

FAULTY LOGIC AND LOVE AFFAIRS:
A PRAGMATIC INTERPRETATION OF A PASSAGE
FROM JULIAN BARNES' *TALKING IT OVER*

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Pragmatics can be used to examine and reach a satisfactory interpretation of a literary text and also, perhaps, to give clues about its possible stylistic merits. This is our starting point. When facing a piece of literature -a monologue in this case-from a pragmatic point of view one has to answer a number of questions. The most important one is: Can we face language processing in a literary text from the same perspective as normal everyday exchanges? By using one particular approach to Pragmatics, Relevance Theory, we have been able to design, and propose a system of analysis which seems to provide us with an interpretation of a literary text which can be used as a starting point for artistic appraisal. This is but a preliminary contribution -work in progress- to a subject which proves fascinating and challenging: the interface Pragmatics-Literature.

In this paper we want to put across some ideas about how to analyse a literary text -a monologue- out of a novel from a pragmatic point of view in such a way that 1) we are able to build up a consistent and satisfactory interpretation of that text, 2) the building up of this interpretation proves to be a valid way of stylistic evaluation. This work is but another step in our progression towards a deep and global knowledge of the relation pragmatics-literary work, something that started in 1986. There is a long way ahead, but the results up to now have been rewarding and the future looks promising. Besides, we can see, with satisfaction, that an interdisciplinary interest in pragmatics, stylistics and literary theory is becoming widespread in Spain.

The main area of concern is our research up to now has been dialogue. The reasons why dialogue appeals to a pragmatist are evident: in dialogue, apparently, we have literature recreating the conditions of normal everyday linguistic exchange. There are more aspects than simple conversation in a dialogue ... and we have to take them into account, but we can, tentatively, work under the illusion that we are dealing with speech. It is far from clear that this illusion is true like that, but this is the commonsensical reason why, in a novel, we have opted first for this form, convinced as we are that a pragmatic analysis can be fully developed in all other areas of literature. In the world of fiction, dialogue mirrors speech -although this mirror can be as unconventional as that in *Alice*- and this is why we have chosen dialogue as our first concern in our understanding of literature. Here we give a step further by analysing a monologue in which the character addresses himself in a self-convincing process we contemplate as spectators.

Before starting to justify our model of analysis and build up our interpretation, we would like to make some preliminary comments on an aspect which is crucial for us: the nature of literary language and, beyond that, the feasibility of a pragmatic analysis of a literary text. In short: we have to answer four possible questions:

- 1.- Is literature different in nature from speech? This would lead us to the question of whether we can process linguistic information when studying literature the same way as we process speech when listening to a linguistic exchange.
- 2.- Related to the first question. Finding out what language means, in the Gricean sense of Meaning1 and Meaning2 (1957) is the same when we participate in a linguistic exchange as when we build up a pragmatic interpretation of a literary text?
- 3.- Taking into account that literature is fiction, can we use a method that -in certain schools- relies heavily on truth values/ appropriateness conditions?

Summing up: isn't literature something open-ended in which meaning is but a potentiality to explore by a critic in an open reading?

We think that we have to comment on these four questions to justify ontologically and epistemologically our approach. About the first question, we can answer that these aspects of language considered overwhelmingly literary: images, irony, distance and the like, are nowadays the subject of many pragmatic studies -Blakemore (1992), Davis (ed) (1992)- where they are related to instances of the same kind of uses in normal everyday speech. Nowadays, in certain pragmatic schools, language can be seen as a continuum from the most colloquial forms to the most elevated ones in the sense that all them can be explained pragmatically from the same point of view. Further, language creativity, especially through metaphorical processes, has been emphasized by a number of linguists from different schools: from the classical approach of Ullmann (1962) to the fashionable works, based on the idea of prototypes, of Lakoff on metaphors we live by (1980).

We do not intend to say that the matter is completely settled, we simply hint at the possibility of seeing both normal everyday language and literary language as speech from a pragmatic point of view.

Because of what we have stated, we think we can consider that speech processing and literary language processing will follow the same principles (Sperber & Wilson 1986, Blakemore and, with some caution, Kiparsky 1987). This does not mean that there is not any room for literary studies, but that they should rely heavily on linguistics insofar as linguistics pays attention to the phenomenon of language processing. Jakobson's (1958) esthetic function of language should be accounted for -as Kiparsky (1987) notes- by linguistic means. We cannot but agree with this point of view. There is, however, one question pending in the relation language/pragmatics: the possible modular character of pragmatics -insofar as pragmatics deals with language in context, linguistic and extralinguistic- in comparison with the modular character of linguistic knowledge as advocated, for instance, by Chomsky (1980). It seems that pragmatics might be non-modular but part of the general perceptual human system (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1988, Escandell 1993). This tantamounts to saying that although pragmatics relies heavily on linguistics, its open, contextual nature presupposes generality: human asking, drawing conclusions, reacting, believing. From language as such we go onto human experience... and this is the domain not only of pragmatics but of philosophy, logic, psychology and a number of other disciplines. We can build up a linguistic interpretation and, with our words, we can hint at something that is beyond that but, by doing so, we reach the most controversial area of human life: issues such as thought, perception, beliefs. Beyond our pragmatic interpretation there will be something unattainable, something we could label, following Lacan (1992), "joy". Esthetics mixes with the subconscious. This is a fascinating and unexplored world: the relation pragmatics/psychoanalytic theories. But this goes beyond the scope of this paper.

