Working Papers

and pre-publications

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Proper Names, Definite Descriptions and Semantic Structure of Kafka's "The Trial"

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*working paper**

Contemporary poetics is focused on the study of meaning of literary texts. Literary texts are perceived as highly organized semiotic systems of creative, imaginative *meaning production*. In its search for a deeper theoretical understanding of this creative semiotic activity, poetics has discovered possible-worlds semantics (cf. VS, 1978, No. 19/20; Poetics, 1979, No. 1/2). This semantic theory, while certainly inspired by classical philosophy and, especially, by Leibniz's idea about the infinitude of possible worlds (cf. Mates, 1968), is thoroughly modern in its formal *apparatus and theoretical goals: it provides set-theoretical models for* o formalized interpretation of modal, intensional and intentional concepts (Kripke, 1963; Hintikka, 1975).

Semantics of verbal signs (including literary texts) can be characterized as the theoretical study of the relationships between the word and the world. Possible world semantics provides a broad base for this study by assuming that the domain of these relationships should not be restricted to the actual, real world, but rather expanded to include a multitude of possible worlds [1]. For imaginative literature, this perspective is doubly significant: First, if literary texts refer at all, they certainly refer to possible *fictional* worlds, rather than to the real world. The concept of possible world is the only serious candidate to fill the place of the domain of reference of fictional texts. Second, and more importantly, possible-worlds semantics leads us to postulate a more dynamic relationship between the literary text and its world. Because fictional worlds do not pre-exist texts, every literary text has to construct its domain of reference, has to bring its fictional world into existence. For this reason, literary texts are to be interpreted primarily as semiotic mechanisms of world construction; reference appears as a secondary function of a literary text, since it presupposes the existence of a constructed fictional world. The world-constructing force, constantly expanding the scope and variety of the fictional uni-

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verse, is the highest manifestation of the meaning-productive capacities of literary texts. The fact that fictional worlds have always been accepted as an integral part of every human culture is the best attestation of the success of the world-constructing imagination.

Poetics of the creative potentials of imaginative literature, based on the idea of possible worlds, provides a stimulus to a better understanding of all forms of creative semiosis. Moreover, literary semantics of this type will return its debt and contribute to the solution of topical problems of philosophical and logical semantics. Having as its object of study the richest stock of possible worlds, of which philosophers and logicians have been only vaguely aware, literary semantics will substantially enrich our knowledge of the structures, the modes of existence and the cultural functioning of possible worlds.

The most attractive feature of possible-worlds semantics is the scope of its explanatory power. All traditional problems of meaning in literature can be rephrased in the metalanguage of this theory; moreover, this approach reveals or, at least, brings into focus, semantic aspects of literature which up to now have not been noticed or have not been assigned their proper significance [2]. In this paper, I want to investigate how the framework of possible worlds enriches our understanding of the semantic functions of proper names (and other terms of singular reference) in fictional literature. The investigation will proceed in two steps: First, I will explain and illustrate the semantic interpretation of proper names, proposed in the possible-world semantics. Second, I will use this interpretation in an investigation of terms of singular reference in a literary text, trying to reveal their participation in the construction of a fictional world.

1. Proper names as rigid designators

One-world semantics could offer no other treatment to fictional proper names than to deprive them of reference: A name like *Raskolnikov* lacks reference because an individual of this name and corresponding to Dostoevskij's descriptions never existed in the actual world. This solution, isolating fictional names sharply from names of actual persons, places, etc., was, in fact, a dead-end of semantic interpretation. It made no sense for literary semantics and, therefore, was never adopted in the study of literature.

In possible-worlds semantics, fictional names are seen as referring to individuals existing in fictional worlds. *Raskolnikov* is the name of a fictional character existing and acting in the fictional world constructed by the text of Dostoexskij's novel *Crime and Punishment*. It should be

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emphasized, in order to counter a frequently repeated charge, that possible-worlds semantics *does not* divorce fictional worlds from the actual world. In a fully legitimate step of semantic interpretation, fictional worlds can be compared or contrasted to the actual world. Thus, Raskolnikov, a fictional individual, can be said to represent young Russian intellectuals of non-aristocratic origin (the so-called *raznočincy*) who emerged *en masse* in Russia around the middle of the 19th century. It is absurd to claim that the proper name *Raskolnikov* refers to one of these actually existing individuals; it is quite another matter to propose that the fictional figure Raskolnikov represents these actually existing *raznočincy*.

