In her collection of essays, Anecdotal Theory, Jane Gallop proposes an alternative to a formal academic rhetoric by using an initiating personal anecdote which honours the uncanny detail of lived produce theory with a better sense of humour, afforded" (2002: 2, emphasis added). "Anecdotal [she] would recount an anecdote and then attempt a theoretical basis for a thesis presentation. In order arguing about the book pages.

"Did you put that on my desk?"

a strategic "myth" (in Roland Barthes's sense) for the considered in semiotics since it necessarily serves as a "myth" (in Roland Barthes's sense) for the existence of semiotics as a discipline (or whatever it is). This is undeniable an end, a purpose, a remainder behind the concept of "decoding," as it enables a belief in the "success" of semiotic analysis - the ability, in other words, to "crack" the code of a given signifying entity. But, nevertheless, decoding is surely nothing more than what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call a "literalization which fixes the differences of a relational system" (1985: 114). Or, perhaps one could modify this to read: this, which endows to fix... An apt illustration of this is found in the common belief (Peirce, Eco, et al) that "infinite semiosis" is not truly infinite, that a signifier ultimately refers to a transcendental signified, carries with it "the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences" (1985: 112). Signs, in effect, don't refer only to other signs, this argument maintains; some sort of end -understanding or knowledge or even truth - will be the eventual, progressive outcome. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that a signifier ultimately refers to a transcendent signified, despite infinite semiotics. "The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations - otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be a meaning," they suggest. "Every relation of representation is founded on a fiction that of the presence at a certain level of something which, strictly speaking, is absent from it. But because it is at the same time a fiction and a principle organizing actual social relations, representation is in the terrain of a game whose result is not predetermined from the beginning" (119). This argument is not very compelling, however. (In fact, the same content is also found in readersview.com literary criticism that maintains that the reader can't do just whatever she wants with a text; that the text, in effect, exerts some control of some kind just by virtue of being a text.) Yet this view of semiotic restriction provides an opening for further consideration of the concept of decoding.

A hyperbolic example of this phenomenon can be rendered as follows: the monomous "denotation" (yet another myth) of a word, look up its definition in a dictionary (Ruhl; Simpkins 2002). Then look up the definition of each word in that definition. Et cetera. Rather than leading to an ably pointless exercise, eventually some sort of "definition" of that first word will emerge - a sense of what that word means to someone, in effect, through a process of what Gilbert Ryle (1968) and Clifford Geertz (1973) discuss as "thick description."

For semiotics, acceptance of the viability of "decoding" arguably serves as a rationale to justify itself. If semiotics can provide an outcome for decoding a sign vehicle, leading to the equivalent of a sum or remainder, then some sort of "truth" or truth-value has been established. But, as numerous examples can show, it appears that nothing of any certainty or finality can ultimately be gained from decoding texts without accepting that these results are manufactured (or to use Nietzsche's term, "invented") by the apparatus employed. Ultimately, then, any decoding would simply be a new encoding even further "away" from the truth of a signifying entity. And the process of semiotics carries on, endlessly.

Humans, Nietzsche maintains, have arranged an epistemological "peace treaty" which "brings in its wake something which appears to be the first step toward acquiring that puzzling truth drive; to wit, that which shall count as 'truth' from now on is established. That is to say, a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth" (1873: 889). This is how we "invented knowing" - "truth" and "truthfulness" are "invented" (891). Decoding, accordingly, could be viewed as a "nudity of a metaphor" (892) or a "conceptual crap game." "Only by forgetting what is primitive world of metaphor," Nietzsche concludes, "can one live with any repose, security, and consistency" (893).

Given the unimaginably human, impositional, even fabricational component of what we call decoding, Nietzsche's perspective actually holds positive consequences for semiotics. It acknowledges that decoders don't just passively decode sign vehicles; they make them anew. Otherwise, if semioticians continue to pretend that decoding is a disinterested process with a "naive" (even similar to some components of the scientific method), they are not being honest or even accurate about what happens in the course of decoding. This is understandable, after all, for as Stanley Fish notes, the illusion of materiality, or consensus, or reproducibility of results, is undesirably seductive. Fish emphasizes the immense seduction of the materiality of the page in this regard. While he avers that "the objectivity of the text is an illusion," he nevertheless is "a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing. The illusion of efficacy and completeness. A line of print or a page is a book is so obviously there - it can be handled, photographed, or put away - that it seems to be the sole repository of whatever value and meaning we associate with it" (1970: 82). The text, along these lines, then, is
Peanuts

An article in The New York Times (January 14, 2009) titled "Listening to Schroeder: Peanuts’ Scholarly Find Makes Sense for the First Time" offers a more detailed description on the bottom of the front page (declaring "Peanuts Decoded") that seemingly reinforced the aforementioned belief that such an action can occur. (Eilert 2009; Carse 2006) A conceptual metaphor is described as the title of the article titled: "Deciphering the Peanuts Gang" [A3]). At first glance, this sense of "decoding" appears to mean that someone believed that actually there was a way to crack the code of this American comic strip, but instead, the article focuses on William Meredith's work as the director of the Ira Sushitz Center at San Jose State University "When Schroeder - the boy who plays piano in the comic strip - "poured on his piano, his eyes clenched in a trance, the notes floating above him, and smoke from ink spots drooping by the key of G," we are told from Meredith's perspective. "Schulte carefully chose each stroke of music he drew and transcribed the notes from the score. More than in illustration, the music was a soundtrack to the strip, introducing the characters' state of emotion, prompting one to ask a question or punctuating an interaction" (C1). According, instead of detailing the "final" decoding of Peanuts, the article explores how one analyst adds yet another layer to the reader strategies already in place in the analysis of this comic strip. In the case of thick description, this would merely be only one more approach to the text. It is clear, however, that the reference to Schulte's "careful" use of musical interpretation is directly connected to an assumed ability for an encoder to craft a type of monosemous control into a sign-vehicle that presumably, in turn, can be located and decoded "successfully" if equal care is exerted by the decoder (in manner similar to a "close reading" in literary interpretation).

Nina Auerbach, for example, argues that "codes create a stable and coherent signifying construct. Regarding one of the main characters in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, for instance, she asserts that "the incoherence underlying Edmund's authoritative vocabulary tells us that the word "ought" recurs anachronistically in his speech, "for there is no objective code to end with it consistently" (1985: 36). A far more rudimentary form of this concept of decoding can be seen in the ingenious poetical analysis by Tanya Reinhart (1978) of a famous poem by e. e. cummings ("titled anyone lived in a pretty how town."). Read in a (hypothetically) positvion conventional manner, the poem appears self-contradictory and relatively opaque, if not at least transparent, in terms of determining the speaker's identity. "saying nothing" not in any conventional sense in the poem, just vague references to "anyone," "someone," "no one," and so on throughout the remaining 26 circuits any conventional methodological analysis derived from the field of literary semiotics and seems to beg for the discovery of a decoding grid that "naturally" fits as an overlay to the poetic text that, in turn, reveals an underlying structure of intelligibility that otherwise remains effectively invisible.

What Reinhart offers is a completely systemic overplay for the poem which posits, for instance, that "anyone" (given a capital "A" now) is a character named "Anyone." She does this with four sets of "characters" (Anyone, Someone, Noone, Everyone) and furthermore creates character-lypography corollaries (protagonists and antagonists), specified "team" units (Goffman), and a story/pot. But, as she says, she has to coate these characters through the one typographical feature in particular that cummings usually avoids (in fact, he went so far as to ban the spelling of his name to lower-case letters, although Reinhart also changes his name to "Cummings"). The point here is that whatever gains Reinhart makes, comes with an at least equal - if not greater - price, for after all, she is altering data to fit her hypothesis.