With respect to the third question, the only possible answer is a definite one: yes, literary language is fiction. This would mean that from a logic based on Frege or Russell

-keeping in mind their fundamental differences- (see Meyer 1986), literature would be out of the scope of the truth values. I think that views such as those of Ohman (1979) should be considered. Wittgenstein's distinction between language as domain of logic and language as a social game would solve the problem in the sense that, we could say, literature has its own set of rules. Instead of talking about true/false we could talk of appropriate/inappropriate, cheating etc. (Meyer, 1986). However, we think that we can keep truth values in fiction, tentatively, if we follow ideas such as those of Hintikka (as contained in Meyer 1986) on logic and language. We have to confess that our acquaintance with this line of argumentation gave us very important clues to frame up our model of analysis. Here, we would like to pay attention to two aspects which, by the way, were latent in Sperber & Wilson's theory of Relevance. Let's start with a formula:

Ex Pxp
 E: existential quantifier.
 x: variable.
 P: propositional attitude.
 p: proposition.
 : belongs to
 : possible world.

This formula, used to explain natural language, and the relation natural language-logic is interesting to us in literature in the following way., possible world, is typically reality. In ideal conditions Pxp would belong to that world: You believe that something is true and this something is true in the same world... but you can be mistaken. Maybe you don't believe it and it is true in fact, or maybe you believe it and it is not true. This is an area of important philosophical controversy -see Anderson & Owens, 1990 for a review). In Hintikka, we have a clear separation between propositional attitude and proposition... and their corresponding true/false values. This is most relevant for us because in our interpretation we have: 1) to take into account that reality is one thing and a possible world -fiction- is another possible world, 2) we will evaluate the utterances of literature not in relation to reality, but to that reality of the world depicted by the writer. What we have to do is check both the propositional belief and the proposition as true/false in that world. Only then, once we have built our interpretation we can start setting an equivalence fiction/reality in our world. To sum up:

P: world of the character: T/F
 P1-Pn: world of the literary work: T/F
 p: world of the reader.
 p1-n: world of reality.

Hintikka's logic helps us put into words our intuition: fiction is, if coherent, subject to truth values in a possible world. As reality is once removed, we can count on truth values to build up our pragmatic model.

We can advance now a tentative answer to the final question. Apart from there being the possibility of "open readings", we have the means to build up a pragmatic interpretation in such a way that we will include:

- 1.- The linguistic analysis of the work.
- 2.- The pragmatic analysis of the text by combining, roughly, linguistic interpretation and context.
- 3.- This pragmatic reading will be based on Sperber and Wilson's principle of Relevance (1986).

4.- Our interpretation, linguistically expressed will send us to human experience in life. The complexity and potentiality of the message will make the work rewarding: "joy" in the Lacanian sense will be the result... a) if the literary work is valid, b) if our interpretation is coherent and at the same time strongly and weakly communicative (Sperber & Wilson 1986, Blakemore 1992). We do not want to establish, it would be contradictory, a direct link between a rational construct and symbolism, but simply state that the building up of a linguistic interpretation may trigger "joy" in the same sense as, roughly, language in a psychoanalytical session has an effect on the subconscious. We want to note that everyday language is the means to metaphorically express the unattainable structure of the subconscious. We cannot explore further this subject here. We are also conscious that in Lacan "joy" is normally used to make reference to a strong feeling of anxiety being, as such, something negative. We merely collect here the sense of the unattainable that is present in Lacanian "joy" as metaphor: no matter what interpretation we may build up, it will never be enough. Our effort, however, will produce at the same time frustration and a sense of reward... not only in clinical terms. It is only in this way that we can join a representation of the real world with the world of symbols. We restrict our scope to this metaphor.

Having based ontologically our approach, a logical one, we will deal for a moment with those competing major theories in Anglo-Saxon pragmatics: Speech Act Theory and Conversational Maxims (Levinson 1983, Escandell, 1993).

