from emphasizing the sign itself, especially its plane of expression. In a work of art, the aesthetic function is thus at work when you move the interest from content to expression, that is, to colour, texture, or form. In that way, the metasemiotic function is highlighting the code.

What kind of functions are the most active ones in photos of transsexuals? At first, there is an active referential function since we know that these photographs have been received as a kind of socio-realistic documentary of a marginalized group of people. Furthermore, the emotive/conative (interpersonal) functions are also activated since most often transsexuals are visually addressing the photographer or the receiver. In addition, the aesthetic function is activated, at least in some particular cases, since these photos are integrated in an artworld. Yet it’s my strongly-held belief that the most important function remains the metasemiotic one.

There seems to be some problems however with the scope of that metasemiotic phenomenon in semiotics. Jakobson, who defined it originally, describes it in the following way: “Whenever the sender and/or the receiver needs to control that they use the same code, the speech is focused on the CODE: it gets a METALINGUISTIC (that is a commenting) function”\(^5\). But according to Sonesson, the phrase Jakobson puts forward as a metalinguistic example: “Do you understand what I mean?”, is not sufficient to be qualified as a metalinguistic utterance since the language which is used as content for that metalinguistic commentary is only referential. Nothing new is said on a
metalinguistic level (Sonesson 1989: 196). The Russian semiotician Yuri M. Lotman claims that if a picture is placed within another picture, that picture will be semiotized. It will become more pictured than what it is a picture of. The referential function will cease to work and the metasemiotic function will increase its importance (Lotman 1990: 55). Still, in some of Lotman’s examples, for instance in Venus and Cupid by Velasquez, which contains a mirror within the painted picture, the metasemiotic effect is quite small. The mirror seems to function referentially, showing the face of Venus, rather than accentuating its own semioticity. This would support Sonesson’s criticisms of a rather blurred notion of metasemiotic.

For his part, the British linguist Michael Halliday has discussed the clause in language as being built up by a relationship between theme and rheme, where theme means what is talked about and rheme what is said about this (Halliday 1985: 39ff). In the case of metasemioticity, that pair can be used to identify the difference between a picture that simply shows another picture, for instance in the case of reproductions of photographs in magazines, and a metasemiotic picture. A reproduction is supposed to stand for an original photograph with no comments added while the comprising picture is transparent, emphasizing the secondary picture. The theme and rheme relationship will not appear between the picture and the pictured picture.

In the case of pictures of transsexuals, I have shown that there is a primary sign, a picture, and a secondary sign, a transsexual. To be metasemiotic, a sign must be a sign about a sign. There must be a theme and rheme relationship, and the primary sign must comment on the secondary sign. In what way may Strömböhm’s photographs comment on the transsexual sign? If the transsexual sees himself as a woman, it is a pseudo-identity and, furthermore, an expression and content relationship where the male expression is instrumental to the content just as a torso dressed in bra and underpants in a shopwindow showing women’s underwear. A female customer doesn’t bother about the torso being mutilated, that is, if it is without head, arms, and legs. She doesn’t bother about the plane of expression of the sign since it is wiped out in the sign relation. She can easily see herself in the torso, dressed in the shown underwear. Following the function of the invisible torso, the expression part of the transsexual constituted by the male properties is not taken into account in the pseudoidentity. Although in the case of pictures of transsexuals, it is rather different. The expression and content relationship is transformed into a theme and rheme one, where both parts are important for the rhetorical organization. In fact, the metasemioticity of the picture shows the rhetoric rather than the pseudoidentity.

4. THE DOUBLE DISCOURSE
OF SURREALISM

To understand this better, we must now relocate the pictures from a socio-realistic and documentary genre to the artworld. The problem with the referential function in that documentary and socio-realistic genre is that social, geographical, and temporal specifications prevent rhetoric to appear. But in another context, that is, in the artworld, and especially in Surrealism, rhetoric is more probable to occur.

Breton argues as follows in Communicating Woesels:

What must be undone is the formal opposition of these two terms, which resides in the imperfect, infantile idea we have of nature, of the exteriority of time and of space. The stronger the element of immediate unlikelihood appears, the more strongly it should be surmounted and denied. The whole meaning of the object is at stake. So two different bodies, rubbed against the other, attain through that spark their unity in fire, thus iron and water reach their common, admirable resolution in blood, and so on.

