

**The Concept of the Ethos of the Enunciator in the Work *Em Busca do Sentido: Estudos Discursivos* [In Search of Meaning: Discursive Studies] by J. L. Fiorin / *O conceito de ethos do enunciador na obra Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos, de J. L. Fiorin***

João Batista Costa Gonçalves\*

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this article is to show the concept of the *ethos* of the enunciator as approached by Fiorin's work *Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos* [In Search of Meaning: Discursive Studies], in order to analyze how the author constructs a theoretical and analytical point of view in the field of Discursive Semiotics, taking into consideration Rhetoric and Discourse Analysis studies on *ethos*.

**KEYWORDS:** Ethos; Enunciator; Enunciação; Discursive Semiotics

**RESUMO**

*Objetiva-se, com este artigo, mostrar o conceito de ethos do enunciador, tal como discutido por Fiorin na obra Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos, para, com isso, analisar como o autor, em diálogo com os estudos da Retórica e da Análise do Discurso sobre o ethos, cria um lugar teórico e analítico para este conceito no campo de estudos da Semiótica Discursiva.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ethos; Enunciador; Enunciação; Semiótica discursiva

---

\* Universidade Estadual do Ceará – UECE – Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil; jbcgon@ig.com.br

*Éthos* is an image of the author rather than the real author.  
It is a discursive and an implied author. (our translation)<sup>1</sup>  
José Luiz Fiorin

## Introductory Comments

This text<sup>2</sup> intends to analyze how the discussion on *ethos* was carried out in the work *Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos* [*In Search of Meaning: Discursive Studies*] (FIORIN, 2008a),<sup>3</sup> in order to show the author's analytical-theoretical contribution to the discussion of the topic in language studies.

Having this in mind, the article was organized in four parts. The first one contextualizes the aforementioned work, for the sake of defining the space that the author dedicates to the construction of the enunciator's image in the discourse.

The second part dwells on the reading of the first chapter of the third part of the work, *Éthos*<sup>4</sup> *do enunciador* (Ethos of the enunciator), in which the author gives great prominence to the concept so that we are able to follow up the theoretical-conceptual debate on the topic. The reader is readied to evaluate how Fiorin, supported by two theoretical perspectives, namely the Classical Rhetoric of Aristotelian orientation and the Discourse Analysis as conceived by D. Maingueneau,<sup>5</sup> tries to demonstrate how

---

<sup>1</sup> Source text: "O éthos é uma imagem do autor, não é o autor real; é um autor discursivo, um autor implícito."

<sup>2</sup> Originally, the content of this article was the subject of the lecture *Em busca do sentido: a noção de ethos discursivo* [*In Search of Meaning: the Notion of Discursive Ethos*] that I delivered at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) on September 12, 2014, during the III Colóquio Cearense de Semiótica (3rd Conference of Semiotics in Ceará), held in honor of Professor José Luiz Fiorin. This article retrieves the ideas presented at the event with a few extensions.

<sup>3</sup> The work, as the author ensures in his Preface, is a collection of articles written and published in different times of his academic life.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese, there are spelling variations concerning the Greek word *ethos* (ἔθος). It is possible to find occurrences of the forms *etos*, *ethos* and *éthos*. Fiorin adopts the latter form in his works, using the plural *ethe*. Because of that, all of his direct quotations in this article will preserve this spelling. In all other cases, the form *ethos* will be used, since it is the most common in linguistic texts written in Brazilian Portuguese. This fact can be observed in AMOSSY, 2005 [*Images of the Self in Discourse: The Construction of the Ethos*]; as well as in: MOTTA and SALGADO, 2008 [*Discursive Ethos*].

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on how *ethos* is established at the intersection of many fields of knowledge, from Rhetoric to Discourse Analysis, with Sociology, Anthropology and Pragmatics in between, see Amossy (2005). In Fiorin's proposal for the study of the *ethos* of the enunciator under the Discursive Semiotics perspective, the author will consider the conceptual trajectory formed by these two extremes: on one side, the rhetorical *ethos* discussed by Aristotle and, on the other side, the conception of discursive *ethos* proposed by Maingueneau, who revisits Aristotle and integrates the concept into the French Discourse Analysis framework.

Discursive Semiotics<sup>6</sup> can assimilate the concept of *ethos* in its theoretical framework in order to study different kinds of text.<sup>7</sup>

The third part of the article highlights the way Fiorin demonstrates, through the analysis of several excerpts majorly taken from Brazilian literature, how the *ethos* category, as thought by Aristotle in Classical Rhetoric<sup>8</sup> and by Maingueneau in French Discourse Analysis, can be useful for Discursive Semiotics after a few theoretical adjustments.

The last part is dedicated to summarize the theoretical and analytical contribution that Fiorin's discussion can bring to the *ethos* debate in language studies, especially in the way the author improves the concept of the *ethos* of the enunciator in order to make it more palatable for the studies on Greimasian semiotics.

## **1 In Search of the Concept of the Ethos of the Enunciator**

Before the presentation of the book as a whole, it is important to feature the title of the work in question: *Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos* (In Search of Meaning: Discursive Studies). This title clearly reveals the author's concern in analyzing the functioning of meaning within the text or how meaning is constructed in the materiality of texts, an object of interest for anyone who develops discourse studies. This is Fiorin's purpose throughout his work, which is divided in three parts.