Being simplistic, we can say that Speech Act Theory aims at Speech Acts performed in conditions of appropriateness. Beyond propositional truth values there is "extra" meaning that has to be accounted for. Speech Act Theory is based on human intentionality/volition (Lepore & Van Gulick, 1991) and evaluates speech acts, direct and indirect (Searle 1969, 1975) in terms of appropriateness... in a given context. Grice (1967, 1978), inside a conversational framework, postulates a co-operative principle and four maxims to explain how propositions (true) combine with contextual propositions and render, beyond literal meaning, implicatures, true propositions, in a context. The evaluation here is based on truth values. Up to our knowledge, Grice has not clearly established a distinction propositional belief/ proposition. Something important we will deal with when making reference to Relevance Theory.

To sum up, in Speech Act theory somebody states, denies warns etc that p. The Speech Act is felicitous or not. The proposition true or false. All in a context. In a Gricean framework, we deduce what is meant1 and implied (meant2) in a given context represented in the combination of propositions subject to truth values following conversational rules.

Sperber & Wilson's theory of Relevance is an attempt to simplify the Gricean framework 1) by postulating Relevance as *the* communicative principle, 2) by establishing an inferential-deductive process that can account for meaning in context. Relevance theory produces the principles to work out that number of implicatures which, in a given context, are maximally relevant by 1) Defining the listener's context as a set of arbitrary propositions which interact with those propositions uttered. 2) Considering as boundaries for the deduction in a given context: 2.1) A Satisfactory number of implicatures. 2.2) Processing effort in a limited time.

Now, we can't but mark two important differentiating characteristics in the building up of our literary interpretation: 1) Time does not necessarily matter for a reader/critic, 2)

Precisely because of that, *and if the text is well written*, the reader/critic will enjoy in *weak communication* (as defined by Sperber & Wilson, 1986, Blakemore, 1992).

Relevance theory tries to combine and integrate Speech-Act Theory and Gricean theory by making reference, in a way, to the propositional beliefs of the speaker. The idea is but suggested at the end of Sperber & Wilson (1986) but has helped us in the building up of our model.

Relevance theory, on the other hand, warns that it is necessary to enrich propositions resulting from linguistic constructions -Lyons, 1977 distinction: utterance, sentence, proposition is crucial here- in a given context before they can be processed. In all this process, truth values are kept.

In our model of analysis, as we have designed it so far, we follow Relevance Theory's central ideas: search for relevance in a context as number of implicatures taking into account processing effort. But we have been forced to introduce changes and expansions because we are dealing with literary dialogues on the one hand... and we are not that happy with Sperber and Wilson's view of performatives. Before proceeding, we have to say that the keeping of truth values and the adoption of the Principle of Relevance separates us from other ways of tackling dialogue (see for instance Meyer's *Rhethoric* (1986) or Jacques' *dialogisme* (1981)). This is due partially to conviction, partially to the fact that we constrain ourselves to the potential reader's building up of an interpretation of a literary dialogue in his/her search for relevance.

The main characteristics of our model are:

- 1.- Our point of view is that of a potential reader with two contexts: context (a), that of the narration, context (b) his/her own context. In both cases we are dealing with a set of propositions.
- 2.- The potential reader, simultaneously, is going to follow two evaluative criteria: true/false, appropriate/inappropriate in the sense that a given sentence can be true as fact but unfelicitous as act. Both concepts are essential in literature, one will render consistency to the text and to the inferential-deductive process. The second one will evaluate what has been said in relation with the status, in a broad sense, of the speaker.
- 3.- Because of this, Relevance kept as the guidance principle, is changed in the sense that we use it for two purposes in our interpretation: to evaluate something as true and/or adequate.
- 4.- The reader in his/her search of relevance builds up his/her interpretation by distinguishing propositional belief and propositions in context (a) and assigning the values true/appropriate to them.
- 5.- This reader is conscious that all his/her deductive process and its validation takes place in a possible world different from reality.
- 6.- This reader distinguishes neatly between context (a) and context (b) in his search for relevance.

Tentatively, then, the working model we propose is:

DIALOGUE
DEDUCTIVE TASK
INTERPRETATION

1.- FIRST LEVEL: CHARACTERS.

1.1.- *Context*: Novel up to now.

Discourse: previous descriptions: setting up of situation (level of narrator).

Exchange

1.2.- *Participants* : -character (context a)
 -narrator (context b)
 -reader (context a -as spectator)
 context b -as interpretator)

1.3.- *Utterance*.

Speaker [knowledge
 thought => "Formal Semantics" utters x -following:
 reference cooperative
 intention] principle
 -intending:
 relevance

1.4.- Grammatical Processing.

Interlocutor -grammatical form
 Narrator => processes: -intonation
 Reader -grammatical meaning
 -register

Reaching one propositional formula and one question:
Bap1: T/A in Ca?

On this level, we have to take into account that:

- 1.- The maxims of Manner and Quantity will have to be evaluated (marked order, intonation etc. we suppose that on the line of Sperber & Wilson 1979).
- 2.- The presence of an explicit performative will be detected.