The main idea in Breton’s thinking is unity between differences. The difference between dream and reality is supposed to dissolve into a kind of “surreality” (surréalité) (Breton 1973: 200). Breton’s rhetoric is reached by uniting objects that are as much opposed to each other as possible, ending in transparency. Another part of the surrealistic theory of metaphor concerns the developmental direction of that metaphor as it is supposed
to move upwards from the lifeworld or from a lower material level to a more spiritual world. In his article entitled "Signe ascendant" (Breton 1988: 39), Breton discussed Surrealism as a non-reversible process, where that development is directed toward putting something in place of something else. The Surrealist metaphor thereby moves in a certain direction between two realities, and is never reversible. It is aimed at health, pleasure, tranquility, and concordant purposes. The opposite of this positive metaphor is a negative one, and as an example of such a negative output, Breton mentions Jean Cocteau’s simile of a guitar with a bidet. While what is thematized in traditional metaphors is the vehicle, and the tenor stands for that vehicle, things tend to be the opposite in Breton’s ascendant sign: the vehicle will be the tenor in an irreversible process. The tenor then is not referring unambiguously to the vehicle, but replaces it. This means also that the tenor can be thematized. But if the tenor will thus be thematized, the effect of the metaphor ceases and Breton’s theory of metaphor becomes an ascendant spiral of successive spiritualizations.

But the basic intention remains to change the world, and that is why some of the surrealists wanted the lifeworld itself to be the carrier of such a fantasy-charged content, and not just artworks and/or dreams. The objectivization of fantasy means that man’s desires will be something real and not just desires imprisoned in an artwork. A closer look at Breton’s views reveals a connection between his ideas and the arguments of the sociorealistic paratext from Strömholm’s Vämnera från Place Blanche. What can be a more perfect survolité than a third gender, that is, a transsexual identity? By uniting masculinity and femininity in one and the same body, transsexuals can make the goal of Bretonian Surrealism come true.

In Surrealism, there is however another discourse. Georges Bataille, the surrealists’ “enemy from within”, developed a parallel theory in which separation and mutilation supplemented union, and in which instead of spiritualization “low materialism” is stressed. Here, downward-going rhetoric in relation to the lifeworld and spirituality supplements the upward-going rhetoric of Breton. Bataille called the Bretonian Surrealism an “icarian naïvité” and instead talked about transgressions to a lower level. His main conceptual metaphors are “man is an animal” or “man is a thing”. Bataille rejects the Hegelian and Bretonian utopias, thus ideas of final harmony and spiritualization. He maintains the need for a frequent transgression, and it’s only that transgression that can give us an experience of wholeness. Bataille therefore put forward a more dynamic model consisting of opposing prohibitions, les interdits, and of transgressions of those prohibitions.

On the one hand, according to Bataille, we find work, order, history, taboo, and culture. On the other, transgressions of those prohibitions that can be arrived at in sacrificial rituals, perversions, excesses, and feastings. It is important here to point out that Bataille doesn’t want those prohibitions to be cancelled, instead transgression works just because of the presence of those prohibitions. Bataille does not envision, as Breton does, a successive process of liberation (Bataille 1986: 67). However, just as in Hegelian dialectics, the goal is to reach wholeness by cancelling the individual’s isolation — that is, what is discontinuous. This can’t be done through Hegelian reasoning and/or Bretonian spiritualization, but only momentarily, for instance in excesses and perversions, through contact with the animal within man.

Another important opposition for Bataille, that which is connected to prohibition and transgression, is the one between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Homogeneity means that human relations are governed by rules and are characterized by interchangability. An example of homogeneity is a closed-circuit system of communication or an economy where debit and credit go together. Other examples are work and science. An homogeneous activity is useful and productive. For example, an employee is in homogeneity, since he doesn’t have any value in himself, but only in relation to what he produces. The homogeneous repels the heterogeneous, and works consequently as censorship. Bataille compares this with the way the unconscious is repelled by the ego (Bataille 1985: 141). The heterogeneous on the other hand, is the measureless and incomparable, the radical other, thus what is its own meaning and is characterized by wastefulness — expenditure.

To the heterogeneous sphere belong what the homogeneous one has rejected, for instance, ta-
boozed behaviors and excretions from the human body or from society, menstruation blood, throw-ups, urine, faeces, garbage, dead corpses, but also a mob, aristocrats, the lumpenproletariat, violent criminals, mentally deranged people, leaders, and poets. Furthermore can be added bodyparts, people, words, and acts that suggest eroticism; as well as dreams, neuroses and all that is holy (Bataille 1985: 142). It is only by way of that rejected part that one can attain wholeness.

