FOCUS I

THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES, TERMS, AND DEFINITIONS

IMAGOLOGY AS IMAGE GEOLOGY

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In his book *Įsivaizduojamybė* [The Imaginary] (2013), the Lithuanian philosopher Kristupas Sabolius offers a Middle Eastern folk tale about the thirteenth-century wise man Nasreddin, in which a rich man passes away and leaves a will bequeathing his wealth, including seventeen camels, to his three sons. The will states that the eldest son would own half of the seventeen camels, the middle one would get a third, and the youngest would get his share of the camels as one-ninth. The sons are stunned and unable to execute their father's will, as the wealth cannot be divided into equal parts unless they chop one camel in half. They therefore go to the wise man Nasreddin for advice. Nasreddin adds one camel of his own so that the total number of camels equals eighteen. He then divides them as per the deceased father's will: the eldest son is given nine camels—that is, one half—the middle son receives a third, or six camels, and the youngest is left with a ninth part—two camels. When added up, nine, six, and two make seventeen. The one camel added by Nasreddin is taken back (Sabolius 2013, 17). It is that one camel that is the potential of imagology—the (discursive) truth that simultaneously exists and does not exist. The phenomenon of the synergy of existing and non-existing immediately implicates the terminology of an unauthentic simulated relationship—opinion, anticipation, expectation, preconception, speculation, generalization, and the like—which conveys the dependence of the national character on people's attitude. However, imagology also involves concentrated collective codes and models defining such underlying structures of a nation's solidarity as myths or symbols. The functioning of all these images of a virtual nature, and their archetypal accumulations in the imagological context, resemble Nasreddin's eighteenth camel: they do not succumb to the unambiguous logic of being or non-being.

As indicated by the notional component *imago*, imagology focuses on the complicated relationship between reality and imagination, between the image and its projection, and merges the spheres of perception and reality. In the cultural field, the concept of imagology functions with an ambivalent meaning: first, as an academic model of culture, and second as

a common contemporary tool of power and a principle of manipulation in the consumer society. In both instances, imagology is a mental arena of the construction and re/deconstruction of ethnic, national, racial, and cultural images. Literary imagology, or "image studies," entered the field of vision of methodological dispersion after the Second World War and with varying degrees of intensity has been functioning on the European methodological map for almost fifty years. In recent decades, the concept of traditional imagology has undergone significant transformation. Its development and relevance are obvious in both the latest works of theorists and practitioners and the conferences organized to discuss the strategies, practices, and continuation of the method.[1] Since 1992, the publishers Rodopi in Amsterdam have been publishing a methodologically oriented series of academic research called *Studia Imagologica*. Over twenty works have already appeared that lend imagology a new interdisciplinary and transcultural (translocal) perspective. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey* (2007)—a programmatic work in imagology and a critical-analytical compendium of national, cultural, and ethnic images and stereotypes of different nations dedicated to the conceptual "father" of imagology, Hugo Dyserinck—is an important landmark pointing to a renewed interest in this field of comparative literary studies in the twenty-first century.

So far, literary scholarship in the Baltic countries has approached national images without a conceptual reference to imagology; that is, as individual literary motifs, as reputations of nations contrasted on the basis of the comparative principle, and as universal wandering plots. Modern imagology gives an impulse to expanding intercultural analysis by taking a literary scholar to the transcultural space of image taxonomy. Imagology makes it possible to discern deeper and differently from other research

[1] For example: "Imagology and Cross-cultural Encounters in History" (Finland, Oulu, 2007); "Imagological Aspect of Modern Comparative Literature: Strategies and Paradigms" (Ukraine, Kyiv, 2009); "Imagology Today: Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives" (Croatia, Zagreb, 2009); "Translation and National Images" (The Netherlands, Amsterdam, 2011); "History as a Foreign Country: Historical Imagery in South-Eastern Europe" (Croatia, Zadar and Nin, 2012); "Cultural Identity and Alterity in Time. International conference on Imagology" (Romania, Miercurea-Ciuc, 2013); "Imagology Profiles: The Dynamics of National Imagery in Literature" (Lithuania, Vilnius, 2015); and "Imagology and Comparative Studies: About the Images of Otherness in the Culture of Central and Eastern Europe" (Poland, Poznan, 2016), "New Perspectives on Imagology" (Austria, Vienna, 2018).

methods employed by literary historians to analyse the potential of images. This is because imagology prioritizes the perspective of another nation and brings self-identification (you are what you identify with) to the foreground; it allows for a closer look at the impact of stereotypical perceptions on our national imagination.

The aim of this article is to position the method in the field of other disciplines of literary theory and analysis, to critically discuss the essential theoretical approaches of literary imagology, to introduce its underlying concepts (self-image, hetero-image, stereotype), and to outline the imagological parameters of the representative context of the Baltic countries by identifying its specific aspects.

Defining Imagology by Location

When attempting to localize imagology in the coordinate system of other methods, references are made to comparative literature as "the disciplinary homeland of imagology" (Blažević 2014, 355). The contemporary liberal academic atmosphere, which supports multiplicity and the crossing of methods, was favourable to the interdisciplinary starting positions of imagology that took shape in a broader field of other disciplines. Having crystallized as a triad of three disciplines—psychology, literature, and history—addressing issues close to anthropology and social sciences, interdisciplinary comparative imagology [2] marked a qualitatively new methodological format of the discipline of comparative literary studies. Traditional comparative literary studies examined national and ethnic images and stereotypes in isolation (nation X in the literature, folklore tradition, or historiography of nation Y). The modern strain of the method engages itself in embracing the whole imagery of a certain culture or artificially shaped political formation (e.g. the European Union) during a defined period of time in recording its shifts and the historical variability of representations. Imagology made its way to a beneficial meta-theoretical soil because imagination as a principle of conceptual perception of the

[2] In this paper the term "literary imagology" is used in the sense applied by the representatives of the Aachen school of imagology—Hugo Dyserinck, Manfred Beller, Joep Leerssen, and others. The French school of imagology (Jean-Marc Moura, Daniel-Henri Pageaux) associates imagology not so much with the trend of contextual as with textual analysis (semiology, narratology, semiotics, phenomenological hermeneutics). Pageaux even went so far as to try to elevate imagology to the poetic level.

world through images, texts, and discourses has recently pervaded ever more varied branches of scholarship.[3]

Imagology is not a methodology oriented towards the nation state; it perceives a nation as a territorially undefined formation of the imagination where the national character is treated as a totality of images connected by contextual and intertextual associations. Consequently, imagology questions deterministic national essentialism by rejecting the existence of a nation as an individual exceptional unit (Leerssen 2007, 379). From the imagological point of view, all nations perceive one another differently, and therefore an endless network of mutual representations and reflections comes into being. An image is the result of this networking.

