

*Paulo Meneses*

# THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL TALE: DOCTRINAIRE EXPRESSION OF MEDIEVAL SPIRITUALITY

*“Hagiography is directly realized in the world of the divine, in which each represented element finds its meaning. The life of a saint is a significant life in God”.<sup>1</sup>*

All specialists who question the diverse components of the medieval universe stress that the *ecclesiastical institution* occupied a choice place within the sociocultural structure of that world. This is true because of the solidity of its implantation in the century and particularly because of the efficacy of its doctrinal function. In the cultural domain, the production and transmission of knowledge (in addition to the practice of indoctrination that it supposes), the

Translated by Jeanne Ferguson

<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Esthétique de la création verbale*, translated by Alfred Aucoturier, Paris, Gallimard, 1948, p. 189.

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

Church was completely sovereign. The ecclesiastical institutions (from simple parish churches to cathedrals and episcopal sees, as well as convents and monasteries) were responsible for the foundation and rise of medieval schools, universities, the centers where books were produced—or more precisely, manuscripts—and the organization of libraries.

The power of the ecclesiastical institution was such that all medieval thought revolved around a polarizing center that constituted the idea of God and his saving power over the human soul. The hagiographical text did not escape either by its nature or its function from this rigid norm that presided over all reflective and creative work of medieval man. In the quotation given above as epigraph, Mikhail Bakhtin clearly indicates what this genre of narration is, in substance. Aaron J. Gourevitch, another Soviet medievalist with an international reputation writes:

“Nor can we ignore the value system on which the view of medieval man rests and claim to understand his culture. In the Middle Ages the most widespread and popular literary genre was hagiography, the “Lives” of the saints; the most characteristic architectural model was the cathedral; painting was dominated by icons, and sculpture by figures from the Holy Scriptures. Medieval masters—writers and painters—, scorning the visible configuration of the world around them, fixed their eyes on the other world”.<sup>2</sup>

The position of Horst Ruthrof is just as fundamental. With regard to the nature and function of hagiography he tells us,

“Unlike the aesthetically organized *Märchen*, the European Saint’s legend has a clear ideological focus. It is addressed to a theologically structured community of believers, thus re-enforcing an actually existing relationship of dependence between an actual controlling authority and a controlled audience.”<sup>3</sup>

In this passage we find two essential elements of the theory of signification such as it was elaborated by the great masters of

<sup>2</sup> Aaron J. Gourevitch, *Les Catégories de la culture médiévale*, translated by Nina Godneff and Hélène Courtin, Paris, Gallimard, 1983, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Horst Ruthrof, *The Reader’s Construction of Narrative*, London-Boston-Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 126.

medieval studies: the idea of a community of believers organized hierarchically according to rigid theological norms and the existence of a rapport of dependence between an emitting authority with full powers and a submitted and passive receiving entity. Gourevitch very correctly writes,

“Theology represented the ‘supreme generalization’ of the social practice of medieval man; it offered a universal semiotic system, and the members of feudal society understood themselves and their world in terms of theology. They found in it the justification and explanation of this world. That also means that the medieval view of the world was characterized by its integrality, from which comes its specific non-differentiation, the inseparability of its different spheres. From this also comes the belief in the unity of creation. Just as the details of the Gothic cathedral express the architectonics of the divine edifice; just as a chapter of a theological compendium reveals the organizing principle of the whole; just as in the individual event in world history was seen the symbol of events in sacred history, in other words, just as the eternal was perceived in the temporary, man represented the union of all the composing elements of the world and the final end of creation. Everything was contained in the minute particle: the microcosm was in a way the replica of the macrocosm.”<sup>4</sup>

In the same vein, Armand Strubel writes,

“St. Augustine is the source for two very important movements in medieval ‘mentality’ that form the intellectual background of literary allegory: on the one hand, the conviction that *the entire universe is only a symbol and everything in it is a reflection of God* (the basis of theological reflection and artistic inspiration up until the 13th century); on the other hand, the organized ensemble of the exegesis, which becomes richer from century to century and offers a *coherent model of discourse*.”<sup>5</sup>

The intention of the present study is to show how the nature of a certain kind of medieval story, as well as its didactic and

<sup>4</sup> Aaron J. Gourevitch, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Armand Strubel, “La littérature allégorique”, in Daniel Poirion, ed., *Précis de littérature française du Moyen Age*, Paris, P.U.F., 1983, chap. VIII, p. 239 (our italics).