In logical semantics, the possible-worlds approach has provided the necessary theoretical framework of an original conception of proper names which has achieved a high degree of popularity: proper names are *rigid designators* (Kripke, 1972; 1980). The proponent of this idea has offered the following definition of this specific mode of reference: «Let's call something a *rigid designator* if in any possible world it designates the same object, a *nonrigid* or *accidental* designator if that is not the case» (Kripke, 1972, 269f.). Being rigid designators, proper names are distinguished from, indeed, contrasted to, definite descriptions, as well as to all other verbal categories. In this respect, the theory of rigid designation can be seen as an explicit formulation of an old suspicion — expressed both by philosophers of language and by linguists — that proper names form a specific semantic subsystem within the system of natural language. Thus, for example, Jakobson has stated quite clearly that proper names «take a particular place in our linguistic code» (Jakobson, 1971, II, 131). The Soviet semioticians Lotman and Uspenskij are even more radical in their view of the peculiar properties of proper names: «In a number of linguistic situations, the behavior of proper names is so unlike that of other linguistic categories that it involuntarily suggests the idea that we have before us some other, differently constructed language incorporated in the midst of natural language» (Lotman-Uspenskij, 1977, 236). Earlier, Ziff came very close to the theory of rigid designation, not only by claiming that «a name is a fixed point in a turning world» while «descriptions change», but also by identifying the «baptismal rites» as the necessary and specific way of assigning proper names to individuals (Ziff, 1960, 102-104) [3].

Two necessary consequences follow from the conception of proper names as rigid designators: a) The meaning of a proper name is not equivalent (cannot be reduced to) a definite description or a set of definite descriptions. Pace Russell, proper names are not abbreviated

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descriptions [4]. The meaning of the proper name *"Napoleon"* cannot be expressed by any or all of the definite descriptions which can be associated with the historical figure ("the victor of Jena", "the exile of Elba", etc.). Napoleon would remain *Napoleon,* even if none of these descriptions was applicable, that is, even if his life history had pursued a completely different path [5]. b) Proper names as rigid designators warrant the transworld identity of individuals [6]. In all possible worlds in which we have lived, might have lived, imagine ourselves to live, we are and will be identified if we carry the proper name label. Because the proper name follows the individual in all his possible life histories, it is, in Barthes's apt formulation, «en quelque sorte la forme linguistique de la réminiscence» (Barthes, 1972, 124). The preservation of the proper name in moves across possible worlds does not mean that an individual is restricted to one proper name only. One and the same individual can be known under several names, pseudonyms, aliases. The crossworld identity of such an individual presents no difficulties once the referential equivalence between these names is established [7]. Fictional literature offers interesting examples of cross-world identity ensured by the ridig designator of a proper name. Let me point to a very explicit case represented by O. Henry's short story «Road of Destiny» [8]. O. Henry makes use of a traditional folk-tale schema — three heroes travelling from a crossroad in three different directions and meeting three different fates — in a semantically challenging experiment: the three different life histories are assigned to one and the same hero, a peasant poet from a small French village named David Mignot. The three lives of David Mignot, proceeding in three alternate possible worlds, all end in the hero's death. The semantic force of the rigid designator is here manifested in the extreme: David Mignot's identity is preserved across the three fictional worlds, because the rigid designation overrules the natural impossibility of life resumed after death.

To be sure, the identity of David does not hinge on his proper nome only. O. Henry demonstrates the supporting role which definite descriptions can play in crossworld identity [9]. First of all, David has a «prehistory» common to all of his life stories. Second, and more importantly, a group of other characters, especially David's fiancée and the fateful Marquis de Beaupertuys, make their appearance in all lives of David. The *pointe* of the story is given by the recurrent motif of the killing instrument: it is always de Beaupertuy's pistol, once fired by the Marquis, once by his companion and, finally, by David himself. The pistol, a symbol of the inevitability of fate, awaits David at the end of whichever road he takes at the intersection.

O. Henry was able to construct three alternate life histories of one

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fictional individual *by one and the same text* because he nullified an impossibility: David's life is resumed after death. In a more common case, alternate life histories of fictional characters are constructed by *different texts*, presenting one of the most conspicuous semantic features of intertextuality. Pavel (1979, 182) gives the example of Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* in which Cordelia survives and marries Edgar. While interpreters might or might not accept the crossworld identity of Shakespeare's Cordelia and Tate's Cordelia, no such doubts arise in the case of David Mignot.

