

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF FIGURATIVITY IN IGNACIO ASSIS SILVA'S WORKS¹

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- **ABSTRACT:** We aim at this work to examine the contribution of the Brazilian semiotician Ignacio Assis Silva (1937-2000) about the concept of figurativity, responsible for the construction of meaning through the articulation of simulacra of the natural world with the thymic and sensitive dimensions, following the transformations undergone by the concept inside the theory. The object of study of the participants at the Seminars of General Semantics in the years of 1970, the concept reaches an investigative peak in the following decade, continuing to intrigue semioticians in the years of 1990, such as Silva, whose research culminates in the thesis (1992) converted into the work *Figurativização e metamorfose: o mito de Narciso* (1995). With a corpus composed of Silva's publications, we collected, inventoried, interpreted, and analyzed the data obtained in this investigation assisted by methodological elements of the Linguistic Historiography developed by Konrad Koerner (1996) and Pierre Swiggers (2009), which searches to describe and explain the production and development of the Linguistic knowledge within a socio-historical context of a particular culture. Collaborating with the understanding and explanation of Brazilian contributions to the Discursive Semiotics, the methodology of LH allowed us to approach the different ways that Silva thinks of figurativity, establishing to what extent these theoretical facts contributed to the advance of Semiotic studies.
- **KEYWORDS:** figurativity; history of semiotic ideas; linguistic historiography; Ignacio Assis Silva; semiotics of discourse.

Introduction

The central theme of Ignacio's research, in my reading, is always the same: the search for the structuring of meaning. As a semanticist and semiologist, the search for signification that establishes the sign; as a

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semiotician, the concern with the transformation of the natural world into a world of language and with the transformation of stereotyped language into a new language, mediated by the metamorphosis that doing-to-be the new meaning in the text (NASCIMENTO, 2010, p. 12).

The task that defines the doing of the Paris School semiotician is the investigation of the effects of meaning produced by the discourse, and the persuasive dimension of discursive manifestation. This persuasion occurs in the relationship between being and appearing to be true what is enunciated, and it is organized by an arrangement of figures from the natural world and the discourse, a semantic resource widely used to lead an enunciatee to believe in a discourse manifested as he perceives the world and apprehends it. In other words, it is because of this organization of the figures in the text, called figurativity, that sensitive experiences are simulated so that the enunciatee considers them to be true.

The concept of figurativity was borrowed by the Semiotics from the aesthetic theory², as Denis Bertrand (2003 [2000]) explains in *Caminhos da semiótica literária [Précis of Literary Semiotics]*. According to the researcher, this concept “[...]” was extended [in Semiotics] to all languages, both verbal and non-verbal, to designate the property that they have in common to produce and to restore, partially, significations analogous to those of our most concrete perceptual experiences³” (BERTRAND, 2003 [2000], p. 154, our translation)⁴. In addition, the study of figurativity has transcended the spaces of Parisian Semiotics seminars, in which researchers such as Jean-Marie Floch, Jacques Geninasca, among others, worked with Greimas and Bertrand, who found a rich field of researching around figurative manifestations in the construction of meaning; it is the case of Ignacio Assis Silva (1995a), author of *Figurativização e metamorfose: o mito de Narciso [Figurativization and metamorphosis: the myth of Narcissus]*.

Considering the hypothesis that figurativity studies undertaken in Brazil, especially by Silva, as far as they take care about the structures of signification (from elementary to surface), and contribute to the change in the understanding of the function of the figure in the discursive construction of meaning within the general economy of discursive Semiotics, we aim, in this work, a critical reading of the Ignacian work directed at understanding and explaining the contribution of the research undertaken by this researcher to Semiotics. In this sense, we are interested

² We refer to the study of the organization of themes and figures in the visual arts through the notions of iconology and iconography. This is defined by Erwin Panofsky (2007 [1955], p. 47-48, our translation) as “[...] a branch of art history that deals with the theme or message of works of art as opposed to their form”. That is equivalent to a “method of interpretation” of the analysis of motives (PANOFSKY, 2007 [1955], p. 54, our translation).

³ Original: “[...] foi estendido [em semiótica] a todas as linguagens, tanto verbais quanto não-verbais, para designar esta propriedade que elas têm em comum de produzir e restituir parcialmente significações análogas às de nossas experiências perceptivas mais concretas” (BERTRAND, 2003 [2000], p. 154).

⁴ This point of view on the origin of the figurativity notion was also registered in *Bulletin* n° 26 of *Actes Sémiotiques*, entitled “*La figurativité II*” (BERTRAND, 1983a, p. 3, 1983b, p. 43).

in the process of constructing the research of a Brazilian semiotician on figurativity in order to, in the end, identify the repercussions of his work within the scope of semiotic theory, in constant development.

To carry out this research, we used methodological elements of linguistic historiography (LH), a discipline that, according to Ronaldo de Oliveira Batista (2019, p. 156, our translation), studies the “[...] stages of the history of knowledge produced about language in different time frames and with different objectives”⁵. From this perspective, LH has the interest to answer questions related to the modes of production, circulation, and reception of a type of linguistic knowledge at a certain time, as well as its interaction with other knowledge. This discipline still needs to know the traditions to which this knowledge belongs and to what extent it continues and/or breaks with linguistic ideas, as explains Batista (2019).

Thus, for the investigation of Ignacio Assis Silva’s scientific production about figurativity (a semiotic resource of the figurative organization) in order to understand the context in which this concept emerges and evolves in his research and in Semiotics, we resort to the research methods developed by Konrad Koerner (1996) and Pierre Swiggers (2009). The historiographical perspective, in this sense, plays the role of helping us to periodize, describe and interpret the changes undergone in the study of the concept in the Greimasian theoretical model and in the process of building this knowledge by Silva through his texts.

In addition, we adopted a “chronicler” and “innovative” approach, according to Jean Cristtus Portela (2018). The “chronicler” approach seeks to reveal the continuities and discontinuities of theoretical facts, that is, it is a narration of the resumption of the work of one author by another, whereas the “innovative” approach makes possible not only narrating the theoretical facts but also presenting them, considering how an author approaches the work of the researchers who preceded him (PORTELA, 2018). In other words, at the same time that we discuss the ways of thinking about figurativity in the Ignatian work, we establish to what extent Silva’s research contributes to the advancement of semiotic studies.

However, before we proceed to explore semiotic ideas around figurativity in Ignatian texts, we present the methodology elements of the linguistic historiography that support our investigation. Then, we review briefly Ignacio Assis Silva’s path in Semiotics – as a helper in the process of institutionalization and evolution of the discipline – and, in the sequence, interspersed with the description and analysis of Ignatian theoretical-scientific production; we bring to light the researcher’s endeavor, which contributed decisively to the study of figurativity.

⁵ Original: “*etapas da história do conhecimento produzido sobre a linguagem em diferentes recortes temporais e com diferentes objetivos*” (BATISTA, 2019, p. 156).

In search of the method

As we explained, to discuss figurativity in Silva's work, it is necessary, first, to present linguistic historiography and its methodology. Subsequently, it is possible to describe how the method chosen to carry out this research, the historiographic method, can contribute to the critical reconstruction of the history of a concept that belongs to the semiotic metalanguage, more specifically, to the investigation of Ignacio Assis Silva's scientific production.

Let us begin, then, by defining the scope of LH, a discipline that deals with the production of language and/or natural language at a certain moment in history (BATISTA, 2019). Thus, when observing the language object in social interaction, LH aims to describe and explain how linguistic knowledge, which belongs to a certain socio-historical context within a particular culture, is produced and developed, as explained by Cristina Altman (1998, p. 29). Furthermore, the *corpus* to be described in the historiographic model can be constituted either of a particular work, or the set of the production of an author, or a set of texts of a determined object of study, in addition to the fact that this *corpus* is delimited, whether geographically, historically, or thematically (SWIGGERS, 2009).

