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1. ABSTRACT

In order to understand narratology's contribution to semiotics, it is important to grasp the distinction between its three fundamental entities: story, narrative and narration. The story generally corresponds to a series of events and actions that are told by someone (the narrator), and represented in some final form, producing a narrative. As a field of study, narratology looks at the internal mechanisms of narrative, the form taken by a narrated story.

In the field of narrative discourse, we endeavour to identify the common, near-universal principles of text composition. Thus, we attempt to discern what relations are possible between the elements of the narrative/story/narration triad. These relations operate within four analytical categories: mood, the narrative instance, level and time.

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2. THEORY

2.1 ORIGINS AND FUNCTION

Gérard Genette's work (1972 and 1983) fits into the German and Anglo-Saxon academic tradition, and is intended to serve as both a culmination and a renewal of this school of narratological criticism. We should point out that internal analysis, like any semiotic analysis, exhibits two characteristics. Firstly, it is concerned with narratives as independent linguistic objects, detached from their context of production and reception. Secondly, it aims to reveal an underlying structure that can be identified in many different narratives.

Using a rigorous typology, Genette has developed a theory of narratological poetics that may be used to address the entire inventory of narrative processes in use. According to Genette, every text discloses traces of narration, which can be studied in order to understand exactly how the narrative is organized. The approach advocated here clearly addresses a level that lies below the threshold of interpretation, and as such, it constitutes a solid foundation, complementing other research being done in the social sciences, e.g., in sociology, literary history, ethnology and psychoanalysis..

NOTE: NARRATOLOGY: BETWEEN TEXTUALISM AND PRAGMATICS

As a typology of narrative, Gérard Genette's theory of narratology is regarded by many specialists in the field as a reading method that marks an important milestone in the development of literary theory and discourse analysis. By using narrative voice as a concept through which all the other categories are articulated, Genette engages the context of production as a fundamental element.

2.2 NARRATIVE MOOD

When a text is written, technical choices must be made in view of producing a particular result in the story's verbal representation. In this way, the narrative employs distancing and other effects to create a particular narrative mood that governs "the regulation of narrative information" provided to the reader (1980, p. 41). According to Genette, all narrative is necessarily *diegesis* (telling), in that it can attain no more than an illusion of *mimesis* (showing) by making the story real and alive. Thus, every narrative implies a narrator.

For Genette, then, a narrative cannot in fact imitate reality, no matter how realistic; it is intended to be a fictional act of language arising from a narrative instance. "Narrative does not 'represent' a (real or fictive) story, it recounts it – that is, it signifies it by means of language [...]. There is no place for imitation in narrative [...]" (1988, p. 43). Thus, in place of the two main traditional narrative moods, diegesis and mimesis, Genette contends that there are simply varying degrees of diegesis, with the narrator either more involved or less involved in the narrative, and leaving less room or more room for the narrative act. However, Genette insists that in no case is the narrator completely absent.

2.2.1 DISTANCE

Any study of narrative mood requires that we assess the distance between the narrator and the story. Distance helps us to determine the degree of precision in a narrative and the accuracy of the information conveyed. Whether the text is a narrative of events (tells what the character is doing) or a narrative of words (tells what the character is saying or thinking), there are four types of discourse, each demonstrating progressively greater distance taken by the narrator with respect to the text (1980, pp. 171-172):

1. Narratized speech: The character's words and actions are integrated into the narration, and are treated like any other event (-distant).

Example: He confided in his friend, telling him about his mother's death.

2. *Transposed speech, indirect style*: The character's words or actions are reported by the narrator, who presents them with his interpretation (- + distant).

Example: He confided to his friend that his mother had passed away.

3. *Transposed speech, free indirect style*: The character's words or actions are reported by the narrator, but without using a subordinating conjunction (+ - distant).

Example: He confided to his friend: his mother had passed away.

4. Reported speech: The character's words are cited verbatim by the narrator (+ distant).

Example: He confided to his friend: "My mother passed away."

2.2.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NARRATOR

Using the notion of narrative distance as a starting point, Genette presents the functions of the narrator as such (1980, pp. 255-256). He lists five functions that also reveal the degree to which the narrator intervenes in his narrative, based on the desired degree of detachment or involvement.

