THE PLACE OF LITERATURE IN THE SCOPE OF THE SEMIOTIC THEORY OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how literature fits into the larger process of culture, based, on the one hand, on a broad conception of literature, relying on dichotomies fiction/nonfiction and utilitarian/distracting, and, on the other hand, on the semiotic theory of culture of hedonistic-functional line. The objective is to demonstrate how the categories distracting fictional literature, utilitarian fictional literature, distracting nonfiction literature, utilitarian nonfiction literature and the resulting forms of hybridity of these categories can be described by means of hedonic and pragmatic functions of social practices and their subtypes and are linked to concepts of culture in the broad sense (everything that opposes the domain of nature) and culture in the strict sense (a set of social discourses with predominantly distracting function, whose production and enunciation require technical aptitude).

Keywords: Utilitarian and distracting literature, hybridization of genres, pragmatic and hedonic functions.

O LUGAR DA LITERATURA NO ÂMBITO DA TEORIA SEMIÓTICA DA CULTURA

RESUMO

Este trabalho discute como a literatura se insere no processo maior da cultura, partindo, de um lado, de uma concepção ampla de literatura, apoiada nas dicotomias ficcional/não ficcional e utilitária/distrativa, e, de outro, na teoria semiótica da cultura de linha hedonista-funcionalista. Objetiva-se demonstrar como as categorias literatura ficcional distrativa, literatura ficcional utilitária, literatura não ficcional distrativa, literatura não ficcional utilitária, bem como as formas resultantes de hibridismo dessas categorias, podem ser descritas por meio das funções pragmática e hedônica das práticas sociais e de seus subtipos e se articulam aos conceitos de cultura lato sensu (tudo o que se opõe ao domínio da natureza) e cultura stricto sensu (conjunto dos discursos sociais com função predominantemente distrativa, cuja produção e enunciação exigem aptidão técnica).

Palavras-chave: Literatura utilitária e distrativa, hibridismo de gêneros, funções pragmática e hedônica.
INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses how literature, understood in its broadest sense, falls within the more general process of culture, both in its broad sense (i.e., in its anthropological/sociological definition, as opposed to the concept of nature) and in the strict sense (which partially corresponds to the traditional concept of culture, as inherited from the Greco-Roman tradition).

For this, we will first of all define what comes to literature and culture (in both senses of that) and then, based on the semiotic theory of culture of hedonistic-functional line, explain the various literary phenomena, including those resulting from hybridization of genres.

1. What is literature

First of all, we should define what we mean by literature in this work, given the high polysemy of this word. Of its many meanings, the most common is referred to the art of writing. Therefore, literature would be the art made out of words, the text with an aesthetic function, which includes prose fiction and poetry. In a narrow conception, literature would be the prose fiction, as opposed to poetry. In this sense, a writer produces novels, short stories, chronicles, even theatrical plays, but the poetry is by the poet. This concept is somewhat problematic, in that there are prose poems, poetic prose, texts blending prose and poetry, and so on. In addition, many consider that a play is not literature in the strict sense, but belongs to the realm of another art, the drama (as well as a screenplay does not belong to literature but to the cinema). It is also considered that the chronicle is more akin to journalism – and, in some cases, to philosophy – than to literature proper.

On the other hand, it is common to use the term literature in expressions such as “nonfiction literature”, “self-help literature”, “medical literature”, “legal literature”, etc. Were it not so, there would be no reason why study Caminha’s Letter in Brazilian literature classes.¹

It can be seen how the boundaries are fluid, and the task of setting limits or definitions in this field is difficult. By the way, our goal here is to show that the lack of clear divisions between the various genres of verbal manifestation, i.e., the hybridity of forms, is what ensures the great wealth of human experience in dealing with the word.

This paper will define literature as the set of all the works published or publishable in book form. There can be some embarrassment in this definition when facing a book composed of images only, such as a photo album or a compilation of reproductions of paintings, as well as in relation to a children’s book having nothing but illustrations. Nevertheless, they are border cases: the infant-addressed book does not fail to be considered as children’s literature, and plastic art catalogues in general have some text.

¹ Caminha’s Letter is considered to be the founding document of Brazil. It was written by the scribe Pero Vaz de Caminha, a member of the Portuguese fleet that discovered Brazil in 1500, as soon as they came to land, and sent back to Portugal, addressed to king Emmanuel I, describing the new found land. This letter is also considered the initial landmark of Brazilian literature.
Given this, literature will be herein each and every book, no matter whether fictional or non-fictional, whether it is aimed at entertaining, educating, comforting, helping in practical tasks or any other finality that may be conceived of. It is necessary to remind as well that there is a full rich oral literature, be that of the popular culture, be that of primitive peoples, be the anecdotes and tales that circulate by word of mouth. There are still the blogs, and the news and magazines reports. These texts are not actually published in books, but they can, at any time, be published (provided that there can be found in them some merit for publication, evidently). This is why we speak of published or publishable works.

From the beginning, the great division that is established in literature takes place between fiction and nonfiction. This division is followed by editors, distributors, bookshops, newspaper book-reviewers and critics, and therefore it will be kept here.

It is understood by fiction any work containing not documented elements. Even a romanticized version of a historical fact is considered as fiction in that the author has not described or narrated only what can be verified through research and documentation, but has introduced dialogues, portrayed persons and environments or made comments that were a product of his imagination. This is what distinguishes a historical novel from a history textbook. In this latter, only what is documented is narrated; in that former, the author lets his imagination fly, even allowing himself not to be completely faithful to facts.

Fictional are also – although they are not literature – painting, sculpture, dance, theater, film, mime, because they all somehow simulate reality, constituting what Aristotle called mimesis in his Poetics: everything that seems to be, but is not, real. And, as will be seen in 3.2, is also fiction all that appears, that is, all that is created to stimulate our senses, like an abstract painting or instrumental music.

And why are books written? The main reason is to fix on the material support that is the paper the words that deserve to be remembered and known by everyone, now and in the future. Therefore, every speech that deserves record because it brings benefit to someone ends up, sooner or later, materialized in a book and becoming, thus, available to enjoy.

