

Semiotics Today: An Introduction

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When the Managing Editors of this journal asked us to undertake this special issue on the position of semiotics in the vast domain of contemporary cultural studies, we accepted with great pleasure, given our personal involvement with structuralism and semiotics during nearly half a century. While we ourselves work within the tradition of semiotics defined by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early years of the 20th century as the study of how sign systems function in the life of society, we did not limit the scope of this volume to classical Saussurean semiotics (or semiology, as it is also known¹). In our Call for papers we asked for submissions “on all aspects of semiotics, focusing on analysis informed by a reflexive theoretical and methodological awareness” and it is our hope that readers will find these qualities in the papers selected.

It has become something of a ritual in introductory courses, handbooks and papers on semiotics to pay respects to the two founders of the discipline, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. This is theoretically and historically justified, since the theories of both authors deal with signs, and since they were to a large extent contemporaries (Peirce 1839-1914, Saussure 1857-1913). On the other hand, it tends to level out radical differences between them. Saussure, as a linguist, was interested in the study of natural language and by extension of all cultural systems, and his concept of the sign refers exclusively to such systems. Peirce, educated as a chemist, was interested in the philosophy of knowledge and his concept of the sign is part of a theory of logic.

Historically also, the two approaches have developed in radically different directions. The views of Saussure on linguistics – and on what he calls *sémiologie*, semiology – first appeared in 1916 in a book, *Cours de linguistique générale*, compiled from lecture notes by two of his students. These views had to wait for nearly a century to be unexpectedly completed by Saussure’s own draft for a treatise on general linguistics, discovered in 1996 in the winter garden of the Saussure family villa in Geneva and published in 2002 under the title *Écrits de linguistique générale*. Since the first publication of the *Cours*, the Saus-

1. Saussure’s term for the field was *sémiologie*. Peirce called his theory of signs *semiotic*. The term *semiotics* was adopted in 1969 by the International Association for Semiotic Studies to refer to the combined field of the Saussurean and Peircean traditions. In this Introduction, we retain the older terminology when it is necessary to distinguish between the two.

surean approach has been the prime mover of a continuous succession of semi-otic schools of thought.

In the period before World War II, the first such group was the Russian Formalists (see Sebeok, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, entry “Russian Formalism”), revolving around the eminent personality of Roman Jakobson and concentrated in the Moscow Linguistic Circle (founded in 1914) and O.P.O.JAZ, the St. Petersburg Society for the Study of Poetic Language (founded in 1916). Around the Formalists developed two important parallel currents of thought. The first, gathered around Mikhail M. Bakhtin, represented a Marxist critique which articulated Formalism with, and absorbed it into, Marxism (see, for example, Medvedev and Bakhtin). The second is the work of Vladimir Propp, who did not belong to the Formalists but whose *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is closely akin to their work.

Formalism was followed by the Prague Linguistic Circle (1926), whose *Theses* (1929), co-authored by the tireless Jakobson, went beyond Formalism and marked the beginning of Structuralism (Steiner 3-31; also Winner). The pre-war period closed with the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen (1931), whose main representative Louis Hjelmslev elaborated a general theory of semiotics (see, for example, Johansen).

During the War a young French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, found himself stranded in the United States, unable to return to occupied France. There he met Jakobson and followed his lectures at the New School for Social Research in New York. Under Jakobson’s influence Lévi-Strauss was initiated into Structuralism. In 1948 Lévi-Strauss received his doctorate from the Sorbonne. His thesis, later published as *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949), is the first landmark of French Structuralism, followed in 1958 by the second landmark, *Anthropologie structurale*.

A few years later, in 1964, Saussurean semiology was established in France with Roland Barthes’s groundbreaking “*Éléments de sémiologie*”. Due to Jakobson’s influence, Lévi-Strauss had founded his work on Jakobson’s structuralism and the Formalist tradition, which represents a specific elaboration of Saussure’s ideas. It is Barthes’s achievement that, though doubtless strongly influenced by Lévi-Strauss, he went back to the source, Saussure, and his strictest follower, Hjelmslev. This origin is manifest in the title of his work, the first treatise of European semiotics, in which he replaces the Formalist term “structural” with Saussure’s term *sémiologie*.

Simultaneously, in the mid-1960s, Algirdas Julien Greimas, the founder of the Semiolinguistic Research Group, also known as the Semiotic School of Paris, published his *Sémantique structurale: Recherche de méthode* (1966).² Four years

2. Greimas continued to extend and deepen his semiotic theory and his work, covering two decades of research, was published with Joseph Courtés in 1979 as *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Twelve years later, he upset all of semiotic theory with his “semiotics of passion”, in which in addition to binary semantic opposites – such as black vs white – he works with graded continua, i.e., shades of grey (Greimas and Fontanille).

after Barthes's *Éléments* appeared Umberto Eco's far more extensive handbook of semiotics, *La struttura assente: La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale* (translated into French as *La structure absente: Introduction à la recherche sémiotique* in 1972), which continues the work of Barthes and functioned as a stimulus for a community of Italian semioticians. With the publication of Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* in 1976, it can be said that semiotics came of age.

In the same year as the publication of Barthes's first semiotic handbook, the Moscow-Tartu Semiotic School, the descendant of Formalism and the Prague Linguistic Circle, was founded in Estonia around the central personality of Juri M. Lotman. The School went through several phases, the third of which (1970-1979) produced a strong statement for a semiotics of culture in the form of the *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures* (Uspenskij et al.). The successor of the School since 1990 is the Tartu Semiotic School, based at the University of Tartu.

This, in an extremely condensed form, is an account of the major steps in the development of European "classical", orthodox, structural semiotics.³ This line of thought, which has never ceased developing from its initial premises, eventually led to Poststructuralism and through it Postmodernism.

The development of Peircean semiotics is quite different. It is true that Bertrand Russell considered Peirce as the greatest American philosopher, and Karl Popper called him one of the greatest philosophers of all times. An anthology of Peirce's writings was first published in 1923, followed by the publication of the first six volumes of his *Collected Papers* in 1931. However, there was no diffusion of Peirce's theory before the War and only one author, Charles W. Morris, can be considered as his successor. As Morris states (*Writings on the General Theory of Signs* 7), he was helped in his 1925 doctoral dissertation by *The Meaning of Meaning* by Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richards (1923), and these two authors dedicate one appendix of their book to Peirce (Ogden and Richards 269-90), but his supervisor, George H. Mead, did not know Peirce's work. Morris refers to Peirce in 1932 and relies heavily on him in his *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938; included in *Writings* 13-71). In 1946, he translated Peirce's constituent elements of the triadic sign into behavioural terms, in the hope that in this way semiotics could be instituted as an empirical science. There were some random publications by Peirce's followers after the War and in 1965 the journal *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* (a society founded in 1946) began publication of papers on Peirce, pragmatism (of which he was the founder), and generally American philosophy.

The key role in the diffusion of Peirce's ideas after the War was played by Thomas A. Sebeok. Sebeok, born in 1920, read *The Meaning of Meaning* as a young man and when Morris in 1958 became Research Professor at the University of Florida, Sebeok followed his lectures; he was also influenced by Jakobson

3. On the development of classical semiotics and a discussion of the key figures, see Lagopoulos, *Επιστημολογίες του νοήματος*, 65-73, 80-98, 114-57; characteristic texts of the authors and schools may be found in Gottdiener et al.

and Peirce. As Sebeok himself recounts he first became interested in animal communication in 1962 and two years later turned to semiotics. The result was the delimitation of a new field, *zoosemiotics* (see Kull, “Thomas A. Sebeok and Biology” 50), a term he introduced in 1963. Sebeok’s zoosemiotics is probably one of the only two specific schools that have appeared so far in the Peircean tradition. We observe from the bibliography of Sebeok’s writings from 1942 to 1985 that up to 1962, his papers concern linguistics and folkloric studies; his first paper on communication in subhuman species, “Coding in the Evolution of Signalling Behavior”, appeared in 1962, followed in 1963 by “Communication in Animals and Men”; in 1964 he participated in congresses on semiotics; and in 1965 he published the paper “Zoosemiotics: A New Key to Linguistics” (Bouisac, Herzfeld and Posner 575-82). Zoosemiotics draws on Morris, who acted as a bridge between Peirce and Sebeok (Martinelli, *A Critical Companion* 4.171; Martinelli, Maran and Turovski 1).