In contrast to O. Henry's «supernatural» motivation, the modern psychological novel constructs individuals living in several alternate worlds without violating the natural possibilities: the fictional individual is presented as a sequence of discontinuous stages marked by an alteration of most of his properties. While the set of the individual's descriptions is valid within the scope of each stage only, his identity across these stages (possible worlds) is ensured by his proper name. In his analysis of proper names in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Nicole has observed the strange use of proper names with a definite article: *le Swann de Buckingham Palace, l'Albertine d'alors, l'Albertine caoutchoutée des jours de pluie;* quite correctly, he has interpreted this usage as expressing a «subite révélation d'un sujet fractionné, multiple» (Nicole, 1981, 206). Nicole associates Proust's technique with Jespersen's theory of proper names (connoting rather than denoting) (ibidem, 210), without noticing that the concept of rigid designation provides a simple and most convincing explanation of Proust's semantics: The proper name with a definite article is used to express *both* the existence of an individual in different alternate worlds *and* his crossworld identity. In a most subtle way, all semantic potentials of the rigid designator are exploited by Proust.

Both O. Henry's and Proust's semantic systems do not violate the principle of essentialism: when moving from one world to another, their heroes preserve a set of essential properties which serve as additional markers of crossworld identity. However, for fictional literature a radically non-essentialist semantics has to be postulated. We need a possible-worlds framework in which a mortal can acquire immortality, a prince can change into a frog (and vice versa), a Gregor Samsa can be metamorphosed into a worm [10].

Imagination has the capacity of transporting fictional individuals into olternate worlds, where all of their properties, including the most essential ones, can change. The transworld identity then holds on the thin thread of rigid designation only; but this thread is semantically so strong that it is sufficient — as in the case of David Mignot — to

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trace the individual through all his possible or impossible transfigurations.

2. The intensional function of naming

If we adopt the conception of proper names as rigid designators, we are not necessarily forced to accept the claim that proper names lack *sense* or *intension* (Frege's *Sinn*). Rigid designation is precisely the specific «mode of presentation» of the referent which Frege identified as the sense of an expression (Frege, 1892, 112). Presenting its referent rigidly, a proper name differs in sense (intension) from all referentially equivalent definite descriptions which present the referent (individual) differently in different forms of expression. This necessary consequence of the theory of rigid designation has been pointed out by Linsky: «Two correferential singular terms cannot be identical in sense if one is a rigid designator and the other is not» (Linsky, op. cit., 68) [11]. Since this kind of intension sets apart the whole category of proper names from the category of definite descriptions, we will call it *categoric* intension (sense). In other words, we claim that the proper name *Odysseus* carries a categoric sense of rigid designation which differs from the categoric sense of all definite descriptions referring to this fictional hero; furthermore, a definite description like *the king of Ithaca* differs in *specific* sense from another description, for example, *the hero of Homer's poem «The Odyssey»* [12].

If we accept this interpretation of intensional contrast between proper names and definite descriptions, then we can say that natural language provides at least two intensionally different alternatives of naming individuals. Any name-giver is given this choice in his assignment of terms of singular reference. It should not surprise us that writers and poets have discovered the potentials of this choice; they are, after all, prolific name-givers. Whenever a new individual is introduced into the work's fictional world, he has to be «baptized» by a proper name or identified by a definite description. The assignment of terms of individual reference in a literary text is fully under the control of its author; consequently, the selected proper names and definite descriptions, as well as their particular distribution over the set of fictional individuals, represent one of the most specific and conspicuous regularities of a writer's idiosyncratic semantic system [13]. In the technical language of literary semantics, this regularity will be described by the so-called *intensional function of naming*. In order to explain this concept briefly, I will use a simple example [14].

Let us assume that the fictional world is given by the set of its in-

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dividuals, distinguished from each other by purely extensional signs, such as lower-case letters of the alphabet. In other words, the fictional individuals of the set D={a, b, c, d...} are individuated, but not yet named in natural language terms. In the act of naming, each fictional individual will be assigned either a proper name, or a definite description. If this assignment is carried out consistently and exculsively in the text, we will say that a *two-value intensional function of naming* operates in that text. I have observed such a regularity in Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Three individuals of its fictional world are assigned proper names: *Robinson, Xury* and *Friday*; all others are consistently designated by definite descriptions only: *my father, the Portuguese captain, the English captain's widow, Friday's father*, etc.

Let us recall that proper names and definite descriptions differ in categoric sense; consequently, the two-value function of naming provides a mapping of set *D* into two intensionally differentiated subsets: one consisting of individuals named rigidly by proper names, the other composed of individuals designated nonrigidly by definite descriptions (see Schema ♯ 1). This structuring of the fictional world, affected by and fully determined by the form of textual expression, is the first hint that the concept of intensional function provides an access to the intensional semantic macrostructuring of literary works.