Intending to transcend the reporting of past events in the history of scientific activity, LH values the synthesis of information from original sources, according to Koerner (1996). For this reason, Swiggers (2009) develops a methodological apparatus through which, primarily, we consider the period to be investigated, the material to which the researcher has access to, as well as his spirit and perspective of analysis adopted. The temporal delimitation, the point of view, and the form of presentation of the data are considered as the source-texts are accessed, that is, the original texts researched – here, the Ignacio Assis Silva's texts published in the form of scientific articles (in periodicals and in collections), book, and habilitation thesis.

Swiggers (2009) also clarifies that the materials identified in the source-texts must be analyzed, described, and interpreted so that the results can be exposed. An exposition that must obey a narrative sequence based on the analysis of a theme or a problem, or must relate different contexts and perspectives on the object at some point in history. The presentation of the results also requires, depending on the researcher's intention, the most appropriate, relevant, valid, and scientific information about the object studied. Furthermore, it is the historiographer's task to define the intellectual profile of the work, which, in our case, is the theory-correlative profile, since we intend to correlate theory and institutional context⁶.

Therefore, in view of the assumptions mentioned above, in order to proceed with our investigation, we follow Swiggers' proposal (2009), by making an inventory of the source-texts available to be handled and read within a time limit previously imposed: from 1970, the year of the first publication of the journal BACAB, to 2000, the year of

⁶ The historiographer can also adopt a socio-cultural and/or political context according to Swiggers (2009).

Ignacio Assis Silva's death. To choose the source-texts, we considered works published in the form of articles in the journals⁷ *BACAB*, *Significação*, *Cruzeiro Semiótico*, and *Actes Sémiotiques*; chapters of collections of texts *Aims and prospects of semiotics. Essays in honor of Algirdas Julien Greimas* (SILVA, 1985)⁸, *Do inteligível ao sensível. Em torno da obra de Algirdas Julien Greimas [From the intelligible to the sensitive. Around the work of Algirdas Julien Greimas]* (SILVA, 1995b)⁹ and *Corpo e sentido: a escuta do sensível [Body and meaning: listening to the sensitive]* (SILVA, 1996); from the thesis *Figurativização e metamorfose: relações intersemióticas (o mito de Narciso) [Figurativization and metamorphosis: intersemiotic relations (the myth of Narcissus)]* (SILVA, 1992b) and the book *Figurativização e metamorfose: o mito de Narciso* (SILVA, 1995a).

After reading and establishing the text chronology, we cataloged those that deal with figurativity or those that are related, in some way, to the researcher's path up to and beyond *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1995a), accompanied by an inventory of dates and publication supports. In this sense, we consider an internal (immanent) perspective of the theory, in other words, a perspective focused on the object itself and on the concept within the semiotic theory. We also contextualized the climate of opinion when the texts are published. Thus, we do not despise the scientific spirit of the time, in spite of the adoption of an immanent perspective, as suggested by Koerner (1996).

As a result of this part of our investigation, we present the texts we selected for analysis in the chart below:

⁷ In the constitution of the *corpus* of this work, we did not include Ignacio Assis Silva's publications in *Revista de Cultura Vozes* – “Direções atuais da Semântica Estrutural” [“Current directions of Structural Semantics”] (1972), “Diversificação semiolêxêmica e sinonímia” [“Semiolêxemic diversification and synonymy”] (1972), “A configuração semântica do texto” [“The semantic configuration of the text”] (1975) –, as well as in the “Suplemento Literário” [“Literary Supplement”] section of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* – “A análise estratificacional da linguagem” [“The stratificational analysis of language”] (1971). In this sense, we opted for examining works published only in Semiotics journals and books (collections).

⁸ Collection of texts organized by Herman Parret and Hans-George Ruprecht in honor of Greimas.

⁹ Collection of texts organized by Ana Claudia de Oliveira and Eric Landowski, also in honor of Greimas.

Chart 1 – Inventory of articles published by
Ignacio Assis Silva between 1970 and 2000

PERIODICALS OR COLLECTIONS	ARTICLE	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
<i>BACAB</i>	As relações constitutivas do signo [The constitutive relations of the sign]	1970
	Conceitos básicos da análise estratificacional [Basics concepts of stratificational analysis]	1975
<i>Actes Sémiotiques</i>	Une lecture de Velasquez	1980
	L'art abstrait: une poétique du dépouillement	1987
<i>Corpo e sentido</i>	A escuta do sensível [Listening to the sensitive]	1996
<i>Cruzeiro Semiótico</i>	A metamorfose de Narciso [The metamorphosis of Narcissus]	1988
	Metamorfose ou metáfora radical? [Metamorphosis or radical metaphor?]	1992
<i>Do inteligível ao sensível</i>	Brøndal, Hjelmslev, Greimas	1995
<i>Aims and prospects of semiotics</i>	La construction de l'acteur	1985
<i>Significação</i>	<i>Estruturação do universo linguístico</i> [Structuration of the linguistic universe]	1974
	<i>A construção do ator: do signico ao simbólico</i> [The construction of the actor: from the signic to the symbolic]	1987
	<i>Indagações sobre os fundamentos da linguagem</i> [Inquiries about the fundamentals of language]	1990
	<i>Sincretismo e comunicação visual</i> [Syncretism and visual communication]	1994
	<i>Métamorphose et rationalité mythique chez Lygia Clark</i>	1999

Source: Author's elaboration.

Having completed this inventory and answering Swiggers' proposal (2009), which the materials should be analyzed and described in order to be able to expose the results, as we have already mentioned, we described and analyzed the facts, correlating the inventoried works with the doing of Silva within the general economy of the theory and with *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1992b, 1995a), a work considered a milestone in the studies on figurativity carried out in Brazil. Let us see, before, how Silva's research and institutional actions are intertwined with the history and scientific spirit of Semiotics.

Between the institutionalization of Semiotics in Brazil and the research on figurativity

Although the Greimasian intellectual production is a starting point in the study of figurativity – from *Structural semantics: an attempt at a method* (1966) to *Da imperfeição [Of the imperfection]* (1987) –, many scientific productions about the concept are dispersed in the form of books, articles, theses, and dissertations by semioticians from different generations, but all of them are heirs of the Greimasian legacy. Ignacio Assis Silva was one of those heirs. Greimas’s advisee between 1979 and 1980, he worked at the Groupe de Recherches Sémio-linguistiques (GRSL)¹⁰ – in the Semiotics of Space, Poetic Semiotics and Plastic Semiotics workshops – and in the Seminars of General Semantics. Thus, while he was an intern, he participated in the seminars (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003, p.5) and collaborated with the French Semiotics journal *Actes Sémiotiques*¹¹.

Before that, Silva had been an active researcher in Brazil since the 1960s, the same period in which Greimas started the semiotic project with the publication of *Structural semantics* (GREIMAS, 1983a [1966]). Graduated in Classical Letters at USP, he taught the discipline “Latin Language and Literature” at the College of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters (FAFI)¹² of São José do Rio Preto, between 1964 and 1967 (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003, p.2), the institution where the BACAB¹³ group was founded, the precursor of the first group of Semiotics experts in Brazil, the Center for Semiotic Studies “A. J. Greimas” (CESAJG). Silva is also one of the protagonists at the inauguration of CESAJG in 1973 – with the financial and institutional support of the College of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters “Barão de Mauá”, in Ribeirão Preto, the countryside of São Paulo¹⁴ – and in the creation of the first Brazilian Journal of Semiotics, *Significação – revista brasileira de semiótica*¹⁵, in 1974, where he published several texts. Prior to that, he is also a founding partner of the São Paulo State Linguistic Studies Group (GEL), created in 1969, participating on the association’s Board of

¹⁰ Group of Semio-linguistic Research.

