Pragmapoetics and its Reverberations
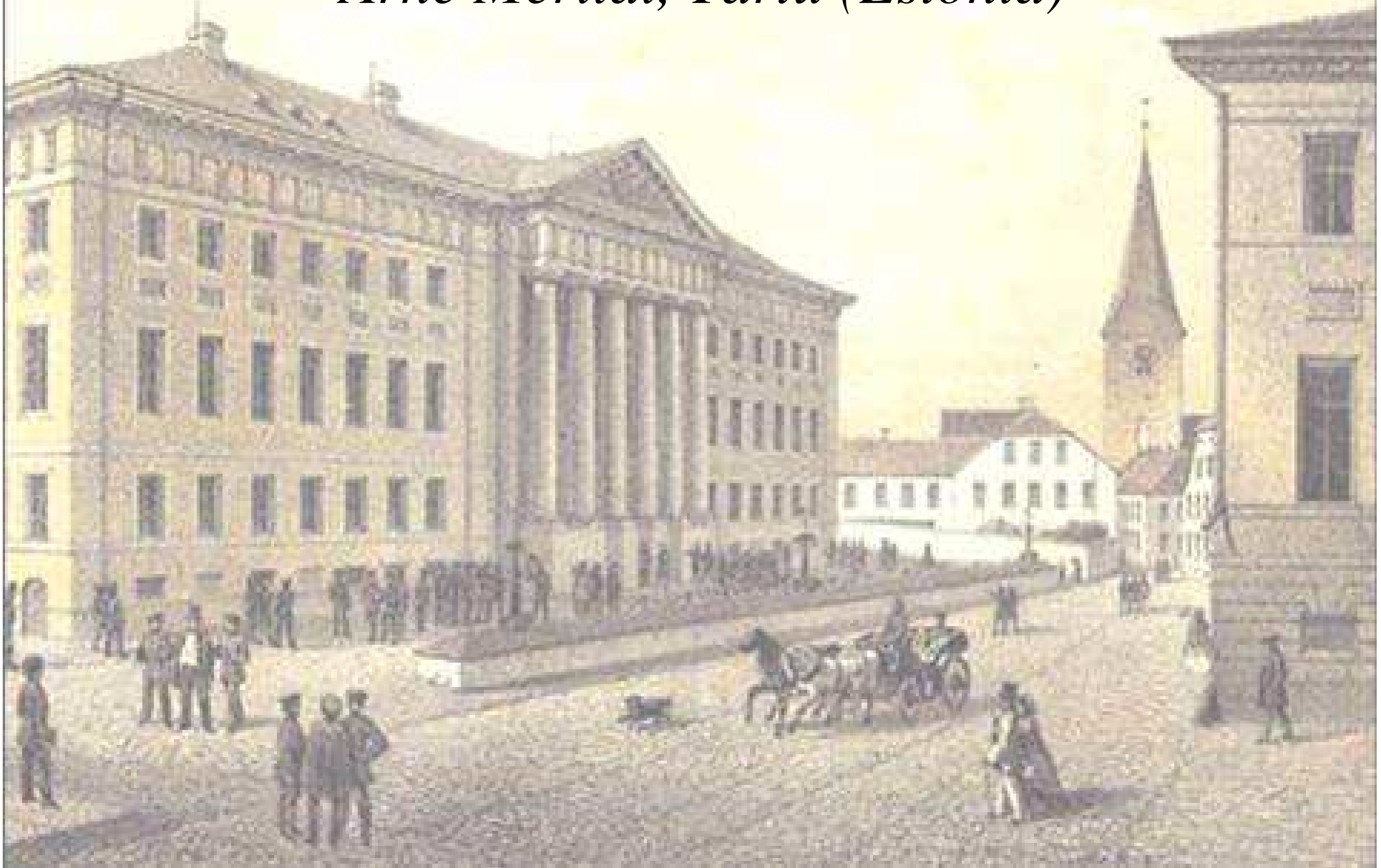## *Arne Merilai, Tartu (Estonia)*

- The notion of pragmapoetics (q.v *Pragmapoeetika: Kahe konteksti teooria.* Tartu University Press, 2003), a theory of poetic language usage, was introduced by the author of this contribution as a parallel to the notion of pragmalinguistics, a study of ordinary language usage.

- As a study of figurative speech, pragmapoetics explores the ontology of poetic utterances. It links stylistics with general semiotics: the study of syntax, semantics and pragmatics with an emphasis on the latter.

- It focuses itself on the Jacobsonian poetic function, i.e. on the **self-referentiality** of the artistic expressions, i.e. on the Lotmanian secondary modelling language.

