

The Actor and the Subject-Agent in the Semiotic Analysis of the Paris School A Model Applied Study of Zakaria Tamer's "Tigers on the Tenth Day"

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Abstract

Classical semiotic analysis, founded by A. J. Greimas and his colleagues, centres on the presence of stable meaning within discourse or the text. This meaning is analysed as an established reality within discourse and from a fixed perspective, on the assumption that stable signification relies on a set of semiotic tools for its disclosure. These tools also prevent such signification from being arbitrarily manipulated and prevent texts from being used for divergent utilitarian purposes. The concepts of the actor (acteur), the agent (agent), and the actant (actant) are fundamental to this analysis, since purposive and thematic roles intersect within them to constitute the true dynamics of the text.¹

Keywords: Paris School semiotics; actantial model; actor and actant; figurative trajectories; narrative programmes; Zakaria Tamer.

The Main Research Problem of the Article

This study seeks to answer a set of fundamental questions:

1. What form does meaning take in discourse from a semiotic perspective?
(the narrative component in semiotic analysis, or the first level of analysis)
2. How are these narrative programmes conveyed linguistically?
Or, in other words: how are these actantial elements transformed into absolute or constituted actors through their functions, properties, purposes, or purposive roles?

In semiotic and structuralist usage, these are called "actors" or "holders of different projects", and the characteristics and attributes assigned to them are called "functions", "indices", or "qualities". The terms used in the discursive component are what give them this texture, at which point we recognise a second level: the figurative level (les figures), where we study figurative trajectories (les parcours figuratifs).²

The Objectives of Semiotic Analysis

This analysis seeks to:

- Present a comprehensive model of classical semiotic analysis.
- Provide detailed and precise analysis of the actor and their purposive and thematic roles (from the actor to the agent).

- Clarify the role of the actor in contemporary and recent semiotic studies as the nucleus of semiotic analysis.

The fundamental observation: in most semiotic analyses, the researcher examines the programmes and then proposes a general meaning in a semiotic square, but neglects figures and figurative trajectories. This study fills a real gap in contemporary Arab research, since many studies are confined to actantial analysis without delving into the discursive and figurative dimensions that enrich meaning and complicate signification.³

Plan of Analysis

By the plan of analysis, we mean the movement from the abstract to the concrete, that is, from the narrative model to the linguistic model.

Surface structure:

- The narrative component (Niveau narratif)
- The discursive component (Niveau discursif)

Deep structure:

Through this, we aim to:

- Deconstruct the discursive component
- Identify the figures (figures) and then the figurative trajectories (parcours figuratifs)
- Identify the purposive or thematic role (rôle thématique)
- Enable the actant to possess an actantial functional role and purposive roles
- Extract semiological isotopies (isotopies sémiologiques)

Steps of the deep structure:

1. Revealing the figures (a large number of figures) and how they cohere within figurative trajectories

By figures is meant here every word that appears in a given context and is linked to contextual meaning rather than to purely lexical meaning. These figures come together in dynamic systems that form what semioticians call figurative trajectories (parcours figuratifs), which represent the direct linguistic embodiment of the ideas and concepts set in motion by narrative programmes.⁴

2. Revealing the nuclear semes concealed behind these figures:

That is, identifying the nuclear semes or central meanings to which these figures belong. This area is relatively absent from semiotic analysis in contemporary Arab culture. The seme (sème) is treated as the smallest semantic unit, composed of latent features that move from one word to another and form a coherent semantic texture.

3. Extracting semiological isotopies:

Through figures and figurative trajectories, we extract the recurrent semiological isotopies within them (the broader meanings), that is, the “semiological isotopes” (les isotopes sémiologiques). These isotopies constitute the basic semantic unity that links disparate elements in the text and makes them enter into dialogue and interaction.

4. Extracting semantic isotopies:

From the semiological isotopies, we extract what generates semantic isotopies (les isotopes sémantiques). These higher levels of isotopy reflect the major meanings and deep values borne by the text.

5. Arriving at general meanings:

Through semantic isotopies, we arrive at the general meanings that polarise the signification of the text within a semiotic square (carré sémiotique). This square constitutes the final stage of semiotic analysis and represents the basic structure of the overall meaning in the text.

Analysis of the Story: An Applied Model

The Theoretical Introduction to the Analysis

When a researcher begins to analyse a text semiotically, he divides it into segments. The analyst apprehends these segments through a kind of transition from one state to another, whether temporal, spatial, or otherwise. Greimas emphasises that “Le discours ... ne peut être conçu comme une simple manifestation surface d’une structure profonde”, which means that the text does not represent a mere external surface, but is rather the bearer of a complex meaning that requires methodical dissection.⁵

Criteria for Segment Division

1. Linguistic inflection at the discursive level: when there is a shift from one tense to another, or from one linguistic structure to another, this marks the beginning of a new segment. The transition from the past to the present, or from direct to indirect discourse, announces a new narrative transformation.
2. A change in the acting character: when the discourse concerns a particular actor or actant and then moves to another person or character, this marks the beginning of a new segment. This transition does not merely mean a change of actor, but rather a transformation in the narrative programme itself.
3. Spatial and temporal indicators: a spatial or locative change, for example, when discourse situated in a given space moves to another space. Space is not merely a background but forms part of signification and carries important semiotic values.