The benefits that a book provides its readers can be of several types: entertain, amuse, relax, raise awareness, make think, discomfort, teach, advise, persuade, clarify, remedy questions, raise doubts… Anyway, there are also books that bring more benefits for those who write than to those who read them: a nasty joke says that the works of self-help are so called because they are exactly for helping out to enrich their authors. By the way, it is not known if anyone ever got rich by reading self-help books; by writing them, instead…

It is possible to divide all the functions that a book can play in two basic categories: the utilitarian and distracting (see below, item 2.7). Hence, literature may be fictional, non-fictional, utilitarian or distracting. We have, from the beginning, four basic types of literature, resulting from the articulation of these categories, as shown in Table 1.
Table 1: The four types of literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERATURE</th>
<th>DISTRACTING</th>
<th>UTILITARIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FICTIONAL</td>
<td>Distracting fictional literature (novel, short</td>
<td>Utilitarian fictional literature (mythology,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>story, poetry)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>religion, some self-help books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON FICTIONAL</td>
<td>Distracting non fictional literature (philosophical,</td>
<td>Utilitarian non fictional literature (technical,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aesthetical or critical essay, popularization</td>
<td>scientific, juridical,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of science, biography, journalistic novel)</td>
<td>school, specialized books, manuals, self-help)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main form of literary hybridism is when a work meets the characteristics of more than one of these categories.

2. Literature, art and culture

As seen, literature can be fictional or non fictional, distracting or not distracting. The distracting fictional literature is the most widespread and popular form of literature, so that, when using in everyday language the word *literature* pure and simple, this is the kind of literature that is referred to. And it is this kind of literature that falls within the field of art. But both the literature of artistic nature and the other types of works are part of a more general process called culture. To understand how literature is linked to art and culture in general, we must first of all define culture.

2.1. What is culture?

Among the many definitions of culture, we can mention the following:

- culture is all that, both in humans and the environment, is not an exclusive product of nature. This is called the anthropological definition of culture and refers to the famous opposition *nature vs. nurture*;
- Culture is all that man creates or transforms, all that he adds to nature with his transforming work. This definition is a result of the above;
- Culture is a complex set of behavior patterns, beliefs, institutions and other spiritual and material values transmitted collectively and characteristic of a society or a human group. When it comes to Brazilian culture, corporate culture or pop culture, it is this concept that we have in mind.
Although there are rudiments of culture in other animal species, none of them presents the complexity found in *Homo sapiens*. Culture, symbolic thought, and articulate speech are the differential traits defining the human species.

The main vehicle of transmission of culture is verbal communication, which is only possible thanks to the existence of articulate speech (i.e., having vocabulary and grammar).²

### 2.2. How has culture emerged?

The first hominid to have traces of culture was *Australopithecus africanus*, about three million years ago, by chipping stones to produce sharp instruments. Around this time, there was a great drought in Africa, which led hominids down the trees in search of food.

With the shortage of vegetables and cutting ability to make weapons, *Australopithecus* began to hunt and eat the flesh of large mammals. This led to the development of the brain and, consequently, increased intelligence, starting a virtuous circle: the more he hunted and ate meat, the more his brain grew and therefore the smarter he became. More intelligence enabled the production of better weapons, which increased even more the hunting productivity, and so the cycle restarted.

About 200,000 years ago, in Africa, appear anatomically modern humans, or *Homo sapiens*. About 100,000 years later, this species arrives in the Middle East and Europe, where it meets the *Homo neanderthalensis*, or Neanderthal man, another human species, both descendants of *Homo erectus*.

Around 40,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* supplants Neanderthals and alone begins to dominate Western Eurasia. The most likely reasons for this supremacy – and therefore the extinction of Neanderthals – is the emergence of symbolic thought and, consequently, its expression by means of language, both verbal and nonverbal.

Finally, approximately 15,000 years ago civilization arises, whose first manifestations are the cave paintings of Lascaux and Niaux (France), Altamira (Spain), and bone carvings, like the Venus of Brassempouy.

Why were the first records of symbolic thought and the first manifestations of civilization exactly works of art? It is believed that such representations had a mystical-religious or superstitious purpose. But how did art, belief in supernatural, rituals, come up?

To understand this, let us resort to Maslow’s theory of basic needs (1943), which is summarized in the so-called Maslow pyramid (Figure 1).

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² It is customary to speak about animal language, but what animals actually have is a protolanguage and not a language proper. Indeed, the communication of the animals has a basic “vocabulary”, but does not have a grammar allowing to combine words to form more complex statements and thoughts.
According to the author, humans have a number of needs, belonging to several orders or levels, and they only engage in meeting needs of the next level when those of the previous level have been met. Thus, the first kind of need that we must meet is physiological, i.e., to ensure the functioning of our body. Next, we must ensure our physical survival and our body and mental health. Only then will we seek love, acceptance, friendships, social life, job satisfaction, leisure, and so on.

All the tools, from the flint ax to the computer, have been designed to meet the two lowest levels of needs, i.e., have been created to ease the “pain” in its broadest sense, that is, to solve practical problems of life.

But once these needs were met, many tools have become toys. For example, the bow and arrow created to hunt started to be used for target practice as training or mere entertainment. Fishing, besides providing food, has become a hobby. For the same reason, children fight a joke to measure forces, as well as kicking a coconut might have been the remote genesis of soccer, and the sound made when striking the hollow trunk of the trees may have given rise to music.

Celebrate a memorable hunt, honoring the best hunters, preserve the memory beyond death, fix the image of the hunt for ritual purposes may have been the probable reasons for the creation of cave paintings. Over time, legends were created about ancient deeds that gave rise to mythology and literature. Therefore, the matrices of culture are myth, dream, game, and ritual. These matrices give birth to history, literature, art, philosophy, science, sports, belief in supernatural, and therefore religion.

Painting and sculpture mark the emergence of art, whereas the narration of a story from generation to generation gives rise to the myth. As this narration was oral, it was easier to memorize the story if it were in verse, which gives birth to literature and poetry.

