

Invariant Meaning Structures in Texts – Proverb and Fable –

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0. Introduction

Invariant structures of literary texts and the question of their possible description have been the topic of literary scholarship more than once. Relevant componential or morphological analyses already being undertaken in the 1920's in the narrower or broader surroundings of Russian Formalism,¹ did not focus exclusively on folkloristic texts as did Propp in his well-known analysis of the Russian magic tale. In the same way, literary forms such as the novella or short stories by Pushkin were the object of analysis (cf. e.g. Petrovsky, 1921, 1923, 1927; Reformatzky, 1922).² In subsequent years, however, the investigation of invariant text structures focused more and more on highly stereotypical texts, and on folklore texts, in particular. All these investigations, however, have one trait in common: they all strive for an abstract structural schema, usually of stories, i.e. of narrated events. More recently, these attempts have resulted in the description of so-called "story grammars", whose value has justly been acknowledged, not only in text science, but in psychology, as well. And there can be no doubt about the value of these abstractions.

It should be noted, however, that the the investigation of *thematic invariants* has been more or less neglected. Only after the analysis of myth undertaken by Lévi-Strauss, and on the basis of subsequent investigations inspired by his work as, e.g., by Greimas and others, have scholars begun to think about recurrent thematic structures. Still,

¹ For a short presentation of earlier literary morphology in Germany cf. Doležel (1973).

² For a more recent "morphological" analysis of Conan Doyle's (Sherlock Holmes) detective stories, aiming at the description of 'their' structure of suspense/tension in a psycho-semiotic perspective, see: Grzybek (1983).

semiotician Walter A. Koch (1981), who, in his "Sketches on a semiotics of poetry" distinguishes between stylistic, aesthetic and informational modes of poeticalness, is completely right when he points out that, on the one hand, "informational poeticalness", as he calls it, has no tradition in linguistics or semiotics, and that, on the other hand, literary scholarship seems to presuppose an infinite number of informational structures of poeticalness (Koch 1981: 188,191).

In arguing against Jakobson, Koch (1981: 39) juxtaposes conventional poetic "surface segments" such as 'moon', 'lake', 'rock', 'rose' and others — which, according to Jakobson, tend to be conventionalized, but which as Koch argues, still are subject to changing trends, or fashions — to elements of informational poeticalness, which he assumes are located on a deeper level, i.e. in universal constructions and, in his terminology, "in the reconstructions of *metaphysical* questions". When Koch enumerates some elements of informational poeticalness, it becomes obvious what he has in mind: central to his concept of informational poeticalness are semantic oppositions such as "Life - Death", "Man - Nature", "Mortality - Immortality".

Of course, concepts of this kind have been underlying many studies of literary texts, for a long time, at least implicitly, though in a more or less intuitive manner. Still, literary scholars are in full agreement with Koch's critical objections. Stierle (1971: 52), for example, who in his own studies speaks of "narrative oppositions",³ concedes that these oppositions have not been investigated systematically, thus far.

Koch, too, does not provide us with a systematic investigation into "informational poeticalness"; still, he shifts our attention to an important realm of literary analysis, largely neglected thus far.

But irrespective of the lack of systematic studies on invariant meaning structures in literary texts, there recently have been promising attempts with regard to (seemingly) less complex texts, conventionally called "Simple Forms" (cf. Jolles 1929).⁴

³ It is important to note that Koch's analyses are not restricted to narrative texts, but primarily focus on lyrical texts, and thus demonstrate the even greater relevance for literary studies.

⁴ Ultimately, the English translation 'Primary Form', which has been proposed by A. Taylor (1962), seems to be a more suitable term to reflect Jolles' notion of 'Einfache Form'. Due to convention, however, this term

It should seem quite reasonable, therefore, that literary scholarship turned to the results obtained in folkloristics and took counsel from the success of its methodology.

In fact, one can observe a newly growing interest in these "Simple Forms", in particular in the proverb and related forms, not only in folkloristics, but in literary scholarship, too. Without a doubt, this tendency has been particularly fostered by the success of structural and semiotic descriptions of these Simple Forms.⁵

The recent interest of literary scholarship in the nature of Simple Forms does not seem to have arisen by chance; predominantly, however, attention has been paid to the role of Simple Forms in literary texts. In these approaches, Simple Forms are either regarded as prototypes of more complex forms, which are elaborated or transformed in one way or another, or they are treated as explicitly or implicitly inherent allusionary material which aims at an intertextual semantic modification of the surface text (cf. Hansen-Löve 1982; Schmid 1982, 1988; Zholkovsky 1978; Zholkovsky/Shcheglov 1978).

Within the framework of the meaning-text-model which Zholkovsky developed in co-operation with Shcheglov, he understands a text as a theme elaborated by certain expressive devices. Analyzing Somali proverbs and a maxim by LaRochefoucauld, however, the investigation of the underlying theme is more and more neglected in favor of the demonstration of how the described expressive devices are operative.

In Hansen-Löve's and Schmid's approaches, on the contrary, the process of "elaboration", or "unfolding" [German: Entfaltung; Russian: развертывание] of Simple Forms into more complex texts is focused on. Both of them assume that proverbs and related paremia are, on the one hand, "end products" of a process termed "свёртывание" by Hansen-Löve, that is of "folding" [German: Einfaltung], by which he means the comprimation of complex experiences into elementary

has been translated a 'Simple Form' throughout the present paper.
⁵ The recent interest in the semiotic and structural investigation of the so-called Simple Forms manifests best in relevant editions, such as Eismann/Grzybek (eds.) (1987), Grzybek (ed.) (1984); Ivanov et al. (eds.) (1988); Kanyó (ed.) (1982); Koch (ed.) (1989); Meletinsky/Neklyudov (eds.) (1975, 1985); Permyakov (1988); Permyakov (ed.) (1978), (ed.) (1984), (1988).

signs. On the other hand, both Schmid and Hansen-Löve maintain that these elementary signs are "departure formulae" [German: Ausgangsformeln] which represent the basis for further "elaborations" (Hansen-Löve 1982: 204; Schmid 1982: 166). Thus, depending on one's perspective, a proverb may be regarded as either departure or end genre (Hansen-Löve 1982: 214, 218): "Elaborations to narrative or rhetoric texts take their origin in paremiological departure genres, which, in turn, represent the product of a first act of realization (...)." Irrespective of this common theoretical basis, different interests stand behind Schmid's and Hansen-Löve's approaches: Hansen-Löve is primarily interested in the theoretical foundation of the processes of "unfolding" and "folding" of semantic figures, less in the analysis and description of the concrete semantic material and its actualization in different texts from an achronic perspective (Hansen-Löve 1982: 225). Schmid, on the other hand, is mainly interested in the problem of diegetical realization of proverbs, etc. in Pushkin's "Povesti Belkina" and in his "Kapitanskaja dočka", i.e. in the function of proverb texts in the development of a text and its meaning constitution or generation. Regarding proverbs as "microtexts which reduce recurrent states of affairs to the concise formula of popular wisdom", Schmid (1988: 268) tries to demonstrate that many proverbs in Pushkin's stories either explicitly or implicitly "contain a secret sujet formula of the narrated story".

Thus, Hansen-Löve's and Schmid's studies focusing on the relationship of Simple Forms to literary texts either are limited to the analysis of single literary texts or concentrate on the theoretical foundation of the processes of "развертывание" and "свёртывание". Neither of them systematically goes into details in describing the meaning potential which already lays at the basis of proverbs and which is common to various types of text realization.

In the present article, considerations are presented which aim at a model for the systematic description of these invariant meaning structures. They are to be understood as structures, which are not specific to particular texts, or text genres, but which can be found at the basis of different texts or text genres.⁶ The model which shall be presented has been derived from the analysis of proverbs, and its operationality

⁶ Of course, such a point of view does not exclude the possibility that other, more complex texts explicitly refer to proverbs and thus, represent some

shall be demonstrated with regard to another genre, the fable. The fable has been chosen because, among literary genres, it can be regarded as one of those which most evidently can be located on the threshold between folklore and literature.