This processing and questioning will lead to:

2.- CLARIFICATION OF PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE.

2.1.- If speaker believes p1 T/A: *P*.

2.2.- If speaker knows that p1 is generally T/A even if he does not believe it (i.e. if other people may consider it true): *p*.

2.3.- If speaker utters p1 being conscious of his status: T/A.

2.4.- If speaker utters p being conscious of the other people's consciousness of his status:
 T/A.

All this in context (a) in ' i.e. in the context of the narration in the world of fiction.

The determination of the sincerity and appropriateness of this propositional belief will lead to:

-listener.
 -narrator.
 -reader

taking into account Quality and Speech Acts to search for relevance.

3.- ENRICHMENT OF PROPOSITION.

Bap1 has to be enriched (Sperber & Wilson 1986) in context (a) according to:

-reference.
 -spatio-temporal axis.

- clarification of logical relations (conventional implicatures).
- completion of propositional form.
- disambiguation

have to render Bap1 in such a way that it can be processed in context according to relevance. This can only be done if the proposition is complete in context (a).

We are conscious that here there is a fuzzy area which requires a lot of work in the line of Sperber & Wilson's school (Carston 1988). We are but mentioning some of the problems: deixis, tense and, using Gricean terminology, conventional implicatures. Once the propositional form is complete we have to go to the next step.

4.- WORKING OUT OF IMPLICATURES ACCORDING TO RELEVANCE IN P, P' IN CONTEXT (A).

We assume that the listener/reader/narrator will have to reach significant conclusions in his/her deductive process both in the area of propositional beliefs and in the area of propositions. Apart from the distinction, and enlargement, of contexts: discursive/mutual/encyclopaedic, we have to suppose that the listener's context can, at least methodologically, be divided in: a) propositions about propositional attitudes i.e. the listener will have to work out the speaker's attitude towards what he/she has said: whether it is a statement of belief supported by context or is an echoic utterance (clash belief/proposition in that particular context). In the second case he/she will have to qualify the speaker's attitude as ironic and/or, at least partially, metaphorical (Sperber & Wilson 1988). To sum up, and coming back to the twofold evaluation we have distinguished, the listener has to decide whether the speaker's attitude is true and/or appropriate in that particular context and what is, therefore, the illocutionary force of the utterance given those conditions.

Besides, b), the listener/reader/narrator will have to work out by means of an inferential-deductive process the set of implicatures by means of the interaction of his/her context with what has been said. Here, again, Relevance will be the key element. We have to note that here there lies a basic distinction between listener (character in this case) and narrator/reader. In the first case time is limited: we are dealing with a "realistic" dialogue. In the second case there is as much time as is required to search for a relevance that goes beyond linguistic exchange.

At this stage, an interpretation has been reached. Relevance is the central communicative principle and the means to work out what has been implied out of what has been said subsuming on the one hand the other Gricean maxims, on the other, illocutionary force in a twofold evaluation: that what one can truly infer from an utterance which has been considered appropriate. To sum up: a listener/narrator/reader fixes a set of propositions in the following way:

- . Ex Pxp in C(a)
- Ea Pap in C(a)
- Ea Pa/b/c p,q,r in C(a)
- [a Ea Pa/b/c p,q,r in C(a)]

That is:

- 1.- The propositional attitude does not change once it has been established.
- 2.- There will be a number of propositions (implicatures) which will have different constants occupying the first slot in the predication which will be true of the world of fiction ... or of an alternative world in the context of the story.

3.- These implicatures can be subject to the existential quantifier (there is one a) or they can be presented as general truths (all a).

That about the character who has to answer... and who will act and speak accordingly. In the case of the narrator, apart from context (a) (being consistent), he/she will find relevance in context (b): the context of the author's world. In the case of the reader, also apart from context (a) there will be a context (b). But, in this case, (b) will consist of his context previous to the reading of the work and his context when and after reading the work. Contexts (b): those of the narrator and the reader will, typically be in intersection, i.e.: we think that we will never reach the whole and precise narrator's communicative intention... even if he/she knows it, something we doubt.