The same situation can be found right now on the American television show "House, M.D.," in which a gifted medical detective uncovers young woman's group through "differential diagnosis" to crack the code of each new puzzle nightly. During the differential, he and his team throw out diagnosis hypotheses based on the woman's existing symptom with the way that specific medical problems present themselves. Often, though, one member will propose excluding one or more symptoms in order to consider a potentially "valid" final diagnosis. If we leave out the hypertension...). This usually leads to a sarcastic denigration of that hypothesis proposal since it doesn't "match" all the data. That is, it produces at least two potentially fruitful results based on what has happened on the episode up to this point. Either this will lead the group to dismiss the proposed dishonest hypothesis, but in the end, the reader will see the situation differently and come up with something (and this happens almost every week) that does include all of the symptoms. So this is a "false diagnosis" closer to the patient is suffering from two different maladies at the same time, and thus the second set of otherwise excluded symptoms actually matches up with those characteristic of this second malady. (Edgar Allaso Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," [1840]), portrays a related detection scenario in which a sexton, while reposing in leisurely convalescence following an illness, prides himself on his ability to perform a typological decoding of the passer-by in the crowds of mid-nineteenth century London. He has, in fact, repeatedly used this skill successfully over and over again on those who walked past him. "At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn. I looked at the passengers in the crowd, and of them in their aggregate relations," he notes. "Soon, however, I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable variations of dress, hair, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (S/Z).

The initial reference to the narrator's health ("For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent" [1840: 507] merits commentary at this juncture. First, Poe explains his leisure activities of people watching, but it may serve as a type of "sick" denominator for his decoding/re-encoding activity, too. In this sense, his especially acute abilities, along with his pursuit of decoding the character of the stranger, could be viewed ironically in the end, not unlike when readers recognize that a narrator of fiction has been turned out to be as (in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper"). Accordingly, through this particular narrator's condition, Poe could be seen as ridiculing the notion of decoding as a viable enterprise, the pursuit only of those who are deliriously ill.

But the narrator suddenly finds himself stymied by one unusual character who does not mesh with his decoding system. Stalled by this inscrutable individual, he proceeds relentlessly (in a dramatization of techniques derived from the principle of "close" reading and the larger tenets of textual criticism related) to literary criticism. Eventually, the narrator concludes that this passersby resists what could be called a conventional interpretive regimen. Nevertheless, by desperately pulling a rabbit out of his hat, the narrator suddenly faces an interpretive dons ex machine, concluding that this character can be successfully decoded as the individual who refuses to be read. Perhaps, Poe's picture ("Er gand mudder, du se mitte reie", see, from Le Bruyne [1840: 506]) remains unclear, but the event of the story incorporate yet another quote, this time in German ("er lasst sich nicht lasen", from Grüninger [1953]), which is repeated and altered by the narrator by appearing again at the conclusion. The use of two non-English quotes in the space of the first textual utterances draws attention to them, especially the latter, which is shown to be relevant to the interpretation is repeated (sans translation the second time), arguably establishing a semiotic jockeying between the encoder and decoder which results in the decoder's understanding of the text. This raises the question of whether Poe is the ultimate encoder of his stories (on this issue, see Foucault, "What is an Author?" [1970]). Poe qua author is well-known for having his narratives incorporate languages other than his "base" language of English (the uses Ancient Greek in this story as well, for instance).

A parallel scenario, then, is portrayed in the declaration of the narrator's conclusion of what man of crow signifies that which "does not permit itself to be read" (i.e., the second quote, translated [506]). The subject who resists signification, who inhibits an extraction of his narrative system, indeed, given the quote in German, in other words as well, leaves the text of the story in the upper hand of the narrator, who might not last long in the second part of the strange man's "unnameable": "This man," I said at [length to whom he is speaking here], "is the type and genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the very image of a man who can follow; for I shall know no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is the grosser book than the "Horrorns", I think, of the "Great Mercies of God that 'er lasst sich nicht lasen" (507). This closing line links back to the opening reflection that certain men "will not suffer themselves to be revealed" (513). The decoding narrative, nevertheless manages to override by virtue of giving a name to that which resists naming.

Veiled Meaning

A useful illustration of this resistance to decodability also appears in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" ([1836], a short story which begins when the paradigm of the Reverend Muster Hooper "beheld the semblance of" him pacing slowly his meditation way towards the meetinghouse") (37-38). Hawthorne's diction is precise, in other words a word, in that "semblance" suggests both resemblance as well as an entity that is a lesser version of an original. The only other word, with which hooper has to do with the wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit" (38), yet the reader is not even sufficient information to account for this. Conventionally interpreted, this only play this "place this "in" the category of what barthes identifies as an "enigma" ([2, 2. A sign-vehicle rendered all the more problematic as it is encoded as something unusual, something escaping or even perhaps preceding intelligibility."

"Are you sure it is our parish?" one of the crowd asks the sexton, who functions apparently as the subject who is supposed to know (38: 30). Again, Hawthorne draws attention to the process of decoding by virtue of this display of inter-observer agreement. When the sexton asserts that "Oh a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," on the other hand, the decoder has to wonder how the sexton knows this or anything in the semiotic universe, for that matter, with "certainty." It returns to the narrator's identification of Hooper's "semblance," the decoder cannot assert definitively that this feature is Hooper himself. This is an issue that Hawthorne further troubles by having the minister black facial signification by way of wearing a black veil

While finally offering an explanation for the crowd's consternation, the narrator begins to provide a decoding framework which, while on the surface (as was the case with Poe's story) seemingly reduces the significant possibility of the decoder and decoder which actually serves to open an increasingly larger array of decodings. The narrator remarks that "the cause of so much amazement appear may sufficiently slight, but," in the course of elaborating on the veiling phenomenon, provides a semiotic bombshell of sorts by relating, seemingly offhandedly, that this is indeed "Mr."

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The primary consideration remains on the impact on the decoders who find Mr. Hooper’s transmutations of the word “veil” by the veil. Even though he is delivering his usual, “mild” sermon: there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made his words breathe through an effort that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of his past. The subject had reference to secret sins, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our fellow townsfolk. I would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. (1836: 40)

The narrator maintains that through the veil as a semiotic sign, it was breathed into his words, turning what is ostensibly a generic sign-vehicle into one that is seemingly targeted toward individual decoder (admittedly, an already common response among such audiences for this “speech genre” [Blauhn 16]). “Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded insinuation of dread or thought.” The narrator notes that in the course of the sermon, “there was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, or in his voice or manner of speech. Violence,” while nevertheless “with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came to hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unworldly, or rather sub-human, minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger’s visage would be disclosed, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.” The parishioners found themselves experiencing “indescribable confusion” and even “amazement,” noting to themselves as well feeling “consciences agitated,” at the moment they lost sight of the black veil. “The veil, it could be said, again heightened attention to the opacity – not genuine transulence, and certainly not transparency – characteristic of any semiotic vehicle in the act of signification. Every sign when “manhandled” (Barthes) by the decoder is treated in this manner, in other words, as a semblance of signification rather than signification itself.

This challenge to the parishioners’ decodification expertise diminishes as they offer interpretive frameworks that gain purchase. “A few of them ‘shook in their suspicion’…estimating that they could penetrate the mystery” and even “one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper’s eyes had been darkened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade” (1836: 40-41). This “naturalization” of the veil’s (also in Barthes’s sense) clarity alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to the social-semiotic system. Narrativization rescues the veil from the realm of the unintelligible, in other words, transferring it into one that safely harbours the practice of storytelling. To the narrator, Hooper becomes visible as someone “with a veiled face,” with this synecdoche apparently responsible for the “strange and bewildered looks” with which his parishioners “reappraise” him as he engages in his usual ministrations (41). The narrator registers an enigmatic response from the parishioners by framing the minister’s departure from the scene in a semiotically opaque manner: “And as he raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple, in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, the audience, who had witnessed the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shrank, and the man, who had lifted unto wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil. (44)

In order for the townsfolk to satisfactorily decode this resistant signifier, a group was changed with the task to “put all the pieces together,” and find the “figure at the beginning” and “end of the scene” (1836: 48). If they understood that the corpse “only knew” the man of harden breast, they had to discover the “truth” about Mr. Hooper. (“Men sometimes are so.” Unless this is the non-registered sign “men” as in “mankind,” etc., this is a curious utterance, considering that gender has not entered into this discussion so far. The exception to this is the remark about the garment resembling a woman’s veil, which probably establishes an economy of gender distortion when Mr. Hooper “cross dressed” in this manner. Of, rather, it could be said that he reassigned the gendered orientation of the veiled对他 virtue of wearing it). The townsfolk further reflect an anxiety about the horror of confronting the transcendental signified in all its semiotic finitude. Would this be akin, then, to the divide forming a void between the signified and signifier; the final elision of significative differential in which a sign ends its distillation?