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

doctrinary function, influences, by controlling it, the way the narrator treats the material with which he “composes” his story and the way in which the story would be received and assimilated by its eventual readers. We hope to do this by means of an interpretative analysis of the principal mechanisms of narrative technique of a hagiographical text that we consider exemplary—*The Vision of Tundal*.<sup>6</sup>

Essentially, our observations on the *Vision of Tundal* will consider the concepts of narrative modality and narrative semantics defined by Lubomir Doležel,<sup>7</sup> but we will also refer to other theoretical formulations having to do with the field of narrative text. For Doležel,

“Modalities and systems of modalities are abstract semantic concepts which can be established and studied independently of their particular manifestations, that is, also independently of their manifestation as *narrative modalities*.”<sup>8</sup>

Doležel believes this fact to be essential for the theoretical solidity of the text grammar of the narrative he proposes. This grammar is based on the concept of textual coherence which, in his opinion, is indispensable for a theory of text to be scientifically valid:

“Text theory would fail in its mediating role, if it were conceived as a mere application or extension of current linguistic models. The autonomy of text theory can be justified only if specific text properties, i.e., properties distinguishing text structures from language structures are posited as its explicandum. It is now widely acknowledged that one of these properties is *text coherence*.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *La vision de Tundal* (or Tondale or Tnudgal, transcribed in Portuguese as Tundalo or Tungallo), a Latin text of 1148 or 1149 by Marcus, a southern Irish monk, probably after a sojourn he made with the nuns of St. Paul at Ratisbon. This monk was the companion of Malachie and knew St. Bernard. The Portuguese quotations are taken from a critical edition by Patricia Villaverde Gonçalves, (*Revista Lusitana*, Lisbon, 1982-1983). The French equivalents are taken from *La Vision de Tondale*, French, Anglo-Norman and Irish texts, translated from the Latin and published by V.-H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer, Paris, Champion 1907.

<sup>7</sup> Lubomir Doležel, “Narrative Semantics,” *PTL*, 1, 1967a, pp. 129-151; *id.* “Narrative Modalities,” *Journal of Literary Semantics*, V. 1, 1976b, pp. 5-13; *id.* “Truth and Authenticity in Narrative,” *Poetics Today*, 1-3, 1980, pp. 7-25.

<sup>8</sup> Lubomir Doležel, 1976a, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, 1976b, p. 5.

In line with the proposals of one of the pioneers in the theory of the text, Teun A. van Dijk, Doležel considers—quoting van Dijk—that a text grammar of the narrative must take textual coherence into account on two levels:

“The constraints upon the concatenation of sentences in a coherent sequence are of two different types. A first set determines the immediate, linear transition relations between the sentences... we will call these constraints micro-structural constraints or *micro-constraints*. Our *hypothesis* about the form of a text grammar, however, is much stronger. We claim that the coherence of sequences is also determined by what may be called *macro-constraints*. These have the whole sequence as their scope.”<sup>10</sup>

We find the macrotextual components for the kind of narrative texts that are the object of Doležel’s theoretical proposals in the domain of the “diegesis.” Western poetic tradition has tried to account for the various problems posed by these components from two points of view: “compositional,” that is, associated with the *Poetics* of Aristotle and concerning contemporary literary theory (the German rhetoric school, specialists in “natural narration” like Labov and Waletzky, among others):

“which operates with such macrostructural concepts as: *descriptio* and *narratio*, exposition, complication (crisis), reversal, solution (dénouement), *Vorgeschichte*, *Zwischengeschichte*, *Nachgeschichte*, etc. The patterns of the story emerge from the linear arrangement of these macrostructures”<sup>11</sup>;

and a “functional or semantic” point of view, introduced by V. Propp, later taken up by C. Lévi-Strauss and C. Bremond, strengthened by the discovery of the fact that:

“a corpus of stories can be reduced to a limited number of

<sup>10</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, “Text Grammar and Text Logic,” in S. Petöfi-H. Rieser, ed., *Studies in Text Grammar*, Dordrecht, D. Reidel 1973, (*apud* Lubomir Doležel, 1976b, p. 5).

<sup>11</sup> Doležel, 1976b, p. 6.

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

invariant semantic units; these units form a paradigmatic system from which all the stories of the corpus can be derived.”<sup>12</sup>

Not satisfied with these two points of view, Lubomir Doležel proposes a text grammar of the narrative resting on the concept of “modality,” beginning with the following declaration of principles:

“in my opinion, story coherence has to be described primarily in terms of semantic macrostructures [...]. In this paper, a proposal is made to base “narrative grammar” on the concept of modalities”<sup>13</sup>

given that the modalities have intrinsic properties that, in macrostructural terms, can preside over the global coherence of the narrative texts. As generic semantic concepts, they can form homogeneous logical systems closely tied to the components of the stories, especially to actions, with the advantage of being able to go beyond

“the scope of individual actions and assume a role of global (macrostructural) constraints dominating a whole sequence of actions.”<sup>14</sup>

Once the regulating power of certain modal concepts (particularly deontic ones) concerning the logic of human action is determined, it becomes easy to envisage the modalities as “potential constraints imposed on human actions,”<sup>15</sup> since Doležel tells us,

“it is precisely this controlling role of modalities (recognized with respect to human actions) which makes them a strong candidate in our search for story-forming macro-constraints. A sequence of narrated actions is structured into a coherent story by being subject to controls imposed by narrative modalities.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.*

Beginning with these theoretical presuppositions, Doležel determines four kinds of stories that come directly from the four types of modalities which he uses:<sup>17</sup>

- *alethic stories* (alethic modalities) in which operators of possibility, impossibility and necessity function.
- *deontic stories* (deontic modalities) where operators of permission, interdiction and obligation come into play.
- *axiological stories* (axiological modalities) where operators of benevolence, maliciousness and indifference are at stake.
- *epistemic stories* (epistemic modalities) where the operators of knowledge, ignorance and conviction intervene.