One crucial difference between the present considerations and the above-mentioned studies has to be seen in the status of the proverb itself, which, by Hansen-Löve and Schmid, is considered either as an end product of complex experience, or, with regard to other texts, as an initial basic unit. In the present approach, however, a proverb is understood as being the *minimal form* of actualization, or realization, of an achronic (though historically bound) cultural meaning potential at its basis, which, in turn, may also serve as meaning potential for other, more complex forms of realization.⁷

1. Fable and Proverb: Possible Relations and Former Research

The interrelationship of proverb and fable has repeatedly been the object of folkloristic and literary analysis. It goes without saying that the whole relevant discussion cannot be reproduced here in detail. Still, some representative approaches should be mentioned.

Generally speaking, two major devices of establishing a relationship between proverb and fable are relevant.

One possible kind of interrelation between these two genres can be seen when proverbs function as internal constituent parts of fables, i.e. when they are *used as proverbs* and explicitly *quoted as proverbs*.

kind of intertextuality. Also not excluded is the possibility that there may be genre-specific peculiarities in the realization of meaning structures.

⁷ Ultimately, both Hansen-Löve and Schmid might not, perhaps, object to the modification proposed here. Still, this seems to be slightly more than merely a question of perspective. The existence of empirically seemingly alogical proverbs, for example, and of so-called "paradox proverbs", in particular (cf. Grzybek 1986a: 392f.), asks for a more differentiated investigation of the complex relationship between human experience and its transformation into elementary signs; it is, however, but one argument in favor of the separated study of the cultural meaning potential emphasized here.

Schmid's analysis, which demonstrates that proverbs may, either explicitly or implicitly, serve as allusionary material modifying the semantic structure of the complex text, would thus be a special case of this basic phenomenon. The latter would therefore have to be regarded as one particular instance of proverbs being integrated into more complex texts in general.

In this case, when the proverb turns out to be a *text within a text*, certain modifications, not only in the semantic structure of the complex text, but in the semantic functioning of the proverb, too, can be observed. The description of this process is definitely beyond the scope of the present paper, and it seems reasonable to leave the detailed analysis of this question to separate analysis (cf. Grzybek 1989c,d). Based on Lotman's (1970) notion of the artistic text as a model of reality, there is reason to regard a proverb (as integral part of a literary text) not only generally as a *text within a text* (and the whole matter as a particular type of intertextuality), but, more specifically, as a *model within a model*. In this case, the semantic indefiniteness of the proverb is reduced in its maximality by the fact that both the situation the proverb is referred to and the situation in which it is actually uttered, turn out to be modelled in and by the literary text.

Analyzing the semantic functioning of proverbs in the novel "*Babička*" by 19th century Czech authoress Božena Němcová, one can even demonstrate that the totality of proverbs used in the text, in particular by the main heroine, the Grandmother, results in a particular model of the world. In this way, the quoted proverbs form a separate semantic level which, of course, is closely interrelated to all the other levels within the overall semantic structure of the literary text as a whole. One should not assume, however, that proverbs play such an important role in every literary text.

A completely different case⁸ has to be seen when an explicitly quoted proverb is supposed to summarize the gist of a complex-(fable) text; in this case, which Loukatos (1965: 230) labels 'paramythia' (in addition to 'promythia' and 'epimythia'), the proverb is mostly quoted at the end of a fable. Further below, we will deal with this phenomenon in detail, and we will be concerned with cases when proverbs seem to be

⁸ As early as 1894, Potebnya (1894: 93) distinguished these two possible cases.

a corresponding summary, but actually do not fit the overall meaning or even contradict it.

This close relationship of proverb and fable is one reason behind the fact that in the predominant number of investigations, the possible genetic connection of both genres has been focused. With regard to this genetic question, fables have partially been regarded as illustrations or "elaborations" of proverbs, on the one hand. On the other hand, proverbs have been regarded as condensations, or "remnants" [German: Schwundstufe] of more complex texts, and of fables in particular.

Thus Hegel, for example, in his "Aesthetics" (1839: 380), already assumed that proverbs can be transformed by "development" [German: Ausführung] into fables.⁹ Similarly, Perry (1959: 28) sees an immediate genetic connection between both genres. He writes: "The simplest form of a fable is what we usually call, owing to its brevity, a proverb." On the other hand, we have authors such as Otto (1890), Potebnya (1894; 1905: 332ff.), or Krzyżanowsky (1968), who remind us to regard proverbs also as the possible result of some condensation process, on the basis of more complex folklore genres, and in particular of fables.

Without evaluating the whole relevant discussion, which would touch upon controversial issues, it seems most reasonable to assume that both above-mentioned processes, elaboration and condensation — which are termed "implication" [имплицитность] and "explication" [эксплицитность] in Soviet phraseology by Mokienko (1980) — are both equally possible, so that there are proverbs which have developed from fables, just as there are fables which have become proverbs (cf. Taylor 1931: 27-32, Loukatos 1965, van Thiel 1971).

Concentrating on the possible genetic dependency of proverb and fable, one has to realize that it seems impossible to generally define the direction of development, and that obviously both processes can be observed independently of each other. This fact, however, gives rise to the following hypothesis, which shall guide the following considerations, and which refer us back to our introductory remarks: according to this hypothesis, proverbs and fables are but *two different types of realization* of an *identical semantic potential* underlying both of them.

⁹ Yet, one should keep in mind that such fables have recently been called "purely literary products" (van Thiel 1971: 109).

Such a point of view postulates the existence of semantic deep structures, which are, heuristically speaking, still prior to verbalization, and which are still subject to some kind of "elaboration" into either proverbs or fables (or both of them, or still other forms), which does not exclude the possibility that fables, in turn, may finally be "condensed" again.¹⁰

On the basis of G.L. Permyakov's relevant works,¹¹ in particular on the proverb, from which such a model can be deduced,¹² the aim of this article is to understand concrete proverb texts as other than the initial basis of further elaborations. What shall be demonstrated is the efficiency of the semantic potential already lying at the basis of proverbs in more complex texts, namely fables. Such an approach might prove the general transferability of the description model gained from proverb analysis to more complex texts. Additionally, it might offer a chance to systematically prove the interrelation between proverb and fable which has been observed, or rather postulated, again and again.

My approach is especially viable two reasons. Firstly, it deals only with analyses of single fables. Secondly, it assumes that the semantic potential at the basis of proverbs represents only a part of all possible invariant meaning structures in different texts or text genres.

¹⁰ Thus, by 'condensation' we mean only a process leaving more or less intact the invariant meaning structure of a text; we do not mean instances in which parts of more complex realizations, e.g. quotations from fables, go over into the phraseological stock of a given language. One can understand such phenomena – which, in Russian, are predominantly tied to I.A. Krylov's fables (cf. Orekhova 1975) –, only when knowing the whole fable (con)text (cf. Permyakov 1979: 318).

¹¹ For a comprehensive bibliography of Permyakov's work see: Grzybek (ed.) (1984); 203–214.

¹² This is not to say that Permyakov's approach itself does not have the status of a model in its own right; what is meant here is the model described by Grzybek (1984, 1987), which attempts to put Permyakov's approach into a more general theoretical framework and to integrate it into other related concepts.