Thus, culture is born to meet basic needs, i.e., to get out of pain and go to a safe state. But when already secure, one seeks to escape the boredom by playing, that is, finding recreational purposes in practical things.

By studying the importance of play in culture, Huizinga defines:
Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is “different” from “ordinary life”. (Huizinga, 1980, p. 34).

For this author, the faculty of reasoning is what gives us the *Homo sapiens* dimension, the manufacture of objects gives us a *Homo faber* dimension, but it is the playing games which makes us *Homo ludens* (ibid, p. 5).

In short, man is not the only animal to use tools (there are birds and primates that manufacture their own tools to get food) or to impart knowledge to their peers, but perhaps the only one to do it through language. Nor is he the only animal that plays, but the only one that plays to the delight of others.

### 2.3. The evolution of the concept of culture

Our modern conception of culture dates back to ancient Greece, more specifically the Athens of the fifth century BC. As we know, this town was a *polis*, or city-state, governed by a system called democracy. But the Athenian democracy was different from ours, because decisions about the city were taken at a meeting directly by citizens. It was therefore a direct democracy and not representative (which did not prevent the emergence of politicians and demagoguery). But Athens had only 60,000 people, that is, free men, and eligible voters, the ones with the right to exercise power. There were 400,000 non-citizens (slaves, women, children and foreigners, including Greeks from other cities), who could not participate in political decisions.

Despite this highly exclusionary political model, there was a concern to prepare citizens for the exercise of power. This preparation, or education, called *paideia*, was in full training – physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual – of the citizen, or *politès*. For non-citizens was left the *banausia*, i.e. the legwork.

*Paideia* was based on what the Greeks called *skholé* (“distraction”), which originated the word *school* and included study, philosophical rambling, religious contemplation, sports and leisure. That is, *paideia* endowed citizens of a refinement of mind of one who need not work as he has people who work for him.

In its turn, the word *culture* comes from Latin and means cultivation, care for the field or cattle. This sense of cultivating the land remains in the Romance languages until the late Middle Ages.

In the sixteenth century, there arises a metaphoric sense of culture that would be fundamental to the Enlightenment philosophers of the 18th century and resonates even today: the culture as training and education of the spirit.

In 1755, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his book *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, in which he deals with culture, in the sense of civilization, as the major factor in the corruption of the human being and puts forth the theory of the noble savage (“Man is born good, it is civilization that corrupts him.”).
The 1798 edition of the *Dictionary of the French Academy* reinforces this notion of culture as opposed to nature. For Enlightenment thinkers, culture is the sum of knowledge accumulated and communicated to mankind throughout history, in sciences, literature and art.

By French influence also appears in the 18th century German term *Kultur* with the same metaphorical sense, in which the initial capital denoted a high status in a model to be followed by all societies.

Since then, *kultur* (with lowercase) shall be any learned skill, anything that distinguishes man from nature, while *Kultur* (capitalized) is the spiritual refinement that includes the arts and sciences.

### 2.4. The two forms of culture

According to the Greek philosopher Epicurus, human actions are driven by two basic principles: avoidance of pain (actions driven by the duty, that is, by necessity or obligation) and the pursuit of pleasure (actions driven by the will – desire or taste). Epicurus advocates the pursuit of simple pleasures and the avoidance of refined and unattainable pleasures.

How then do we define culture from the epicurean dichotomy? There is, first, the culture in its etymological sense, that is, the cultivation of nature, agriculture, cattle ranching, cultivation of soybean or bacteria. Secondly, there is the cultivation of man, which is divided into a culture in its broadest sense (anthropological), which we call culture *lato sensu* and includes everything that does not belong to the exclusive domain of nature, and culture in a strict sense (traditional), which we call culture *stricto sensu* and that may be the cultivation of the body (the sport) and the cultivation of the spirit (the free knowledge, aesthetic sensitivity).

It can be said that culture *lato sensu* is the set:

- of all that man creates or transforms;
- all he adds to nature;
- all that, in the man himself, is not an exclusive product of the biological instinct;
- everything that is not innate, but learned and transmitted through language;
- the objects and practices that characterize a particular human community.

On the other hand, culture *stricto sensu* should be understood as the set of activities:

- directed to the spirit, leisure, personal enrichment (physical, intellectual or spiritual) of human beings;
- that are practiced as an end in itself and not as a means to other ends;
- motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and not by the need to solve problems.

Systematizing the latter form of culture within a framework, we have Table 2.
Table 2: Culture *stricto sensu*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public conveyance with no utilitarian purposes of <em>causing to feel</em> discourses</td>
<td>Artistic discourses: Literature, music, cinema, theater, visual arts, fashion, comics, performances, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sporting discourses: Football, racing, swimming, tennis, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public conveyance with no utilitarian purposes of <em>causing to think</em> discourses</td>
<td>Scientific popularization discourses: Books, lectures, exhibitions and documentaries of scientific popularization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanistic discourses: Books and lectures on philosophy, aesthetics and criticism, biographies, thematic exhibitions, documentaries, popularization of mythology and mystical systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5. Relations between culture, knowledge and education

Many confuse culture with knowledge. After all, an educated person is one who has accumulated enough knowledge. But in reality not every culture is knowledge. A love song or an abstract painting is undeniably forms of culture, both in the broad sense and in the strict. However, what knowledge, what information do they provide about the world?

Moreover, not every knowledge is culture. A handbook of information technology provides knowledge, but we cannot say that it is a cultural work in the strict sense, nor that a person with great computer knowledge is an educated person.

The role of education is undoubtedly to impart knowledge. But the knowledge imparted by education is primarily a practical knowledge to form citizens first, and then professionals (manpower), that is, to ensure the survival of individuals in society.