These four types of stories make up the atomic or elementary stories, in other words, “story structures that are formed under the restrictions of one unique modal system.” Nevertheless, it may be that the modal constraints that weigh on the “story” of a narrative text do not come from one sole modal system, producing in this way “molecular” or “composed” stories, namely

“stories [that] are ”built” from atomic stories, either by linear concatenation (with possible patterns of parallelism, symmetry, contrast, etc.), or by the procedure of modal synthesis (imposing two or more jointly operating modal constraints).”<sup>18</sup>

Finally, let us recall a characteristic of modalities that is of capital importance for the Dolezian narrative theory: the modal operators intervening in the kinds of stories mentioned will be in rapport with one or more agents of these stories. In other words, there is a relativization of modalities. This implies that the agents of one type of determined story may have modal concord or modal discord, depending on whether the modalities to which they relate are identical or opposed. In the first case, it will be a story of

<sup>17</sup> Doležel, 1976a, pp. 142-145. On the importance of modal constraints with regard to the facts of history in narrative texts, see also Vitor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva, *Teoria da Literatura*, Coimbra, Almedina, 1982, Vol. I, pp. 567-568.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* 1976b, p. 7.

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

cooperation or alliance, while the second will engender an antagonistic story.<sup>19</sup>

Let us see, in substance, what happens in a story, that is, in the domain of the narrative macrostructure, like the *Vision of Tundal*. It recounts the life of a knight:

“bel grant et fors et de noble lignage mais de pechie et de malisse estoit plains et n’avoit cure deu salut de s’ame, et de notre seignor encore moins, sainte eglise desprisoit, et si ne uoloit ueoir les poures membres de Jhesu Crist, et ce qu’il hauoit dependait en maluois usaiges et en vanite.” (p. 5)

One day this dissolute and unbelieving knight fell victim of an illness that was almost always fatal and his soul, torn from his body, was drawn into a “peregrination”<sup>20</sup> across spaces varying from hell (the kingdom of darkness and damnation), purgatory (the place of penitence and expiation, in the Christian sense of the word which through repentance and conversion to the good leads the way to happiness), and paradise (recompense filled with the calm and serene light of those who have lived in conformity with the dogmas of the Christian doctrine). This incursion of the soul into the supernatural world responds to a triple objective: to inform it through experience of the future of those who, on earth, lead an immoral life, outside the precepts of the divine law, and those who, on the contrary, fear God and consider this life as a simple passage toward eternal happiness; to permit the soul, when it returns to the body, to give the world a detailed report of all it has seen and experienced, so that those who hear its story may choose the right way and reject the forbidden life. In other words, to effect a purification in the hearers by means of the eloquent description of the vile while assuring the maintenance of an established order, in this case the divine order as presented by the dogmas of Catholicism; finally, to create an exemplary model,<sup>21</sup> (Tundal, who

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* 1976a, pp. 148-149/1976b, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> “Peregrination” as the only way for the salvation of the soul is an essential idea of the medieval view of the world.

<sup>21</sup> Exemplarity, capable of leading to imitation, is a fundamental element of the emic plan of the hagiographic text. That is, it is presented as a distinctive trait of the “narrative armature” (Greimas) of this type of text (see in this regard André Jolles, *Formes simples*, French version by Antoine-Marie Buget, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1972, p. 36).



after the return of his soul to his body abandons his former way of life and submits entirely to the divine will of which he becomes the servant and efficacious hero) that awakens in the theological community<sup>22</sup> the desire to imitate him.

This synthesis shows us that the story of the *Vision of Tundal* is comprised of three stages: a) the presentation of the hero giving an account of his origins and his way of life until the time when, during his dangerous illness, his soul is torn from his body and transported by a sort of *via sacra* into the unknown and the unusual; b) the passage of the soul through hell and purgatory (where it expiates in various ways its terrestrial abuses while experiencing the terrifying vision of the horrible punishments inflicted on many other souls by monstrous creatures found there), then to paradise (where it contemplates the happy and peaceful life of the elect) that permits it to realize the choice it must make when it returns to the body: either the practice of good (rewarded by paradise, which is allowed) or the practice of evil (which is forbidden) punished with the horrors of hell or the rigors of purgatory; c) the conversion of Tundal who renounces his past (which is forbidden) to embrace a new ideal—paradise—whose access is reserved for those who observe the divine law (which is permitted).

It is easy to see that here we have a story of the genre of those that Doležel qualifies as molecular or composed, that is, a story whose internal cohesion does not depend on one sole modal system. Three kinds of modal constraints, interlinked, contribute to its coherent formation: those of the deontic system,<sup>23</sup> the axiological system<sup>24</sup> and the epistemic system.<sup>25</sup> Let us go back to the story of the *Vision of Tundal* to see how it articulated with regard to the modal constraints in question. In fact, this is a case in which norms and values play a preponderant role. The “knowledge” factor is also of capital importance, because a good

<sup>22</sup> Horst Ruthrof, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> Doležel, 1976a, pp. 142-143; *id.* 1976b, p. 8. See also A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris, Hachette, 1979, under the word “Déontiques” (*modalités*).

