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# Man Ray and Photography as a Poetic Communication Technology

Rafael Duarte Oliveira Venancio, Marina Colli de Oliveira

**Abstract**— This article wants to analyze how Man Ray in his photographs, engages a poetry of silence using this medium as a poetic communication technology. To understand the functioning of this poetic language, we will adopt the Groupe  $\mu$  analysis method (both the *General Rhetoric* and the *Treatise on the Visual Sign*). Whereas the language is manifold as the forms of representation, and it present in all media, whatever the lack of speech - silence - would find its richest form in both directions through the metaphors and metonymy engaged in metasemes of the photos studied.

**Index Terms**— Man Ray, Photography, Visual Rhetoric, Poetry

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article is part of a set of articles on visual poetics in which the authors are engaged to study. Usually tied to a written text of idea, visual poetry could find its way studies in the interpretation of paintings, photographs, drawings, posters and other types of image representation built by humanity.

The focus instead is a Man Ray photograph. With its imagery manipulations, Man Ray creates a silence which creates poetic intertextuality with references of the twentieth century as well as earlier centuries.

We will use here a brief study of a photo, "Le violon d'Ingres (1924)," to demonstrate, with the help of Visual Rhetoric, the poetics of silence engaged by the photographer in his photographic montage.

Thus, this article, seeking a poetic of Man Ray's photographs, lies in identifying four modes of metasemes, ranked by Groupe  $\mu$ , to accomplish the necessary interpretation of exercise. Only then can we check the silence contained in the photographs, a silence beyond the absence of words, but by the conjunction of images.

## II. MEDIA LANGUAGE AS A POETIC TECHNOLOGY

The language is multiple on ways of representation, it being present in all media, whatever. The existence of this diversity allows the study of variability of types of texts, whether written, oral, pictorial or gestural. The lack of speech allows communication through other forms of expression may be through images, gestures, looks. The silence itself is a way to communicate. In this way, abstaining from speaking

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establishing paradigmatic forms whose use sets some of the most significant properties of an act of communication. By the end, everyone learns, sometime and somewhere, that silence, in certain situations, is not only, as they say, gold, but also, and this comes full in the communications field, through more shrewd to solve certain types of social situations. [1]

Silence is a form of communication like the others, including being structured like the others. Yet for Peñuela,

From this point of view, silence is as important as any code of other codes that we use to speak, because making a movie or a cartoon, does not run away by talk of these texts also be speech acts, to this rule. Even if the Basso study favors communication situations mediated by the verbal code, their analysis put in evidence the ambiguous status of the protagonists of the evidence that he studied and especially his remarks incite to think at first that behind the silence always implied a line, which is equivalent to admit that behind a spoken language lurk "quiet phrases". I believe (...) that this principle is also applicable for the non-verbal messages. It is not difficult to record, for example, that the words and images of a news item referring to an event "outline of silence phrases" and that sometimes these "mute statements" provide more information than the explicit text of the news, as well as put by the case, which is outside the images framed by a television screen may put the viewer on the trail of information that is not necessarily omitted on purpose [1]

However, does the text can be confused with poetry? Into Lotman's semiotics, there is an argument, well defined by Silva, that there is a distinction between poetic text and poem:

the first step is to conceptualize the poetic, inseparable quality of the artistic text, but goes beyond it, differentiating it from the poem concept. A poem is usually a pre-established structure, vertical, consisting of verses. May have stanzas, meter and rhyme, which, above all, from the modern Brazilian literature and the European avant-garde, is no longer a rule, as there are so-called blank verse, or without rhyme, with varied metric, as well as visual poems, collages, etc. The poem is also generally perceived as instance of verbal thing of words, though, we reaffirm, exist and are widely known, aspects of experimental poetry that puts the name of the visual poem, and even three-dimensional sound structures. It is the poem that we treat this text, but poetry as quality, present in texts (verbal and nonverbal) media [2]

And we can forget that photography is, to Flusser, a form of tangible representation:

Let us take a stone, for example. What is the relationship that rock out there (which makes me tripping) with your

photograph, and what the relationship of the stone with the mineralogical explanation about it? The answer seems easy. The photograph is a stone in the form of image and the explanation is in the form of a linear address. This means that I can imagine the stone to read the picture, and I can think of it when reading the written lines of explanation. The photographs and the explanation are mediations between me and the rock; they stand between us and show me the stone. [3]

The combination of these forms of language can be made from the perspective of Groupe  $\mu$  through the concept of metase-meme, put into perspective by Venancio [4][5]:

On the General Rhetoric, we find the definition of what a "metase-meme is a figure that replaces an seme by another is to say that it modifies the zero degree semes groups. This kind of figure assumes that the word is the same as a collection of nuclear semes without internal order and without taking the repetition". They come into relation with other three areas - called metabolic, by requiring a change - the language (they are: metalogisms, metaplasms and metataxes) through a triangle update Ogden-Richards where there is the relationship among common language (concepts), figurative language (word) and poetic language (thing) [5]

Based on these concepts, it is intended with this article, to connect different representations of poetic language of Man Ray's photographs. This act of deciphering images-words and words-images is described by Azeredo [6] as not "in this case, the establishment of precise, but of possible elements. Thus, the crack is here as an experimental exercise in which each element found opens new combination possibilities to interpretation and therefore experimenting with their own thinking".