About fifteen years later, Sebeok extended zoosemiotics to *biosemiotics*, the second Peircean school, although he had some doubts on this concept for more than half a decade. The passage was effected through the decisive influence of the biologist Jakob von Uexküll (Kull, “Thomas A. Sebeok” 51-52) and a direct grounding in Peirce’s semiotics. Sebeok had read von Uexküll in a bad translation as a student, but much later read the original German text and from 1977 on used von Uexküll’s ideas as a major inspiration (Kull, “A Brief History of Biosemiotics” 13). In 1984, a manifesto of Sebeok’s new orientation – a copy of which the present authors acquired in mimeographed form, since it was distributed during the Third Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in Palermo – was published in *Semiotica* (Anderson et al.). This is the only Peircean text comparable to the various Saussurean *Theses*. It aims to establish a new “paradigm” in semiotics, proposing a general and global semiotics (there called “ecumenical semiotics”) which would bring together the social, cognitive and humanistic sciences on the one hand, and the “life sciences” on the other.

“Anthroposemiotics”, that is, the semiotics of culture, would be only one part of Sebeok’s ambitious “global semiotics”, the other part being biosemiotics, studying natural processes in all living organisms; he avoids further extension of semiotics to a “semiophysics” which would also include the study of inorganic matter, but the idea seems to attract some Peircean semioticians. For Sebeok semiosis is coextensive with life, and he divides biosemiotics into “zoosemiotics”, “phytosemiotics” and “mycosemiotics” (the sign processes of plants and fungi, respectively); he also defines four levels of “endosemiosis”, that is, the processes that he considers as transmission of signs inside organisms (Sebeok, “Global Semiotics”). Sebeok played a central role in the universal diffusion of Peirce, zoosemiotics, and biosemiotics, a wave that has to some degree marginalised European classical semiotics.⁴

4. On Peirce, Ogden and Richards, Morris and Sebeok, see also Lagopoulos, *Επιστημολογίες του νοήματος*, 75-76, 98-101, 103-14; Gottdiener et al., vol.1).

Saussurean and Peircean semiotics follow asymptotic courses, even though occasionally some concepts from the one camp slip into the other. Saussurean scholars choose to ignore Peircean semiotics while following the school of their preference and simultaneously developing their field; Peircean scholars are generally indifferent to Saussurean semiotics, sometimes explicitly critical of it, and have a tendency to reiterate Peirce's work without developing it further.

Texts comparing Saussure and Peirce without a polemical intention are far from current, this is why we find refreshing the paper by Russell Daylight, with whom we open the first section of the present volume. Daylight adopts an epistemological perspective on the relation between Peircean semiotic and Saussurean *sémiologie*. His method is to analyse the basic characteristics of both systems and then proceed to a comparison. Starting with Peircean semiotic, he first turns his attention to the triadic definition of the sign: for Peirce, semiosis necessarily presupposes three basic elements, of which the first, the *representamen*, stands for (that is, represents) the second, the *object* (what Daylight calls the referential object). He points out that in this definition there is always representation (*renvoi*, referral) of the one element by the other, but also interpretation of this representation by a third element, the *intepretant*. Thus, for Daylight, the Peircean theory of the sign is a theory of representation.

Daylight focuses especially on one of the three types of signs defined by Peirce, the index, which in spite of some efforts remains foreign to semiology, acknowledging that the two other types (icon and symbol in Peirce's terminology) are recognised by both approaches. As he reminds us, the index is a natural "sign", occurring "out there" in the world as referent (for example, smoke is an unintentional, extra-linguistic *representamen* standing for the referential object fire). As such, it is based on a cause-and-effect and more generally "factual" relationship, which may be interpreted but exists independently of the interpreting subject; Daylight points out that Peirce is interested "in a scientific or verifiable relationship with objects". Saussurean semiology can accept unintentional signs, but since the Saussurean sign is by definition conventional and arbitrary (thus not a cause-and-effect relationship), and Saussure deliberately excludes consideration of the referent (the object "out there" referred to by the sign), the index is not a sign at all in the Saussurean sense.

The arbitrary nature of the sign is the key to Saussurean theory. Arbitrariness, or lack of motivation, refers initially to the relationship between signifier and signified; it does not imply a "free choice of the speaking subject", but is the result of "a collective habit"; that is, arbitrariness is a social "convention" (Saussure, *Cours* 100-101). The Saussurean sign is not always wholly arbitrary. There are different degrees of arbitrariness between signifier and signified, from absolute arbitrariness, which is the rule, to different kinds of relative arbitrariness, i.e., a relative (lack of) motivation or the existence of a certain natural relationship between signifier and signified. To paraphrase Saussure's examples, "nine" is non-motivated, but "nine-teen" is relatively motivated, because "-teen" brings to mind "thir-teen", "four-teen", etc. A similar relationship holds in the case of

the balancing scales as a signifier for “justice”, in which case the scales are a “symbol”.

Saussure’s discussion of arbitrariness mainly focuses on the relationship between signifier and signified. However, there also emerges a second relationship, namely that between the signifier and its material vehicle. We find it as relative arbitrariness in his views on onomatopoeia and exclamation, which for him have a symbolic quality, like the scales of justice. In the same context, relative arbitrariness characterises what we would call today gestural semiotics; Saussure refers to gestural signs as “entirely natural”, by which he means, as in the preceding cases, signs with natural vehicles (which is a specific quality of the “substance of the expression” in the terminology of Hjelmslev, 47-60). There is finally a third locus of arbitrariness, which is the most disturbing philosophically, namely that between signified and referent, in other words between our thoughts and the world. The key to its understanding is the concept of value, meticulously discussed by Daylight.

We know that the relationship between signifier and signified is considered by Saussure as the “first principle” of his linguistics. Because of it, *langue* is a system of values differential in nature (Saussure, *Cours* 100-02, 180-81).⁵ As Daylight puts it, because of value as negativity and differential, ideas do not pre-exist the linguistic system, but are consequences of it; thus, the meaning of a sign does not derive from its referent, but from its opposition to other signs. Daylight argues that it is exactly in this idea of the constitution of the signified as the effect of an articulation that Saussure’s originality lies (note that for Saussure, the constitution of the signifier also follows the same pattern).

Daylight draws a set of conclusions from his comparison between semiotic and semiology, among others that the opposition between Saussure’s binary and Peirce’s triadic sign does not hold, because Saussurean theory also includes the interpretant as “social agreement”. His main conclusion is that the major difference between the two systems is that between articulation and representation. Peircean semiotic is founded on the “stand-for” relationships between already constituted entities, all on the same level. Saussure’s signifier and signified belong to a surface level, but he founds his semiology on a deeper level, supporting the surface level and concerning the linguistic constitution of Peirce’s entities – hence semiology is not an incomplete theory but an entirely different theorisation of the sign. On these premises, Daylight argues that Peircean semiotic and Saussurean semiology “offer completely independent but complementary domains of explanation”. This is a sound epistemological argument concerning the more abstract level of semiology, the theory of value, but it should not obscure the strong operational efficiency on the lower, applied level of the concepts of signifier and signified.

Rea Walldén’s aim is cinematic semiosis and its relation to the “exo-semiotic”, and in order to approach these issues theoretically she focuses on Hjelms-

5. For Jacques Derrida, the differential has priority over the arbitrary nature of the sign.

slev's views. The starting point of her theoretical discussion is Saussure's de-essentialisation of the sign, that is, the rejection of the logic of nomenclature and thus of the epistemological premise that meaning is defined through reference to the exo-semiotic world (the referent, reality). This discussion complements Daylight's discussion of the concept of value, by which the referent is excluded from Saussurean semiology. Eco explains the exclusion of the referent as a consequence of the epistemological perspective on social phenomena adopted by semiotics. As he states, the choice of the semiotic perspective on culture does not imply that culture has no material aspect, but that this aspect is left to be studied by other scientific fields. Thus, according to Eco, the phenomena of the social world cannot be exhaustively covered by a semiotic approach, and their semiotic study does not imply that material life can be reduced to spiritual and mental facts, a reduction that would lead to idealism. But, he argues, it is of central importance to study these phenomena *sub specie communicationis*, from the perspective of meaning (Eco, *La structure* 25-30 and *A Theory* 6-7, 26-27).