In Notes from Underground, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s narrator argues that if humans were given an opportunity to live unfettered by impediments, they would immediately want them restored (or new ones created) in order to have something to cause a friction they need in order to have something to complain about. The same would be true if we could somehow achieve “final” semiosis - we would immediately want semiosis to begin oscillating again.

While Mr. Hooper’s performance at a funeral service later that afternoon provides further opportunities for supernatural decoding of the veil (Does the corpse wear a face to close the eyes, or does the body turn over in the casket? Did the body shudder at the sight?), it also provides the audience with a type of “other-thorality-internality” which offers its own curiosity and mentions in his benediction: “The people trembled, though they but daredly understand him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, and prepared, so as to be dust, and to be dust, and to be dust, and to be dust, and to be dust for the dreadful hour that should unmask the veil from their faces” (1836: 42). Of course, although he could be referring to the more common practice of face veiling, the crowd assumes that he is turning his literal veil into a metaphorical reference, one with semiotic implications insofar as it asserts that everyone “is pale” by facing the inevitable. This, he says, is done as a signvehicle instead of a transparent (or even just translucent) signifier.

The subsequent supernatural associations of some citizens suggesting that they see the minister “walking hand in hand” with another woman following this scene (something corroborated by inter-observer agreement), along with a similar development pertaining to a young couple he marries, suggest that, indeed, the veil is imbuing Mr. Hooper with extraordinary signifying capabilities (1836: 43).

After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple. The crowd, in awe, in wonder, in a strain of mild pleasantness so aye to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, the audience, who had witnessed the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shrank, and the man, who had lifted unto wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil. (44)
can (including the presumed class of signs deemed transparently "iconic").

Mr. Hooper nevertheless endeavours to engage in this very procedure, but the impact of infinite semiotics cannot be imposed on him, for "this veil is a type and a symbol," he says (by way of the speech genre of what is assumed to be an "explanation"), "and I am bound to wear it even, because it is a place of darkness, in a secluded nook, before the gaze of multitudes, and with as strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This droll shade must separate me from the world; even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!" (1836: 46).

When Mrs. Hooper asks her husband to decode the veil's signified for her, he draws upon an explicitly semiotic framework, although expressing it in the less rigorous idiom, to imply that this process is fundamentally conjectural, or perhaps suggesting that the encoder has no special privilege in terms of speaking an explicit language. "It be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most others, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil" (1836: 46). His wife, however, observes that it is this very polyvalent condition which can lead to stigmatizing interpretations by others. But while what the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow urged Elizabeth, "Beloved, and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal! In response to this, Mr. Hooper "smiled again – that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil." This seems to indicate that he has acquired the complaints of the encoder as unverifiable and uncontrollability that Saussure identified in his Course when he noted that even an artifically constructed language cannot be controlled by the encoder alone and that the decoders necessarily project their own signifieds onto it.

In fact, right after this assertion, the narrator relates that Elizabeth does this very thing: a "new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terror fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him." (1836: 47). The minister pleads for an empathic decoding by Elizabeth at this point, providing a linguistic supplement to the non-linguist-signifier of the veil: "Have patience with me, Elizabeth!...Do not be too hasty in judging this veil. It is placed before us here on earth. Bene, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil, and as mortal as I am! Oh! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my veil. Do you have leisure in this hallowed obsession?" What the minister learns here, something that frustrates so many sign users, is that the encoder truly has no leverage over the decoder's practices. Ironically, whenever she herself has occasion to request to see beneath the veil for one last time, she leaves, and his response is not insignificant: "Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from the happiness he sought here. He is, of course, is that Elizabeth is confusing the materiality of the signifier (like those who get upset over the purely symbolic gesture of flag burning) with the signified itself, more especially because he instinctively aligns himself with the community of interpreters – "the multitude" – who believe the veil signified his "dreadful secret").

Their instinctive dread caused him to feel, more strongly than all aught else, that a presence, a voice, an inspiration, that the veil is the symbol of the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave rise to the charge, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime, too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely insinuated. When he removes all the veil, rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or his own heart, and under whose influence, his conscience tortured him for some great crime, too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely insinuated.

Consistent with Susan Sontag's assertion in Illness as Metaphor that figural language gains greater power in direct relation to the decoder's increased ignorance, the veil actually makes Mr. Hooper an even more powerful encoder. Among all its subtle influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman, the narrator remarks. "By the old mystic symbol of the veil, I have no other apparent cause – he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agon in sin" (49).

Up to his death scene, Mr. Hooper maintains the opacity of the veil, using only speech and his extra-linguistic signifier of a smile, and as the novel progresses, Mr. Hooper nevertheless endeavours to align himself with the community of interpreters – "the multitude" – who believe the veil signified his "dreadful secret").

As will be discussed later, this becomes essentially what Barthes posits: the signifier without a signified. A signifier that effectively conveys only itself instead of a relational signum: "No!, said aloud, and the word, and the signifier, this tissue of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on." (1836: 45). Here, Mrs. Hooper engages in a bid for mutual encoding–decoding by a given (narrative) agent. A similar situation appears at the conclusion of James Thurber's "The Catbird Seat," in which the narrator, perceiving that the only plausible decoding is based on character history yet it is, in fact, a mis-decoding (see Simpkins accounts for the otherwise seemingly inexplicable), when the friend shows his inmost heart to the narrator, he articulates the signifying dilemma represented by his veil as he says that any sign vehicle is hampered, semiotically, by the situation in which better how transparent or iconic it may appear on the surface. "What?", he says as his last words:

But the mystery which it obscures, typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? Where the friend of the narrator, he articulates the signifying dilemma represented by his veil as he says that any sign vehicle is hampered, semiotically, by the situation in which better how transparent or iconic it may appear on the surface. "What?", he says as his last words:

In an email exchange, Baxter responded to my question regarding a bibliographic code explanation of this specificity regarding the paper, and the, of the "next harbour facility", now reading:

My first thought in answer to your question is, "I don't remember." But I think I do remember. It seems to me that whenever you receive a note that is freighted with meaning, particularly meaningful, fighting, that you begin to check the peripheries, as if they held the meanings that are withheld at the level of the text. The hapless guy who receives that note has began to experience the bleeding of meaning into the peripheries. Thus the interest in fonts, etc., August 30: 86.

The only seemingly neutral or disinterested response to the piece of paper and its "contents" appears when Harry Edmonds first comes upon and examines it:
On the upper lefthand corner someone had scrawled the phrase: THE NEXT BUILDING PLAN TO BOMB. Harry unfolded the paper and saw an inked drawing of what appeared to be a sizeable train station or some other public structure, perhaps an airport terminal. In the drawing were arched windows and front pillars but very little other supporting detail. The building looked solid, monumental, and difficult to destroy. (1997: 65)

Harry then shows it to other people. The office receptionist says: “You’ve got to take it to the police...This is dangerous. This is the work of a maniac. That’s La Guardia there, the airport! In the picture! I was there last month. I’m sure it’s La Guardia, Mr. Edmonds. No kidding. Definitely La Guardia,” (1997: 66)

Harry’s girlfriend: “Lucia examined the soiled original drawing and re­captions his own drawing, emphasizing the personal, contributive, constructed nature of decoding by substituting himself for the building in the original drawing and alternately tilting his own drawing as “The Next Place I Plan to Bomb,” thereby turning the unspecified link between the original’s drawing and linguistic text into, in this case, a personal decoding rendition signified by “ruling” (Simpkins 1980). This is exactly what happens in decoding as well.

Harry is the only respondent, however, who acknowledges this reality of the process of decoding while the other characters seem to (or explicitly say) “objectively” draw upon their personal experience to determine what the drawing represents, injecting biographical frames into the process without acknowledging this. The whither of our presumably similar texts that are blowing about haphazardly at the end of the story (just as they were at the beginning) virtually parodies the endless referral slippage of semiosis in which one of them may again attach itself to yet another decoder, setting off the operation of semiotic interpretation yet again. Additionally, Baxter’s narrator has only limited omniscience, as is suggested by the drawing description, and more importantly the open conjecture about Harry’s subsequent actions at the end where the narrator suggests several possibilities of his next step.