<sup>24</sup> Doležel, 1976b, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, *ibid.*, p. 9. See also A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *op.cit.*, under the word “Epistémiques” (*modalités*).

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

observation of the norms and the conscious choice of the values needed to persuade and indoctrinate that characterize hagiographical texts depend on it:

a) *Deontic modal constraints/axiological modal constraints* (norms/values):<sup>26</sup> as we have already pointed out, the transport of the soul into various zones of a supernatural universe is justified and has a meaning only if it is seen as an efficacious process of transmission—under an “authority of control”, and intended for a “controlled audience”<sup>27</sup> that includes the soul—of an ensemble of norms (composed of the opposition permitted/forbidden) and values (which inform the binomial good/evil) conducive to giving the listeners the intrinsic desire to follow the way that leads to the archetype of the good (authorized) and at the same time the capacity to refuse everything that has to do with the paradigm of evil (forbidden).

b) *Epistemic modal constraints*: the whole story of the *Vision of Tundal* is organized in order to stress the fact that the licentious and impious life of the knight Tundal is due purely and simply to a state of ignorance or false belief, a state which will be radically changed by the “pilgrimage” of his soul, either by the direct test of unknown situations (the trials it undergoes), or by the circumstantiated and authoritative explanations given by the angel, his ever-present companion on this journey to the end of the night. In transforming an (initial) state of ignorance into a state of cognizance, the narrative process of the hagiographic text in general and the *Vision of Tundal* in particular only obeys the logic that governs what, by nature and by function, is essential to it: to show/teach<sup>28</sup> man the best line of conduct to follow with the view of the award that awaits him at the Last Judgment.

We may also say that our text begins as a story of discord, antagonism (the deontic, axiological and epistemological modal

<sup>26</sup> We treat these two types of “modal constraints” in the same paragraph so that, in the case we are dealing with, they are found in a rapport of mutual dependence, a fact that would make their approach artificial and of small consequence in individualized terms.

<sup>27</sup> Ruthrof, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>28</sup> Doležel, 1976a, pp. 147-148.

operators regarding Tundal and the angel are antagonistic) and ends, after the long and painful process represented by the penitential course to which the soul is submitted, as a story of concord or alliance between the two mentioned narrative agents, the only one that could satisfy the eminently catechistic aims proper to this genre of story.

To respond to the objectives we have established, it remains for us to see how these global constraints, acting at the level of the profound structure of the texts, intervene in the organization of the outward structure of our account. To do this, we have chosen three aspects: the one concerning the status of the narrator; the one regarding the conception of the personages and space in which they move; and finally the one that refers to the status of narratology and the potential readers of the analyzed text.

#### NARRATOR(S)

A careful examination of the entity presiding over the entire organization of the universe represented in this kind of text—the narrator<sup>29</sup>—is essential for determining in a sound and efficacious manner the meaning or meanings conveyed by the story.

The *Vision of Tundal* places us before a narrative voice whose textual order—apparently complex—arises directly from the modal constraints that are exercised at the level of its profound structure, forming a coherent system of three narrative voices that, although acting on different levels, create a rapport of mutual solidarity, cemented by a common trait of vital importance—that of authority. More precisely, we have,

a) a hetero-diegetic narrator at zero degree<sup>30</sup> who is analogous to the author of the text, remaining almost entirely in the

<sup>29</sup> “Among the possible personages of a novel (a genre that, within this context, is considered as the paradigmatic realization of literary accounts) there is one that is distinguished by its status and functions in the narrative process and in the structure of the text: it is the narrator...Any narrative text implies the mediation of a narrator: the voice of the narrator is always heard in the account in presenting the traits that distinguish it in conformity with its status of the person responsible for the narrative statement, and it is the one that produces in the literary text the other voices found there—the voices of possible hypo-diegetic narrators and those of personages” (V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, *op.cit.*, pp. 663 and 727).

<sup>30</sup> “The zero degree of individuation—what I will call here impersonal

## The Hagiographical Tale

background<sup>31</sup> with regard to the world represented in his story. His principal function is to present a beneficial and exemplary story in objective and incontestable terms, the responsibility for the story going immediately afterward to the one whose soul will be the protagonist. It seems obvious that this narrator, who is located at an “extra-diegetic”<sup>32</sup> level is concerned with appearing as the mere dispenser of a story that in his eyes is urgent to write down, because it belongs to a tradition threatened with disappearance and because it constitutes an exemplary, almost unique, case. Once this mission is accomplished, the relating of events passes to the one who has experienced them: Tundal. The narrator takes up the account again only at the end of Tundal’s story to have us share in his conversion and the rules of life that are from then on to mark his passage in the world of men. The brief but vital intervention of this narrative voice responds on one hand to the need to give a maximum of objectivity and credibility to the story it is telling that no doubt can enter the mind of the potential receivers of Tundal’s story and on the other hand, it responds to the well-known desire to share, to make known something that should not remain in the realm of the unknown.

narration—is attained when the discourse of the narrator presupposes one property, and only one: the ability to tell a story” (Marie-Laure Ryan, “The Pragmatics of Personal and Impersonal Fiction,” *Poetics*, 10, 1981, pp. 517-539; quotation taken from page 518); “The words of the anonymous narrator *Er-form* (our case) has a guarantee of authenticity which is lacking in the words of narrative agents” (Doležel, 1980, p. 11).