The first one, entitled *Demarcação de campos* (Field Demarcation), presents many texts that illustrate the author's concern in exploring the theories related to French semiotics "up to the limit of its possibilities" (FIORIN, 2008a, p.9).<sup>9</sup> In the second part, entitled *Tratamento discursivo de questões de linguagem* (Discursive Treatment of Language Issues), Fiorin selects texts that aim to study figures of speech, such as metaphor and metonym, style and modalities under the light of Discursive Semiotics. Preoccupied by matters of the nature of enunciation, the author dedicated the last part,

---

<sup>6</sup> In this article, the expressions Discursive semiotics, French semiotics, and Greimasian semiotics are considered equivalent.

<sup>7</sup> Despite his predilection for literary texts, Fiorin is aware that the ethos of the enunciator is operational to the analysis of other kinds of texts, such as the journalistic, as shown in p.143, when he recalls Discini's (2003) analysis of the enunciator of the newspapers *Folha de S.Paulo*, *Estado de S.Paulo*, and *Notícias Populares*.

<sup>8</sup> For further information on the contributions of rhetoric for studies on *ethos*, see Cruz (2009), especially the first chapter of the work, *Um pouco de retórica* (A Little Bit of Rhetoric).

<sup>9</sup> Source text: "até o limite de suas possibilidades."

entitled *Semântica das categorias da enunciação* (Semantics of Enunciation Categories), to texts that studied the semantic investments made in the enunciation categories of person and space.

Regarding the category we propose to analyze, we notice that the concept of *ethos* is somewhat strongly present in all three sections of the work. For instance, there has already been a reference to *ethos*, though brief and indirect, at the end of the first chapter of Part I, *Enunciação e semiótica* (Semiotics and Enunciation). Fiorin claims, in the conclusion section *Conclusões*, that “the issue of the image of the presupposed enunciator created by the text” (2008a, p.34)<sup>10</sup> would constitute a relevant theme for the study of the enunciation developed by Semiotics.

In the chapter *Uma concepção discursiva de estilo* (A Discursive Conception of Style), which is the second chapter of the second part of the work, the debate on the concept of *ethos* of the enunciator gains a new lease of life. In the discussion, Fiorin postulates a new discursive conception of style, based on Bakhtinian ideas, for which it is necessary to consider that “[...] a style shows an *éthos* in contradiction with another, which allows us to affirm, based on Bakhtin (1999:16), that style are two men” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.104).<sup>11</sup> At another time, Fiorin (2004) suggests a new conception of style in the Discursive Semiotics theoretical framework based on five proposals:

a) style is recurrence; b) it is a differential fact; c) it produces a meaning effect of individuality; d) it configures an *éthos* of the enunciator, that is, an image of it; e) it is heterogeneous, whether it be in its mode of constitution (constitutive heterogeneity), or in its textual surface (marked heterogeneity) (FIORIN, 2004, p.109).<sup>12</sup>

This concept of style conceived in a dialogical manner is exemplified by Fiorin (2008a) in the poem *Satélite* (Satellite), by Manuel Bandeira, in which the enunciator of the poem creates a polemic relation of styles through many linguistic marks, such as the repeated use of the prefix *de-* (demetaphorized, demythicized, deprived). By doing this,

---

<sup>10</sup> Source text: “a questão da imagem do enunciador pressuposto criado pelo texto.”

<sup>11</sup> Source text: “[...] um estilo mostra um *éthos* em contradição com outro, o que permite afirmar, com Bakhtin (1999:16), que o estilo são dois homens.”

<sup>12</sup> Source text: “a) estilo é recorrência; b) é um fato diferencial; c) produz um efeito de sentido de individualidade; d) configura um *éthos* do enunciador, ou seja, uma imagem dele; e) é heterogêneo, seja no modo de sua constituição (heterogeneidade constitutiva), seja na superfície textual (heterogeneidade marcada).”

the enunciator creates “a stylistic modernist *éthos* (the straight) and another one, previous to the modernist (the converse)” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.106).<sup>13</sup> In the conclusions of the same chapter, Fiorin draws our attention to the fact that the concept of style is, among other things, “an *éthos* of the enunciator, that is, an image of it” (2008a, p.109), and adds that “the style creates an *éthos* for the enunciator” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.104),<sup>14</sup> based on Discini’s (2003) ideas about the understanding of style under a semiotic perspective. *Apropos*, on her doctoral dissertation *Estilo e semiótica* (Style and Semiotics) – advised by Fiorin, presented at the University of São Paulo in 2001 and later published under the title *O estilo nos textos* (Style in Texts) (2003) – Discini articulates the concept of *ethos* with that of style under the perspective of Discursive Semiotics. For the author, style designates “a set of characteristics of the expression and of the content that create an *ethos*” (DISCINI, 2003, p.7).<sup>15</sup> From this particular angle, through style, many recurring traces that are apprehensible in the totality of the text can be described. They mark the individuality of the enunciator and point to the image of this subject, recovered by the effect of meaning caused by these traces. It is, thereby, due to the stylistic investments of the enunciator that the *ethos* of the subject is shown. As well as the *ethos*, the style is, therefore, a way of saying, through which identities are established, creating effects of individuality.