One way that the “communal” decoding standards that Fish discusses be realized is through public rule dissemination based on the presumption that all institutionally sanctioned decoders agree to act in accordance with these rules. Nevertheless, this is only an artificial distinction and no way consistent with reality, as Harry discovers when no two decoders offer the same decoding of the text he shows them. As Harry’s actions reveal, it is only when boundaries are constructed and agreed upon that they have any sort of real force. Culler used as an illustration of this in a graduate course on semiotics, the airport security signs that at one time (pre 9/11) in the US declared that even any apparent jokes about having a bomb, etc. would be decoded as serious utterances. This creates an institutionally constructed and regimented form of what Hodge and Kress call a “reception regime” (1988) which, among other things, delegates the ability to decide whether something is considered offensive to the decoder but not the creator.

A related illustration of this type of decoding strategy is found in Roland Barthes’s apparent assertion that some sign vehicles can only be decoded as signifiers without a signified. Essentially, though, he breaks the magician’s code of maintaining professional secrecy where he explains the illusion behind decoding by revealing how something that appears to be not signifying can be hardly transported into the realm of the intelligible through the process of arthful decoding. Barthes’s paired decodings offer a striking example, however, i.e. as the concluding punctuation does not establish an either/or opposition (e.g., a case of this or that), but rather, an oscillation around mutually inclusive possibilities, with only two among many other decoding options. Additionally, the placement of this example at the end of Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes with no apparent ligature is also puzzling. What exactly is the reader supposed to make of this paratext (if that is what it is)? Is it like the abrupt cord to Herman Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener” in which the narrator offers a satisfactory, although transparent at best, decoding of Bartleby’s malady? Or, is it like Poe’s narrator (discussed earlier) when he finally comes up with a reading that crystallizes a decoding, yielding a sharp focus that renders intelligible the otherwise inescapable stranger?

This article will be continued in the next issue of the SRB 20.1 (2011).


By Anna Cabak Rédei

Time and Translation


By Anna Cabak Rédei

The selection of writings illustrates Lady Welby’s contribution to the Signific Movement in the 1890s, which eventually flourished in the Netherlands within the Dutch Significs Group.

Petrilli’s ambition with this book is to communicate the theoretical bedrocks of significs and its evolution with a special focus on issues connected to the problem of “signs, meaning and understanding,” i.e., with “language and communication” (iv).

The organization of the volume is chronological. The reader is carefully led through Victoria Welby’s own writings as they develop, and their linkage to contemporary intellectual and scientific streams of thought, by Petrilli’s sensitive “ear”. There is also a rich selection from the archives of Victoria Welby’s correspondence and papers, as well as reviews of those, in the closing chapters of the book, which ends with appendices and bibliographies of great value for anyone interested in further studies of Lady Welby and the Signific Movement. The integrated archival material, such as hitherto unpublished letters and/or illustrations, such as Culler’s comments on Culler, is also included.

Who was Lady Welby? Ladie Welby was born as Lady Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart–Wortley into the highest circles of the English nobility. She was named...
after Queen Alexandrina Victoria, who was her godmother. In 1863 she married Sir William, the Earl Welby. Lady Welby lacked formal education. She studied on her own, through, among other things, travelling, reading and experiencing life with her mother as a child and later on through her extensive correspondence, Lady Welby communicated with 450 interlocutors, who were to make up the ‘Welby Circle’. Lady Welby’s intellectual work was very much developed in dialogue with others. 

During 1870–80 Lady Welby expanded her correspondence significantly and it came to include a wide range of interests, and many important names within contemporary philosophy such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Henri P. Bergson, Michel Bréal, Rudolph Carnap, Thomas A. Huxley, Henry and William James, Charles K. Ogden, Bertrand Russell, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, George Bernard Shaw and Ferdinand Tönnies. Last but not least, Lady Welby’s correspondence with women such as Lucy L. Clifford and Mary Everest Boole was important for her intellectual development. With the former, for example, Welby discussed the issue of identity, and in a polemic with positivism advocated a relational and semiotic perspective (1861). Welby’s understanding of subjectivity involves the idea that it is dialogical in nature and as such a result of the interplay between “a plurality of selves” (1849). Peirce expressed much the same view in his conception of ‘tuism’. However, as Sonesson (2000) points out, the limit between ego and other is erased in Peirce’s version, and might perhaps be “a plurality of selves” (149). Peirce expressed much the same view in his conception of ‘tuism’. However, as Sonesson (2000) points out, the limit between ego and other is erased in Peirce’s version, and might perhaps be

What is meaning? However, at some places, a slightly different terminology is evident:

For we begin with a vague “sense” which is a response to a stimulus. This becomes gradually more consciously attending to that level which we call “feeling,” and involving more and more definitely that which we call “mind”, a word which in its turn suggestively connotes in popular usage, will, desire, intention, memory [i.e. some sort of General in Peirce’s terms; my note] (in Petrilli, 23, n.1)

Welby’s triad indicates three levels of meaning:

These levels indicate a progressive increase, quantitative and qualitative, in the order of interpretation, signification, and expression, therefore in practical import, capacity for incisiveness and relevance in the ever more complex dimensions of life, whether in the intellectual spheres or in everyday life. The term “sense” has different meanings: those to refer to the world of the senses understood in biological terms, the world of sensual perception, perceptual experience, to the properly biological sense of “nourishment in”, and in connection with values, ideology, and social programs; “meaning” is the general term for signifying processes, as well as the second term in Welby’s triad indicating meaning intention; while “significance” indicates the overall effect, import and value of signifying processes. (in Petrilli, 264)

Petrilli (255) writes:

What is meaning? (1890) was a prize for his essay “Philosophical Terminology.” The essay was published in Petrilli’s volume: “What is meaning?” (1890) was a prize for his essay “Philosophical Terminology.” The essay was published in Petrilli’s volume: 

What is meaning?

from one sign and sign system to another” (20–21).

various values, augmented in the ongoing translative processes define the value of ‘experience’. The “highest value of “significance” indicates the overall effect, import and value of signifying processes. (in Petrilli, 264)

In the early essays “Meaning and Metaphor” (1893) and “Interpretation” (1896) that preceded What is meaning? Welby was specifically occupied with the problem of language, meaning and interpretation.

In any case, meaning - in the widest sense, such as “meaning” is the only value of whatever “fact” presents itself to us. Without this, to observe and record appearances or occurrences would become the unthinkably wearisome task. Significance is the one value of all that consciousness brings, or that intelligence deals with; the one value of life itself (in Petrilli, 429)

As can be seen, the problem of the context’s (which Welby defined in comprehensive terms) significance for conveying meaning to any word (or in broader sense, any sign), is at stake throughout these writings. As Petrilli (441) writes:

Welby underlines the need to critique language, to judge and value the power of words and expressions, and to better define their meanings in light of the context of discourse which they somehow include. The terms “person”, “self”, “religion” are signalled as examples. Reference to the larger context is necessary for the purpose of minimizing the negative effects of misunderstanding and improving the work of conceptualization.

In connection with Welby’s semiotic approach she wanted, on the one hand, to criticize what she saw as the excessive side of the terms ‘common sense’ (‘simple’ meaning), and on the other, something as a priori to language. Welby theorized the latter (already present in Lois and Clax from 1883) Welby within the frames of her conception “mother-sens,” or “primal sense” (142).

Another substantial contribution to the field was the “Welby Prize” his book The Articulate, that awarded the prize for the best essay in the journal Significs, Mind, which Welby announced in 1896. The German sociologist and philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) was granted the prize for his essay “Paradox in Mental Evolution” (Sept. 1890) and “An Apparent Mental Evolution?” (Dec. 1890). Welby also anticipated a specific field of modern semiotics, namely biosemiotics, or “global semiotics” (the latter paper contains references to Darwin, among others), with “her studies on the relation between signs and life, signs and evolution” (128), and she anticipated the branch of ‘semiotics’ of the Bari school, introduced by Petrilli and Antonio Ponzi. Another genre important for Welby’s mode of expression was the essay, which included in Petrilli’s volume: They were short and privately printed. Apart from the major monographs mentioned earlier, Welby wrote two books on reflection (enquiries published in Petrilli’s volume): Grains of Sense and Signs and interconnections as examples. Reference to the larger context is necessary for the purpose of minimizing the negative effects of misunderstanding and improving the work of conceptualization.

