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Heterolinguality as Alternative Imaginary of “Self”: Voices, Democracy and Ethos

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Although not reducible to this sole diagnosis, the contemporary crisis can be viewed as a symptom of an imaginative failure: we need imaginaries that would be more accurate to the contemporary situation[i]. May we hope that the crisis will help distinguish (since *krinein* means to separate, distinguish, diagnose in Greek) new paradigms for both action and meditation[ii]? This hope might sound excessively optimistic, but I believe it is part of my social and political responsibility as an academic scholar to participate to the collective effort and elaborate alternative imaginaries. My hypothesis is that Europe, seen as “A Commonality That Cannot Speak”, probably does not lack a voice as much as an efficient conception of what is at stake when speaking in one’s own or someone else’s name. To put it differently: I suggest considering every speech act as staging a subject-position (or *ethos*) through and by discourse rather than as an emanation from an authentic presence, a true and pure source (a Subject). Translation may help grasp the process by which I do not coincide perfectly with myself so that I can speak *as another*. The paper will focus more specifically on the recent movement of the *Indignados* to sketch an *heterolingual* imaginary but I would first like to make a detour and say a word about the form of this paper.

A Collective and Open Form

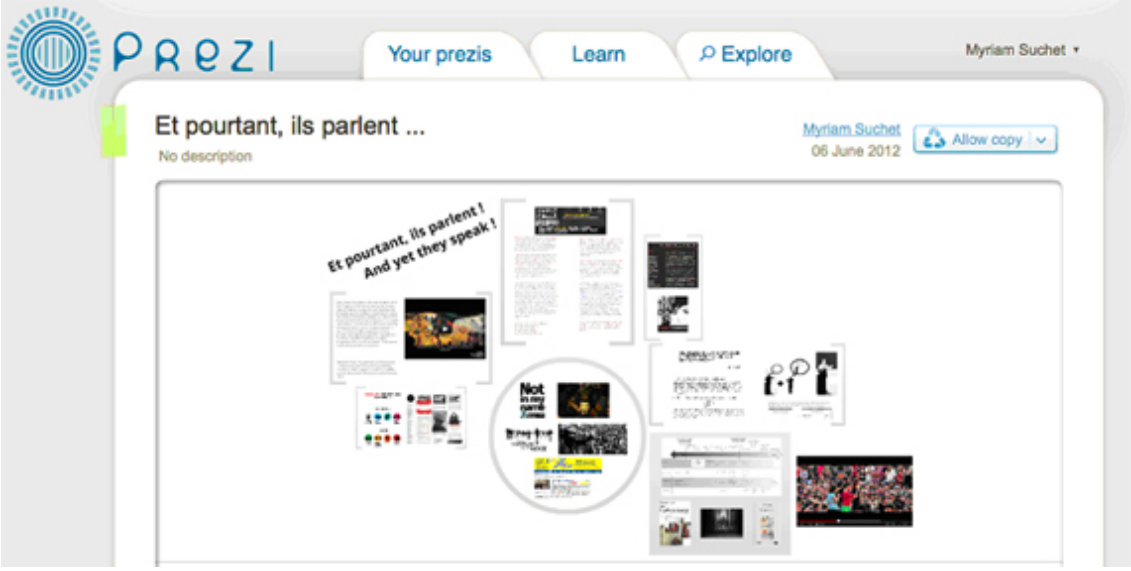
When I first read the argument about the a failure *to address the notion of commonality* today in Europe, it made me think of a recent issue of *Multitudes* (special edition n°45) entitled *Du commun au comme-un*. Behind a seeming tautology, the title suggests the fictive or imaginary part of commonality by slipping from “*commun*” (“common”) to “*comme-un*” (as one). The conjunction “as” is understood in a sense of fictionalization, as it is made explicit in the introduction if you search for “fiction” (Citton/Quessada 2011). I will argue somewhat differently, for it seems to me that the building of commonality requires the possibility for each of us to speak “as another” rather than for all of us to speak “as one”. I use the conjunction “as” in a strong and implicative sense, close to “on behalf of” (in French “en tant que” rather than “comme” or even “à la place de” or “au nom de”; in German “als ein Anderer” rather than “wie ein Anderer”). In other words, I do not use “as” as a device of fiction or comparison but as a dialogic device.

