Discourse Networks Through the Lens of Paul Zarifopol and Friedrich Kittler. Romanian and German Perspectives

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Abstract

The discourse networks of the 1800s and 1900s were an important starting point in the writings of Paul Zarifopol and Friedrich Kittler. Closely following the development of discourse networks, they explored how these evolved over time and the impact they had on society. The present paper focuses on the two intertwined perspectives of the two writers, in an attempt to find common ground. In this context, the paper aims at an interdisciplinary approach, drawing a parallel between Kittler's media theories and Zarifopol's literary theories, reflected in discourse networks.

Keywords: discourse network, Paul Zarifopol, Friedrich Kittler, literary theories, interdisciplinarity

INTRODUCTION

Discourse networks, such as the gramophone, the typewriter, radio, film, music, etc., were an important topic of discussion in 1900s. They first appeared in the initial forms in the 1800s and steadily developed with the advent of technology. The term was coined by Friedrich Kittler and was first used in his benchmark book, *Discourse Networks* (1990). Discourse networks were defined as a series of tools that facilitate communication, while also contributing to its propagation and dissemination. In the 1800s, the main discourse networks were represented by the classic form of communication, namely writing and reading (Kittler, 1990: 108). The development of early technologies led to the simultaneous development of discourse networks, as writing and reading could be transcribed onto technological devices, so that they could be stored and accessed by anyone. The discourse networks of the 1900s took the forms of the gramophone, the typewriter, radio, film, etc., marking an important evolution in both discourse and media technologies (Kittler, 1990).

Paul Zarifopol and Friedrich Kittler were two thinkers concerned with how discourse networks developed over time. The two scholars closely followed their evolution, highlighting the advantages they brought to the era. Kitler was one of the most representative figures in media theory, dedicating an entire volume to discourse networks and the relationships between/among them. On the other hand, Zarifopol was not only one of the most talented essayists in Romanian literature, but he was also one of the most attentive observers of the society in which he lived, proving his expertise through the complex analyses he made. Therefore, the two writers could not have been a more suitable choice for the present topic, as they were two representative figures in discussing how discourse networks functioned throughout time. Moreover, the two writers were chosen because of

the similar perspectives they shared, even though they were separated by a time gap. However, it was not only time that separated the two, but also the different mentalities of the nations to which they belonged, as well as their different ways of thinking. Despite these aspects, similar topics and ideas are to be found in common in the works of the two scholars, both of them offering authentic analyses of discourse networks. In some cases, there may also be some different approaches, mainly caused by the time gap between the two, but this only makes the perspectives even more appealing.

Although the two thinkers were separated by a temporal distance, their perspectives shared many connections, as they view in a similar way the beneficial effects that the development of discourse networks had brought. Inevitably, there were also some divergent points, especially regarding the future implications that discourse networks would have. While Kittler optimistically envisioned the beginning of a new era, in which technology would increasingly occupy the spheres of existence, Zarifopol was more sceptical about the implications that discourse networks could have if not used wisely. Finally, the perspectives of the two writers were distinguished by their novelty and profound intellectuality, completing the critical portrait of the era.

The research methods used in writing the present paper were literature review and discourse analysis. The use of these two methods led to a deeper understanding of the theories of the two thinkers and to relevant conclusions. The literature review was necessary in order to familiarize the reader with the context in which discourse networks emerged and spread, while discourse analysis was an essential step in shaping the hypotheses and providing relevant arguments. The present paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the discourse networks of 1800s and 1900s, based on the theories of the two thinkers, who closely observed their development and evolution.

GENERAL REMARKS

Paul Zarifopol's essays dealt with a variety of topics, approaching ideas from multiple fields of study and activity. He was not only concerned with Romanian and foreign writers, but also with the communication field, as he was interested in media studies, especially in all the technologies that emerged after the First World War. Therefore, he dealt with topics like the gramophone, the typewriter, film (Kittler, 1999), radio, music (Kittler, 1990), etc., drawing multiple connections between them and the literary field. He analysed, at the same time, the impact that all the new technologies had on the era (Kittler, 1990). A closer reading of his books, for example of *Discourse networks* or *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, reveals that many of his ideas are still reflected today, so that the lifespan of his texts extends even to our times, as he dealt with ideas that are still relevant. On the other hand, Kittler was one of the most prominent figures in media studies. Trained as a literary scholar, like Zarifopol, he first brought into discussion the language channels, highlighting how writing and reading evolved within the era, as well as how the transition from the author to the reader and vice versa was realised. Starting from this point of view, Kittler identified in the 1800s two different cultures: a culture of the scribe and a culture of the learned (Kittler, 1990: 108). The culture of the scribe embodied the ability to write, while the culture of the learned embodied both writing and reading:

Historians differentiate between two types of culture with regard to writing: a culture of the scribe, in which the ability to write is a privilege and thus a function of the ruling class; and a culture of the learned, in which reading and writing are coupled together and thus can be universalized. (Furet & Ozouf, 1977: 90, my translation)

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In the European Middle Ages, on the other hand, the scribe was simply a copyist or a calligrapher, who did not understand the content of the material he was transcribing. As a rule, the texts the scribes transcribed were the biblical texts, their role being to spread the word of God. Moreover, they were also required to write personal commentaries or continuations of texts that medieval readers proposed and dictated. Starting from 1800s, the discourse network brought a major shift, fostering a culture that promoted reading and writing as interdependent concepts, automatically linked to each other. In this way, reading and writing became an automatism, playing a crucial role in shaping universal education and making people literate. Thus, in 1800, writing and reading became common property, under the condition of cultivating the pure listening:

> The discourse network of 1800 was the opposite: a culture in which reading and writing were coupled and automatized. The purpose of this coupling was a universal education, and its prerequisite was an alphabetization that connected reading and writing by linking both back to a singular kind of listening. (Kittler, 1990: 108)

At the same time, Anselmus[1] contributed to the universality of writing and reading. He was the first to attribute the quality of poet to the reader. Faced with the difficult task of copying illegible characters that completely excluded both listening and comprehension, he realised that the role of the reader was not only to read the content of a text mechanically, but also to give it meaning. Thus, the image of the reader could be equated with that of a poet. From that moment, the era began to generate and to promote more and more reader-poets:

[1] A symbolic character in the fairy tale *Golden Pot* (1814), written by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Anselmus was considered to be the first creator of poetry.

And because Poetry, unlike wisdom or insight, regulations or the teachings of the gods, cannot exist without readers, the reader-poet Anselmus generates more and more reader-poets, beginning with his writer Hoffmann and moving on through him as relay station to many other poetic youths. In this way reading and writing became universal. (Kittler, 1990: 108-109)

From this moment forward, the book industry started becoming more and more widespread, as the era witnessed both a mobilization of the continuous transition between author and reader, and a series of technological or social innovations that led to progress. Thus, the changes that occurred in the practice of discourse led to the development of the book industry.

The three key concepts in discourse practice were poetry, author and work. Kittler explained that there was no need to look for their meaning within aesthetic systems, because it was made available to the reader in Hoffmann's fairy tale, *The Golden Pot*. According to Hoffmann, poetry emerged with the manifestation of the erotic, authors with the writings that were already written in their subconscious, and works of art with the strong feelings they experience, materializing in the form of hallucinations:

> The end of the fairy tale *The Golden Pot* says it clearly. Poetry as a possession of the inner mind arises in erotic and alcoholic intoxication; authorship arises in rereading what had been unconsciously written in the delirium; poetic works, finally, are media for the hallucinatory substitution of realms of the senses. These three key concepts in the discourse network of 1800 are as many promises of happiness. (Kittler, 1990: 109)

Therefore, poetry at that time was associated with visions, hallucinations, illusions, dreams, magical powers, being a result of the supernatural:

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'Since it is the nature of madness to fasten onto any given idea or concept, often to the exclusion of almost all others' (Arnold, 1782: 210).

Some authors of the 1800s even associated poetry with madness, believing that the visions people had of the deceased loved ones could stir our imagination, thereby drawing images of past and present into people's souls, which could be transformed into artistic material: 'the ever-turning wheel of the imagination, which like a magic lantern throws out images of the past and future across the soul' (Spiess, 1966: 56, my translation). Another example could be Tiedemann's *Investigations into Man* that reported the case of a

> young man who had dedicated himself to poetry and could spend a whole day without writing one line, until somnambulism came to his aid. He got up in the middle of the night, wrote, then read over what he had written and applauded himself by laughing loudly. (Tiedemann, 1778: 267, my translation)

In such cases, poetry stood at the forefront of its time. Around 1800, the emerging human sciences, particularly through their medico-psychological explorations of insanity, identified within the multiple expressions of unreason a singular form that stated the true essence of irrationality.

However, poetry meant much more than that. The discursive practice of the 1800s brought not only new perspectives on poetry, as we have seen above (psychological, supernatural, occultist, etc.), but also a new way of understanding it through the aesthetic system it embodied. Poetry thus began to develop its own technical standards and its own aesthetics. A number of theorists and philosophers of the era attempted to define poetry and the creative process on the basis of a set of complementary elements. A. Wilhelm Schlegel defined poetry as one of the most comprehensive arts and considered language to be an essential element in the poetic art, the poet making his own world through it, which led to the transformation of the real world into an imaginary world in which all poetic elements met:

> The other arts possess, according to their limited modes or means of representation, a definite domain that is more or less susceptible to delimitation. The medium of poetry, however, happens to be identical with that through which the human spirit first attains consciousness, and through which its ideas obtain the power of voluntary connection and expression: language. Therefore, poetry is not bound to any objects but rather creates its own; it is the most comprehensive of all arts and at the same time the universal spirit present in them all. That which in the portrayal of other arts lifts us above commonplace reality into an imaginary world, is what we call the poetic element in them. (Schlegel, 1962: 225, my translation)

Unlike Schlegel, Hegel defined poetry from a spiritual perspective. According to him, poetry was based not so much on the senses and feelings as on the spiritual senses that inhabited the poet's soul, spiritual contemplation and imagination being the essential elements in the creative process. The poetic material would not render the meaning, but the expression of an individual spirit to another individual spirit:

> That is to say, it works neither for contemplation by the senses, as the visual arts do, nor for purely ideal feeling, as music does, but on the contrary tries to present to spiritual imagination and contemplation the spiritual meanings which it has shaped within its own soul. For this reason, the material through which it manifests itself retains for it only the value of a means (even if an artistically treated means) for the expression of spirit to spirit, and it has not the value of being a sensuous

existent in which the spiritual content can find a corresponding reality. Amongst the means hitherto considered, the means here can only be sound as the sensuous material still relatively the most adequate to spirit. (Hegel, 1975: 626).