Grais of Sense marks a different phase of Welby’s work, and moves away from the religious sphere to problems of scientific matters, such as anthropology, philosophy, pedagogy and linguistics in the light of significs. The importance of the notion ‘sense’ is given a more significant and elaborate role in What is meaning? (1902) as it is used to adequately define the value of ‘experience’. The ‘highest value of sense experience is identified in ‘significance’, that is, in sense that emerges in the relations between signs and values, and is an a priori to language expressed in the zone of the sign and sign system to another” (20–21).

In 1896 in the essay “Sense, Meaning and Interpretation,” Welby introduced the term ‘Significs’, alongside ‘Semioethics’ referring to ‘mother-sens’ as a possible alternative. Petrilli (255) writes:

Significs separates the verb to signify which evinces only the dual semantic valency of the concept of meaning, linguistic and valuable; and different terms such as ‘semioethics’, ‘social semantics’, it was completely free from technical associations. However, we have seen, Peirce viewed Welby’s triad as part of logic but Welby insisted (in a letter to Peirce on the 18th Nov. 1903) that “Significs”, as a philosophy
of 'significance' (the third level of her meaning), was to be regarded as a "practical extension" of 'significance' (the third level of her meaning) in order to underline her philosophical system.

One reason for regarding laws as thoughts is that a law like a thought is "general in referring to all possible things" and "independent of the time and place" (379). In fact, Peirce criticizes Welby for not including thirdness within her conception of time, thus excluding an important part of the field. However, Peirce continues by saying that the method "is a pure idea of Secondness [...]'. (in Peirce, 397)

What, then, does Peirce suggest? Further along in the letter to Welby, Peirce writes:

There is one of the main branches of geometry, Topics, which alone occupies itself with properties of Space itself; namely, with the order of connecting parts. This has been little studied, and no regular method for treating it is known to the authors. It seems to me that the problem of Space cannot be treated in the same way as the problem of Time, because, according to him, language did not manifest the dependent nature of time on space "except in the matter of expression in speech" (i.e. in a conventional way, language being such as to its own terms). About a month later Peirce wrote to Welby:

It appears to me that the method of designating temporal relations by their analogies with spatial relations must date from the very beginnings of speech. [...] Therefore I imagine the method took rise between two persons who met and endeavoured to communicate partly by words and partly by signs. These persons would be together with a common spatial environment, which was visible, and in which they moved, and which would be 'painted out' by gesture. It would therefore be particularly easy to form a terminology for spatial relations. [...] Hence, if you do not assume a dependence of Time on Space to be otherwise independently proved, it appears to me that circumstances would nevertheless infallibly drive those two persons to the expression of temporal relations through their analogies with spatial relations.

However, Peirce was not alone in viewing time as being dependent on space. The French contemporary philosopher Henri Bergson, for instance, held a similar view, as mentioned in a letter to G. F. Stout (1903–1905). Now, the issue of time was dealt with before her essay of 1907 in her correspondence, and appended excerpts from it may give some idea of how she would have discussed the issue. For note here are comments on Welby's papers by W.R. Sorley (also from 1903–1905) which touch upon this theme mixed by Peirce's reflections on the problem of the connection between language, mind and the state of things in the world. Sorley asks:

What is the ground of this assertion that time is a derivative from space? Am I right in saying that the only argument is the philological that time conceived is a derivative of space conceived in spatial metaphors? I have not elsewhere seen so complete a working out of the idea of spatial relations and if this is rightly done, it must throw strong light on Topics, while if it is not rightly done it will do nothing for the discussion on time, which is here accounted for, to some extent at least, illustrates Peirce's polyphonic to Welby's triadic, as Peirce is concerned about significance, while Welby's ideas, namely by showing (in the form of excerpts and appendices) the context in which they emerged.

In What is Meaning? Welby also introduced the term 'translation' by underlining its broad scope; much in line with Roman Jakobson's (1896–1982) notions of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translations from the essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959) which have been further developed by Petrilli elsewhere. In order to elucidate her ideas on translation and analogy, Welby presented some experiments: a translation of Dr. Hughlings Jackson's "Lecture on the Nervous System" (1884) in which physiology is turned into religious language use. She also made an inversion of the same transposing religious language into a physiological one. These experiments fit well with Welby's general idea of translation as an intellectual process. As Petrilli puts it: "Translating thinking processes into analogical and semiotic processes at large, in which something stands for something else, its meaning, which is generated in fact through the translation of signs into other signs, into different types of signs and different sign systems" (528). The latter indicates what Welby coined the 'homological method' (along with the 'analitical method'), which denoted the process of relating, according to him, by translation in a broad sense, things that might seem very distant from each other. Welby borrowed the term from the biological sciences. Petrilli again: "Beyond surface resemblances and analogies, the homological method searches for profound generical, structural, functional and dynamical relationships among the terms of reference in question. [...] Welby warned against the error of exchanging analog or surface similarity with homology or generical-structural similarity" (532).

Peirce's model reminds us of Peirce's interpretive-cognitive model, containing the idea that the meaning of a sign is further developed by another sign (its interpretant), in a continuous, never ending chain of signs, such that the chain never ends (552). Often enough this process implies a multiplying of signs, for instance, the number of words increases along the way. For Peirce, "the meaning of a sign is [...] parallelised by growth in significance," and involves the accumulation of knowledge not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative and ethical terms. The qualitative aspects in Welby seem to match Peirce's conception of the final interpretant (something to strive for). Translation is a topic central to other philosophers of language such as Bakhtin and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and Petrilli shows how Welby's thoughts may be linked to ideas present in these scholars' work. When it comes to Wittgenstein it is not the issue of relating, but the forward the relation between Wittgenstein's notion of "proposition" and Welby's "pictorial symbol" and "representative action", all being "signifying units" (541). Petrilli reads Welby's theory of translation in the light also of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's (1921-1985) works. Notably, the relationship between Welby's concept of "common language" (from What is Meaning?), also expressed in terms of "common sense" or "common meaning" and Rossi-Landi's concept "common speech" later developed in the term "social reproduction" (542-3). Petrilli relates "common language" to the meaning of "semantic material" to underline the idea that different languages are part of and form a "single historical natural language, as well as the different historical-natural languages, cultures and sign systems" (544-5). "Common meaning" implies a replication of referencing in some sense universal, "an a priori community" generating differences and variations through expression.

It seems to me that the "common meaning" used by Welby might be connected to a further fundamental term in her work, namely, "motherSense" or "primarsense", as her publishers preferred. And it is via Peirce that we may not only explain Welby's terms motherSense, also the relationship to Welby's notion of "primarsense" (572), but also the connection of the former to "common meaning." Petrilli production suggests that Welby's work might be further explored in the light of Peirce's three categories (discussed above), and thereby in connection with his notions qualisense, molition and habit. Welby writes in a paper entitled "Primordial Sense and Significs", dated 15 April 1907.
The connection between Mother-sense and Significs may be put like this: Primal Sense is what takes up and supplies to us the material of immediate awareness, conscious and interpretative. It is thus at once primordial and universal, at all stages of human development [...]. (in Petrilli, 574)

However, as Welby stresses in the same paper, “the greatest of all special gifts, the rationalising Intellect: which has not only to criticize, but also to reason out and construct from, the domain of Mother-sense - its warnings, its insights and insights, its revelations, its swift reading of worth, its penetrative reality” (in Petrilli, 574). If we look at Peirce’s discussion in an undated manuscript published in Collected Papers with the title “Forms of Consciousness,” we may establish some possible links to Lady Welby:

Feeling is the momentarily present contents of consciousness taken in its pristine simplicity, and might be called primisense. Altersense is the consciousness of a directly present other, seconding us. Malisense is the consciousness of a thirdness, or medium between primisense and altersense, leading from the former to the latter. It is the consciousness of a process of bringing to mind. [...] Altersense has two modes, Sensation and Will. Malisense has three modes, Abstraction, Suggestion, Association. (CP 2:55) in Petrilli, 577

One is tempted to connect Welby’s notions of mother-sense and common meaning through Peirce’s definition of altersense, and in doing so, establish a link (at least in some respects) between the former term, in its turn, to this triad of Peirce (as mother-sense gives rise to the “rationalising Intellect,” also called “father reason,” with which it is in a dialectical relation). Petrilli, on the basis of the correspondence between Welby and Peirce, extends these connections, when writing: “Opening the to this triad of Peirce (as mother-sense gives rise to the other second, withstanding us. Medisense has two modes, Sensation and Will. Malisense has three modes, Abstraction, Suggestion, Association. (CP 2:55) in Petrilli, 577

References


2010 McLAREN-LAMBERT AWARD


The journal is delighted to be acknowledged as the publisher of this prize-winning essay. It may be found online in the SSR Archives at http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/.