Unlikely, the knowledge imparted by culture, when it exists, is a free, uninterested knowledge, not generally applicable to everyday life (no one watches a theater play in order to acquire skills to be used in their work). Therefore, culture does not form citizens, because it is aimed at citizens already formed. If a teacher asks his students to read novels or go to art or science exhibitions, the goal here is not cultural but educational: what the teacher wants is to form citizens able to enjoy culture, to think, to appreciate beauty, in a word, to have a critical sense, and not just docile and robotic manpower for the labor market. In short, writers, poets, playwrights, painters, sculptors, musicians, philosophers, scientists, thinkers do not create their discourses to be used in the classroom (although they may be), but to be experienced by the members of society.
2.6. Characteristics of culture stricto sensu

A detailed explanation of what comes to culture in the strict sense, within which are located the arts and, more specifically, the distracting literature (fiction and nonfiction), can be found in Bizzocchi (2003). However, its characteristics can be summarized as follows:

- all cultural practices are discourses, i.e. acts of communication and symbolic goods;
- they are public activities, directed to society as a whole, and freely accessible to all citizens;
- they are not utilitarian activities;
- they are an end in themselves and not a means to other ends;
- they serve primarily for pleasure, in the broadest sense of the word;
- they differ from the simple entertainment because they require an innate talent and, above all, mastery of a specific technique, acquired by learning.

In short, culture is the set of activities that Alves (2004) calls “toys”, as opposed to “tools” (utilitarian activities), and are directed to society by someone who has a special aptitude for practicing them. This definition includes perfectly all that we intuitively think of as the products of culture: novels, short stories, poems, popular science books, philosophical, aesthetic and critical essays, story-books, biographies, memoirs, chronicles, art or science exhibitions, thematic exhibitions (for example, on an artistic movement or a personality), music concerts, dance performances, theater, film, circus shows, popular scientific or philosophical lectures, architectural works of artistic value, landscaping works, performances, urban interventions, graffiti, music CDs and DVDs, movie DVDs, albums of fine arts, comics, sports competitions, lectures with humanistic content (for example, a writer talking about his work, a religious or a religion expert explaining publicly a doctrine – not to be confused with religious preaching), TV documentaries on scientific, artistic, philosophical or humanistic topics, folklore, carnival, festivals and celebrations, and so on.

There follows from this definition the fact, surprising to many, that many artistic events regarded as vulgar, populace or “tacky” as rap, hip-hop, porn films, soap operas and others belong to culture as much as the highest forms of art. This is because we are starting from an objective concept of culture, based on judgments of fact and not on value judgments, which, incidentally, have no scientific relevance. The belief – widespread among intellectuals – that classical music is culture, but popular one is not, results from a subjective and biased view of someone who stands above good and evil, bringing his personal opinion to the status of ultimate truth. The preference for this or that artist is a mere matter of taste and not a scientific fact.

But, if all events listed above are part of the culture, on the other hand, a book or lecture on prevention of diseases may have scientific content, but is not culture. Someone who writes poems or paints pictures and never exposes or publishes them is not doing culture; someone who sings at birthday parties but has never made a presentation in a concert hall or a record does not produce culture either. It is clear, then, that culture, besides being discursive, must be public and distracting. Furthermore, it requires specific competence to be made: it is what distinguishes it from pure entertainment, like certain reality shows and TV competitions, which are discursive, public and distracting, but do not require from the participants any innate ability or technique that
may have taken years of learning and improvement. We will explain what the specific competence is later on, in 2.8.

At the same time, many utilitarian activities, such as medicine and law, require a skill, but either are not discursive, or are not public, or are not distracting, so they are not part of the culture *stricto sensu* – even though they are legitimately part of the culture *lato sensu*.

2.7. The pragmatic and the hedonic functions

The pragmatic or utilitarian function (which, following the happy denomination of Rubem Alves, *op. cit.*, we can call tool-function) consists of causing not to have pain, that is, solving problems, making life easier.

However, the hedonic or distracting function (let’s call it toy-function) has the goal of causing to have pleasure, or amusing, entertaining, exciting.

The pragmatic function is divided into seven types, namely:

1. **Vital function** (*making able to be* = making life possible): maintenance, preservation and restoration of life and health, protection against threats to life and physical integrity, ensuring the survival, relief of physical pain, protection, security: *food, medicine, drugs, police, military*, etc. Examples of verbal discourse endowed with this function are the interjections “Watch out!” and “Help!” and bottles of shipwreck.

2. **Motivational function** (*causing to want to be* = motivating, supporting): relief of stress and emotional pain, support, comfort, motivation: *psychotherapy, counseling, motivational speeches*, self-help books, Seicho-No-Ie calendars, etc.

3. **Instrumental function** (*making able to do* = helping): facilitating or enabling tasks, reduction of stress, increase in comfort and productivity: *technology, machinery, appliances, industry, vehicles, communication facilities, utensils, furniture, general services*, etc. (Note: even the musical instruments and toys fall into this category because they are the means, instruments, not ends.) An example of text with instrumental function is the password to an account.

4. **Normative function** (*causing to have [not] to do* = disciplining): establishment of rules for the implementation of human activities in order to preserve rights, maintain order and ensure the smooth functioning of systems: *laws, standards of conduct, ethics, morals, regulations, statutes, contracts, sporting rules*, etc.

5. **Instructive function** (*causing to know how to do* = teaching, instructing): transmission of skills for social life, performing tasks and survival: *education, instruction manuals, recipes, advice*, etc. (Note: even teaching hedonic practices, such as piano playing, enter this function.) The most perfect examples of this function are the textbooks and workbooks, but even the *Kama Sutra* has an instructive function.

6. **Informative function** (*causing to know in order to enable* = informing, warning): transmission of information for the prevention of pain and the achievement of the other functions: *informative journalism, public utility reports, useful information, signposts, road signs*, etc.
7. **Persuasive function** *(causing to want [not] to do = inducing):* induction of action or stance, formation of opinion: politics, advertising, economic analysis, advice, opinionated journalism, pamphlet or engaged literature, etc. (Note: this function can provide a utility to the receiver or the sender itself, as in advertising, that serves the advertiser rather than the audience.)