Eco's position strictly follows the necessary epistemological prerequisite for the constitution of any scientific field, known as the "law of relevance" (*loi de la pertinence*) and already stated by Saussure. Realising that no science is in a position to exhaust the description of any empirical object, Saussure states that each science has to choose only one of the possible perspectives through which an empirical object can be approached. Indeed, the importance of the epistemological perspective is shown from Saussure's position that, in the case of linguistics, the empirical object of research is actually constituted by the perspective itself (Saussure, *Cours* 23).

Hjelmslev similarly states that a theory must be founded on the presuppositions that are necessary for its object. This demand for empirical correspondence is satisfied, according to Hjelmslev, by the "empirical principle", the three requirements ruling scientific description: in order of importance, the description must be free of contradiction (coherent), exhaustive and as simple as possible (Hjelmslev 10-11, 18). Following Hjelmslev, Greimas and Courtés define relevance as a rule of scientific description, that is, an ordered sequence of operations that satisfies the criteria of scientificity, according to which, among the numerous possible features of an object, only those necessary and sufficient to exhaust its description are selected or, in a more general manner, the object is described according to only one perspective (Greimas and Courtés, *Sémiotique*, entries "Description", "Opération", "Pertinence", "Procédure").

Thus, the epistemological perspective of Saussurean semiotics on the social world, followed by the components of scientific description, excludes the study of the referent. This delimitation of Saussurean semiotics creates an unbridgeable distance with the claims of Peircean semiotics to include the whole natural world in its field. For Eco, there is no reference to a real referent when we study the sign as such (i.e., at the level of *langue*). The referent is excluded from semiotics, both as a real object to which it is assumed that the signified corresponds, and as the class of the real or possible objects for which such a correspondence would

hold, because semiotics does not deal with the issue of truth-value; when truth-value is sought (that is, in extra-semiotic fields), the reference to the real object is of course legitimate. This is in fact the case in most everyday use of language (i.e., at the level of *parole*), where the signification of the reference is guided by the signification of the sign as such (Eco, *A Theory* 58-67, 162-66).

In the definition of the field of relevance of semiotic theory (semiology) Walldén follows Hjelmslev, who also defines the domains that fall outside it (contrary to Peirce's theory, for which every phenomenon is a sign-phenomenon). This outside is called by Hjelmslev "substance", and Walldén also uses Alexandros Lagopoulos's term for it, "exo-semiotic".⁶ As Walldén reminds us, Hjelmslev formulates "four parts of every semiotic system" which he calls "strata": content-form (that is, Saussure's signifieds), content-substance (a confused, nebulous, chaotic, amorphous mass, according to Saussure), expression-form (Saussure's signifiers), expression-substance (a plastic, indeterminate, amorphous masse, according to Saussure). Walldén concentrates on the internal structure of substance, its hierarchical subdivision into three levels, both for content and for expression.

Against this theoretical background, Walldén attempts to locate the specificity of cinematic language in its relation to the exo-semiotic substance. She starts from cinema theory and notes its very early if indirect relation to Saussurean semiotics among the Russian Formalists. She mentions the attempts to found cinematic semiosis on iconicity and indexicality, but – referring to Eco's argumentation – rejects the idea of a natural connection to the referent. She discusses in some detail Christian Metz's theory of cinema, indicating his divergence from Hjelmslev's views, and finally comes back to the latter in order to use his concept of the content of the substance-planes to identify the specificity of cinematic semiosis.

The previous two papers allowed an overview of crucial points of both Saussurean and Peircean semiotic theory, with a preponderance of the Saussurean approach. Floyd merrell's paper corrects this imbalance and also opens the issue of the contribution of semiotics to the field of translation studies. His paper, originally intended as an enthusiastic review of Dinda Gorrée's book *Wittgenstein in Translation: Exploring Semiotic Signatures*, is an interesting example of "hetero-chronic" collaboration. As he mentions, Gorrée, using Peirce's theory of the sign, comments on Wittgenstein's translations and semiotic thought, grapples with the issue of the difficulties encountered in the prolific work of both Wittgenstein and Peirce, emerging as it does from a large and fragmented field of texts, and in the process addresses issues concerning the nature and theory of translation. The paper is a merging of Gorrée's views and merrell's own thoughts on Peirce and translation, such that it is sometimes difficult to trace the precise authorship of the positions expressed. The core of merrell's argument consists of

6. Lagopoulos integrates the concept of substance into a Marxist approach to the production of semiotic systems.

an elaboration on Peirce's triadic composition of the sign, complemented by a discussion of Peirce's pragmatic maxim.

We recall that the triadic composition of the sign follows from Peirce's Kantian search for the universal phenomenological principles – the categories – accounting for all kinds of experience, knowledge and representation, i.e., for all signs. They correspond to three modes of approaching phenomenal entities: "Firstness", the approach which sees them as having "monadic" (non-relational) properties; "Secondness", involving a "dyadic" relationship, with each of its terms having monadic properties; and "Thirdness", involving a "triadic" relationship, with dyadic relationships existing between pairs of terms. The only relationship, according to Peirce, that incorporates all three of the above categories is the triadic relational structure of the sign, which was also discussed by Daylight. The sign in the narrow sense, the *representamen*, the first term of the relationship (cf. Saussure's "signifier") is labeled by merrell R. The object, the second term of the relationship (cf. Saussure's "signified") is labelled O, and, as he reminds us, *the representamen* stands for the object in such a way that it causes a response to *the representamen*, identified with the interpretation of its meaning by an interpreter, the interpretant (merrell's I), the third term, which stands in the same relation to the object as the *representamen* itself.⁷

The point that merrell wants to make is that semiosis is a dynamic process, a perpetual becoming. He makes this point by presenting a series of sets of triadic concepts derived from the three categories Firstness (R), Secondness (R-O), and Thirdness (R-O-I): (from) sign possibility (to) sign actuality (to) sign probability, likelihood or necessity, depending on prevailing conventions; (from) selection (to) relative fixity (to) re-translation; (from) vagueness (to) relative determinateness (to) alternatives; and metaphorically, (from) stasis (to) movement (to) acceleration. As he writes, Firstness is becoming Secondness that is becoming Thirdness and then back to Firstness – whence unlimited semiosis – and this process implies (and he refers here to Gorlée) "cumulative and complex acts of translation". The combination of the three categories is found, as merrell points out, in Peirce's "pragmatic maxim" – a utilitarian approach to the semiotic – inviting us to consider (Thirdness) the practical bearings of the effects (Secondness) that may have a thing under consideration (Firstness) and concluding that our conception of these is the whole of the conception of the thing. According to merrell, each such conception is for Peirce one amongst an infinity of "socio-cultural" time-space contexts – though we feel that here the term "socio-cultural" should be considered as a free translation.

According to merrell, this chain accounts for the process of translation: the translation from a source-text to a target-text implies selection (Firstness) among

7. For a more detailed development of the above, as well as their use in the formulation of the three types of signs – icon, index, symbol – and a ten-class typology of signs (1903), see Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. I §300-53 and vol. II §228, 233-64, 303-08; see also Pape, "Peirce and his Followers"; Sebeok, *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, entry "Peirce".

an open set of possibilities, after which follows a state of apparent fixity (Secondness). The translated sign is a different sign, open to the future. Thirdness operates in re-translation, causing indeterminacy. This is why he disagrees with Goriée, who seems to assert the possibility of “one final interpretant sign”, which for him is a utopia, since semiosis “is always going on”. For Merrell, the interpretant as third term of the triadic relationship operates as a mediator, an “in between”, in the three possible combinations between the terms of the sign. He agrees with Goriée that the translation process (Goriée’s “semiotranslation”) is nonlinear and writes that it cannot be reduced to bivalent either/or values, exactly because of this mediator, the “middle way”; it is the factor allowing the process to move. He argues that by its nature the middle way, as a logic of vagueness, is in conflict with classical bivalent Aristotelian logic and its principles of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle. Hence, Merrell concludes, translation is not a special case of semiosis, but the two are virtually “codependent” – a highly abstract view that seems to identify the concept of translation with that of interpretation.