Schema ♯ 1

Two-Value Intensional Function

WORLD   **TEXTURE**

a.   +

b.   +

c.   ×

d.   ×

+ ... proper name

× ... definite description
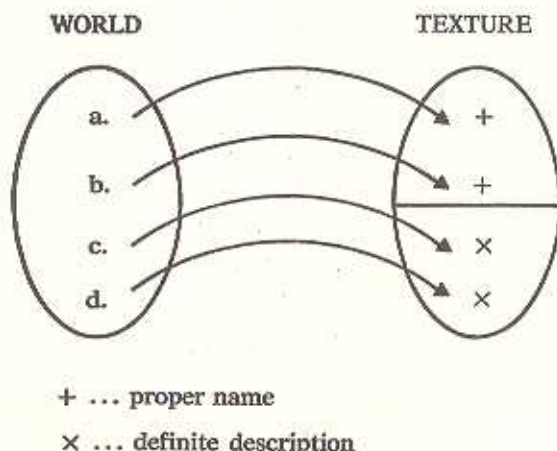
A two-value function is the simplest form of intensional function of naming. If we inspect the terms of singular reference more closely,

we discover that the system offers more than two intensionally differentiated modes of naming. While logical semantics has been generally satisfied with distinguishing proper names and definite descriptions, linguistic semantics has always been aware of the fact that within the category of proper names there exist subcategories fundamentally differing in sense; thus, for example, a significant intensional difference is invoked if we call somebody by his surname or by his first name [15].

The naming of individuals in a literary text is the result of the selection from a definite set of categories of terms of singular reference. Depending on the number of categories which enter the selection process, the intensional function of naming will operate as a two-value, three-value, ... n-value function. In what follows, a complex function of naming and its contribution to the semantic macrostructuring of a literary text will be examined. *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, a novel which has been a challenge to semantic interpretation, has been selected for this study.

3. The intensional function of naming in *The Trial*

It is intriguing to observe that an intensional function of naming operates in *The Trial* [16] with a surprising consistency and regularity. Rare «exceptions» to the observed regularities can be accounted for as resulting from competing semantic factors. The scope of the intensional function of naming covers both the narrator's text and the characters' discourses; as a rule, fictional individuals are called by the same name in both textual planes. Thus, for example, *Fräulein Bürstner* is the exclusive designation of this character, used both by the narrator and by this individual's fictional co-agents. Exceptions arise when an intimate mode of naming, usually first name, is used in conversations between the agents: *Josef K.* is called *Josef* by his uncle and by Leni.

The intensional function of naming in *The Trial* operates over the following set of categories:

I. Proper name:
1. surname: *Block, Fräulein Bürstner;*
2. given (first) name: *Leni;*
3. abbreviation: *K.*

II. Definite description:
1. fixed: *der Prügler* (the whipper);
2. contextual (unstable): *ein junger Bursche* (a young boy) — *der Bursche* (the boy) — *der Sohn des Hausmeisters* (the son of the housekeeper).

As a result of the application of the intensional function of naming,

the set of agents of *The Trial* is split into the following intensionally defined subsets:

1. The protagonist forms a one-member subset, singled out by his exclusive proper name-abbreviation. The standard form of the name is *Josef K.* with the variant *K.*, and with contextual variants (used only in allocutions) *Herr K.* (in Mrs. Grubach's speech) and *Josef* (used by his «intimates», the uncle and Leni). It is noteworthy that the priest (in chapter IX) addresses the protagonist «*Josef K.*» (152), a quite unusual form of address in German, even if standard family name was used [17]. While all the above given forms are variants of the abbreviation, there is an alternative mode of naming the protagonist, namely by fixed definite descriptions. This aspect of the protagonist's naming will be dealt with later.

2. A group of fictional individuals of *The Trial* is designated by standard surnames, in two variants: a) The surname alone is assigned, as in the case of *Huld, Titorelli, Block.* Three minor characters, Bank clerks, are named in the same way: *Rabendsteiner, Kullich, Kaminer;* in this case, the mode of naming is problematic, as will become clear later. b) The second variant of the surname, its polite form, is restricted to three agents: *Fräulein Bürstner, Frau Gruber* and *Fräulein Montag.* In the case of *Fräulen Bürstner,* an occasional variant *das Fräulein* can be found in characters' speech, indicating her prominent position in this set; the other two female characters named in this way are episodic. An interesting detail should be mentioned here: In their most intimate moment at the end of chapter I, Joseph K. wants to call Fräulein Bürstner by her first name, but he realizes that he does not know it (27). This lack of first name is no less significant for the intensionality of this «femme fatale» than is the polite surname under which she is known.

