

## Categorization of Speech Acts in Play and Performance Analysis

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### Introduction

Speech act theory provides one of the crucial criteria for demonstrating that a play cannot be conceived as a text in the full sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> 'Play' is defined here as a set of printed verbal signs, organized as a script for a possible theatre production. 'Text' is defined here as a definite set of organized signs, verbal or otherwise, that the reader/spectator is confronted with and expected to decode. It can be shown, following speech act theory, that plays do not meet the conditions of this definition of 'text,' in particular because of the indefinite and non-final shape of the signs and utterances that the reader is expected to decode.

In addition to sentences not being presented in the final medium—supposed to be voiced on stage—most of them do not indicate what kind of speech act they are part of. Only a naive reader might assume that all the speech acts of a dialogue are of a constative nature. In fact, the same sentence may be used for different speech acts, if accompanied by different gestures and intonations. Furthermore, even the so-called 'explicit' speech acts, with verbal indicators of force, can have their meaning easily changed by means of appropriate non-verbal indicators of force. Consequently, it can be said that non-verbal indicators of force are the most decisive and reliable factor in determining and recognizing the type of speech act a verbal sentence is part of. In other words, for any given play, there is no way to determine in the above sense, unless specified in stage directions, the nature of the component speech acts of its dialogue. Therefore, a play is always subject to interpretation, in the sense of assigning non-verbal indicators of force to the actual printed sentences of the dialogue; i.e., speech act theory leads to the conclusion that a play is an incomplete text since it does not comply with the truth conditions of 'text' as suggested above. Only a theatrical

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performance presents the component speech acts of the dialogue in their definite and final form; i.e., it is not subject to interpretation on the utterance level in the sense of making force explicit. Therefore, only a performance meets the conditions of the aforementioned definition of 'text.'

At the same time, speech act theory also provides the criteria for demonstrating that our previous conclusion should not be taken as an absolute truth. Although most of the forces of speech acts are not verbally indicated by the speakers (the characters), plays usually provide other types of verbal clues, which substantially reduce the options of actors and directors when interpreting a play in the aforementioned sense of assigning force to speech acts. This claim supports our feeling, that at least in some kinds of plays, such as Shakespeare's tragedies, enough information is provided in order to make possible a quasi-'reading' of a play, as if it was a real text. Therefore, I intend to show that plays, or verbal scripts, although incomplete, are not as deprived as speech act theory might have led us to believe.

Such a thesis does not contradict our previous claim, that a play cannot be conceived as a text in the full sense of the word. It certainly opens the way, however, for a more serious consideration of plays as primary sources of research than envisaged by theory in recent years. In this paper it is my intention to establish the basic ways of determining the nature of the speech behaviour of the characters and eventually provide a detailed example of this type of play analysis.

### **Methodological Considerations**

There is a basic difference between the analysis of a speech act in the framework of play analysis and in the framework of performance analysis: in a performance speech acts are accompanied by non-verbal indicators of force and are delivered as definite instances of given types of acts. In contrast, in a play, not only non-verbal indicators of force are missing, but verbal indicators are usually missing as well. It is in this sense that plays are incomplete texts, since without specification of force, speech acts remain ambiguous, on a 'pre-text' status. Therefore, when 'reading' a play, whether for theatrical professional purposes or for the sake of analysis, the task of the reader is to interpret non-indicated acts, i.e., among other things to assign possible forces to speech acts which are coherent with all other components of the final text; i.e., within a given conception of the fictional world.

On the other hand, categorization is the essence of verbal activity and it fulfils a crucial role in the description of the fictional world:

First, there is a relationship of categorization between verbal expressions in the text and the referential fictional world described by it. In this respect it

should be emphasized that the real referent of verbal categorization is not stage reality but the fictional world evoked by the theatrical text; for example, 'stone' might be used for categorizing a lump of painted plaster and still be an adequate description for the fictional stone, if this lump is indeed meant to enact a fictional stone.