- Pragmapoetics elaborates on theories of deixis, speech acts, implicatures, discourse, and fictionality.

- The standard theories should be refined considerably to describe speech of the higher type.

ARTUR ALLIKSAAR (1923–1966) **WHERE TO,**

WHERE TO,

UGH!!!

Time-tables.
Hail-tables.
Gain-tables.

Are the trains still going to hurry to the parties of strikingly struggling joys?!

Breath-nets.
Heat-nets.
Death-nets.

Are the shins still going to spray the blue sparks of spring?!

Hopes are going to turn to rags.

It doesn't matter – we'll sew them up with the thread of dreams stolen from the bushels of midnight.

The charm is going to grow thinner.

It doesn't matter – it can't vanish anywhere from the tight tin cup of our tribulations.

Yet the spell is really going to fade!

With more tension and greater gulps let us drink then its dusky brightness!

The soul is worn to holes like a prehistoric engine.

Never mind – we will race forward in a canoe carved out of the trunk of the future-tree.

You, wind, are a very frolicsome insect indeed!

For ever with us, chasers of captivations, for ever with us, trackers of transfigurations.

Never falling behind.

Look, how many pretend to be dumb!

Look, how respectably they make fools of themselves!

Look, how benightedness is boasted about!

Look, how many take muck for marmalade!

You can understand everything because you can jumble up things, in order to put them in proper order.

A fly is walking on the time-table and believes it is in Bergen and Berlin and Baku.

There is no moment when no one feels killed.

There is no moment when no one reaches out for an embrace.

There is no moment when no one is on the road.

Go ahead, go ahead, go ahead wrapped in the clouds of the dandelion-fluffs of your wish-dreams!

The branching out of fingers and toes, of thoughts and memories has neither beginning nor end.