According to the Swedish art historian Jan-Gunnar Sjölin, Surrealism’s first surreal procedure was isolation, that is, it’s effort to separate “the object” from the regularities, rules, and habits of the lifeworld. One of the main reasons for the surrealists’ interest in collage was also that (the picture of) those objects are separated from their respective contexts. Isolation is usually thereby the first operation that, by relocation, leads to a release of the object and to its disposability to (new) surrealist values (Sjölin 1981, 1994: 225). The next surreal procedure is the illogical rearrangements (dépaysements) which, according to Breton, are the main devices in Surrealism, and by which an object is placed in præsentia next to another object. Such dépaysement leads ideally, according to Breton, to a unification of these two objects that have been placed together following the indexical rule: “closeness leads to likeness”. Alienation will successively fade away in the surrealist mainstream. Therefore isolation is a negative act while dépaysement is a positive one.

Photography has been discussed within Surrealism through both those positive and negative assessments, but it is interesting to observe how photography is ideally suited to Surrealism since it isolates an object in both time and space. Photographs have the same decontextualizing effect in time as frames have in space. In the photographic aesthetics which developed around Bataille in the magazine Documents at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, dépaysement seldom appears. In effect, Bataille wants to separate objects rather than unite them, so that’s why he is content with the first operation of the surrealist method. He prefers mutilation, self-mutilation, and sacrificial rites in photographs published next to his articles in Documents, extreme close-ups are common. Since Bataille is mostly interested in parts, the rest is posited in absentia.

A picture is most often interpreted with the help of lifeworld schemas, while rhetoric sometimes demands further information to direct the transferral. It can be the context or an ideology in the artworld, the artists’ intentions, or the title of a work. If there isn’t a convention directing the rhetoric, it can work in both directions or in different ways, as the participating units can either blend or separate (Sonesson 1989a: 334). That’s why rhetoric often is optional when an interpretation of a sign leaves the lifeworld to enter the artworld. This may suggest that there is no relation between lifeworld and artworld.

5. THE RHETORIC OF THE LIFEWORLD

According to Husserl, the whole is seen through its parts in the spatial organization of the lifeworld. Yet, what we actually see is not the perspective, the noema, but the whole object. We know that we can always apply “the etc. principle” from a certain point of view, that is, the here-now position, and look at an object from another point of view. From what is thematized, the lifeworld is given with both inner and outer open horizons. By changing the theme, we can always expand the view. In a similar way, the temporal organization connects the consciousness to retentions and protentions, making a coherent flow of time. In the lifeworld, we also use typification and schemes as means of interpretation. By assigning an object to a type or a behavior to a scheme, we know what is to be expected (Sonesson 1989a: 30ff). Since the main task of the lifeworld is to indexically connect time and space, it becomes familiar to us as participants.

George Lakoff and Mark Turner have been discussing metaphor as a cognitive process, not only as taking an active part in poetry, but rather as a way of thinking. Metaphors are used automatically by the members of a culture. They are intersubjective, and yet unconscious. The hierarchy of values all humans encompass, i.e. the Great Chain of Being, creates ways and means to unite different domains that we are acquainted with or that are strange to us. It might be difficult to evaluate what is close to a person or strange to him or her, but the natural point of departure is the hi-
rarchy of the Great Chain which is connected to the notion of the lifeworld. In the Great Chain, man is more important than animals, and animals are more important than plants or non-living matter. Non-living matter can be separated in complex objects and in a lower level of natural physical matter (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 170ff). Seen in relation to the lifeworld, the Great Chain is an upwards and downwards extension of the lifeworld.

Besides its characteristic features, the higher levels of the chain also have all the lower ones. That’s why a cognitive metaphor is understood as a relation between two parts, through mutual properties. The idea of comparing between, for instance, human properties and non-human properties may be to understand the human by way of the non-human, e.g. with the metaphor “man is a plant” or, on the contrary, so that we can understand nature with the help of well-known human properties and behaviors (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 172). This means that the relationship between the different parts of the Great Chain of Being consists of secondary iconicities and thus demands a convention to work iconically. This convention may be a conception of the world which may be rhetorical in relation to the lifeworld and may affect it in some parts, even though the lifeworld is tardy in changing.