Second, Speech Act Theory teaches that verbal categorization is found in speech acts in the form of self-referential categorization of force as an indicator of force, by using a performative verb that could have been used for the categorization of such a speech act; e.g., in 'I apologize for being late.' the verb 'apologize' categorizes the force of the speech act, if it counts as an act of apology, since this verb usually categorizes acts of apology, whether it is part of the sentence or not, as in 'I am terribly sorry for being late.' However, as we shall see below, 'force' is not the sole aspect of the speech activity of the characters that can be categorized by linguistic means, and self-referential categorization is not the only possible type of categorization found in a play. There are other aspects of action and other characters, including functional ones, which play an important role in verbal categorization. All these additional types and aspects of categorization condition our way of reading and even interpreting a play.

Since there is no difference between verbal categorization in a play and in a performance, there is no reason to discard verbal categorization of action found in plays for purposes of performance analysis: in both cases categorization applies to the fictional world and not to stage 'reality.' Furthermore, from this point of view the situation is reversed: a performance, as a primary source of speech act analysis, does not provide more information than found in the play. In this respect, the use of a performance as a primary source might even be counterproductive, since non-verbal indicators of force have to be categorized in terms of natural language before becoming objects of analysis, and such a translation might introduce categorization which is foreign to the text. In other words, plays, although incomplete texts, might offer a variety of types of verbal categorization, built into the very fabric of the dialogue, which are also organic elements of the final text.

The main problem lies in that categorization by characters is subordinate to characterization and reflects biases in their comprehension of the fictional world, including their own predicament, while, on the other hand, categorization by functional characters depends on their particular function in the text. Consequently, the adequate use of verbal categorization found in dialogue depends on grasping the actual characterization and functions of the categorizing *dramatis personae* and, particularly, the ironic relations obtaining between them. If we detect the types of bias and degrees of ironic authority which these cases

of categorization reflect, we may rely on the verbal categorization found in a play as a real primary source of text analysis.

In any case, as mentioned above, we would not find more verbal categorization in the performed play than is found already in the play itself; i.e., although the verbal script is an incomplete text, for the sake of verbal categorization it is the best primary source we have, and with an appropriate model of the fictional world and after due transformations, we might even find it an invaluable one.

In the analysis of verbal categorization in theatrical texts I shall relate to the following: a) the aspects of action as potential objects of categorization; b) the types of dramatis personae that actually categorize speech activity, their functions and their degree of ironic authority.

### **Verbal Categorization**

#### a. Aspects of action as objects of categorization

I have suggested elsewhere<sup>2</sup> that a speech act is a verbal index of an action;<sup>3</sup> as such a speech act is equivalent to a non-verbal act which is also an index of an action; therefore, speech acts and non-verbal acts can and should be analysed in terms of action theory.<sup>4</sup>

Such an approach to speech acts affects our notion of 'dialogue' and changes it from an exchange of verbal descriptions to an exchange of indexes of actions, i.e., to a particular case of interaction. Since theatrical speech acts are iconic replicas of real ones, it follows that these basic features will be found in them as well. Furthermore, I have also tried to demonstrate that no speech acts but actions are the basic units of plot.<sup>5</sup>

Current speech act theory deals with categorization of speech acts as if they were self contained entities. In contrast, the claim that a speech act is an index of an action entails that categorization might apply not only to the nature of acts but also to additional aspects of action; as van Dijk states: "An essential component in the definition of action turned out to be the various mental structures 'underlying' the actual doing and its consequences. This means that actions cannot as such be observed, identified or described. We have access to them only by the INTERPRETATION of doings. Such observable parts of acts, however, may be highly 'ambiguous'—We understand what somebody 'does' only if we are able to interpret a doing as a certain action. This implies that we reconstruct an assumed intention, purpose and possible further reasons of the agent."<sup>6</sup> If so, categorization of force is not all; other aspects of action might and should be categorized as well.

Van Dijk distinguishes between two basic types of "mental structures" which underlie actual doings: "intentions" and "purposes." Apparently, "intentions" relate to the very essence of the act: in terms of current terminology, for example, a speech act of promise is successful, as far as intentions are concerned, when "the hearer knows that the speaker promises.<sup>7</sup> I suggest that such a view reflects a fallacy, which I term, the 'communication fallacy,' because it assumes that speech acts operate as a message to be decoded."<sup>8</sup> In contrast, if a speech act is viewed as an act, equivalent to a non-verbal act, it is clear that if somebody makes a promise, indicated in the usual way, natural or conventional, it would certainly be categorized as a promise.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we should claim that a speech act is successful, if it is adequately categorized. In any case, speech acts presuppose intentions essentially connected with the act; for example, a promise indicates the intention to do something in the future that pleases the hearer. The assumption of an intention essentially connected to the nature of the act is legitimate, but it should be clear that such an intention is not communicated but fully indicated by the speech act itself. Speech acts also indicate that some conditions do obtain; for example, a promise implies sincerity, a commitment and an ability to do so.<sup>10</sup>