Poetry, seen as a direct connection between the world and the spirit, also quickly gained its place among aesthetic systems. Thanks to the increasingly widespread use of discourse networks, language could be translated from one to another, becoming a real channel of communication. In terms of the way in which poetry was configured, it emerged as the embodiment of the complete art, as it incorporated the modes of representation of other arts, as Hegel stated:

> As for poetry's mode of configuration, poetry in this matter appears as the total art because, what is only relatively the case in painting and music, it repeats in its own field the modes of presentation characteristic of the other arts'. (Hegel, 1975: 627)

This does not mean, however, that poetry could replace the other arts in its own right, but that it can translate them into artistic material for poetry. Translation is achieved through fantasy and imagination, which has the power to define all the arts. Poetry is imagination itself, the fundamental foundation for all the individual art forms that can be found within it: 'Only poetry can claim the imagination itself, that universal foundation of all the particular art-forms and the individual arts as its proper material' (Hegel, 1975: 967).

As the discourse networks of the 1800 brought new perspectives on poetry, enriching the literary field of German culture, similar developments occurred within Romanian literature too, with poetry and art itself representing a field that was increasingly being explored. One of the

most prominent voices in this regard was Paul Zarifopol, who aligned with Hegel's critical system. Like Hegel, Paul Zarifopol was also an important voice on aestheticism in art and poetry. In Romanian literature, he was considered one of the most important defenders of aesthetics, promoting continuously the idea of the specificity of art and the cult of authentic art as a singular, individual domain. The aesthetic system that he brought into discussion was intensely debated because of the controversies that he raised, as he placed himself on the side of absolute aesthetics, outside of any psychological, philosophical, social or political sphere. He was not only a commentator of both Romanian and foreign writers, but also a literary theorist, with his own critical system. Paul Zarifopol remained in the history of Romanian criticism as one of the most consistent supporters of the autonomy of aesthetics, of the specificity and independence of art, as C. Trandafir stated: 'The guiding thread is the idea of the specificity of art, the support of the legitimacy of aesthetics and its protection from the interference of alien elements' (Trandafir, 1981: 81, my translation). He supported the aesthetic point of view and, at the same time, he based his conceptions on rational judgments and values, bringing art back to its true purity. He realised that art had its own singular field, differentiated from other related fields such as history, philosophy, politics, morality, etc., and he rejected inauthenticity and imposture.

Paul Zarifopol started from the idea that art belonged to its own domain, with its own particular laws and differentiated language, being the result of a historical process:

> Pledges for literary art or attempts at literary precision are made with iridium quill. Corrosive, tightly argued appreciations give the impression of the definitive in spite of the discontinuity imposed by the essay's formula. (Muthu, 1979: 19, my translation)

Zarifopol constantly emphasised the importance of aesthetic judgment, first of all, as a primordial act, which could not carry its existence without special preparation, embodied by artistic technique. He urged critics and writers to strive for precision, to maintain the clean sketch of the art's content and regardless of its connections with other fields, to keep it solely in mind:

The literary criticism practiced, however incidentally, by Zarifopol, is drawn from these rationalist premises and it aspires to explain the work to the limit – always pushed further – of the impenetrable mystery. (Cistelecan, 2018: 502, my translation)

Unlike Kittler, Zarifopol rejected biographic, romantic, scientific, psychological, sociological, etc. criticism, and had the cult of art, seen as the result of a labour process, of a craft. He pleaded for a rigorous attention to the object, for the appreciation of art on the basis of its own laws and criteria, calling for the delimitation of literary art from mere literature, and for the delimitation of the artistic commentator, which distinguished himself from the historical, sociological or psychological one. In a constant search for the image of authentic art as self-sufficient, detached from the contingencies of utility, the critic rejected poetry of a philosophical, sentimental-pedagogical nature, prophetic and political, disapproving the involvement of philosophers in the field of aesthetics.

A polemical and dissociative spirit *par excellence*, Paul Zarifopol's mission was to detect the problematic points and to accurately diagnose certain phenomena, advocating the distinction between literary art and literature, the need for technical criticism practiced by specialists in the field, the removal of extra-aesthetic criteria and inaccuracies determined by sociological and psychological methods, the exclusion of sentimentalism, as well as the promotion of lucid criticism as a differentiated act of culture:

Paul Zarifopol's fears of scientific criticism, whether psychological or sociological, stem from the risks of any partial reading, which risks degenerating into a rigid system. He advocates an individual criticism, as differentiated as possible, free from prejudice, elastic, adaptable from one text to another. (Munteanu, 1993: 236, my translation)

He denounced the inconsistency of the idea of perfect style, of style as ornament, of classical composition, of grammatical correctness and elegance, fighting the rigid norms of classicism from a modern perspective, bringing into the picture the idea of the perishability of art and the evolution of aesthetic taste. As he showed a clear antipathy for the artificial style that was imposed by the rigid rules of literary education, Zarifopol started to seek the unchallenged art, the one that was released from any classical patterns:

Paul Zarifopol was the most outstanding representative of our interwar criticism, elevated to the purest expression of intelligence and the most severe intransigence. His judgment, often unjust, offers us an incomparable spiritual feast. (Cioculescu, 1976: 300, my translation)