The hedonic function is divided into four types: aesthetic (or poetic), ludic (or dramatic), epistemic (or noetic) and mystical (or magical). The latter is the only one that cannot be produced directly by discourse, since it corresponds to the delight of mystic trance, the state of grace. Many mystics reach this state, called epiphany, nirvana, totalizing state, expanded consciousness and many other denominations, by means of fasting, meditation, ingestion of hallucinogens and even strong sensory stimuli (bright lights flashing, repetitive and very loud sound). This trance state can be experienced in a religious cult or a rock concert, but in all cases the stimuli come from one of the other three hedonic functions. Especially in the literature, is the mystical function – unless proven otherwise – absent.

Consider then the aesthetic, ludic and epistemic functions.

1. **Aesthetic function** *(causing pleasure by means of sensations):* in the aesthetic function, stimuli are sensory and produce the pleasure of the senses. Its validation criterion is the opposition beautiful vs. ugly: what causes pleasure are pleasant visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and/or gustatory stimuli. Therefore, the discourse endowed with this function searches for beauty and provides pleasure by exhibiting beauty. The discourses, both verbal and nonverbal, whose major function is aesthetical tend to be “descriptive”, as a lyrical poem describing images or moods, or a picture portraying a landscape, an environment, a person, a scene or an abstract image.

2. **Ludic function** *(causing pleasure by means of feelings):* this function starts from the existence of a conflict that unfolds in time and can have several outcomes. The struggle of good against evil (e.g. police vs. villain), a love story (boy trying to win the girl’s heart), a legal dispute (plots like Kramer vs. Kramer, by Avery Corman, or QB VII, by Leon Uris) or a sports competition (a football match, a race car). In all these cases, there is the search for a solution to a fictitious conflict, and the pleasure of the recipients of the discourse (reader, spectator) is the expectation regarding the outcome, which intensifies as they get identified with one of the subjects of conflict, i.e. they support a character (or a pilot, or their team of devotion). Therefore, the ludic discourse awakens feelings of love and hatred, and produces a sentimental pleasure, or pleasure of the heart. Its validation criterion is the opposition winning vs. losing.

The ludic, verbal or nonverbal, discourse is “narrative” because it always tells a story made up of moves presented in chronological order (the successive scenes of a play, the moves of a game, etc.), which narrates the attempt to conquer an object of value (the beloved, power, victory, and so on).

The basis of the ludic pleasure is in the surprise effect, the unexpected outcome, be of a film, a race or an anecdote. It is the ludus, or game, which Huizinga *(op. cit.)* speaks about.

3. **Epistemic function** *(causing pleasure by means of thoughts):* the epistemic function is that which makes one get to know and think. It is based on the principle of satisfaction of curiosity and represents the pleasure of...
the mind. It is the discourse of the pursuit of knowledge, or search for truth, which can be achieved through research (scientific, journalistic) and reflection. Its validation criterion is therefore the true vs. false opposition.

The epistemic pleasure comes from the revelation of what one wants to know, whether the origin of the universe, the biography of a personality or gossip about the private life of show business celebrities. It is generally linked to “dissertational” discourses, as essays, chronicles, lectures on popular science, etc.

Every epistemic discourse is partly informative (causing to know to give pleasure), partly persuasive (causing to believe to give pleasure). For example, books on the theory of evolution as the Origin of Species, by Charles Darwin, or The Greatest Show on Earth, by Richard Dawkins, present facts and, at the same time, try to use them as arguments in favor of a thesis. Some (e.g., biographies, book-reports) are predominantly informational, whereas others (scientific and philosophical essays) are predominantly persuasive. In any case, it is good to distinguish between information and persuasion in the epistemic function with the pragmatic persuasive and informative functions, because the epistemic function is not intended to be useful but enjoyable.

The persuasive epistemic discourse (support of a thesis) corresponds to the instance of artistic authorship, while the informative one corresponds to the instance of interpretation.

Culture is a way – or rather, a set of ways – of understanding the world. While the utilitarian activities act on reality, culture beholds it to try to understand it and not necessarily to change it. (Who wants to make a revolution should write a manifesto, not a novel or an essay.) Thus, culture provides subsidies for other practices to change the world, whereas it only intends to show the reality as it is – or could be.

The four hedonic functions may also be related to the four cognitive processes of the human mind, or functions of consciousness (sensation, intuition, reason and emotion), described by Jung (1971). The aesthetic function would then be predominantly linked to sensation, the ludic function to emotion, the epistemic one to reason, and the mystical to intuition.

There is a relationship between the four cognitive processes above, the four major systems of explanation of the world (art, science, philosophy and religion) and the four basic types of pleasure (aesthetic, ludic, epistemic and mystical), which in their turn refer to the four modes of perception of reality – the four “eyes” – defined by St. Bonaventure: the eye of flesh, the eye of the heart, the eye of the mind, and the eye of the spirit.

Thus, visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory sensations, as well as the suggestion of these sensations produced by words in a descriptive text, provide a pleasure that, being sensory, is primarily organic (and hence we can say that it is carnal and sensual). Therefore, the aesthetic function produces the pleasure of flesh.

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3 According to Weil et al (1993, p. 18-19), science results of the combination between sensation (observation of reality) and reason (logical-mathematical thought); art, of the relationship between sensation and emotion; philosophy, the joint between intuition (the doxa of the philosophers) and reason; and religion, the relationship between intuition (religious enlightenment) and emotion.
The ludic function suggests a conflict between subjects in search of the same value object. This dispute arouses emotions of love and hate, and constant expectations regarding the next steps of the narrative. (That is why soap operas are divided into episodes, which always end in dramatic climax, leaving the resolution to the next episode.) It is what is technically called the polemic structure of the discourse. Given the positive or negative identification of the audience with each of the subjects at stake and also their permanent expectation for the outcome, it can be said that the ludic function is addressed to the heart. That is why the rooter refers to his team as “my heart’s team” (and not “my body”, “mind”, “spirit”).

The epistemic function causes pleasure by means of information – and reflection. So it makes get to know and often makes think. The pleasure of knowing applies both to reading a book about science and a gossip magazine. Therefore, knowledge must not be understood as scholarship, but simply as information. In both cases, the cognitive process activated is thought, which is why we can say that the epistemic pleasure is the pleasure of the mind.