A note on the novel: in the case of the novel, the matter is different because it is very long, and the segments may be determined at the level of chapters or at the level of qualitative transformations in what it is based on, or in the projects of the actors. The analysis of an entire novel may take a very long time, but the theoretical model remains stable and applicable.

A historical note: semiotics was established primarily in the study of short stories, folktales, and fables. It is well known that Greimas devoted more than 300 pages to the analysis of a short story by Maupassant. This indicates the real depth of the semiotic method and its capacity to make every detail of the text speak.⁶

The First Step: Dividing the Text into Segments

Coherent semiotic analysis requires:

- analysing the segment, its paragraphs, and its sentence structure with precision;
- discovering the narrative programmes and active actants it contains;
- discovering the figures at the same time and tracing their repetition and development;
- forming figurative trajectories by linking related figures;
- arriving at a synthesis between the actantial role of these characters, the purposive role, and the thematic dimension borne by each character.

Determining the Narrative Segments in “Tigers on the Tenth Day”

The First Segment: The Royal Summons and Scientific Proximity

- Beginning: from the beginning of the story, “The king decided one day ...”
- End: up to “So the historians immediately wrote what the king had said in ink of gold.”
- Divider: the boundary between the first and second segments is determined by the temporal transition “Then came a day”.

In this segment, we witness the king’s first project, namely attracting scholars and bringing them close to the palace. Here, the king demonstrates his awareness of the importance of knowledge and its value in building civilisation. Greimas says that “L’actant est une catégorie généralisée du sujet”,⁷ meaning that the king here is not merely a human individual but a semiotic representation of the principle of authority and of the will that seeks to possess the value-object, namely knowledge.

The Second Segment: The Educational Programme and the Communication of Knowledge

- Beginning: “Then came a day when a number of seekers of knowledge gathered around al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham.”
- End: the phrase “Nothing deserves that a person sacrifice his life for its sake except knowledge and truth.”
- Feature: this segment is determined by disputation and teaching, or by the communication of knowledge between Ibn al-Haytham and the students.

In this segment, we move from the royal programme to another, relatively independent programme: the educational programme. Here, Ibn al-Haytham appears in a new role, not merely as an official in the service of the king, but as a teacher and bearer of wisdom who seeks to

disseminate the true value, namely knowledge and truth, among the students. This separation between the two programmes points to a latent conflict over the very definition of value.⁸

The Third Segment: Ideological Conflict and Negative Interpretation

- Beginning: “When the king learnt what al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham had said.”
- End: “and preferred to wait for the appropriate time to come.”
- Content: the beginning of the king’s second project, namely revenge.

Here, the situation is reversed. The king hears Ibn al-Haytham’s words concerning knowledge and truth, and he does not accept them. What semioticians call “negative interpretation” (interprétation négative) occurs here, as the king reads Ibn al-Haytham’s words as a direct challenge to his authority. “L’interprétation n’est pas une simple lecture mais une actualisation du sens potentiel du texte”,⁹ and here the king chooses a particular interpretation that serves his political interests.

The king criticises Ibn al-Haytham’s statement: “Is this how one who is overwhelmed by our favour speaks ...” He then opposes it with a contrary view: “Does the king not deserve that people sacrifice their lives for his sake?!” This response is not merely a difference of opinion but a conflict over who has the right to demand sacrifice and loyalty.

The Fourth Segment: The Project of Revenge and Imprisonment

- Beginning: “Al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham became aware of the danger.”
- End: up to “and ordered that he be confined in his house until death.”
- Feature: here we move from discursive conflict to actual conflict, from the level of utterances to the level of actions and punishments.

In this segment, Ibn al-Haytham enters into a counter-project: the project of survival and escape. He attempts to convince the king of the value of inventions and extraordinary military equipment. Yet the king continually refuses and mocks his proposals, considering him mad. The text states: “The king said with concealed mockery ... the king said in a sarcastic voice ...”, and finally, “The king roared with laughter”, then “The poor man has gone incurably mad.”

Here, the fundamental transformation becomes clear: from the king’s acceptance of Ibn al-Haytham as a scholar to his rejection of him as a potential threat to the system. Imprisonment becomes the king’s final solution for eliminating this danger.¹⁰

The Fifth Segment: The Ending and Deferred Freedom

- Beginning: “In prison ...”
- End: the final paragraph of the story.