3. The individuals assigned first names only are, at first sight, a rather mixed set: *Elsa, Leni* (K's mistresses), *Anna* (the cook) and *Franz* and *Willem* (the wardens). What is significant for this set is the fact that it can be defined by an extensional property: all characters in this group are of «low status», socially or professionally (Franz and Willem are described as «niedrige Angestellte» (10), low clerks). We have here a case where intensional splitting of the domain coincides with its extensional subdivision, reinforcing its significance for the semantic structure of the novel.

4. The possibility of naming agents by the assignment of unstable, changing definite descriptions will detain us here only briefly. In *The Trial*, as a rule, unstable descriptions are a transitory stage in the process of naming, leading either to the assignment of a proper name, or to

the selection of a permanent, fixed definite description. The introduction of one of the wardens in Chapter I can be used as an example of both outcomes; the chain of naming proceeds as follows: *ein Mann* (a man) → *der Mann* (the man) → *der fremde Mann* (the strange man) → *der Fremde* (the stranger) → *Franz* (in Willem's allocution) / *der Wächter* (the warden) (in narrator's text). The individual will be known thereafter under his proper name or under the fixed definite description. This process does not apply to a group of minor, episodic characters who do not rise above the level of anonymity signified by the unstable definite descriptions. The role of these characters will not be discussed, with the exception of the intriguing case of Josef K.'s executioners.

5. A very prominent feature of the naming of agents in *The Trial* is the assignment of fixed definite descriptions to a large set of individuals. Both the negative and the positive aspect of this mode of naming is significant: On the negative side, these agents are — similarly as Josef K. — deprived of a standard proper name; they exist without proper names. On the positive side, the type of the fixed definite description is very important: the individual is designated by his function or position in one of the two social institutions constructed in *The Trial* — the Bank and the Court. All the employees of the Bank (with the exception of the two minor clerks already mentioned) are named in this way: *der Diener* (the servant), *der Direktor* (the director), *der Direktor-Stellvertreter* (the vice-director). The group of the representatives of the Court, designated by fixed definite descriptions, is much larger: *der Aufseher* (the supervisor), *der Untersuchungsrichter* (the examining magistrate), *der Student* (the (law) student), *der Gerichtsdiener* (the Court attendant), *der Auskunftgeber* (the informant), *der Prügler* (the whipper), *der Kanzleidirektor* (the director of the bureau), *der Richter* (the judge), *der Dritte Richter* (the Third judge), *der Gefängnisskaplan* (the prison chaplain), etc. We should add that the designation *der Angeklagte* (the defendant) could be characterized as a fixed definite description expressing a «position» at the Court. It is assigned to minor (anonymous) characters, but in two cases, in the case of Joseph K. and Block, it serves as a secondary designation of major characters [18].

One exception to the exclusive use of fixed definite descriptions has already been mentioned: Josef K.'s wardens are given proper (first) names (*Franz, Willem*). We will explain this exception later. Another, probably insignificant case is the girl in chapter IV, whom Josef K. meets during his visit to the attic offices; she is not assigned a fixed definite description and, therefore, her function at the Court remains unclear. The most important of all these exceptions is the case of the two

gentlemen in chapter X who arrive to execute Josef K. They are named — as already indicated — by a string of unstable descriptions and are never assigned a fixed definite description. This seeming violation of the intensional function of naming is so significant for the semantic structure of *The Trial* that we have to return to it in some detail in the last section of our paper.

4. The contribution of the intensional function of naming to the intensional macrostructuring of *The Trial*

We have claimed at the conclusion of section 2 that the structuring of the domain of the fictional world, affected by an intensional function, provides a clue to the macro-sense (intensional macrostructure) of the literary work. It is clear that this macrostructuring is generated by the form of the intensional function; if the intensional function did not operate in the text or if it operated in a different way, a different intensional macrostructuring of the fictional world would be obtained. While only one intensional function of *The Trial* has been investigated, it is suggested that this *partial* study reveals three significant features of the total intensional macrostructure of *The Trial*:

a) The hierarchy and relationships of individuals in the «private group»

We have observed that the protagonist of *The Trial* forms a one-member set on the account of his non-standard proper name (abbreviation). The intension of exceptionality, uniqueness, which emerges in this singling of the protagonist within the system of fictional characters [19], outweighs by far the intension of anonymity or mysteriousness which this mode of naming evokes in isolation [20].