If we place Breton’s theory of metaphor next to Lakoff’s and Turner’s modelizations, we find that it is ascending in the Great Chain of Being, contrary to the metaphor “man is a plant” which is descending. Another key aspect of Breton’s theory is that it can be seen as familiarization when he talks about the spiritual world moving into the lifeworld. One can also argue that the aesthetics of Bataille are descending, downward-going, and a rhetoric of estrangement. This means that man, which has reason, language, culture, and society, is viewed instead by way of characteristic features of a lower level. Man is thereby seen as bestial and monstrous, and the material world is transferred onto the cultural.

As is well known, the formalist Viktor Shklovsky discusses estrangement as the main device in Modernism, and in art in general (Shklovskij 1971: 500). This estrangement is seen as a deautomatization and aggravation of perception since, in art-making, the process of perception is a goal in itself and is supposed to last for the duration. Thus to make strange is to relocate something that is in itself well-known into a sphere of strangeness. As an opposite and reversed operation to estrangement, familiarization may then be seen as a very important device in advertising, in political propaganda, and in Western entertainment in general. To make familiar is therefore to relocate something in itself strange to the well-known lifeworld. We can thus combine the formalist notion of estrangement and the notion of familiarization with Lakoff’s and Turner’s Great Chain of Being in a modelization that takes the form of a cross (tab. 1).

![Diagram of the Great Chain of Being and the relationship between strange and familiar](image)

**Table 1. “The Great Cross.” The Vertical Axis Is “The Great Chain” (Lakoff and Turner) and the Horizontal One The Relation Between Different Human Worlds Including Different Lifeworlds. The Rhetoric Stands in Relation to the Familiar I Here, Now Position of a Life World or a Culture.**

An array of rhetorical possibilities become visible in this model. The vertical axis is the Great Chain and the origo is the I-here-now departure from the lifeworld core. Rhetorical movements on this axis can be ascending like Breton’s, and they can be either estranging or familiarizing depending on the direction to or from that I-here-now position. Furthermore they can be descending like Bataille’s rhetoric. In that latter case, only estrangement will occur. An example of familiarization on the lower part of that axis is when a dog is treated as part of the family. The horizontal axis stands for rhetorical movements on the same level of the chain. Also these movements can be either estranging or familiarizing. A case of familiarization on the same human level is, for instance, a TV
documentary showing an African tribe in their domestic work, i.e. in children’s caretaking, etc., thereby emphasizing human lifeworld values, and the tribe being “just like us”. Another example is in advertising where ordinary lifeworld values are projected onto “strange” commodities, making that advertising necessary in everyday living. An example of estrangement on the horizontal axis is another TV documentary about the same African tribe which emphasizes their seemingly strange rituals and tribal dances. In effect, estrangement and familia-rization are very important devices in today’s ideology. In fascism, estranging of ethnical groups is common, and the present-day multicultural tool is a familiarization ending in the concept of the “global village”.

6. PHOTOGRAPHIC IMPERIALISM

It is obvious that a transsexual is a kind of union, but such an union might result in at least two effects. On the one hand, two parts may be united according to the above-mentioned principle “closeness leads to likeness”. On the other, differences may be singled out. By uniting what can’t be united, instead of likeness, the oxymoron highlights the differences between two objects. They are united by force like two united negative magnetic poles, and if they could they would immediately repel.

This suggests that Bretonian rhetoric may be compatible with the non-rhetoric of socio-realism, if we suppose that Breton’s utopian union is the end of his “great narrative”, that is, when everything is transparent, when perception and representation are the same thing, and when man and woman are united in one and the same body. It also means that in Bataille’s surrealistic narrative, union is impossible outside momentary rhetorical transgressions. That’s why, according to the Bataillean conceptual metaphor, a transsexual should be a compulsive union, and a grotesque rather than a human.

The primary sign, the photograph, must comment on the secondary sign, the transsexual, if it is a metasemiotic sign. If we treat the pictures of transsexuals as metasemiotic, we find a sign about another sign. Ordinarily, for herself and for those who know her, the transsexual is a pseudoidentity or no sign at all when walking in the city if the people who meet her just see a woman. Yet in photography, seen in relation to rhetoric in Surrealism, any reading of transsexuals must be something else. If we abstract the properties of transsexuals below the “basic level” of perception, we find masculinity and femininity, two anthropological opposites. A theme and rhyme relationship will appear between those properties. The picture immediately shows a theme, a woman, although in some parts of the picture there are male properties, which are the rhyme. In Surrealism, we know that what is most expected is estranged, so here it is the woman that must be estranged.