- *Hopes are going to turn to rags*

- F – speech force

- p – proposition

- **EA(p)** – expressive assertive

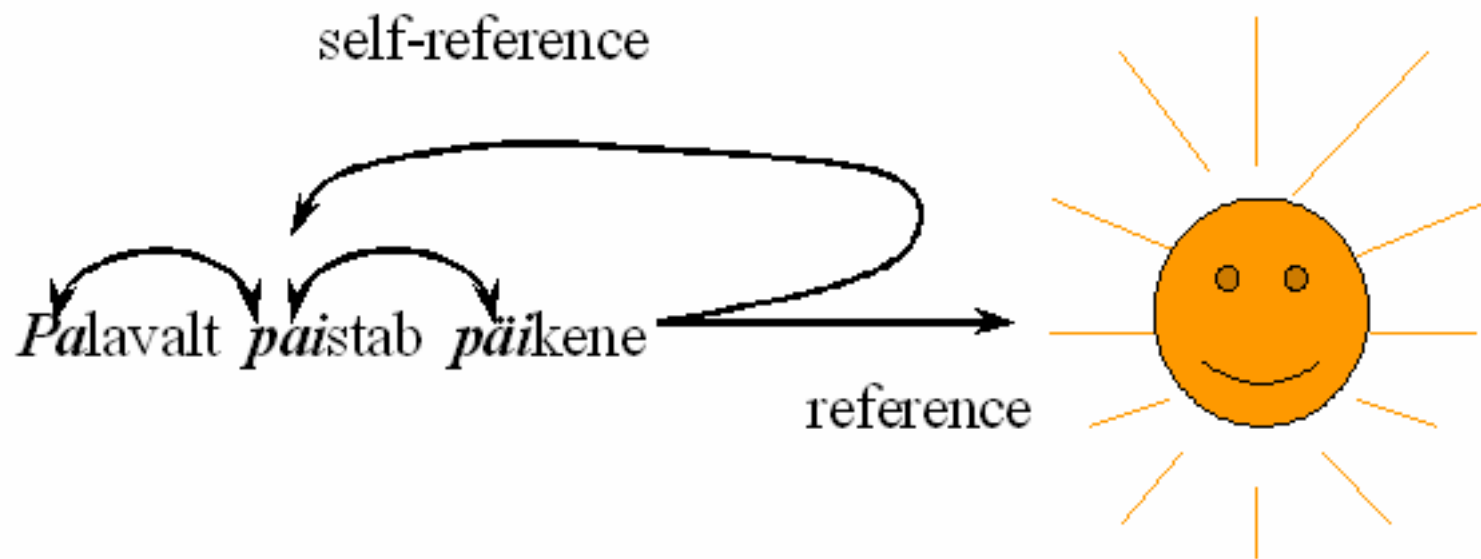- **E**complaint**A**description**(p)**

- **EA(p)...R**irony**(q)**

Figure 1. Deictic expression

self-reference

S ⟹ O

(deictic) utterance, utterer   reference
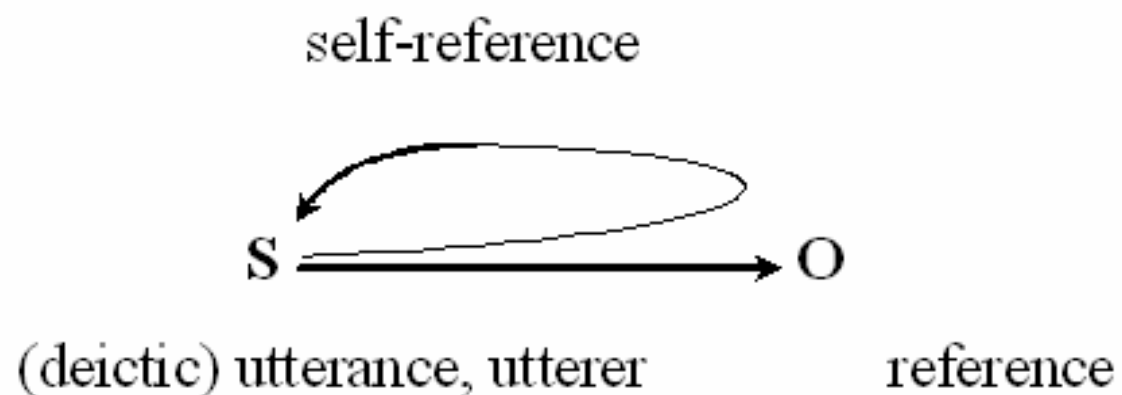
'I'$_{def}$ = refers to the person uttering the expression 'I'.

'Now'$_{def}$ = refers to the time of the utterance of the expression 'now'

Figure 2. Poetic expression

self-reference

*Pa*lavalt *pai*stab *päi*kene

reference

In English: *Scorchingly, the sun is shining.*

Figure 3. Referential and poetic functions

Figure 4a. Poetic self-referentiality

stressed syllables (2, 4, 6, 8)

long stressed syllables

Üks	ves-	**ki**	sei-	**sab**	ve(t)-	**te** päül,
kuid	ves-	**ki-**	tööd	**ei**	teh-	**ta** sääl,
sest	ves-	**ki-**	mees	**on**	vä-	**si-** nud
ja	ves-	**ki-**	ki-	**vid**	ku-	**lu-** nud.

similar syntax

monosyllabic beginnings (for iamb)