In this final segment, we witness death as a liberating force. The king dies and loses his authority over Ibn al-Haytham. The end of the royal programme, namely revenge, comes through the king’s death, not through Ibn al-Haytham’s victory. Here, Ibn al-Haytham achieves his “value-object”, namely survival, but in a negative manner: he does not survive through his own power, but through the death of his enemy.

The Actants and the Actantial Model

Actants (les actants) represent the actantial model in its six different elements. They are abstract entities that apply to all cultures, discourses, and texts. That is, they are general categories or an abstract structure that conditions every action, whether human, animal, intellectual, or the like, based on observation or on a kind of process directed towards the attainment of a given value.

In Greimas, the actantial model identifies six actants distributed across three axes:

The First Axis: The Axis of Desire

- Subject (Sujet): the one who seeks to obtain the value
- Value-object (Objet): what the actor seeks

The Second Axis: The Axis of Will/Authority

- Sender (Destinateur): the one who moves the actor and commands him to accomplish the task
- Receiver (Destinataire): the one who will benefit from the accomplishment of the task

The Third Axis: The Axis of Assistance and Obstruction

- Helper (Adjuvant): the one who assists the actor
- Opponent (Opposant): the one who obstructs the actor

In “Tigers on the Tenth Day”, we may apply this model as follows:

The King’s Programme: The First Programme

- Subject: the king
- Value-object: the scholars brought close to the palace
- Sender: the king’s awareness, his recognition of the importance of knowledge
- Receiver: royal society, the state
- Helper: royal authority, money, officials
- Opponent: the initial absence of scholars, geographical distance

Ibn al-Haytham’s Programme: The Second, Educational Programme

- Subject: Ibn al-Haytham
- Value-object: the dissemination of knowledge and truth
- Sender: the actor’s own message, his conviction of the importance of knowledge
- Receiver: the students, society
- Helper: his profound knowledge, the students’ interest
- Opponent: none at first, but the king will become the principal opponent

The Transition from Abstraction to Linguistic Concretion

Yet after a while, when the analyst has completed the abstract construction of the actantial model and seeks its clothing or linguistic texture, he then moves from its general concept to the concrete

concept. In this way, the abstract actantial structure may be formulated in a film, in a caricatural image, in a drawing, or in a language.

“C’est au niveau discursif que les actants abstraits reçoivent leur manifestation actorielle.”¹¹ That is, the abstract actant, the king as an abstract actor, is transformed into a concrete actor, the king as a living person who speaks and moves, and finally into a real actor (acteur) with specific psychological and moral traits.

When those abstract elements in the actantial model are joined to, or clothed in, a given language, they acquire what semioticians call their “figuration”. Figuration is a kind of embodiment of these universals within a clear linguistic framework. The king is not only “authority” but a person who wears a crown, sits on a throne, and issues commands in a loud voice.

Figures and Figurative Trajectories

This figuration allows for the analysis of the discursive component by observing figures (les figures). Figures are every word that appears in a given context. The word appears in a given context on the basis of the meaning of the word, which semioticians call the lexeme (lexème), and the latter here, in its meaning, is related to its occurrence in a given context.

In “Tigers”, we find very important recurring figures:

- the figure of the king: crown, throne, authority, decision
- the figure of knowledge: knowledge, books, teaching, wisdom
- the figure of truth: justice, frankness, truth
- the figure of tigers: power, danger, instinct, pouncing
- the figure of the tenth day: inevitability, ending, fate

All these figures do not signify their simple lexical meaning, but carry deep meanings in context. The king does not symbolise authority alone, but despotic authority that rejects truth. The tigers are not merely animals, but represent the primitive force that pounces upon civilisation.

The Relation between Figures and Contextual Meanings

Formula: figure = figurative trajectory + figure + meaning of the word

The figurative trajectory is a system of words that concerns us not in its purely lexical meaning, but in its contextual meaning. The seme (sème) is the minimal unit of meaning within lexemes (lexèmes), that is, within words that may carry several meanings and are actualised in a given context according to one of those meanings.

For example, the word “king” in the context of his statement “one who is overwhelmed by our favour” does not mean merely a ruler, but carries an additional seme, namely “despotism” and “the desire for absolute loyalty”. In the other context, “Does the king not deserve that people sacrifice their lives for his sake?”, a new seme is added: “jealousy of the competing value”.¹²

Deriving Thematic Roles from Figurative Trajectories

Several figurative trajectories yield thematic, purposive, or topical roles. Semioticians distinguish here between:

- General thematic roles (les rôles thématiques): these are the abstract meanings inferred from a particular set of figures, such as “the role of the despotic ruler”, “the role of the wise teacher”, or “the role of the oppressed resister”.
- The thematic figure: this is the general abstraction of these figurative trajectories in their absolute concepts. Absolute authority stands opposite pure knowledge.
- Figures: these show how such concepts are transformed into concrete, perceptible properties, apprehended through the senses, sight, imagination, and so forth. We see the king sitting on his throne, hear the tone of his mockery, and feel his anger.