- 1. *The narrative function*: The narrative function is a fundamental one. Any time we have a narrative, this role (detachment) is assumed by the narrator, whether present in the text or not.
- 2. *The directing function*: The narrator performs a directing function when he interrupts the story to comment on the organization or articulation of his text (involvement).
- 3. *The communication function*: The narrator addresses the narratee directly (that is, the text's potential reader) in order to establish or maintain contact with him or her (involvement).
- 4. *The testimonial function*: The narrator affirms the truth of his story, the degree of precision in his narration, his certainty regarding the events, his sources of information, and the like. This

function also comes into play when the narrator expresses his emotions about the story, that is, the affective relation he has with it (involvement).

5. The ideological function: The narrator interrupts his story to introduce instructive comments or general wisdom concerning his narrative (involvement).

The diegetic narrative mood, then, is expressed to varying degrees, depending on the degree to which the narrator is effaced from or represented in his narrative. This distancing between the narration and the story helps the narratee to evaluate the narrative information being presented, "as the view I have of a picture depends for precision on the distance separating me from it [...]" (1980, p. 162).

2.3 THE NARRATIVE INSTANCE

The narrative instance is said to be the conjunction between (1) narrative voice (who is speaking?), (2) time of the narration (when does the telling occur, relative to the story?) and (3) narrative perspective (through whom are we perceiving?). As with narrative mood, by examining the narrative instance we can gain a better understanding of the relations between the narrator and the story in a given narrative.

2.3.1 THE NARRATIVE VOICE

If the narrator lets signs of his presence appear in the narrative he is recounting, he may acquire a particular status, depending on the way the story is rendered. "We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells [...], the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells [...]. I call the first type, for obvious reasons, *heterodiegetic*, and the second type *homodiegetic*" (1980, pp. 244-245).

In addition, if the homodiegetic narrator is the hero of the story, he/she is called *autodiegetic*.

2.3.2 THE TIME OF THE NARRATION

The narrator is always in a specific temporal position relative to the story he/she is telling. Genette describes four kinds of narration:

- 1. Subsequent narration: This is the most common temporal position. The narrator tells what happened in some past time.
- 2. *Prior narration*: The narrator tells what is going to happen at some future time. This kind of narration often takes the form of a dream or prophecy.
- 3. Simultaneous narration: The narrator tells his/her story at the very moment it occurs.
- 4. *Interpolated narration*: This complex type of narration combines prior and simultaneous narration. For example, a narrator tells what he experienced during the day (after the fact), and also includes his current impressions about these events.

2.3.3 NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

A distinction should be made between narrative voice and narrative perspective; the latter is the point of view adopted by the narrator, which Genette calls focalization. "So by focalization I certainly mean a restriction of 'field' – actually, that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called *omniscience*" (1988, p. 74). These are matters of perception: the one who perceives is not necessarily the one who tells, and vice versa.

Genette distinguishes three kinds of focalization:

- 1. Zero focalization: The narrator knows more than the characters. He may know the facts about all of the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and gestures. This is the traditional "omniscient narrator".
- 2. Internal focalization: The narrator knows as much as the focal character. This character

filters the information provided to the reader. He cannot report the thoughts of other characters.

3. External focalization: The narrator knows less than the characters. He acts a bit like a camera lens, following the protagonists' actions and gestures from the outside; he is unable to guess their thoughts.

By examining the characteristics of a narrative instance and the particulars of the narrative mood, we can clarify the mechanisms used in the narrative act, and identify exactly what methodological choices the author made in order to render his/her story. The use of different narratological processes creates different effects for the reader. For example, one could have a hero-narrator (*autodiegetic* narrator) who uses simultaneous narration and internal focalization and whose speech is often in reported form. This would undoubtedly produce a strong illusion of realism and credibility.

2.4 LEVELS

Various reading effects result from shifts in narrative level, traditionally known as embedding. Within the main plot, the author can insert other short embedded narratives, told by other narrators from other narrative perspectives. This is a rather common technique that adds diversity to the narrative act and increases the complexity of the narrative.