Thus, Zarifopol placed himself in opposition to German authors like Hoffmann, Schlegel or Spiess, rejecting the idea that the source of inspiration in the creation of artistic material could be other than aesthetic. However, Zarifopol adopted their perspective regarding the way in which poetry was formed and developed. Similar to the German philosophers, he began his analyses by highlighting the evolution that the discourse network had in the 1800s, which was the period when major changes took place not only in the social, but also in the literary field. With the spread of writing and reading, more and more writers emerged, and the creations began to become more various, precisely because of the

diversity of the authors' voices, as Schlegel also stated: 'There are so many writers because these days reading and writing differ only by degrees' (Schlegel, 1890: 399, my translation). At that time, one of the most widespread art forms was poetry, in its early stages, free from rules, and then increasingly cultivated, developing its own aesthetic system. Poetry is just as widespread today, with many people defining themselves as poets. Zarifopol noticed that several philosophers have argued over the years that being a poet is something that can be done by anyone and does not require an innate vocation. Therefore, he noticed that Renan, for example, believed that anything we said about ourselves could be poetic material (Zarifopol, 1971: 463). At the same time, he looked at Taine, who also said that our life experiences put together could make the subject of a good novel (Zarifopol, 1971: 463). He noticed that even certain Romanian writers agreed, Heliade Rădulescu urging people to write (Zarifopol, 1971: 463), while Alecsandri, according to him, brought the idea that some people were simply born poets (Zarifopol, 1971: 463). Zarifopol, however, added a very important point, namely that not everyone could become a poet, but only a clever and cultivated person: 'The quality of any activity is the product of natural endowment and appropriate culture' (Zarifopol, 1971: 464, my translation). Even though the romantics enthusiastically affirmed that the ability to be poet was innate, Zarifopol emphasised the need for a person to learn and cultivate himself or herself in order to prove that he or she was indeed born to be a poet.

Another issue that was raised in the discourse network of the 1800s was the translation and translatability of literary works, which began to become a growing necessity. This subject concerned both Zarifopol and Kittler. As Pestalozzi noticed, knowledge was exchanged by means of concepts, just as goods were exchanged by means of money (Pestalozzi, 1927: 306). In this sense, translation also became a discursive practice where each seller came with his or her own merchandise to sell or exchange, as Hoffmann said: 'Translations are the discursive market, to which the most distant merchants come with their wares' (Hoffmann, 1963: 65, my translation). The best portrayal, however, was made by Goethe, who first brought to attention the translatability of all discourses. He emphasised not the translation itself, but what remained after the translation, the essence of the meaning that the poet translated into the language of the people. This is why he rejected imitative translations, word by word translations, and emphasised the importance of original translations, those that preserved the authentic elements of the creation, transposed in the same light:

I value both rhythm and rhyme, whereby poetry first becomes poetry; but what is really, deeply, and fundamentally effective, what is really permanent, is what remains of the poet when he is translated into prose. Then the pure, perfect substance remains... I will only, in support of my position, mention Luther's translation of the Bible, for the fact that this excellent man handed down a work composed in the most different styles and gave us its poetical, historical, commanding didactic tone in our mother tongue, as if all were cast in one mould, has done more to advance religion than if he had attempted to imitate, in detail, the peculiarities of the original. (Spiess, 1966: 56, my translation)

While the presence of untranslatable elements within any language was acknowledged, it was ultimately minimized. The general equivalent emerged as the residue of what was left behind, a remainder representing the pure, the perfect substance or the signified. Kittler noticed that the process had a flattening effect, that could be best visible in the translation of Mignon in Wilhelm Meister. Here, the fragmented material was unified in an artificial way. In the discourse

network of 1800s, the general equivalent fulfilled the role of a foundational structure that was opened to changes. The problem regarding the untranslatability of discourse networks could be addressed only within the framework of linguistics. Moreover, the meaning could often be transferred from one language to another with minimal loss involved, therefore, the consistencies helped to define the distinctiveness of a given language, as Kittler stated (Kittler, 1990: 71). Linguistics in 1800s occupied one pole of a central spectrum on the logic of the signified; poetry occupied the other. In its pursuit of moral and intellectual elevation, poetry embraced the general equivalent, and with it, the idea of inherent meaning, which remained deeply religious in nature, whether in the works of Luther or *Faust*. As the saying goes, 'All Poetry is, in the end, translation' (Tiedemann, 1778: 267, my translation).

Kittler stated that the discourse network of 1800s was strongly defined by love, nature and women. The three elements intertwined and formed the creative substance for poets. This would then be transferred to the level of discourse through language. In that context, language functioned purely under the form of a channel (Kittler, 1990: 73). The same aspect was noticed by Schlegel too:

> Nature, the whole world of passion and action that lay within the poet, and which he attempts to externalize through language – this nature is expressive. Language is only a channel, the true poet only a translator, or, more specifically, he is the one who brings Nature into the heart and soul of his brothers'. (Schlegel, 1962: 225, my translation)

Zarifopol's perspective on translations is similar. Translating a text is not just a matter of reconstructing the terms used in that particular text, but of finding symbolic language meanings that give meaning to the original discourse. The text could be reconstructed again under the condition of giving the appropriate words, as well as the original meaning that the poet wanted to convey:

> Translation is the written proof of understanding a text. To understand a text is to reconstruct parts of the life of a world, of a time, of a man. To translate means to find in symbolic elements a language which correspond so closely to the original discourse that they give the appropriate material to the new reconstruction. The possibility of translation depends on the similarities in the historical life of the nations between whom this literary exchange is made. The translator who fails to realize the obligations and challenges of which we are speaking, will only make systematic distortions. (Zarifopol, 1971: 502, my translation)

All in all, translation into the mother tongue was considered a teachable skill, something that could be systematically conveyed in the newly established humanistic preparatory schools to every aspiring civil servant. In contrast, translation from the mother tongue represented a persistent paradox. The ability to transcend this paradox marked the true poets, setting them apart from others. Discourse networks helped them to perceive poetry as a singular, initiatory experience, an exceptional rite for the emerging generation of poets.