Purposes, which reflect intended perlocutionary effects, are much more difficult to analyse. Purposes are not clearly indicated by the speech act itself, and in many a case they are intentionally kept veiled. Furthermore, purposes are not necessarily connected to particular speech acts. Purpose refers to the diffuse domain of possible effects that one can achieve by a particular act, verbal or otherwise. In principle, any possible perlocutionary effect can be correlated with any possible speech act. Consequently, categorization of purposes is open to speculation. However, speech acts do presuppose purposes and, even if not easy to categorize, they are nonetheless indicated by them. We might therefore find different categorizations of given purposes by various characters within one and the same text.

It follows that there is an assumption of inner counterparts of speech acts—intentions and purposes—such as 'I promise.' Inner and outer counterparts constitute a whole, an action, of which the speech act is its perceptible side. Thus the referent of categorization might be the whole or its various components: its perceptible side or its intentions and purposes. In other words, verbal categorization may apply to intentions, such as 'promise,' 'order' and 'apologize,' to conditions, such as being committed, being sincere and being able, and to purposes, such as 'persuade,' 'insult' and 'undermine.'

In principle, a promise counts as a promise regardless of intentions, purposes and conditions; but it counts as such because it presupposes the existence of intentions, purposes and conditions; i.e., categorization of acts is context free: a

promise is a promise regardless of intentions, purposes and conditions, although it presupposes them, regardless of success or failure on the intention or purpose levels, and regardless of characterization and situation. In contrast, categorization of given purposes is not context free, since they reflect characterization and motivation of given characters, i.e., categorization of purposes is dependent on the interpretation of speech acts. It is self-evident, however, that categorization on the act level is incomplete and that categorization on the action level is vital to the understanding of the plot, since characters react to the acts as indexes of actions. In other words, actions, and not speech acts, are the basic units of plot.

The main problem in analysing speech acts resides in the fact that within the philosophy of language and pragmatics, speech acts are analysed as self contained phenomena. Such an approach cannot be maintained even for the analysis of actions, particularly in the context of drama, not only because the dual part-whole unity of act-action is part of a chain of actions, but mainly because the plot is prestructured according to the type of experience that the play is intended to impart to the audience; i.e., because the overall structure of the plot determines the ultimate meaning of its component actions.

First, in the context of the structure of the plot we discern that 'immediate' purposes operate in the context of 'global' purposes<sup>11</sup> or motives, such as marrying somebody, avenging something, or seizing power. Such global motives operate as major factors in the analysis of a single action. Furthermore, plot is conceived in terms of effects, i.e., in terms of the character having succeeded or failed not only in relation to his immediate purposes but mainly to his global ones; if a character wishes to marry someone, each of his actions, regardless of immediate purposes, is examined in relation to this global motive. Marriage might be a successful act regarding a person who desired marriage, for example, but Oedipus's marriage with his mother is regarded as a failure because of his desire to avoid it. We assume that every action of the character reflects such a global purpose. The decision to bring about success or failure of the global motives of the character utterly depends on the type of experience the audience is meant to undergo. Consequently, we expect that verbal categorization affects not only 'immediate' purposes, but also 'global' ones.

Categorization of motives and actions may be exercised in matter of fact or 'neutral' terms but, usually, action is characterized in terms of value systems. Value categorization is a crucial factor in the attitude of characters to other characters and to themselves. Moreover, value categorization is also a vital component of the structure of the plot since it determines the attitude of the audience to the characters, their motives, their actions and their final success or failure. Furthermore, value categorization affects the way in which motives, immediate or global, are grasped in the framework of the structure of the

character. For instance, the same act can be perceived as a tragic hamartia, if performed by a basically positive character, or as an act of evil, if the character is polluted by negative intentions. In other words, from the viewpoint of a value system, the structure of the character reflects a more complex type of intentionality (hamartia stricken characters, for example). This type of intentionality is in fact the basic constituent of the structure of the plot, since success or failure of global motives is also grasped by characters and audiences as harmonious or absurd in direct relation to the structure of the character on the value level.