2.4.1 EMBEDDED NARRATIVES

Narration of the main (first-level) narrative occurs at the *extradiegetic* level. The event-story being narrated on this first level fills a second-level position, known as *intradiegetic*. If a character found in this story takes the floor and tells some other narrative, his narrative act will also be on the same *intradiegetic* level. However, the events being told through the second-level narration are *metadiegetic*.

Example (fictitious): Today I saw a teacher come up to a group of children at play. After a few minutes, she spoke: "Listen, children, I'm going to tell you an amazing story of courage that happened a few hundred years ago. This is the story of Marguerite Bourgeois..."

Below is a table showing the narrative levels.

Narrative levels

OBJECTS	LEVELS	NARRATIVE CONTENT
main plot	Extradiegetic	Homodiegetic narration ("I")
Event-story	Intradiegetic	Story about the teacher and the children
Second-level narrative act	Intradiegetic	The teacher speaks
Embedded narrative	Metadiegetic	Story of Marguerite Bourgeois

2.4.2 METALEPSIS

Writers sometimes also use metalepsis, a process in which the boundary between two narrative levels (which is normally impervious) is breached so as to deliberately blur the line between reality and fiction. Metalepsis is a way of playing with variations in narrative level in order to create an effect of displacement or illusion. This would be a case in which a character or narrator from one level appears on the scene at a higher level, whereas plausibility completely

excludes this possibility. "All these games, by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundaries they [the authors] tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude – a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells" (1980, p. 236).

To return to our previous example, if the *homodiegetic* narrator from the main story line intervenes in the *metadiegetic* story of Marguerite Bourgeois, this would be a case of metalepsis. Marguerite Bourgeois is a 17th-century heroine who founded the Notre-Dame Congregation school for girls in Montreal. So it would be impossible for a contemporary ("current") narrator to appear on the scene, camping out in New France in this embedded story.

2.5 NARRATIVE TIME

We have already seen that the time of narration has to do with the relation between the narration and the story: What is the narrator's temporal position relative to the events being told? Genette also gave some thought to the question of narrative time: How is the story presented with respect to the narrative as a whole, with respect to the final result? Once again, several methodological choices are available to writers. In order to achieve the expected result, they can vary (1) the order of the narrative, (2) the speed of the narrative and (3) the frequency of events. Skillful use of these techniques allows the narratee to identify which narrative elements are being emphasized by the author(s) and what the structure and organization of the text is.

2.5.2 ORDER

Order is the relation between the sequencing of events in the story and their arrangement in the narrative. A narrator may choose to present the events in the order they occurred, that is, chronologically, or he can recount them out of order. For example, detective novels often begin with a murder that has to be solved. The events preceding the crime, along with the facts leading to the killer, are presented afterwards. The order in which the events actually occurred does not match the order in which they are presented in the narrative. This mixing of temporal order yields a more gripping, complex plot.

The term Genette uses to designate non-chronological order is *anachrony*. There are two types of anachrony:

1. Analepsis: The narrator recounts after the fact an event that took place earlier than the present point in the main story.

Example (fictitious): I woke up in a good mood this morning. In my mind were memories of my childhood, with Mun singing every morning, her voice ringing out.

2. Prolepsis: The narrator anticipates events that will occur after the main story ends.

Example (fictitious): How will my adventure in Europe affect me? I will never be able to look at my family and friends in the same way; surely I will become contentious and distant.

There are two factors that can enter into analepsis and prolepsis: *reach* and *extent*. "An anachrony can reach into the past or the future, either more or less far from the "present" moment (that is, from the moment in the story when the narrative was interrupted to make room for the anachrony): this temporal distance we will name the anachrony's *reach*. The anachrony itself can also cover a duration of story that is more or less long: we will call this its *extent*" (1980, p. 48).

Anachronies can have several functions in a narrative. While analepses often take on an explanatory role, developing a character's psychology by relating events from his past, prolepses can arouse the reader's curiosity by partially revealing facts that will surface later. These breaks in chronology may also simply fulfill a dissenting role, if the author wishes to disrupt the classical novel's linear representation to some degree.

2.5.2 NARRATIVE SPEED

Other reading effects may be obtained by varying the narrative speed. Genette uses theatrical performances as his basis, in which the event-story ideally has the same duration as the staged narration. However, in literary texts, the narrator can speed up or slow down the narration with respect to the events being told. For example, we can summarize someone's entire life in a single sentence, or we can take a thousand pages to recount events occurring over a 24-hour period.