The discourse network of the 1900s mainly focused on media technologies and the impact they had on society, bringing important changes. Kittler began his discourse by highlighting the psychophysical experiments that were carried out in the 1900s, particularly those that were related to the automation of writing and reading (Kittler, 1990: 206). However, the most important achievements were made in the fields of optics and acoustics, Thomas Edison being the one who brought two important innovations: film and the

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gramophone. Once the gramophone started to become more popular, people wanted to use it for other various purposes. From a religious perspective, people sought to be able to reproduce as many biblical texts as possible, while poets, for example, desired to be able to hear the great writers who inspired them in their works, as one of them confessed:

> I would so much like to have heard Goethe's voice! He was said to have such a beautiful vocal organ, and everything he said was so meaningful. Oh, if only he had been able to speak into the gramophone! Oh! Oh!'. (Friedlaender, 1980: 159, my translation)

From Kittler's perspective, vibration occupied a very important place in acoustic technologies. (Kittler, 1990: 230) The gramophone was not just a simple reproduction of a person's voice, but went beyond that, drawing its essence from the vibrations that the voice creates, bringing it closer to the listener. In this way, a more lasting connection could be established between the speaker and the listener, creating reverberations that would withstand the passage of time. The ideal that people wanted to achieve through the gramophone was formulated by Charles Cros, who, in his poem *Inscription*, incorporated its principles:

> Like the faces in cameos,/I wanted beloved voices/To be a fortune which one keeps forever,/And which can repeat the musical/Dream of the too short hour;/Time would flee, I subdue it'. (Cros, 1964: 136, my translation)

Before the phonograph reproduced religious texts or voices of writers, its history began by reproducing children's texts. That was the moment when talking dolls appeared. Initially, they caused a wave of discontent, because they were considered threatening for pedagogical norms, as pupils did not learn useful aspects they could see in everyday speech. Moreover, it was thought that multiple linguistic games led to addiction. Nevertheless, the idea was overcome, because the technology improved its performance, so the phonograph came to be more useful in schools, and thus the phonograph was introduced in the school system, as Kittler stated (Kittler 1990: 232).

Thanks to its linguistic performance, the phonograph was useful in schools precisely because of the phonetic accuracy it could reproduce, helping pupils to improve their skills through the precise pronunciation it offered, as well as through its pure rhythmic and melodic line:

> it is essential for achieving an accurate impression of the most fleeting, unrepresentative, and yet so important, characteristic aspects of language, of phonetics (speech melody) and of rhythm. (Surkamp, 1913: 13, my translation)

Ernst Surkamp is also the one who associated the phonograph with the idea of accent or dialect. In his opinion, the phonograph incorporated multiple languages, whose pronunciation and accent were specific: 'a store of readily accessible language sounds in exemplary, faultless accent' (Surkamp 1913: 30, my translation). Yet, Kittler believed that the phonograph's potential could extend further and in unpredictable directions. Therefore, he brought into attention Rilke's case (Kittler, 1990: 233). His physics teacher gave the students the task to rebuild and experiment with a phonograph as soon as the device became commercially available, and the recorded sounds unveiled what he described 'a new and infinitely delicate point in the texture of reality' (Rilke, 1960: 52). The advent of a purely empirical phonetics, clearly distinct from phonology, made it suddenly possible to capture real phenomena,

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rather than force them to fit educational conventions.

While Kittler focused on the concept of the phonograph, Zarifopol was not so much concerned with the phonograph as he was with the radio. Kittler elaborated on the discussion of radio too, but he highlighted the military role it played. In the analysis he undertook, he found that technologies, as well as the radio itself, were used in wars to increase efficiency and speed of reaction: 'the entertainment industry is, in any conceivable sense of the word, nothing but an abuse of army equipment' (Kittler 1999: 96). On the other hand, Kittler also stated the positive role that wars fulfilled regarding the development of technology. War represented an additional reason for people to create more advanced technologies and to test new ways through which they could make more lasting and efficient devices. In contrast to Kittler, Zarifopol actually lived through the two wars and had the chance to observe their real consequences. Therefore, he wrote multiple essays dealing with this issue. Nevertheless, regarding the radio, he chose to focus on the literary point of view, rather than the military one, talking about the way the radio interacted with literature, as well as the impact it had on society. He determined the main purpose of the radio, which was to connect people from an acoustic point of view, offering the possibility of hearing a person without seeing him or her:

> The essence of radio culture is to connect people exclusively acoustically. Radio offers us, to an amplified degree, the original possibility of hearing ourselves without seeing ourselves. (Zarifopol, 1988: 47, my translation)

According to him, the main responsibility of radio communication was to ensure the realization of pure hearing (Zarifopol, 1988: 47). Furthermore, the radio focused on the individuality of the uttering voice which became unique and unrepeatable, taking the form of an isolated expressive manifestation that monopolizes all attention: 'A voice rises somewhere, from all over the world. A single expressive manifestation is isolated from a human being' (Zarifopol, 1988: 47, my translation).