¹¹ Greimas founds the French Semiotics journal idealized by Anne Hénault, *Actes Sémiotiques*, in 1977/78 with financial support from the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the National Institute of the French Language. Until 1987, the journal was divided into two parallel series: *Bulletin* and *Documents*. It becomes *Nouveaux Actes Sémiotiques* in 1989 (LANDOWSKI, 2007). From 2013 on, it returns to the title of *Actes Sémiotiques*.

¹² Current Institute of Biosciences, Letters and Exact Sciences (IBILCE) at São Paulo State University (UNESP).

¹³ Semiology study group formed in 1969, by Eduardo Peñuela Cañizal, Alceu Dias Lima, Ignacio Assis Silva, Edward Lopes, and Tiekio Yamaguchi Miyazaki. The term BACAB refers to Aztec mythology, which reveres gods named Bacabes, responsible for circumscribing the cosmic orientation in that people’s calendar. For the group members, the ideogram exemplifies a semiological system.

¹⁴ The founding of CESAJG is the result of Edward Lopes’ commitment to the University of Barão de Mauá to bring Greimas to Brazil to teach the course “Semiotics of narrative” and the collective effort of BACAB, a group that Silva and Lopes were part of, to continue the Greimasian project in Brazilian lands and also to erect a periodical dedicated to the publication of texts that dealt with the Semiotics studied and developed in Paris.

¹⁵ With the change of scope in 2007, the periodic ceases to focus exclusively on studies on Semiotics and changes its name to: *Significação - revista de cultura audiovisual*.

Directors between 1971 and 1973, then chaired by Izidoro Blikstein, and having Edward Lopes as treasurer, and occupying a position of secretary (GEL, 2019).

In the *Actes Sémiotiques*, the researcher published in *Documents* in 1980 and, in 1987, in *Bulletins*, following the discussions about figurativity in the debates of the Greimasian seminars of that decade. This theoretical effervescence around figurativity is noted, above all, in *Bulletins* n° 20, “La figurativité”, in 1981; and n° 26, “La figurativité II”, in 1983; as well as in n° 44 “L’art abstrait”, which houses the text of the Brazilian researcher “L’art abstrait: une poétique du dépouillement”, in 1987. In the *Documents*, for example, it is noted that in the 1980s the concern with the literary text divides space with approaches aimed at pictorial representation, in view of Silva’s publication in n° 19, 1980, “*Une lecture de Velasquez*”, accompanying works published there by Jean-Marie Floch, François Rastier, Eric Landowski, Denis Bertrand, Algirdas Julien Greimas, among others, throughout the decade.

Furthermore, it is in the same decade that volume II of the *Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (1986) is published, in which figurativity officially becomes an entry in semiotic metalanguage, and *Da imperfeição*, in 1987, by Greimas, a milestone for the study of figurativity and some related concepts (semi-symbolism, for example).

In the 1970s and 1980s, *Significação* included several texts that are concerned with figurativity. In addition to Silva’s works, we highlight the approach of the concept in texts by Algirdas Julien Greimas (1982 [1973]¹⁶, 1984a, 1984b)¹⁷, and by Jean-Marie Floch¹⁸ in 1987. In the 1990s, the number of articles published in *Significação* that focused on studies related to figurativity *per se* is less expressive, standing out among these texts, works by Ignacio Assis Silva, in 1994 and 1999¹⁹, and by Eduardo Peñuela Cañizal, “La Metáfora Visual en las Cartografías del Cuerpo”, 1999.

It is also between 1970 and 1980 that the semiotician worked in the Postgraduate Program in Linguistics and Portuguese Language (PPGLLP) at UNESP in Araraquara since its emergence – as a member of the Course Council and the list of supervisors and of the academic staff of this Program –, being responsible for the subjects “Syntax-semantics of grammatical classes” with Alceu Dias Lima, and “Semantics of textual dynamics”, according to process 119/77-FFCL (p. 7, p. 93, p. 145 e p. 152)²⁰ that documents the origin, approval, and accreditation, in 1978, of PPGLLP at the Institute

¹⁶ A footnote informs that the text is a transcript of a speech in the course ministered by A. J. Greimas in July 1973, at CESAJG, conducted by Louis Panier.

¹⁷ Greimas’ text translated by Ignacio Assis Silva, “*Semiótica figurativa e semiótica plástica*” [“Figurative semiotics and plastic semiotics”], also published in *Documents* with the title “*Sémiotique figurative et sémiotique plastique*” in the same year.

¹⁸ The text “*Semiótica plástica e linguagem publicitária*” is a translation by José Luiz Fiorin for a text published in *Documents* in 1981, “*Sémiotique plastique et langage publicitaire*”.

¹⁹ We will deal with these texts below.

²⁰ Unpublished text, the process 119/77-FFCL predate the process 217/75 of the Marília unit, which after the restructuring of UNESP had its Institute of Letters incorporated by the campus of Araraquara, requiring that changes be imposed on the initial project, adapting it to the new reality of the ILCSE. Among the alterations, we highlight the change in the title of the Postgraduate Course in Linguistics and Portuguese Literature, originally, to the Postgraduate Course in Linguistics and Portuguese Language (UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL PAULISTA, 1977, p. 6-8).

of Letters, Social Sciences and Education (ILCSE)²¹ of the campus of Araraquara, the original record of Silva's role in Semiotics research developed at UNESP and in Brazil.

Linked to the PPGLLP, Silva also teaches in the Postgraduate Program in Semiotics, created at UNESP in Araraquara in 1980 with Edna Nascimento, Alceu Dias Lima, and Maria de Lourdes Ortiz Gandini Baldan (2003), to name a few. In addition to the production of the well-known *Roteiro: para Introdução à Semiótica Greimasiana* [*Scheme: for Introduction to Greimasian Semiotics*] in 1981²², that is shared with teachers and students of the institution (NASCIMENTO, 2004), among the subjects taught in the Program, the following disciplines stand out "Literature and visual arts", "Semiotics of Passions", "Semiotic Theory II", "Space as a significant practice"²³.

He is also responsible for the integration between the Postgraduate Programs in Linguistics and Portuguese Language and Literary Studies, promoting discussions on Linguistics, Semiotics, and Literature, according to Maria Célia Leonel (2010)²⁴, and offering, in the years 1990, a course entitled "Inquiries about the foundations of language: figurativization and metamorphosis"²⁵, according to Neiva Pinto (2003). In addition, moving between the two Postgraduate Programs – Linguistics and Portuguese Language and Literary Studies – he has advised researchers such as Maria do Carmo Almeida Corrêa, Marisa Gianecchini Gonçalves de Souza and Maria Tereza de França Rolland, among others. To complete his role in the process of institutionalizing Semiotics in the countryside of São Paulo, also at UNESP in Araraquara, he taught, between 1978 and 1995, the disciplines "Communication theory" and "Linguistics" in the Undergraduate Course in Letters²⁶, in addition to idealizing and founding the "*Cadernos de Semiótica Aplicada*" (CASA) group in 2000. Before that, between 1996 and 1999, he led the discussions at the Sociosemiotic Research Center (CPS), a semiotic group at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of São Paulo, as reported by Ana Claudia de Oliveira (2010).

Still in the thematic role of researcher, Silva publishes two articles in the Portuguese Journal *Cruzeiro Semiótico*²⁷ – "*A metamorfose de Narciso*" (SILVA, 1988) and

²¹ Currently, College of Sciences and Letters (FCL).