<sup>31</sup> Apropos of the “effacement of the emitter” in medieval literary texts, we may refer to the following studies: V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, *op.cit.* pp. 223-224; M. Bakhtin, *op.cit.*, p. 189; E.R Curtius, *La Littérature européenne et le Moyen Age latin*, translated from the German by Jean Bréjoux, Paris, P.U.F., 1956.

<sup>32</sup> “By definition, the narrator of a primary account is a narrator in the first degree, whose narrative act is external with regard to the related facts” (V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, *op.cit.*, p. 730), the reason for which it is called *extra-diegetic* (as opposed to the *intra-diegetic* narrator, a category in which the two other narrative voices of our text are integrated). The inclusion of a narrator in one of these categories depends on the possibility it has to “be characterized”... through its relationship as a productive instance of the discourse with the diegetic level constructed by its discourse, seeing that, according to Gérard Genette, “any recounted event in a story is at a diegetic level immediately above the one in which the producing narrative act of this story is situated” (*id.*, *ibid.*). See also in this regard Shlomith Rimpon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London, New York, Methuen, 1985, pp. 91-95.

b) As we have already pointed out, our second narrator is located at the intra-diegetic level.<sup>33</sup> It is the knight Tundal who will take charge of relating a series of actions in which his “soul” has the role of “protagonist.”<sup>34</sup> Placed outside the story that he tells us<sup>35</sup> and of which he knows intimately all the stages (without forgetting that of his sudden seizure in the form of a vision), he essentially seeks to give his account a maximum of credibility and efficaciousness, because his narrative act will only be fully accomplished if he succeeds in making it an *exemplum* that will awaken the desire for imitation. Two prime functions are attributed to him: that of coordinating all the acts of the discourse so that the account of the various situations in which the soul finds itself engaged during its “peregrination” will appear as a convincing account of a case which, from the fact of its new and exemplary character, will remain engraved in the memory of the community to which it is addressed; and second, to allow the later introduction of the hypo-diegetic narration<sup>36</sup> of which we are going to speak.

<sup>33</sup> “During a primary account, secondary accounts, more or less long, may nevertheless be produced by second-degree narrators existing in the diegetic universe, whose narration is in that way intra-diegetic” (V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, *op.cit.*, pp. 730-731).

<sup>34</sup> As to the treatment of personages, we return to the doubt, expressed by quotes, that we feel by designating the “soul” as a protagonist in Tundal’s story.

<sup>35</sup> The fact that the account of the “soul’s” course devolves on the “body” from which it was entirely detached during the peregrination should be pointed out for two essential reasons: a) because it obeys the principle of the “global coherence of the story” told, acting, as we said above, at the level of profound structure and imposing on it the presence of two nuclear factors: a maximum of credibility and conviction, from which comes a maximum of aptitude to convince its potential readers (This hetero-diegetic could of course also choose the homo-diegetic way to become an observer more closely connected to the world represented in its story—the “subjectivated *Er-form*” of Doležel) 1980, pp. 16-17)—; another choice was to make the “soul” an auto-diegetic narrator, the Doležian “*Ich-form*” (*ibid.*, pp. 17-18). But as Doležel observes, there is lacking in both options the “function of authentication” of the narrative universe that characterizes the genre of the chosen narrator and they thus cannot be adapted to the nature and function of the hagiographic text); b) because, conforming entirely to the medieval view of the world, it marks the incompatibility existing between terrestrial things and those of the divine sphere, thus not permitting that the body becomes a traveling companion of the soul and taking away from it any possibility of being a homo-diegetic narrator.

<sup>36</sup> On the use of the terms “hypo-diegetic story/hypo-diegetic narrator” and on their functions, see V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, (*op.cit.*, p. 731) and Shomith Rimón-Kenan (*op.cit.*, pp. 91-95).

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

c) A narrator who is located in the narration of second degree (hypo-diegetic): the angel, traveling companion of the soul. Questioned from time to time by the soul on the specific meaning of the space in which it finds itself or the situation in which it is engaged, the angel makes of his answers an ensemble of “hypo-diegetic” stories whose essential role is to enlighten its interlocutor, in other words, to explain the inherent states and actions of the story to which they appertain.

We must note that the angel, as narrator, has a different status from that of the narrators of the first and second degrees: since he takes a direct part in the events that his discourse explains, he is a “homo-diegetic” narrator (subjectivized *Er-form*)<sup>37</sup> without disobeying the conditions imposed by the narrative “macrostructures” (objectivity, credibility and strength of conviction) that make the first two narrative voices “hetero-diegetic” narrators, and also because, since his condition as angel sets him in the heights of the celestial hierarchy, any uncertainty is excluded as far as the authenticity of his discourse is concerned. His authority is doubly assured: by the medieval theological system and by the cases of rejection/renewal of the norms of which the theory of the account speaks.<sup>38</sup>

The presence of three narrators does not at all imply that the surface textual structure is incoherent or fragmentary.<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, the authority that the hetero-diegetic status of the first and second narrators reveal as well as the omnipotence and omniscience that the condition of angel confers to the third narrator (let us not forget that it is the angel who effects the passage of the soul from its initial state of ignorance or false belief to its final state of cognizance and true conviction) clearly show that they are in close relationship with the modal constraints that determine them, being located at the interior of an objectal field that answers

<sup>37</sup> Doležel (1980, pp. 16-17) considers that this type of narrator is weakened, although relatively less so than the *Er-form* narrator, in its faculties of the “authentication” of the narrative discourse of which it is a producing instance.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*, *idem.* pp. 20-23.