Even though my demonstration might differ from the one defended by the contributors of *Multitude*, I am interested in the composite form taken by this issue that deliberatively mixes articles and arts, interviews and performances questioning collective practices. Such an heterogeneity indicates that (re)thinking commonality requires specific forms of thinking and a way to link discourse and practice, images, feelings, etc. Thinking collectively and in a polyphonic mode is not easy – at least I haven’t been trained to do so. In order to try and establish the “heterolingual address” that is necessary to imagine a satisfactory commonality, I have opted for three strategies:

1. First: my presentation does not have any definitive conclusion; it is more a sketchy map for further investigations. Any reader should feel free to join and participate to the pearltree named “imaginaire hétérolingue”.[iii]

2. Secondly, I will let many voices be heard by referring to different theories, positions and analysis instead of putting emphasis on the "originality of my own voice".

3. Also, I decided to test the software named *Prezi* that enables to share the presentation on line and to draw conceptual maps mixing images and texts[iv].



Speaking with the Indignados[v]

The recent citizen protests called "Indignants movement" or "15-M" in Spain; "[illegible]/*Kínima Aganaktisménon Polités*" ("Indignant Citizens Movement") in Greece give spectacular examples of the emerging of alternative commonalities in Europe. The main claim of these movements is to free silenced and oppressed voices. The *Indignados*' manifesto is available online in French, Catalan, Italian, German, Greek, sign language, Aragones & Asturian languages, etc[vi]. Here are excerpts from the Spanish and the English version:

Somos personas normales y corrientes. **Somos** como **tú**: gente que se levanta por las mañanas para estudiar, para trabajar o para buscar trabajo, gente que tiene familia y amigos. Gente que trabaja duro todos los días para vivir y dar un futuro mejor a los que nos rodean. Unos **nos** consideramos más progresistas, otros más conservadores. Unos creyentes, otros no. Unos tenemos ideologías bien definidas, otros nos consideramos apolíticos... Pero todos estamos preocupados e indignados por el panorama político, económico y social que vemos a nuestro alrededor. Por la corrupción de los políticos, empresarios, banqueros... Por la indefensión del ciudadano de a pie. [...] La democracia parte del pueblo (demos=pueblo; cracia=gobierno) así que el gobierno debe ser del pueblo. Sin embargo, en este país la mayor parte de la clase política ni siquiera **nos** escucha. Sus funciones deberían ser la de llevar **nuestra** voz a las instituciones, facilitando la participación política ciudadana mediante cauces directos y procurando el mayor beneficio para el grueso de la sociedad, no la de enriquecerse y medrar a nuestra costa, atendiendo tan sólo a los dictados de los grandes poderes económicos y aferrándose al poder a través de una dictadura partitocrática encabezada por las inamovibles siglas del PPSOE. [...] Por todo lo anterior, **estoy** indignado. **Creo** que puedo cambiarlo. **Creo** que puedo ayudar. **Sé** que unidos podemos. Sal

con **nosotros**. Es **tu** derecho.

We are ordinary people. **We** are like **you**: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around **us**. Some of **us** consider **ourselves** progressive, others conservative. Some of **us** are believers, some not. Some of **us** have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but **we** are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook, which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice. [...] Democracy belongs to the people (demos = people, krátos = government) which means that government is made of every one of us. However, in Spain most of the political class does not even listen to **us**. Politicians should be bringing **our** voice to the institutions, facilitating the political participation of citizens through direct channels that provide the greatest benefit to the wider society, not to get rich and prosper at our expense, attending only to the dictatorship of major economic powers and holding them in power through a bipartidism headed by the immovable acronym PP & PSOE. [...] For all of the above, **I** am outraged. **I** think **I** can change it. **I** think **I** can help. **I** know that together **we** can.