Finally, the pleasure of the mystic trance, the state of grace, that epiphany experienced by St. Teresa of Avila or by yogis and monks is the pleasure of the spirit. As mentioned earlier, it is the only kind of pleasure that cannot be induced directly by discourse, for it is always a corollary of some other types of pleasure.

Systematizing the hedonic functions, we have Table 3.

### Table 3: Hedonic functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>TYPE OF STIMULUS</th>
<th>COGNITIVE PROCESS</th>
<th>TYPE OF PLEASURE</th>
<th>FOUNDING OPPOSITION</th>
<th>OBJECT OF SEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AESTHETIC</td>
<td>Sensations</td>
<td>sensation</td>
<td>of the flesh</td>
<td>beautiful vs ugly</td>
<td>beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUDIC</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>emotion</td>
<td>of the heart</td>
<td>winning x losing</td>
<td>victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISTEMIC</td>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>of the mind</td>
<td>true x false</td>
<td>truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYSTICAL</td>
<td>Sensations</td>
<td>intuition</td>
<td>of the spirit</td>
<td>individual x all</td>
<td>Plenitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, in the soap opera *Caminho das Índias*, exhibited in 2009 on the main Brazilian television network (Globo TV), whose theme was the life of Indians in Brazil, we find the following functions:

- aesthetic function in the soundtrack, dances, the costumes, the scenery, the landscapes of Rio de Janeiro, India and Dubai, and the beauty of the actors and actresses;
- ludic function in the plot and its various conflicts;
- epistemic function in spreading the Indian culture and also in implicit criticism of the Hindu cultural values, shown as backward under the Western point of view;
- informative function in clarifying about schizophrenia and other mental illnesses, as a character was schizophrenic;
- motivational function in encouraging those who suffer from mental illness;
- persuasive pragmatic function in the merchandising of a bank and a cosmetics brand, discreetly inserted in some episodes.

Placing into a table all the objects of our reality and all human activities, we have the situation shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Natural and cultural activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture lato sensu</th>
<th>Hedonic activities</th>
<th>Culture stricto sensu</th>
<th>Hedonic public activities that require skills and learning</th>
<th>Causing to think</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic activities, public or not, that do not require learning or skill: <em>singing in the shower, collecting, hobbies, reality shows</em>, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Technical activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pragmatic activities that require specific expertise, from the menial to the university: <em>medicine, carpentry</em>, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pragmatic activities that do not require specific skills: <em>writing, driving, having lunch, talking, bathing</em>, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>All that is not human creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing now exclusively distracting activities (as if we gave a close in the first rows of Table 4), we have Table 5.

**Table 5: Distracting activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture stricto sensu</th>
<th>Causing to think</th>
<th><strong>Sciences</strong>: books, articles, lectures, documentaries and exhibitions of scientific dissemination.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong>: philosophical, aesthetic or critical essays, journalistic books, biographies, journalistic exhibitions, lectures on literature, religion or mythology, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Causing to feel</td>
<td><strong>Arts</strong>: literary fiction, comics, art exhibitions, music CDs, DVDs and shows, dance and opera performances, drama (cinema, theater, TV), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sports</strong>: public exhibition of sports competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-cultural entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competitions, talk shows, beauty contests, gambling, hobbies, animal baiting or racings, variety magazines, collecting, tourism, recreation, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Therefore, culture in its broadest sense is all that is learned. We can say that it is what makes us human, it is what distinguishes us from the rest of nature. Indeed, the technique (which we can identify to technology) has allowed us to dominate nature. And animals, as it is known today, also have technique and transmit it by teaching their peers. The use of intelligence to survive is not therefore uniquely human. But only man has been able to use the intelligence to play. So what makes us truly human is not culture lato sensu, but culture stricto sensu: what is good for nothing is what really makes our life beautiful.

Therefore, culture in the strict sense is the public conveyance, without utilitarian ends, of discourses created with specific competence to make one think and/or feel. That is where the distracting literature, fictional or not, fits.

2.8. The issue of the specific competence in culture

Unlike the non-cultural entertainment, and similarly to technical activities, culture stricto sensu requires specific skills to be performed. This means that the creator of culture, be he an artist, intellectual, athlete, journalist, etc., must have a special ability to exercise his practice (what we could call talent or gift), as well as a working method resulting of learning, formal or informal (including even self-teaching), usually long, complex and, above all, intended only to adepts. Therefore, the specific skills demanded by culture differ from generic skills required for everyday tasks such as reading, writing, cooking, etc.

The use of a specific competence includes the mobilization of skills, commonly called talents, which, in fact, are scientifically called multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2011). There are nine kinds of intelligence: logical, linguistic, musical, spatial, motor, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist and existential. There is also talk in emotional intelligence, a sort of combination of intra and interpersonal intelligences (Goleman, 1996).

Although all – or nearly all – of them are involved in most human activities, even the simplest, culture requires in a high degree some of them. For reasons of space, we summarize in Table 6 the main intelligences involved in achieving cultural practices.

**Table 6: Main intelligences involved in cultural practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>TYPE DE ABILITY/SKILL</th>
<th>TYPE OF INTELLIGENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARTISTIC CREATION (idealizing a picture, writing a play, composing music)</td>
<td>Creativity (ability to idealize)</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE (picture painting, theater or music playing)</td>
<td>Sensitivity (aesthetic sense)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPARISON SPORTS (gymnastics, athletics, running, etc.).</td>
<td>Dexterity (mastery of a skill)</td>
<td>Motor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFRONTATION SPORTS (games, wrestling)</td>
<td>Strategy (vision of the future)</td>
<td>Logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES</td>
<td>Research (observation of reality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection (interpretation of reality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Genres and social discourses

Human communication can be direct or mediated. It is mediated when using a medium, or media, to convey the message. The paper of a letter, a microphone, a telephone, the mass media (newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, radio, TV, internet) are all kinds of media. When communication takes place without the support of media, such as a dialogue face to face, we say that it is direct. The communication is also divided into levels according to the number and nature of the participants and the hierarchy established between them. The levels of communication are as follows:

- **Intrapersonal communication**: it is the communication of the subject to himself, in an inner dialogue that is usually silent, but can sometimes occur in a loud voice – when someone talks alone or “to himself”.