<sup>39</sup> See the pages on this subject by Youri M. Lotman (in *La Structure du texte artistique*, translated from the Russian by Anne Fournier *et al.*, under the direction of H. Meschonnic, Paris, Gallimard, 1973) on medieval texts, particularly on one of the fundamental elements of structure in literary texts: “the point of view of the text” (p. 366).

the need to produce a story whose archetypal dimension, believable in nature and acting in function, can induce the community to which it is addressed to follow freely and resolutely the road that is proposed to it. A divine authority (God and the Church, His manifestation on earth) creates in a way a potential model that has little need of material support. Such was the function of these narrative voices, filled with the scruple of one who is in the situation of a simple executor of precepts emanating from the highest spheres of the hierarchic organization of the universe in which it is integrated.

#### PERSONAGES/SPACE<sup>40</sup>

As far as the conception of the personages is concerned, the *Vision of Tundal* is essentially characterized by the allegorical profile<sup>41</sup> which is given them. The soul, throughout its voyage from the kingdom of darkness to that of light, from a state of false innocence (arising from a state of ignorance) to that of an ultimate experience, is sustained and becomes a personage by the rapports of discord and/or concord that it establishes with two other personages—the angel, symbol of the forces of Good, and the devil, agent of Evil. The soul never ceases to be an instrument, first in the hands of the devil, later at the service of the angel, the passive object in the constant struggle between the two antagonist forces.<sup>42</sup> That is why

<sup>40</sup> The joint treatment of these components is due not only to the close relationship of mutual dependence that characterizes them but also to the specifically allegorical function that each one fills in our text (and, we dare say, in any hagiographic text).

<sup>41</sup> *Allegory*, because of the way it adapts itself to the didactic and doctrinary ends of a large part of the production of medieval texts, is one of the favorite rhetorical figures of the thought and creation of medieval man. The semantic base of its functioning—"the basic procedure consists of imagining through thought what one wants to express (a lesson in behavior, religious or courtly) an equivalent in imagery susceptible to a rich exploitation...and separable into elements. ...Allegory offers a "concrete" representation, speaking to the imagination, an imaged approximation of analogy..." (Armand Strudel, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-246)—in fact, a privileged instrument for the transmission of the ideological apparatus of the social, laic and ecclesiastical institutions of the epoch. On allegory, see also the following studies: Howard R. Patch, *op. cit.*, ch. IV; Chandler R. Post, *Medieval Spanish Allegory*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1974.

<sup>42</sup> See Youri M. Lotman, *op.cit.* and Philippe Hamon, "Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage," in A.A.V.V., *Poétique du récit*, Editions du Seuil, 1977, pp. 115-180 (particularly as concerns syntagme and the concept of referential personages, p. 122).

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

we hesitate to consider the soul as the protagonist of the story told by Tundal. Actually, it is the victim of its initial alliance with Evil (the devil, as active agent, rules for a short but significant time: the profound essence of the hagiographic text in terms of surface textual manifestation gives it only the time and space necessary to attract the attention of its potential hearers to the danger that this force represents during the passage of man on earth), just as it benefits from the voyage of penitence it undergoes. Moreover, it is also the soul that, after this voyage of redemption and after its return to the body, allows the sinner Tundal to become the virtuous Tundal, heroic and exemplary in his devotion to the divine cause. But all that is to the profit of another cause—that of the victory of the angel over the devil, Good over Evil; that of the re-enforcing of the dogmas that define Christian doctrine and the real presence of spiritual power in the daily life of medieval man.

In line with cultural, axiological and literary codes, each epoch has its own way of conceiving the heroes of its narrative texts.<sup>43</sup> In the Middle Ages, when the concept of “person” had no meaning unless viewed from the angle of its close relationship with the ensemble of forces that made up the social structure of the time, the only interest was in heroes or personages on a high plane, since they were the only ones who could incarnate the representative type that was then made of the world. The personage-person was too close to the ordinary to adapt itself to the system that modeled medieval thought. Only the creation of beings not touched by the vulgar but by the supernatural could, due to their faculty to convince, permit the integral realization of its progress of action.

In the same way, the construction of space is allegorical and, it seems to us, for the same reasons that made personages simple allegories: the localization of events in a realistic space would have brought a lowering of intensity in the emotion of their reception, substantially affecting the perlocutory force of their messages. If the semantic-pragmatic effects are one of the distinctive traits of the hagiographic text, the allegorical conception of space (indispensable for these effects to be concretized in the story) will

<sup>43</sup> See the observations of V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, (*op.cit.* p. 669).



be of capital importance as far as the actualization of the narrative program of lives of saints is concerned.