unstressed syllables (1, 3, 5, 7)
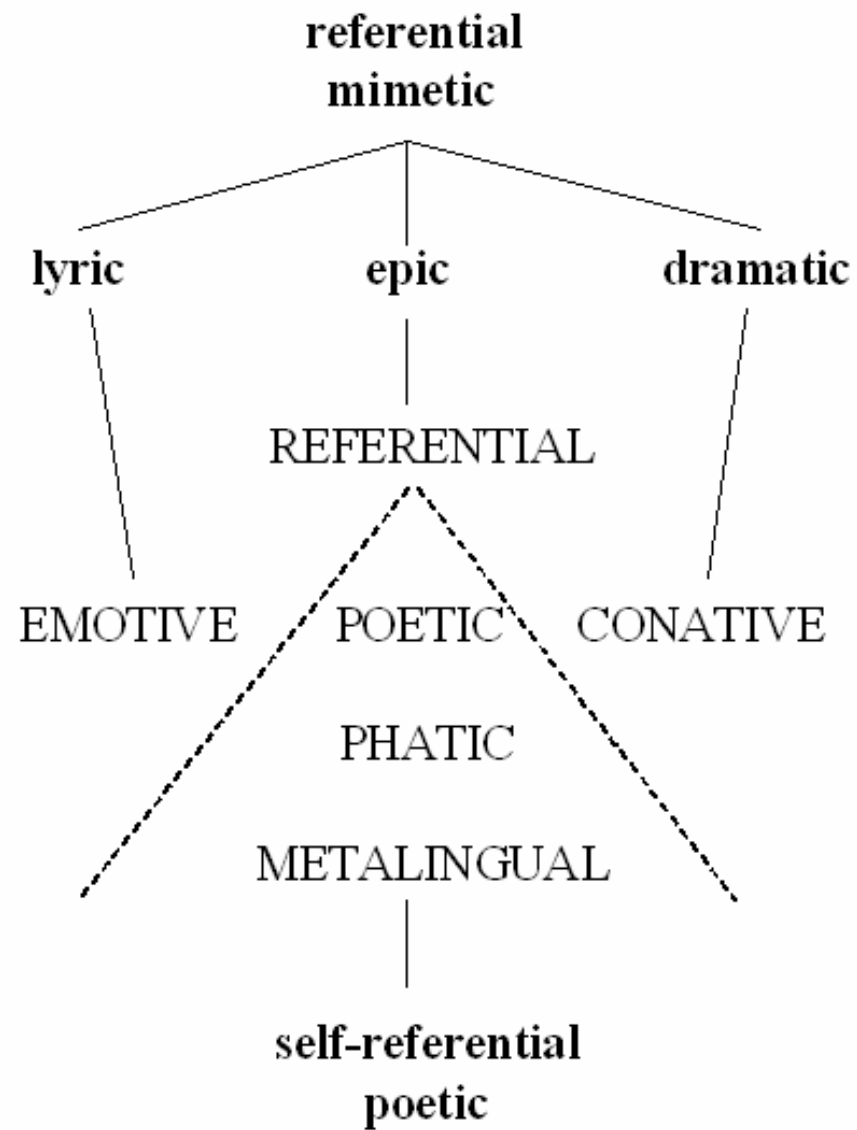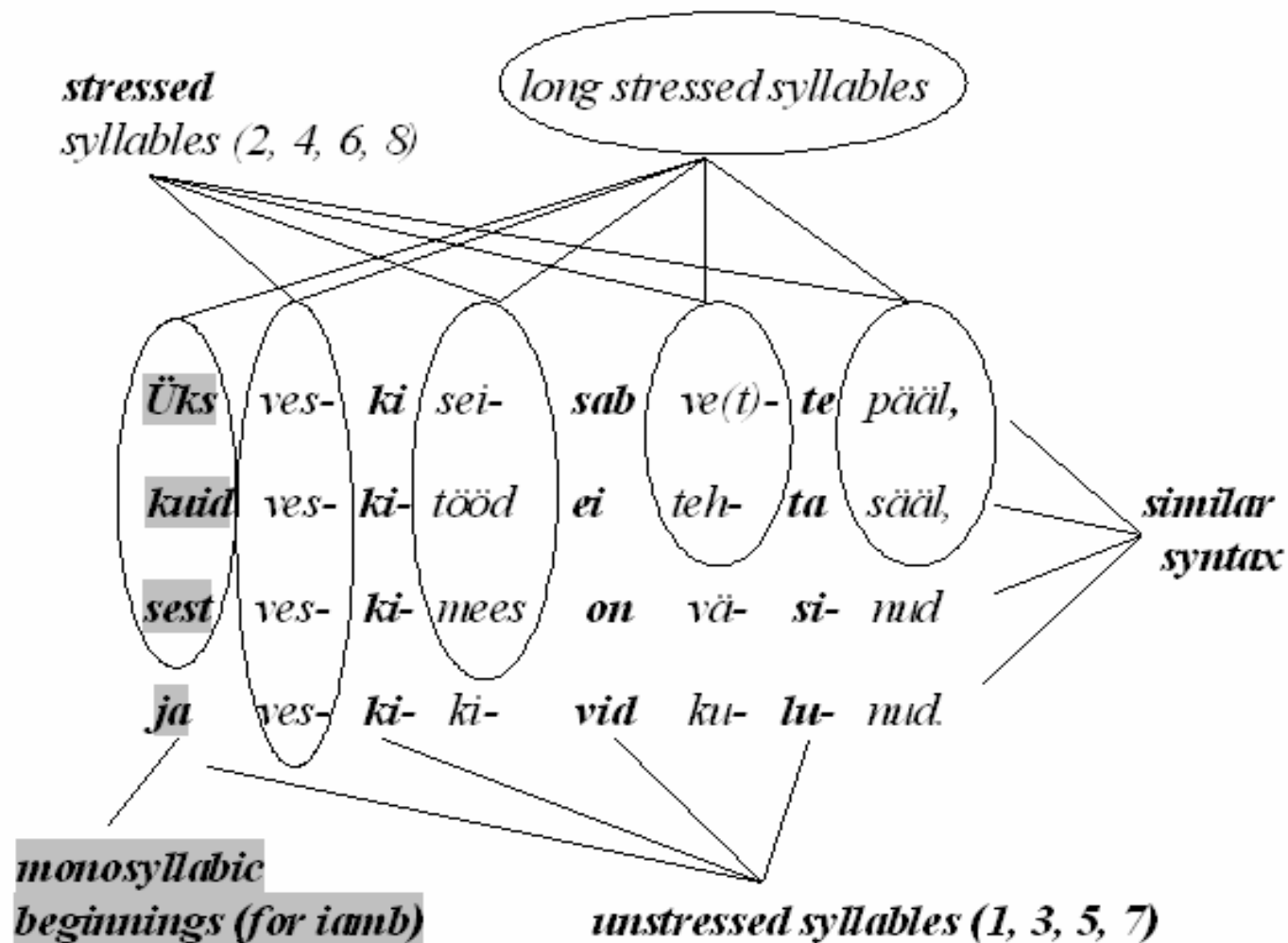