The relationship between text and image, poetry and photography is, above all, the passage of the issue for contemplation. This transition occurs by a silencing process, making signs in images, written and oral visual.

That is the central question that, in our view, motivates the search for a different way of communication and expression. Ultimately, it needs to build a language that, on returning to the nature of the image, veicule the singular, the multiplicity in the median and unambiguous face [6].

This kind of photography, as a representation of reality can be associated with photography as a representation of another form of language. This polymorphism in metase-meme value both depictions, adding different modes of perception of this discourse in poetry. She moves between silence and the message, and with it the value of poetic language, bringing the experience of emotional way.

This emotion strengthens the poetry of speech, in other words. We can remember the conceptualization posed by Chamie [7] which tells us that "photography is violent, not because it shows the violence but because it fills force the view and because it nothing can refuse or turn".

### III. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, in the Groupe  $\mu$ 's General Rhetoric, we find the definition of what a "metase-meme is a figure that replaces an seme by another it is to say that it modifies the zero degree semes groups" [8]. If we think its relation to the domains of language (metalogisms, metaplasms and metataxes), we can find the update of the triangle of Ogden-Richards cited where concepts, words and poetic language unite [8]:

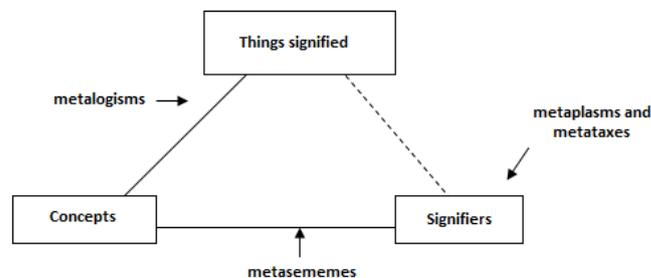


Figure 1: Update triangle of Ogden-Richards by Groupe  $\mu$

Thus, we find that the metase-memes are at the semantic level, what the traditional rhetoric call tropes, figures to change in meaning (metaphor, metonymy). The other, in turn, operate in different fields: (a) metaplasms are figures involving a change of sound or graphics; (b) the metataxes are changes in syntax; and (c) the metalogisms are changes in the reference value, whose greatest example is hyperbole.

It is particularly on the issue of metase-memes noted that the validity of the review of W.G. Regier [9] that the "Groupe  $\mu$  builds [his theory] over Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca". Now the tropes are a major highlight element in the New Rhetoric, but only with the inclusion of Groupe  $\mu$ , is that they and rhetoric as a whole are reinserted in the field of Language Sciences without being mere adjuvants or are reduced to logic.

However, realizing the greatness of theoretical concept, it is the question of how one is formed metase-meme. For this, a conceptual dissection is required. We start by seme, whose preparation we owe Eric Buysens, which is nothing more than the smallest possible unit of meaning analysis. To Buysens [10] "the word seme designate any conventional process whose concrete realization (called semic act) allows communication". Thus, "the seme is only a functional part of the semic act, and noticeable action is only semic act, if it is the realization of a seme" [10].

The seme, in turn, is composed of semes, each being a unique feature of seme. As part of the content form, seme in the field of significance operates the same function as significant as the element has the shape of expression. Then, as defined above, it is metase-meme replacing a seme other causing change of significance. The visual sign, this metaphorical and metonymic replacement that metase-meme does can be classified, according to the Groupe  $\mu$  in his Treatise on the Visual Sign in four types:

(1) the *in absentia conjuncta* mode (IAC): the two entities are joint - that is, they occupy the same place of the statement, for total replacement for one another; (2) the *in praesentia conjuncta* mode (IPC): the two entities are combined in one place, but with only partial replacement; (3) the *in praesentia disjuncta* mode (IPD): the two entities occupy different places without replacement; and (4) the *in absentia disjuncta* mode (IAD): one entity is manifested and the other is external to the statement, but projected on this. [11]

With this, we can draw the following comparison table:

field / mode	<i>In absentia conjuncta</i> (IAC)	<i>In praesentia conjuncta</i> (IPC)	<i>In praesentia disjuncta</i> (IPD)	<i>In absentia disjuncta</i> (IAD)
linguistic	tropes	Portemanteauword	comparisons, rhymes	proverbs
visual iconic	iconic tropes	iconic interpretations	iconic pairings	designed iconic tropes
visual plastic	plastic tropes	plastic interpretations	plastic pairings	designed plastic tropes

**Figure 2:** The metaphor and metonymy of metasememes in the Treatise on the Visual Sign

Thus, the study of Visual Rhetoric, seeking a poetic in Man Ray's photography, lies in identifying these four modes of metasememes to accomplish the necessary exercise of interpretation. Only then we can check the silence contained in those paintings, a silence beyond the absence of words, within the conjunction of images.