In effect, the space of the *Vision of Tundal* is closely linked to the trajectory of the soul, that is, to the states and actions it is obliged to experience and accomplish. Going through spaces such as hell, purgatory and paradise, where it experiences antagonistic sensations (suffering/joy, affliction/serenity; rigor/mildness, etc.) the soul becomes aware and conscious of the norms to which, freely but compulsorily it must obey if it wants to gain divine favor. Apart from the decorative and dilatory function<sup>44</sup> with which the description of these spaces is invested, there is one that is much more important: that of directly and efficaciously contributing, through the creation of “allegorical domains” (Curtius), to the exemplarity of all the heroes, such as it must be in the accounts of the lives of the saints.<sup>45</sup>

Here as an example we give three passages from the *Vision of Tundal*:

“L’ange alant devant, ils alerent par une voie mout tenebrouse et tortuose et trop malemant estroite et penose. Et queque ils eurent assez travaillie en alant, li dolante ame de moi vit une beste moute cruouse et meruoillousement grant et horrible quar estoit plus grans que montaigne qu’elle eust veue. Li ieul de cele beste estient si com montaignes ardens, et si hauoit la boiche mout grant, quar il i antroit bien IX. mil armeures de homes, et hauoit en sa boiche d’une et d’autre part. II iaians (serpents) mout grans [...] et isoit par sa boiche meruoillousement grant habundance de flame embrasée [...] Et cris et plains espaontables issient de cele beste, et hauoit dyables au devant qui contraignoient les ames qui deuoient souffrir al torment.” (p. 14)

“D’illueques alerent il un poi avant si virent une maison aornée de meruilleux aornemens dont les parois estoient d’or et d’argent e de toute maniere de pieres precieuses. En celle maison n’auoit ne huis ne feniestres mais dedens entroient tuit cil cui voloient et estoit toute reonde et molt large sens pilers et sens coulombes et estoit si clere et si resplandissans qu’il sanbloit que la luist tex un clartes que la clarte dou soleil. Illueques auoit un siege d’or aorne de tous aornements de soie et de pieres precieuses...” (p. 43)

<sup>44</sup> Youri Lotman (*op.cit.*) theoretically bases this capacity that space has to penetrate the models of the world issued from artistic texts.

<sup>45</sup> See V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, *op.cit.*, p. 709.

## The Hagiographical Tale

“...et vinrent plus amont et virent un ciel si comme un mur plus haut assez et plus bel et plus cler et plus resplandissant que les autres [...] Il estoit touz de pieres precieuses diverses, et de diverses vertus et de diverses colors, et entre meslees d’or et d’argent [...] Et estoient des pieres telz: la premiere estoit cristaux, l’autre crisolites, l’autre berilz, l’autre jaspis, l’autre iacinctes, l’autre sigmarades, l’autre saphirs...” (p. 53)

These are paradigmatic examples of the way in which spaces corresponding to hell and purgatory on the one hand and to paradise on the other are presented to us throughout the story. In both cases, the strategy is to appeal to the hyperbole,<sup>46</sup> a discursive modality whose perlocutory efficacy has always been noted by the rhetoricians. With the exception that in the case of the description of the places reserved to the evil forces, the hyperbole rests on the monstrous elements borrowed from the bestiary,<sup>47</sup> while the firmament, sojourn of virtue and the glory of God, is based on the hyperbole of the most precious gems in the lapidary.<sup>48</sup>

From the strange way (revolting in the first case, charming in the second) in which hyperbole renders these antagonistic spaces there emerges a subtle exhortation to observe the divine will with

<sup>46</sup> “Hyperbole is putting into relief the *verba singula* with the obvious aim of provoking astonishment even more than credibility. The trope, which belongs to the *audacior ornatus*, has poetic effects of evocation and serves in rhetoric to arouse pathetic and partisan feelings and in poetry the affective creation of images that go beyond reality” (Heinrich Lausberg, *Elementos de Retórica Literária*, Portuguese translation by R.M. Rosado Fernandes, Lisbon, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1962. p. 158).

<sup>47</sup> “Monsters symbolize cosmic forces in the stage preceding chaos, non-formal potentialities... They are *par excellence* the antithesis—or adversary—of the ‘hero’ and ‘arms’... The struggle with the monster represents the combat undertaken to liberate the conscious from the ascendancy of the unconscious. The deliverance of the hero corresponds to the breaking of day, to the triumph of light over the darkness of the conscience or the spirit on the irrational levels of the unconscious.” (J.C. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, English version by Jack Sage, New York, Philosophical Library 1981, under the entry “Monsters”. p. 213.) As far as concerns the symbolism of the various monsters in the universe of the bestiaries, Cirlot specifies that hell was represented in the Middle Ages by the head of a monster (a dragon, for example) with one or two human heads in its jaw.