The rise of literary imagology coincided with the weakening of the power of the nation state and a turn from ethnocentrism to post-nationalism declared in the academic environment. Imagology shares its intellectual genealogy with Edward W. Said's "imaginary geographies" (1977), which are defined not as a territorial but a constructional unit and are the foundation of the concept of Orientalism. In the model of Orientalism, imagining functions as a power tool for subordinating the Orient by attributing preconceived pejorative meanings to it, and by emphasizing the patronising relation of the West with regards to the East. Said recorded how the Europeans stereotypically describe the Orient as exotic and barbaric in order to gain an advantage over it, while the Orient has internalized this attitude and accepted it as a negative self-image. Incidentally, in addition to other conceptual flaws,[4] imagology has attracted criticism due to its exaggerated Eurocentrism (Perner 2013, 32) and adoration of Europe as a coherent unity.

The component of imagination in imagology and Benedict Andersen's classic model of "imagined communities" (1981) features not only linguistic but also etymological-conceptual coincidence. Both these theoretical paradigms are united by the similarity of the relationship between imagination and reality. The incursions of imagological research into the imagined reputation of a nation are based on the analogous idea

[3] A mutual correlation can be traced between, for example, the "imaginary homelands" of the classic postcolonial writer Salman Rushdie, the "imagined cartographies" of Donald Leech, and the "imaginäre Topographie" of the German literary and cultural scholar Sigrid Weigel.

[4] During its lifetime, imagology has been accused of having a too-broad field of research, a simplified attitude to other nations, a static approach, immunity to globalization and a constructivist turn in the humanities, an inadequate package of analytical tools, and, in general, being a deficient concept when compared with other disciplines of literary analysis, in particular postcolonial studies.

that ethnic communities are not homogeneous and geographically defined concentrations of people, but discursive practices and projections existing in the collective consciousness. Speaking of the fictional aspect of imagology, Hugo Dyserinck appeals to Karl Propp's World 3, which consists of the abstract output of the mind (myths, histories, models, networks) (Dyserinck 2003). Imagined communities are not assumed or made-up nations, but this imagination-driven energy of the mind that ensures communion with people who you might never meet is a condition for their existence. For this reason, imagology, like the imagined communities, is a peculiar medium between reality and the imaginary.

Based on the priority of the principle of imagination, the field of vision of imagology encompasses utopias as imagination-produced projects of the ideal society or an unfeasible social order. However, unlike realistically existing "imagined" communities, these communities are artificially designed, made up, and "imaginary," although their prototypes can be existing society models with recognized cultural meanings. In such cases, literary utopias function as satires or allegories that not so much create the model of an ideal society as criticize the existing social order.

The discussion mostly concerns the status of imagology and postcolonialism as adjacent or even related disciplines. Some theorists consider imagology as a variety of postcolonialism from the Old Continent as a "dominantly European and less assertive older sister of postcolonial studies" (Dukić 2012a, 15), while others claim that the self-awareness of the twins is overrated (Perner 2013; Blažević 2014). Without seeking to reduce both theoretical paradigms to a common denominator as organic synthesis, we must admit that although they emerged in different continents—yet parallel to each other—both methods are politically oriented and related from the point of view of identity differences and interruptions, the cultural debate about Self and Other, and power relations. It is nonetheless obvious that by declaring transcendental national boundaries (the so-called "supranational standpoint") and maintaining the view that culture as a totality of micro-universes is more homogeneous, differently from the postcolonialists who raise the issue of the juncture of creolism and hybridization, imagology is engaged to be ideologically more moderate and more ethical than postcolonialism (Perner 2013, 32; Blažević 2014, 356). We could add another essential difference: having emerged as a strategy for deconstructing the culture of colonial empires, postcolonialism is based on binary logic and is oriented towards the study of the bilateral relationship between the dominated and the dominant. Meanwhile, imagology proposes multidirectional research into the interactions of the images of various nations.

A Repository of Images

The central term of imagology and the smallest unit of imagological analysis, the image, is used in imagology in the meaning of imagining and perception, as a mental image of Self or Other. Various prefabricated images generalizing (exaggerating or simplifying) certain aspects of national belonging—cliché, prejudice, stereotype—function in the theory of imagology. These concentrated images of illusionary nature are like ready-made mental items that fill our thinking, providing a framework or at least guidelines to our identity or to the perception of the Other. Imagologists should view these fixed representative models as their working analytical material, neutrally and without negative bias: "There is no escaping from stereotypes and rather than fight them, we should treat them as a cognitive material in imagological thinking" (Dąbrowski 2011, 97).

The adepts of theoretical imagology understand the image as a discursive representation of Other (hetero-images) or Self (auto-images, self-images) in literature. Imagologists are the geologist explorers of national/ethnic images who weave the tapestry of collective images characterized by inherent ambivalence where the Self is the warp and the Other is the weft. This bilateral dynamism between hetero-images and the self-image immediately offers two anthropological viewpoints to the scholar: the spected and the spectant, although, paradoxically, the imagological image tells us more about the preconceived notions and assumptions of the spectant rather than the target group of the spected (Chew 2006, 182; Perner 2013, 31). Each national identity is basically an ethnocentric repository of characteristic images, which from the imagological point of view is non-finite and virtual because it can be decentred in a juncture with other national identities. Imagology highlights the relativity of national imagery, its direct dependence on the image of the nation created by the people of that particular nation, the perspective of other nations, and previously written texts which serve the authors as a (un)conscious stepping stone in constructing or deconstructing certain images.

There have been attempts to nuance the polarized notion of the auto-image and the hetero-image by introducing the notion of the meta-image, which the Other has with regard to my nation (Millas 2001; 2006; Leerssen 2007, 334), also by focusing attention on the specific situation of the (non)belonging of the emigrants:

> There is another distinction that has to be made when discussing ethnic images in fiction. The imagologists' classification of images into just two groups is incomplete. The authors ignore the points of view of exiles, i.e.

> the images of immigrants, who are initially outsiders in a community, but get partially integrated, and the images of the emigrants, who were once insiders, but have more or less lost contact with their native community. We shall call the former infra-images and include them within self-images, the latter alo-images and include them within hetero-images. These points of view combine involvement with detachment and adapt the images of otherness to suit self-images. (Brinzeu 2000, 19)

For rethinking the image in the global cultural environment from the perspective of "transcultural imagology" and "global challenge" (Blažević 2014, 356), imagology offers a conceptual transition from the studies of national identity to those of national difference and national diversity. The mindset of the modern subject is of high (ambi)valence since it is dominated not by indicators of pure origin and frequently not even by the regime of hybrid images, but by eclecticism of identities and/or a void caused by the inability to choose suitable identification. Imagology tracks the imaginary nature of not only emigrational but also contemporary identity, as well as reconfigurations and (trans)formations of contemporary identity; however, it lacks respective terminology that would appropriately respond to these challenges. Let us say that such established oppositions of binary thinking as Self/Other or local/foreign can have in-between variants of identity-turned-other, when what is alien is attempted to be made one's own, to penetrate what is unknown, to integrate alien elements (for instance, "one's own other" or "self-in-and-through-others"). The feeling of emotional attachment and of belonging to a certain community, which was the basic condition for the existence of "imaginary communities," can be replaced by feelings of partial belonging or imagined non-belonging (for example, the declared demeanour of the citizen of the world). Still, by rejecting canonical images, what is "dissociated from" often emerges as the counter image (Leerssen 2007, 343).