I have underscored various statements about voices being reduced to silence. It is easy to notice that the two versions are not perfectly symmetrical, the English one putting slightly more emphases on the silencing of the people's voice. I have also highlighted (bold) the striking use of the personal pronouns, shifting from first person plural "we" to second person singular: "you", then specifying internal differences among the common "we" by distinguishing different "unos" and progressively leading to the very last sentence uttered in the first person singular "I". The use of "I" suggests that the reader (me, you) has joined the movement: "unidos", "together". The third pronoun "they" designates the opponent and traces an external boundary, but I sense the *Indignados*' "we" to be far more inclusive than the 99% although it does not pretend to constitute a majority. Any one of us may identify with or rather declare him or herself to be indignado/indignada/indigné(e)/outraged and everyone may have his or her own way to be outraged, while belonging to 99% undermines the differences among the majority, especially concerning genre and social classes.[vii] The difference between the two movements might come from the fact that the *Indignados*, who claim "Democracia real ya" (real democracy right now) avoid every kind of representation. This refusal may also explain the awkward use of the pronouns in the manifesto: pronouns usually stand for nouns – this is why they are called *pro*nouns in English, *pro*nom en français, *Für*wort oder *Pro*nomen in German. Here, they are radically perturbed in their substitutive function. Both movements, however, share a common claim to make one's voice be heard and both encounter similar difficulties to get heard.

Et pourtant ils parlent !

There are several evidences of the difficulty to hear the Indignant communality – although it does have a voice. Among the archives (Arditi 2012) available on YouTube remains a video realized by David Icke[viii]. David Icke was a well known BBC television sports presenter and spokesman for the Green Party until he developed the belief that a secret group of reptilian humanoids controls humanity. This video is less directly about conspiracy but still remains highly controversial. If you have a look at the video, you will probably note the following:

- "they" becomes "we" when switching from text to voice;
- one and only one voice is to be heard;
- Spanish is secondary (not to mention Catalan) since the voice-over is exclusively in English;

- the video multiplies figures of infants, voiceless by definition;

- the emotional message covers up the actual voices of the people.

What the video does not mask, however, is the effort to invent a new language on the occupied squares, a gestural language available to everyone at the same time in an assembly, so that each person can intervene without mediation[ix]. What is more, the video captures several moments when different interpreters are translating in Sign Language what is being said, transforming one speech act into a paradoxically voiceless but polyphonic re-enactment.

I am far from being an expert in Sign Language and I can only regret how little attention is paid to sign interpreting when discussing translational issues - especially from the perspective of enunciation, where much is to be gained[x]. Signing involves a reflection on how to report someone else's speech (signed or oral) even when one is not translating. In Sign Language, direct quotation is rarely introduced by phrases such as "she said". Rather, signers indicate quotation by a *referential shift*, which is expressed or flagged by a number of non-manual markings that may include the following ones, according to Josep Quer:[xi]

- slight body shift towards the locus in signing space where the author of the reported utterance has been previously located;

- break in eye gaze contact with the actual addressee; gaze directed towards the purported addressee of the reported context;

- change in head position;

- facial expression (linguistic and affective) associated with the author of the reported utterance.

Under referential shift, when a first person pronoun is used (by pointing to the signer's chest), the discourse is interpreted unambiguously as a direct quote and the spatial locus associated with the signer's body no longer refers to the person signing but to the referent associated with the shift. Theorists such as Scott Liddell (2000), Christian Cuxac (2000) or Marie-Anne Sallandre (2001) (for French) consider reporting signers as actors playing a role. When signing, reporting is more directly linked to role taking: one does not quote as much as one speaks *as another*. I do not believe this to be an exception but rather an easier way to grasp everyone's possibility to be more than one speaker. As Linda Alcoff puts it:

"in speaking for myself, I am also representing myself in a certain way, as occupying a specific subject-position, having certain characteristics and not others, and so on. In speaking for myself, I (momentarily) create my self – just as much as when I speak for others I create their selves – in the sense that I create a public, discursive self, which will in most cases have an effect on the self experienced as interiority. [...] The point is that a kind of representation occurs in all cases of speaking for, whether I am speaking for myself or for others, that this representation is never a simple act of discovery, and that it will most likely have an impact on the individual so represented." (Alcoff 1991–1992: 10)