This article renews the idea of animation as a precursor to the cinematic form, drawing on research into the works of one of its historical progenitors, Emilie Reynaud. This is a deconstructionist text that references related arguments from the author, providing a deeper excavation of the contention that ‘cinema is animation’ while offering a detailed account of Reynaud’s pre-film work. The selection committee was comprised of Tom Klein (Chair), Richard Stam, Chris Carter, Adam de Beer, and Romana Turina. Dr. Cholewinski is former Head of Department and Senior Lecturer in Film and Animation Studies at the University of Sydney, where he now holds the title of Honorary Associate.

The McLaren-Lambart Award is an annual honour bestowed by the Society for Animation Studies (S.A.S.) to one of its members, recognizing an outstanding contribution made to animation studies in the previous 2 years. Tracing the origins of this prize to a collaborative award with Canada’s National Film Board, it is named for NFB animators Norman McLaren and Evelyn Lambart.
Information Enough
By Inna Semetsky

This review essay is a series of musings inspired by J.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstrom's book, Cybersemiotics: Why information is not enough (2008). It is almost ironic how instrumental rationality in the modern world of computerization and mysticism has become the target of binary opposites. While acknowledging what the pure reason of modernity considered to be a supernatural action, any attempt to explain it was made in terms of the natural science from the perspective of the logic of explanation and causality. Naturally enough, the term natural has been habitually taken in its reductive sense of a linear direct cause-effect connection pertaining to the very nature of the scientific facts as if describing the whole of Nature. The 'prompt' conclusion arrived at by means of syllogistic reasoning was simple: either anomalous effect or anomalous cause. Brier's volume not only problematizes this logic by bringing biosemiotics into discourse in science, but also breathes life into science per se.

Importantly, as Brier notices at the outset, his book is an extended and updated synthesis of many previously published articles from as early as 1992 and supervenes all of the above. He is motivated by the desire to create a knowledge paradigm independent from ideological concerns (I leave it to readers to decide whether it is ever possible or even desirable). Brier begins his "quest for cybersemiotics" (3) by revisiting cognitive revolution and the birth of research programs in information science against which he proposes to formulate a new transdisciplinary framework that combines "Peirce's semiotics, second-order cybernetics, Luhmann's systems theory, cognitive semantics, and language game theory" (4). This is an ambitious project, and understandably my brief essay won't be able to offer a fair review of and/or critique of all the areas addressed in the book.

My argument is that, contra Brier, information is very much enough—but if and only if we will have reconceptualized it very much in nature! In support of this I will invoke the cutting edge science of coordination dynamics (Kelso and Engstrom 2006) as well as the current program of transdisciplinarity developed and conducted by physiologist and philosopher Basarab Nicolescu. I think that both sources not only can but should inform contemporary research in semiotics. Brier freely fluctuates between different discourses (social science, natural science—especially biology, philosophy—especially phenomenology but with a twist of metaphysics—linguistics etc.) under the following motto: "I am presenting a new theory; clearly, then, I am not fully satisfied by the old theories. Yet each of these older theories provides useful concepts that have helped me in my search for a framework broad enough to encompass our present experience and knowledge" (5).

The blend of old and new theories is seen in the titles of the book's three chapters, which occupy nearly 500 pages and include the following (slightly paraphrased for brevity). "The Problem of the Information-Processing Paradigm as a Candidate for a Unified Science of Information"; "The Self-Organization of Knowledge"; "An Ethological Approach to Cognition"; "Bateson's Concept of Information in Light of the Theory of Autopoiesis"; "Voiron's Coherence of Information"; "Towards an Integrated Meta-phenomenology"; "Integration of Umlaufslehre, Ethology, and Peircean Biosemiotics"; "An Evolutionary View on the Threshold between Semiosis and Information Ecology" (Kelso and Engstrom 1998). The book is a rich collection of information, Signification, Cognition, and Communication; "The Five-Level Cybersemiotics". In addition, Brier offers a chapter on the practical problem of information and document systems. While the claims, can be subverted by means of cybersemiotics.

The overall paradigm that assists Brier in developing his new theory is Peirce's triadic semiotics but the sources are many. Here are the few: Bertalanffy, Bohm, Deely, Emmeche, Gadamer, Heidegger, Hoffmeyer, Hesse, Husserl, Janich, Kochoff and Johnson, Lorenz, Merleau-Ponty, Noth, Popper, Rhein, Rusek, Seboek, Spencer-Brown, Suzuki, Varela, Wiener, Wittgenstein.

Among Brier's extensive endnotes I would like to single out one. In a time consuming comparison of Herman Hesse's masterpiece Magister Ludi also known as the Glass Bead Game and which is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of the whole of culture not unlike the organist playing pipes on the organ. However the range of this magisterial ‘organ’ is the entire intellectual cosmos and, hence, is capable of reproducing, at least in theory, the full intellectual content of the universe.

The game is played with ‘ideas’ like with musical notes in a fugue and portates of the new symbolic language that can simultaneously represent the structure immanent to the ideas it expresses; as well as having its own means of symbolic, albeit hierarchically, expression. Brier concludes that "Magister Ludi is a manifesto for the reintegration of intellectual life with the ‘real’ world, of intellectual and mystic enlightenment with practice… We are in serious need of a broader global view of knowledge and enlightenment to individuals as well as in society" (443).

The word "enlightenment" in this context seems, however, to be slightly problematic. Rather than using a specific word that traditionally highlights reason over the extrapositional considerations of modern thought, I think that creative parentheses illumination will have captured Brier's idea better. Indeed, Peirce (as Brier's major intellectual inspiration) appears to be the first post-modern (post-postmodern) philosopher (Deely 2003; Griffin 1993) and his semiotics as the science of signs partakes of post-modern critique of the Cartesian subject who stays forever separated from the world of objects that he can observe with the cool gaze of an independent spectator, a scientist, informed by the positivist paradigm stemming from modernity's culture of Enlightenment.

The triadic nature of a Peircean sign, however, makes a "scientific observer" the very participant in the process of semiosis. A genuine sign as such encompasses a triad comprising, as John Dewey said, "the observing, and the observed" (Dewey 1991: 97). The act of observing plays the role of a Peircean interpreter: knowledge is embodied in action making a transaction defined as an "unfractured observation" (Bld.3) the minimal unit of analysis. Such participation in the reality of that what is produced was indeed a distinguished feature of mystical, post-modern thought. In this regard, Brier's basic premise is "everyday science" to be the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' interpreter that he can use a squiggle, ~, for pinpointing the relation, the symbolic punctuation for reconceiving the apparently dualistic opposites and assert that in "the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self" (2006: 233). A self- referential relation is what establishes all of its correlations between/across the different levels constituting a complex system.

Different disciplines have their own complementary pairs that, rather than being alien to each other in the manner of Cartesian dualism, are connected via what Kelso and Engstrom specify and present as coordination dynamics. Among complementary pairs in which the terms are related, or coordinated in a bipolar interdependent manner are the following: cause-effect; so-called 'point external', rationalism empiricalism; science-humanities; organism-environment; immuno-transcendence; body-mind; nature-nurture; yin-yang being-coming; certainty-mortality; material-spiritual; and so on ad infinitum.

Different "selfother" (self/not-self pairs do belong to the variety of discourses; their commonality derived from the same relational dynamics, which is "contained" in the logic of the included middle. Brier's one chief "enemy" is logic—"but I think we should be careful here to not confuse the logic of the exclusion middle that continues to haunt us since the time of Aristotle with the creative logic of the included middle (cf. Semetsky 2006) as foundational for semiotics understood as the science of signs; notwithstanding the fact that the same logic was also a province of mystical experiences (even if unknown to mystics per se).