²² Edna Nascimento (2004, p. 2) clarifies that Silva wrote the script when returning from the internship with Greimas, in Paris, in order to "facilitate the understanding of semiotic principles". The document has not been published.

²³ Information about the subjects taught in the Postgraduate Program in Semiotics (or Literary Studies, some years later) can be found in the researcher's Lattes Curriculum, available at <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3294565159970447>. Access on: 26 Oct. 2021.

²⁴ Postgraduate Program in Semiotics, becomes Postgraduate Program in Letters: Literary Studies in 1987, covering two areas of concentration, Theory of Literature and Semiotics, until it became the Postgraduate Program in Literary Studies in 2002, Semiotics being absorbed by the Postgraduate Program in Linguistics and Portuguese Language (UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL PAULISTA, 2019).

²⁵ The same title as the article published in 1990 and inversion of the lexical position of the original title of the thesis defended in 1992, *Figurativização e metamorfose: indagações sobre os fundamentos da linguagem* [*Figurativization and metamorphosis: inquiries about the fundamentals of language*] (SILVA, 1995a, p. 28).

²⁶ The subjects taught in the Undergraduate Course in Letters and the directions provided by the semiotician are also available at <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3294565159970447>. Access on: 26 Oct. 2021.

²⁷ Except for Silva's texts, figurativity is not the focus of the works published in the magazine until the print runs initiated in 1984 ceased in 1993.

“*Metamorfose ou metáfora radical?*” (SILVA, 1992a) –, that belongs to the Portuguese Semiotic Association and is directed by Norma Backes Tasca. He also publishes in the collections *Aims and prospects of semiotics* (SILVA, 1985), *Do inteligível ao sensível* (SILVA, 1995b), *Corpo e Sentido* (SILVA, 1996); all resulting from scientific semiotic events. Thus, having known Silva’s role in this process of introduction and rooting of Semiotics in Brazil, especially in São Paulo universities²⁸, let us see, in the next lines, how the semiotician is configured as a discursive actor in the history of Semiotics and Brazilian studies on figurativity.

From rigor to the defense of the flexibility of the structural model: the establishment of interest in figurativity in Silva’s texts

Defended by different humanities researchers in the 1960s – from the ethnology of Jean Pouillon to the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, from the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan to the structural linguistics of Roman Jakobson, from the semiology of Roland Barthes to the Semiotics of A. J. Greimas – the structuralist conception is present in “*Conceitos básicos da análise estratificacional*” (1975), text published in the second issue of *Bacab Journal*. In it, Silva (1975, p. 7, our translation) defends the use of a structural model of analysis: hierarchical, as well as the language that is also constituted of a “[...] network of relationships that is established between the elements and the achievements of these elements²⁹”, as determined by the stratification theory of language.

For Silva (1975, p. 32-33), the “stratification model” is both syntagmatic and distributional, making possible for the “stratification analysis” not to admit a direct and immediate relationship between the planes of expression and content, since the linguistic signifier is not linear, in other words, it can take place in different ways as it happens in the poetic discourse, reflecting his Jakobsonian³⁰ formation. Furthermore, it brings to light readings on *Structural semantics*, by Greimas (1983a [1966]), *Prolegomena to a theory of language*, by Hjelmslev (1961 [1943]) and *Problems in General Linguistics*, by Benveniste (1971 [1966]).

Twenty years later, in “Brøndal, Hjelmslev, Greimas” (SILVA, 1995b), the structuralist model is under discussion. If, on the one hand, he proposes that Semiotics post-*Da imperfeição* (GREIMAS, 2002 [1987]) does not abandon the structure, on the

²⁸ For Leonel (2010, p. 1), Silva is “[...] one of the main responsible for the development and diffusion of Greimasian Semiotics in Brazil [...]”, due to his publications and his teaching performance “[...] in the Undergraduate Course in Letters and in the Postgraduate Programs in Literary Studies and in Linguistics and Portuguese Language at FCL at UNESP in Araraquara”.

²⁹ Original: “*rede de relações que se estabelece entre os elementos e as realizações desses elementos*” (SILVA, 1975, p. 7).

³⁰ After affirming that the results of this thesis “[...] have a beneficial impact on modern investigations of poetic discourse”, he makes it clear, in a note, that it is Roman Jakobson “who has most insisted on the non-linear character of the linguistic signifier [...]” (SILVA, 1975, p. 34).

other, he claims that the discipline unfolds to become a “meta- or semi-symbolic”³¹ Semiotics, that is to say, less orthodox in order that tensivity is more frequently present in the analyses (SILVA, 1995b, p. 65). In view of this demand for a greater openness (flexibility) in semiotic analysis, not breaking, but proposing that the discipline evolves, since it is a theory that is constantly called *in fieri*, what theoretical events have taken Silva to change the way of looking at the rigid structural model of the discursive Semiotics of the 1970s and 1980s?

Briefly resuming the history of Semiotics, the figurativity is demanded in three distinct moments, which configure continuity in the transformation of its role within the theory. In the 1970s, its role was linked to the organization of the surface structure (discursive level). In the first half of the 1980s, Bertrand and Floch (1986) clarify that it is seen in all layers of the generative path of meaning, engendering them at the same time that it articulates and unites the cognitive and thymic spaces, as well as provides, in each of them, the isotopies responsible for making values to mean, modalizations, transformations, and veridictory contracts as it performs procedures for spatial, temporal, actorial anchoring, etc.

After *Da imperfeição* (GREIMAS, 2002 [1987]), the figurativity is called to evoke and/or make to perceive, in each layer of the generative path, different sensations through esthesia and synesthesia; it is, therefore, called upon to integrate studies on the body that feels, that is and that makes the semiotic subject, according to Prado and Santos (2017). Simultaneously, it is seen intermingling the figures in order to produce the plasticity of the texts, continuing what Floch had proposed in 1979 and Greimas in 1984. This figurativity after *Da imperfeição* propitiates the emergence of the Semiotics of sensitive experience, as far as, explicitly influenced by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, it transcends, without disregarding or discarding, on the contrary, seeing with less radicalism, but with the same Greimasian rigor as before, the structural analysis. This new way of thinking about Semiotics is also present in Ignatian production.

In the inaugural issue of *Bacab Journal*, a semiological oriented Journal, the researcher publishes “As relações constitutivas do signo”. In this article, Ignacio Assis Silva (1970) highlights the oppositional relations of the sign that, in the depths of signification, provides the transformation from sign to the symbol. The relationship between denotation and connotation would, in this sense, be responsible for raising a sign, no matter if more or less iconic, to the category of symbol, which would no longer mean from a denotative point of view, assuming a connotative signification within the “[...] socio-cultural³² complex of a people, in language [...]”³³ (SILVA, 1970, p. 23-26), a point of view that would be closer to what Greimas (1983a [1966]) calls the thematic

³¹ According to the semiotician, this opening of Semiotics apart from structures “[...] would contemplate the tension between what is of the order of the semiotic ‘stricto sensu’, the systems of signs, and what is more to the symbolic, within whose scope are the other substances, waiting the time of being reached by the theory, being formalized” (SILVA, 1995b, p. 65).

³² We can take the expression “a socio-cultural complex” as “a socio-cultural universe”.

³³ Original: “*complexo sócio-cultural de um povo, na linguagem*” (SILVA, 1970, p. 23-26).

investment of the discourse figures. It is a text that can be considered the cornerstone of Ignacian studies on semi-symbolic relations.