The problem is that we tend to identify one and only one speaker for an utterance where in fact several may interact and be internally diffracted by a constitutive collective or heterogeneity. Let Erving Goffman echo to Linda Alcoff:

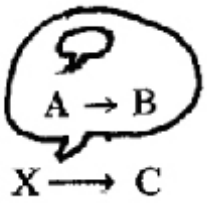
"When one uses the term "speaker", one often implies that the individual who animates is formulating his own text and staking out his own position through it: animator, author, and principal are one. What would be more natural? So natural indeed that I cannot avoid continuing to use the term "speaker" in this sense, let alone the masculine pronoun as the unmarked singular form." (Goffman 1981: 145)

I believe translation can help us escape from the illusion that a voice can always be attributed to one subject, even though the translational enunciation remains more often than not a hidden and seemingly transparent process – at least in the West but also in Japan, as suggested by the title of Kumiko Torikai's book: *Voices of the Invisible Presence* (2009).

Translational Enunciation vs. Phonocentric Illusion

As it has already been stated, the *Indignados*' conception of democracy seeks to go beyond representation in the name of immediate voice. Such a refusal of representation is not unheard in the history of social protest, leading to a lasting crisis of representative politics. In Mexico in the 90's, the Zapatistas claimed to be exercising power not *on behalf of* the people of the Chiapas, but *with* the people of the Chiapas and to *give voice to* people without *speaking for* them. According to Lasse Thomassen however, such statements are paradoxical and Subcomandante Marcos' mask can itself be interpreted as a form of representation (Thomassen 2007). According to Thomassen, representation is constitutive and refusing it implicitly suggests there should exist something beyond or before representation: presentation or real true authentic presence. Such a belief leads us back to what Derrida used to call the "phonocentric illusion"[xii] that is, the privilege granted to orality as a proof of immediate presence.

Rooting a critique of phonocentric illusion on translation implies to question translation as a process. In other terms, the question is to know *what am I doing* when I translate. Brian Mossop has raised this very basic and pedagogical question a long time ago (Mossop 1983: 244). Mossop has shown that translating is not as much transferring from a source to a target language as reporting what a speaker or writer previously stated. In the following picture, X (the *rapporteur*) reports in writing to C what A had previously written to B:



But an enigma remains: the "x" standing for the translator. I believe it is a mistake to consider this "x" as one single spot, a unified speaking subject. We need to diffract this spot and consider polyphonic figures of speech. In Naoki Sakai's terms:

"The translator cannot be designated either as 'I' or 'you' straightforwardly: she [sic] disrupts the attempt to appropriate the relation of the addresser and the addressee into the *personal* relation of first person vis-à-vis second person. To follow the determination of a 'person' as espoused by Emile Benveniste – that is, that only those directly addressing and addressed in what he calls 'discourse' as distinct from 'story' or 'history' can be called persons, and that those who are referred or talked about in the capacity of 'he,' 'she' or 'they' in 'story' or 'history' cannot be persons – the addresser, the translator, and the addressee cannot be persons simultaneously; the translator cannot be the first or second person, or even the third 'person' undisruptively." (Sakai 1997: 12–13)

To my eyes, translating does not imply *adding* one more speaker who reports what has previously been said by another speaker, but *substituting* a speaker to another so as to hear two voices in one.

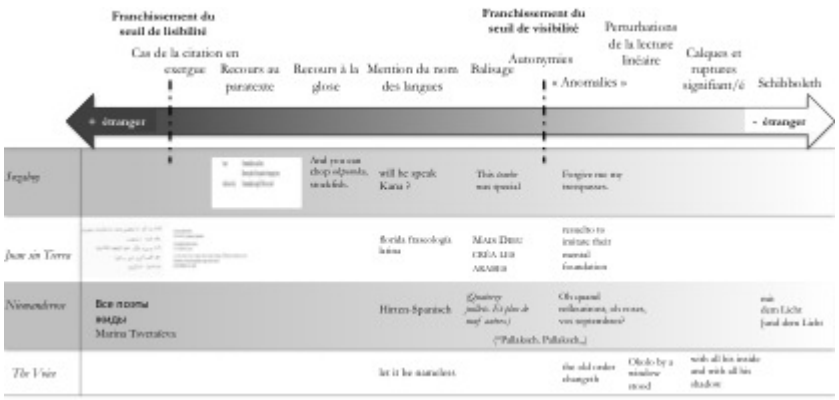
(1) report :  (2) substitution : 