Nevertheless, radio communication was not just a one-way communication, but it was also conditioned by the existence of a listener. A relationship of interdependence was established between the speaker and the listener, each carrying his or her own mystery: the speaker the mystery of the spoken word and the listener the mystery of the listened word. The listener had to focus his or her full attention on the voice, as it was the only sensibility that can penetrate his soul:

> A voice that speaks and a pair of ears that listen. Thus: the attention is concentrated in one branch of sensibility – the listener is the listener and nothing else, – he lives only with the ear. (Zarifopol, 1988: 47, my translation)

It was not only the image that was suppressed in radio communication, but also gestures and mimicry, the only human reality that remained being the voice, which took the form of the absolute: 'It is absolute speech or absolute singing, the effects of mimicry and gesture are completely eliminated' (Zarifopol, 1988: 47, my translation). Therefore, radio became the place where the two human sensibilities met: the speaker, through the mystery of speech, and the listener, through the mystery of listening. He introduced the idea that written communication would gradually be replaced by the oral communication, as it was a faster and more efficient way of communication. Another idea he stated was that 'the radio rules recommend us: don't declaim, just tell stories' (Zarifopol, 1988: 48, my translation). He considered that essence and brevity are the two fundamental characteristics of radio communication. According to him, to tell a story and not to declaim required the existence of three

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necessities: 'the necessity to keep our judgment cold, the necessity to know the facts, the necessity to not waste time' (Zarifopol, 1988: 48, my translation).

In his examples, Zarifopol started from the distinction he had made between the radio and the cinema. In cinematography, words are reduced to a minimum, whereas the facts are the ones that gave it its essence. The explanations of the events in the movie are concentrated in a few words, the emphasis falling on the unfolding of the action, which was why, from his perspective, weak movies were those that needed long explanations. Just as the cinema cultivated the taste for facts, the radio communication should do the same, cultivate short but meaningful facts:

> The popularity of the cinema shows us how strong the taste for facts of today's man is. And just as the cinema, for its part, puts a stop to talk, concentrating everything in action, so radio communication is necessary in the same sense, in that it captures mimicry, gesture, and eliminates declamation and swollen speech. (Zarifopol, 1988: 48, my translation)

Zarifopol was an honest essayist not just with himself, but also with the audience he addressed. Therefore, he established the idea that communication through media technologies brought a considerable advantage as a form of smooth communication, that had the possibility to cross distances, but, at the same time, it also brought a disadvantage because it could encounter some limits at the level of knowing who the listening audience was. According to him, in the absence of a contact with the listener, radio communication could have a ghostly character, incorporating stories that were told by an unknown voice that could speak from thousand kilometres away. Zarifopol asserted that 'the radio is a new power of literary preface in general, and that this power comes, along with others, to

contribute to the suppression of the long sentence' (Zarifopol, 1988: 47, my translation).

Discourse networks of 1900s also had a great contribution to the development of dialects, as Kittler noticed (Kittler, 1990: 234). The greatest impact was felt again in schools. Until then, students learned through the book language (Kittler, 1990: 234). Even though each had their own individuality and particular language, they had to conform to school policy, namely to learn their language, more precisely, the language of their poets and thinkers. Learning was done exclusively through the book language, meaning the formal learning just from books, without offering the possibility of opening up to other spheres of learning or knowledge. In Hackenberg's view, this way of learning stifled students and did not educate them properly. The book language had increasingly begun to control the language of schools, and the result was the formation of students who were progressively becoming shy and monosyllabic in their speech:

> The school-age child brings his own language to school, his native language, his family language, the language of his playmates, his own naive, intuitive language: our task and our desire is to teach him our language, the language of our poets and thinkers… But is it not asking a great deal when we demand that children, from the very first day of school, speak nothing but the school language... It is not long before the children will be overtaken by books and book language: a child learns to read. Reading, however, weakens and cuts across – it cannot be otherwise – the child's coherent, fluent speech, and book language begins more and more to influence and control school language; finally, in its often foreign and refined way, it creates a child who is now shy and monosyllabic. (Hackenberg, 1904: 70, my translation)

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In this case, the development of discourse networks brought about a major change. As soon as the gramophone was introduced into schools, a greater improvement regarding student performance was noticed. Hall was the one who studied this subject more closely and noticed that acoustics significantly helped in the learning process. In his analysis, he started from the connections that were created between rhyme, rhythm, sound and words, capturing the pupils' attention. Any form of acoustics or visual absorbed their attention and helped create new forms of learning. This was based on the natural sounds that children heard every day, such as the sounds of nature or animals (Hall, 1893: 348). Perception was activated to the fullest and the information accumulated, though perception would be stored at the cognitive level as information. Thus, psychological processes were also involved in the learning process, a process that was activated through sounds, as Hall stated:

> Words, in connection with rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, cadence, etc., or even without these, simply as sound-pictures, often absorb the attention of children, and yield them as a really aesthetic pleasure either quite independently of their meaning or to the utter bewilderment of it. They hear fancied words in noises and the sounds of nature and animals, and are persistent punners. As butterflies make butter or eat it or give it by squeezing, so grasshoppers give grass, bees give beads and beans, kittens grow on pussy-willow, and all honey comes from honeysuckles, and even a poplin dress is made of poplar-trees. (Hall, 1893: 348)