- **Interpersonal communication**: is the dialogue between two or more people in which everyone has an equal right to speak and listen, and no one controls the process. This is what happens in a chat between friends. The number of participants in this level of communication is never more than five or six people; with larger amounts, a schism occurs, i.e., the group divides into two or more, each with its subject.

- **Group communication**: is the communication in which one speaks to a group of people, as a class or meeting. In this case, someone (the teacher, the leader of the staff) presides the communication: it is he who determines the subject, location, and duration of the communication, and gives the right to speak to other participants.

- **Corporate communication**: is similar to the previous level, but now the participants are not necessarily together, in real time, but the communication is addressed to all members of a corporation, whether students of a school, employees of a company, practitioners of a particular area, customers of a bank, and so on. Meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards, intranet, journals, conferences and symposia, direct mail, are all examples of corporate communications.

- **Social communication**: is that which is accessible to every citizen, regardless of addressing to this or that segment of the public. Therefore, this communication is intended to society as a whole. It is public and thus everyone can, in theory, be recipients of it, as with newspapers, TV, public events (concerts, football matches, lectures at bookstores), etc. The social communication is also known as mass communication. Its discourses are called social, public or mass discourses.

The intra and interpersonal levels are not hierarchical; others have hierarchy (someone is predominantly sender and others are predominantly recipients). At all levels, except for the social, the recipient is a closed and determined set of people. This means that anyone who was not invited or allowed to participate cannot be part of the communication. The social communication, instead, presupposes an open and indeterminate set of people as a recipient: anyone can participate, and one cannot know the identity nor the exact amount of recipients. Systematizing, we have Table 7.
At all levels of communication, there are different genres. Genre is the set of discourses (i.e., verbal or nonverbal texts) that have common characteristics such as structure, vocabulary, functions, sender, recipient and modal structure. For example, we can intuitively distinguish a bull of medicine, a newspaper, a recipe, a prayer, a petition, a letter, etc., because each of these types of text has an internal organization, a purpose, a kind of vocabulary and syntactic construct that individualizes and distinguishes them from each other.

In Table 7, we see discourses of different genres, direct or mediated, belonging to different levels of communication. What distinguishes above all one genre from another is the so-called modal structure of the discourse, a kind of logical sentence that describes, by using modals, what that discourse does, who the intended audience is and what effect it wants to have on its recipient.

We will detail the modal structure of some types of discourse that usually appear as literature. They are the journalistic, artistic (within which is the distracting fictional literature), self-help, technical-scientific, pedagogical and humanistic discourses.

### 3.1. The journalistic discourse

Journalists investigate and comment on facts of reality that impact people’s lives. But while the knowledge of some of these facts is crucial for life in society, the knowledge of others is curious, interesting and important to our training, but not essential. While news and analysis on politics, economy and current affairs carry predominantly utilitarian function, biographies of personalities, books reporting on past events, gossip columns and reviews of arts and entertainment have more hedonic nature. We must therefore recognize the existence of

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**Table 7: Communication levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Level</th>
<th>Examples of Direct Communication</th>
<th>Examples of Mediated Communication</th>
<th>Presence of Hierarchy</th>
<th>Type of Recipient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Thought, dream, soliloquy</td>
<td>Calendar, diary</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Closed and determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Conversation, medical consultation</td>
<td>Phone call, letter, e-mail</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Closed and determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Classroom, meeting attendance, closed lecture</td>
<td>E-learning, meeting by videoconference</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Closed and determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Assembly, congress, symposium</td>
<td>Intranet, newsletter, bulletin board, circular, journal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Closed and determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Play, concert, live football, open lecture</td>
<td>Radio, TV, internet, book, magazine, newspaper, CD, DVD</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Open and indeterminat e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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two types of journalism, the utilitarian and the distracting, although in practice they often mingle. Even so, they have different modal structures.

The modal structure of the utilitarian journalism is:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cause to know} & \quad \text{to} & \quad \text{enable to do/be/want} \\
\text{[inform]} & \quad \text{[confer citizenship]} & \quad \text{to} & \quad \text{cause not to have pain} \\
\text{cause to believe} & \quad \text{to} & \quad \text{cause (not) to do} & \quad \text{[guide]} \\
\text{[form opinion]} & \quad \text{[persuade]}& \quad & 
\end{align*}
\]

The “reading” of this structure tells us that a public utility journalistic text reports on the reality to ensure the right to citizenship and shapes opinion to persuade citizens to take action. And it does all this to provide a service utility – to guide people.

Whereas the distracting journalism (which is part of culture \textit{stricto sensu}) has the following structure:

\[
\begin{align*}
\left\{ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Cause to know} \quad \text{to} \quad \text{cause pleasure} \\
\text{[inform]} \quad \text{[entertain]} \\
\text{cause to believe} \quad \text{to} \quad \text{cause to want (not) to do} \\
\text{[form opinion]} \quad \text{[persuade, criticize]} \\
\end{array} \right. 
\end{align*}
\]

The distracting journalism also informs and forms an opinion, only this time to entertain the public and also to stimulate a critical view.

A journalistic text that is both distracting and utilitarian has a structure resulting from the merger of the two above. Still, one of the two functions will be the primary and another secondary.

3.2. The artistic discourses

Art creates a fiction that looks real (Aristotle’s mimesis) and appears to the senses (through sensory stimuli) to entertain and thrill. It also often defends ideas, values and flags, and criticizes reality in order to persuade the audience. Although engaged art does this in a more explicit way, many works of art – and particularly literary – are also highly persuasive. That is why, under authoritarian regimes, they pass through the sieve of censorship.

Its structure is:
cause to appear to cause pleasure
[fiction] [entertain, thrill]
cause to believe to cause to want (not) to do
[form an opinion] [persuade, criticize]

3.3. The discourses of self-help

Self-help and self-development books and lectures aim at motivating, persuading and also teaching (how to make money, sell more, gain partners, etc.) to relieve emotional or financial pain of their target audience, i.e., help them solve their problems.