The image in imagology is understood not as an individual element but one associated with group identity, as a symbolical foundation of collectivism that conveys the ideological and cultural programme of a group of individuals. As a rule, a whole set of preconceived representations involved in the creation of the meaning of a society or the national character of a nation is examined. Contemporary imagology focuses not on actual images but their imagined context and structural ties with other images of the same culture; that is, on cultural imagery. Cultural imagery is perceived as a group of images, attributed to a certain culture at a certain time, which makes up the symbolical foundation of national identification. Although images evolve and change diachronically, they are usually analysed and reconstructed synchronically

by performing a cross section of some specific and conditionally static period in literature. When literature contains some unique national information, the imagologist must be prepared to examine the deep mechanism of its expression rather than just the surface of the literary image:

> Image is only the tip of the iceberg. When facing foreign images, one needs to carefully examine the historical and cultural factors that constrain image variations. (Cao 2013, 188)

Yet I would suggest not underrating the significance of the individual image (stereotype) in the process of meaning creation and including it in the imagological amplitude as the smallest analytical category of imagological analysis. The extensive quantitative examination of images (imagery) can be more representative, but a vertical deep analysis can be no less productive at the level of the individual image because a representation of one member of some nation can lead to the reconsideration of a foreigner-formed canonical vision of a whole country: to rehabilitate its image or compromise it. Attention should be paid to the close correlation between the individual and collective image, between "our" and "mine," each of which can function as a substitute of the other. The individual image can reflect the attitude of a whole social group with which the author/narrator/character identifies, while the characteristic (in particular negative) addressed to his or her nation can be accepted in a very sensitive and emotional manner as a personally attributed quality. The analysis of personal identities is highly interesting when the national character finds expression through one individual as an information carrier functioning as the agent or mirror of the whole nation. I discern a challenge to imagology as a group examination of national and ethnic images due to the fact that in our times each individual maintains personal control over reality, and is engaged in self-creation and image engineering: individuals fashion themselves by espousing the respective fictional features of "I," including markers of national/ethnic identification. As people identify less and less with their nation and national myths, other supranational identities, such as class or profession, take hold (Florida 2012).

Imagology between Fact and Fiction

The most complicated contradiction in literary imagology, which has triggered a number of discussions in the method's development stage and has not yet been entirely resolved, is the relation between objective (living) reality and literary depiction; in other words, the theoretical

dilemma of whether the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) can be recognized in literature, or whether the quest for it is a methodologically erroneous step. The answer is both "yes" and "no" if we speculate according to the logic of Nasreddin's camel. It has become a methodological axiom that a nation's imagological "emblems"—certain assumptions, images, or stereotypes prevailing in the literature of a given period—are perceived as imagined. In the terminology of Jean-Marie Carré, one of the pioneers of imagology, these are mirages rather than factual—sociological, anthropological, or historical—data. Many paradigms critical of imagology (starting from the famous opposition of Carré and René Wellek) refer to the danger of assimilating reality with literary representations produced by the writers' imagination.

Imagology does not accept that original content and primary unmodified truth are hidden on the reverse side of an image because the national character as such is perceived as an imagined construct that is impossible to distinguish: singling it out is considered a symptom of national essentialism and determinism (Dyserinck 1982, 36–7). Following the established tradition, the leading contemporary Dutch imagologist Joep Leerssen claims that only the literary text as such can be the imagologist's research object, dissociated from any ambition to relate a writer's interpretations found in the text with identity traits that actually circulate in a nation. He expands on his arguments and draws a demarcation between the imagined national stereotyping and the factual message, and suggests the following generalizing example:

> (1) "Spaniards are proud" as an easily recognisable stereotype
> (2) "Spaniards are mortal" as a simple fact. (2007, 284)

Such arguments resemble reasoning of a rhetoric or scholastic nature because, first of all, mortality is not a national or ethnic quality reserved for Spaniards alone, and therefore it is not accurate to choose it as an analogy; also, some religions believe in the immortality of the soul, for which reason the second statement is also more imagological in nature than factual.

One can understand imagologists striving to dissociate themselves at any cost from compromising accusations to the effect that imagology departs too far from the discipline of literature and is just a masked history of culture, social psychology, or ethno-psychology. However, the ambitions of interdisciplinary imagology that were previously seen as a limitation and a danger to the method's literary origin and mission can now be seen as its advantage and strength. It seems that the demonization of historical or social reality in the text arises from methodological self-

defence. This possibly explains why Leerssen was extremely sceptical with regards to historical imagology: he emphasized that imagology examines only representations, the secondary literary (artistic) depiction, and not society as such or a nation's character, which led Dukić to conclude that "history does not possess, at least from the point of view of the Aachen School, the status of the sister discipline of imagology" (2012b, 120–1). In the imagological context, there was a suggestion to use the term "representation" instead of "mentality" due to the obscurity and vulnerability of the latter (Gorun 2007, 22).

I also discern a terminological discrepancy in the aspiration of imagologists to set themselves aside from the examination of social and political reality in the text. Questioning the reality of the literary image and suggesting it should be called a representation, they object, in terms of terminology, to the statement that:

> Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*. (Baudrillard 1995, 6)

According to the inadequacy of the image in literature declared by the imagologists, its projection should be called a simulation rather than a representation. Leaving aside the ambition to directly identify an artistic work with reality and treat it as a form of reality dubbing, we still argue that the fact that imagology perceives the image purely as a discursive product does not methodologically contradict the imagologist's aspiration to try to grasp the reflection of "reality" in literature, even if admitting it possesses the utopian character pointed out by Baudrillard.

By combining different contextual analysis approaches (social-historical, ethno-psychological, and cultural-political), this method could become more effective and more universally applicable. It is important to remember that imagology assumes a political mission to deconstruct nationalist reasoning and thus combats nationalism in literature and seeks a better mutual understanding between nations (Dukić 2012b, 118). In cross-cultural diaspora studies, migration studies, transnational studies, and globalization studies, this provision contains prospects for imagology in shattering stereotypes that set nations against one another, and searching for bridges of mutual understanding. Against the background of intensified regional conflicts and global terrorism, imagology as a socially engaged methodology is assigned an exclusive position in the network of methods:

"If ever a scholarly field had direct relevance to contemporary social issues, it must certainly be imagology" (Chew 2006, 180).