Around the exceptional hero, a «private group» is formed by fictional individuals who are named by standard proper names (surnames or first names). The set includes Josef K.'s «helpers» and «informers» — *Huld, Titorelli* and *Block*, as well as two differentiated subsets of female characters. There is a clear intensional contrast between K.'s mistresses named by the first name only (*Elsa, Leni*) and the inaccessible *Fräulein Bürstner* named consistently and exclusively by the polite form of the surname.

It is important to note that the «private group» of characters is contrasted intensionally with the set of the agents of the social institutions. The exceptional case of a few minor representatives of the institutions (Josef K.'s wardens, the trio of the Bank clerks) can be explained in the framework of this opposition: Being attracted into the «private group» by their special associations with Josef K., these

individuals are assigned proper names, a distinctive intensional feature of the group.

b) The domain of social institutions

Two social institutions, the Court and the Bank, play a fundamental role in the semantic structure of *The Trial*. On the extensional level, these institutions are clearly in contrast: The Bank is a rational, highly efficient and well-organized form of social activity with clearly determined procedures and goals of operation. The Court's mode of operation is desperately muddled, irrational and chaotic, with no rules of procedure and with absolutely random results. This extensional contrast, however, is bridged by a similarity on the intensional level, indicating a basic analogy of the two institutionalized modes of social activity. The intensional similarity is given by the fact that the Bank's and the Court's representatives form one class on the criterion of naming: as we know already, they are named by fixed definite descriptions expressing their function or position in the strict institutional hierarchy: *the director* (in the Bank) — *the bureau director* (in the Court). The semantic significance of this mode of naming is reinforced by the lack of proper names in this set of agents. Being named according to their position or responsabilitv in the institutional hierarchy, these fictional agents appear as social roles, rather than as private individuals. At a deeper level, there might be a special motivation for withholding the proper name in the case of the Court's officials. The reason is suggested by Titorelli, a very important «informer» about the workings of the Court. When Josef K. alsks Titorelli about the name of the judge who is being portrayed by the painter, Titorelli replies: «*Das darf ich nicht sagen*». (108) («I am not allowed to tell you»). This answer indicates that the proper names of the Court's officials are *tabu*. This tabu-like prohibition of proper names is consistent with the overall intensional character of the Court in *The Trial*: The Court is an alien, separate, unknown and inaccessible world (see Doležel, forthcoming).

A minor point should bring us back to the protagonist. His central position in the «private group» has been emphasized. However, Josef K. is exclusive in yet another respect: in his accumulation of names. *Josef K.* is the name of a «private citizen» who faces his tragic fate in exclusive isolation.

However, the same individual is a «member» of both institutions representing the social machinery. Correspondingly, he is assigned the «institutional» names, i.e. fixed definite descriptions, being *Herr Prokurist* (Herr Assessor) in the system of the Bank, and *der Angeklagte*

(the defendant) in the domain of the Court. The one-member set formed by the protagonist is, in fact, the intersection of all three main sets of fictional agents of *The Trial:* the «private group», the Bank and the Court. The pivotal position of the tragic hero could not be highlighted in a more emphatic way.

c) The suspicious executioners

It is striking to discover that the two individuals who appear in the last chapter of *The Trial* to kill Josef K. are not named in accordance with the intensional function of naming operating in this text. If the Court has its *judges, magistrates, whippers, wardens* and *prison chaplains,* it could be expected to have its well-appointed and properly named *executioners.* However, the naming of the two gentlemen from chapter X remains in the vague mode of unstable descriptions; in the narrator's text, they are designated as *zwei Herren* (two gentlemen), *die Herren* (the gentlemen) and *seine Begleiter* (his companions); in K.'s inner monologue, they are *alte untergeordnete Schauspieler* (old, minor actors), *vielleicht ... Tenöre* (maybe ... tenors). (K. even asks one of them in which theater they perform).

The absence of the expected mode of naming could be explained away as an exception, if it was clearly established in the text that the gentlemen are representatives of the Court. However, unlike the wardens of chapter I, they do not claim to act according to a commission (*Auftrag*); they make just a silent sign in answer to K.'s rather indefinite question. The association of these agents with the Court is expressed neither explicitly, nor by the intensional indicator of naming. In such a way, the text forces us to acknowledge that the identity of K.'s killers is uncertain. Should we assume that they are not at all connected with the Court? Should we interpret K.'s «execution» as an event which was not «ordered» by the Court?