Fiorin (2008a) closes the chapter by briefly resuming Aristotle’s (Rhetoric) and Dominique Maingueneau’s (Discourse Analysis) ideas about *ethos* in order to indicate how much this concept resembles the notion of style. By doing so, Fiorin underlines that this notion can be “fully integrated to the theories of discourse,” gaining from these theories a “significant operational usage” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.110).<sup>16</sup>

However, it is only in the last part of his work that Fiorin gives greater importance to the discussion about *ethos*,<sup>17</sup> recovering the preceding theoretical

---

<sup>13</sup> Source text: “um *éthos* estilístico modernista (o direito) e um anterior ao modernista (o avesso).”

<sup>14</sup> Source text: “configura um *éthos* do enunciador, ou seja, uma imagem dele.”

<sup>15</sup> Source text: “um conjunto de características da expressão e do conteúdo que criam um *ethos*.”

<sup>16</sup> Source text: “plenamente integrada às teorias do discurso” [...] “significativo estatuto operacional.”

<sup>17</sup> In the second chapter of the third part of the book, *O pathos do enunciatário* (The Pathos of the Enunciatee), the discussion about the *ethos* of the enunciator is retaken. However, this time based on the traditional rhetoric studies of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, Fiorin highlights the image of the other actor of the enunciation, the enunciatee. This image is constructed by the enunciator, through marks the enunciatee leaves in the enunciation. We can understand *pathos*, according to Fiorin (2008a), as the state of mind of the audience, associated with the passions of the listener.

proposals and dedicating a whole chapter for what he calls *Éthos do enunciador* (Ethos of the Enunciator).<sup>18</sup> The following section of this article will deal with this discussion.

## 2 The Construction of the Debate Around the Concept of Discursive Ethos: The Ethos of the Enunciator

The rhetoric tradition has bequeathed to us a whole discussion about the art of arguing. Among these studies, the most outstanding is *Rhetoric Art* (1991),<sup>19</sup> by Aristotle, who defended the idea that the (good) image<sup>20</sup> that the speaker presents of himself to his audience constitutes one of the most convincing clues to reveal his character, thus generating credibility and gaining his public's support. That image of the speaker which is constructed throughout the development of his discourse was called by the Stagirite *ethos*.

Fiorin (2008a) recovers this contribution of Classical Rhetoric to the discussion about *ethos*, modernizing it through the lens of French semiotics. For this purpose, he firstly convenes the teaching of Aristotle in *Rhetoric Art*. The Greek thinker states that

[i]t is the *éthos* (character) that leads to persuasion when discourse is organized in such a way that the speaker inspires trust. We easily and promptly trust in good men, in all matters, but we trust them absolutely in confusing matters that are prone to misunderstanding. However, it is necessary that this trust be a result of the power of discourse and not of a favorable prevention regarding the speaker (I, 136a *apud* FIORIN, 2008a, p.139).<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> This chapter, in fact, was originally published as an article in: CORTINA, A.; MARCHEZAN, R. C. (Eds.). *Razões e sensibilidades: a semiótica em foco [Reasons and Sensitivities: Semiotics in Focus]*. Araraquara, SP: Cultura Acadêmica Editora, 2004, pp.117-138, as stated by Fiorin in the first pages of *Em busca do sentido [In Search of Meaning]*.

<sup>19</sup> ARISTOTLE. *The Art of Rhetoric*. Translated by J. H. Freese. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> Fiorin (2008a) retrieves another passage of the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle to show that the good image of the speaker is the image of prudence and sense (*phrónesis*), of virtue (*areté*) and benevolence (*eunóia*).

<sup>21</sup> On account of this article's approach to Fiorin's work, we decided to keep his own quotation of *Arte Retórica* [Rhetoric], since we are interested in his particular reading. The same procedure will be adopted regarding D. Maingueneau's work.

Source text: "É o *éthos* (caráter) que leva à persuasão, quando o discurso é organizado de tal maneira que o orador inspira confiança. Confiamos sem dificuldade e mais prontamente nos homens de bem, em todas as questões, mas confiamos neles, de maneira absoluta, nas questões confusas ou que se prestam a equívocos. No entanto, é preciso que essa confiança seja resultado da força do discurso e não de uma prevenção favorável a respeito do orador."

From the excerpt above, Fiorin shows us that, in the same way the subject of the enunciation is understood by semiotic studies of Greimasian base, the comprehension of *ethos* by rhetoric is also an effect of meaning of the construction of a simulacrum of the image of the enunciator.

Thus, for Greimasian semiotics, the subject cannot be accessed, however real it may be, since we are not able to get inside it, in his psyche, to get to know him and his identity. Therefore, this real subject does not interest French semiotics. Actually, its interest is oriented towards the subject created as an effect of discourse.

As a result, both the rhetoric and the semiotic perspectives adopted by Fiorin realize *ethos* as an image constructed by the language subject as an effect of discourse and not as an extrinsic structure.

In order to make use of the categories applied by Maingueneau (2008), we could say that, likewise Aristotle (1991), Fiorin only believes in the *ethos* that is shown, and not in the *ethos* that is said so that for both proposals the *ethos* is not in the utterance, but it is shown in the enunciation.

Yet, one must be careful enough to know that, from the standpoint of Greimasian semiotics, everything that is recorded in the enunciation, both in the level of the utterance and of the enunciation, cooperates to the constitution of the image of the subject of the enunciation, whether it be the *ethos* of the enunciator, or the pathos of the enunciatee.