Among the three following papers composing the next section of this volume, the first two, by Mony Almalech and Evangelos Kourdis, continue to revolve around the issue of translation, though on a much more concrete level, attempting to locate in semiotic theory a guide to the empirical process of translation. Both papers concern essentially linguistic analysis and thus pose the question of the relation between linguistics and semiotics. Undoubtedly, any semiotician would consider language as one among many other semiotic systems – a position already formulated by the founder of structural linguistics, Saussure. Also undoubtedly, any linguist would defend the integrity of his/her field and the majority among them would resist any extended introduction of semiotics into linguistics. This is quite legitimate if we consider the historical development of the two fields and the ensuing division of scientific labour. However, linguistics is traditionally seen as having three branches, phonology, grammar (syntax) and semantics (see, for example, Lyons 53-54). Since semantics is the level of the signifieds and no semiotic study can be independent from that level, semantics is the common link between linguistics and semiotics, though of course each field has its own perspective on the matter.

Almalech focuses on “root semantics”, a linguistic enterprise, and it could be objected that this approach belongs to the linguistic and not the semiotic perspective. A first answer to such an objection would be that certain linguistic approaches may be of direct interest to semiotics, as exemplified for example by Greimas’s close collaborator Courtés (278-84). A second answer is that Almalech extends his linguistic analysis to articulate it with a semiotic perspective.

This double movement is reflected in his methodology. His paper concerns the different translations of the Old Testament from Hebrew, a Semitic language, into Indo-European languages. The basis of his methodology is to identify the root of a Hebrew source-word and then define a cluster of words having the same root – an etymological approach used in Biblical hermeneutics. This cluster il-

luminates the meaning of the source-word – largely through what we would call connotation. This is Almalech's first and main methodological movement, which we can consider as a micro-semantics, approaching a text at a more detailed level than that of Evangelos Kourdis's macro-semantic isotopy. The second movement is to compare the meaning identified with similar descriptions in the text (Almalech's "content-dependent semantics"), a comparison aimed at the corroboration and the enrichment of the meaning already found.

Almalech's focus is on the four different Hebrew expressions translated into English as "window". The first and most frequent form is *halòn*. Its probable root is also found in *halàl*, which has two opposite meanings, deriving from two very close roots; derivation from the one root gives the meanings "to shine" and "to praise", the other root gives "to profane" and "to slay". The second form, *mehezàh*, is used only for the palace of Solomon, is also translated as "light" but is connected through its root with "seer". This last meaning, which points to the prophetic abilities of Solomon and to the purity of a prophet, is lost in the Indo-European translations. Further, Almalech argues, this form refers to light as the connection between earth and the universe, an idea found among Jewish mystics: the windows are the prophetic instruments allowing the achievement of this connection to God. The third form of "window", *tzòhar*, is only used once, for the Ark of Noah. The same word is used for "whiteness" and "(the light of) midday" and is connected to "purity" and "light". Almalech argues that it thus connects Noah to purity; we would suggest that there might also be a relationship between the (window of the) Ark and the sun in its midday position, that is, at the "summit" of the universe, with a cosmic axis uniting this summit with the Ark as centre of the universe. Whiteness, attached to light, is lost in the Indo-European translations. The last form, *arubà*, is most frequently found in the expression "windows of heaven" and once is connected to ritual purity. Through the heavenly windows, God channels the waters of judgement and cleansing, but also blessings, the connection between purity and light.

Almalech's conclusion from the analysis of the source-words for "window" is that all of them are traversed by the idea of light and purity and display transformations of the idea of light. Light is the prototype of the white colour, which is thus a "macro-light white". Windows become a sub-category of light and macro-light white presence. These meanings, important as they are, cannot be retained in the translations of the Hebrew Old Testament. From this conclusion follows a theoretical conclusion: there are in Old Testament Hebrew meanings that never pass to the Indo-European translations, because the Hebrew language is the vehicle of a worldview totally different from that of the Indo-European languages. We would say that the act of translation is not the translation of words but of cultures.

Evangelos Kourdis's paper, also on translation, finds its analytical tool among the very great number offered by the structural semantics of Greimas. It is the concept of *semantic isotopy* and its use is a novelty in translation studies.

According to Greimas and Courtés, the meaning of a "sememe" (word) can

be analysed as a set of *semes*, the minimal units of signification. The recurrence of some semes throughout a set of sememes, producing the semantic isotopies, creates the semantic coherence of a text of whatever size; through these semes, beings and things are semantically constituted and the world is categorised. The paradigmatic isotopies rule the syntagmatic organisation and coherence of any kind of text (written or oral, visual, architectural, musical, etc.) at all levels, and are also the vehicle of its worldview (Greimas and Courtés, *Sémiotique*, entries “Classème”, “Catégorie”, “Isotopie”, “Sème”, “Sémème”).

Kourdis uses this concept to study inter-lingual translation, specifically the translation from French to English and Greek of film titles and newspaper headlines. Analysing the semantic isotopies involved in seven translations of film titles and four of newspaper headlines, he identifies four different ways in which the translator deals with the isotopies of the source-language:

- preservation of the isotopies during the act of translation with possible different nuances on the connotative level,
- preservation of the original isotopies with repetition or additional isotopies,
- decrease of the number of isotopies with preservation of the isotopy with the most strongly marked connotation, and
- total change of isotopies, when the vehicle of the isotopy in the original text cannot be culturally recognised by the target-public.

Kourdis concludes that isotopies are not always translated – that is, transferred – from one language to another, but usually the dominant isotopy is preserved. He also argues that inter-lingual translation should take into account both denotative and connotative signification, although the preservation of connotation in the target-language involves difficult choices, since it is a matter of cultural adaptation.

Maria Chalevelaki’s paper also deals with the analysis of natural language. Her paper is methodologically complementary to that of Kourdis, since she relies on Greimasian syntagmatic analysis while Kourdis uses paradigmatic analysis. Chalevelaki’s object is the headlines of the articles on the Greek elections of 2009 published by the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* during the period from the proclamation of the election to the day after the event. The set of headlines forms a coherent synchronic text, in spite of its micro-diachronic nature.

For her analysis Chalevelaki uses Greimas’s “middle level of signification”. Greimas’s canonical narrative theory is designed to analyse discourses (not simple phrases, which were the upper limit of Saussure’s linguistics).⁸ It involves three levels of signification. The first level is the deepest one and includes a fundamental syntax and a fundamental semantics. The foundation of the fundamental syntax is the well-known model of the semiotic square, the elementary structure of signification following from the logical elaboration of a semantic cate-

8. It is thus a discursive semiotics, the semiotics of *parole* that Saussure simply announced as a potential branch of linguistics, while he himself focused exclusively on the linguistics of *langue*.

gory, i.e., a logical opposition (such as *being vs appearing*, *consanguinity vs alliance*, *horizontality vs verticality*).

The second level, the middle level, includes a narrative syntax and a narrative semantics. The elementary structure of the narrative syntax is the narrative programme, constituted by an elementary enunciate of *doing* ruling an elementary enunciate of *state*. The syntactic unit of this level is the actant of narration, acting according to a defined matrix of modalities. It is these modalities that are the focus of Chalevelaki. The overall syntagmatic organisation of the narrative syntax follows a “canonical narrative scheme”. The two levels together compose the “semio-narrative structure”.⁹

The third and most superficial level is that of discursive structures, which accomplish “textualisation”, that is, the constitution of a discursive *continuum* which is the vehicle for the manifested text but precedes its manifestation. This level also includes a syntax and a semantics, the discursive syntax covering “actorialisation” (i.e., the constitution of the actors of a text), “temporalisation” and “spatialisation”. The three levels are the three instances of the “generative process”, moving from the simpler and more abstract towards the complex and more concrete and thus producing a text (Greimas and Courtés, *Sémiotique*, for example entries “Actant”, “Spatialisation”, “Temporalisation”, “Textualisation”).