Surkamp also concluded that dialects should be encouraged in schools, especially since all the technologies brought about by discursive networks could contribute to more effective learning, but also to the pleasure of listening to fragments in one's native language:

Dialects in schools deserve every possible encouragement, and the talking machine can be effective in that its undistorted oral presentations nourish one's delight in a native language. (Surkamp, 1913: 14, my translation)

Discourse networks spread not only in schools, but also in the literature field. Poets also gave the talking machine a try. Kittler stated that the first German writer to record his voice was Ernst von Wildenbruch, in 1897, who wrote a poem specifically for the purpose of recording it (Kittler, 1990: 235). The poem is entitled *For the Phonographic Recording of His Voice* and is entirely dedicated to testing the new technology. Walter Bruch, who was the inventor of PAL television, was able to access the recording from an archive that kept historical recordings, and transcribed Wildenbruch's poem, reproducing it later:

> Shapes can constrain the human visage, the eye can be held fast in an image, only the voice, born in breath, bodiless, dies and flies off. The docile face can deceive the eye, but the sound of the voice can never lie, thus to me the phonograph is the soul's own true photograph, which brings what is hidden to light and forces the past to speak. Hear then, for in this sound you will look into the soul of Ernst von Wildenbruch. (Bruch, 1979: 20, my translation)

The lyrics were not only profound, but also brought an innovative vision to the phonograph. Kittler analysed them and he noticed that Wildenbruch started from the idea that the only reality and the only form of truth was the voice. If the face and eyes could deceive, the voice was the only vulnerable element of the human being. The voice spoke the truth and revealed hidden things (Kittler, 1990: 236). From his perspective, the voice was a reflection of the human soul, a faithful photograph of it. Discourse networks led not only

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to the development of auditory technologies, but also to the development of visual technologies. Thus, in addition to the phonograph, movies also underwent development. It was the first time that movement could be recorded, and not just imagined by the public: 'Movement can now be recorded in the technological real, no longer only in the imaginary' (Sellmann, 1912: 54, my translation). If the purpose of the phonograph was to record the voice, the sole purpose of movies was to record movement: 'The cinematograph can only do one thing, as its name implies, and that is to record movement' (Sellmann, 1912: 54, my translation).

With the advent of movie, rapid connections began to be established between the body and technology, between stimuli and response, and it was no longer necessary for all these connections to be made at the imaginary level. Kittler conveyed the impact that film had had on society, highlighting the promise that was made by poets in the age of literacy: 'Film transposed into the technological field what Poetry had promised in the age of alphabetization and granted through the fantasy of the library' (Kittler, 1990: 245). All aspects of real life could be transposed onto screens, which led to the rapid popularity of movies, which became a pure joy for the general public. As technologies that appeared simultaneously, film and the gramophone did what human power could not: they transposed visual and auditory data with extraordinary precision. However, their greatest impact was on data storage. The method of storing data in books was surpassed by the possibility of storing it on technological devices, reducing its degradation and contributing significantly to the increase in production quality, as Kittler also observes:

> As technological media, the gramophone and film store acoustical and optical data serially with superhuman precision. Invented at the same time by the same engineers, they launched a two-pronged attack on a monopoly that had not been granted to the book until the time of universal alphabetization: a monopoly on the storage of serial data'. (Kittler, 1990: 245)

Film not only offered people the opportunity to escape from books, but also gave them the chance to live in a better fictional world. In movies, the ordinary could become miraculous, and the ugly could become beautiful. Movies often presented ideal pictures in which anyone could exceed their limits and become whatever they wanted to be. Movies portrayed both the intellectual and working classes, but the distinctions between them were diminished, so as everyone would have the opportunity to live their own dream:

> The schoolboy wants to see the prairies of his Westerns; he wants to see strange people in strange circumstances; he wants to see the lush, primitive banks of Asian rivers. The modest bureaucrat and the housewife locked into her household long for the shimmering celebrations of elegant society, for the far coasts and mountains to which they will never travel... The working man, in his everyday routine, becomes a romantic as soon as he has some free time. He does not want to see anything realistic; rather, the realistic should be raised into an imaginary, fantastic realm... One finds all this in the movies. (Pinthus, 1963: 21, my translation)

The emergence of these technologies prompted writers of the time to shift from classical methods of art creation to the modern ones, integrating technology into their methods. Moreover, some of them began to produce texts that were intended exclusively for technological production.

Paul Zarifopol was also interested in how the film spread. His approach was similar to that of Pinthus, considering film as an opportunity to

access a new world. The idea he pointed out in his analysis was related to how audience preferences had changed over time. People began to feel a strong need for novelty and adventure, as well as for escaping the routine of everyday life. Film could offer them the little pleasures they needed and could stimulate their attention by means of dynamic action and surprising events. Therefore, a new era began in the 1900s, an era in which not only technology developed, but also people's way of thinking:

> People do not want complicated thinking; they are already overwhelmed with psychological problems, with profound inner tragedies, with mouths tight and twisted into a bitter smile; and they have lost the patience to hide their boredom. They long for spectacle, movement, adventure. The literary father, who fell into the temptation of the bandit novel, gave in to a basic need: he gave in to the pleasure of stimulating his attention through a rush of varied, violent, unforeseen events. And precisely: cinema has unleashed the courage of this pleasure throughout the world. (Zarifopol, 1971: 327, my translation)