On the other hand, unlike the Aristotelian rhetoric,<sup>22</sup> Fiorin leads us to conclude that the image of the subjects constructed in discourse is not restricted to the range of markedly argumentative and persuasive texts, but it is extended to other types of texts, such as literary ones, as illustrated by the analyses of Brazilian literature provided by the author.

It should be noted that, in this respect, Maingueneau (1997) had already made a few reservations to the Aristotelian study of *ethos*, indicating that two rearrangements of the rhetoric *ethos* should be made in order to introduce this category into the Discourse Analysis theoretical framework: 1) not to reduce the *ethos* to oral discourse, since the

---

<sup>22</sup> We are aware of other critical readings of the Aristotelian views on *ethos*, both in linguistic studies, such as Eggs's (2005) and Maingueneau's (1997) himself, and in philosophical studies, such as Vergnières's (2003). However, taking into consideration this article's objectives, we chose to restrict our presentation to Fiorin's (2008) understanding of the Aristotelian theory of *ethos*, as he incorporates it into Discursive Semiotics.

author believes that all texts are equipped with vocality and corporeality; 2) to remove all the burden of a subject that is free to make intentional choices from the adhesion the speaker intends to get from his audience, for, according to Maingueneau, the effects of meaning generated by the *ethos* would result from the discursive structure in which it is situated, and not directly from the subject of the enunciation.

The other theoretical reference which Fiorin borrows in order to discuss the concept of *ethos* is precisely Maingueneau's proposal:

*Ethos* embraces three components: the character, which is the set of psychic features revealed by the enunciator (which would be called *ethos per se*); the body, that is, the physical features the enunciator presents; the tone, the vocal dimension of the enunciator unveiled by discourse (1995:137-140 *apud* FIORIN, 2008a, p.141).<sup>23</sup>

Thus, in line with Maingueneau's<sup>24</sup> ideas, Fiorin apparently wants to show that the enunciatee adheres to the enunciator's discourse because he relates with the image of the subject of the enunciation, who presents himself with a character, a body, and a tone.

This image of the enunciator to which the enunciatee relates – a term from Greimasian semiotics – is given, in Maingueneau's (2001) proposal, by what the author has called “discursive incorporation,” through which the figure of the guarantor (*le garant*) arises. The guarantor is understood as the enunciator that emerges from the subjective instance of discourse to obtain the co-enunciator's adherence to a determined universe of meaning.

As for the aspect of tone in the depiction of the discursive *ethos*, it is important to highlight that Maingueneau (2005), under Bakhtin's (1986) influence, relates to this

---

<sup>23</sup> Source text: “O *éthos* compreende três componentes: o caráter, que é o conjunto de características psíquicas reveladas pelo enunciador (é o que chamaríamos de *éthos* propriamente dito), o corpo, ou seja, as características físicas que o enunciador apresenta; o tom, a dimensão vocal do enunciador desvelada pelo discurso.”

<sup>24</sup> The concept of *ethos* in the French theoretical thinking starts to take form in the 1980s with the publication of *Genèses du discours/ Gênese dos discursos* [Genesis of Discourses] (1984/2005) (1984/2005). In this work, although the conception of *ethos* had already been outlined, the term does not appear explicitly. This will only happen in *Novas Tendências em Análise do Discurso* (New Tendencies in Discourse Analysis) (1997 [1987]). Maingueneau (1984/2005), in *Gênese dos Discursos* [Genesis of Discourses], treats *ethos* as a “global semantics” of discourse, using expressions such as “mode of enunciation,” “way of saying,” “manner of speaking,” “manner of enunciation” to refer to the concept. For further reading on the development of the concept of *ethos* in the work of Maingueneau, see Amossy (2005), for an overview, and Gonçalves (2006), for a more detailed treatment.

mode of enunciation, which the Russian thinker named tone, as the dimension of the *ethos* that is connected with “voice” and “orality”:

[...] The exceptional role of tone. [...] The least-studied aspect of speech life. This is not the world of tropes, but the world of personal tones and nuances, and it consists not in the relations among things (phenomena, concepts), but in the world of others’ personalities. The tone is determined not by the experiences of the speaker, but by the relationship of the speaker to the individual personality of the other speaker (to his rank, his importance, and so forth) (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.154).<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, from this conceptual relationship, the discursive *ethos* is manifested through the expressive intonation (e.g. friendly, mocking, demagogic, authoritarian tone) that the enunciator lends to the utterance while interacting with the co-enunciator.

As we have seen, Fiorin resumes two theoretical matrices, an ancient one, Aristotelian Rhetoric and a modern one, Discourse Analysis, to propose an operational concept of *ethos* for French semiotics. Let us now analyze this proposal.

Firstly, and needless to say, the title of the chapter, *Éthos do enunciador* (Ethos of the Enunciator) is not random. It marks the position of the author as aligned with French semiotics, in search of a notion of *ethos* that is compatible with the concepts and categories that compound the whole of the theory’s epistemological project.