A positive answer to this question would bring a new aspect into the semantic interpretation of *The Trial.* If K.'s execution cannot be traced to the Court, then it is an unmotivated event coming from another, unknown realm. Such a twist in the line of the story would indicate that Kafka wrote not only *The Trial* but also, in the last chapter, a parody of this novel, specifically a parody of the rules governing its fictional world. We know that the Court's proceedings and decisions are purely random and arbitrary; consequently, any random and arbitrary event, if its origins are not specified, is interpreted as emanating from the authority of the Court. The final event of Josef K.'s tragedy has been interpreted as such without questioning. However, our investigation of the intensional function of naming in Kafka's novel suggests that

this interpretation is far from self-evident. We are faced with a textual fact which leads us to contemplate a new semantic interpretation: In the fictional world of *The Trial* there exists a mysterious domain of an absolute, unattached randomness, hiding behind the institutionalized randomness of the Court. The Court, while parading as the embodiment of supreme human legality, has adopted the randomness of the laws of nature in its treatment of human individuals. The world of random arrests and secret court proceedings necessarily breeds private terrorism of «freelancing» agents, pursuing their own mysterious missions. If this interpretation is accepted, the existence of *mutual* reflections between the fictional world of Franz Kafka and the actual world of the 20th century is emphatically confirmed.

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Fotonotes

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(1) «A possible world is a *state of affairs* of some kind — one which either obtains, is real, is actual, or else *could have* obtained» (Plantinga, 1977, 245). Let us add that states of affairs which *could* obtain or *will* obtain should be included in the definition.

(2) Possible-worlds approach in literary semantics has inspired recent studies of such neglected concepts as "fictional existence" (Doležel, 1980), "narrative domain" (Pavel, 1980), "narrative modalities" (Doležel, 1976; Ryan, ms.), "fictional speech act" (Pavel, 1981), etc.

(3) The existence of these and similar observations in the «traditional» theories of proper names (for a survey, see Zabeeh, 1968 and Pelc, 1971) belies Schwartz's claim that «the new theory of reference is the most serious challenge ever to traditional theories of meaning» (Schwartz, 1977, 13). Such a challenge is, in fact, construed on the dubious extension of the concept of rigid designation beyond the scope of proper names to the so-called «natural kinds» and to other, unspecified types of common names. If it is assumed that «virtually every term in the common language is rigid» (ibidem, 39, footnote 23), then the whole point of the theory of rigid designation is lost.

(4) The theory of rigid designation is usually presented in contrast to Russell's theory of proper names and definite descriptions. However, Zabeeh quotes Russell's later opinions which seem to indicate a departure from his earlier commonly known formulations (Zabeeh, 1968, 20f.).

(5) This argument has been formulated by Donnellan (1970, 352f.).

(6) The concept of transworld identity, a significant component of contemporary possible-worlds semantics, has been successfully defended by Plantinga. His argument is in agreement with, indeed, hinges on, the theory of rigid designation; in order to be able to identify an individual across possible worlds, all I have to know is «which of the persons existing in W ... *I am talking about*» (Plantinga, 1977, 253; italics — L. D.).

(7) The special case of «doubles» is most instructive in this connection. If the double existence of an individual is presented as a mystery, as in Stevenson well-knoun story, the mystery is resolved when it is recognized that Dr. Jekyll = Mr. Hyde.

(8) I became aware of the semantic significance of «Roads of Destiny», as well as of other texts by O. Henry, thanks to Ejchenbaum's classical essay narrative experimentation (Ejchenbaum, 1925).

(9) Cfr.: «If a speaker says "*a* is $\varnothing$", where "*a*" is a name, the question of what he referred to does not hinge in what he can supply in the way of descriptions — though *what descriptions he does give, if any, can constitute an important datum*» (Donnellan, op. cit., 357; italics — L. D.).

(10) In logical semantics, the possible-worlds framework has been usually associated with a mild form of essentialism; thus, for example, Linsky claims that in no possible world can a person be a wiener (Linsky, 1977, 148). On the other hand, it is quite clear that the interpretation of possibility in the concept of possible worlds has to be wider than that of «casual or natural possibility» (Plantinga, op. cit., 245). Again, imaginative literature requires a more radical

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semantics which has to leave open the possibility of *impossible*, i.e. intrinsically contradictory, worlds.