The included middle is grounded in the relational dynamics enabled by likeness/similarity, correspondence, or anything between different levels of reality, Peirce, for example, emphasized the utility of likeness to mathematicians and compared an algebraic formula to an iconic sign, rendered such by the rules of communication, association and distribution of the symbols. Such an unorthodox logic as semiotics (realistically, a contradiction in terms within a strictly analytic reasoning) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Katzman calls virtual, or archaic, logic that “goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility” (Kaufman 1996: 293) as well as beyond given signs into an interpretative symbols, meanings and values. The emphasis on communication indicates that there is an interdependent network in which each level speaks to each other, desperately trying to encode each other's expressive language, thus creating shifty meanings along the communicative link expressed by the title. Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites and truly coordinate complement a theoretical epi-genome with practical praxenosis resulting from the feedback between high-level general knowledge and action. The apparent dichotomies and antinomies of 'either/or' habitual thinking are: transcended and traversed by virtue of the "both-and" science of a coordination dynamics equally applicable to natural and social-cultural systems that together are embedded in a flow of semiosis. The infamous ‘observer’ (one or many) comprising the

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human experience per se, would be ‘located’ precisely at this included middle-in-between what appears to us as two disparate Cartesian substances of body and mind.

As Deely points out, at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience is a sign - a symbolic interaction of nature - structure mediated and sustained by signs (Deely 1990: 5). The levels in the complex semiotic system are not immediately connected with each other but insulated by the interpretant of the third category: the generic 'interpretant', either human or non-human; and, it is the very mediation or interpretation that enables the emergence of the notion of meaning for the interep for the inerpreter in the form of meaning. As Peirce said, signs are in fact signs only when interpreted. Still, the information is always already here, embedded in sensuous everyday reality, its implicit, virtual form, meaning is "altogether virtual … it is contended not in what is actually thought, but in what this thought may be because it is possible…" (Deely CP 5, 289). Being virtual, it does not make its potential informational content less real (cf. Deleuze, 1994).

The transference of information between levels is what enables the evolution of signs, the very process of semiosis a complex system grows, indeed, because it 'learns' by virtue of making the information meaningful in its actual context in neural network terminology, would be qualified as unsupervised learning (1998:100), which is contrasted with conventional training models of knowledge structure. I believe that this is what Brier means when he says that "information is not enough". I believe what he wants to say is that it is a particular output- input linguistic model that is "not enough" and with which he engages in shadow-boxing. It is the included third of the interpretation (in any guise) that, by creating a self-referential feedback, expands the boundaries of "what is telling with it" with information that as such acquires meaning.

Signs are the patterns of coordinated, interpretive activity comprising "embodied cognition" (Kelko and Enstrom 2006: 89) analogous to that invoked by Brier (referring to Lakof and Johnson). However, if we examine the interpretants of the semiotic signs, dynamics is that the interaction (the included third, the interpretant in the Peircean triad) is a priori informational and the dynamic (or sign) systems are "informationally based" (Kelko and Enstrom 2006: 9); information is what establishes psychophysical unity thereby confirming what Peirce was saying more than a century ago: "The old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance, will hardly find defenders today" (Peirce CP 6:24, quoted in Brier, 2003).

However, and again in agreement with Peirce, old thoughts die hard. In the language of the science of coordination dynamics, a genuine Peircean triad is comprised by a complementary triad: sign–interpretant–context (keeping in mind that the flow of semiosis is unlimited) is a dance of particles folding back on themselves "(Deely 1995: 157): analog (virtual) - digital (measured) - and analog again at the level of human actions (actual).

The reference to Leibniz brings to mind yet another of Brier's targets: algorithmic perception as a science project began by Leibniz and today continued, with much more traditional computational intelligence (AI) than Peircean 'interpretant', either human or non-human; and, it is the very mediation or interpretation that enables the emergence of the notion of meaning for the interep for the inerpreter in the form of meaning. As Peirce said, signs are in fact signs only when interpreted. Still, the information is always already here, embedded in sensuous everyday reality, its implicit, virtual form, meaning is "altogether virtual … it is contended not in what is actually thought, but in what this thought may be because it is possible…" (Deely CP 5, 289). Being virtual, it does not make its potential informational content less real (cf. Deleuze, 1994).

In this sense Leibniz's unframed project relates to the cutting edge of philosophy of mind and cognitive science that understands computers as dynamical systems that indeed manipulate 'bits', but these units of information are reducible only to what in physics would be called particles. They are moments in the flow represented at large by analog (and not solely digital) information: it is the remnant of Peirce's process of 'being' and defined as discrete 'bits' within a certain context only, that is, always holistically as parts of the whole (cf. Rockwell 2007: 128).

Sure enough, we can hardly grasp this deep knowledge because we habitually stay in the prison-house of verbal language and use the language of propositions that subscribes to the logic of the: the excluded middle, to yes or no, to true or false. A novel language of expression pertaining to span, even if you are virtual, virtually nothing, that is "not enough". Such is the vocabulary of the modern scientific community; the language is isomorphic with the concepts designated by them; and yet "fragmentary project...remain[ed] utopian" (Noctem 1995: 217), acknowledged by Peirce as pre-ordinarily as parts of the visible, sensible, world in which we live.

Brier asserts that "[t]rue information… becomes the organizational aspect of nature" (354), but notes that with regard to information "a fullledged metaphysics is underdeveloped" (Brier 2004/2007): it refers to "the expression of things and to how things become what they are through an unfolding of potential into actual" (Brier 2007: 60). Still, it is this apparent nothingness as a virtual potential informational "field [that] produces effects, and these can be perceived" (Laudo, 2004/2007: 7). "Trends in a Peircean pramagmatic sense are the field of the observable, sensible, world in which we live.

In the universe perfused with signs information and computation are everywhere: it is all there. It is potential information is actively everywhere, therefore not direct causal connection except for the relations of semiosis, being interwoven into a whole by means of the interconnecting network of quantum. Semiosis as such is this interconnected network between the different locations in space and events in different points in such connections are... "nonlocal" in the natural science and "transpersonal" in consciousness research (ibid., 68). Physicist David Bohm emphasized that in holism therefore is no direct causal connection except for the relations of semiosis, being interwoven into a whole by means of the interconnecting network of quantum. Semiosis as such is this interconnected network between the different locations in space and events in different points in such connections are... "nonlocal" in the natural science and "transpersonal" in consciousness research (ibid., 68).
generic terms, sign/vehicle, sense, and referent, the path of mediation, represented by a dotted line between a sign/vehicle and a referent, must be present.

The coordinating relation (akin to the dotted line) is ubiquitous. Kelso and Engstrom, however, point to a separation of class of coordination, like physical laws in general, are matter-independent, they are function- and context-dependent; they govern (hence make relatively predictable) “the flow of functional information” in systems at the instant. It is the coordination that produces meaning (or “sense” in North’s trilogy). This means that, “natural, Neo-Platonistic, ‘equation’ or ‘premise’ system defines itself relationally to the framework of science of coordination dynamics; it is expressed in the form of another complementary pair, unity–duality. Kauffman (2010) gives an example that unites one-all of the above, which, at a band, which appears to be a paradoxological structure if not for understanding that it is the perspective of an observer and context that produce a paradox.

This also means that our very sentence is an emergent property and not rule-based, that is, it cannot be founded on merely propositional thought and logoscentric. Perhaps this is what Brier is getting at when he argues against algorithmic computation. The attention to different regimes of signs becomes imperative and Leibniz’s unfinished project must be completed. Kelso and Engstrom indicate the no-lossopatic origins of intentional action. The project begun by Leibniz reflects the integration of knowledge representation. In analytic philosophy the representational system presupposes a class of things represented which are not representations themselves, hence ‘outside’ language and outside of the mind. For example, the poetry, or personal, metaphorical language, which “represents” symbolically or indirectly via meditation, cannot be ‘objective’ in describing reality. But the reality is habitually taken as the empirically observable physical reality induced as such to the level of Peircean Secondness ignoring the fact that:

The Universe as an argument is necessarily a great work of art, a great poem — for every fine argument is a poem and symphony — just as every true poem and symphony — just as every true poem is a sound argument. But let us compare it rather with a painting — with an impressionistic seaside piece — then every Quality in a Premiss is one of the elementary coloured particles of the Painting... The total effect is beyond our ken but we can appreciate in some measure the resultant Quality of parts of the whole (Peirce, CP 5. 119 quoted in Brier, 384).