Stimulated by the reading of *Structural semantics* (GREIMAS, 1983a [1966]) and by Greimas' course, Silva brings in the inauguration text of *Significação, "Estruturação do universo linguístico"* (SILVA, 1974), a comparison of the founding work of the Paris School Semiotics, in respect of the relationship between figurative arrangements and perception, with impressions of the Lithuanian master's speech in which there is a first transformation in the understanding of what will become "figurativity". According to Silva (1974), Greimas (1983a [1966]) establishes that the natural world is encoded by the natural language, in other words, it is signified as it is experienced and, consequently, perceived. In this way, the place of articulation, in the discourse, of the semic figures that arise from the world of objects is named at the semiological level – the initial definition of what came to be understood as figurativity years later – and the semantic level at the discourse manifestation. However, in a class given during the course "Semiotics of Narrative", Greimas introduces a terminological change by declaring, in the words of Silva (1974, p. 30, author's emphasis, our translation), "[...] prone to replace the expression *semiological level* by *figurative level*³⁴"; a revision in the metalanguage caused by the understanding that the subject who perceives, to produce the signification, is permeated by semes of the semantic level that are intrinsic (interoceptive categories), such as language, and by semes that are external to this subject, but corresponding to those already internalized by the subject (exteroceptive categories). These semes outside the subject belong to their culture and it is the articulation of the meaning (perception) that puts them in contact with the subject. In addition, they are responsible for differentiating, for example, "[...] the lexemes *large vs. small, tall vs. low, square vs. round, straight vs. curved*³⁵", narrates Silva (1974, p. 30, author's emphasis, our translation).

Unlike the semes of interoceptive categories, which belong to the plane of content, semes of exteroceptive categories are signifiers and the transformation of signifiers into signified occurs due to the mediation of the relationship between the world (which is around the subject) and the thinking, which is carried out by the brain. For this reason, Greimas says that the exteroceptive categories correspond to the "[...] expression *figurative level*, whose function is to articulate, transform the exterior world into signification³⁶ [...]", continuing, the interoceptive categories, designated at the semantic level, at least at that time, explains Silva (1974, p. 30, author's emphasis, our translation).

Besides treating the metalinguistic reorganization around the semiological/figurative level, the article published in 1970 in *Bacab* takes the first steps towards the

³⁴ Original: "*propenso a substituir a expressão nível semiológico por nível figurativo*" (SILVA, 1974, p. 30).

³⁵ Original: "*os lexemas grande vs. pequeno, alto vs. baixo, quadrado vs. redondo, reto vs. curvo*". (SILVA, 1974, p. 30).

³⁶ Original: "*expressão nível figurativo, cuja função é articular, transformar o mundo exterior em significação*". (SILVA, 1974, p. 30).

study of semi-symbolic relations in the texts, and it may be the genesis of all Ignacian research around the relationship between figurativity that takes place at the deep and superficial levels. We say this because Silva (1974) also deals with explaining how language signifies the exterior world through the integration of two grammars, one deep, which belongs to the deep and more abstract structures of signification, and the other of surface, facing the most superficial level, therefore, more concrete of the discourse, which are combined through the figurative manifestation; an investigative interest that culminates in *Figurativização e metamorfose: o mito de Narciso* (SILVA, 1995a) and subsequent publications.

This work is the transmutation *verbum ad verbum* of the thesis *Figurativização e metamorfose: relações intersemióticas (o mito de Narciso)* (SILVA, 1992b) in which all the research communicated by Silva in scientific Journals and in collections of articles until his defense converge in a single work, that we will explore below, as we analyze how publications related to Silva's research are engendered in his thesis, which is published in a book format three years later, only differing from the latter in the subtitle, which suppresses the lexical expression "inter-semiotic relations".

Structuring of meaning in the Ignacian molds: from articles to work

Divided into twelve chapters to which most of the articles examined here have been incorporated, *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1992b, 1995a) is part of the third approach of figurativity, since it seeks a Semiotics of the sensitive (SILVA, 1995a). Such search is evident in the choice of a diversified *corpus*, simultaneously mythical and poetic, consisting of semiotic-objects with Latin origins – poems by Ovid, sculptures by Brancusi, paintings by Picasso and Dalí – and linked to classical mythology.

Thus, as he constructs the work, rearranging the texts already published, Silva infuses his intellectual and scientific collaboration for the construction of the semiotic framework. If in the first chapter, "Landmarks", he mentions the theoretical bases that guided his research, in the next chapter, "Main cases of metamorphosis", he addresses the types of metamorphoses that stand out in his research: those whose form is directed towards nullity and those in which the form acquires figurative investments of high semic density. Therefore, he introduces the metamorphosis of Picasso's "bulls" towards more abstract forms, a type of transformation in which there is a suppression of figurative traces until nullity is reached – the bull's path towards "bullness" – analyzed first in "*L'art abstrait: une poétique du dépouillement*"³⁷ (SILVA, 1987b), contrasting them with the figurative model of Echo's metamorphosis, a voice transmuted into a limestone structure, from "*A metamorfose de Narciso*" (SILVA, 1988).

³⁷ Text published in 1987 in *Bulletin* n° 44, republished in the book *Leggere l'opera d'arte: Dal figurativo all' astratto*, organized by Lucia Corrain and Mario Valenti, in 1991.

The relation of opposition between the analysis of Picasso's bulls and the myth of Echo are still present in "Indagações aos fundamentos da linguagem" (SILVA, 1990), text that composes another section of *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1992b, 1995a). The comparison of the works in this text leads Silva (1990) to conclude that, if figurativity is responsible for the figurative disposition that makes the discourse signify at all levels of the generative path of meaning, as meaning is constructed, in the case of Picassian metamorphosis, meaning effects such as iconization³⁸ are produced, at the discursive level, by figurativization, while a phenomenon of dereferentialization³⁹ is installed in deep structures. Inversely, in the Ovidian metamorphosis, Echo's case, there is a second process: referentialization.

In "Indagações aos fundamentos da linguagem" (SILVA, 1990), methods of analysis from "*L'art abstrait: une poetique du dépouillement*" (SILVA, 1987b) and from "*A metamorfose de Narciso*" (SILVA, 1988) are claimed to demonstrate how the suppression of figurative traces – the dereferentialization – leads to an effect of "evacuation of meaning" (rarefaction of Echo's body and the shapes of Picasso's bulls). At the same time, in "A metamorfose de Narciso" (SILVA, 1988), the process is opposite to that of Picasso's bull, highlighting the role of referentialization.

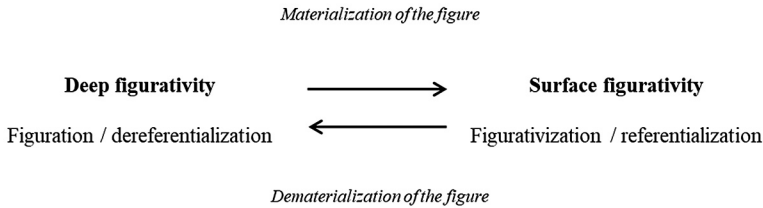
When analyzing a poem by Ovidio, whose work consists of figurative traces of high semic density (SILVA, 1988, p. 58), the semiotician seeks to reveal "[...] the role of figurativity in the functioning of metamorphosis". For this purpose, Silva (1988) presumes that the Ovidian enunciate has a figurative matrix (figurative support) endowed with the ability to appropriate a figurative organization (figurative application) that allows the production of referential impressions. Thus, as the internal and intrinsic relations to the discourse are interwoven, strongly visual poetry is produced. In this sense, the examination of deep and superficial isotopies aims at the need to identify syncretisms that give rise to new forms (SILVA, 1988).