There can be no doubt that the sources of imagology are always subjective, yet it appears possible and feasible to identify the most characteristic traits of a nation from the abundance of textual and discursive data, so that subsequently, following the boomerang principle, these data could be channelled to social reality and used for the practical purpose of reducing ethnic and religious tensions. We would support Blažević, who makes an essential contribution to the development of imagology by provoking the established notion of the image and proposing an extensive elaboration on the theory of imagology: "a wider definition of image, which might be conceived as an interferential configuration of mental images, textual and non-textual representations and practice patterns constituted within a particular socio-historical context" (Blažević 2014, 361).

Of particular importance in the present discussion is the fact that literature is a bidirectional medium that contextualizes and programmes our thinking at the same time. On the one hand, textual representations actualize reality; on the other, writers themselves can be considered architects of reality because by establishing images they contribute to the construction of reality, and "people are formed by what they read" (Spiering 1992, ix) This raises the issue of the representativeness of a literary work for imagological research: *fictional* works intentionally create a different alternative existence; therefore, as an aestheticized margin of error of reality, they do not possess enough imagological potential. The field of the imagologist's activity consists of marginal (faction) genres such as the historical novel, ego-documentary genres like (auto)biography, epistolary genre, diaries, or *pseudofactual* genres such as travelogues, history textbooks, and the like, in which representative material for the examination of the stereotypical structure and a nation's changing self-image can be found. In addition, literary imagology finds itself between the poles of national individuality and universality: between the intensifying global centripetal trends of nationalism and particularism that acquire extreme literary expressions (dialectal writing, literary regionalism) at one end, and at the other the wearing-off geographical, linguistic, and national boundaries with multiplying literary texts void of specific national markers and dissociating from the particular culture in which an image was born. Such texts, although more universal and better understood against the background of cultural expectations of foreigners, supply the imagologist scholar with less material. The supranational term "global literature" as a global literary field also postulates universality

over national distinction and traditions. The "Euro-novel"—the meta-national idea that was born and established itself as a product of European integration and cultural levelling—functions along the lines of a similar principle.

In the twenty-first century, the range of theoretical contacts of imagology has been broadening and now encompasses journalistic writing, research into traditional and contemporary folklore, political rhetoric, managerial discourses, the informal culture of daily life (ethnic jokes), and the like. Sources are becoming more intermedial, bordering on visual imageries: films (historical, political, and geographical documentaries), modern media genres, caricature, and advertising. The importance of imagology in translation studies has been acknowledged, and research is being conducted on the role of the translator as a mediator, the transfer of the national through translation, and image-building and image modifications in translation (Hung 2005; Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen 2016). This kind of research actualizes the complex issue of reception: images may be not only inadequately written down but also subjectively read, and their primary meaning might be lost in the process of translation and reproduction.

Imagology as a Principle of World Construction

Literature can function in a manner similar to that of a modern newspaper or social networks, which do not *recreate* an event, but rather *create* it (instead of simply reporting it). A typical example would be Umberto Eco's novel-satire *Numero zero* about a non-existing newspaper, *Tomorrow*, which is invented to demonstrate how disinformation can be spread, and how news is constructed not to inform but to form an opinion even if there is no factual basis whatsoever. Imagology can operate as a power-relation-based algorithm of programming, disciplining, or machination (such as jokes about other nations created on the basis of extreme stereotypes and political agitation, and extreme forms of such a relation would be political propaganda and ideological censorship). In this way, imagology opens the perspective of additional existence that is, at the same time, a provocation of existence.

The Czech writer and dissident Milan Kundera was the first to introduce the neologism "imagology" to fiction in his 1990 novel *Immortality*, and used it to define a new systemic contemporary phenomenon. He revealed the ideological transition from political ideology to imagology, a new tool for the power and mass media of contemporary consumerist societies, which is a dictate of image building,

fashion, and advertising, a production of public relations, and a creation of pseudo-mythology. In the epoch of popular culture, the primary picture and autonomous reality lose their meaning in general: they are pushed out by representation and the construed facade image. In the modern world, it is not the essence but its attribute, the external shell, and not existence but the appearance that replaces it, that become important:

> Philosophers can tell us that it doesn't matter what the world thinks of us, that nothing matters but what we really are. But philosophers don't understand anything. As long as we live with other people, we are only what other people consider us to be. (Kundera 1991, 142)

This idea echoes the thesis proposed by literary imagologists, to the effect that in contemporary multicultural society it is no longer identity but identification that matters; or, in other words, not what you are, but what you choose to identify with (Leerssen 2007, 27). It is just a function, a fabricated mask designed not only by the environment and invisible professionals (mass media, camera lenses, and camcorders) but also by the efforts of the individual. Although trivial and changing, the imagologists' systems are also powerful in their great challenges to stealthily penetrate and overwhelm the individual's consciousness:

> Imagologues create systems of ideals and anti-ideals, systems of short duration which are quickly replaced by other systems but which influence our behaviour, our political opinions and aesthetic tastes, the colour of carpets and the selection of books just as in the past we have been ruled by the systems of ideologues. (Kundera 1991, 130)

In the epoch of the media, which can also be called "the era of imagology," the principle of reality is questioned in general. Nearly all daily life falls into the imagologists' sphere of power and is subjected to their logic of reality-building. Therefore, the simultaneous existence and non-existence of Nasreddin's camel, constant dialectics of the authentic versus the inauthentic, represent a symptomatic contemporary condition which can also be considered the capital and driving force of literary imagology as a research method. In such a system, it is important to foresee the possibilities of all conceivable relations and causalities and to perceive the phenomenon of double dependency as the power of imagology.

I therefore suggest a rethinking of the imagological approach stating that literature should be researched separately from reality, and complementing it with the effect of Nasreddin's camel. In other words, I

propose merging the strengths of Kundera's social imagology as the doctrine of an imitation surrogate worldview and literary imagology as a method of literary scholarship.