The make the total effect “our ken” we will have to realize Leibniz’s project and to learn the signs’ “silent discourse” (Semetsky 2010a).

To conclude, I would like to refer to the project of transdisciplinarity addressed by Basarab whose book Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity was published in 2005. The Transdisciplinary Program of Nicolis’s Center for Transdisciplinary Research should become a valuable complement to any research project in semiotics. Niclos’s advocates overcoming the split between sciences and humanities and contends that the term “transdisciplinarity” was initially coined by Jean Piaget in 1970 to indicate something across and between the disciplinary divides. Transdisciplinary knowledge belongs to what Niclos specifies as “in vivo knowledge that exceeds scientific knowledge of the external world as independent from the subject. Bound to the internal world of human subjectivity, it necessarily includes a system of values and meanings exceeding objective facts alone. Yet, transdisciplinary knowledge does not reject science; what it rejects is science. Below is a Table 1 addressing the Disciplinary and transdisciplinary in the case of knowledge:

Table 1: Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge. Adapted and considerably developed in the context of this paper from Niclos at https://www.metamexus.net/conference2005/pdf/niclos.pdf (accessed 15 November, 2005).

Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge stay in a complementary relation to each other. Disciplinary, in vivo, knowledge is based on the classical logic of the excluded middle that induces a separation between subject and object and reduces the meaning of knowledge to knowing merely the facts of the external world. The new transdisciplinary or in vivo knowledge is founded on the logic of the included middle so that subject and object come par to each other. They are in a triadic contra dixide relation; they are in correspondence (NB: French Varella designated such a correspondence as a differentiation between a complex, autopoietic, that is, self-referential, system structured, sure enough, as a network of signs; Brier indeed acknowledges the importance of Varella’s contribution to his cybersemiotics; see Index on p. 470).

Transdisciplinary knowledge is based on the logic where terms form a bipolar semantic-orientative pair versus being binary opposites. In in vivo knowledge is not a static knowledge of the facts per se but a dynamic understanding of meanings that by necessity brings in the dimension of values which is traditionally (in vivo) considered ‘subjective’, that is, located outside normal science. Epistemology and ethics alike transcend the confines of an individual ego or Cartesian Cogito and cannot be separated from the collective, social, domain: the individual society, too, is a complementary pair in which the terms of the triadic relation sustain each other by the reoccurring symbol ‘÷’5 2. In the latest issue of the journal Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion, Niclos (2009: 2470 points out that “a new system of values can appear only through the dialogue between different domains of knowledge, between different cultures and different religions. This system does yet not exist.”

I think that this ethical dimension should now become the core of semiotic research so in establishing what North has recently called “intercultural competence” (2011: 9) and which is an urgent matter in our present content that displays diverse “signs of the times” (Semetsky 2003) amidst cultural conflicts and the clash of values at the global level. The language of signs that can ‘speak’ in characters denoting meanings and values — shared meanings and values — needs to be understood.

Inna Semetsky is a researcher in education and the arm at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her Web site <http://www.innassa.com/> contains a wealth of material about her recent activities.

References
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Wikileaks provides a familiar glimpse into the future of networked knowledge. It is an effect of the slow erosion of the distinction between classified and declassified information. This erosion is the consequence of the manner in which documents are stored and accessed and the inability of their keepers to make guarantees about their security once digitally archived and networked. This is both familiar and startling at the same time.

Dutch digital culture expert Geert Lovink (2010) put it well last August. Wikileaks is more of a quantitative leap than a qualitative game changer. It provides the leaked materials as content courtesy of the US military, US Army analyst Bradley Manning, charged in May 2010 with leaking the Afghan War documents (after the hacker-informant Adrian Lamo turned him in; see Goldstein 2010), and does a reasonable job at presentation by offering a few pointers about the characteristics of the kinds of documents at issue, such as the difference between layers of classification, etc. It may edit these documents in some manner, and attempt to verify them, but it doesn’t generate a discourse or context of interpretation; it does provide access to original documents, however, which deepens reportage. For much of this it relies on its established journalist partners, especially The Guardian, Der Spiegel, El País, Le Monde, and on-and-off again The New York Times.

Make no mistake, Wikileaks is putting its shoulder squarely into the mountain of classified documents, and raises a few storms of dust, at least momentarily. Recent attempts to estimate the extent of classification of documents suggests that it contrrips declassification by three to five times (Galison 2004). Wikileaks cannot possibly catch-up and right this democratic deficit or keep pace in any serious way, despite its impressive stock of captured materials. Its source documents are quantitatively arresting, but not in the context of what it is measured against, especially over time.

The fact that Wikileaks is so readily reducible to the figure of non-editor-in-chief Julian Assange is one of the reasons why as an organization it is vulnerable. Certainly, Assange has made some deals with blue chip mainstream news corporations and has a group of hackers - Anonymous - to defend his interests and counterattack (via what they call a LOIC: Low Orbit Ion Cannon type of DDoS attack under the rubric of ‘Operation Payback’) against the financial service sector players like MasterCard, Visa and PayPal that have closed its accounts (and the blocking off the site for Library of Congress staff). Wikileaks’s counterassay that credit card companies like more stable revenue streams from porn and gambling is acute. Such is this relationship, and reassuringly unstable because use of the LOIC is traceable and, as has been recently shown, not ‘anonymous’ for hacktivists at all (Peat et al. 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned or Wikileaks really believes in transparency at any cost.

Where Assange is personally threatened, his only recourse is to up the ante by more and more spectacular disclosures. His behaviour becomes less complex and more fragmented. He doesn’t deepen our understanding of what he is doing and why. Rather, he plunges everyone into a politics in which he becomes a case, lepally, and psychopolitically, and this is what comes to dominate and drive the story, while the material awaits constructive narratives and actionability.

On the other side of the menu, there are the state agencies which lament their loss of control over secure information, and their right to privatize it, feeding the growing creature of the security industry. Then the security intellectuals enter the fray. Some, like University of Calgary’s Tom Flanagan (Wilton 2010), can’t control themselves and seek frontier justice: the fact is that the universities, too, want in on this frenzied commodification of information. They want to rush through the revolving door arms-in-arm with the state and private business the ‘cyberprofessionals’ wading Deep Packet Inspection tools sanctioned under US Cybersecurity Act of 2009, see Project Censored 2010) to get in on the game to which they have been summoned as newly minted entrepreneurs. Academics, too, can play at and with secrecy, despite the openness of the profession and protocols around the presentation of research results. These, too, are changing.


The lesson of Wikileaks is not revealed in the content; we knew that diplomats are paid to lie and that the military get paid for shooting civilians. But in the activation of solidarity, complicity and collaboration between independent part-timers, between cognitive workers of various kinds: hardware technicians, programmers, journalists who work together and share the same goal of destabilising totalitarian power. From this lesson, the rebels find their way to self-organization of the general intellect.

Recourse to a revised Marxist concept of “general intellect” underlines how general human semiosis is mobilized by a self-organizing cognitariat, otherwise exploited within the extensive electronic networks of post-Fordist production, in defence of Wikileaks. The traits of these semiotic modalities are heterogeneous and scattered across the cybersphere, yet seem to lack a corporal body. The offline bodies of the hackers working to further the Wikileaks adventure have not yet appeared in this drama. For Bifo, diverse elements of the cognitariat are self-organizing and assembling a general intellect that doesn’t require, at least in its preliminary phases, an identifiable body, but rather coalesce semiotically around a common political project against state secrecy and for the catch and release of hitherto silenced knowledge. Against security—that is the timely call to the cognitariat to destabilize the master narrative of our time (Neocleous 2008), the critique of which exposes the kinds of subjectivities it produces and the violence it exercises.

The breakthrough into the world of classified information that Wikileaks has provided will need to be followed by more robust and sophisticated qualitative and, ultimately, actionable assessments of the dataset and the consequences of these interpretations will be the measure of this unfolding lesson for the sons and daughters of Wikileaks.

Gary Genosko is editor of The Semiotic Review of Books.

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