Consequently, categorization of intentions and purposes, neutral or value tinted, immediate or global, on the act or action levels, might be found in the verbal script. Furthermore, neutral categorization is implicit in value categorization, and should be analytically separated in the process of play or performance analysis.

#### b. Types of categorization

Categorization of acts, intentions and purposes appear in plays in three basic forms: 1) self-referential categorization by the speaker; 2) subsequent categorization of the action by the hearer or other characters following a speech act; 3) categorization by functional characters (theatrical conventions) which reflect the expected categorization by the audience from the viewpoint of the author.

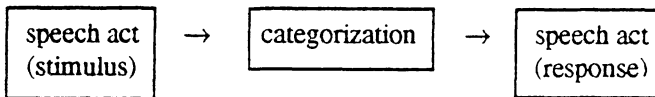
1) Categorization by the speaker: the use of a performative verb as an indicator of force is the basic method of self-referential categorization suggested already by speech act theory.<sup>12</sup> In this case, we should say that the speaker uses a verb, that could have been used for categorizing the speech act, as an indicator of its force. I have suggested already that the so called 'explicit indicator of force' is not always a reliable categorization of a speech act, and that basically verbal indicators of force are subordinate to non-verbal ones, as in indirect speech acts; e.g., when 'I beg your pardon!' is not used for begging pardon, but for blaming.<sup>13</sup> We may assume that a verbal indicator of force is reliable only on condition that it is not contradicted or modified by non-verbal indicators of force.

I have suggested also that the use of performative verbs reflects an underlying convention which allows the use of such verbs, which usually categorize the force of speech acts, in a non-verbal capacity. However, the claim that performative verbs are used in a non-verbal capacity does not preclude such a verb from being used as a clue to the true nature of the speech act for which it is used.<sup>14</sup> If plays are used as primary sources of analysis, the following

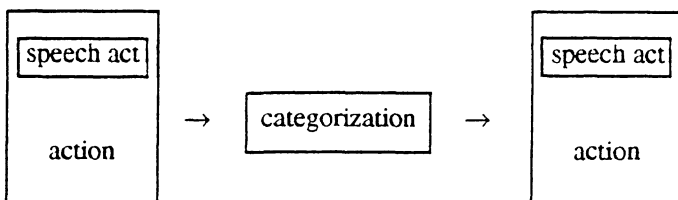
principle should thus apply: verbal indicators of force should be seen as conclusive, unless proven incompatible with possible non-verbal ones.

We may also find self-referential categorization of intentions and purposes in the dialogue itself. In such a case, self-categorization might bear the stamp of a biased character. We may also find it in soliloquies, or equivalent conventions, in which characters reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings to the audience.<sup>15</sup> Since these conventions operate on the author-audience channel of communication, for the purpose of bestowing ironic superiority on the latter, such categorization may be unbiased.

2) Categorization by the hearer: Categorization of a previous speech act is a necessary step before response by the hearer by means of a subsequent act, verbal or otherwise. In contrast to self-referential categorization of acts, which is basically an indexical activity—speech acts are objects of categorization and not part of the categorizing system—categorization by the hearer is a genuine verbal activity since it relates to speech acts as objects of categorization. Therefore, we might, and often do, find traces of it in dialogue; however, such categorization is not always made explicit, and quite often it is implicit in the very way that a character responds to a speech act; for instance, if a threat is followed by a counter threat, or if an order is followed by either obeying or questioning of authority, we may assume that adequate categorization has been accomplished. I suggest that whether this mediating verbal activity is made explicit or not, a model of verbal interaction should include it as a necessary component of its basic structure:



Furthermore, since speech acts are indexes of actions, we may conjecture that this categorizing activity not only applies to the index, but also to the action as a whole, including intentions and purposes, since we assume that when the speaker acts, his intention is to produce an action and not only its perceptible side, and since, as mentioned before, when a hearer acts he reacts to the whole action and not only to its perceptible side:





We have claimed that speech acts are context free, whereas given purposes, although indicated by speech acts, are open to speculation. Nevertheless, we assume that categorization, true or false, precedes response and applies to acts, intentions and purposes. We may even conjecture that basically characters succeed in categorizing speech acts which are context free, whereas purposes might be mistaken since categorization too is dependent on characterization and its biases.