Imagology in Eastern and Central Europe

As a method of literary analysis, comparative imagology arose and was institutionalized in the academic centres of "the first world," but in the twenty-first century it entered the field of vision of the cultures belonging to the "second" cluster of European literature—the Balkan and the Baltic countries, eastern Slavs, and the like. The collection of papers *The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture* (2009) addressed the identification models of contemporary supranational Europe and actualized the complicated notion of common European identity, yet it must be admitted that the imagological (ideological) juxtaposition of "Western Europe" and "Eastern and Central Europe" still exists in contemporary Europe. The post-Soviet/post-socialist nature of the latter lies at the base of this division. Any empire or union demands collective solidarity and creates myths of territorial and national unity, whereas liberated states seek to demythologize them by redistributing resources of power and by rehabilitating national images. When the Baltic countries, which recovered their independence in 1990, went through the stage of developing and substantializing their nations—thus demonstrating that national sentiment can be more powerful than ideologies, imagology, keeping pace with the humanitarian fashions of the time—this was the declaration of an epistemological turn away from ethnocentrism. One might claim that the downgrading of nationalism is more prominent in the countries of the "first world" than in post-communist cultures, or, in the words of the Russian critic Leonid Bachnov, in "Europe B" (2015, 525). Constantly coerced, the nations of Europe B have not yet had enough time to outline their cultural boundaries while they are being thrown into the supranational European "melting pot."

On the map of nations drawn by the most influential literary imagologists (*Imagology* 2007), in which each nation is introduced as a case study, the Baltic region and the national character are totally unrepresented, although the nations of Central Europe (Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians), the Eastern Europeans (Poles and Russians), the Scandinavians (Fins, Swedes), and others are represented by separate chapters defining different ethnic groups and proposing the historical outlines of their development. One might presume that the failure to include the Baltic

countries in the general list implies that they are attributed to the grand narrative of the USSR: they are denied a sovereign history, a distinctive cultural substrate, or an individual national character. We would like to hope that by doing this imagologists are not questioning the very fact of the independence of the Baltic countries, but are questioning their content and importance (by attributing a status which the postcolonialists would call "marginal"). Therefore, just like the non-existing existence of Nasreddin's camel, they are stereotypically seen as passive, small actors in a bigger game and the mainstream debate. Neither the spread of information technologies, nor changed political circumstances (the Soviet Union that collapsed twenty-six years ago), nor the universal processes of globalization were capable of eliminating this enduring habit of mapping the Baltic nations in the Soviet space, with the accompanying "package" of images: "Lithuania = Russia. I receive the imaginary identification card: cold and vodka (only the bear is missing)" (Grainytė 2012, 68). Such territorial allusions and ideological "reading" of the national character automatically play the role of social labelling. In the official political field of European memory and the hierarchy of values of a Western European that is metaphorically defined as "between the West and the rest," the Baltic countries are assigned the generalizing status of *homo sovieticus* and the ethnicity of an Eastern European; they are not differentiated and seen as a whole united by a set of identity qualities common to other Eastern European—post-socialist and post-Soviet—countries. The stereotype of the Eastern European is a deep-rooted issue in the division between Western and Eastern Europe. Just as in Said's model of Orientalism, Western Europeans mostly attribute negative images to "the rest," and these negative images generate negative self-characterizations and deepen the crisis of self-perception.[5] In order to refute these arguments of the normative Western discourse, the countries of the Baltic region enter the struggle of narratives for their self-definition[6] and the inclusion of their independent histories in the culture of European memory, and attempt to define their identification as a result of the confrontation of East/West

[5] Following the analogy with Said's Orientalism, such deprecating terms as Balcanism or Balcanization have established themselves in the academia of the Balkan countries. Maria Todorova revises them in her book *Imaginary Balkans* (2006).

[6] On January 6, 2017, the ambassadors of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to Germany drafted a joint address in response to a publication in the German news portal *Zeit Online* in which the Baltic countries are called "successors of the statehood of the USSR." The ambassadors pointed out that neither in legal nor political terms can the Baltic countries be referred to as former Soviet republics.

identities. Seeking the disappearance of national identities by employing the supranational principle in the construction of the Soviet person, the communist regime achieved partial success only on the level of the hetero-image, because the surviving Baltic nations proved their "unmeltable ethnics," paraphrasing the title of the famous book by Michael Novak.

Imagologists perceive a nation as a construct affected by sociocultural and geopolitical circumstances, or, in Leerssen's words, as a group of individuals that is inter-subjectively associated by common self-identification caused by a common feeling of cultural and historical continuity (2007, 379). At this point, I would like to pose a problematic question: how long should this "common" historical and cultural continuity last in order to qualify as a sufficient base for cultural and psycho-social identification? Where should the Baltic countries position themselves when their history is more affected by interruptions than by continuity? Culturally-performative literatures of the Baltic region could be an excellent source for imagological studies because historically they were forced on numerous occasions to recreate their identities when they first faced various outbreaks of power, and later the ghosts of historical memory. They experienced the influence of Germans (Latvians and Estonians) and Poles (Lithuanians); from 1918 to 1940 they created nation states; they experienced half a century of sovietization, which fundamentally affected the mechanisms of their world outlook, behaviour, morals, habits, and psychological responses; they re-established their independent states in 1990; and, finally, in 2004 they joined the European Union and accepted the European element as an important extension of their nationality. This historical synopsis shows that the constantly shifting position of the "centre" has layered the identity structure and brought about flexible boundaries of national/ethnic images. Although the Baltic countries have spent much effort in dissociating themselves from the legacy of their past (in particular, the Soviet past), they still cannot prove their Western qualifications, either to themselves or to the West. The Latvian sociologist Mārtiņš Kaprāns observes that "the Latvian émigrés played an important role in the process of creation of myths and collective images, because living with an uninterrupted consciousness of the Latvian statehood they hardened a fundamental anti-Soviet ethos" (2014, 43). In this complicated schema of identities, it would appear to be more effective to highlight strengths and idiosyncrasies and to reveal the alternative potential of the imageme[7] lying in the deep cultural layers that could

[7] Imagemes are ambivalent and polar images defining a national character. According to Leerssen, the deep semantic structure of the imageme hides a binary opposition determined by the ambivalence of values—the Janus-faced ambivalence.

become a new impetus for identifying and self-identification, rather than attempting to prove the Western character of the Baltic countries or contrast them with Western Europe, because that would establish even more strongly the stereotypical polarization of Eastern/Western Europe. In my opinion, the most productive way forward would be to examine what the "small" literatures of the Baltic countries say about their glorious past encoded in historical and mythical memory, to actualize the ethnic substrate of the Baltic countries, and to demythologize the hetero-images of these countries constructed by the Other. This would help in shaking off the inferiority complexes that are fed by historically evolved serf ideology and traditional comparison with the large actants. Or, as Jordan Ljuckanov suggests, to examine pairs of small literatures by comparing them as "a 'cross-marginal territoriality,' instead of the a-territoriality of universalist comparative literature and the one-side-of-the margin territoriality of, for example, Balkan studies" (2014, 296). Presumably, a comparison with the paradigmatic experiences of other communist countries (e.g. Cuba) would highlight not only the distinction of Eastern and Central European countries and their positive identity, but would also enable the identification of specific phenomena such as "Soviet globalization." And last but not least, one of the main tasks of Eastern European imagologists should be producing knowledge about themselves, which would help small nations to enhance their visibility, to engage Nasreddin's camel (e.g. the Baltic countries) as former participants in the division of the USSR who nonetheless recovered their integrity and exist in reality.