This discussion reverberates in the chapters "Figurativization and metamorphosis", "Metamorphosis and mythical thought" and "Landmarks", in which the semiotician affirms that although metamorphosis destroys one form to build another, the first figurative traces resonate in the new form (SILVA, 1995a), like the Echo's metamorphosis, already deconstructed, in resonant rock; and the Narcissus-man in Narcissus-image and, later, in Narcissus-flower. Below, we illustrate the movement of referentialization/dereferentialization of the figure:

³⁸ The meaning effect in which figures covering the themes have a higher semic density.

³⁹ Dereferentialization is a process of stripping out figurative traces. It is opposed to referentialization, that is, to figurativization, since the referent is a figurative resource responsible for producing effects of reality and/or unreality, truth, and/or lies (GREIMAS, 1983b, p. 49). In the *Dicionário de semiótica*, Greimas and Courtés (2011 [1979]) explain that the referentialization is associated with the procedures of space-time and actancial anchoring (in this case, through internal shifting out).

Figure 1 – Double reading of the path of figurativity in the Ignacian molds



Source: Author's elaboration.

Furthermore, Silva (1988, p. 59) says that “[...] an act of language [...] doing-to-be a new state” as “[...] performs the *transformation* of a *signic* state into a *symbolic* state”, and the new forms that emerge “[...] bring together values [...] assumed or assimilated by the cultural memory of their time”, in other words, they become, Echo and Narcissus, finally, symbols of a myth. This statement takes up, to a certain extent, “*Une lecture de Velasquez*” (SILVA, 1980) - which aims at resignification from the reconstruction of a text devoid of figurative traces⁴⁰ - as it reconstructs the signification of the Ovidian text with a focus on the transformation of Narcissus-man in Narcissus-flower mediated by Narcissus-image (SILVA, 1988).

It is also important to clarify that “*Une lecture de Velasquez*” (1980) reproduces a spirit of the period. The term figurativity is already recurrent in the GRSL debates, as it appears in texts by Jean-Marie Floch, such as “*Des couleurs du monde au discours poétique des leurs qualités*” (FLOCH, 1979), to be mentioned by Greimas and Courtés (2011 [1979]) in the entry “figurativization” and to have been explored by Greimas in Brazil, in the course of 1973⁴¹. In addition, although figurativity is not a dictionary entry in the early 1980s, this publication by Silva (1980) in *Documents*⁴², follows the discussions on figurativity undertaken by the group of visualists during this period in which they did an internship in France and that resulted in the publication of “*Sémiotique figurative et sémiotique plastique*” by Greimas (1984a)⁴³.

⁴⁰ “*Une lecture de Velasquez*” (SILVA, 1980) brings Silva’s first semiotic analysis, which reads at the same time figurative, symbolic and mythical of *Vieja friendo huevos*, by Velasquez, aiming at transposing the sign to arrive at the symbolic, that is, the pictorial text of figurative traces to reconstruct them and, thus, retake the discarded sense and the symbolism present in a figurativity composed of figures that carry “[...] ‘sensitive qualities’ of the world and deal directly with man” (SILVA, 2004 [1980], p. 192-204), according to the third meaning of the natural world (GREIMAS; COURTÉS, 2011 [1979]) and also anticipating discussions about the sensitive experience after *Da imperfeição* (GREIMAS, 2002 [1987]). Although he performs the first exercise of dereferentialization, this is not the metamorphosis that is the motto of his contribution, the one that arises from the rediscovery of Ovid, according to Silva (*apud* SOUZA, 2003).

⁴¹ In accordance with a speech entitled “*Métaphore et isotopie*”, transcribed and published in the *Significação* in 1982.

⁴² Text republished *Leggere l’opera d’arte: Dal figurativo all’astratto* (1991), by Lucia Corrain and Mario Valenti, and in the Brazilian collection *Semiótica Plástica [Plastic Semiotics]* (SILVA, 2004), by Ana Claudia de Oliveira, translated by E. Goes. As we did not have access to the original text, we used this latest version in this work.

⁴³ This text was written in 1978, according to Greimas (1984b).

In addition to figurativization, referentialization, and dereferentialization, the Brazilian semiotician explores another concept related to figurativity: semi-symbolism. This study is communicated, after his thesis defense, in the article “*Sincretismo e comunicação visual*” (1994). In this text, which also integrates *Figurativização e metamorfose* (1992b, 1995a), the visual communication is promoted to the status of the best representative of the relationship between different semiotics in the same text and he bases his study on syncretisms in the relationships between strata (SILVA, 1994), in accordance with Lamb and Bennett’s Stratificational Grammar⁴⁴, already explored in “*Conceitos básicos da análise estratificacional*” (SILVA, 1975).

According to Silva, semi-symbolic relations are born in a discursive organization that allows them to produce signification in syncretism⁴⁵ between languages. In this sense, semi-symbolism corresponds to “[...] configurations of sensitive qualities on/ under in which qualities of meaning are erected/slide [...]”, in other words, they are “[...] quantities crossed by relational/relativizing tensions” (SILVA, 1994, p. 75). These tensions arise in the opposition between syncretism and discretism, and they result from three types of metamorphoses (SILVA, 1994, p. 76-77): the “doing-to-be the signic reading of the world”, the “doing-to-be the semi-symbolic relationship”, the “doing-to-be the language of languages”, as he names it in *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1995a, p. 64-67).

So, firstly, tension can lead to a passionate, figurative and thematic “disinvestment” – “*desyncretization*” – in which the “less” starts to say “more” through figural and thematic primitives, in short, “*desfigurativization*” (SILVA, 1994, p. 77). Secondly, through an intertextual and intra-actancial syncretism, by transforming figures from the natural world into figures of the natural language, nullifying or radically reducing the distance between them, there has been a reinstatement of values, culture, and history for some time asleep in a sign already corroded by use. This syncretism is considered the “syncretism of syncretisms” (SILVA, 1994, p. 77-78). Finally, different semiotic systems can be combined in visual texts performing an operation that is both intratextual and intertextual (with emphasis on the latter). This third tension corresponds to an “[...] intersemiotic operation that doing-to-be an image or set of images [...] as an emblematic figure of a Culture or a phase of that Culture⁴⁶”, explains Silva (1994, p. 78). It is a metamorphosis that can only be classified as such if it occurs in all strata of the generative path, even if not in the same intensity, intertwining them, as well as the particular “images” of each semiotic system, during the act of language. In his words,

⁴⁴ In the introduction to the text, he says: “My first contact with the notion of syncretism was when I studied the basic concepts of Stratificational Grammar by Sydney Lamb and D. C. Bennett” (SILVA, 1994, p. 73).

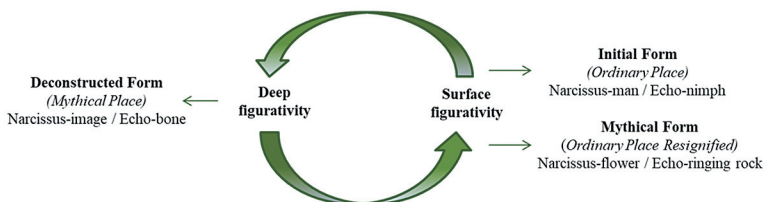
⁴⁵ Greimas and Courtés (2011 [1979] define syncretism (or syncretic semiotics) as the activation of “[...] various languages of manifestation [...]”. Lucia Teixeira (2004, p. 235) goes a little further and asserts that they are “[...] those [objects] in which the plane of expression is characterized by a plurality of substances mobilized by a single enunciation whose competence to textualize presupposes the mastery of several languages for the formalization of a another that organizes them into a whole of signification”.

⁴⁶ Original: “*operação intersemiótica que faz-ser uma imagem ou conjunto de imagens [...] como uma figura emblemática de uma Cultura ou de uma fase dessa Cultura*” (SILVA, 1994, p. 78).