In order to show the special psychological position of events such as elections in comparison to everyday life, Chalevelaki has recourse to the Greimasian concept of “tensiveness”, describing the gradual development from “less” to continuously “more” and including two components, the intensity of a phenomenon and its temporal extension (see Greimas and Courtés, *Sémiotique* vol. 2, “Tensivité”, “Extensif/Intensif”; Fontanille 64-68). Thus, Chalevelaki opposes an extraordinary fact, such as elections, to everydayness. She approaches the two concepts as constituting a pair of opposites – that is, as a Greimasian “semantic category” – namely *everyday vs rupture of the everyday*, and attaches each term to opposed qualities of time and feeling: the everyday has a long duration in time and creates low emotional intensity, while the extraordinary interrupts the everyday, introduces the element of surprise and leads to an emotional peak. The headlines on the Greek elections preserve the interest of the reader by turning information into a narrative, with a plot leading to the development and solution of a mystery. In this plot, politicians are marked by their modalities and thus transformed into heroes assuming specific (and recognisable) roles. As we shall see below, this is the same conclusion Owen Gallagher draws from his analysis of critical remix videos. In this manner, the narrative of the elections provokes and retains the interest of the reader.

The newspaper headlines present the perspective of certain politicians on reality as “appearing” and its own perspective as “being” true (a typical

9. For Greimas, this level corresponds to *langue* (and to an enlarged definition of Chomsky’s “competence”). The concept of *langue* is here extended from the collective system to the individual text – as also happens in psychoanalysis.

Greimasian opposition), proposing two versions of the facts and inviting its readers to choose. Thus the newspaper integrates the readers into the process of enunciation and makes them participate, since they are called to judge which is the actual truth and given the power to influence the result through their own participation in the election. Each headline includes elements that activate the next headline, and the readers personally integrate this complex text.

The following section on Visual Semiotics includes seven papers, appropriately since visual semiotics has been the focus of much recent work in semiotics. Owen Gallagher does not use Greimasian theory, but his paper converges markedly with Chalevelaki in that both show how the more abstract meaning generated by public discourse in two very different media draws on general cultural mythical archetypes. Gallagher studies critical remix videos, a technique of the last two decades using the Internet to advance views critical of dominant media messages. Gallagher's semiotic approach is founded on Roland Barthes and Christian Metz, integrated with Antonio Gramsci's cultural theory. Gramsci's views offer Gallagher the theoretical tool for ideology critique, a tool totally in harmony with Barthes's political programme.

Gallagher makes reference to both the Dadaists and the Situationists, and we find it particularly interesting that in his definition, the critical remix and its properties owe a considerable debt to the Situationist concept of *détournement*. According to the Situationist leader Guy Debord, *détournement*, the "diversion" or twisting of a message in a subversive direction, can function in a multitude of areas, such as the twisting of phrases in posters, records and radio broadcasts, and the creation of films from the fragments of previous ones (Debord and Wolman).

Gallagher selects the corpus of texts to be analysed through statistical sampling, a systematic technique which is unfortunately rare in semiotic studies. His methodology for visual semiotic analysis is equally systematic. It develops according to seven steps, starting with the identification of the minimal divisible parts (in this case the individual shots) and the visual signs, moving to the denotative meaning of the latter and their connotative symbolic meaning on the basis of cultural conventions. There follow the description of the total connotative/symbolic meaning of the remix based on the connections between the main connotative signs and the identification of the higher-level symbolism, which Gallagher calls myth and (umbrella) ideology, presupposing the syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis of the signs.

At this level, Gallagher states, "archetypal" mythical meanings are frequently found to operate, hidden in the subconscious. The power of the detailed visual semiotic analysis is that its end product displays both the (perspective of the remix on the) ideological message it criticises and the alternative ideological message of the producers of the remix. In other words, Gallagher does not succumb to the appeal of the remix. He points out that the unmasking of one ideology is effected through a counter-ideology, claiming to be more truthful but using similar techniques of manipulation and deception, and thus subject to new crit-

icism. This conclusion, however, does not disappoint him and he believes that critical remix videos are a useful tool for grassroots activist filmmakers.

A crucial theoretical issue is posed by Gallagher's approach. His stated aim is to explore "the role ... of ideology in the construction of meanings communicated to an online audience" and in his paper the focus is on the meaning emerging on the production-side of the message. However, when he refers to cultural connotations, they inevitably involve both the producer and the audience/consumers. A communication channel is constituted by three instances: production, the message and consumption. Gallagher wants to analyse the production-instance, something which involves two steps: first, by articulating the message with the semiotic framework of its production, involving the semiotic discourse of the actual producer, a "socio-semiotic" approach, and second by inserting the message within the social and political environment in which it was produced, thus moving further in the direction of what we would call a "social semiotics", which exceeds the limits of semiotics and is founded on its articulation with sociology (cf. Lagopoulos, "A Global Model of Communication" 71-75).

Gallagher's paper makes references to the social and political environment of production and thus goes beyond the limitations of an immanent analysis of the videos – which is the (quite legitimate) method Chalevelaki uses for the analysis of the production-instance. The issue arises with the consumption-instance. The production-instance is one and specific, while the audience is multiple and heterogeneous. Structuralist and semiotic studies generally limit themselves to the immanent analysis of their object, in order not to exceed the boundaries of their discipline. Literary theory uses concepts such as that of the "implied reader". These strategies, legitimate as they are, lead to a limited perspective. This fact is acknowledged by Courtés in discussing the concept of enunciation, that is, the production-instance. He states that enunciation is an instance purely linguistic and semiotic, presupposed by the enunciate (discourse) and following from the decision not to go beyond the text *per se*, and adds that this is an aim more modest than that of the other human sciences, that are able to attain a deeper level of analysis (245-46).

If the concept of enunciation is an attempt to deal with the production-instance from within the limits of an immanent analysis, concepts such as the "average" reader are unsuitable, and the general cultural ideas used by Gallagher, or the specific public of a journal with a particular political orientation implied by Chalevelaki, are too general, allowing only a timid approximation. The audience is composed of different social classes, men and women, young and old individuals, and we cannot predict the precise reading of a text by any of these sub-groups. Since the actual readers do not reside inside the text, but are real persons outside it, the only way to know them and the variations of their attitudes and reactions is to go and find them and ask them. The minimum theoretical framework we need to study their readings is socio-semiotics, which can be realised only through sociological research, namely questionnaires and interviews. Gallagher is quite conscious of the difference between the production and the

consumption instances and of the need to overcome the limitations of immanent analysis, which is why he ends his paper by arguing for a deeper understanding of critical remix videos based on the “sociological and psychological study of audience reaction”.

Like Gallagher, Michalis Kokonis is interested in the digital world and more specifically in computer games, noting that this new form of entertainment has become a dominant cultural expression of such importance that it has been institutionalised in academia as the new field of Computer Game Studies. According to Kokonis, the scientific understanding of narrative computer games requires a semiotic approach on the one hand, but challenges semiotic theory on the other, because games as texts are markedly different from literary, visual or audiovisual texts, for two main reasons: their interactivity and their special kind of narrativity. He sees them as hyper-texts, to which their players relate as both authors and readers.

Kokonis observes that the most popular computer games have a narrative dimension including four types of stories: the designer’s story (the back-story), the personal trajectory of the player through the story, his/her career as built through their interaction with the game and the creation of alternative worlds. All four types are combined in *Rome Total War*TM, a game which he sees as a test-case for the study of game textuality. In this game, there are initial rules and a grid-like historical framework (the back-story), but it is the player’s performance as process of semiosis that develops the story and each time creates a new story among countless possible counterfactual histories. The historical narrative is not once and for all given, and the reader-player acquires authorial properties.

Kokonis refers to the division of computer game theorists into ludologists and narratologists, the former stressing game play against story, the latter focusing on the narrative dimension. His choice is to move semiotically in the middle ground, approaching the games through a “text and practice” semiotic perspective, given that the games challenge the traditional theories of narrative fiction in which author and reader have strictly defined separate roles. Kokonis formulates these roles in ontological terms. For narrative theory, the real-life author and the actual reader are entities outside the text and they both belong to an ontological domain, the real-life world, separated by an ontological divide from another ontological domain, the fictional world. Playful metafiction surpasses this divide by turning towards the very nature of the text and problematising both its existence and that of the world it constructs.