Genette lists four narrative movements (1980, p. 94) (NT: narrative time; ST: the story's time):

- 1. Pause: NT = n; ST = 0. The event-story is interrupted to make room exclusively for narratorial discourse. Static descriptions fall into this category.
- 2. *Scene*: NT = ST. Narrative time corresponds to the story's time. Dialogue is a good example of this.
- 3. *Summary*: NT < ST. Some part of the event-story is summarized in the narrative, creating an acceleration. Summaries can be of variable length.
- 4. *Ellipsis*: NT = 0; ST = n. The narrative says absolutely nothing about some part of the event-story.

Needless to say, these four kinds of narrative speed can be used to varying degrees. They can also be combined: A dialogue scene can contain a summary within it, for example. Variations in speed within a narrative can show the relative importance assigned to different events in the story. If an author passes quickly over a particular fact, lingers over it, or omits it entirely, there is certainly reason to ask why he made these textual choices.

2.5.3 FREQUENCY OF EVENTS

One last concept remains to be examined with respect to narrative time: the notion of narrative frequency. This is the relation between the number of times an event occurs in the story and the number of times it is mentioned in the narrative. "A system of relationships is established between these capacities for 'repetition' on the part of both the narrated events (of the story) and the narrative statements (of the text) – a system of relationships that we can a priori reduce to four virtual types, simply from the multiplication of the two possibilities given on both sides: the event repeated or not, the statement repeated or not" (1980, p. 114).

These four possibilities imply four kinds of frequency relations, which can then be organized into three categories (1980, pp. 114-116):

- 1. Singulative narration: 1N / 1S: Narrating once what happened once. nN / nS: Relating n times what happened n times.
- 2. Repeating narrative: nN /1S. Recounting more than once what happened once.
- 3. Iterative narrative: 1N/nS. Relating one time what happened several times.

The table below summarizes Genette's typology of narrative.

Summary of Genette's narrative typology

					- 11	2000				
ANALYTICAL		COMPONENTS								
CATEGORIES	ANALYZED									
NARRATIVE	DISTANCE	Narratized	arratized Transposed		Transposed			Reported		
MOOD	3	speech	speech,		speech, free		speech			
		5900	indirect style		indire	ndirect style		_		
	FUNCTIONS	Narrative	Dire	cting	Com	muni	cation	Testin	nonial	Ideological
	OF THE	function	function function		n function		function			
	NARRATOR									
NARRATIVE	NARRATIVE	Homodiegetic Heterodiege		liege	iegetic Au		todiegetic			
INSTANCE	VOICE	narrator na		narrator			narrator			
	TIME OF	Subsequent	ent I		Prior		Simultaneou			Interpolated
,	,		l .			10				

1	NARRATION	narration	na	arration	n	arration		narration
	NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE	Zero focalizati					External calization	
NARRATIVE LEVELS	EMBEDDED NARRATIVES	Extra- diegetic	Intra-diegetic		Meta-dieget	Meta-diegetic		
	METALEPSIS	Breaching of narrative levels						
NARRATIVE	ORDER	Analepsis	Prolepsis		Reach		Extent	
TIME	NARRATIVE SPEED	Pause	Scene			Summary		Ellipsis
	FREQUENCY OF EVENTS	Singulati	Singulative		ating		I	terative

3. APPLICATION

In this section we will examine the narrative processes used in a short narrative (a fable) in order to understand how the text is organized and show the relations between narration, story and narrative. As mentioned earlier, analyzing narratological processes is in some ways a textual decoding procedure, and therefore cannot be separated from an auxiliary approach aiming to produce an interpretation.

The Dairy Woman and the Crock of Milk Jean de La Fontaine, Les Fables, 1668 [trans. N. Spencer]

On her head Perrette carried milk in a crock, Set on a pad so it wouldn't rock. Her wish was to get off to town with no delay. Her garb was light and short, her pace was quick; To move fast, she wore a brief skirt that day,

5 And flat-heeled shoes were her pick. Our dairy woman, thus turned out, Was already thinking hard about

The profit from her milk and how she'd use the money:

10 Buy a hundred eggs, triple the laying, just no doubt. With her diligent care, prospects were most sunny. "It's easy for me," said she, "To raise chickens 'round my house, I find.