The main difference between the two images it that on the second one the second speaker doesn't have the status of an author – he or she is lending her or his voice to utter someone else's speech; whereas I am the author of a reported speech when I quote someone else. In other terms: translating is speaking with one's own voice but for some one else and in someone else's name. *The translator is more similar to an actor than to a rapporteur*.

Considering translation as a form of representation does not mean, however, that there is one and only way to substitute a speaker to another. This is where we need a qualitative as opposed to merely functional notion of voice, in order to characterize the relationship between the enunciators and to account for the way the distance is being negotiated (Aczel 1988).

The Notion of *Ethos*

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *ethos* designates the image of oneself built by the orator in his speech in order to exert an influence on his audience. This image is produced by a manner of speech rather than by its message: the orator does not claim his sincerity but speaks in such a way that his sincerity appears to the audience. According to Aristotle, *ethos* is a discursive construction as opposed to referential: it should not be confused with the social status of the empirical subject.[xiii] Oswald Ducrot, who explicitly refuses the "postulated unicity of the speaking subject", has attached ethos to L, the speaker [*locuteur*] as such, by distinction with the *locuteur* as "being in the world" (❓). Both the *locuteur* "as such" and the *locuteur* as "being in the world" are different from the empirical speaking subject.[xiv] I have used the notion of *ethos* to designate how a speaker produces his/her own figure when using more than one tongue at a time. My definition of a "heterolingual" text is a text staging another tongue as more or less different according to a continuum where the borders are denationalized, denaturalized and graduated. According to the degree of foreignness maintained between the tongues, the speaker will seem more or less stable, coherent and secure.



At the one end of the continuum, to the left, the difference is made spectacular by the change of alphabet – the reader might feel excluded for the text, abandoned by an unreliable speaker. At the other end, it is the speaker who seems lost in non-translation, in a language that does not have any secure point of reference to

indicate where it starts and where it stops. The other tongue is so familiar that it cannot be distinguished nor by its alphabet nor by diacritical marks such as italics or quotation marks.

It should be possible to organize a similar continuum with the different attitudes or voices attesting of the relationship between the enunciative figure of the translator and the first "*locuteur* as such" – in Ducrot's terminology. In the case of translated texts, *ethos* is not attached to one speaker but to the relationship between two speakers. As a result, *ethos* does not designate a personal figure but the negotiation of the distance between two figures. In other terms, *ethos* in translation is *differential*, it characterizes an attitude of a spokesperson towards the speaker s/he is representing and the represented speech. It is easy to guess the attitudes will rank from total identification to distancing, just like an actor can embody a character or maintain a distance – *Verfremdungseffekt*.

I am aware that it is somewhat ironical to assert that sign language may help hearing voices that are usually reduced to silence... My point was to show how translation can help consider voice without tracing it back to a sole, authentic and immediate subject of enunciation. If representation is to be acknowledged as constitutive, building a commonality is less a matter of reducing difference among people than accepting everyone's internal dialogism or polyphony. The *ethos* staged by a speaker when speaking in his or her own name is negotiated when translated or represented by another speaker speaking *as* her or him. I believe a critique of representation requires a qualitative and non-phonocentric approach of voice.

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Online Ressources

http://www.democraciarealya.es/

http://www.occupypatriarchy.org/

http://occupytogether.org/

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzW6VVjvxwE

http://howtooccupy.org/

http://occupydesign.org/

http://vocesconfutura.tumblr.com/

[i] Arjun Appadurai (1996): "[...] no idiom has as yet emerged to capture the collective interests of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and post-national identities." In A. Appadurai (1996): *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 166.