2. Proverb and Fable: Paradigmatics, Syntagmatics, and Dual Signification

As mentioned above, the methodological approach of the initial isolation of invariants and the subsequent investigation of their transformations is related to the name of V.Ya. Propp, in folkloristics as well as in literary scholarship. Propp's (1928) analysis of the Russian magic tale has been classified as "syntagmatic" by Dundes (1968: ix), who opposed it to C. Lévi-Strauss' supposedly "paradigmatic" approach. The latter's analysis of myth allows the conclusion that in myths, semantically contradictory concepts are being mediated which initially are distinct and incompatible, and which do not seem to be mediable. Interestingly enough, E. Meletinsky (1968: 253), in the postscript to the second edition of Propp's *Morphology of the Folk-Tale*, explicitly points out that Lévi-Strauss' kind of analysis is "not a structural analysis of mythological narration, but of mythological *thought*", and Lévi-Strauss himself explicitly speaks of the "possibility to demonstrate certain logical operations, which belong to the principles of mythological *thought*" [italics supplied; P.G.].

With regard to our question, we thus indeed obtain justification for understanding the meaning structures underlying proverbial (and other) texts as a paradigmatic semantic potential, and to investigate that potential as belonging to the paradigmatic axis. Concrete proverbial (and, consequently, other) texts, on the other hand, would have to be understood as *one* particular type of syntagmatic realization. Such an understanding, according to which a Simple Form is well the "true carrier of a meaning", but which is only present *potentialiter*, and which, immediately when being verbalized, cease to be a Simple Form, would render A. Jolles' considerations more contemporary and more precise. It would additionally give support and foundation to Cherkassky's (1968) more modern view regarding proverbs as "minimal units of the supra-verbal semiotic plane".

Given the assumption that a proverb is the minimal syntagmatic form realizing underlying invariant meaning structures, Cherkassky's further thesis, which regards proverbs as minimal units particularly of the *supra-verbal* plane in particular, deserves special attention.

This formulation by Cherkassky can reasonably be understood within the framework of Hjelmslev's (1943) distinction between denotative

and connotative semiotic systems. Within this framework, proverbs can be regarded as secondary modelling systems, characterized by the simultaneous presence of a denotative and a connotative level of signification (cf. Grzybek 1984, 1986, 1987). The description of the meaning of a proverb would therefore ask for concentration on the connotative level of signification. In other words: what is important is not what is "said" on the denotative level, but what is "meant" on the connotative level. A verbal utterance such as the Russian *If there is no fish, a crabfish is taken for a fish* becomes a proverb only when it is used or understood with reference to the connotative level of signification, i.e. when one refers it not only to a 'fish' and to a 'crabfish' but when it is understood in a more general and more encompassing way. In the given case, this might be the general assumption that, under certain conditions, particular things (which usually are regarded as being worse or as less valuable than the things needed or wanted) can replace other things (which usually are regarded as better or more valuable, but which are not available in the given moment).

The concrete verbal utterance belongs — in agreement with Dundes (1964) — to the linguistic, but not to the folkloristic level of the text; it becomes a proverb only when it is subsumed under a general law, under the model of a proverb situation (cf. Levin 1984). It should go without saying that we are not dealing here with connotations on the lexical level; rather, we are concerned with the assumption that a connotative level of signification is being constructed above a denotative level of signification — a phenomenon which, with regard to artistic texts in general, and to literary texts in particular, has been described in detail by Yu. Lotman.

Taking into account these considerations, one has to call into question the relevance of attempts which try to grasp the "semantics of the fable" within a textlinguistic framework by exclusively determining levels of isotopy which are regarded as being decisive for the semantic tectonics of the text (Grubmüller 1981). Ultimately, such an approach can only indicate "violations against semantic solidarities" or "violations against our world knowledge". This is considered to be the case when, for example, an actant which is characterized by the semantic marker [+ animal] is able to commit an action which is usually restricted to actants with the semantic marker [+ human], e.g. to speak.

In addition to the fact that such a view seems to be doubtful already on the level of actual *language processing* — one is forced, e.g., to declare metaphors and other tropes to be semantic "anomalies" — here, i.e. on the level of the (fable) text, the flexibility of human thought (and of text processing) falls a victim to immanent system-oriented thought in linguistics and textlinguistics which, in their semantic descriptions, remain on the denotative level of texts.

Still, Grubmüller (1981) attempts to characterize the essence of the fable on this basis, explaining it by the principle of meaning reduction (certain semantic features are deleted) and concludes that "ultimately the egocentricity of our cognition will take the floor". In a seemingly similar way, Tartu paremiologist Arvo Krikmann (1984b), in his *Essay to Explain Some Semantic Mechanisms of the Proverb*, emphasizes the proverb's anthropocentricity as one of its most essential characteristics or principles. Krikmann, however — and this is a crucial difference as compared to Grubmüller — links this to the assumption that there must be a shift of meaning levels during the process of meaning constitution. Such a view, i.e. the assumption of switching between meaning levels, seems to be far more closely linked to psycholinguistic conceptions, generally speaking of various "levels of understanding" (cf. Hörmann 1976). With regard to the concept of semantic anomalies developed within the framework of semantic feature analysis Hörmann fully agrees with Olson's (1970: 260) view that "such anomalies are less a function of incompatible semantic components than of the limits of experience or imagination."

At least in case of the proverb, we need not accept the assumption of processes of meaning expansion or meaning reduction, since during the complex process of meaning generation, the (initial and prior) constitution of the denotative meaning does not seem to be mandatory for the understanding of the connotative meaning. This conclusion can be derived from a critical analysis of relevant psychological investigations (cf. Grzybek 1984c); this result makes views which classify proverbs as 'indirect speech acts', for the understanding of which the prior construction of the literal meaning is postulated to be necessary, appear questionable. Yet, related questions have not been investigated thus far with regard to the fable; therefore, they have to remain unsolved and are open to future studies.

In any case, as far as the proverb is concerned, the question of poetical figures such as metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches, etc. contained in the text is only of secondary and subordinate importance — of primary importance is the principle of dual (denotative and connotative) signification. Of course this peculiarity is not characteristic of the proverb alone; rather it can be observed with regard to other semiotic systems, the fable being only one of them. For our present purposes, however, it seems reasonable to remain in the field of semiotic description of the proverb, for a bit, and to analyze the determination of its invariant meaning structures, as worked out by Permyakov.

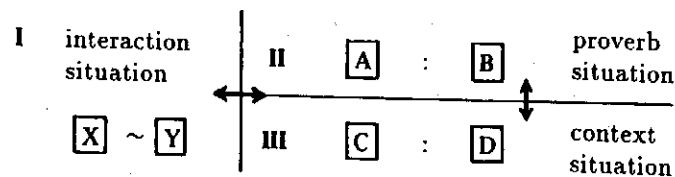
3. The Proverb: Sign and Model of Situations

Permyakov's (1970: 20) basic assumption is to regard proverbs as "signs of situations or of a certain type of relationships between objects". Proverbs serve not only as signs of the situations described, but also as *models* of them, with the help of illustrative images which can be easily understood. The notion of situation as it is used here can best be demonstrated on the basis of P. Seitel's (1969, 1972) distinction of different situation types involved in proverb usage. According to Seitel, we have to distinguish three types of situations:

- (1) the *interaction situation*, in which a proverb is actually being used,
- (2) the *context situation*, to which it is referred,
- (3) the *proverb situation* which is contained (i.e. modelled) in the proverb itself taken literally.

This differentiation results in the following figure:

Fig. 1:

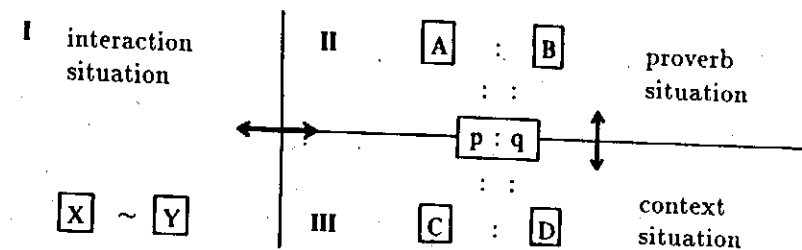


According to Seitel (1972: 240), two aspects of proverb use have to be taken into account: first, the speech act of the proverb in a given interaction situation, and second, the logical process of relating proverb situation to context situation. According to Seitel (1972: 147), this logical process involves analogical reasoning, since we are concerned with an analogy between the relationship of entities of the proverb situation and entities of the context situation. Formally speaking, proverb usage can thus be expressed the analogy of $A : B :: C : D$.