Once we have reached this point, we have to take into account that a reader will be exposed not only to literary dialogues but to different ways of description in narration. He/she will have to process information on different levels. As it is always the case in language (Halliday 1978) this processing of information will be simultaneous. We will never be able in a reductionist approach (in the sense of Clemens 1993) to specify everything a text suggests. But, when working out our interpretation, when explaining to ourselves how come that we have reached certain conclusions, we may well distinguish different inclusive levels in our deductive-inferential process in such a way that the dialogue is basic and the novel, as discourse, is the highest level, that place where all inferences are going to combine to achieve maximal relevance. The role of the narrator is essential: he/she selects information and gives us the material for our processing. A huge task lies here. For the moment, it suffices to reproduce the tentative levels of analysis we have distinguished up to now (Varela 1993):

INTERPRETATION: CONVERSATION + DESCRIPTION + CONTEXT

relevant to: story
novel

DISCOURSE

Reading2: conversation+description+context
relevant to: situation
novel

DESCRIPTION

Reading1: conversation+context
relevant to: character
situation
story

CONVERSATION

interpreted by: character
narrator
reader
interpreted by: narrator
reader
interpreted by: reader

What we have done, following the structural concept of levels of interpretation (Todorov 1977) is integrate the idea of different levels of analysis in a model whose main principle is the search for Relevance. What we suggest is simply that 1) when building up our in-

terpretation 2) when reasoning to ourselves this interpretation readers will process information, and will arrange their inferential-deductive processes in the way described in the diagram. To put it in a nutshell: dialogue “makes sense” in context. The output “makes sense” in a wider context, that of description. The output will “make sense” in a still wider context, that of discourse. We will have to take into account that in all cases we are dealing with one particular reader and his/her particular context. In his/her context there will be many assumptions, beliefs and facts common in his/her society, but there will also be a whole world of personal experience. Besides, this model, as we have already said, is reductionist: it can explain things up to a point, from then onwards it is open, i.e. we will never be able to explain why a reader likes something. We can only claim that once we have liked/disliked something we can explain to ourselves, to a certain extent, why... using the communicative principles current to analyse speech. Other options are, therefore, possible, but they can't be integrated in our model.

What is very important in our proposal is the role the narrator has in the building up of the linguistic message. The narrator selects and frames the linguistic exchanges of his/her characters. The best way to put it is that it is the narrator the one who speaks all the time in different forms (Leech & Short 1981 for a very basic approach). This is evidently true: it is the “voice of the narrator”, the teller of the story. But, here, in the building up of an interpretation we presuppose that we structure it following a deductive-inferential model from speech, what the character actually say, upwards, towards the novel as discourse. In a dialogue, the narrator's challenge is frame it in such a way that 1)it is “realistic” i.e. adequate in a possible world, 2) is capable of implying what the narrator wants to convey in: 1) the context of the exchange -depicted by the narrator-, 2) once this level is complete, on the level of description, that level in which the narrator makes comments on characters, actions and dialogues. The interaction of all this with context will lead us to the third level: discourse... in the wider context of a literary tradition, milieu etc. This is the idea, but now, let's go to the text, on the first level, to test this preliminary hypothesis. The passage we have chosen is from Julian Barne's latest novel: *Talking it over*. We've chosen this particular passage due to reasons that will become evident along our comment:

THE TEXT

“Oliver: Argumentation against affairs written down by one who has had more than his share of them.

1.- Vulgarity. Everyone's doing it. I mean: “everyone”. Priests do it. The Royal family does it, even hermits find a way of doing it. Why aren't they constantly bumping into one another on their damp passage from bedroom to bedroom? Bonk, bonk -who's there?

2.- Predictability. Courtship, Conquest, Cooling, Crackup. The same dreary little plot-line. Dreary, but no less horribly addictive. After each failure, the quest for another failure. Make the world fresh again!

3.- Time-sharing. I thought I put that rather well to Gillian. How can you enjoy your holiday when you know the owners are waiting to move back in? And fucking against the clock is not my style; though in *certain* circumstances it may have its wily attractions.

4.- Lying. A direct result of 3) above. Affairs corrupt -and I speak as One Who, etc. It's inevitable. First you lie to your partner and then, very soon afterwards, you lie to the second. Oh, you say you won't, but you will. You scoop out a little duck-pond of emotional integrity

with a great bulldozer of *mensonges*. Watch the track-suited husband go off jogging with a pocketful of change for the telephone. Jingle, jingle, the sound of lies tickling.

5.- Betrayal. How satisfied is everyone with small betrayals. What juice they provide. Roger the Dodger gets away with it again, part 27 -when getting away with it is really not very difficult. Stuart is my friend -yes he is- and he is going to lose his wife to me. That's a big Betrayal, but then I think people can handle Big Betrayals better than small ones. An affair would be a small betrayal, and I don't think Stuart could handle that as well as the Big Betrayal. You see, I do think about him as well.

6.- I haven't yet had the result of my Aids test."

Now, I didn't put it like this to Gillian, not exactly, no. In fact, to tell the truth, I think I made a terrible bosh of it." (Julian Barnes 1991, 150-52)

Now, the first and most evident reason why we have chosen this text is because it is a piece of argumentation. Discourse (the novel) until now tells us that Oliver, an "intellectual" with a particular psychological conformation, has fallen in love with Gillian, his best friend's -Stuart- wife. In this scene he is giving himself? reasons why he can't propose - and has not proposed- Gillian a simple love affair.