[ii] Marie-José Mondzain (2002): "Qu'est-ce que la critique?" In Jean-Michel Frodon (ed.): *L'œil critique: le journaliste critique de television*. Brussels/Paris: De Boeck Université, pp. 18–19. The conference "A Commonality That Cannot Speak: Europe in Translation," organized by the eipcp in June 2012, has given voice to many initiatives that contradict the widespread feeling of "not being able to do anything," cf. 1. März Transnationaler Migrant_innenstreik, Maiz, etc.

[iii]Available here:
http://www.pearltrees.com/#/N-s=1_4813044&N-reveal=1&N-u=1_598928&N-p=40315084&N-fa=4813044&N-f=1_4813044.

[iv] http://prezi.com/f4twdrd8twmu/present/?auth_key=itib27t&follow=msuchet.

[v] At the *outset* I wish to draw back misleading track that would try to follow a translational path from the bestseller *Indignez-vous* to the *Indignados*. Even though the book published under Stéphane Hessel's name has been translated in 14 languages; it should not be considered as a point of origin or as a source as a certain traditional perspective on translation could say.

[vi] ¡ Democracia real YA!: "Manifiesto," http://www.democraciarealya.es/, consulted on July 1st 2012.

[vii] To my eyes, the "We are the 99%" slogan, so catchy in North America, pretends to constitute a majority. It is symptomatic that minorities have felt excluded from the 99%. Women, especially, fought to "occupy patriarchy" (http://www.occupypatriarchy.org/; http://occupytogether.org/, consulted on July 1st 2012). Cf. Marcos Ancelavici (2012): "Le mouvement Occupy et la question des inégalités. Ce que le slogan 'Nous sommes les 99 %' dit et ne dit pas." In Francis Dupuis-Déri (ed.): *Par dessus le marché! Réflexions critiques sur le capitalisme*. Montreal: Écosociété, pp. 15–48.

[viii] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzW6VVjvxwE, consulted on July 1st 2012.

[ix] http://howtooccupy.org/; http://occupydesign.org/; http://vocesconfutura.tumblr.com/; consulted on July 1st 2012.

[x] I would like to thank Bill Moody (2007) for sending me his article: "Literal vs. Liberal: What is a faithful interpretation?" In *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter (SLTI)*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 179–220.

[xi] I am following Josep Quer (2005): "Context Shift and Indexical Variables in Sign Languages." In Effi Georgala/Jonathan Howell (eds.): *Proceedings of SALT 15*. Ithaca: CLC Publications, pp. 152–168; http://elanguage.net/journals/salt/article/view/15.152/1760, consulted on July 1st 2012.

[xii] Jacques Derrida (1997): "Plato's Pharmacy." In J. Derrida: *Dissemination*. Transl. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 63–119. See also J. Derrida (1997) *Of Grammatology*. Transl. Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, see especially "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing" and "*The Supplement of (at) the Origin*." Spivak, who has – among other works - translated Derrida, reminds in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that there are "Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation' as in art or philosophy." Cf. G. Ch. Spivak (1988): "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Cary Nelson/Lawrence Grossberg (eds.): *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, pp. 275–276.

[xiii] The current use of *ethos* in Translation Studies is mostly referential; cf. Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2001): "Ethos, éthique et traduction: vers une communauté de destin dans les cultures." In *TTR – traduction, terminologie, redaction*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 31–47; Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005): "A Bourdieusian Theory of Translation, or the Coincidence of Practical Instances: Field, 'Habitus,' Capital and 'Illusio'." In *The Translator*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 147–166.

[xiv] Oswald Ducrot (1985): *Le Dire et le dit*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, p. 201: "L'ethos est attaché à L, le locuteur en tant que tel: c'est en tant qu'il est source de l'énonciation qu'il se voit affublé de certains caractères qui, par contrecoup, rendent cette énonciation acceptable ou rebutante." Trans. in Ruth Amossy (2001): "Ethos at the Crossroads of Disciplines: Rhetoric, Pragmatics, Sociology." In *Poetics Today*, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 5.