He continued his argument by comparing the written text with the video animation offered by the film, in an attempt to explain why people felt more attracted to visuals than to reading. According to him, the difference between the two could be seen in the impact they had on the audience. While reading could be boring and sometimes difficult or tiring, watching a film not only facilitated the transmission of information in a more animated way, but also touched the reader's soul:

> The text, always too literary, of theatrical dialogue, makes him [the reader] impatient: the brief explanation projected on the illuminated screen, in letters half a metre high, fills his soul and spirit just right, no matter

how plebeian it may be in literary terms. (Zarifopol, 1971: 327, my translation)

Zarifopol compared film to theatre, considering that film was the pure realization of theatre, both through the intelligence with which it was conceived and the ingenious way in which it was staged: 'It is pure theatre. A maximum of intelligence and imagination, in the service of stage representation' (Zarifopol, 1988: 102, my translation). Films not only contributed to mark an important step in the technology of the era, but also restored social harmony within it, providing balance: 'It is obvious that the purest and most solid social and international harmony was achieved by cinema' (Zarifopol, 1971: 325, my translation).

CONCLUSIONS

If the discourse networks of the 1800s represented a first step in the development of language and technology, the discourse networks of the 1900s brought about a new paradigm. Media technologies began to be increasingly integrated into everyday life, leading to the emergence of a new stage in the development of the era: 'The paradigms of media used in positivistic literary history were widened to include film, radio, and record' (Schanze, 1977: 133, my translation). All this would lead to the emergence of a new art form, in which writers would have complete freedom. Apollinaire discussed this aspect, raising the possibility that, in the future, the only forms of publication would be those based on technology, portraying the image of a new art form that would spread:

> It would have been strange if in an epoch when the popular art par excellence, the cinema, is a book of pictures, poets had not tried to compose pictures for meditative and refined minds that are not content with the crude imaginings of the makers of films.

These last will become more perceptive, and one can predict the day when, the photograph and the cinema having become the only form of publication in use, the poet will have a freedom heretofore unknown. One should not be astonished if, with the means they now have at their disposal, poets set themselves to preparing this new art. (Apollinaire 1972: 228).

Kittler supports Apollinaire's point of view. In addition to phonograph and film technology, there would also be the typewriter, which, according to McLuhan, brought about 'an entirely new attitude to the written and printed word' (McLuhan, 1964: 260).

Kittler and Zarifopol also supported this idea, identifying a major change in society with the development of discourse network technologies. The change took place not only at the social level, but also at the level of people's mentality. Even if the new discourse networks were perceived with caution by people at first, they became, over time, fundamental means of communication. Classic discourse networks were gradually replaced by the new ones, which proved to be more efficient in terms of use. They were later introduced in schools, leading to greater achievements in what concerns the learning process of students. The development of discourse networks marked the beginning of a new era, where information became more accessible. The attribute of accessibility was later complemented by that of rapidity, contributing significantly to the propagation and dissemination of information. Even though it was not a widely discussed topic of that time, discourse networks marked the beginning of a new technological era, in which people had their first interactions with intelligent machines.

In their writings, Kittler and Zarifopol analysed thoroughly the discourse networks. The close attention they paid to discourse networks became more apparent with a deep dive into their literary works. Moreover, through a retrospective

lens, one can become aware of the common ground their works share. It is not a mere interest in discourse networks that brings Kittler and Zarifopol together, but also an almost mirrored view of their perspectives. Kittler and Zarifopol provided valid arguments, which in turn had only made their emphasis on the impact of discourse networks all the more reasonable. For example, both Kittler and Zarifopol perceived discourse networks as a fundamental component in the evolution of society and even provided a blueprint in understanding discourse networks and the way the development of their era was impacted by them. Even though both provided these highlights by giving examples from the media literature, their writings do have their own particularities. The temporal distance is apparent, even if the outlines of the understanding of discourse networks were more or less the same. Still, the distinctions are not intended to put Kittler and Zarifopol in antinomy, but rather to highlight a complementary understanding. Kittler emphasised how the discourse networks were influenced by the ever-growing development of media technologies, while Zarifopol was more interested in a humanistic understanding that sought to grasp how exactly the discourse networks were impacting people of his time. To this humanistic approach, Zarifopol added a hint of scepticism, for he commented on the potential threat these new technologies provided, should they be used in less than wise ways.

Overall, their interest in the discourse networks sets Kittler and Zarifopol in the position of leading figures on the matter. The two thinkers shared many intertwining ideas, even if their foundations were different. In this case, culture represented a decisive factor in the way they distinguished from one another. Their studies aim to explain discourse networks and how they had spread upon their nations, which already implies a difference in perceiving. Despite these shifts, they both sought out to give a clear understanding of discourse networks. It is in this understanding that

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they provided the outline for how one could rebuild the path of media technologies that interfered with discourse practices. Kittler and Zarifopol observed how discourse networks had been shaped from their classical form, namely writing and reading, to a modern form, one which emphasised the transition within media technologies that rethought the way we communicate. Thus, discourse networks have become an integral part of everyday life.

The echoes of the two thinkers still resonate nowadays, reflecting their relevance in the present too, especially since both anticipated the complex development of discourse networks. Over time, these have become increasingly advanced technologies, changing the way we perceive the world. Discourse networks are now at their peak in the era of technology, spreading with an astonishing speed and, at the same time, discovering newer and newer forms.

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