Clever indeed the fox will be

15 If I'm not left enough to buy the best pig of its kind. To fatten the hog won't take much bran to my mind: It'll already be, when I get it, of more than decent size. When I sell it again, with cash my purse will be lined. And what's to stop my putting in our stable, a prize

20 In view of the current cost, a cow, along with her calf? I can see it frisking in the herd; it makes me laugh!" With that, Perrette, carried away, kicked up her legs. The milk spilled; farewell, calf, pig, chickens, and eggs. The mistress of this wealth, with mournful eye taking leave

25 Of her fortune thus tossed away, Begged her husband to forgive, Instead of beating her that very day. A farce is what this story became; The Crock of Milk is now its name.

30 Who doesn't roam off to Cockaigne? Who doesn't build castles in Spain? Picrochole, Dairy Woman, Pyrrhus, all dream lies. The foolish no more than the wise Have their fantasies; daydreams hold the sweetest prize. 35 Seductive illusions sweep reason from our mind:
All wealth belongs to us in our eyes,
Every honor and every beauty we can find.
When I'm alone, I defy the bravest knight ever known;
I travel afar, drag Sophy from his throne.

They make me king, my people cherish me;
Crowns of all the realms rain down on my head.
Should something then happen to restore me to reality,
I'm as before, John Clod instead.

* * *

Using the same order in which we presented the analytical categories of narratology, we can make the following observations about this fable:

3.1 NARRATIVE MOOD

Distance:

There are three degrees of narrative distance used in this fable, making the narrator seem at times very involved in his narrative, and at times completely absent. These variations add diversity to the act of narrating. Some examples follow:

Narratized speech (narrator is -distant):

Lines 1-3: The expression "Her wish" implies that a character involved in the narrative act is speaking.

Transposed speech, free indirect style (narrator is + - distant):

Lines 22-23: The expression "farewell" reveals the character's words.

Reported speech (narrator is + distant):

Lines 12-21: The phrase "said she" and the quotation marks indicate that the narrator is reporting the character's speech verbatim.

The functions of the narrator:

Besides the *narrative function*, which is built into any narrative, this fable manifests three important functions: the *communication function*, the *testimonial function* and the *ideological function*. All three of these can be seen in lines 28-43. While the narrator certifies the truth of the events by presenting this story as a well-known farce (lines 28-29), he ends his narrative by addressing questions directly to the narratee (lines 30-34) and moralizing (lines 30-44).

The effect of this distancing and involvement on the part of the narrator is to bring out and intensify *diegesis* as the narrative mood, the idea being that all narratives should be considered as fictional acts of language, rather than as perfect imitations of reality (*mimesis*).

3.2 THE NARRATIVE INSTANCE

Narrative voice:

The fable may be divided into two narrative parts. The first section (lines 1-29) has a *heterodiegetic* narrator: He talks in the third person and he is absent from the story he is telling. In contrast, the second section has an *autodiegetic* narrator. In the instructional discourse found in lines 30-43 we find an involved narrator, speaking in the first person and appearing on stage as a protagonist in his own story.

Time of narration:

We would say that this fable contains *interpolated narration*. The first narrative section (lines 1-29) is presented as *subsequent narration*; the narrator is telling the events after they occurred (indicated by the past tense). Then the last section (lines 30-43) reveals the narrator's *present impressions* of the past story.

Narrative perspective:

This text provides an example of zero focalization. The narrator seems to know the words, thoughts, gestures and facts about all the characters, including Perrette. Since the narrator knows that "A farce is what this story became", we can conclude that the perspective is omniscient.

3.3 LEVELS

This fable contains only one narrative level. There is no embedded narrative; the whole text is on the same level. To review the terminology presented earlier, the narrative act occurs at the *extradiegetic* level, whereas the event-story contained in the text is at the *intradiegetic level*.