In English: *A mill stands upon the waters / but no millwork is being done there / as the millman is tired / and the millstones are dull.* (Hando Runnel)
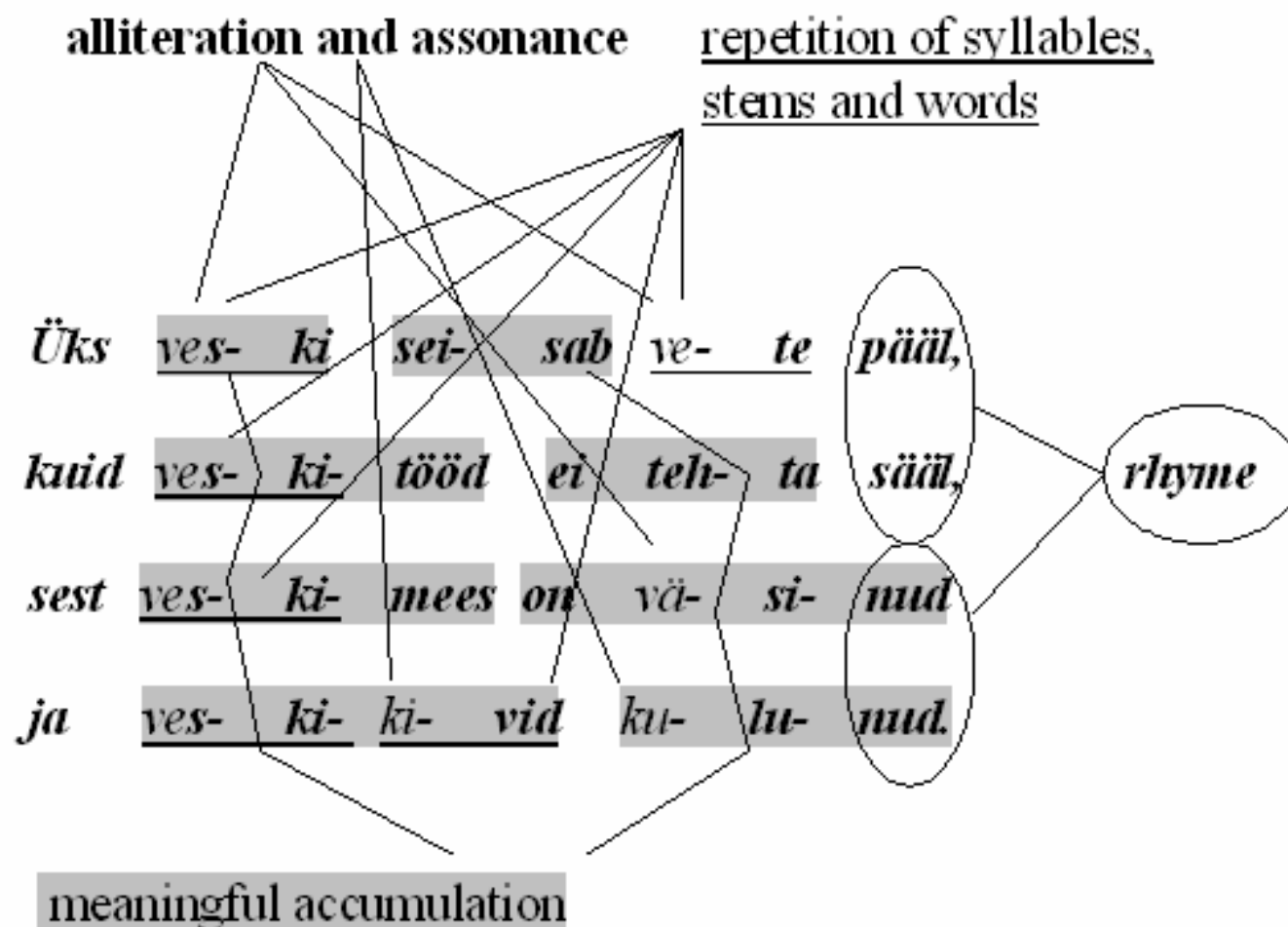
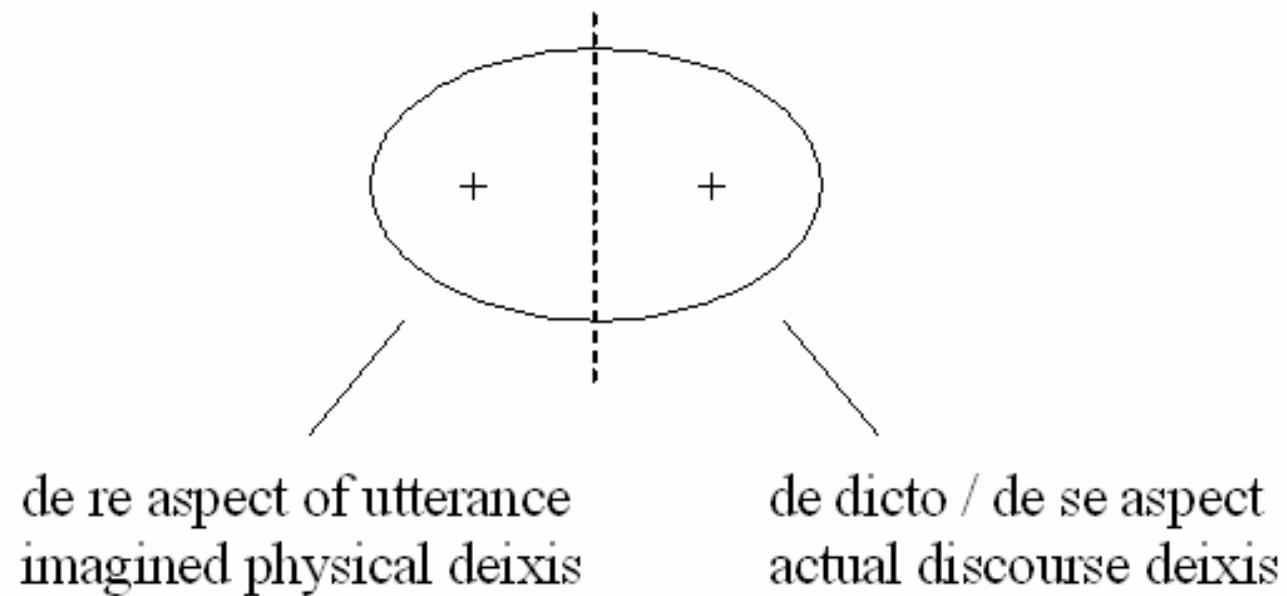Figure 4b. Poetic self-referentiality