Conclusions

At present, imagology is a promising field in that it addresses not isolated images but their relationships and associative links with other images, the chronological boundaries of image dispersion, and the shifts of the content elements. Yet it is claimed that, at times, the method lacks methodological flexibility and a prompt response to the social changes of the world, which explains why this paper proposes several revisions of imagology or possibilities for its expansion:

(1) With the diversity of circulating identities growing on both macro (European, cosmopolitan) and micro (local, regional, ethnic, national) levels, and with the forms of their interaction becoming more complex, it

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One side of the face dominates a particular context while the other side remains as a potential that can be activated in an appropriate situation. Imagemes can consist of different, sometimes even opposite images (2007, 344).

is worth adding nuances to the unambiguous law of auto-image and hetero-image in imagological binarism as the instances of complicated (non)belonging are proliferating. If the method declares the supranational standpoint and sees culture as a dynamic process of interactions, terminologically it should not fall into the trap of dichotomy.

(2) The questioning of the epistemic dualism between reality and the text. In my view, neither the dichotomy of the text and reality, nor the lobotomy of reality in the text when a claim is made that literary accounts lack any factographic value, constitutes a correct strategy. I therefore propose recognition of their synergy and expansion of the boundaries of literary imagology as a discipline according to the principle of the relationship between reality and the imaginary that I attempted to actualize by resorting to the symbolism of Nasreddin's camel.

(3) A stronger accent on the mutual dependency of "our" and "mine," because an individual image can accumulate the characteristics of a whole nation, and the other way round—it can deconstruct reductionist stereotypes regarding a nation's group identity.

(4) Although the literature of the Baltic countries is useful material for imagological research, I suggest dissociation from the opposing East/West typology, and examination of the literatures of small nations by conceptualizing Eastern Europe not as a projection of Western Europe, but by the mutual pairing of different small literatures and challenging the idea of a weak and historically insignificant Eastern or Central European.

(5) It would be meaningful to employ the interdisciplinary nature of imagology not only as its immanent quality but also externally, by working in tandem with scholars of other disciplines (historians, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists) and by conducting collective research. This would facilitate the verification and substantialization of literary images, and the research outcomes would be used to improve intercultural communication on the social level.

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WIDER IMAGE: IMAGOLOGY AND THE POST-POSTSTRUCTURALIST CHALLENGE

ZRINKA BLAŽEVIĆ

Imagology: a Retrospective

Although the disciplinary history of imagology can be traced back to the 1960s when it was established as a subdiscipline within the academic field of comparative literature, it really gained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s (Moura 1992: 271–80). Since it was primarily focused on the critical and comparative examination of literary images as they portrayed foreign countries and peoples, as well as on ethnic and national prejudices and stereotypes in national literary canons, it came as no surprise that this renewed popularity coincided with the revival of national movements in southeastern Europe after the collapse of the communist regimes and the ensuing processes of European integration.

From 1967 until the beginning of the 1990s, the most famous centre for imagological research was the so-called Aachen School led by Professor Hugo Dyserinck, from which the most respectable contemporary imagologists such as Manfred S. Fischer, Karl Ulrich Syndram, and Joep Leerssen emerged. The Aachen imagological school defines imagology as the branch of comparative literature that critically examines hetero-images (images of others) and auto-images (images of the self) in fictional and non-fictional literary genres and film (Leerssen 2007, 27). The main epistemological premise of the Aachen School is that national images are not natural and objective phenomena, but discursive constructions. This means that it is not the cognitive and informational values of national images that are the focus of imagological research, but rather their literary genesis and the mechanisms for their discursive diffusion, modification, and fading. The Aachen imagological school defines its research approach as "supranational," which presupposes an objective and disinterested standpoint in the epistemological sense, and interlinguistic comparisons of images in various linguistic and literary cultures in the methodological

respect (Dyserinck 1982, 32). For these reasons, imagology was recognized early on as an important segment of European Studies promoting the better cultural understanding of European nations (Leerssen 2007, 25).

Since the 1990s, imagological research has spread from Germany and Benelux to the southern and eastern European academic fields where the imagological program of the Aachen School, combined with the more historically oriented French imagology represented by Daniel-Henri Pageaux and Jean-Marc Moura, has been promoted and practiced by numerous literary theoreticians and historians such as Enrique Banús Irusta (Spain), Manfred Beller and Paolo Proietti (Italy), Alexandru Duţu (Romania), István Fried (Hungary), Małgorzata Świderska (Poland), Pavao Sekeruš (Serbia), and Tone Smolej (Slovenia).

In this context, the Croatian imagological school emerged in the middle of the 2000s, spearheaded by the relentless efforts of Professor Davor Dukić, who launched a research project in 2008 named "Imagological Research of Croatian Literature from the 16th to the 19th centuries." Two conferences hosted by the project team were very successful in the academic promotion of imagology in Croatia: the first entitled "Imagology Today: Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives" held in September 2009, and the second, "History as a Foreign Country: Historical Imagery in South-Eastern Europe" held in March 2012. The main aim of the first conference was both to critically examine the history of imagological theory and research and discuss the possibilities of its (re)positioning in contemporary humanities and social sciences. On that account, three thematic complexes were proposed: (1) the disciplinarity of imagology (imagology and other disciplines/fields of research); (2) the methods of imagology; (3) the ideologies of imagology. Twenty-one participants from twelve countries, including the forefather of imagology Hugo Dyserinck, and the leading European imagologist Joep Leerssen, accepted the conference invitation. Their works, collected in the conference proceedings published in 2012 as a sequel to the famous edition *Aachener Beiträge zur Komparatistik* by the very distinguished publishing house Bouvier, constitute the best possible proof that imagology is still a vital and robust research paradigm with manifold cognitive, explanatory, and interpretative potentialities (Dukić 2012).

Encouraged by the results of the first conference, the project team prepared a second conference entitled "History as a Foreign Country: Historical Imagery in South-Eastern Europe," which was held in Zadar and Nin on March 22–24, 2012. Its aim was to explore, from the imagological viewpoint, the representational/inscenational aspects of history as temporal otherness in cultures of southeastern Europe. The

papers and discussions were focused on the following topics: (1) uses, functions, and meanings of historic imagery—the construction of identity and alterity, mnemonic structures and practices, and the (un)imaginability of trauma; (2) configurations of historic imagery—historic myths, symbols, processes of (de)heroisation, and *lieux de mémoire*; and (3) media and genres of the representation/inscenation of historic imagery. The conference volume, which comprises valuable theoretical reflections and interpretative case studies on historical imagery in southeastern literature, historiography, film, and performance, has recently been published by the Bouvier publishing house. It is to be hoped that the papers collected in this volume will raise awareness about not only the academic but also the social relevance of imagology as a most effective platform for critically encountering ethnic, national, religious, gender, and other stereotypes and prejudices in order to promote tolerance and sensibility with regards to cultural difference in the still seriously polarized southeastern European region (Blažević, Brković, and Dukić 2015).