3.4 NARRATIVE TIME

Order:

We must first determine where the main story begins and ends in order to identify the anachronies. In the present case, we could say that the event-story begins when Perrette starts her trip to market, and it ends in the mocking of the dairy woman as she comes home from her excursion. Within this delineation, two *anachronies* can be distinguished:

- (1) An *analepsis*: Lines 5-6 relate an event that happened before Perrette left for market. The *reach* of the analepsis is very short, since the event occurred almost immediately before the beginning of the event-story. The *extent* of the analepsis is *undetermined*, but one would suppose it to be limited, since we don't know how much time this action (getting dressed) took.
- (2) A prolepsis: Lines 7-21 are a nice example of prolepsis. The dairy woman amuses herself by imagining what will happen after she returns from market with her money. The reach of the prolepsis is undetermined, as we don't know how much time will elapse between her return from market (the end of the event-story) and the anticipated actions (raising chickens, a pig, a cow and calf, or what have you). The extent is undetermined as well, because there is no way to know over what time period these predictions extend.

Narrative speed:

The fable includes three narrative movements presented in a complex manner:

- (1) Firstly, the story of Perrette is a *summary* (lines 1-29); the narrator summarizes the events in a few lines (NT < ST).
- (2) Within this summary, we find a *scene* (lines 12-21), in which Perrette is talking to herself. The narrator reports the dairy woman's thoughts in real time. However, we should observe that this scene consists of a *summary* itself, since the protagonist summarizes the anticipated events.
- (3) Lastly, lines 30-43 act as a *pause* within the event-story, in that the narrator interrupts the story to offer instructive comments. However, the moral he presents is also illustrated with examples in the form of *summaries*.

Event frequency:

Once again, we need to separate the narrative into two narrative parts.

The first part (lines 1-29) uses the *singulative mood*: what happened once is told once. However, the last part (lines 30-43) provides an interesting example of the *iterative mood*: the narrator relates one time something that may possibly have occurred many times, in many circumstances, and with various protagonists.

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5. EXERCISES

Read the following excerpt, taken from the first chapter of *Jacques the Fatalist* by Denis Diderot (trans. J. Robert Loy, Washington Square: New York University Press, 1959 [1796]).

* * *

THE MASTER. — So you were in love, then?

JACQUES. — Was I not!

THE MASTER. — And because of a bullet shot?

JACQUES. — Because of a bullet shot.

THE MASTER. — You have never told me a word about it.

JACQUES. — I dare say I have not.

THE MASTER. — And why not?

JACQUES. — Because it couldn't have been told any sooner or any later.

THE MASTER. — And the time to tell of your loves has now come?

JACQUES. - Who knows?

THE MASTER. — Well, in any case, start on them.

Jacques started the story of his love affairs. It was after dinner, the weather was sticky, and the master went to sleep. Night overtook them in the middle of the fields, and there they are, lost. There is the master in a terrible rage, falling on his lackey with a whip, and that poor devil saying with each blow: "That one, too, must have been written up yonder."

You see, reader, that I am well on my way, and that it is completely up to me whether I shall make you wait one year, two years, or three years for the story of Jacques's loves, by separating him from his master and having each of them go through all the vicissitudes that I please. What's to prevent my marrying off the master and making him a cuckold? Shipping Jacques off to the islands? Guiding his master to the same place? Bringing them back to France on the same ship? How easy it is to fabricate stories!

* * *

Answer the following questions:

- 1. What section of this excerpt contains reported speech in free indirect style?
- 2. Besides the narrative function, name two functions performed by the narrator. Is he distant from or involved in his narrative?
- 3. Why can we say that this narration is interpolated?
- 4. On what narrative level do we find the narrative of Jacques' love stories?
- 5. Is there an analepsis in this excerpt?
- 6. The first part of the excerpt (the dialogue between Jacques and his master) corresponds to what kind of narrative movement?

News and Actuality

- 06/03/2011 The 11th World Congress of Semiotics (October 5-9 2012, Nanjing Normal University, China)
- 10/02/2011 Publication of 'Structure, Semiotic Relations and Homologation' by Louis Hébert in Signo
- 10/02/2011 Publication of 'Analysis by Classification' by Louis Hébert in Signo
- 05/12/2007 Release of a new book with 12 semiotic tools (Louis Hébert, *Dispositifs pour l'analyse des textes et des images*, Limoges, Presses de l'Université de Limoges, 2007)

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