Seitel has here described an essential mechanism of the semantic functioning of proverbs. Taking into account, however, that in case of proverbs, what is "meant" on the connotative level is more important than what is "said" on the denotative level (see above), the state of affairs is somewhat more complicated than Seitel assumes. Since it is the abstract idea on the connotative level of signification rather than the proverb situation in its literal (denotative) meaning, which is relevant in the semantic functioning of proverbs, we are concerned with a process of double analogy. If we term this abstract idea « $p : q$ », we thus obtain the overall formula $A : B :: p : q :: C : D$.¹³ It is exactly this relationship termed « $p : q$ », by the way, which turns out to be invariant in proverb use.

This modification of Seitel's schema can be illuminated in the following figure:

Fig. 2:



¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the processes of dual signification and double analogy see: Grzybek (1984: 227ff., 1987: 49ff.).

It is important for our study to see whether the principle of double analogy can also be transferred to the fable.

Interestingly enough, Herder, who regarded the capacity to create analogies as the "origin of all human poetry", spoke as early as 1787 of the appropriateness of the fable in particular for exercising "the analogical power of invention." With direct reference to the fable, Herder (1787: 565) concludes: "Thus analogy is the mother also of the Aesopian fable; not abstraction, not empty reduction from the general to the particular."

Considerations such as those by Coenen (1976), who is concerned with the "interpretability of fables", show that the semantic functioning of fables might well be grasped by the above-mentioned principle of double analogy. Coenen distinguishes a "primary meaning" (S_1) and a "secondary meaning" (S_2), which are to be understood as realizations of one assumed "semantic basis schema" (S_0) common to both of them; on the basis of the above-mentioned considerations the latter might be interpreted as the relationship termed $\langle p : q \rangle$ above which, in the case of adequate usage, must correspond to the analogy between proverb situation and context situation.

The distinction of various situation types involved in the use of proverbs can be transferred to other, more complex genres, too, though the phenomena to which these texts refer, or which are being modelled in these texts themselves, are significantly more complex.¹⁴ And just as in the case of proverbs, one can say with respect to other texts that an identical text in different situations may evoke completely different meanings with different (pragmatic) functions. Thus, the categories of heterosituativity, polysemanticity and polyfunctionality, which have proven to be relevant in the case of proverbs, do generally seem to presuppose each other.¹⁵ The necessity of introducing these categories is due to the fact that ultimately, in the same way as on the level of lex-

¹⁴ For situational characteristics specific to the fable, see further below.

¹⁵ As to the notions of 'polysemanticity' and 'heterosituativity', cf. particularly the works by A. Krikmann (1974a,b) and by Levin (1984), respectively. Of course, the distinction of three situational types seems to be ideal in case of the proverb. With respect to more complex texts, not only the modelled situation (or rather: situation complexes) and context situation turn out to be much more complex, but the interaction situation, too. Ultimately, therefore, the question of unlimited transfer

ical semantics, the description of both the denotative and connotative levels of signification are merely abstractions of actual meaning generation processes.¹⁶ Since the result can be but a hypothesis about the ultimately realized meaning, Krikmann (1974a,b) is completely right when he speaks of a proverb text as a "semantic potential". Given this background, it is important to bear in mind that Permyakov's "Grammar of Proverb Wisdom" must not be understood in the sense of a generative grammar which allows the generation of an infinite number of proverb texts and their concrete meanings on the basis of a finite inventory of semantic units and a particular set of combination rules; rather, it has to be interpreted as an appropriate model by which actually generated texts can be grasped retrospectively, i.e. by which they can be subsumed under the model of a particular proverb situation.¹⁷ Let us return to Permyakov's findings.

It now becomes obvious that when Permyakov strives toward a "classification of situations" in order to categorize proverbs according to their meaning, this can be understood only as a classification of modelled proverb situations. One example of such a modelled situation might be the above-mentioned assumption that a particular thing can replace another thing which usually is held to be worse or less suited, if the better thing is not available. Concrete proverbs such as the German *If he is in need, the Devil will eat flies*, the Russian *If there is no fish, a crabfish is taken for a fish, too* or the Persian *If there is no horse, an ass will do* and many other similar sayings relate to the (real or fictitious) situation, as variants relate to invariants.

This variability cannot be explained only by the fact that we are concerned here with examples from different languages, or cultures;

to more complex texts has to remain unsolved, in particular, if we have to do with written (and the more literary) texts, in which text production and reception are temporarily and locally distinct. Nevertheless the general transfer possibility should not be doubted.

¹⁶ This is not to say that identical phenomena or processes are meant by the term 'connotation' on the lexical and textual levels; a detailed analysis of lexical and textual connotations, however, would transcend the scope of the present paper.

¹⁷ When speaking of 'proverb situations', we are not using this term in Seitel's sense. He uses it to refer to the literal meaning of a proverb; we refer to the abstract idea, i.e. the connotative meaning of a proverb.

rather, this phenomenon is dependent on the fact of verbalization in general. Otherwise, the existence of proverbial synonyms, antonyms or variants etc. within a given culture could not be explained.

But it is not only that various concrete verbalizations relate to a given (context) situation as a variable relates to an invariant. From a different point of view, it would also be correct to maintain that one single proverb may relate to quite a number of possible context situations; in fact, Permyakov (1979: 318ff.) clearly points out that one essential characteristic of a proverb is that it is polythematic (what sets it apart from all analytical clichés such as omens, for example, which are monothematic). From this perspective, the proverb would relate to the various context situations as an invariant relates to variables.

What is invariable, then, ultimately, is the underlying, supra-linguistic meaning which we termed «p : q» above — both the corresponding verbalization and the context situation to which it is referred would have to be understood as variables.

This approach makes it possible to heuristically regard the meaning potential as belonging to a connotative paradigm, the concrete realizations (i.e. verbalizations), on the opposite — quite in agreement with Jakobson's theory of the two axes of language — as projection from the (in our sense denotative and connotative) axes of selection onto the (syntagmatic) axis of combination. It goes without saying that ultimately, any meaning is only manifest in syntagmatic text realizations; still, we see how we are slowly approaching the central point of our basic question. Therefore let us turn our attention to the meaning potential of proverbs, in order to investigate the possible transfer of this method to the fable as another syntagmatic type of realization afterwards.

In his earlier works, Permyakov succeeded in reducing the totality of invariant situation types of proverbs to four so-called "Higher logico-semiotic invariants". In later years,¹⁸ they still represent the most abstract categories of situational types, although Permyakov then in a much more detailed manner distinguished 28 so-called "form-building groups" [FBG] involving further construction types and subtypes,

¹⁸ This more detailed differentiation can be found in Permyakov's works published after 1978.

which additionally underly a complex system of logical transformations.¹⁹ Of course, we cannot go into details here as far as this is concerned; for our needs it will be sufficient to confine ourselves to the four "Higher logico-semiotic invariants". As it was mentioned above, they partially model the relationships between objects or between an object and its properties (Invariants IA and IB), partially the dependence between the relationships of objects and the relationships of their properties (Invariants IIA and IIB).

Thus, these four situation types represent formalized logical operations, the importance of which has already been discussed above in general terms in context of Lévi-Strauss' works. In his later works, Permyakov repeatedly stresses the fact that this logico-semiotic classification has to be complementarily supplemented by a thematic classification of its own — as to this point, Permyakov's later works significantly differ from his earlier ones.²⁰ Permyakov establishes the thematic classification with the help of semantic oppositions, the function of which has also been mentioned above in context of Lévi-Strauss' analyses of myth.²¹

The mandatory complementary description of the invariant meaning of a proverb can be illustrated by three examples belonging to one and the same "Higher logico-semiotic invariant": *Where there is*

¹⁹ For information on the system of logical transformation see: Permyakov (1979: 307ff.).