[...] we should only speak of syncretism, in this third case, if there is an act of language that interweaves the particular “images” not at a merely thematic or merely figurative level, but interweaves them in all layers of the generative path of meaning, some more, some less, but all. Lesser the “images” are worked out both generatively and transformationally, lesser syncretism there is⁴⁷ [...] (SILVA, 1994, p. 79).

This entire path towards metamorphosis as a semiotic event is summarized in “*Metamorfose ou metáfora radical?*” (SILVA, 1992a)⁴⁸. Fully reproduced in the thesis (and in the book), this text presents itself as the “rosetta stone” to unravel the genuine “metamorphosis”, a true aspiration of the researcher (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003, p. 5). In other words, the text seems to find a way of reconstructing the meaning in which “[...] instead of going from radical metaphor to artistic manifestations, going from those to that, or rather, to radical metamorphosis⁴⁹” (SILVA, 1992a, p. 51), understood as the movement in which the common (belonging to a given class) is transformed into something of a mythical order, a class recognized as being another – movement of the radical metaphor –, but in the process it creates a new class that at the same time allows it to go to the new (mythical) class, realizing the radical metaphor, and to return to the class it left, constituting a radical metamorphosis. This corresponds, in this way, to the return of the common transformed into mythic to the class of the common; a common that is no longer the common first, but a common other, a doubly transformed common, therefore reformulated (SILVA, 1992a), as well as Echo and Narcissus:

Figure 2 – Radical metamorphosis model (the transformation of Echo and Narcissus)



Source: Authors' elaboration.

⁴⁷ Original: “só se deve falar de sincretismo, neste terceiro caso, se há ato de linguagem que entretece as “imagens” particulares não em nível meramente temático ou meramente figurativo, mas as entretece em todas as camadas do percurso gerativo da significação, umas mais, outras menos, mas todas. Quanto menos se trabalham as “imagens” tanto gerativa como transformacionalmente, menos sincretismo há” (SILVA, 1994, p. 79).

⁴⁸ This article not only became a homonymous section in the third chapter of Ignacio’s work but is reproduced there *ipsis litteris* and in all its completeness.

⁴⁹ Original: “em vez de ir da metáfora radical às manifestações artísticas, ir destas àquela, ou melhor, à metamorfose radical” (SILVA, 1992a, p. 51).

Another concern of the researcher recovered in the articles, formally organized in the fourth chapter of *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1992b, 1995a), is the actor's narratological figure: who he is and how he is constructed by the discourse. In “*La construction de l'acteur*” (1985), published in *Aims and prospects of semiotics*, the semiotician discusses the first of two hypotheses that are for him responsible for the discursive and textual construction of the actor: “[...] the one in which the figure (especially in Baroque painting) would be built as a state, perhaps as a semiodiscursive place in the aspectual domain [...]” (SILVA, 1985, p. 575, our translation⁵⁰). The second hypothesis is developed in the article “*A construção do ator: do sógnico ao simbólico*” (SILVA, 1987a) and turns to the discursive and textual construction of the actor in which the figure becomes a figure-actor, a narratological figure, through discursive procedures, and “[...] emerges as the place quintessentially for constituting *inter-semioticity*”. Constructed in the discourse and by the discourse, this figure syncretizes the natural world/natural language disjunction, thus constituting a semi-symbolic instance (SILVA, 1987a, p. 56, author's emphasis).

Thus far, we have seen the realization of a narrative program of use necessary for the realization of a basic narrative program, production of knowledge about figurativity, which is condensed in the habilitation thesis. For the researcher, this search started when revisiting Ovid (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003), but, according to the examined texts, the initial state of this self-addressed subject is revealed much earlier, when, in “*Estruturação do universo linguístico*” (SILVA, 1974), problematize the replacement of the expression “*semiological level*” by “*figurative level*”, made by Greimas, although he has already been developing works that would be explored further in future articles, such as the 1970 publication in *Bacab*. It is the publication of “*Metamorfose ou metáfora radical?*” in 1992 the last phase of the researcher's state transformation, who already had constituted knowledge.

Has the investigation been completed? Not yet. Even though the *performance* has been realized, as we have verified the conjunction of the subject (Silva) with its object-value (the true metamorphosis), there is still the sanction to this *performance*, in view of “[...] the complexity of the object [figurativeness in Ignatian texts] asks for a discourse, a metalanguage, which does not close, does not petrify [...]” (SILVA, 1995a, p. 268), we would say, in the fascination it raises.

From the thesis-book to the new challenges

After *Figurativização e metamorfose* publication (SILVA, 1995a) and his research on figurativity consolidation, the International Interdisciplinary Colloquium “*Corpo e sentido*” happens at the UNESP in Araraquara, in 1995, that is held in partnership with

⁵⁰ Original: “[...] celle d'après laquelle la figure (surtout dans la peinture baroque) serait construite comme un état, voire comme un lieu sémio-discursif à domination aspectuelle [...]” (SILVA, 1985, p. 575).

the CPS, which results, in 1996, in the collection *Corpo e sentido: a escuta do sensível*, organized by Silva and which houses the authorial text “*A escuta do sensível*” (SILVA, 1996). In this article, a figurativity linked to semi-symbolism is evidenced as a founding matrix of the imaginary (SILVA, 1996), which can be understood as figural support that underlies figurativization (SILVA, 1995a). The text also reveals the interest in the aesthetic event, in the constitution and functioning of semi-symbolic configurations, in the role of passionate configurations amid these transformations (SILVA, 1996); concern that accompanies the search for the transcendence of structures (manifested in the text “Brøndal, Hjelmlev, Greimas”, in 1995) and in which the sensitive experience summons and is summoned in and by the works of post-Greimasian thought⁵¹.

These new concerns of the semiotician, as well as the position that figurativity, as engendering figurativization and semi-symbolism, can be understood as the founding matrix of the imaginary, echoes in the analysis of an exhibition by Lygia Clark⁵² in “*Métamorphose et rationalité mythique chez Lygia Clark*” (SILVA, 1999). From the researcher’s perspective, the actuality of these studies on figurativity is maintained, at the end of the 20th century, because it is seen emerging “[...] towards the immanent sensitive, the mythical status, underlying [...] the flaking of the speech; mythical, because there it produces the fundamental transformation of the Subject-Object relationship, a unique, extraordinary event, instantaneous establishment of a ‘state of things’” (SILVA, 1999, p. 135, our translation)⁵³.

Based on the examination of the Ignacian production that we have proposed to carry out, the actuality of his study of figurativity reveals the spirit of the time, as Koerner (1996) and as shown by Cañizal (1999) when dealing with the occurrence caused by aesthetic experience, as it explains that Silva’s work (1995a) achieves, in Greimasian molds, to imbricate the signification that is found *a posteriori* in the Semiotics of the narrative and the one, according to aesthetic Semiotics, is intimately linked to the imperfection of being.

We remind that Ignacio Assis Silva’s perspective towards the figurative, as well as the search for a Semiotics that is both poetic and plastic, begins during the internship held in Paris between 1979 and 1980 and after participating in the workshops “Plastic Semiotics”, by Floch (1987), and “Semiotics of Poetic Discourse”, by Zilberberg (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003). The plastic and literary objects remain an object of interest to the researcher until the end of his life since researches related to them constitute the project of the CASA group, written by Silva in 2000.

⁵¹ According to Moreira (2019), “post-greimasian thinking” are the ideas of authors whose works produced from 1992 to the present day have had a positive repercussion in discursive Semiotics, standing out for the reproduction of their research by researchers from Europe and Brazil. They are, therefore, scientists – like Jacques Fontanille (1995), Claude Zilberberg, Éric Landowski – whose “potentially innovative ideas” are strongly welcomed by other semioticians.