Figure 5. One utterance, different speech levels

de re aspect of utterance
imagined physical deixis

de dicto / de se aspect
actual discourse deixis

- A central idea of pragmapoetics consists of a model of the two contexts of literary perception:

  - the aspect of the **content** or the **narrow context;**
  - the aspect of the **expression** or the **broad context**.

- All linguistic communication seems to take place on two contextual levels simultaneously:

  - in the narrow or syntactic-semantic context, the type of the utterance is interpreted generally, against the background of possible worlds;
  - in the broad or semantic-pragmatic context, the particular meaning gets fixed according to the actuality, in the real world of the author-(inter)text(s)-reader.

Figure 6. Perceptional aspects of literature

BROAD CONTEXT

NARROW CONTEXT

⟷ Internal content and form, implied author ⟷
Fiction, imagined reference and belief ($belief_1$)
Virtual/non-virtual de re deixis and speech acts

External/expressional content and form, real author
Actuality, scepticism towards $belief_1$, actual belief ($belief_2$)
Actual de dicto / de se self-defeating speech acts
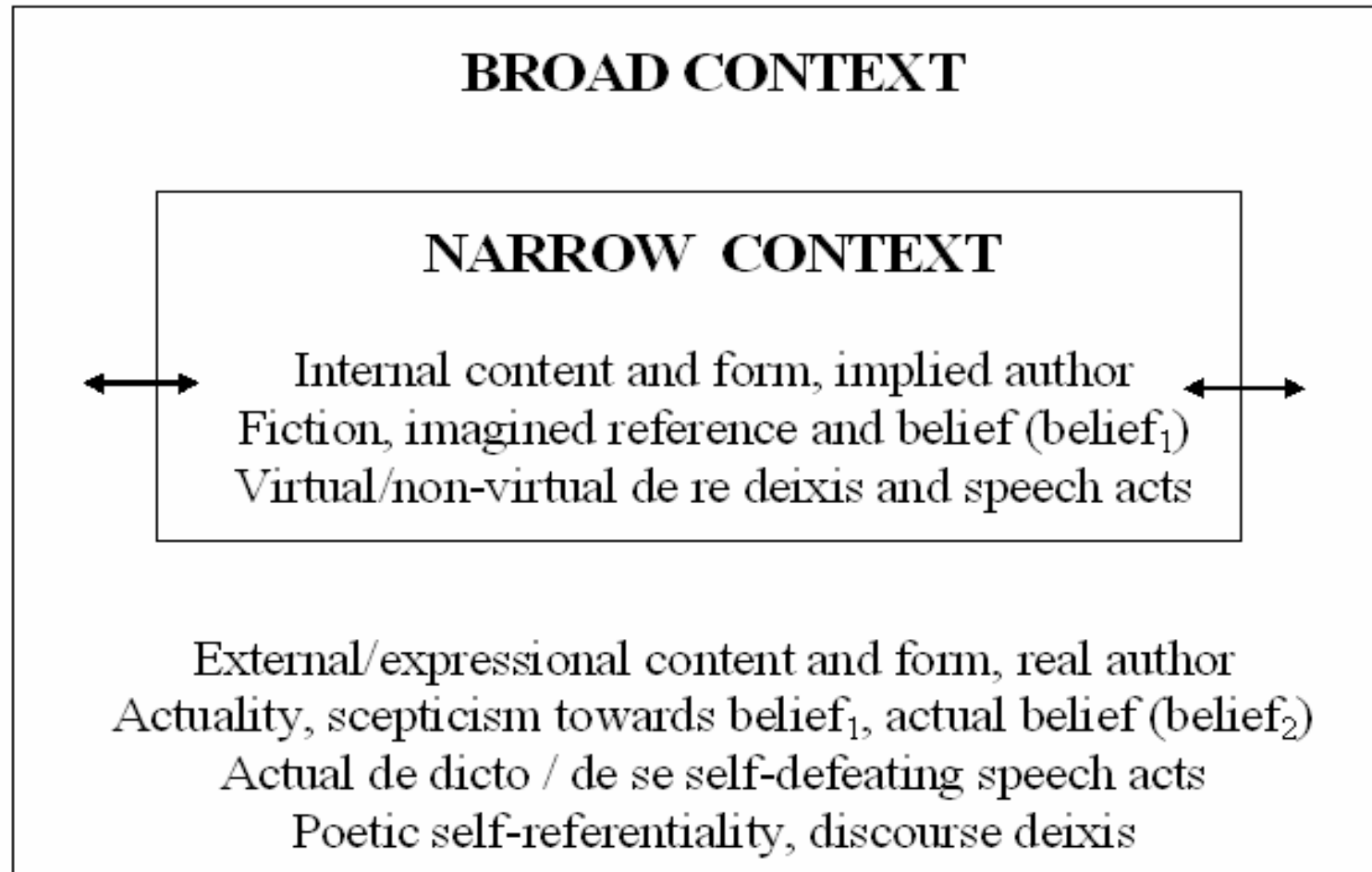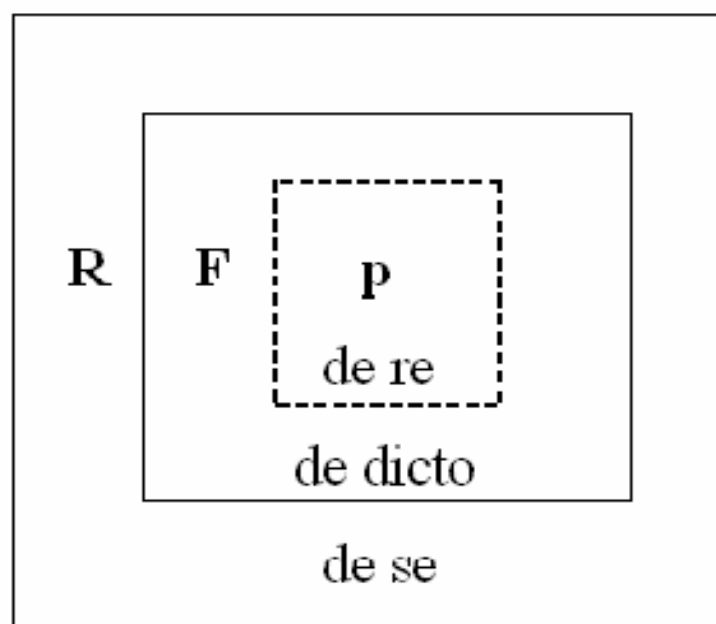Poetic self-referentiality, discourse deixis