²⁰ In this context, one clearly sees that Permyakov, in contradistinction to his own claims, distinguishes, at least in his later works, *four* levels of analysis, not *three*. The three levels mentioned by Permyakov are:
 — the linguistic plane,
 — the logico-semiotic plane,
 — the plane of realia.

From 1975 onwards, however, Permyakov explicitly points out that the proper *theme* of a paremia is represented by a given pair of semantic oppositions, regardless of the involved realia. Thus, it seems reasonable to understand the plane of realia as denotative level of signification, the thematic plane (which represents the fourth level of analysis) in combination with the logico-semiotic plane as connotative level of signification (cf. Grzybek 1984b, 1987).

²¹ In this respect, Permyakov's approach owes much to Ivanov's and Toporov's (1965) methodology in their investigation of "Slavic Verbal Modelling Semiotic Systems".

smoke, there is fire; No rose without thorns; No river without a bank. All three of them belong to the Invariant IB, which is characterized by the logical operation of implication.²² All three of them maintain that the first part of the given pair does not come into appearance without the second part. Yet, the meaning of these proverbs is not the same: In the first one, it is maintained that there is no "consequence" without "reason",²³ in the second one, that there is no "good thing" without any "disadvantage", in the last one, that there is no "whole" lacking any of its constituent "parts".

Taking all this into account, we obtain the possibility to describe the meaning potential of proverbs (and other texts), which has to be understood as being paradigmatic in nature, on the connotative level of signification. And it might be quite reasonable to assume that the *thought structures* mentioned by Lévi-Strauss turn out to be *connotative text structures*.

²² Permyakov (1970: 21) rephrases this logical operation: "If there is one object (P), there is another object (Q); or, more accurately, given a connection between one object and another object, if there is one object, there is (will be) another object." - Permyakov's later subdivision of the Higher logico-semiotic invariants into "form-building groups" allows for more detailed descriptions. To give but one example: The above-mentioned proverb "Where there is fire, there is smoke" would fall into form-building group 8 ["Reciprocal (in)dependence"], but it would not fall into subgroup 'K' ["Existential (in)dependence"] which implies that the existence or presence of one thing depends on the existence (presence) of another thing, but it would fall into subgroup 'L' ["(In)separability"] which is defined in the following way: "Mutually depending things cannot be separated from each other; where there is one thing, there also is the other thing."

²³ This thematic filling may seem to be very abstract, at first sight, when one thinks of the English interpretation of this proverb, which often refers to rumors and their causal origins; such an abstract formulation seems to be necessary, however, taking into account interpretations from other cultures, such as by the Wakweli from Cameroon who, by referring to the fact that when taking fire one will have smoke mean that by marrying a woman one also marries her relatives - once again, a striking example for the semantic indefiniteness of the proverb in general ...

4. Situational Specifics of the Fable

But let us try to systematically resume once more the most important results thus far obtained before transferring the demonstrated method of analysis and description to more complex texts, to fables. First of all it turned out that in registration and description of meaning potentials the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes have to be kept apart heuristically. Furthermore it seems to be necessary to differentiate denotative and connotative signification on the paradigmatic axis.²⁴ Finally, it seems reasonable to give a separate status to the logical transformations, since they represent something like a switchboard between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. The need to separate them from the syntagmatic operations has been mentioned with reference to the fact that they precede concrete realizations. Their separation from the paradigmatic axis seems to be reasonable, too, since strictly speaking, they have nothing to do with the "theme" which can be described by the semantic oppositions; they represent their rules for combination - their abstract "grammar", in a way. Thus, the *theme* of a text might be described on the level of connotative paradigmatics by help of semantic oppositions, their meaning, however, by help of semantic oppositions and the logical operations organizing them.

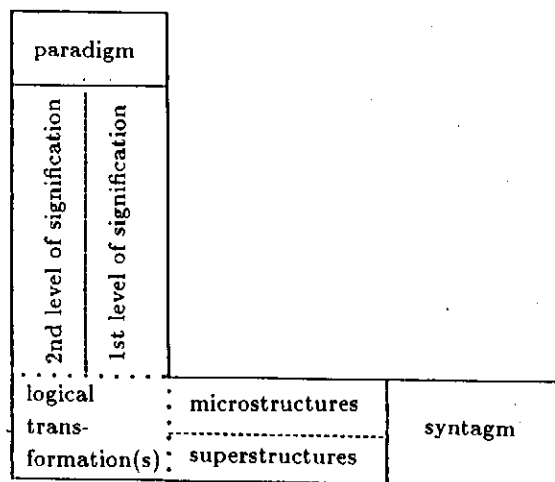
Additionally it is necessary to distinguish (at least) two levels on the syntagmatic axis, too: the first of them comprises all the *microstructures* characteristic of the given sign system (in case of proverbs usually natural language up to the level of sentences or sentence sequences), the second of them abstract *superstructures*, which are media-unspecific and which can manifest in various semiotic systems (e.g. narrative structures etc.).

Taking all this together we receive the following model (cf. Grzybek, 1984, 1987), which has to be understood as a *heuristic* model representing different levels of analysis (cf. fig. 3):²⁵

²⁴ From a semantic point of view, this obviously is the most crucial distinction. Again, Koch (1981: 84) seems to be right, when he points out that ultimately, there seems to be an infinite number of possible paradigms.

²⁵ The presented model has obvious characteristics of Jakobson's model of the two axes of language, but it goes beyond it in several aspects. First of all, it pays attention to the notion of dual (denotative and connota-

Fig. 3:



Now demonstrating the possible transfer of the described model to more complex texts, it should be mentioned from the beginning that this model claims neither to describe the meaning structures of all (possible) texts nor the semantic structure of one particular text in totality. When describing the semantic structure of any text one must take into account that on the level of concrete realizations ultimately every single element of this text potentially modifies its overall semantic structure. As far as verbal texts are concerned, this observation is particularly relevant for questions which may be regarded as genuinely belonging to the realm of literary scholarship; with respect to fables,

tive) signification, which is characteristic of secondary modelling systems; secondly it introduces a separate level of logical operations or transformations which serve as a switchboard between the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic axes and which therefore have a somehow ambiguous intermediary status.— Of course, Jakobson (1960: 119) takes into account semantic factors, too, and points out that many problems it covers transcend the borderline of language and are common to various semiotic systems. But when he, in this context, speaks of a “grammar of traffic signs”, for example, it becomes evident that he aims at analogies in the form of a transfer of methodologically conditioned categories to other sign systems.

it is particularly relevant in case of interlanguage translations, literary re-workings of folklore fables, etc.

In fact, despite their assumed oral origin and oral tradition, fables have practically always been subject to individual literary coinings by particular authors. As Russian formalist Lidia Vindt (1927: 104), in a special investigation of the fable, showed, such re-workings seem to have concentrated on particular devices of the concrete literary making: “Thus, the thematic kernel remains unchanged. Precisely the same fables which had already been known from Indian and Greek collections, have been re-worked in a thousand ways.” The key word “thematic kernel”, of course, directly concerns our question, and one should not neglect that it is used here with regard not only to folklore, but to artistic literary texts, too.

Obviously, the possibility of describing the invariant meaning also of literary fables is taken into account here; in this context the concrete poetic realizations would have to be understood as variables which are subject to genre specific and genre transgressing laws of literary evolution. Indeed, Vygotsky, in his *“Psychology of Art”* was already arguing such a view: “As far as the fable as literary genre is concerned, it obeys to the usual laws of any artifice. It does not stay alive over thousands of years” (Vygotsky 1925: 106).