Just as in some postmodern literature – and here Kokonis refers to Barthes – the author is inscribed in a ludic manner within the novel, in computer games the player holds the position of an almighty God, having an omniscient perspective and a procedural authorship. However, Kokonis avoids a pure postmodern interpretation of computer games on the grounds that the player is both an external reader, deciphering the signs of the game-text in a process of continuously developing semiosis, and an internal actant creating the text. The game is a semiotic and interactive machine producing meta-histories. The major difference of

computer games with fiction is their hyper-textual nature and the interactive relation between the game-text on the one hand, and the player's interpretative and gaming practice on the other. This is the kernel of Kokonis's methodological proposal.

Kokonis agrees with the philosophical proposition that play is a fundamental existential phenomenon. In fact, irrespective of any specific philosophical view, play is probably as old as mankind. Traditional games also offer a grid, within which the players are both authors and actors, each occurrence (token) of the game is unique and countless alternative worlds may be created. With both traditional games and with computer games we are led to a semiotics of signifying practices, admittedly of a peculiar kind, and this is what Kokonis invites us to do.

We should note that a semiotic approach cannot account for all the acts taking place during the game. It is true that every signification system is a "semiotic", as Hjelmslev calls it, and humans think only through the mediation of such systems. However, as Hjelmslev also points out, not every semiotic is the object of the domain of semiology, a position clearly distinguished from Peircian "pan-semiotism". Thus, a meta-semiotic, a metalanguage, is (*strictu sensu*) not part of this domain. The mental operations in a computer game partake of both domains, semiology *and* meta-language (due to rational connections and deductions).

Computer games are surely objects of admiration (and theoretical intimidation) and represent one of the latest acquisitions in technology, but we need not be carried away by their complexity and sophistication. Together with signifying practices, the classical semiotic communication circuit is fully operational in computer games. Edmund Leach has observed that ritual, for example, is a kind of collective monologue: the rite is imagined to be a message emitted by the gods or the mythical ancestors, but its actual senders are the participant performers themselves, who also are the recipients of the message; the participants "transmit collective messages" to themselves (Leach 43, 45). The one-player computer game is a kind of individual monologue: the player uses the semiotic system of the game to construct a message to him/herself. Thus, the process of playing the game can be fully accounted for by the pattern of the communication circuit and corresponds to one if its possible forms. The peculiarity of the narrative structure – a new narrative generated each time one plays the game, so that a huge number of different counter-factual histories can be produced by the same game – in fact operates like a kind of practical application of Proppian or Greimasian narrative theory, where a limited set of narrative functions can be modified and combined in many different ways, producing a huge number of different stories.

A last point we would like to make concerns the ideological nature of the game message. In the usual non-game settings, such as those examined by Chalevelaki and Gallagher, both the production- and the consumption-instance are constituted by integral social subjects imbued with their respective value sys-

tems. On the other hand, the narrative game setting is heavily based on technical abilities, adapted to the preset goal of the game, and the consequent unfolding of semiosis in game play is also limited by this goal. The result is that the (unavoidable) emergence of the value system of the player(s) is also limited to a narrow slice of his/her ideology, as opposed to the more holistic ideology emerging in non-game settings.

With Maria Daskalaki's paper, the discussion on cinema initiated by Walldén continues. The interests of the two authors are closely related, since the final aim of Walldén is the cinematic avant-garde, heir of Dadaism and Surrealism, and Daskalaki's discussion displays through a specific example the main traits of postmodern cinema (and postmodernism in general) that has a very close connection with these two currents in the arts. Daskalaki's analysis is integrated into a wider theoretical context. The case discussed is the textual material of a film trilogy, part of the Peter Greenaway's ambitious multimedia project *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, begun in 2003 and intended to extend from films, TV episodes and DVDs to exhibitions and books; Daskalaki also uses additional material on the film and the views of the director. Greenaway's central character is given many attributes: journalist, traveller, geologist and mainly prolific writer and habitual prisoner. He attempts to understand the world and puts his material into 92 suitcases; this number, an immovable number symbolising Armageddon, seals the project, because it is also the number of the characters of the project, that of the DVDs, etc. The central character becomes a hero of politics and art history of the twentieth century.

Daskalaki elaborates on Greenaway's encounter with Michel Foucault's views, focusing on the latter's concept of heterotopias, "places of otherness", such as prisons and mental hospitals, but also boats. Greenaway's suitcases can be seen as portable heterotopias and his many references to museums in the trilogy concern places that according to Foucault are heterotopias. Greenaway is passionate about all kinds of freedom and uses his exhibitions, the museum being for him a heterotopia, as a means to liberate from conventions, to challenge the impartiality of current systems of classification and to rearrange things in a different and impossible manner, a fascination with unconventional classification paralleling Foucault's.

According to Daskalaki, this approach to classification is intimately connected to Greenaway's Foucauldian conception of history. Greenaway wants to liberate film-makers from four tyrannies:

- of the *linearity* of the text through *the form of the horizontal and vertical* musical score,
- of the *actor* through *elimination* of the fixation on his/her appearance,
- of the *camera* as a mimetic and passive eye, through *anti-camera* language using simultaneously many cameras, thus multiplying viewpoints and presenting stories as infinitely re-written, enriched with interferences of animated maps, diagrams and cartoons, supported by fragmented sound and music and deformed voices,

- of the *orthogonal frame* through a “*multi-screen language*” playing with time, image speed and repetitions.

Greenaway’s work is thus a visual realisation of his rejection of totalising systems and a unified history. According to Daskalaki, his project is a historiographic metafiction, a work gathering all the traits of postmodernism: fragmentation, hybridisation, including mixing of genres, playfulness and parody.

In her second paper, Walldén orients her theoretical approach to cinema towards the comprehension of avant-garde cinema through a discussion of cinematic realism. She focuses initially on two key concepts, reality and materiality, and points out their central role both in theories of signification and in the arts. As she explains, diverging epistemological positions offer incompatible answers to the issue of the relation between knowledge and reality, and the issue of materiality is related to that of reality. She also observes that the concept of representation, taking the form of similarity and/or difference, attempted to bridge the gap between knowledge and reality, but was contested by Saussure’s de-essentialisation of the sign, the importance of which is also emphasised, as we saw, by Daylight.

Walldén discusses a series of traditional positions relating cinema to reality: the idea of the unmediated opening to reality, an idea she finds unjustified given the many technical and creative mediations of cinema; the idea of a neutral recording of an already-coded reality, which also ignores these mediations; the use of the concepts of iconicity and indexicality, two concepts theoretically fallacious; and the richness of the sense stimuli provided by the cinema, though cinematic experience cannot compete with everyday experience. She then passes to a philosophical discussion of realism and distinguishes between ontological and epistemological realism. Ontological realism believes in the existence of a subject-independent reality and epistemological realism in our ability to know it, or otherwise to have access to truth. Epistemological anti-realism (which does not accept this ability) can be reconciled with ontological realism, and this is the epistemological position of both Kant and Saussure.

Walldén concludes from her discussion of cinematic realism that, while cinema theory conceives of cinema as referring to an external referent, cinema is on the contrary attached to the expression-plane. Since the positions on the relation of cinema to reality are ethical and political, this new position leads to a politics of the expression-plane. She points out that it is exactly this double issue, the focus on the expression-plane in order to articulate it with the exo-semiotic, and the political investment of the former, that has been central to avant-garde cinema. More specifically, she believes that this double issue brought radical innovations at the level of the signifier, which sought for new means of expression, questioned the cinematic *status quo* and de-stabilised the very institution of cinema and art generally. In this context, theory-awareness becomes central in artistic practice and the opposition between theory and practice is rejected.