When the analyst has completed this area, he has completed what pertains to the surface structure. In other words, when an actant begins to assume another role and has either an actantial role or a purposive role, we call him an “actor” (un acteur) or an “agent”. The actor is the point of intersection between these two different levels.

The Actor as the Meeting Point of the Two Roles

Two important elements come together in the actor:

First: the actantial role (rôle actantiel), that is, his role in the narrative programme. Is he a subject, an object, an opponent, or a helper?

Second: the thematic/purposive role (rôle thématique), that is, the role defined by the meanings and values carried by the text. Is he learned or ignorant, just or unjust, courageous or cowardly?

In “Tigers”, the king combines both roles:

- His actantial role: he is the subject in his first programme, attracting scholars; the agent in his second programme, taking revenge on Ibn al-Haytham; and the principal opponent in Ibn al-Haytham’s programme of survival and escape.
- His thematic role: he represents despotic authority, which rejects anything that threatens it, even if it is knowledge and truth.¹³

Defining the Narrative Programmes

Applied Example: Actantial Analysis

When we begin to read the story, we find that, at the beginning of the story, both the king and Ibn al-Haytham have a particular project.

The King as Agent

The king here is an agent engaged in a project. Yet we ask the following question: who is the motivating force in the king's project? Or rather: who is the sender (Destinateur)?

The answer is his consciousness and his self. The word "decided" indicates that the decision was personal. Since the king possesses supreme authority, he cannot be directly instituted by anyone else. The real sender here is the king himself, meaning that the king functions as both agent and sender at the same time.

Discovery: through this narrative utterance in the first segment of the story, we discover that the king instituted an agent in a value-based project through which Ibn al-Haytham is brought closer to the palace. The king's motivating force here is his consciousness or his self, because news of knowledge reached him and he settled upon this matter. This is a conscious choice by the king to improve the condition of his kingdom.

Analysis of Competences (Compétence)

Semiotics, however, leads us to ask many questions in analysis. We therefore ask ourselves: what competence did he use here? What capacity enabled him to summon Ibn al-Haytham?

From the story, we cite the following passages: "he hastened to summon him ... entrusted him with supervising the cannons of his palace ... and granted him a monthly salary ...".

Analysis: these successive sentences reveal a kind of resolve and will. He wants this, and the matter did not occur by chance but through persistence and planning.

The Three Competences

1. Will-to-do (Vouloir-faire): he wants this. The king feels a genuine desire to bring scholars close to him.
2. Knowledge-how-to-do (Savoir-faire): he knows what he intends, especially since he later comments, to the effect that "the country that does not appreciate its scholars ...". The king knows the appropriate ways to influence people and attract them.
3. Ability-to-do (Pouvoir-faire): he has the ability to do so, because he is a king, and the king has authority over Ibn al-Haytham, as well as messengers and resources.

Conclusion: the king acts by possessing the will-to-do, together with knowledge-how-to-do and ability-to-do. This triad constitutes what semioticians call the "canonical narrative programme" (programme narratif canonique).

Thus, the king represents, in himself, both the sender and the agent in a value-based project whose aim is to bring this actant close to him and to the palace. "L'acteur, chez Greimas, est cette manifestation de l'actant au niveau du discours."¹⁴

The Role of Ibn al-Haytham: The Subsidiary Project

As for Ibn al-Haytham, he had a role and was assigned a project, but the project he undertakes is subsidiary, a subsidiary project that falls within the king's project. That is, it is a small project subsumed under the king's larger project.

The king assigned him a value-object, namely the supervision of the palace cannons, because, in supervising the palace cannons, he is in the service of the king and not in the service of himself. This is a project with a defined horizon, expected to end with the achievement of the desired result, namely the protection of the palace.

Yet the second educational project, which Ibn al-Haytham created by himself, is entirely different. Here there is no sender from outside except himself. Here the aim is not to serve the king but to disseminate the true value: knowledge and truth.

Conclusion: Ibn al-Haytham is instituted within a subsidiary project, and the sender in his first project is the king. He is an agent in relation to a value-object, supervising the palace cannons. This subsidiary project as a whole is a mediator within the king's value-based objective, namely bringing scholars close to him. Ibn al-Haytham, however, is also the bearer of an independent project in teaching and the communication of knowledge.

Narrative Conflict and Opposing Projects

Expectation Arising from Contrariety

Now that we have a king and an actant, Ibn al-Haytham, we expect the two characters to enter into conflict, since the hypothesis of complementarity between them is relative, and the story will acquire no real meaning if the relationship continues along a path of uninterrupted harmony.

We may summarise the foregoing by saying that the king lured Ibn al-Haytham, and that the latter agreed to carry out a subsidiary project within the king's basic project. Thus, even if we assume that the text has certain intentions, we expect a kind of collision. Since we expect a kind of collision, we shall observe that the two characters will each have a distinct project: the king has one objective, and Ibn al-Haytham has another.