By arguing that analyzing the *ethos* of the enunciator is the same as analyzing the *ethos* of the actor of/in the enunciation, Fiorin is proposing a concept of *ethos* defined by the theoretical terms of Greimasian semiotics. Thus, the understanding of the *ethos* of the enunciator as the *ethos* of the actor of/in the enunciation demands clarification of how the three capital concepts used in this definition are understood by the semiotic perspective, namely: enunciation, actor, and enunciator.

For Fiorin, enunciation is understood, in Benvenistean terms, as the instance of the *ego hic et nunc*, the instance that “populates the utterance and the people with times and spaces” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.137).<sup>26</sup> This way, according to Fiorin, and under the semiotic perspective, the enunciation is the linguistic instance presupposed by the existence of an utterance and an enunciator.

---

<sup>25</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. From Notes Made in 1970-71. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.132-158.

<sup>26</sup> Source text: “povoa o enunciado e pessoas, de tempos e de espaços.”

In his turn, the actor is understood as a thematic-figurative concretization of the actant of the enunciation. To make it clearer, let us read Fiorin's (2008a) own words:

When we speak of me and you, we speak of actants of the enunciation, that is, of positions within the enunciative scene, one who speaks and one to whom we speak. However, in different texts, these positions are concretized and these actants become actors of the enunciation (FIORIN, 2008a, pp.138-139).<sup>27</sup>

Joining this discussion with the concept of *ethos*, the author clarifies that “when we speak of the *ethos* of the enunciator, we are speaking of the actor and not of the actant of the enunciation” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.141).<sup>28</sup> In order to establish the concept of the actor of the enunciation, Fiorin relies on Greimas's thought, in which the actor of the enunciation is defined by the totality of his discourses and his work. Thus, when we analyze the whole of an author's work, such as Machado de Assis's, for instance, we can surmise the marks of the *ethos* of the enunciator from a totality manifested in the discursive materiality of his work. Thereof, Fiorin (2008a) investigates where we could find the marks of the *ethos* of the enunciator in the discursive materiality of the totality:

Inside this whole, we seek for recurrences of any of the compositional elements of the discourse or the text: in the choice of subject, in the construction of the characters, in the chosen genres, in the level of language used, in the rhythm, in the figurativization, in the choice of themes, in the isotopies and so on (FIORIN, 2008a, p.143).<sup>29</sup>

In its turn, the figure of the enunciator is understood as the image of the author constructed by the text, and not as a real, skin and bones author. Therefore, the figure of the enunciator is implied in the text, being discursively built by its author.

By standing against this ontologization of the enunciator, Fiorin (2008a) relates this enunciative instance to the *ethos* of the enunciator, stating that:

---

<sup>27</sup> Source text: “Quando falamos em eu e tu, falamos em actantes da enunciação, ou seja, em posições dentro da cena enunciativa, aquele que fala e aquele para quem se fala. No entanto, nos diferentes textos, essas posições são concretizadas e esses actantes tornam-se atores da enunciação.”

<sup>28</sup> Source text: “quando se fala em *ethos* do enunciador, estamos falando em ator e não em actante da enunciação.”

<sup>29</sup> Source text: “Dentro desse todo, procuram-se recorrências em qualquer elemento composicional do discurso ou do texto: na escolha do assunto, na construção das personagens, nos gêneros escolhidos, no nível de linguagem usado, no ritmo, na figurativização, na escolha dos temas, nas isotopias, etc.”

The *éthos* of the enunciator has nothing to do with the psychologism that often tries to infiltrate into discursive studies. It is a matter of apprehending a subject constructed by discourse and not by a subjectivity that would be the source from which the utterance emanates, a psychism responsible for discourse. The *ethos* is an image of the author, not the real author; it is a discursive author, an implied author (FIORIN, 2008a, p.139).<sup>30</sup>

Firstly, from this excerpt, in which he defends his theoretical position, we can state that Fiorin is, in fact, inscribed (using Bakhtinian terminology) in a non-subjective and non-idealist theoretical tradition of language that dates back to Aristotle (n.d.), in which *ethos* is assumed as a product of discourse, and he arrives with great strength at language studies with the ideas of the Bakhtin Circle (cf. VOLOŠINOV, 1986).<sup>31</sup> This non-subjective thesis of language is later retaken by post-structuralist theoreticians such as Foucault (1972),<sup>32</sup> Derrida (2005),<sup>33</sup> and Pêcheux (1982).<sup>34</sup> At the same time, due to his theoretical stance regarding the treatment of the *ethos*, Fiorin inscribes the Greimasian semiotic in that same tradition. That is certainly a merit of the author, mainly because Discursive Semiotics is often accused of being an immanentist theory of language, too attached to some of the structuralist principles.

Secondly, also based on the citation above, we can assert that the author, aided by Greimasian terminology, tries to demonstrate the distinction between the instance of the enunciator and other enunciative instances in a text, such as that of the interlocutor and that of the narrator. From that point, he discriminates the *ethos* of each of these subjects of the enunciation.

According to Fiorin, for analytical purposes, there would be no difficulty in guessing the *ethos* of the interlocutor, because it would be the image of a character constructed by all of his physical and psychological features in the work. The challenge would be to differentiate the *ethos* of the enunciator from that of the narrator.