Imagology: a Prospect

As a member of the abovementioned research project, I have tried during the past few years to develop a new research platform for imagology with the main purpose of widening its epistemological, theoretical, and methodological scope to make it more attuned to recent post-poststructuralist theories. In that manner, imagology would become better equipped to grapple with the profound epistemic challenges constantly emerging within the academic field.

First of all, the research platform proposed for the new post-poststructuralist imagology is focused more attentively on the relationship between the literary/visual/performative text and its sociocultural context, which I see as recursive. It follows that the text and its imagery both constitute, and are constituted by, the complex dynamics of the cultural field in general. This epistemological insight is predominantly indebted to the theory of structuration of Antony Giddens, who argues that "social activity, with respect to its structural properties, exists in and through the use of the resources which agents make in constituting their action which at the same time reconstitutes those structural properties as qualities of the system in question" (1993, 163). It presupposes a new definition of structure as no longer being considered a stable and coherent entity, but endowed with a dynamic and transformative character and the ability to propel the constant processes of re-significations or re-creations of semantic codes, which are constitutive components of social and cultural

systems. Therefore, from a praxeological standpoint, cultural categories are conceived as historically generated phenomena subjected to constant revaluation and resignification. Furthermore, this subsequently implies a new understanding of culture, which is seen as a dialectical play between system and practice, stability and instability, past and present, diachrony and synchrony (Spiegel 2005, 22).

Alongside the text/context relationship, a new post-poststructuralist imagology should necessarily reflect the problem of bodily experiences and material conditions of practice. As distinct from the classical Aachen School definition of image as a literary representation of national characters, I would conceptualize a key imagological concept—the image—as an interferential configuration of mental images, textual and non-textual representations, and practice patterns, which are constituted within a certain sociohistorical context. Seen from the perspective of the subtle dialectics of structure and agency or objectification and embodiment, an image could appear as a constitutive part both of collectively disposed cultural imagery and individual experience of the world (Blažević 2012, 105).

Accordingly, images may be understood not only as cognitive and perceptive products of the human brain or various kinds of visual representations, but also as formative elements of all cultural imaginaries, i.e. systems of signs and/or thoughts with ideological, axiological, and affective potentials (stereotypes, ideologies, myths, beliefs, worldviews, etc.) that represent imaginational possibilities of a culture in a certain period (Dukić 2009, 78). In that respect, imagology might draw fruitful research impulses from the rich tradition of the French *histoire des mentalités*, which explores continuities and changes of cognitive and emotional structures, systems of representation, and repositories of conscious and unconscious images in various historical periods (Burguière 2009, 30). On the other hand, the proposed definition of images as patterns of thinking, discourse, and practice implies a strong focus on the dynamic historical and performative aspects of images, since they are an important element of a historically determined human *Lebenswelt* and a vital factor of historical agency in general. Consequently, if we assume that images are semiotic in structure and disseminated through historically generated media communication systems that people employ and are embedded in, every theoretical reflection on images must highlight the relationship between the material, social, and cultural domains. Furthermore, the processes of image production are conditioned not only by language but also by phenomenal experience and practice, which can concurrently be described as corporeal and historical. This means that human experiences

and practices are dependent on embodied practical knowledge, mental and bodily activities, states of emotion and motivation, and relationships with material artefacts, all of which must be taken into account in post-poststructuralist imagological research.

This broader heuristic definition of the image has far-reaching consequences in theoretical as well as methodological respects. Besides bridging the ontological gap between the mental and corporeal, social and cultural, individual and collective, and productional and representational, the proposed definition of image presupposes a broader and more differentiated conceptualization of identity and alterity. According to recent anthropological insights stating that subjectivities are multidimensional and fluid and include dialogical power-related inscriptions by selves as well as by others (Bauman and Gingrich 2006), identity and alterity are conceptualized as relational, processually configured, enacted, and transformed by cognition, language, imagination, emotion, body, and additional forms of agency. From this theoretical point of view, an image should not be considered only as a representation of the ethnic/national Other, but should comprise a wide scope of variously ontologically and phenomenologically conceptualized manifestations of Otherness alongside social, cultural, religious, confessional, civilizational, generational, and gender lines. The Other is therefore constitutive for individually and collectively determined selves in cognitive, emotional, and practical respects which are embedded in the dense network of hierarchically distributed power relations (Blažević 2012, 106).

It goes without saying that the identity/difference relationship must be analysed both at individual and collective levels. As for the first objective, post-poststructuralist imagology should establish interdisciplinary cooperation with neuroscience in order to disclose chiastic generative mechanisms and relationships between various kinds of mental images. Regarding the first goal, Antonio Damasio's neurobiological explanation of a deep interconnectedness between neural mental models and consciousness enacted in the very process of cognition seems to be very instructive. Starting from the assumption that body and brain form a resonant loop, Damasio scrutinizes interactive performances of anatomically differentiated parts of the brain (sectors of the upper brain stem, thalamus, and cerebral cortex) that regulate the continuous process of mental imaging. In his opinion, this very complex and multileveled mechanism of mental imaging is at the core of all cognitive processes such as perception, cognition, memory, and imagination (Damasio 2010, 19–27).

Mental imagery is also a research field of the psychology of image, the most propulsive and highly interdisciplinary oriented branch of social and cognitive psychology. Psychology of image conceptualizes images as mental representations generated through a process of imaging, i.e. forming a mental concept of something which is not actually present (e.g. memories, projections, introspections, fantasies, impressions, dreams, etc.). Starting from the assumption that the world of internal images is built through language, linguistic conventions, codes, and semiotic communicative systems that people employ and are embedded in, the psychology of image seeks to scrutinize mutual relationships between mental imagery, the self and social identity. In contrast to the so-called descriptive and pictorial approaches to mental imagery, the psychology of image claims that the process of mental representation is conditioned not only by language but also by phenomenal experience that is immanently historical. This means that the human experience of a perceptible world is made up of interdependent elements involving perception, action, learning, and individual history. In this context, perception is seen both as the reception of information through the senses and the mental insight which includes processes dependent on memories of the past and future expectations (Forrester 2002, 17–23). Furthermore, with the purpose of detecting subtle relations between the individual and collective forms and functions of images, a new imagology should rely on research results from social psychology, especially its branch engaged in stereotypes and prejudices. The latter have an important function in cognitive orientation and reducing the complexity of the human lifeworld, and serve not only as psychohygienic, protective, and identity-building instruments of individuals and groups, but are also key factors of the culture of memory (Stangor 2000; McGarty 2002).