(11) Kripke (1972) has accepted the thesis that proper names lack sense (intension) because he treated intensions as functions from extensions to possible worlds. This reductionist interpretation of intensional meaning serves its purpose in logical semantics, but is vacuous for literary semantics. It can be claimed, however, that even Kripke's thesis could be reformulated to accomodate the view that proper names and definite descriptions differ in categoric sense: proper names having «zero» sense are in intensional contrast to definite descriptions which carry sense.

(12) Only the *categoric* sense of proper names is of interest for the present study; therefore, the *specific* sense of proper names will not be discussed. Let me just point out that poets and writers have always been aware of the rich intensional («evocational») capacities of proper names; similarly, most of the existing studies of proper names in literature have been concerned with describing their specific intensions (cf. Eis, 1970; a bibliography of Russian studies of personal names in literature con be found in: Nikonov — Superanskaja, eds., 1970, 330-355). We do not have to share Proust's personal connotations of *Parma, Florence* or *Balbec* in order to recognize that for literary semantics the existence of specific intensional meanings of proper names is beyond doubt.

(13) In his name-assignment acts, the author can use conventional proper names, or create his own «neologisms», he can establish a motivation between the name and the properties of its bearer, or leave this relationship arbitrary, he can apply models of natural language formation, or «artificial» models (abbreviations) etc. In his supreme authority of name-giver the novelist «a la liberté (mais aussi le devoir) de créer des noms propres à la fois inédits, et "exacts"» (Barthes, 1972, 128).

(14) The intensional function of naming is only one of the many possible intensional functions operating in literary texts and generating their macrosemantic regularities. For a theoretical foundation of the concept of intensional function, see Doležel, 1979.

(15) Within logical semantics, the idea that «every singular term is either a personal name or a definite description» has been criticized by Linsky. Linsky claims that «there are many kinds of singular terms which fit neither of these two categories» (Linsky, op. cit., 69), but does not offer any kind of categorization. I prefer treating the «many kinds of singular terms» as subcategories of the two basic kinds.

(16) I have used the Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag edition of *Der Prozess* (Frankfurt/M., 1960). A very informative survey of Kafka criticism can be found in Beicken, 1974. A more recent, voluminous summary of the results of Kafka research is Binder, ed., 1979.

(17) It is a minor point that the abbreviation is applied, in a few instances, also to Josef K.'s uncle. The usage is clearly motivated by the need to «protect» the hero's mode of naming.

(18) It is important to note that the fixed definite description is used in all respects as a proper name; most significantly, the fictional individual is identified by it in the ritual of introduction (55, 78).

(19) The intension of exclusiveness of *Josef K.* becomes even more obvious if Kafka's system of naming is compared to Zamjatin's in the novel *We*. While in Kafka's text the «artificial» abbreviation is assigned exceptionally and exclusively to the protagonist, in Zamjatin's science fiction all the fictional characters — with

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the exception of the Benefactor — are designated by artificial names consisting of a letter and several numbers (for example: D - 503). This mode of naming assigns to the inhabitants of Zamjatin's fictional world a sense of «faceless mass»; deprived of natural proper names, they are deprived of their human individuality. The totalitarian ruler of this world — the Benefactor — is singled out from the «mass» by the fixed definite description, which, quite in Kafka's spirit, but with an ironic twist, designates his institutional position. In such a way, Zamjatin, while using basically the same categories of naming as Kafka, reverses the intensional structuring of the fictional world.

[20] The «mystery» of the abbreviation (recurring in *The Castle*) has received much attention in Kafka criticism, esp. in its speculations whether it does or does not stand for the writer's name (cf. Jaffe, 1967, 13, 16f.).

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A

Semiotica, linguistica, semantica
Sémiotique, linguistique, sémantique
Semiotics, Linguistics, Semantics

B

Semiotica narrativa e discorsiva. Retorica
Sémiotique narrative et discursive.
Rhétorique.
Semiotics of narrative and discourse.
Rhetoric

C

Socio-semiotica (socio- ed etno-linguistica)
Socio-sémiotique
(socio- et ethno-linguistique)
Socio-Semiotics (Socio- and Ethno-
Linguistics)

D

Semiotica letteraria; mitologia e folklore;
poetica
Sémiotique litteraire; mythologie et folklore;
poétique.
Literary Semiotics;
Mythology and Folkloristics; Poetics

E

Semiotiche auditive.
Sémiotiques auditives.
Audio Semiotics.

F

Semiotiche visive e audio-visive
Sémiotiques visuelles et audio-visuelles
Visual and audio-visual Semiotics