---

<sup>30</sup> Source text: “O *éthos* do enunciador nada tem de psicologismo que muitas vezes pretende infiltrar-se nos estudos discursivos. Trata-se de apreender um sujeito construído pelo discurso e não uma subjetividade que seria a fonte de onde emanaria um enunciado, de um psiquismo responsável pelo discurso. O *éthos* é uma imagem do autor, não é o autor real; é um autor discursivo, um autor implícito.”

<sup>31</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I.R.Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> FOUCAULT, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

<sup>33</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> PÊCHEUX, M. *Language, Semantics and Ideology*. Translated by H. Nagpal. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Fiorin proposes a solution to this distinction supported by Greimas's ideas, according to which the enunciator should be seen as the actor of the enunciation defined by the totality of his discourse.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, it is only by examining the whole of a work, or the *totus*, as Brondal-based Discini (2003) postulates, that we can reach the *ethos* of the enunciator, recognizing similarities or differences between him and the narrator of one of the examined works. Based on these ideas, Fiorin (2008a) suggests that:

When analyzing a singular work, we can define the features of the narrator. When studying an author's whole work, we can learn the *éthos* of the enunciator. At the end of the analysis, we can find an identity or a difference between the character of the enunciator and that of the narrator of a singular work. In Tom Jones, the narrator is naïve whereas the author is ironic (FIORIN, 2008a, p.141).<sup>36</sup>

All the power of application that the notion of *ethos* gains with the investment that Fiorin brings from French semiotics will be noticed in the analysis that the author makes of some literary works,<sup>37</sup> mostly Brazilian.

---

<sup>35</sup> Fiorin refers to the following passage: "From the point of view of discourse production, we can distinguish the actant of the enunciation, which is a logically implicit actant, logically presupposed by the utterance, from the actor of the enunciation: in the last case, the actor will be, for instance, Baudelaire, once he is defined by the totality of his discourses" (GREIMAS E COURTÉS *apud* FIORIN, 2008a, p.141). Source text: "Do ponto de vista da produção do discurso, poder-se-á distinguir o actante da enunciação, que é um actante logicamente implícito, logicamente pressuposto pelo enunciado, do ator da enunciação: neste último caso, o ator será, por exemplo, Baudelaire, na medida em que define pela totalidade de seus discursos."

<sup>36</sup> Source text: "Quando analisamos uma obra singular, podemos definir os traços do narrador, quando estudamos a obra inteira de um autor é que podemos apreender o *éthos* do enunciador. Podemos, ao final da análise encontrar uma identidade ou diferença entre o caráter do enunciador e o do narrador numa obra singular. Em Tom Jones, o narrador é ingênuo, enquanto o autor é irônico."

<sup>37</sup> In A multiplicação dos *ethes*: a questão da heteronímia (The Multiplication of *Ethe*: The Issue of Heteronymy), a chapter of *Ethos discursive (Discursive Ethos)* (MOTTA and SALGADO, 2008), Fiorin (2008b) uses the poems of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa and his heteronyms to analytically explore the various images of the author through the concept of the *ethos* of the enunciator. Thus, he intends to demonstrate that heteronymy can be understood "as a creation of different *ethe* to occupy different positions simultaneously, maybe even antagonic, of a certain field of discourse" (FIORIN, 2008b, p.68). Source text: "como a criação de diferentes *ethe* para situar-se simultaneamente em posições diferentes, e mesmo antagônicas, de um dado campo discursivo."

### 3 The Set of Examples of the Ethos of the Enunciator: The Construction of the Author's Image in the Discursive Materiality of Literary Enunciation

Holding the notion of the *ethos* of the enunciator, Fiorin explores the category's heuristic potential to analyze literary texts. Therefore, he intends to present four basic questions of theoretical-analytical relevance.

In the order these questions are raised, the first one is that, by the end of the analysis of a literary work, it is possible to find similarities or dissimilarities between the *ethos* of the enunciator/author, which is deduced from the totality of his work, and the *ethos* of the narrator, constructed upon a single work. In order to illustrate this thesis, Fiorin shows that, in *Tom Jones's* example, the *ethos* of the narrator and of the enunciator/author are divergent: the narrator's image is of a naïve subject, while the author is presented with an ironic character. On the other hand, in *O missionário* (The Missionary), by Inglês de Souza, the *ethos* of the narrator and of the enunciator are alike; both are presented with a rough character with a moralist image.

The second question is an extension of the precedent. In order to analyze the *ethos* of enunciator, it is necessary to get to know the image of the author of the literary work constructed throughout the whole of his work, and not from biographic information about the author. Thus, a Discursive Semiotics study is not interested to know if Machado de Assis, for instance, was an ironic or skeptical man. It would rather be interested in learning, through various textual and linguistic indications that are recurring in the enunciation, how this image can be discursively constructed in the whole of the author's work. Fiorin exemplifies that through his analysis of the character's *ethos* in a few Machadian novels.<sup>38</sup> Thus, before these first two questions, we can say that the features that allow the reader/analyst to construct the image of a certain character, with its corporeality, its character, its tone, can also help this very reader/analyst to construct the *ethos* of the narrator and of the author/enunciator revealed in the whole of his work simultaneously.

The third question proposed by Fiorin is maybe the strongest for the tradition of literary studies due to its originality as well as the categorical tone with which it is expressed. He claims that "all changes in literature are followed by a change of the

---

<sup>38</sup> For a thorough analysis on the ethos of Machado de Assis's novels, including the Greimasian semiotic point of view, see Cruz (2009).