3) Categorization by functional characters: Most of the theatrical conventions, such as chorus, confidant and ballad singer (Brecht), function on the indirect channel of communication between author and audience, which circumvents the characters of the fictional world. This channel of communication is used to enable the audience to understand the characters' world better than they do themselves; i.e., for the sake of irony.<sup>16</sup> In other words, whereas categorization by the characters is usually biased, from an ironic point of view, categorization by means of these conventions enjoys authorial authority. Furthermore, it is because characters are biased that the indirect channel is needed. Such categorization aims at the actual target audience envisaged by the author (synchronic audience) and not at any random audience for whom the play is performed (diachronic audiences).

As mentioned above, categorization of action can be neutral or value tinted. The value system which categorizes characters' behaviour may be shared by the characters of the fictional world and the audience, although this is not always the case. In many a play the value system is not shared even among the characters themselves. Therefore, the expected categorization by the audience is usually presented as part of the text in the mouth of functional characters, such as the chorus, the honest man or the prophet. Since the aim of the theatrical event is to bring about a given type of experience, it is obvious that categorization by the audience is the decisive factor in shaping this experience, and that categorization by characters, by means of any value system, is subordinate to the categorization made by the audience. Furthermore, there is a relationship of irony between them, in the sense of the audience's superiority in the understanding of the characters' world. Even if characters and audience shared the value system which underlies categorization, characters, tragic or comic, are usually afflicted by a structural bias in their point of view, which reflects their tragic or comic flaw; i.e., the ironic relationship is maintained in such a case as well. The expected categorization of the audience should thus be seen as the ultimate 'truth.' This truth is of a ritual nature, since the fictional world is prestructured in order to substantiate it.

The stage directions found in plays are verbal categorizations of non-verbal aspects of the fictional world provided by the author. Therefore, stage directions, if they apply to aspects of speech acts, should be seen as reliable categorization, since they also enjoy authorial authority.

### **An Example of Categorization of an Action**

After trying several times to hear from Teiresias what he knows about the death of Laius, in a short series of speech acts which range from suppliant requests ("your suppliants" (327)) to blunt orders ("Tell us, you villain, tell us . . ." (335)), Oedipus suddenly accuses Teiresias of sharing the responsibility of Laius's death, save of the actual killing:<sup>17</sup>

Oedipus: . . . I think you were a comploter of the deed and doer of the deed save in so far as for the actual killing. Had you had eyes I would have said alone you murdered him. (347-349)

In this speech act there is no self-referential categorization of accusation. The accusation is made by simply stating facts in the manner of an assertive sentence.

The question is, how did Oedipus arrive at such a strange conclusion? Seemingly there is nothing in Teiresias's recurrent refusals to speak, explicitly categorized by Oedipus as such (330), to make him suspicious. However, a closer examination reveals that Teiresias not only refuses to speak but clearly hints at some secret and incriminating knowledge, potentially devastating for both Oedipus and himself; for example: ". . . I will not / bring to the light of the day my troubles, mine—rather to call them yours" (328). It is safe to conclude that Oedipus sees in these hints a veiled accusation. If so, his own accusation of Teiresias becomes a counter accusation.

However, an accusation in itself is not a sufficient condition for a sound counter accusation. Two facts are known: 1) Teiresias suggests that he knows the truth and refuses to speak, and 2) Teiresias hints at the possible guilt of both Oedipus and himself. Only if we assume that Oedipus was trying to conjecture Teiresias's purposes for such a veiled accusation, may we be able to understand the king's own accusation. The clue might be found in the fact that the encounter takes place in front of the people of Thebes, and that the veiled accusation might be aimed at discrediting the King in front of the crowd eager to find a scapegoat for their troubles. If we add to this assumption Oedipus's certainty that he is definitely not involved in the murder of Laius, an assumption made explicit by Oedipus in previous occasions, it follows that Teiresias knows who killed Laius

and that by hinting at the possible incrimination of the King himself he is not only shielding someone else but also trying to achieve something for himself. Such a reasoning, we may assume, must have taken place in Oedipus's mind before he made his accusation.