In some cases, the male properties are almost invisible, as in the case of Nana’s portraits, where only the Adam’s apple is male. By uncovering the apple, the male properties will be washed over the entire face and the rhetorical effect will be that “this woman is a man”. In other pictures, the fundamental male properties are seen in Presentia together with female properties like breasts. In the first picture of our series, Cynthia is naked (fig. 1), but in spite of this, she seems a woman with female breasts. Nothing in the picture contests that she’s a woman. Nevertheless he shows his penis in the last picture of this series (fig. 3) and that makes it possible then to transfer that referential information to the first picture (fig. 1) and thereby to understand that he is pressing his thighs together with the penis hidden in-between them. The male properties are thus disguised, but can be imagined in Absentia. In the second picture meanwhile (fig. 2), the upper part of the body is female, with female breasts, haircut, and face, while its lower part is male. According to Sonesson’s rhetoric, this last case is a factorality from part to whole with double abduction.

This means that the male properties become very important in these pictures and the main rhetorical effect in relation to lifeworld expectancies of the receiver, which very often may be an heterosexual. But this effect can’t be what transsexuals themselves really strive for. Instead, they want that man to be a woman, which is the exact opposite.

In effect, those pictures of transsexuals can be considered metasemiotic and as a discussion of the pseudoidentity that disregards the male properties by placing them in the substance of the
FORMES IDENTITAIRES

FIGURE 1.
CHRISTER STRÖMHLÖM, CYNTHIA, IN VÄNNERNA FRÅN PLACE BLANCHE, STOCKHOLM. AB TIPRO, 1985.

FIGURE 2.
CHRISTER STRÖMHLÖM, NANA, IN VÄNNERNA FRÅN PLACE BLANCHE, STOCKHOLM. AB TIPRO, 1985.

FIGURE 3.
CHRISTER STRÖMHLÖM, NANA, IN VÄNNERNA FRÅN PLACE BLANCHE, STOCKHOLM. AB TIPRO, 1985.
sign. Due to those "comments" in the primary sign, the "expression" of the secondary sign gains in importance and becomes a content of its own. There is a fight between two prototypicalities within those pictures and the male properties will probably win out. In this case, Lotman's semiotization seems to work since special attention is paid to the "expression" of the secondary sign, that is, to rhyme and masculinity. The femininity of transsexuals then becomes a mask that covers up a hidden masculinity. In a wider interpretation, those pictures are emphasizing conceptual metaphors such as "life is a theater", "the world is a stage", and "man is a mask", well-known themes in the grotesque tradition. That visual rhetoric therefore supports Bataillean rather than Bretonian Surrealism.

If we talk about "linguistic imperialism" when language is projected onto pictures, we could also talk about "photographic imperialism" when photography is used to select properties of transsexuals treated as signs. It is interesting to note that when Strömholm talks about his photographic method of getting close to his models, his goal seems to be to attain his own personal freedom as photographer rather than to bother with the integrity of his models or their personal freedoms. His close-up method is thus used to cross the proxemic borders of his transsexuals models so as to be able also to show them as men.

The metasemiotical and rhetorical content in Strömholm's pictures are probably a preferred reading since an investigation of his œuvre supports a rhetorical, and not a referential one. His work contains, in effect, a lot of metasemiotical pictures commenting on other pictures and signs. In Strömholm's work, the main device is isolation from the lifeworld and also disguise in relation to what is in disguise. This can be considered contrary to the expected referential picture in the medium of photography with its indexicalities to a further lifeworld, but also contrary to the unifying and upward-going rhetoric of Breton. Yet, the notion of photographic imperialism must not be interpreted as depreciatory. Instead it emphasizes that the photographer's work is a work in its own right.

7. ARTWORLD OR LIFEWORLD?

The socio-realistic reading of these pictures is supported by the ascribed referentiality of the photograph which, in turn, is supported by the also ascribed original photographic indexicality between objects/photons and emulsion (see Barthes, Sontag, Krauss, Philippe Dubois, and others). In photography, referentiality and the original indexicality seem to guarantee existential authentcity before the content is experienced. One finds what seemingly is already there — reality. Nevertheless, just like paintings, from the point of view of the receiver, photographs have a certain content that precedes referentiality, and it is this content that we are prohibited to see thanks to the idea of indexicality creating the picture before it is seen by the receiver. But as Sonesson has shown (Sonesson 1989b), this process is reversed. The original indexicality demands iconicity in photography. We can apprehend the relationship between object and emulsion as an important rapport only after we have apprehended the elementary pictorial sign relation. This means that there is after all no fundamental difference between photography and other pictures based on pictoriality, like paintings or drawings. This is an important observation in the field of Visual Studies. Also rhetorical contents are built on top of pictorial content, which is the level at which all other meanings of the picture must relate to.