Walldén reminds us that the (traditional) avant-garde is conceptually and historically connected to the Structuralist tradition and similarly the second avant-gardes are connected to Poststructuralism. She considers as central for a

new approach to art the two concepts of the Formalist “defamiliarisation” and the Jakobsonian “poetic function”, which link the focus on the expression plane and the aim of innovative research. She closes her paper with a proposal on the content of the cinematic exo-semiotic expression-substance, which extends the conclusions of her first paper, and on the strategies and techniques used by the avant-garde cinema to emphasise its articulation with the exo-semiotic elements of its expression plane.

The next two papers revolve around the concept of possible worlds, focusing on advertising and theatre respectively. George Rossolatos attempts to combine a textual semiotic with a logical semiotic approach. He uses it as a theoretical basis for the analysis of intertextual relations between filmic, linguistic, literary and advertising texts, with the aim of practical application through the perspective of brand genealogy, and as a consequence for the production of successful advertising texts. Rossolatos’s theoretical framework is the relationship between this world, considered to be real, and other, different worlds, which are then possible worlds. These other fabular worlds and their fictive elements are, for him, counterfactuals, corresponding to the logical form of “if-then” statements.

The issue of counterfactuals inescapably poses the issue of truth. There are different epistemological answers to this latter issue. Rossolatos refers to Realist theories and rightly considers them as naïve, as does Walldén; thus, he distances himself from reference as agreement between logically formulated propositions and a state-of-affairs in the world. In fact, Realist theories are under attack today. Anti-Realist theories, on the other hand, exclude truth-correspondence. They either define truth in another manner or dismiss it, proposing alternative criteria such as efficiency or manageability. Rossolatos endorses the anti-Realist epistemology, referring to Eco’s view that the actual world is a cultural construct, through which Eco makes a direct bridge with possible worlds, which are also cultural constructs. As Rossolatos reminds us, Eco’s breakthrough for the analysis of possible words is the concept of encyclopedic knowledge. Encyclopedic knowledge constitutes everyone’s cultural universe, but Rossolatos is interested in Eco’s approach to the relationship between this world and other possible worlds and the ability of encyclopedic knowledge to make inferences about possible alternative scenarios of a story’s development (identifiable with the “if-then” or “what-if” pattern of counterfactuals) and to invest fictive elements with meaning.

Rossolatos is interested in intra-textual truthful propositions, which is the case of possible worlds. He states that they are established by a text’s own logic and through the mechanism of intertextuality; the very possibility of existence of possible worlds is due to this latter mechanism and to rhetorical, not logical, operations, namely rules of transformation that each time give a concrete form to the ingredients of these worlds. Both the intertextual and intra-textual relationships are anaphoric in nature, and for Rossolatos anaphora replaces the reference of the Realists; the network of anaphoric intertextual relationships belongs to encyclopedic knowledge.

Rossolatos presents several examples concerning possible world constructs.

The first is the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, in which the central hero is born with the physiology of an old man and becomes younger as he ages. The question that this possibility raises installs a macro-proposition (*topos*), abstracted through inferential derivation rules, which poses an extreme counterfactual probability enriching encyclopedic knowledge. On the basis of this macro-proposition, the rhetorical macro-structure “time may be reversed” is inscribed in memory. Such macro-structures become part of collective memory and circulate intertextually, for example between cinema and advertising, and with their help consumers are in a position to make sense of concrete scenarios promoted by advertisers. Rossolatos demonstrates the possibilities this raises in his discussion of the commercial capitalisation of the property of a fictive persona, the display of Rapunzel’s extra-long hair in a GHD Hair Appliances advertisement belonging to the “Twisted Fairytales” commercial series. The length of Rapunzel’s hair, a hyperbole, does not exist in this world, but it exists in her fictive world and this counterfactual property becomes the brand’s slogan: “Your hair can be as long as Rapunzel’s”, which uses part of our encyclopedic knowledge to prompt us to actual purchase.

Dimitris Tsatsoulis, analysing the fictional world created by the theatrical writer or director, also uses the concept of possible worlds, a concept, as he observes, that is not part of classical narratology. He follows the definition of the possible world as a semiotic construct that creates new and unknown worlds, which are an alternative either to the description of the actual world or to an original source-text and may include characters that did not exist in the real world. There is an abundance of these individual and independent worlds, with varying relationships to the actual world and ruled by laws different from the latter. Thus he encounters Rossolatos’s option for rhetoric, as in his view the semiotics of possible worlds overlaps with the domain of intertextuality. Tsatsoulis connects possible worlds with the parallel universes of quantum physics, pointing out however that science has a different aim from semiotics. In fact, society and culture are not governed by natural laws and any borrowing on their part from natural sciences is purely metaphorical.

Tsatsoulis focuses on “transworld identity”, the relation between a fictional character inhabiting the possible world and his/her prototype in the actual or the original textual world; he points out that even an historical character, who may coexist with fictional characters, becomes fictionalised in the possible world. From this moment on, it is not a question of a general identity between fictional character and the original character, but of the mode of readjustment in the possible world. Tsatsoulis’s aim in using the concept of “transworld identity” is to locate the elements that bridge the distance between characters and phenomena in the possible world and their equivalents in the original world, historical or fictional; he also points to the existence of other elements that destroy this bridge. Thus, accessibility from the one world to the other is achieved through a semiotic channel, and characters in the possible worlds are perceived as replicas of the original prototype.

Tsatsoulis's discussion mainly revolves around the role of the preservation of the name in this contradictory mechanism of transfer. The name secures identification and a stable reference, usually to the major attributes of the original, while at the same time the replica may contradict essential traits of the original character. Generally speaking, if the name in all (formulated) possible worlds defines the same object, it becomes a "rigid designator", otherwise it is an "accidental designator". There are cases in which the distance between replica and original is such that the name may give the impression that it is an accidental designator, but nevertheless a precise metaphorical relationship between the two is established with the mediation of our encyclopedic knowledge.

With the paper of Despina-Alexandra Constantinidou, we pass to the field of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis had filtered into Structuralism as early as the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. With Lacan, it is Saussurean theory that gave a new impetus to psychoanalysis, and Constantinidou argues that the historical roots of this encounter are to be found in an even earlier encounter: that of Jacques Lacan with the artistic ideas of the Surrealist Salvador Dali.

In the nineteen-thirties, during his passage from psychiatry to psychoanalysis, Lacan met Salvador Dali, who was at that time closely involved in the Surrealist movement. The Surrealists were profoundly interested in Freudian theory, but concentrated on phenomena such as "automatic writing"; Dali on the other hand focused on the paranoid process, through which a paranoid person assigns meaning to reality. Dali's "paranoid-critical theory of interpretation", closely related to his paintings, asserts the intrusion of the unconscious in the field of representation, becoming a theory of visual representation. He believes that the unconscious uses the form of objects in the world in order to invest them with its own content, mediating in this manner the representation of reality; the unconscious assigns new meanings to form (the signifier).

Lacan, who in the early 1930s was working on his doctoral dissertation on paranoia, contacted Dali and the latter's influence, in addition to the general cultural context of the thirties, led him to explore the function of the unconscious in the representation of reality. Dali had recourse to Lacan's views in order to support his paranoid-critical method as an active method of artistic creation. Constantinidou argues that Lacan, inspired by Dali's theories, gave central importance to the role of the form as such in the process by which the unconscious assigns paranoid meanings to the objects that figure in the paranoid delirium. This focus on form was crucial for Lacan's later re(mis)interpretation of Saussure and his apotheosis of the signifier, which marks his "return to Freud" and the whole of his psychoanalytic theory.

The final section of this issue, *The Semiotics of the Body*, opens with Panayiota Chrysochou's paper on the work of two body performance artists, Orlan and Franco B, whose stage performances consist in wounding their bodies. Orlan uses surgical practices, but maintains that she does not feel pain, attempts incarnations and invokes theological cosmogonies. She takes photographs during and after the operations. Franco B cuts his body using machines and surgical de-

vices and leaks his blood with a hand-held catheter. Chrysochou adopts the view that the stigmata in his forearms are Christ-like sacrificial elements. In both cases signifiers and meaning are open. The meaning of the performance is left to the interpretation of the spectators – an issue on which a social semiotic research with interviews elicited from spectators would have much to offer.