Oedipus's conviction that he has nothing to do with the death of Laius is repeatedly stated and explicitly articulated in his proclamation: "I say as one that is a stranger to the story as stranger to the deed" (220). This feeling of noninvolvement with the story is expressed on various occasions by Oedipus before the speech act under scrutiny. Undoubtedly, there is an ironic dimension to the repeatedly expressed feeling of foreignness to the deed, since we assume that the audience were aware of at least the basic facts of the myth; otherwise, all the expressions, that are objects of irony, would have been pointless. However, this sense of irony, that was activated by the audience when trying to understand Oedipus's accusation of Teiresias, attests to the genuineness of Oedipus's feelings.

Oedipus assumes also that whoever murdered Laius was motivated by the wish to seize power. If so, Oedipus has become the last obstacle in the murderer's way; or in his own words: "For when I drive pollution from the land/ I will not serve a distant friend's advantage,/ but act in my own interest. Whoever he was that killed the king may readily/ wish too dispatch me with his murderous hand;/ so helping the dead king I help myself" (136-141). If so, such reasoning may lead to the conclusion that whoever now tries to strike at Oedipus will disclose his previous involvement in the crime against Laius. Oedipus is thus entitled to his excitement for having discovered the first substantial clue to the murderer of Laius.

Furthermore, we may assume that in ordering all the citizens, including Teiresias, to tell the truth and in banishing anyone with knowledge of the killer who refuses to tell the truth, Oedipus is sincere in his promise to do whatever is in his power to find the killer. His global purpose is indeed to find the killer, to punish him, to restore peace to the land, and above all, to be a good king. Such a purpose is already lauded in advance by the people of Thebes. Ironically, Oedipus crowns it with success.

Oedipus is motivated by a second and more crucial global purpose: to avoid his own fate. This purpose is also fully categorized in value terms within the play, although negatively in this case. During his search for his ancestry, Oedipus describes himself in terms which are meaningful within the framework of Greek religion:

Oedipus: . . . But I account myself a child of Fortune, beneficent  
Fortune . . . (1080)

Oedipus relies on Fortune (the goddess Tyche) rather than on revealing Apollo. Such a feeling clearly contradicts the Greeks' belief in the oracles, and in Apollo himself. When Jocasta casts doubt on prophecy (851), the chorus harshly criticises her (865-910). This feeling of being foreign to the deed, (of so far I have managed not to fulfil the prophecy) with the religious implication of doubt on Apollo's power, must have been present in Oedipus's mind when making his accusation.

Oedipus does not foreshadow that both global purposes are in any way related, or that finding the murderer of Laius might unveil that he has already fulfilled the prophecy. This is his blindness.

Taking into account the nature of Teiresias's speech acts prior to Oedipus's accusation and the possible purposes of his veiled accusation, Oedipus's own purposes, immediate and global, and his own biased eyes, we may conjecture that the latter's reasoning would have been as follows: If he accuses me and I am undoubtedly innocent, he is trying to discredit me in front of my people for his own benefit. If he strikes at me in order to remove me from power, he is motivated by the same drive that brought about the death of Laius; i.e., he is guilty. Since being blind he could not have done the deed, he is definitely shielding somebody, 'a friend'; therefore, in accordance with the terms of my own proclamation, he is the pollution of the land. Teiresias's accomplice, Oedipus suspects, is Creon (378).

In other words, in order to understand Oedipus's accusation we must assume a train of thought, a conjecture of possible purposes of both characters, which is not fully indicated by the verbal text, but coherent with each and every verbal index found in it.

Oedipus's accusation appears to be very well categorized by Teiresias, although not explicitly, since he responds with a counter accusation:

Teiresias: Yes? Then I warn you faithfully to keep the letter of your proclamation and from this day to speak no word of greeting to these nor me; you are the land's pollution. (350-353)

Teiresias's accusation is also not self-referentially categorized: he categorizes his first speech act as a warning (I warn you), and the second appears to be an assertion (you are the land's pollution). In fact, both are part of an indirect speech act of accusation. This accusation is made explicit a few lines later: 'I say you are the murderer of the king / whose murderer you seek.' (362)

In the first speech act Teiresias categorizes Oedipus's former threat of banishment as a proclamation (more than 100 verses later!), which indeed it is:

Oedipus: I forbid that man, whoever he be, my land, my land where I hold sovereignty and throne; and forbid any to welcome him or cry him greeting or making him sharer in sacrifice or offering to the Gods, or give him water for his hands to wash. I command all to drive him from their homes, since he is our pollution . . . (235-242)

Although Oedipus uses the performative verb "command" (self-referential categorization), this is indeed a proclamation of banishment. Whoever has any knowledge regarding the king's murderer should see himself as banished if he does not share his knowledge with the king, since he is the pollution of the land. In accordance with this proclamation, Teiresias, who ever knows the truth and does not share it, is the pollution of the land.

*Pollution*, the Greek *miasma*, is a word heavily tinted with value overtones. *Miasma* means, among other things, that even a crime committed without criminal intentions, or unknowingly, must be still atoned for. If Oedipus has indeed killed his father, although he is not guilty in the legal sense, he is nonetheless both polluted and polluting the land. This is the pollution that the Gods wish to cleanse from Thebes as a condition to restoring its peace. *Miasma* by definition might function as a hamartia, setting the tragic action machine in motion; i.e., *miasma* is capable of making catastrophe commensurate with hamartia. Oedipus and Teiresias accuse each other of being the pollution of the land, although for different reasons, but Teiresias expresses the fictional 'truth.'

Teiresias is a functional character, characterized as a very wise man who shares the knowledge of the Gods. Why does he not continue in his silence, but instead clearly provokes Oedipus into suspicion? The answer might well be that the gods have decided that the time has come for Oedipus to know the truth. This assumption is corroborated by the play's end. Furthermore, Teiresias's behaviour is also in line with Sophocles's possible intention to show Oedipus reacting to the truth as a blind man. Sophocles is interested in Oedipus's blindness, as the central metaphor of the play, since in his view, apparently, blindness is the quintessential feature of man. In fact, Sophocles contrasts on stage a double oximoron: Teiresias being blind and yet "seeing," and Oedipus seeing and yet being "blind" (370-373). Oedipus's blindness, in the scene under scrutiny, crystallizes the audience's feeling of ironic superiority that was generated during the previous scenes. As the plot evolves towards anagnorisis, i.e., to Oedipus sharing the knowledge of the audience and the gods, Oedipus's accusation of Teiresias certainly presents him at his nadir.

Oedipus confronts Teiresias's words with his own wit (390-99). He demonstrates Teiresias's blindness by his failure to solve the riddle of the Sphinx, whereas Oedipus himself had no problem in doing so. Oedipus trusts his human

reasoning and in fact there would have been nothing wrong in so doing, had all the premises been known to him, such as having already fulfilled all the prophecies.

Once irony has been well established, Teiresias can openly say whatever he wishes and Oedipus can not understand. Teiresias, in fact, as appropriate to a theatrical convention, is directly speaking to the audience. Oedipus no longer listens. Teiresias even describes the consequences of Oedipus's having married his own mother: "He shall be proven father and brother both/ to his own children in his house; to her/ that gave him birth, a son and a husband both;/ a fellow sower in his father's bed/ with the same father he murdered . . ." (457-9). The truth has become too blatantly absurd for Oedipus to listen to.

In conclusion, it would appear that Teiresias's outburst is induced by Oedipus's irreverent behaviour, whereas in fact, he is fulfilling a structural function in the play.

The analysis of the bit under scrutiny now shows a clear structure: the veiled accusation by Teiresias is followed by a straightforward accusation by Oedipus, first of Teiresias and subsequently of Creon, which is also followed by a straightforward counter accusation by Teiresias. In order to arrive at the sub-text of the play and the possible theatrical performance we assumed the existence of implicit aspects of action and implicit processes of assessing them. In order to do so, we made use of verbal categorization found not only in the bit itself, but throughout the play. In fact, we have been speculating on the way in which the characters themselves might have been speculating about other characters' intentions and purposes. I have presented here only one possible interpretation of this scene, but suggest that whatever the interpretation, it must proceed in a like manner.