The first fact we note is that the narrator is not present. We can stick, therefore, to our first level of analysis. We can either see it as a written document in which Oliver writes a philosophical tract against "simple love affairs" or as a monologue in which Oliver feels that he considers himself a character who shows his thinking to an audience in fact, in the passage there is a "you":

"You see, I do think about him as well."

Let's tackle the second alternative... taking into account what we know and the way the novel is written.

After a first reading, we can get, among others, the following impressions:

- 1.- Oliver is not talking seriously.
- 2.- Oliver is too pretentious. He wants to be tragic -about love- and he is but a mock tragic character.
- 3.- His intellectual construction, apart from being defective, proves gratuitous in the end, once we reach reason 6).
- 4.- His logic is not convincing... and this proves in the novel.
- 5.- Barnes, as narrator, achieves distance, comical effects, irony, detachment from his character and therefore some literary merit in the passage... for us.

Now, in our search for Relevance, we will point at those elements that we consider central and which would lead us to build a complete interpretation of the passage.

LEVEL OF NARRATOR

We have the following schema: [[Barnes [Narrator [Oliver]]] states arguments (to convince) [Oliver/Audience [narrator [Barnes [reader]]]]. This is straightforward in our interpretation. Here we have Oliver speaking, but his words have been chosen by the narrator, and, ultimately, by Julian Barnes but it is Oliver who speaks. His words are significant first for this imaginary audience (or himself). But these words will prove relevant for the narrator, who has to keep on with the story, then for Barnes inasmuch as the novel -the

passage- is a reflection of his communicative function -and he can always become his own reader- and, finally, for the general reader who is working out his interpretation. Out of all this, necessarily, we have to concentrate on how Oliver advances arguments for: himself/audience/reader in a possible world in one narrative context. As we have noted, in our model the reader has two contexts: the narrative and his/her own context as reader. Therefore the schema will be:

Ea Pap1-n e Ca/Cb
 E: there is one
 a: Oliver
 : world of the novel
 ' : alternative world to the world of the novel
 Ca: context of the novel
 Cb: context of the reader

Therefore our task is:

- 1.- Check what Oliver states. Its grammatical form.
- 2.- Check his propositional attitude in terms of truth/appropriateness.
- 3.- Check the propositions and enrich them.
- 4.- Find relevance to Meaning1/Meaning2 in Ca (true/appropriate).
- 5.- Build up our *interpretation*, which will take into account:
 - 5.1.- A global interpretation of what it says (strong/weak implicatures).
 - 5.2.- A stylistic appreciation of what has been said taking into account 5.1.- and *coherence* as shown in the processing of the text in the number of weak implicatures.

1.- GRAMMATICAL FORM

In the first paragraph we find a complete declarative sentence postmodified by a relative clause postmodified, subsequently by relative clause. We can complete this introduction in the following way -we don't know yet Oliver's communicative intention, does he know it?:

Both Gricean maxims of Manner (being clear) and of Quantity (being informative enough) seem to be kept according to Context. There is not explicit performative, but we can propose one:

"I hereby submit my arguments against affairs. I hereby state that these arguments have been written down by one who has had more than his share of them."

Now, our question. *Bp1 T/A in Ca?*

This is what we have to check as readers. We have to note that this would be the moment to look at those particularities of *style*: register, foreign words and the like that could prove relevant in the process. For the moment, we have to say, only, that we are dealing with Oliver's "logic".

2.- PROPOSITIONAL BELIEF

Oliver states:

- 2.1.- that he has arguments against affairs.
- 2.2.- that he has had too many affairs.

Does he *believe* that? This is what the rest of the passage is going to be about for us. Provisionally, we can qualify all this in the following way:

- 2.1.1.- whether he believes that to be *true*: he is convincing himself.
- 2.2.2.- whether his arguments -and the way of presenting- are *adequate* in a context in which a) he has already had a "wild" affair with a student, 2) he is planning on committing adultery with his best friend's wife.
- 2.2.3.- whether what he means and what he says ... is true and appropriate in a possible world: that of the reader.
- 2.2.4.- whether he has the *authority*, assumed and real, to perform this *speech act*.

If we start by the end we realise that the speech act is blatantly *false* and *unfelicitous*. Maybe Oliver can present rational arguments but, taking into account his moral and psychological characteristics, he cannot present them as moral statements. There is, therefore, between his declaration and reality a very big gap. The Speech Act falls flat and his propositional attitude has to be taken with, at least, a pinch of salt. It is not appropriate because he lacks the status to enforce it and therefore it is false in his beliefs. Tentatively, we have included on this level the Gricean maxim of Quality. Oliver's propositional beliefs are not sincere. On this level of the Speech Act, this is not valid.