The Central Question

What will result from these two projects? Will they separate entirely, or will they compete over a single value-object? The answer is that they will compete over the definition of value itself: the king says, "I am the fundamental value for which sacrifice must be made", whereas Ibn al-Haytham says, "knowledge and truth are the real value".

The King's Interpretation of the Act

Before adopting the set of programmes in the first segment of the story, we conclude that there is an interpretation on the part of the king, as indicated by the statement: "So the historians immediately wrote what the king had said in ink of gold."

When the king completed his programme, brought Ibn al-Haytham close to him, and accomplished his basic project, his act was interpreted by the historians as an extremely noble act. Here, the king seeks to obtain acknowledgement and recognition of his value. This is a second level of the project: not merely bringing scholars close, but obtaining recognition and fame.

The Second Segment: The Educational Programme

The Collective Agent: The Seekers of Knowledge

“Then came a day when a number of seekers of knowledge gathered around al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham.”

In the second segment, we find a collective agent represented by the students. This agent differs from the previous individual agents. In certain semiotic cases, there are agents who present, communicate, or give a value-object without being separated from it, meaning that they do not lose it. An example of this is science and knowledge. In this case, Ibn al-Haytham will not lose the value-object when communicating science or knowledge to these students.

This differs entirely from the programme of loss of value (programme de disjonction). In the king's programme of summoning Ibn al-Haytham, there is a process of separation and conjunction: Ibn al-Haytham was distant, that is, separated, and then became close, that is, conjoined. In the educational programme, however, knowledge remains present with Ibn al-Haytham even after he shares it with the students.

The Model of Non-Loss Communication

- Ibn al-Haytham (A1) is conjoined with a value-object (O1 = knowledge), from which Agent 2 (A2 = the students) is separated.
- This value-object (O1) is now conjoined with the students, the second agent (A2).
- Ibn al-Haytham here communicates knowledge that he does not lose, which is a property of certain narrative programmes.

This model reflects the special nature of intellectual values: they are values that cannot be consumed in the material sense. When one transmits knowledge to another person, one does not lose it; rather, its circulation and influence increase.¹⁵

The Educational Programme

One of the students asked Ibn al-Haytham for a certain item of knowledge; that is, Ibn al-Haytham instituted this student within an educational project through which a particular knowledge is transmitted from Ibn al-Haytham to one of the students.

The value-object desired by the student here is knowledge. The mediator or motivating force that enables them to attain knowledge is Ibn al-Haytham. He performs the role of the “sender” (destinateur) in this programme, because he is the one who moves the student towards knowledge.

As for Ibn al-Haytham, from another perspective, the student, or the desire to disseminate knowledge, is the “sender” in Ibn al-Haytham’s project, as the agent who carries out the project, while the value-object is knowledge distributed among the students. Ibn al-Haytham is the agent who accomplishes this epistemic project.

The Role of Ibn al-Haytham as Teacher

Ibn al-Haytham here did not need persuasion, since he said “without hesitation”. Here, the character of Ibn al-Haytham appears with a defined nature, as an agent possessing a clear and determinate actantial role. He is a teacher by nature, not because the king asked this of him, but because this is his essence.

What matters to us in the analysis here is that Ibn al-Haytham communicated knowledge to the student, that the students acquired knowledge and achieved conjunction with their value-object, and that Ibn al-Haytham accomplished his project as required without losing this value-object. He remains a teacher and a transmitter of knowledge.

The Hidden Element Discovered through Semiotic Analysis

The hidden element in the story, which semiotic analysis reveals, is that the project undertaken by al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham was not under the king’s supervision, but was carried out freely. Although the king summoned him and assigned him certain tasks, al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham was expected to do what had been requested of him.

Yet we shall also expect a reaction from the king. The king cannot accept such intellectual independence from someone under his control. Thus, we move to the third segment of the story, where the king shifts from granting and rewarding to punishment and rejection.

The Third Segment: Ideological Conflict and the Discursive Crisis

Divergence of Visions

In the third segment of the story, the vision differs radically between the king and al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham.

Al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham, as an actant, sees knowledge and truth as having become the true meanings of existence. They are his goal in life and what he taught his students. The goal here is elevated, transcending personal desires and immediate interests.

The king’s reaction, however, was expected, since he is a king characterised by authority, power, and control. His first statement displeased him. The king could not accept that there should be another value competing with his own authority.

The King’s Statement and Negative Interpretation

He says: “Is this how one who is overwhelmed by our favour speaks ...”

Here, the king proceeds to interpret Ibn al-Haytham’s educational project, in which he sees that what a human being may sacrifice himself for has become truth and knowledge. He then

responds to Ibn al-Haytham, saying: “Does the king not deserve that people sacrifice their lives for his sake?!”