By discovering the rhetoric of photography, an array of photographs can be seen as a part of the artworld instead of being separated in a narrow photographic genre that is based only on their photographic mode of construction. Yet this perspective may be a dead end. Arthur Danto has argued that an artworld is needed to interpret a work of art, and that outside of the artworld, there is neither art nor interpretation; and I also mentioned supra that rhetoric was more probable to occur in the artworld and in Surrealism. However, if we follow Lakoff and Turner, the lifeworld might have a rhetorical potential in itself since conceptual metaphors are unconsciously and automatically used in ordinary cognition. The metaphors in art are just more artfully elaborated. The studies of Rabelais, the carnival, and the grotesque by Bakhtin further suggest that rhetoric
is embedded in folklore (Bakhtin 1968: 36f). This might suggest that the artworld is not needed as a general interpretative domain, as Danto has argued. A rhetoric might be understood simply within the conceptual metaphors of lifeworld cognition. This suggests furthermore that a surrealistic work of art or a photography does not need either Breton’s or Bataille’s rhetorical theories to understand a picture as an anchorage in the Barthesian sense, since at least Breton’s theories are often compulsion to the interpretations of artworks. They are normative and rhetorical in relation to the immanent pictorial rhetoric and therefore function as linguistic imperialism in relation to surrealistic works of art. But in Lakoff’s and Turner’s theories, there is a difference between conceptual metaphors and linguistic ones. A metaphor can thereby be realized in photography as well as in language, with no linguistic imperialism at hand.

Sonesson has suggested finally a fourth rhetorical dimension with regard to deviations according to modes of construction, functions, and channels of circulation. If Strömholms’s photographs are at the same time surrealistic works of art and documentary photographs, if they are shown in magazines advocating leftist sexual politics as well as in a one-man-show at Moderna Museet (Museum of Modern Art) in Stockholm, these photographs fulfill also the requirements of a centrifugal rhetoric of the fourth dimension. Centrifugality, in art, means in that sense an effort to include objects and properties from outside art, as with Duchamp’s Fountain, or urinal, Warhol’s Brillo boxes or his pictures of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe. On the contrary, an instance of centripetality in art is the High Modernist, media-specific art advocated by Clement Greenberg and others searching for the smallest artistic denominator, i.e. the surface and the work of art as a thing.

Rather than becoming a part of the artworld the rhetorical approach to photography will release that medium from its imprisonment within the referential function so it can become a more potent part of the meaning-generating world, that is, the semiosphere, a world that is global as well as rhetorical. A surreal semiosphere perhaps?

NOTES

1. This discussion of the different types of iconicity is based on Göran Sonesson, Bildbyggeriet, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1992.
2. The notion of preferred reading is the receiver’s reading that the sender prefers. See D. Morley, Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 86.
4. According to Breton: Ce qu’il s’agit de briser, c’est l’opposition toute formelle de ces deux termes; ce dont il s’agit d’avoir raison, c’est de leur apparente disproportion qui ne tient qu’à l’idée imparsite, inféodée, qu’en se fait de la nature, de l’ex- tériruid du temps et de l’espace. Mais l’élément de dis- semblance immédiate par lui fort, plus il doit être sur- monté et nié. C’est toute la signification de l’objet qui est en jeu. Ainsi deux corps différents, frottés l’un contre l’autre, atteignent par l’état, à leur unité suprême dans le feu; ainsi le feu et l’eau parviennent à leur résolution commune, admirable, dans le sang, etc. (Breton 1970: 129).
This translation is in Breton 1990: 109.
5. On the notion of the lifeworld, see also Göran Sonesson, “Approaches to the Lifeworld Core of Pictorial Rhetoric”, VISIO, 1, 3, automne 1996-hiver 1997, 49-78.
6. Danto argues as follows: (...) indiscernible objects become quite different and distinct works of art by distinct and different interpretations, so I shall think of interpretations as functions which transform material objects into works of art. Interpretation is in effect the lever with which an object is lifted out of the real world and into the art world, where it becomes vested in often unexpected raiment. Only in relationship to an interpretation is a material object an artwork (Danto 1986: 39).

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