Therefore, by scrutinizing symbolic, material, and practical actualizations of images in various sociocultural contexts, a new post-poststructuralist imagology could explain more efficiently the historical continuities and patterns of changes in the production, uses, and functions of images. An excellent template for this kind of imagological research might be provided by the Balkan contact zone. As a permeable and liminal "in-between space" (Bhabha 1994, 2) of civilizational, religious, cultural, economic and social entanglements, coexistences, and transgressions, the Balkans might be seen as a contested space of constant (re)figurations of various symbolic identities (Blažević 2009). Owing to the fact that individual and collective Balkan identities were built upon the principle of reciprocal inclusiveness, research on social and cultural imaginaries might provide a valuable insight into the complex construction processes of the

multiple ethnic, confessional, religious, cultural, and other identificational models, together with the forms and strategies of social, political and cultural interactions, segmentations, and conflicts (Blažević 2007, 96–106). In this regard, Balkan social and cultural imaginaries might contribute to an exemplary model for understanding the complex formation processes of the European mosaic of cultures, especially in light of a transcultural circulation of imagological tropes (Blažević, Brković, and Dukić 2015).

The more comprehensive definition of image proposed here also has important consequences for the choice of potential sources for imagological analysis. Alongside conventional textual sources, which should include all literary and non-literary genres such as scientific production, diplomatic reports, and private correspondence, productive source material for a new imagology might be provided by various kinds of visual sources from cartography to artistic production, and also by bodily and cultural practices like gaze, perception, memory, and imagination.

With a view to unfolding the semantic complexity of the various kinds of sources, the methodological procedures of new post-poststructuralist imagology should include discourse analysis, dispositive analysis, analysis of visual images, and artefact analysis. Critical discourse analysis approaches discourse as a form of practice that has a crucial function in the constitution of social reality, as well as in acquiring and changing comprehensions and representations of the human *Lebenswelt*, individual and collective identities, and social roles. In other words, discourse analysis defines discourse as a practice constitutive of and constituted by the socio-historic and the sociocultural contexts, while its methodology insists on an interrelated three-dimensional analysis of discourse at the textual, intertextual, and contextual levels. At the textual level, discourse analysis scrutinizes the lexical, grammatical, phonologic, paralinguistic, and visual structures of a text (e.g. graphic design, illustrations) as well as various strategies and mechanisms of the ideological activity of a discourse. The intertextual aspect of discourse analysis predominantly engages in higher forms of linguistic organization (structures of argumentation, topology, generic models, etc.) and the relationship of a text with a certain configuration of conventionalised linguistic practices (genres, narratives, discourses), available both to authors and recipients. Finally, at the contextual level, discourse analysis explores the medial and institutional contexts of discursive practices in order to get a firmer interpretative grasp of their structural and functional polyvalence (Fairclough 2007; Wodak and Meyer 2009).

In contrast to the previously described methodological procedure, dispositive analysis focuses primarily on the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices, processes of symbolic and material objectivation, and the situation-specific interactive production of historical actors. Describing itself as a re-constructive research-style and research-perspective, dispositive analysis endeavours to discern conditions for the emergence and transformation of a certain dispositive, conceptualized as a meaningful and material social practice or a complex configuration of knowledge, power, and social being/practice. Starting from the assumption that a dispositive is crucial for establishing a social relationship between human beings and their material environment (objectivation) and (self)-experience (subjectivation), dispositive analysis epistemologically converges with praxeological theories. It does so not only by attempting to mediate a discursive and non-discursive structure and agency, but also through highlighting a "double dimension" of a subjective self which is defined as a cognitive-theoretical and praxeological "doublet," simultaneously disposed and disposing, subjecting and subjected, active and passive, while implicated in the historically conditioned and enacted action (Bührmann and Schneider 2008). Therefore, the analytical apparatus of dispositive analysis is able to detect and explain the recursive relationship between social and cultural imaginaries and the practice of historical actors, which is one of the most important epistemological premises of post-poststructuralist imagology.

The analysis of visual images, which is founded upon the theoretical and methodological presumptions of visual culture studies, might provide useful heuristic tools for the interpretative analysis of both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of images. In the methodological respect, the analysis of visual images not only conceives images as signs, copies, or illustrations, but is also interested in their communicative and cognitive effects. Besides classical iconological analysis, the analysis of visual images includes the examination of the representation of images in social and cultural spaces, their activities in the cognitive processes, the visual aspects of social construction of reality, as well as processes of image formation and reproduction (Mitchell 1986). Starting from the assumption that the production and reception of visual images is a culturally and socially constructed practice, the analysis of visual images focuses on the technological and medial aspects of visual cognition and its relationship with constellations of economic and cultural power in a certain historical context (Manghani 2013). These insights might bestow conducive heuristic incentives to imagological research, especially of modern scopic regimes (Jay 1988).

By inspecting the specific material quality of images and their cultural uses and functions as material objects, artefact analysis is also welcome as a research methodology attuned to a new post-poststructuralist imagology. Defining artefacts as objectivations of social relations and materializations of human and social practices and communicative processes, artefact analysis scrutinizes the forms of knowledge embedded in material objects, their script uses, and incorporated features (Froschauer 2002). Testing the hypothesis that individual and collective meanings, identities, imageries, and beliefs are constructed not only in social communication but also in a complex interaction between material and non-material domains, the research focus of artefact analysis is on the dialectical relationship between material objects and human beings, which might widen the field of imagological research.

Since the new imagology views an image not only as a product but also as a cognitive, symbolic, and communicative process, its analytical approach must necessarily show sensitivity to the phenomena of performativity and intermediality in order to grasp more precisely the process of image production situated at the intersection of the experiential, semantic, and practical. In this respect, Barbara Bolt's (2004) theory of radical material performativity is worth mentioning. Building upon the theoretical propositions of Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, and Latour, she is less concerned with representational than with productive materiality and the co-emergent (methektic) character of the image brought forth in the material performance involving material objects, language, and body. This multifactorial and processual approach to image formation might surely broaden its research scope and endow imagology with new cognitive and explanatory qualities.

In order to explore the phenomenon of creating imageries at the boundary of biology and culture I have proposed that the new imagology include in its research focus a wider notion of image, conceived both as an anthropological universal dependent on the neurophysiology of the brain and as a historically specific and socially and culturally generated and generative phenomenon. Only in that manner might imagology be able to combine the perspectives of both cultural and phenomenological studies, which would bring it in better accord with the epistemological imperatives of post-poststructuralism.

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