⁵² The exhibition “*Memória do corpo - o ‘dentro’ e o ‘fora’*” [“*Body memory - the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’*”] was held in 1967 at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) in Rio de Janeiro.

⁵³ Original: “[...] *vers un sensible immanent, au statut mythique, sous-jacent [...] les exfoliations du discours; mythique car il s’y produit la transformation fondamentale de la relation Sujet-Objet, événement unique, extraordinaire, établissement instantané d’un ‘état de choses’*” (SILVA, 1999, p. 135).

As we have already explained, the education in Classic Letters allows Silva to teach “Language and Latin Literature” in the 1960s, and this education, above all, gives him the competence of knowledge about the mythical and poetic inherent in this literature. However, also equipped with the theoretical competence of an already assimilated discursive semiotic, the contact with visualists and the taste for plastic arts, especially the Latin one, makes that the poetics underlying the plastic object in the early 1980s draw his attention. It is in that same decade that he rediscovered the Ovidian texts and the interest in metamorphosis⁵⁴ arises (SILVA *apud* SOUZA, 2003), specifically, the one that leaves the surface structure towards the deep structure; a relationship that had not been studied until then (SILVA, 1995a) and, as evidenced by the examined texts, it is the researcher’s main contribution to Semiotics. This transition from verbal poetics to visual poetics that culminates in a return to the taste for Latin (or Ovidian) verbal poetics years later constitutes an advance in Silva’s research concerning the establishment of a “constructed object”. This means that the researcher, when transitioning between verbal and visual poetics, constructs an object of interest susceptible to the models of description and analysis of Semiotics, in order to be equally generic, abstract and descriptive (GREIMAS; COURTÉS, 2011): the poetics, because it is what the semiotician describes and analyzes in the verbal text, by Ovid, and in the visual, by Picasso, for example.

The choice of the figurative orientation of the discursive level towards the fundamental level as an Ignacian and, therefore, Brazilian contribution of great importance to discursive Semiotics does not come from the fascination that this semiotician’s text provokes. The revelation that, in the metaphors of Echo and Narcissus, there is a two-way orientation – from the deep structure towards the surface and in the opposite direction – and also that perhaps “[...] the relationship between these layers is a kind of narcissistic relationship, a game of mirrors” (SILVA, 1995a, p. 31), is meaningful because, in principle, many semioticians have internalized “[...] the path of one hand, which perhaps is only good on the road⁵⁵”, as stated Leonel (2010, p. 8, our translation).

Equally, the analysis of Silva’s texts demonstrates that his research contributes to the change in the form of how Semiotics understands the role of the figure in the construction of the discourse meaning. Thus, the bibliographic production of this researcher allows us to affirm, using semiotic metalanguage, that Silva’s narrative program of contributing to the discipline with an in-depth study of figurativity was successfully carried out. An example of this is the thesis published in the form of a book becoming a source of consultation for researchers who are contemporary and extemporaneous.

⁵⁴ Apparently, the initial project envisaged the study of diverse metamorphoses, according to Silva (*apud* SOUZA, 2003, p. 5). In the book, however, the researcher mentions the existence of “two large groups” of metamorphoses: by anthropogenesis (Narcissus and Gregor Samsa) and by morphogenesis (Echo and Proteus), in which it is possible to identify whether an overinvestment is an emptying of the form (SILVA, 1995a).

⁵⁵ Original: “o caminho de uma só mão, que talvez só seja bom na estrada” (LEONEL, 2010, p. 8).

Furthermore, Silva is not a helper in the construction of Semiotics regarding only the theoretical apparatus. He is responsible for institutionalizing and disseminating the discipline. Firstly, because, as we already mentioned, he is a co-founder of CESAJG in the countryside of the State of São Paulo, he participates in the emergence and development of Postgraduate Programs in Literary Studies (in 1980, Semiotics) and in Linguistics and Portuguese Language at UNESP in Araraquara and gives rise to the CASA group at that same institution. Secondly, because he promotes the formation of new semioticians by offering disciplines related to discursive Semiotics (whose program contents were composed of texts by A. J. Greimas, J.-C., Coquet, M. Arrivé, among others) in the Postgraduate Programs and by hosting graduate students in the CASA group.

An inextricable part of his life, when a new research interest seemed to emerge, more directed to tensivity and sensitive manifestations, complementary to that which had ended in 1995, he died in 2000, after idealizing and founding CASA⁵⁶; the last action that makes the institutionalization of discursive Semiotics in Brazil unquestionable, a process that started with the creation of the BACAB group in 1967.

The transformation of the *status quo* of knowledge about figurativity carried out by Ignacio Assis Silva, in the words of Cañizal (1995), is summed up in “[...] a metalinguistic tessitura through which these advances [in Semiotics] are made explicit and in the originality of the contributions with which the author strengthens the bases of the theoretical assumptions used in a great interpretive adventure”. Furthermore, it is because of the new ways of looking at figurativity that we recognize, here, the “*uis mythica*” of Ignacio’s production, *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1992b, 1995a); work that, we believe, is not found anywhere among the works that deal with this concept.

Borrowing the sayings of the researcher, the “*uis mythica*” of *Figurativização e metamorfose* (SILVA, 1995a) makes semioticians, as well as any student of the language who ventures to read it, experience the figurativity that underlie the metamorphoses there (de)constructed and (re)constructed “[...] not in an objective, inert, neutral way, as a subject in degree zero, but also not as a full, oceanic, Barthesian subject, but, rather, as a subject that slides between these poles” (SILVA, 1995a, p. 28). What are the repercussions of that? Probably, a new subject will emerge, also metamorphosed, because, if not as a subject who knows everything or much or how much he would like to know, still a subject transformed by the knowledge that poured from the work of this Latinist, semanticist, semiologist and... semiotician.

⁵⁶ Ignacio Assis Silva passed away in July 2000, after the first two CASA meetings.

SANTOS, F.; PORTELA, J. Contribuições para o estudo da figuratividade em textos de Ignacio Assis Silva. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021.

- *RESUMO: Visamos, neste trabalho, examinar a contribuição do semiótico brasileiro Ignacio Assis Silva (1937-2000) sobre o conceito de figuratividade, responsável pela construção do sentido através da articulação de simulacros do mundo natural com as dimensões tímica e sensível, acompanhando as transformações sofridas pelo conceito no interior da teoria. Objeto de estudo dos participantes dos Seminários de Semântica Geral nos anos 1970, o conceito atinge o auge investigativo na década seguinte, continuando a intrigar os semióticos nos anos 1990, a exemplo de Silva, cuja pesquisa culmina na tese de livre-docência (1992) convertida na obra *Figurativização e metamorfose: o mito de Narciso* (1995). Com um corpúsculo constituído de publicações de Silva, coletamos, inventariamos, interpretamos e analisamos os dados obtidos nesta investigação auxiliados por elementos da metodologia da *Historiografia Linguística* desenvolvida por Konrad Koerner (1996) e Pierre Swiggers (2009), que busca descrever e explicar a produção e o desenvolvimento do conhecimento linguístico dentro de um contexto sócio-histórico de determinada cultura. Concorrendo para a compreensão e a explicitação das contribuições brasileiras à *Semiótica Discursiva*, a metodologia da HL possibilitou-nos abordar os diferentes modos de Silva pensar a figuratividade, estabelecendo em que medida tais fatos teóricos colaboraram com o avanço dos estudos semióticos.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: figuratividade; história das ideias semióticas. historiografia linguística; Ignacio Assis Silva; semiótica discursiva.*

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