*éthos*” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.147).<sup>39</sup> To illustrate, the author cites the case of the Brazilian poetry bound to romantic aesthetics.

According to Fiorin, there was a significant change in the *ethos* of the enunciator during the passage of the second to the third romantic generation. The *ethos* of the second generation was constructed upon the lexical recurrence of words that indicated “the restatement of the wintry, the nocturnal, the emaciated, the pale, the faded and so forth” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.147),<sup>40</sup> showing itself with a young body marked by slenderness and paleness, with a character that swung between melancholy and passion, expressed in an enunciation that varied between a bored and a passionate tone.<sup>41</sup> For Fiorin, this type of *ethos* is represented in the poetry of Álvares de Azevedo.

In its turn, the *ethos* of the third romantic generation, represented by condorist poets such as Castro Alves, is shown with a vigorous, struggling and active body of the enunciator, which is perceived by the restatement of similes that point to the greatness of natural elements, namely the ocean, the stars, the typhoon, and sea storms.

From this analysis, Fiorin draws the fourth and last question, which is that the character of an enunciator is always produced in opposition to another, a thesis the author translates with the statement that “*éthos* is established in interdiscourse” (FIORIN, 2008a, p.150).<sup>42</sup>

In the text we are currently analyzing, despite his relating the notion of *ethos* to that of interdiscourse, Fiorin (2008a) does not debate the concept of interdiscourse/interdiscursivity. However, this discussion is present, in a more punctual way, in Fiorin (2006), where the author takes the notions of interdiscursivity and intertextuality in order to debate them within the works of Bakhtin. From that discussion, Fiorin (2006)

---

<sup>39</sup> Source text: “todas as modificações na literatura são acompanhadas por uma modificação do *éthos*.”

<sup>40</sup> Source text: “a reiteração do invernial, do noturno, do macilento, do pálido, do desbotado, etc.”

<sup>41</sup> Fiorin, in this analysis, imitates the analytical gesture of Maingueneau (1983), in *Sémantique de la polémique* [*The Semantics of Polemics*], in which the French theoretician approaches the Christian discourse and its religious tendencies in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: the Jansenism and the devout humanism. The discourse of the devout humanism, of catholic base, tries to compete with the Jansenist discourse, of protestant inclination. To approach this base of discursive opposition, he studies the so-called “semantic of the devout body” ( in opposition to the corporeality instituted by the Jansenist discourse), according to which the clothing and all the ways of moving within the social space created by discourse cooperate to give meaning to the doctrine defended by this discourse. By analyzing the character and representation of the body of the subjects of these two rival religious movements, Maingueneau shows that, on the one hand, there is the sweet way the humanist shows in their discourse, and on the other hand, the rude and serious manner of the image shown by Jansenism. Maingueneau develops this analysis by using, among other resources, the lexical choice of words, such as sweet, and sweetness.

<sup>42</sup> Source text: “o *éthos* estabelece-se no interdiscurso.”

advocates that, if the Bakhtinian theory makes a distinction between text and enunciation – the latter being conceptually close to what is understood as interdiscourse, once it is constructed within dialogic relation, while the former is conceived as the manifestation of this very enunciation – so it is possible that a difference between interdiscursivity and intertextuality be established in the following way: “the former is any dialogic relation between utterances; the latter is a more particular type of interdiscursivity, in which two distinct textual materialities meet in a text” (p.191).<sup>43</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Contribution of J. L. Fiorin to the Notion of the Ethos of the Enunciator**

By the end of this article we are able to summarize Fiorin’s proposal presented here and, at the same time, to better evaluate the contribution that the author has brought for such a dear theme to those who are interested in studying the production of meaning in texts: the construction of the image of the subjects of discourse, which the classical tradition has called *ethos*.

From the Aristotelian rhetoric proposal for the study of the *ethos* of the speaker, Fiorin assimilates the idea that the *ethos* should be studied as an image of the subject constructed within the discourse and not outside of it. In addition to that, he expands the rhetoric conception in two ways: 1) by showing that, on the one hand, the *ethos* of the narrator can be defined by a single discourse, and, on the other, the *ethos* of the enunciator can be defined by a group, a totality of discourses; and 2) by extending the analysis of the *ethos* to texts that escape the strict sphere of argumentation, such as literary texts. From the analysis that he applies to this kind of texts, Fiorin demonstrates how productive it is to consider the *ethos* of the enunciator based on Discursive Semiotics. At the same time, he draws from this analysis a number of fresh and relevant questions that may contribute significantly to the treatment that the literature scholar can apply to literary texts.

From Maingueneau’s discursive proposal, Fiorin captures the idea that, in order to analyze the image of subjects in discourse, we should take into consideration the elements of tone, character and corporeality that the enunciatee needs to incorporate so

---

<sup>43</sup> Source text: “aquela é qualquer relação dialógica entre enunciados; esta é um tipo particular de interdiscursividade, aquela em que se encontram num texto duas materialidades textuais distintas.”

as to legitimate, in a kind of fiduciary contract, the image of his other, the enunciator. As well as Maingueneau, Fiorin seems to demonstrate that discourse is not only content, but also a way of saying that constructs the subjects of the enunciation. Sure enough, while it constructs an enunciator, the discourse also constructs its correlative, the enunciatee. Besides that, just as Maingueneau, Fiorin believes that *ethos* leaves linguistic and textual marks in the discursive materiality, through which we access the image of the enunciator, by the recurrence with which these “hints” appear in the text. These hints authorize the enunciatee to construct an image of the enunciator, which is not the real, flesh and bones subject, as Fiorin highlights, but his representative constructed within the enunciation. However, unlike Maingueneau, Fiorin only accepts the possibility of construction of the *ethos* in the instance of the enunciation (discursive *ethos*), and not outside of it (prior/pre-discursive *ethos*).