#### IV. MAN RAY'S VIOLIN

A representative metasememe Man Ray's work can be seen in *Le violon d'Ingres*, 1924, reproduced below



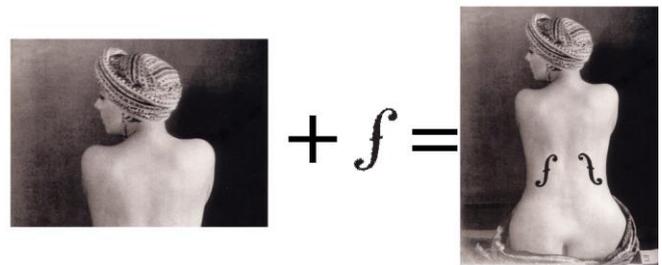
**Figure 3:** *Le violon d'Ingres* (1924)

*Le violon d'Ingres* is a very simple example of metaphor in IPC mode. His presentation is a portemanteau, a combination

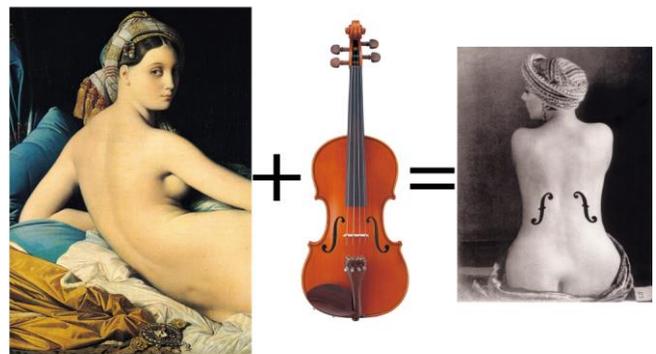
of two elements foreign to each other to form a hybrid, another to the first two. Thus, the bare back of the model, combined with the letters, becomes a violin, referenced in the title.

Here is a violin that nothing touches, hear nothing, nothing sounds. The photo mutism, which makes extensive reference to women painted by Ingres, engages in poetic construction. As a result, we have almost, in our mind, the construction of two significant poetic equations that complement each other.

If the photographic point of view, the metaphor is in IPC mode (model and letters, as termed by Figure 4), from a linguistic point of view, the metaphor of this Man Ray's photography is done by reference, becoming a IAD example from the junction of the Ingres style, specifically the *Grande Odalisque* frame with a classical violin, as termed by the figure 5.



**Figure 4:** IPC mode in *Le violon d'Ingres*



**Figure 5:** IAD mode in *Le violon d'Ingres*

#### V. CONCLUSION

We know that language is "the space where man exists and in which the conventional universe of signs structure their thinking and constitutes their culture" [12]. Thus, we can think of a story that "is a language, and this bloody bargain fabric of pronouns joining and separating" [12]. We can go further and define that "the history of man is the history of social change, and your mobile, a dynamic principle of contradiction" [12].

Having such language dimension, we built a fictional notion close to that of Jacques Lacan and his system RSI (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary). If Real is unreachable and the Symbolic is the ordering of this reality through language, causing his faults and flaws in the subject of the unconscious,

the imagination is the place of desire, completeness, clouds:

It is in this context that the cloud of Lacanian idea arises: are not the objects, but lovely clouds through which the desire is alienated in the subject's relation to the object. It is this kind of relationship that we will find the ghost [fantasy], represented graphically by the split subject connected to the object (\$ \diamond a). You can say, even, that not forge its adherence to the object of imaginary nature grip, the subject does not speak, does not move, does not express itself and does not mean (...). The phantom (\$ \diamond a) if shows how the formula from which you can glimpse the way in which the small object - it gives off of language, or, more precisely, the slide constant of signifiers - will cling to the subject (divided) that he grabs as empty soul to imprison the sense of herself. In simpler terms, "the ghost is nothing more than the junction between one who is missing and its object, joint cemented by desire. The divided subject, barred established by symbolic, is linked to the object that the full imaginary" [13]

Thus, the "eternal remake" culture is the imaginary constructed through the logic of interaction between real and symbolic in Lacanian system. And that is set by the two metaphors (IPC and IAD) examined the photograph of Man Ray. It is just as "cloud" of silence we observe such a situation where a naked female body becomes a fiddle. Violin one that is to our eyes and not to our ears.

The violin Man Ray before us is purely imaginary. It's one of the beautiful ghosts that attack our contemporary aesthetic permeated by looking. And with that, the photographer puts us one question: what we want the truth of poetry: the beautiful true post by Kant or just the aesthetics of the "beautiful" created by the Capital order? A true violin is one who plays its music or the one who questions in its *visage*?

No clear answers to these movements, Man Ray just gives us a certainty. The certainty that poetry can go beyond the written text and merge the conjunction of images that references a multitude of present and absent images. Observations are such that the Visual Rhetoric brings understand, increasingly, the Information and Communication Technologies, such as photography, while poetic.

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