The king’s words here are not merely an innocent question, but an aggressive interpretation of Ibn al-Haytham’s words. The king sees in Ibn al-Haytham’s statement a direct challenge to his authority. “L’interprétation est une actualisation du sens potentiel du texte selon les modalités du lecteur.”¹⁶ Each individual reads the text differently according to his position and interests.

The Beginning of the Real Conflict

Here begins the real conflict between the king and the actant. At first, the king interpreted the statement of the one whom he had summoned; that is, he disclosed the sanction of his scientific project in communicating knowledge to the students. This sanction became what ought to be sacrificed for, and it differs from the traditional value: authority and kingship.

The king then set against the value-object to which Ibn al-Haytham had directed the students another value-object: sacrifice for the sake of the king. Does the king not deserve to be sacrificed for?

This statement reflects the logic of despotic authority, which sees every loyalty directed towards another entity as a threat to itself.

The Depth of the Conflict and the Philosophy of Authority

Here, the king did not merely interpret Ibn al-Haytham’s statement; rather, he opposed it with a negative judgement: “Is this how one who is overwhelmed by our favour speaks ...” He then set against it another value-object for which sacrifice ought to be made: the king.

The king did not attempt to integrate himself into Ibn al-Haytham’s statement, by saying, for example: “Yes, knowledge and truth are important, but I represent these values.” This is because he feared that this value would prevail among the people and that the king would come to occupy a secondary or tertiary position after knowledge and truth. Since he would no longer be the one for whom sacrifice is made, he came to see this value as a danger to himself and to his system of rule.

The Potential Danger from the King’s Perspective

If Ibn al-Haytham is disseminating knowledge, this knowledge means that the highest values do not belong to the king and authority, but to truth and knowledge. The subjects will then revolt against him and will seek to establish other criteria for obedience and loyalty.

It is as though the king saw in Ibn al-Haytham’s statement a dangerous project through which the seeker of knowledge is instituted in the pursuit of something other than the defence and sanctification of authority; this is an implicit, hidden theme. This is what semioticians call the “implicit programme” (programme implicite), that is, the programme that is not explicitly stated but is sensed behind the words.¹⁷

The Fourth Segment: The Project of Revenge and Imprisonment

The King's Institution of a New Project

After these two utterances, the king is instituted within a new project: the attempt to destroy al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham.

The sender in his second project is the dangerous act or statement of Ibn al-Haytham, which functions as the activator. The king has become an agent in relation to a new value-object: “the destruction of al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham”, or at least “his neutralisation and removal from influence”.

The Competences Used in Revenge

With regard to the competence used by the king here, we say: “the king resolved”. Here he possesses the will-to-do (*vouloir-faire*). His will for revenge is extremely strong.

“But he suppressed his rage, concealed what he intended, and preferred to wait until the appropriate time came.” Here he possesses knowledge-how-to-do (*savoir-faire*), as a man of state who knows how to manage conflict. The king knows that immediate revenge might arouse sympathy for Ibn al-Haytham, so he chooses waiting and planning.

Although Ibn al-Haytham initially said “without hesitation”, he is not naïve, for he is a man of knowledge; rather, he was good-natured and sincere, and never aimed at authority. He lacked the necessary caution before despotic authority.

The king, as king, possesses authority and can punish Ibn al-Haytham at any moment; he is therefore also able. He possesses ability-to-do (*pouvoir-faire*), since he was likewise able to suppress his rage and conceal his intention. Here he has ability-to-do.

Yet he preferred to wait until the appropriate time came; thus his knowledge preceded his ability. Knowledge here surpasses mere ability, because the king knows how to use his ability intelligently.¹⁸

Conclusion: the king possesses ability-to-do, knowledge-how-to-do, and will-to-do. This complete triad makes him capable of actually implementing his project of revenge.

The New Value-Object and the Psychological Effects

The new project that emerges in the analysis is that the king wants only Ibn al-Haytham's head, or at least to render him ineffective. The king's value-object is revenge against Ibn al-Haytham and the elimination of the danger.

In general, the value-object is a goal through which the agent seeks to acquire a set of values and elements. When the king eliminates Ibn al-Haytham, he will escape a danger threatening his throne and authority, and will restore his ideological superiority over his people.

The text expresses the king's transformation from a feeling of joy and satisfaction, when he achieved his first project, to a feeling of anger and fear, when he heard Ibn al-Haytham's words. This affective transformation is called by contemporary semioticians, especially in recent studies on the semiotics of passions, the "passional discursive transformation" (transformation discursive passionnelle).¹⁹

The Fifth Segment: The Project of Survival, Escape, and Final Conflict

Ibn al-Haytham's Entry into a Counter-Project

In the fourth segment of the story, Ibn al-Haytham attempts to enter into a counter-project in order to defend himself, through the passage stating: "Al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham became aware of the danger."