Figure 7. Imaginative speech act in a rhetorical context

- *Hopes are going to turn to rags* (Artur Alliksaar)

- **E**complaint**A**description(**p**) – expressive assertive

- R – rhetorical speech force

- **R**metaphor(ical hyperbole), assonance//**EA(p)...R**irony(**q**)

Figure 8. One expression, two objects

Figure 9.
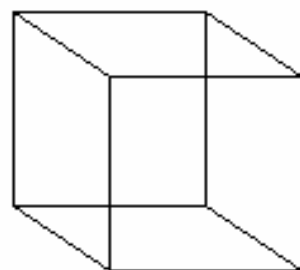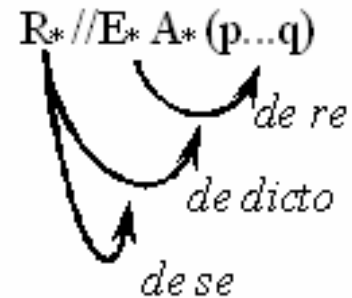
$$R_* // E_* \, A_* \, (p...q)$$

de re

de dicto

de se

- The rhetoric speech forces of the exterior level are not applicable to the propositions as it is in the interior level, but have the whole speech acts of the narrow scope as their objects: single utterances, but two centres of force, content and contextual orientation. The analogue would be Louis Necker's psychophysical cube referred to by Wittgenstein. Slowing down the process of everyday reception, its defamiliarisation is the very nature of the aesthetic as has been claimed by the Russian formalists.

- As a branch of Fregean language philosophy, pragmapoetics forms the a priori philosophy of literature.

- Concerned with the activity of the human mind in the contexts of fictionality, poetry, and the experience of beauty, it also belongs to the philosophy of mind and comparative aesthetics.

- As the properties of the artistic expressions reflect mental relations, pragmapoetics aims to contribute to our understanding of the way our mind works.

- Thus a promising challenge would be an even more cognitive approach in exploring the relationship between poetry, literature and human consciousness: i.e. pragmapoetics as a philosophy of mind.

Some reverberations

- In 2003, the high school textbook *Poeetika*, based on the results of pragmapoetics, was approved by the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia and published (Tartu University Press).
- Pragmapoetics was introduced at two major international conferences:
  - in 2005 in Valencia at the 38th annual conference of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE) and,
  - in 2007 in Rio de Janeiro at the 18th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA).
- In 2006, the paper "Regarding Pragmapoetics: Deixis" was published in the volume *From Utterance to Uttering and Vice Versa. Multidisciplinary Views on Deixis* (TUP, Studia Romanica Tartuensia IVb).
- In 2007, the article "Pragmapoetics as Literary Philosophy" was included in the 12th volume of *Interlitteraria* (TUP).
- In 2008–2009, a collection of papers on pragmapoetics and beyond is scheduled to appear (TUP, *Studia Philosophica Estonica*).

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works as Associate Professor of Literary Theory and Senior Researcher in the Institute of Cultural Studies and Arts at the University of Tartu. He defended his Ph.D. on the Estonian poetry in 1990. He has been interested in the application of analytic language philosophy, hermeneutics and psychoanalysis to the analysis of literature, i.e. in the theory of interdisciplinary poetics, and has published several articles on these subjects. His book *Eesti ballaad 1900–1940* ("The Estonian Ballad from 1900 to 1940) was published in 1991, and *Eesti pagulaskirjandus 1944–1992. Luule* ("The Estonian Literature in Exile from 1944 to 1992: Poetry", together with Õnne Kepp) in 1994. *Eesti ballaad. Antoloogia. XVII–XX sajand* ("The Estonian Ballad from 17th to 20th century: Anthology"), *Poeetika. Gümnaasiumiõpik* ("Poetics: Gymnasium Textbook", together with Anneli Saro and Epp Annus), and *Pragmapoeetika. Kahe konteksti teooria* ("Pragmapoetics: A Theory of Two Contexts") were published in 2003. His collection of poems, *Merlini aare* ("Merlin's Treasure"), appeared in 1998, and *Tolmutort* ("The Dust Cake") in 2001. Belonging to the Estonian Writers' Union since 2001, he recently started to write plays, too.