Summing up, then, there seems to be sound reason to seriously think of the question whether the described model can encompass meaning structures which underly more complex texts, too, and, most probably, in form of semantic *basic* structures. In this context, it might be interesting to relate Koch’s considerations, which were mentioned in the beginning of this paper, to the model described in the preceding passage.

But literary fables, as we know them, for example, from Lessing, LaFontaine, or Krylov, in German, French or Russian culture, shall not be in the center of the following discussion. Rather, the principal transferability of the description model derived from proverbs shall be demonstrated exclusively by way of analyzing traditional, classic, so-called Aesopian fables.

Firstly, as has been discussed above, the distinction of different situation types can be transferred to the fable genre. Strictly speaking, this statement already implies that the moralistic-didactic tendency,

the overall relevance of which for both proverb and fable has been postulated again and again, is not a sufficient reason for us to analyze both genres within the framework of the described model. As I show above, a proverb is polysemantic and polyfunctional, in principle, its meaning depending on the involved context interaction situations. The same holds true for the fable, too: the moralistic-didactic tendency is but one possible function among others. Admittedly, in the case of the fable the moralistic-didactic function seems to be the dominant function; as compared to the proverb, this most probably is due to the "actantialization" of the fable, which renders it significantly more "self-contained". Thus, as opposed to the proverb, fables are rather read than narrated today; therefore the situation of reception is completely different. In other words: whereas proverbs usually are directly related to a concrete context situation, known to the participants of a given interaction interaction, fables, at least nowadays, tend to be received rather indirectly, i.e. without direct reference to a particular context situation — they provide us, so-to-speak, with some pedagogical morales which one might term "prophylactic didactic", in a sense. Still, proverbs may be read, too, in principle, just as fables may be narrated, and obviously they initially were a predominantly oral genre. Therefore, this whole issue seems to be rather a matter of pragmatic dominance than of theoretical principles.

This "self-containedness" of fables leads to the tendency to accept them as correct moral demonstrations; in fact, this is an important reason why one easily accepts fables as prototypical models for moral behavior.²⁶ The same can be said about proverbs, too, however; thus there are many empirical studies asking people if they judge a proverb as 'correct' or 'false'. But as Permyakov has convincingly shown — and as is best be shown by logically contradictory and paradox proverbs — proverbs, like fables, are nothing else but *models*, which are only true or false when they are applied to corresponding situational circumstances. In fact, Paducheva (1976: 246) argues that fables have a "fixed <situational extension>: a class of extra-linguistic situations, in which a given fable may be appropriately applied, i.e. narrated or men-

²⁶ Their prototypical 'reliability' may even be 'supported' by the verbal descriptions of possible context situations, which are integrated into the text; as to this phenomenon, see below in detail.

tioned in place [к месту]." In the very same sense, Permyakov (1979: 313) said about proverbs that they turn out to be 'correct' "when they are applied <in place> [к месту], i.e. in a corresponding situation."

Taking into consideration the interrelationship of heterosituativity, polysemanticity and polyfunctionality, it is particularly important to pay due attention to factors of historical (diachronic) developments of the fable genre, and all the more, if one assumes that the fable in its original form was used by a particular individual author in a concrete historical situation with reference to a concrete (possibly identical) situation. Dithmar (1971: 116) summarizes the assumed original form of the fable as follows: "It has a 'place in life' [German: Sitz im Leben], i.e. it is narrated with a definite purpose, with a definite intention, in a concrete situation." Thus, the 'place in life', according to Dithmar, is the context situation to which the fable was originally referred.

Reacting to this point of view, Gebhard (1974), among others, has doubted the status and relevance of the assumed original form; in fact, Dithmar himself concedes that the 'place in life' is known to us only in the rarest cases, since it is usually not reported. Still, other scholars, such as Grubmüller (1983: 478) maintain that the tradition of the fable genre "has reported and reflected situations of usage from early times on"; similarly, Gumbrecht (1974: 43) is convinced "that information about the ascribed 'place in life' is available to us by the tradited context of use or the adfabulatio."

In any case, and irrespective of the historical original form of the fable, it seems wise — just as in case of the proverb — to carefully keep apart situations to which a fable is (or in former times was) referred, i.e. the context situation, and situations which are integrated into the fable text. As compared to the proverb, the circumstances are significantly more complex in case of the fable, since in addition to the ordinary modelled situation, usually called 'image part' [Bildteil], a verbal description of a possible (and perhaps even of the original) context situation may be integrated into the text, too. In this case, the subsequent decision whether we have to do here with a description of the original context situation or not, usually turns out to be practically impossible. It seems most reasonable to assume that such modellings of context situations, which are integrated into the fable text, initially actually verbalized the historical situation in which the fable was nar-

rated and to which it was referred, and that it was only later added to the fable text in this (modelled) form. From a later perspective, the question whether this is a description of the original context situation is becoming more and more of only secondary importance from a semantic point of view. Before further analyzing this problem theoretically, an example shall illustrate our considerations:

When the Himereans had made Phalaris their commander in chief, and additionally wanted to give him a body guard, the poet Stetikhoros raised and said: A horse had a meadow alone for himself; but then a hart came and spoiled his meadow. The horse wanted to take revenge and ask a man if he could help him to punish the hart. The man promised to do this, if the horse let him put on a bridle and allow him to mount with his arms. The horse agreed; thus, instead of taking revenge, he fell himself into the power of the man. And Stetikhoros continued: Thus be careful that you do not, in order to conquer your enemies, make the same experience as the horse. You already have the bridle, since you made Phalaris your commander in chief; if you give him a body guard, you will finally be his slaves.

It was exactly this form of fable which caused Lessing (1759), in his "Treatises on the Fable [Abhandlungen über die Fabel]" to distinguish 'simple fables' from 'composed fables'. Later, Herder (1789) rejected this distinction, since, according to him, there can be no 'simple fables'; rather, every fable is composed "of the real case, which it shall be applied to, and of the invented one, which the fable instructor conceived for it." Thus, the verbalization of the context situation (not the context situation itself!) is regarded to be part of the fable.

Within our framework, the question whether this actually is the correct historically original form of the fable is less relevant than the semantic consequences of this form, because the pragmatic (and, consequently, semantic) indefiniteness of the fable is reduced by the addition of the context situation (which, of course, is the case independent of the fact, whether it is authentic or not). This leads to the assumption that the fable, at least in this form, takes something like an intermediary status between *apophthegma* and *wellerism*: Whereas in case of the *apophthegma* both *occasio* and *dictum* have a concrete historical

reference, both *dictum* and *factum* turn out to be modelled in case of the *wellerism* (cf. Grzybek 1989a,b).

Of course the problem of pragmatic and semantic indefiniteness is shifted to a different sphere, as soon as the situation which is explicitly added to the fable text is perceived as being modelled or invented. Because in the very same moment when these two elements form parts of one textual wholeness, we are concerned with a different interaction and context situation. In any case, the semantic indefiniteness of the fable is reduced by the addition of such a (real or fictive) historical situation. Only when such a concrete situation is completely lacking — which is the case in the fable's later development — does the fable turn out to be maximally indefinite, semantically and pragmatically. Then, its indefiniteness is only reduced, in a certain sense, by an optional final maxim, a phenomenon that shall be dealt with further below.

5. Invariant Thematic Structures in Fables

In addition to the transferability of situation types (derived from the proverb and now applied to fables) we will now deal with the possible transfer of the model of description of invariant meaning structures.

Permyakov himself, within the framework of his "general theory of cliché" treated fables, but only before the time when he distinguished logico-semiotic and thematic classifications.²⁷ He referred only to traditional folklore fables, a confinement we have accepted, too.²⁸

Of course, the detailed analysis of a complete fable corpus would transcend the realm of the present essay. In the following examples,

²⁷ Having analyzed more than 50,000 proverbs from more than 200 various cultures, Permyakov came to the conclusion that 76 semantic oppositions (twelve of which are intersections of elementary pairs) suffice to cover ca. 97% of the whole proverbial material. — Of course, the exact number of semantic oppositions depends at least partially on the degree of abstraction; still, the relatively small number is quite impressive.