A rich theoretical bibliography is used for the interpretation of these two cases and from it the author retains a set of theoretical concepts, the nucleus of which is the couple semiotic (chora) / symbolic (order), as defined by Julia Kristeva with reference to Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian principles. In Kristeva's sense, the semiotic is almost pre-linguistic and unrelated to signification, but nevertheless closely connected to language as the locus where language coalesces with the body and its drives, while the symbolic, in Jacques Lacan's terms the "phallus", the "law", articulates the drives in a socially intelligible manner and offers the basis for communication.

According to Chrysochou, the practice of the two performers, who cut and refashion their bodies through technological devices, represent an attempt, by merging life and mechanical processes, to transform the material body into an abstract body-machine-image complex. This abstractness is also the issue criticised by the author, who observes that, by objectifying the body through the negation of pain, Orlan reduces it to an abstract sign, a representation, and thus neglects the factor of the actual experience of a body in pain: her discursive text is inscribed on the actual body. In both cases, the above complex represents a collapse into an abstract semiotic system and leads to the reading of the body as an abstract semiotic sign instead of an embodied entity feeling pain.

The criticism of the two performers is part a wider criticism. According to Chrysochou, semiotics de-subjectifies its object of analysis and postmodernism conceives of identity and the body as elements in a system of cultural signs, as fictive, dialogical and shifting. She suggests that phenomenology, dealing with the experience of the lived body, can be fruitfully opposed to these two approaches.

The final paper of the issue is by Massimo Leone and deals with the semiotics of the veil and its relation to the female body in early Christianity. Leone's paper gives us the opportunity to close the presentation of the papers in our issue by returning to a first principle: semiotics as cultural theory.

As we saw earlier, Saussure's proposal for the creation of a general science of signs, *sémiologie*, was adopted by the Russian Formalists, who turned towards poetic language. In its last phase, Formalism approached the text as part of its environment, successively the wider system of genre and finally the cultural system as a whole, considered as a "system of systems" (Sebeok, *Encyclopedic Dictionary* "Russian Formalism"). The *Theses* of the Prague Linguistic Circle show the same tendency to identify semiotics with cultural theory. Roman Jakobson, who introduced the term "structuralism" in the *Theses*, extended his semiotic studies beyond natural language to literature, mythology, the fine arts, music and cinema (see Rudy and Waugh; Harris 97-101). According to the *Theses*, natural

language is just one among a multiplicity of codes or sign systems, the whole set of which composes culture as a complex communication system.

Through the influence of Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology is marked by the Formalist view of the cultural system as a system of systems and the Structuralist view of culture as a complex system of communication. By its very nature, structural anthropology is a striking example of the possibility to identify semiotics with the study of culture. What Lévi-Strauss did for the so-called "primitive" societies, Roland Barthes did for contemporary culture, studying semiotically a wide variety of cultural phenomena from literature to fashion (*Système de la mode*), advertising ("Rhétorique de l'image"), strip-tease and wrestling (*Mythologies* 13-24, 147-50).

The view of semiotics as a theory of culture is prominent in the Moscow-Tartu School of semiotics, influenced also by the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin. During the third phase of this School, culture was conceived as a complex system composed of signification systems hierarchically connected. Natural language holds a prominent position among them, because it is considered to be the only system through which all the other systems can be interpreted, it provides the model for the construction of all other systems and it offers the material for many of them: it is a "primary modelling system". The other systems, the "secondary modelling systems", cover the whole range of literature and the fine arts, patterns of behaviour and cultural activities, as well as the systems preserving memory and identity, such as mythology, religion, history and legislation (on the Moscow-Tartu School, see Sebeok, *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, "Baxtin Circle", "Culture"; Fleischer; Winner 2253).

Saussurean semiotics from its very beginnings thus defined culture as its object of study; it is a theory of culture and it largely overlaps with cultural anthropology. This is in fact Umberto Eco's point of view; Eco states that semiotics is a general theory of culture and essentially a substitute for cultural anthropology (Eco, *La structure* 25-30 and *A Theory* 26-27).

This encounter between semiotics and anthropology is characteristic of Leone's paper. He studies the early Christian semiotics of the veil, focusing on Tertullian's moral treatise of the third century *De virginibus velandis*. His position is that the semiotic essence of the veil is "betweenness", creating by its presence a boundary which is lacking in its absence, and this position is theorised in the comprehension of the veil, a dressing accessory, as a "meta-semiotic generator of semi-symbolic systems"; he considers the veil as a meta-semiotic device of invisibility, because it generates this kind of system. This "meta" function of the veil is due, according to Leone, to the fact that the veil does not only refer to a specific (symbolic, i.e., connotative) meaning, but its betweenness installs "semi-symbolic" systems, characterised by the existence of pairs of oppositions, both on the level of the expression and on that of semiotic (connotative) values.

Leone approaches Tertullian's text systematically and studies both what is, in Hjelmslevian terminology, the form of the expression (for example, *long* vs *short* hair, where the hair is paralleled to the veil) and the connotative form of

the content (for example, *virginity is known only to God* vs *virginity is known to all men in the Church*) and relates them to the oppositional pair *presence* vs *absence* of the veil (which refers to the form of the expression, showing that the meta-semiotic function is founded on a sign). According to Leone, the veil's visibility is the cause of a bodily invisibility and the veil as betweenness produces oppositions such as (inside the veil) the virgin's female body and (outside the veil) the desire of men. The veil hides – protects – femininity, becomes a public sign of virginity just as the hymen is a private sign of it, and states an identity, the identity Tertullian, like contemporary fundamentalists, wants for his early Christian religious community of Carthage. This identity is inscribed on the surface of the female body, which thus becomes a semiotic surface, and is intended to differentiate this community from the other, heretic Christian, Jewish and pagan, communities. Communities of this kind are, for Leone, “cultures of invisibility”.

We concluded our account of the history of Saussurean semiology with its classical Parisian period, but semiotics did not end there: it took a different orientation, first as Poststructuralism. Poststructuralism appeared nearly simultaneously with Structuralism and as Manfred Frank observes the prefix “post” is misleading, since there is an internal relationship between the two trends. For Jonathan Culler also, Structuralism already contained what came to be called Poststructuralism (78). Frank adds that what he calls “Neostructuralism” emerged from the encounter of Structuralism with German Romantic philosophy, psychoanalysis and the Marxism of the Frankfurt School (7-30). Robert Wicks adds an Existentialism transformed by its contact with Saussurean linguistics; he finds the influence of Existentialism so strong in authors such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Jean-François Lyotard that he calls them “Linguo-Existentialists”. He further adds the double influence of Dadaism and Surrealism (ix-x, 11, 14-16, 295-98).

The catalyst for the final formation of Poststructuralism were the events of May 1968 in France, in which the Marxist Situationist International led by Guy-Ernest Debord and Surrealist artists played a central role (Lagopoulos, “From *Sémiologie* to Postmodernism” 225-27). Lacanian psychoanalysts collaborated closely with the Marxists, and Lacan, with not prior inclination in that direction, became the leader of “Freud's French revolution” (Turkle 6-11, 47, 49, 65, 68, 84-86). All these tendencies were integrated into the core of Poststructuralism.

The second orientation classical semiotics took was Postmodernism, a Neomodernism emerging from the reception of Neostructuralism in the US. The landmark of this transformation was Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* (1979), where for the first time he links his Neostructuralist positions with the American term “postmodernism”. With the appearance of Postmodernism, classical semiotics was marginalised; however, many areas of semiotic research – especially those close to linguistics, such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis and stylistics, but also, for example, visual semiotics, gestural semiotics and the semiotics of music – remained more or less immune to Postmodernism.

The Saussurean explosion of the 1960s and 1970s influenced, whether as structuralism or as semiotics, to a greater or lesser degree all the social sciences, the humanities and the arts; the ambition of Peircian semiotics today is to extend this influence even to the positive sciences. Thus, semiotic concepts and terminology became the common heritage of the human sciences and an organic and necessary part of their theory. In a sense, European classical semiotics has fallen victim to its own success, absorbed to a large extent into the local scientific habits of these separate fields; the result perhaps has been a weakening of semiotics, but also a revival of the human sciences.

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