Thus we have the structure:

cause to want to be
[motivate]

cause to want to do
to cause not to have pain
[persuade] [solve problems]

cause to know how to do
[teach]

3.4. The technical and scientific discourses

Scientific and specialized works such as books on medicine, engineering, law and administration, as well as theses and dissertations, are utilitarian texts and, indeed, fit better in the corporate communication than in social.

The academic discourse produces knowledge that will be relayed through education, will serve as a source for bibliographical research and will generate new technology, all to solve practical problems of human beings, in health, economy, transportation, communications, etc. Thus we have:

cause to know how to do
to cause not to have pain
[education] [solve problems]

cause to know to cause to make knowledge
[produce knowledge] [research feedback]

enable to do
[technology]
3.5. The pedagogical discourses

Every discourse that teaches something is, ultimately, pedagogical. In this sense, self-help books and even the aforementioned Kama Sutra have didactic purpose to some extent. But the pedagogical works proper are teaching textbooks, handouts, technical manuals and the like.

They all give competence, i.e. ability to perform certain tasks; in addition, the textbooks for basic education also confer citizenship, as they help to train future citizens. These texts are mainly utilitarian, since they aim to solve some problem (ensuring social harmony, survival, employability, allow the execution of tasks that require special skills, and so on). Then we have:

\[
\text{cause to know how to do} \quad \begin{cases} \text{do} & \text{to cause not to have pain} \\ \text{be} & \text{ensure life in society} \\ \text{want} & \end{cases} \\
\text{[give competence]} \quad \text{[inform]} \quad \text{[confer citizenship]}
\]

3.6. The humanistic discourses

The humanities (not to be confused with the social sciences, that are sciences) include philosophy, aesthetics, criticism and even scientific publishing. Therefore, a book of popularization of science, even when written by a scientist, can be considered a humanistic work. (Strictly speaking, story-books for entertainment purposes can too.)

The humanistic literature transmits knowledge, sometimes the result of research, as in the case of science and journalism, and produces reflections on reality; therefore, aims to inform and form an opinion to cause the pleasure of the intellect and also to persuade, i.e. to promote a critical view. Its structure is:

\[
\text{cause to know} \quad \begin{cases} \text{cause to think to cause pleasure} \\ \text{cause to believe} & \text{[intellectually entertain]} \\ \text{[form an opinion]} & \text{cause to want (not) to do} \\ \text{[inform]} & \text{[persuade, criticize]} \end{cases}
\]

The distracting literature lies mainly in the artistic and humanistic genres. Its main function is always the hedonic function, which may be aesthetic, ludic and/or epistemic. The persuasive function is not always present and is never the principal.
4. Interfaces and interferences between discourses

One of the main reasons for the occurrence of hybridization between literary genres is the existence of interfaces between discourses. The interfaces can be of three types: supermodalization, application and likeness (Bizzocchi, 2003, p. 147). It is a common phenomenon among discourses, so that it is very difficult to find any discourse that does not present this type of relationship with other discourses.

However, if the interface is a common and even natural fact in the discursive activity, there are cases where it produces a pernicious type of interface: when the issuer of a particular genre of discourse intentionally establishes an interface with another genre without giving notice of this fact to the recipient. This is in general in order to manipulate the recipient. In this case, the interface becomes an interference of a discourse in another.

For example, if a television commercial uses artistic elements (actors, music, visual effects, etc.) to persuade the audience to consume a product, we have a legitimate interface between art and advertising, since it is clear to the public since the beginning that it is an advertisement. Now the inclusion of merchandising within a soap opera or subliminal advertising in movies is a covert form of advertising, which often mischaracterizes the artistic content of the work and tries to induce to consumption an audience that is not aware of being targeted by advertising. One might even say that this public is being harmed in some way, since it paid to receive entertainment and culture and is receiving disguised advertising.

5. Hybrid types of literature

We have seen that the hybridization occurs when there is a symbiosis between genres. We can have the fusion of two genres of distracting fictional literature, as the romantic comedy, which mixes love and humour, the tragicomedy, that is comic and tragic at the same time, or the blending of thriller and comedy. We can also have the fusion of genres belonging to different categories, such as fiction and nonfiction, distracting and utilitarian literature, and so on.

Some examples of hybrid literary works are the chronicle, the novel-report, metalinguistic fiction, literary criticism, the philosophical and the scientific novel (which should not be confused with the science fiction novel, which is also a hybrid genre).

Hybridity, when well done, especially when relevant to the nature of the work, only tends to enrich it. So much so that many of the great classics of literature contain hybrid elements.

On the other hand, sloppy or forced hybridity, in which the author wishes to demonstrate his virtuosity more than to please the reader, as well as malicious interference, which aims to manipulate the reader, are impoverishing features of the text. Much of the literature devoid of content, that does not merit being considered as culture, results of bad hybridity and the ill-disguised bad faith of the author, whose ideological or financial purpose overlaps the pursuit of quality and respect to the public. These include many self-help books (although there are good books in this genre) and the books of pseudoscience, like certain works of ufology.
CONCLUSION

The concept of literature is very broad and covers almost the entire human experience. Therefore, it is directly linked to the notion of culture, which is why the semiotic theory of culture is a good tool for study and understanding of the literary phenomenon. We seeked to approach this phenomenon from the point of view of one aspect of cultural semiotics, the hedonistic-functionalist orientation. Based on the concepts of culture *lato* and *stricto sensu* and the various types of hedonic and pragmatic function, we tried to show how all literary genres, fictional or not, fall into the categories generated by this model. Moreover, we also showed the hybridization of literary forms, a process that gives productivity and vitality to literary praxis, as a result of the intersection and overlapping of genres that we can call canonical.

In summary, this study aimed to demonstrate the ability to understand and describe scientifically a manifestation of the human spirit that usually escapes the theories, sometimes giving rise to subjectivist speculation of little value for the study of this object and, consequently, for the proposition of practical applications of the knowledge resulting therefrom.
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