²⁸ The fables analyzed in the present paper have been chosen from the following two collections:

(1) *Die Äsopischen Fabeln*. Deutsch von Wilhelm Binder. Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1855 (⁴1914).

(2) *Phädrus. Des Freigelassenen des Augustus äsopische Fabeln*. Verdeutsch von Johannes Siebelis. Stuttgart: Kraus & Hoffmann, 1857.

we will therefore confine ourselves to some classical fables. Doing so, we can find support in an early investigation undertaken by Wienert (1925). In his attempt to determine the "Types of the Greek-Roman Fable", Wienert distinguished the 'narrative side' [Erzählseite] and the 'meaning side' [Sinnseite] of a fable, a distinction which he did not try to clarify theoretically in a sufficient and satisfactory way. Yet, his analyses led Wienert to the distinction of ca. 60 so-called 'meaning types' [Sinntypen]. The names of quite a few of them correspond to proverb texts, although Wienert did not explicitly focus his analyses on fables involving proverbs or standing in a particular relationship to them. The following examples, too, are chosen more or less arbitrarily; they have not been selected because of some direct or indirect relation to proverbs. But let us turn to their analysis, now.

The fable about the Cat, who fell in love with a handsome man who, according to her own wish, is transformed into a woman, and who, on the day of her marriage, when seeing a Mouse, re-transforms into a Cat and chases after the Mouse, corresponds to Wienert's meaning type [MT] 1a, called "Nature doesn't change" [Die Natur ändert sich nicht]. Other fables belonging to this type are, e.g., the fable about King Fox, who is being carried in a sedan-chair, but who, when seeing a Scarabeus, jumps out and runs after him, or the fable of the Apes educated to dance, who jump at nuts thrown to their feet, or the fable about the Pig who comes out of the bathing house and right away throws himself into a puddle.

According to Permyakov's classification all these fables belong to invariant IA, at the basis of which lays the logical law of implication; its logical notation ($S \rightarrow S \in Q$) can be re-verbalized as "Every object has a particular property or quality". In detail, the fables just mentioned correspond to the FBG 2 («Changeableness — Unchangeableness»). Their meaning is grasped only then, when one additionally takes into account the invariant thematic pair, by which the logico-semiotic classification is complementarily supplemented. In the given cases, this is the semantic opposition "Internal character — external appearance" (I1), which in the broadest understanding can be attributed to the thematic pair "Contents — Form".

In analogy with the logico-semiotic and thematic classification of proverbs, as Permyakov has worked it out completely, one might arrive

at a corresponding classification of fables and add it to those distinguished by Loukatos. As to the fable, Loukatos (1969) differentiated between four types of classification:

- (a) *alphabetical*, according to the first word of the text;
- (b) *nominative*, according to key words or to the titles of the fable;
- (c) *thematic*, according to the actions or the milieu of the heroes;
- (d) *ideological*, according to the allegory or moral significance of the fable.

If one wanted to subordinate the logico-semiotic classification of fables to one of these categories, one would have to understand this classification as a specification of category (d). As any classification in general, and as the logico-semiotic classification of proverb in particular, the classification of fables on the basis of logico-semiotic criteria would probably serve scientific rather than everyday purposes.

The logico-semiotic classification, and in particular the determination of logical transformations, cannot be discussed here in all details. For further elaboration, a prior reading of Permyakov's "Grammar of Proverb Wisdom" shall be recommended. Our analyses of fables do not attempt an ultimately distinct categorisation, but they shall make it evident that the basic meaning of a fable can be reflected in its logico-semiotic classification.

Let us return to concrete fable material with this perspective.

The fable about the farmer who ties a bundle of straw to the Fox's tail and makes him run into the field of his neighbor, whom he envies because of his better harvest, but the Fox runs into the farmer's own field,²⁹ is being categorized by Wienert under MT 8: "He who sets a trap for others gets caught himself" [Wer andern eine Grube gräbt, fällt selbst hinein]. On the basis of the model described above, this fable can be characterized as follows: Firstly, it would belong to invariant IIA, generally termed "The relationship of properties of objects depends on the relationship between the objects themselves". More specifically, it belongs to FBG 19 («Actantial identity/non-identity»), in detail subgroup 'K' of this FBG, which deals with the identity or non-identity of the subject of two actions related in some way. The meaning of

²⁹ There is a variant of this fable in which the man wants to take revenge not on his neighbor, but on the Fox — the result is the same.

the fable results from the combination with the semantic oppositions "Goal - Result" (III11), "Benefit - Harm" (IIa10) and "Self - Others" (IIb8).³⁰

Let us now demonstrate what kind of fable can be attributed to the two other invariants described by Permyakov.

The fable of the Fox who robs the booty over which the Lion and the Bear fight with each other corresponds to Wienert's MT 34 [Wenn zwei sich streiten, freut sich der dritte]. In logico-semiotic terms, it can be described as belonging to invariant IIA ("The interrelation of objects depends on the existence of particular properties of the object"), more concretely: FBG 18 («Priority or non-priority of a secondary or mediating matter»), in combination with the semantic oppositions "Similar - Non-Similar" (IIb4).

From the discussion of several other fables, all belonging to the fourth invariant IB ("If there is one object, there is another object"; see above), one can derive some further observations.

The fable about the Mosquito who beats the Lion but who is caught and killed by the Spider afterwards, is categorized among MT 2b ("Overbearing is punished" [Überhebung wird bestraft]; the fable about the Goose who understands the Woolf's bad intention to eat her, and who succeeds in escaping, is attributed to MT 6 ("Malice or resistance find their master" [Bosheit oder Widerstand findet ihren Meister]). Within the logico-semiotic description, these two fables would not only belong to Invariant IB, but to the same FBG 10 («creation - non-creation») as well. Differences become evident only on the thematic level. The first fable is based on a combination with the semantic oppositions "Pride - Humility" (IIb53) and "Guilt - Punishment" (III1), whereas the second fable is based on the semantic oppositions "Good - Evil" (IIa10) and "Goal - Result" (III11). First of all, this example

³⁰ Permyakov attributes the semantic oppositions "Good - Evil", "Good - Bad", "Benefit - Harm" to the thematic invariant pair IIa10. A more detailed, perhaps hierarchically differentiated classification might be useful. - Generally speaking, it seems quite probable that the determination of semantic oppositions in fables is by far more difficult and complex than in proverbs. First of all, this holds true for notions such as "malicious enjoyment of other's harm [Schadenfreude]", which would have to be treated as combinations or intersections of the two elementary pairs, in this case "Honest - Dishonest" and "Joy - Sorrow".

demonstrates that in case of the fable, as well as of the proverb, it is necessary to differentiate between logico-semiotic and thematic classification; additionally, we see that Permyakov's classification is much more apt to reliably grasp the mutual relations between the various fables.

Another example shows pretty well that fables incorporate no obliging rules and no "eternal truths", but represent models of particular circumstances. This becomes most evident when comparing the above-mentioned fable about Goose and Woolf with the fable about the mean Cat who succeeds in bringing up her two neighbors, Eagle and Wild Boar, against each other. Obviously there are semantically contradictory fables, just as there are proverbial antonyms.³¹ Wienert is forced to establish a special type for this fable, MT 7 ("Malice has success"), whereas according to the logico-thematic classification, this is simply the logical transformation (here: negation) of one and the same MT.³²

The last fable we want to analyze gives us the opportunity to demonstrate some further consequences concerning the relation between the moral, which is explicitly added at the end of the text, and the rest of the fable text.