<sup>48</sup> Cirlot also tells us that “in most of the symbolic traditions, jewels represent spiritual truths, as well as superior knowledge...—not knowledge as science in the meaning of impersonal erudition but as the sum of experiences and inextricably linked to the living being and its evolution.” (*op.cit.*, in the article “Jewels and Gems.” p. 167.)

humility, the only way to accede to the heavenly realm and escape the tortures of Satan. By placing the vicissitudes of the saint's life in such words, where the coexistence of pain and joy, darkness and light, the terrifying power of evil and the calming force of the good take on more definite contour and become an ultimate experience, the hagiographic text only follows the program of indoctrination of medieval man.

#### NARRATOLOGY/READER

The soul as a personage of Tundal's story also assures the "narratological" function<sup>49</sup> of the tales, located at the hypodiegetic level, where the angel makes his appearance as narrator. These accounts answer the need of the angel to inform the soul when it asks the reason for the diverse penalties to which the numerous creatures inhabiting the kingdom of Lucifer are submitted. In terms of narrative strategy, the choice of the soul as narratological agent of the short but enlightening accounts of the angel follows the epistemological modal constraints that underlie the organization of our text. The angel must inform the soul of the hierarchy of the divine sanctions and rewards that correspond in bleakness or in magnificence to the more or less elevated degree where the good and/or the bad are practiced after the ephemeral passage in terrestrial life. But this choice of the soul as a receiving entity of the narrative acts of the angel acquires an importance all the greater since it is destined to return to the body of Tundal, a fact that makes not only the conversion of the knight possible (the sufferings the soul has observed or experienced and which are transmitted to Tundal through the supernatural means of the "vision" allow him to distance himself from his past and consequently to consecrate himself entirely to his new ideal, sanctification), but also the conversion of those who, within the human community, would be led to imitate the new Tundal, hero

<sup>49</sup> On the concept of "narratology" see V.M. de Aguiar e Silva, (*op.cit.* pp. 666-667, which gives the essential bibliographical elements) and Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Function of Narrative*, Berlin-New York-Amsterdam, Mouton, 1982, pp. 16-26 (see also in the *Grand Robert*, for the word under consideration, formed on the model of "*Destinataire*").

## *The Hagiographical Tale*

and saint. This because, after its return to the body, the soul was encharged with an important mission: that of spreading throughout the world by means of the words of “sanctified” Tundal all that it had seen, heard and experienced. It is the angel himself who gives the soul this responsibility: “And you will tell all these things when you return to the world.”

Finally, let us examine the questions that arise with regard to the kind of reader<sup>50</sup> concerned with the doctrinal nature and function of the hagiographic text. To say that any text presupposes a reader is a commonplace of the theory of communication. But if such a presupposition is valid for texts in general, it is even more valid in cases where these texts are produced with a predominantly didactic and doctrinaire intention. Such is the intention that inspires all texts devoted to the lives of the saints and implying an ideal reader having particular characteristics, since he must passively accept the models the texts propose.<sup>51</sup> This reader is the community of the faithful to be catechized (the individual exists in terms of all, the reason for which the attempt is made to reach the whole in order to arrive at the individual). Just as the “vision” that Tundal has of torments and pleasures experienced by his soul allows him to pass from a state of marginality to a state of faithful servant and devoted propagator of the divine order, the reading of the account of the life of a saint, by the representation it gives of archetypical models of sanctity will allow the community (the reader) to choose uniquely and exclusively between two extremes of behavior: that of humble imitation or that of ostentatious rejection (the first leading to eternal happiness, the second to the claws of Satan).

In conclusion, we yield to the words of Horst Ruthrof<sup>52</sup> who with an apt synthesis shows us how the three aspects we have analyzed

<sup>50</sup> On the theoretical concept of the facet of reader in the literary communication system, see V.M. de Aguiar e Silva (*op.cit.* pp. 292-321).

<sup>51</sup> Requiring the “identification” of the reader for the models proposed by the texts, the hagiographic account is integrated into a category of texts which, according to Youri Lotman in the work quoted above, have as a distinctive trait to be constituted by artistic phenomena which are given in advance, and the expectation of the listener is justified by all the construction of the work. Lotman considers that this type of text is constructed on the basis of a principle he calls “aesthetics of identity,” that is, in substance, on a complete identification of the phenomena represented of life and stereotyped models, already known by the listener and which are part of a system of “rules”.

<sup>52</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 126.

in the *Vision of Tundal*—narrator, personages/space (Ruthrof's presented world) and narratology/reader—concur to make hagiographic accounts an efficacious instrument of the power of intervention of the Church in the existence of man in the Middle Ages:

“In reflecting the process of canonization<sup>53</sup> the presented world of the saint's legend provides a miniature image of the hierarchy of ecclesiastical power in actual life, thus acting as a tool of control in the everyday life of medieval Europe. But even outside its historical context of reception, the distribution of roles among our three components, narrator, world, and implied reader is still clear: the narrator is grasped as an informed and loyal member of an established power structure, the presented world as an aspect of a complex theology and its administration, and the implied reader as a faithful member of an all-embracing and meaning-giving organization”.

Paulo Meneses  
(*University of the Azores*)

<sup>53</sup> André Jolles (*op.cit.* pp. 29-30) meticulously analyzes the steps proper to this procedure of canonization, an indispensable element for the condition of exemplarity that characterizes the true heroes of hagiographic texts.