Without confronting the postulates of French semiotics, Fiorin clearly recovers the concept of *ethos* discussed by Rhetoric and Discourse Analysis through the theoretical alignment that he creates with this dialogue. He inaugurates a particular theoretical place for the study of *ethos* that is compatible with the perspective of Discursive Semiotics, leaving a contribution for the Greimasian theory that may incorporate the notion of the *ethos* of the enunciator to its theoretical project regarding subjectivity/identity studies. Therefore, he contributes to the strengthening of the theory, making it evident, through other elements that the theory had not incorporated, how the construction of the actors of the enunciation is realized in the generative process of meaning.

Besides Fiorin (2004; 2008a; 2008b), other authors also contribute to the enhancement of this theoretical/analytical place that the *ethos* offers to the Semiotic studies of Greimasian orientation: Discini (2009) and Cruz (2009). These can either be authentic contributions of the Discursive Semiotics studies in Brazil for Greimas’s postulates, as well as for the many other studies of several perspectives about *ethos*. As a result, any coming studies that aim to outline the various approaches to this category of language studies, such as Amossy’s (2005), may include the Discursive Semiotics perspective, as thought by these Brazilian authors, in the list.

In addition to that, as a corollary, Fiorin’s proposal finally allows us to conclude that the theoretical-analytical model of Discursive Semiotics, in spite of all its formal

modeling, is not a straitjacket, being open to contributions borrowed from other theoretical matrices which, at a first glance, would seem completely divergent and irreconcilable with the presuppositions of French semiotics.

## REFERENCES

- AMOSSY, R. Introdução: da noção retórica de *ethos* à análise do discurso. In: \_\_\_\_\_ (Org.). *Imagens de si no discurso: a construção do ethos*. Trad. Dilson Ferreira da Cruz, Fabiana Komesu e Sírio Possenti. São Paulo: Contexto, 2005, p.9-28.
- ARISTÓTELES. *Arte retórica e arte poética*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Ediouro; Tecnoprint S. A., s/d. (Coleção Clássicos de Ouro).
- BAKHTIN, M. Apontamentos de 1970-1971. In: *Estética da criação verbal*. 4. ed. Trad. Paulo Bezerra. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003, p.367- 392.
- BAKHTIN, M. (VOLOCHÍNOV, V. N.). *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem*. Trad. M. Lahud e Y. F. Vieira. 13. ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2009.
- CRUZ, D. F. *O éthos dos romances de Machado de Assis*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2009.
- DERRIDA, J. *A Escritura e a diferença*. Trad. Maria Beatriz da Silva. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1995.
- DISCINI, N. *O estilo nos textos: história em quadrinhos, mídia e literatura*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2003.
- EGGS, E. *Ethos aristotélico, convicção e pragmática moderna*. In: AMOSSY, R. *Imagens de si no discurso: a construção do ethos*. Trad. Dilson Ferreira da Cruz, Fabiana Komesu e Sírio Possenti. São Paulo: Contexto, 2005. p.29-56.
- FIORIN, J. L. Dialogismo e estilo. In: BASTOS, N. B. (Org.). *Língua portuguesa em calidoscópio*. São Paulo: Educ, 2004, p.115-132.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interdiscursividade e intertextualidade. In: BRAIT, B. (Org.). *Bakhtin: outros conceitos-chave*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2006, p.161-193.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Em busca do sentido: estudos discursivos*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A multiplicação dos *ethe*: a questão da heteronímia. In: MOTTA, A. R. SALGADO (Org.). *Ethos discursivo*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008b, p.55-69.
- FOUCAULT, M. *A arqueologia do saber*. Trad. Luiz Felipe Baeta Neves. 7. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2008.
- MAINGUENEAU, D. *Sémantique de la polémique: discours religieux et ruptures idéologiques au xvii siècle*. Suisse: L'Age d'homme, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Genèses du discours*. Liège: Pierre Mardaga Editeur, 1884.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gênese dos discursos*. Trad. S. Possenti. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Novas tendências em Análise de Discurso*. Trad. Freda Indurski. São Paulo: Pontes, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *O contexto da obra literária*. Trad. Marina Appenzeller. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. A propósito do *ethos*. Trad. Luciana Salgado. In: MOTTA, A. R. SALGADO (org.). *Ethos discursivo*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008, p.11-29.

PÊCHEUX, M. *Semântica e discurso: uma crítica à afirmação do óbvio*. Trad. de Eni P. Orlandi et al. 3. ed. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 1997.

VERGNIÈRES, S. *Ética e política em Aristóteles (phisis, ethos, nomos)*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2003.

Translated by Paulo Victor Bezerra de Lima - bezerradelima@gmail.com

*Received March 02,2015*

*Accepted September 14,2015*