More often than not explicit didactic morals precede or follow the fable in form of a *promythion* or an *epimythion*; therefore, Gasparov (1971: 23), e.g. arrives at the following conclusion: "As opposed to other literary genres, the semantic content of a fable does not remain hidden in images and motives, but is declaratively formulated in the moral."

There are fables, however, which display an obvious incongruency between the overall meaning of a fable and the meaning of the moral attached to it. Vygotsky (1925: 96ff.) had already observed such phenomena in his "*Psychology of Art*", and more recently, this observation has been confirmed by Paducheva (1976) from a textlinguistic perspective.

As one example, she refers to the fable of "The Fox and the Grapes",

³¹ Cf., e.g. *Out of sight, out of mind* and *Absence makes the heart grow fonder*.

³² Logical transformation are essentially the negation of a positive original form or the combination of both (cf. Permyakov 1979: 307ff.).

which in the collection of Aesop's fables is summarized as:³³

Also among human beings there are some who cannot obtain a thing, but who accuse fate for their weakness.

[Οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἔνιοι τῶν πραγμάτων ἐφικέσθαι μὴ δυνατόμενοι δι' ἀσθένειαν τοὺς καιροὺς αἰτιῶνται.]

According to Paducheva (1976: 223), it would be more reasonable to rephrase the content of this fable in the following manner: "(...) who do not succeed because they have no strength, but who cause the impression that the aim is not wanted any longer." In fact, as Paducheva points out, this corresponds very closely to the moral attached to the same fable in Phaedrus' collection:³⁴

Those who, by their words, disparage what they are not able to do, will have to ascribe this example to themselves.

[*Qui facere quae non possunt verbis elevant, Ascribere hoc debebunt exemplum sibi.*]

A similar phenomenon can be observed in our last example about Cat, Eagle and Wild Boar, too, at the end of which we find the following moral:

*Be this a proof to gullible fools,
How double-tonguedness can cause harm.*

Whereas the fable text is based on the semantic oppositions "Good - Evil" and "Goal - Result", the moral incorporates the two pairs "Good - Evil" and "Benefit - Harm".

One might object that in such cases the moral does not actually contradict the overall meaning of the fable, but rather concerns only a

³³ Since many translations, the two mentioned in fn. 28 included, do not adequately reflect the topic in question, the two morals, quoted by Paducheva in Russian translation, shall be cited here in the original form, too; they are translated anew. - The original Greek version, "Ἄλωπος καὶ βότρως", is quoted from Perry's *Aesopica*, Urbana 1952; the original Latin version, "*De vulpe et uva*", is quoted from Perry's *Babrius and Phaedrus*, London/Cambridge 1965.

³⁴ Of course, the reliable attribution of either of these two morals to Aesop or to Phaedrus is rather a matter of speculation, due to a long and obscure history of recoding and tradition. Still, irrespective of the ultimate authorship, the problem remains unchanged.

particular aspect of the fable text, which is of secondary importance. In these cases, Paducheva (1976: 224) speaks of "incomplete morals" (as opposed to "complete morals"). She clearly keeps this apart, however, from instances in which the moral is "obviously nonsensical" [явно несутразна].

In this context, Paducheva (1976: 225) points out the fundamental problem that on the one hand, the moral is part of the fable text, and that, on the other hand, it does not seem to be necessarily in accordance with it, i.e. does not represent its essence. Recently, Sappok (1986) has attempted to solve this problem by explaining the transition from the narrative part of the fable text to the epimythion, referring to Wierzbicka's general-theoretical considerations on the role of "meta-text within the text" and to Frege's distinction of 'reference' [German: Bedeutung] and 'meaning' [German: Sinn]. His assumption is that both the narrative part and the epimythion refer to the same case or the same object. In other words: they have, in Frege's terminology, the same 'reference' [Bedeutung], but a different 'meaning' [Sinn] because they realize reference to the object linguistically in different ways. Therefore, according to Sappok (1986: 227), one of the two parts plays the role of a meta-text, i.e. one part of the text is a text about the other one; both of them taken together form a "coherent and intentionally closed text", and the "text-structural integration" which links both parts to one another, to a large degree is responsible not only for the semantic, but also for the poetical nature of the text.

There is however, one more question to be answered in this context: quite often one can observe in the promythion, or in the epimythion, respectively, a transition from the "is" of the fable to the "ought to" of the moral. According to Ivin (1973: 111), however, thus far no-one has ever succeeded in either verifying or falsifying this transition ...

Krikmann (1984a: 407), who discusses exactly the same question with regard to the proverb, proposes as a solution to render all relevant categories of axiological or deontical nature to the realm of pragmatics. This procedure seems justified — also with regard to the fable — insofar as the chosen direction of semantic analysis of the fable ultimately is nothing but the description of a semantic potential, extracted from the concrete context of usage.

Our topic is directly concerned with both of the last two prob-

lems, since the description of the meaning structures of a fable in its relationship to the moral turns out to be increasingly complex and difficult. In conclusion, it seems most reasonable to investigate the meaning structures of the narrative part of the text and of the moral separately, and to set them into relation to each other only afterwards.

Such a procedure would turn out to be reasonable for two reasons: first, it assumes that the moral transcends the model situation and concretizes *one* possible application to *one* possible — though not necessarily verbalized — context situation. Second, it assumes, as might be justifiable from a historical perspective, that most fables 'did not originally have any epimythion' (Wienert 1925: 13). Dithmar (1971: 20) goes even further in his assumptions, maintaining that the promythion or epimythion represents nothing more than an "atrophy, a replacement for the object part [Sachteil], for the concrete situation." Gebhard (1974: 126), however, does not agree with Dithmar, pointing out the fact that Dithmar does not demonstrate or analyze the process of atrophy, but only claims its result. Gebhard himself explains this process differently: "Nothing is being replaced, but something new is added at the same time, when something old vanishes."

Let us leave the question about the relation between narrative part and moral or epimythion — which, by the way, seems to be an older phenomenon than the promythion (cf. Levin 1982: 46) — at that and return to more general problems.

6. Conclusion

The question which semantic oppositions and which logical rules for their combination are actually relevant in the fable (as a genre) needs further investigation. Similarly, the question of the possible transfer from the described model, the operability of which has been demonstrated with reference to proverbs and fables, to less stereotypical (clichéized) texts, and literary texts in particular, remains to be solved. We must not forget that all the fables mentioned above are traditional fables, or literary re-coinings of traditional fables, at best. But if the fable, and, more so, the literary fable, can actually be located on the threshold of "high" literature and thus represents a direct transition from "Simple Form" to literary "Artistic Form" [Kunstform], then

the investigation of the possible transfer to literary fables should be of outstanding methodological relevance. Yet, such questions have to be left to future research, just as the more general question whether the described model can be usefully applied to other (less stereotypical) literary texts or text genres.

Since, if we are ultimately concerned with the modelling of *thought structures* which are reflected in text structures, one should find them in more complex literary texts, too, although one should take into account significant complications, both on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. But it does not seem completely impossible that by describing invariant meaning structures we can grasp constants of human semiotic behavior.³⁵

³⁵ I am sincerely grateful to Iris Bäcker, Karl Eimermacher, Wolfgang Eismann, Paul Rühl, Annette Sabban, Christian Sappok, and Pamela R. Wilson for their helpful comments on a former version of the present article. — A modified German version, concentrating on the relationship of proverb and fable from a folkloristic perspective rather than on the investigation of invariant meaning structures in literary texts, appeared under the title "Sprichwort und Fabel: Überlegungen zur Beschreibung von Sinnstrukturen in Texten" in: *Proverbium. Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship. Vol. 5*. The University of Vermont, 1988. (39–67).

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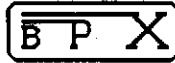
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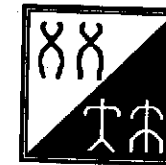
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