The activator in his project, or the sender within it as an agent, is his sense of danger. Ibn al-Haytham has now become an agent in a project whose sender is his sense of danger and whose value-object is survival.

Here a complete reversal of roles occurs. The king, who had been the "sender" and the "agent" moving events forward, now becomes the "opponent" (opposant) in Ibn al-Haytham's new programme. Ibn al-Haytham, who had been the "object" (objet) in the king's first programme, that of summons and proximity, now becomes both the "agent" and the "object" at the same time: an agent seeking survival, and a value-object desired by the king.

The Conflict between Two Contradictory Projects

We now have two wholly contradictory projects, because both Ibn al-Haytham and the king have a project. The two projects enter into conflict, but the contest concerns the value-object over which they struggle. The value-object here is the agent within the project of the first agent.

The king's project is to take Ibn al-Haytham's head, or at least to destroy and silence him, whereas Ibn al-Haytham's project is to survive with his head and his freedom.

Important note: the agent in the second project, Ibn al-Haytham, is a value-object for the first agent, the king. This is a very important feature and constitutes the essence of the conflict. The value-object sought by the king is the very bearer of the counter-project opposed to him.

This means that the conflict is not over an external object, but over a person who is at the same time an agent in another programme. This makes the conflict more complex and deeper at the dramatic and psychological levels.²⁰

The Dynamics and Development of the Conflict

How, then, will the conflict unfold? The king must move in order to entrap his companion and seize his head, while Ibn al-Haytham must strive to escape the king's power.

The king possesses the instruments of authority and force: soldiers, guards, and prisons. Ibn al-Haytham, however, possesses another instrument: knowledge, intelligence, and the capacity for persuasion.

Ibn al-Haytham's Strategy for Survival and the Failed Dialogue

As for Ibn al-Haytham, he wanted to survive. Since we are compelled to follow and accept the logic and illusion of the text, because we are dealing with a fictional discourse that does not require purely rational logic, we assume that Ibn al-Haytham, being a scholar, made a machine or device and presented the king with a set of extraordinary projects or inventions that would raise the condition of the state and the kingdom to a higher and stronger level.

Through this, Ibn al-Haytham was instituted within a new project in which he is the agent, while the activator and sender within it is the attempt to persuade the king, and its object is extraordinary inventions.

Ibn al-Haytham's Double Role and Strategic Failure

In this story, Ibn al-Haytham wanted to perform two roles: the role of the agent, moving towards survival, and, at the same time, to persuade the king to accept this project. Here he is an agent, or rather an actor, who performs more than one role.

The Competences Used in the Attempt

Ibn al-Haytham wanted survival. The value-object is his survival. Since he possesses neither permission nor authority to implement his project by force, he asks the king for permission. It is the king who will consent to instituting him within this project if he can persuade him.

Yet the question that arises is this: what competence does Ibn al-Haytham reveal here?

The answer is knowledge-how-to-do (*savoir-faire*), because he is a man of knowledge and an inventor. Here he does not possess absolute ability-to-do; he does not possess *pouvoir-faire*, because ability belongs to the king. In other words, the king must permit him to implement his project.

That is, Ibn al-Haytham used his knowledge to persuade the king of the usefulness of the new military project, but the king was not convinced, despite Ibn al-Haytham's repeated attempts.

The text informs us of the king's psychological state through specific linguistic variations: "the king said with concealed mockery", "the king said in a sarcastic voice". These descriptions do not merely indicate manner, but point to the king's inner state: mockery, derision, and rejection.

It is as though he was not convinced and had not yet been instituted as sender within Ibn al-Haytham's project. The king refuses that Ibn al-Haytham's aim should be his personal survival and the preservation of his life. The king wants Ibn al-Haytham's destruction.

This continues until "the king roared with laughter". It is as though the opportunity has now become favourable. The descriptions relating to the king are not arbitrary; rather, they are arranged in ascending order: from concealed mockery, to the sarcastic voice, to loud laughter.²¹

The king then proceeded to interpret the hypothetical project proposed by Ibn al-Haytham negatively. He did not accept it and was not instituted as sender within it. He accused him of madness: "The poor man has gone incurably mad." It is as though we see a fundamental conflict between knowledge and despotism, between reason and sheer force.

The Alternative Interpretation of the Text and the Plurality of Signification

In this context, we may also interpret the text by adopting a second logic, according to which Ibn al-Haytham, as agent or sender, sought to institute the king within a new value-based project. The aim of this project would be to raise the civilisational and military level of the kingdom. Ibn al-Haytham performs this project within a subsidiary project realised through his discoveries and inventions.

Yet the king interpreted Ibn al-Haytham's proposal, not positively, but through a negative interpretation, considering him to have lost his mind, even though Ibn al-Haytham had been seeking this positive aim.

Through this segment of the story, it appears that scientific projects may be incompatible with authority founded on despotism, which regards them as both madness and threat.