## Conclusions

Following the aforementioned considerations I suggest that a model for the analysis of categorization of particular actions in the context of plots and plot structures should include the following aspects:

- a) part-whole relationship act-action, including force, intentions, conditions, and purposes;
- b) context-free and context-dependent aspects of action, including immediate and global purposes;
- c) self-referential and referential (by the hearer) categorization, whether explicit or implicit;
- d) neutral and value categorization;

e) categorization as object or subject of dramatic irony;

Finally, we should detect categorization that indicates the exact function of a particular speech act within the structure of the plot, in terms of success-failure, in terms of positive-negative value, and eventually in terms of harmony-absurdity in respect to the expectations of the audience.

I suggest that traces of all these types of verbal categorization are to be found in the play, as their most natural location. Furthermore, we should not expect to find more verbal categorization in a performance than what is found already in the play.

Should we conclude, in view of all these types of categorization, that a play determines unambiguously the nature of the described fictional world, in a way reminiscent of the known axiom which states that between two points only one line can be drawn? Could we conclude that after all a play is a text in the aforementioned sense of the word? The response is negative. Despite all its clues a play remains ambiguous and incomplete by any standard of 'text.' Complete, explicit and reliable categorization of every act and action of the fictional world is not to be found in any play. Plays cannot provide a full account of the complex network of intentionality interwoven in a fictional world. Unless we assume a sub-text, which explains all the phenomena on stage, the matter cannot be understood in its entirety. Obviously, even a theatrical text, i.e., a performance, cannot be understood without the audience assuming the existence of a sub-text and providing possible categorization where it is missing. However, one should not underestimate the scope of information found in a verbal text. A play provides a multitude of points, which restrict the number of possible lines that can be drawn among them; i.e., of possible interpretations. Obviously, plays written in different theatrical styles differ in this respect, but nevertheless, it has become evident that verbal texts contain more clues to their possible original sub-texts than envisaged by previous theory.

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## Notes

1. Particularly, John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford UP, 1962); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969) and *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986 (1979)); Geoffrey N. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London and New York: Longmans, 1983); Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987 (1983)); Teun A. Van Dijk, *Text and Context* (London: Longmans, 1977).

2. Eli Rozik, "Speech Acts and the Theory of Theatrical Communication" *Kodikas/Code*, 12, 1-2, 1989.
3. 'Indexical signs': signs which signify by virtue of the principle of contiguity, particularly, a part-whole relationship.
4. Cf. Teun A. Van Dijk, *ibid.* 167; and Stephen C. Levinson, *ibid.* 246.
5. Eli Rozik, "Plot Analysis and Speech Act Theory," G. Deledalle ed., *Signs of Humanity—L'Homme et ses Signs* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992).
6. Teun A. Van Dijk 182.
7. 198.
8. Cf. the use of the verbs "uptake"—John Austin 117; "interpretation"—Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980) 164; "understanding"—John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 733; John R. Searle, 1979, 34, and 43; and Stephen C. Levinson, 196.
9. Indexicality is not necessarily codified. It may be a natural index or a conventional one, but in all cases it is the perceptible side of an action. Whereas univocality may apply to imitations of indexes (theatrical speech acts for example), it cannot always apply to actions.
10. "Conditions" in John Searle's terminology include "commitment" (the speaker commits himself by what he does), "sincerity" (the speaker means what he does) and "authority" (the speaker sees himself capable or authorized to do what he does), 1969, 60 ff. Cf. John Lyons, *Language Meaning and Context* (Bungay: Fontana, 1981) 191: Illocutionary force can be factorized into two components: commitment vs. non-commitment and factuality vs. desirability.
11. Cf. Teun A. Van Dijk 177.
12. Geoffrey Leech 181. In addition, characters as well as spectators categorize actions by means of words afforded by their natural language. There is no need for a taxonomy for such a purpose, but regular linguistic competence. Cf. Geoffrey Leech 196.
13. Cf. the chapter "Indirect Speech Acts," in John Searle, 1979, 30-57.
14. Geoffrey Leech 181 ff.
15. We should distinguish at this point between indexes of actions and indexes of feelings. Both present indexical structure, but not every type of index is an act.
16. Eli Rozik, "Theatrical Irony," in *Theatre Research International*, 11, 2, Summer, 1986. Some plays deliberately deprive the audience of ironic superiority.
17. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (eds.), *Greek Tragedies*, vol.1 (The U of Chicago P, 1968 [1960]).