What about himself? We can see a desperate mock -anticipating- reasoning to convince himself. It is going to be the line of argumentation itself which is going to show that.

3.- ENRICHMENT OF PROPOSITION

This is, for us the most complex part of the whole process: tense assignment, reference etc. We confess that we are not prepared to tackle this process here... because this would mean to face all the basic problems in a grammatical description. The relation *meaning/grammar* proves here to be the most conflictive point of linguistics. We are not so bold as to suggest more than the average disambiguation. We can only note that unless we have full propositions enriched and disambiguated in context the deductive-inferential model will be senseless (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, pp. 188-91).

4.- IMPLICATURES

If what Oliver has stated in the preliminary paragraph is taken *seriously* (co-operative principle), these sentences would imply, among other things, 1) that Oliver is fed up with love affairs, 2) *that he is not going to start another affair*. If the propositional belief does not hold, we can have *irony*.

Irony, according to Sperber & Wilson would be a case of *clash* between proposition and context showing a particular attitude (1988, 147). Now, taking into account the two potential addressees we have to take into account: (Oliver) and reader we are going to have *irony* at least in the case of the reader. What happens with Oliver? Here we have him making fun of himself *by means of his own logical procedure*. We'll reach this when we go from line of argumentation to line of argumentation.

To sum up: in the opening lines we have:

A failed speech act because:

- 1.- Oliver has not the status to enforce it neither for the reader as for himself, as it will be proved at the end.
- 2.- Two propositions have not been uttered sincerely. This cancels the standard deductive process and makes the reader in his search for relevance:

- 3.- follow a different deductive path in which: a) irony, b) exaggeration c) contradiction will be essential... up to the moment in which sincerity /appropriateness shows up again. Then, he/she will find full relevance to the passage.
- 4- work out strong and weak implicatures that provide him/her with further moral and psychological characterization of the passage, prepare him/her for the subsequent development of the plot... and context b- allow him/her to reflect on certain kinds of intellectuals in nowadays England, England's social milieu...and the value of the literary passage from a communicative point of view.

About Oliver... his "logic" will lead him to the ultimate truth, to that fear that, beyond feelings moral flaws, prevents him from showing a true propositional attitude. In his case, the linearity of the arguments will lead him to a better knowledge of himself and to the formulation of a true statement.

4.1.- DEDUCTIVE PROCESS AND THE LINEAMENT OF ARGUMENTS.

We cannot go fully to examine the whole deductive-inferential system of all the sentences of the passage. We'll content ourselves with a view of the "logical structure" of the arguments:

4.1.1.- PREDICTABILITY /TIME-SHARING.

Apart from the fact that in a line of argumentation the arguments are *not well arranged* (for us two would be more general than one in the sense that there is established a process, for example), argument 2) Predictability and argument 3) Time-sharing show a common feature: *cancellability*. In what sense? *Both present an, apparently, universal truth* that is cancelled by a process of instantiation. Very sketchily:

"Love affairs are predictable and, therefore dreary...*but no less horribly addictive*" (*in my case*).

If we have a negative, universal argument against love affairs there cannot be exceptions in the rejection if the propositional value is true. By opposing reasoning to personal experience (personal characteristics) Oliver cancels the argument and shows no commitment to his propositional belief. If the argument is possible in a possible world this is not Oliver's.

The same happens with argument 3): "Fucking against the clock is not my style; though in *certain* circumstances it can have its wily addictions". Oliver's personal world is not defined. First part is cancelled by second.

The common feature is that there is a clash between so much argumentation and one particular instantiation: Oliver. In the case of the reader a certain set of conclusions are reached, All of them ironic. In context a, doubt and self-convincing process will lead to truth.

4.1.2.- VULGARITY /LYING.

Both arguments cancelled this time by *exaggeration*. In the case of vulgarity a particular truth is presented as a universal truth leading to *absurd* (imaginary world far beyond the world of the situation). Lying, on the other hand, is presented as a universal truth apparently reinforced by Oliver's personal experience. From a different angle, *Oliver's personal experience* is the one that accounts for the general truth. For particular to universal truth. Besides, this is represented by a normal everyday action evaluated as true always in an *absurd* funny equation in the world of the novel: change in one's pocket = adultery.

4.1.3.- BETRAYAL.

Oliver's argument is twofold: 1) Everybody likes affairs because betraying friends gives satisfaction. But, affairs are a small betrayal. Depriving somebody of one's wife is a Big Betrayal. 2) Stuart holds better Big than small betrayals - sincerity?- therefore, Oliver will Big betray Stuart for his sake. Apart from faulty logic, we have faulty prepositional beliefs. It's up to the reader now to think about the relation of these two friends, Oliver and Stuart in the context of the novel. Big betrayal-small effect, small betrayal-big effect with respect to a friend go beyond the reasoning process in the passage. Up to now, therefore, we have bad argumentation. The reasoning is neither true nor appropriate if we take the heading of the passage as the point of reference.