The opportunity was favourable to regard what Ibn al-Haytham proposed as a means of raising the kingdom to a more advanced level; yet the king considered it madness. In doing so, the king implemented his project of banishing or imprisoning him.

We therefore conclude from this segment that the king was able to realise his project, unlike Ibn al-Haytham's project, which failed because he did not survive, at least not in the manner he wished, that is, through his own power and intelligence.

Here emerges one of the most important values borne by the story: despotism is stronger than knowledge in the immediate moment, but it is not eternal. Death alone can liberate the human being from despotic authority.²²

The Ending and Liberation through the Power of Death

In the fifth segment of the story, we observe that the king's project was not fully completed and that it remained in force until his death. When the king died, as the principal agent in the project of revenge, Ibn al-Haytham regained his freedom.

Here, at the semiotic level, we say that Ibn al-Haytham achieved survival after a long time and through the power of death; that is, he became conjoined with his value-object. In other words, he became free and recovered his self.

Yet this survival is not a true victory, but a negative liberation. Ibn al-Haytham did not defeat the king through his own power or intelligence. The king was not convinced; rather, he died. This reflects a sorrowful image of the world: sometimes we do not triumph over despotism, but wait for the despot to die.

Contemporary Critical Studies and Recent Developments

In recent years, semiotic studies have developed remarkably, especially after Greimas. Among the most important of these developments are the following:

1. Tensive semiotics (Sémiotique tensive):

Developed by Claude Zilberberg and Jacques Fontanille, it focuses on the affective and emotional dimensions of discourse. “La sémiotique tensive s’intéresse à la dynamique des transformations qui traversent le texte, au-delà de la structure statique.”²³ This model makes it possible to study not only “what the text says”, but also “how the text feels”.

2. The semiotics of passions (Sémiotique des passions):

This focuses on the study of the affective and emotional states of agents. In “Tigers”, the king passes through successive affective states: from joy at the accomplishment of his project, to anger and fear at Ibn al-Haytham’s statement, and then to the desire for revenge.

3. Reception semiotics (Sémiotique receptionnelle):

This focuses on the role of the recipient and the reader in the construction of meaning. Every reading of the text produces a different meaning according to the reader’s experience.

4. Social semiotics (Sémiotique sociale):

This links discourse to the social order and historical forces. “Tigers” reflects a real social conflict between thought and power.²⁴

Comprehensive Methodological Conclusion

Fundamental Findings

1. The real distinction between the actant, the actor, and the agent: the text cannot be understood without this distinction. The king as an abstract actant is “authority”; the king as an actor is “the ruler who makes decisions”; and the king as an agent is a specific person with determinate psychological and moral traits.
2. Opposing programmes constitute the essence of drama: the conflict in the story does not arise from simple differences, but from narrative programmes that are entirely opposed in their aims.
3. Negative interpretation is a powerful instrument of conflict: the king does not merely reject Ibn al-Haytham’s idea; rather, he reinterprets all his actions and statements negatively. This is the weapon of despotic authority against critical thought.
4. Competences determine the capacity for action: understanding the agent’s competences, his will, knowledge, and ability, is necessary for understanding his capacity to realise his project.

5. Figures and figurative trajectories carry profound meanings: the understanding of the text cannot be reduced to narrative programmes alone. Detailed figures carry additional messages of great importance.

The Role of Semiotic Analysis in Understanding Literary Texts

Through the Paris School model and the concepts of the actant, actor, and agent, semiotic analysis reveals the structure through which meanings operate and roles are distributed in discourse, through a narrative and thematic hierarchy and through the intersection of programmes. This model is not a mechanical application, but an intellectual tool requiring acute critical sensitivity and plural reading.

Contemporary Critical Studies and the Development of the Method

Contemporary critical studies clarify the development of the semiotic approach towards a stronger connection between discourse, the individual, and society in the generation of the literary text's meaning. Semiotics is no longer a rigid analytical tool, but has become a living method that continually develops and interacts with other critical endeavours.

Applications of the model of the actor and the subject-agent demonstrate the capacity of Greimas's methods to dissect the dynamics of narrative and to highlight the tensions and affective and symbolic values of roles in both contemporary and older texts.

Concluding Methodological Notes

This study has sought to fill a real gap in contemporary Arab research in the field of applying the semiotic model of the Paris School. Most Arab studies focus on purely actantial analysis without moving to deeper levels of analysis. This study has attempted to move from narrative programmes to figures and figurative trajectories, and thence to isotopies and general meanings.

This study has also sought to connect earlier studies, represented by Greimas and his disciples, with contemporary studies, such as tensive semiotics and the semiotics of passions, in order to show how the method has developed without losing its fundamental theoretical origins.

Finally, this study affirms the importance of choosing short and condensed literary texts for semiotic analysis, especially those texts that bear deep symbols and significations, such as "Tigers on the Tenth Day".

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