4.1.4.- AIDS.

Up to this point, on his/her search for relevance, not trusting Oliver's prepositional attitude from the start, the reader finds that reasoning process that we have labelled *faulty logic*. We have seen very summarily how not even one argument stands. The reader is forced to see the whole process with *distance*. Oliver's desperate effort in front of his audience will provide the reader, first of all, with new elements about Oliver's personality: he will be seen here as a person basically insincere with himself, complicated, not complex, up to the point of ridicule and laughable at his pseudointellectualism. Food for thought for our third level: the novel, where we can find full relevance. At this moment, then, the reader can ask him/herself: why has the narrator ever written this monologue? and, further, is this a good piece of work or, at least effective? We think that from a *bathetic* point of view the narrator has achieved his goals: to show that serious words and what happens in this triangle are miles away. There is no dramatism, there is no tension, there is only one person who, in an autoconvincing process, reaches finally the truth:

"I hereby state that I haven't yet had the results of my Aids test."

It is here, in argument 6 where 1) Oliver is sincere to himself and states why he has not had yet had a love affair with Gillian, 2) the reader can find a) a true and adequate propositional belief, b) a fully relevant sentence which explains what has happened up to now, makes this mock-St.

Thomas more human, connects context a, reality of the fictive world with context b, the reader's reality and makes the reader understand that joking, the narrator is dealing with serious business. Oliver, finally, reaches certain psychological depth and human characterization. Now we can read the end of the passage:

"Now, I didn't put it like this to Gillian, not exactly, no. In fact, to tell the truth, I think I made a terrible bosh of it."

5.- FROM INTERPRETATION TO EVALUATION

Once we have found relevance to the passage, as the same time as we have built up our interpretation, we can start asking ourselves now whether we consider that this passage is "good" or "bad" or, better whether it is well written or not... for us, or, better still, if the interpretation we have built up communicates *weakly* to such an extent that we can enjoy it in the context of the novel in interaction with reality. We are conscious that we are involved in an individual task here. We are not dealing with literary criticism but evaluating our construct in our own subjective world. "Good" and "bad" merely indicate whether the text is rewarding to us, if it triggers in us that partly conscious partly unconscious activity to which corresponds that feeling we have labelled, following Lacan: "joy". We limit our aesthetic evaluation to this single point because we cannot aim at more. We can only state

that the rational construct we have built does not motivate *us* to go further. It is only in this sense that we can say that the answer to the question posited at the beginning of this last section is negative. We understand, we think, Julian Barnes' purpose, but we consider, in the end, the whole thing *bathetic*. Oliver's characterization and words are, for us, too ridiculous in a context in which love affairs and triangles are presented as something banal and miles away from the kinds of feelings that we consider our own. We can understand the *mechanics* of the passage following the lines of our approach and we can perceive Julian Barnes' communicative and aesthetic goal: depicting a world in which mediocrity and verbosity have supplanted feeling and intellect and in which a triangle is but a bad joke. Something, anticipating, made explicit at the end of the novel. The problem lies in the fact that we, as readers, do not react beyond the intellectual process of comprehension. Our world of ideas, beliefs and feelings cannot interact with what has been presented here. After all the verbosity, and cleverness, of the passage E.M. Forster's (1927) term *flat* seems to be the *most relevant* concept to apply to the character. In our view, distance "makes sense" only if there is something beyond, something that provokes a tension in which an intellectual, and aesthetic, effort is rewarding. Beyond faulty logic, we find but a "witty" description of a character we cannot either like or see as complex in a reading that does not motivate us beyond. We are conscious that some other reader may have a different point of view. It is up to his/her Relevance to keep on enjoying the text. We stop once the linguistic and logical puzzle is solved.

6.- CONCLUSION

To sum up, we can say that in this paper we have framed a tentative approach to a pragmatic reading of a text based on our current linguistic research. The approach we have designed, based on Relevance theory, proves useful to arrange our comprehension and interpretation of a text by means of the pragmatic criteria we use to analyze normal everyday exchanges and to help us understand how come that we like or dislike something *only in the realm of an individual reading*. Other options, and other pragmatic approaches, are, evidently possible, but these are beyond our scope: the search for Relevance in a pragmatic framework in which literary language is but language in context. We are not, we suppose we will never be, literary critics. In fact, we have stressed language processing, not literary evaluation. However, we can give a reasoned, and we hope that also coherent, account of why a text does, or does not, reach, for us that literary merit beyond wit and technique which goes from coherence to suggestion, from language to Lacanian joy by means of the model of analysis we have proposed. The interface Literature-Pragmatics proves to be useful and rewarding. A lot of work remains to be done.

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