Time and Translation

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In her collection of essays, *Anecdotal Theory*, Jane Gallop proposes an alternative to a formal academic rhetoric by using an initiating personal anecdote as a theoretical basis for a thesis presentation. In order to produce a more literary theory, Gallop writes, she "experimented in the 1980s with writing in which [she] would recount an anecdote and then attempt to 'read' that account for the theoretical insights it afforded" (2002: 3, emphasis added). "Anecdotal theory would cut through" the "oppositions of "anecdote" and "theory," she adds, "in order to produce theory with a better sense of humour, theorising which honours the uncanny detail of lived experience." To apply that principle here, I will begin with a story about John Deely, the contemporary American philosopher and semiotician.

**Rubber Pencil**

About ten years ago, I was editing a volume of conference-proceedings with John, and I visited his office with the camera-ready manuscript I had typeset. John is meticulous about such things and while we were arguing about something on a page that he claimed wasn’t centred, I told him he was wrong; that he had to be joking.

"Where did you get that from?" he demanded. John Deely was astonished!

But he said he wasn’t.

I walked over to his desk, picked up a pencil, and performed the "rubber pencil" with it (i.e., holding a pencil in the middle between my thumb and index finger and moving it rhythmically up and down to create the appearance of flexibility).

"Did you put that on my desk?"

Finally, after several minutes of explanation he understood the phenomenon and we went back to arguing about the book pages.

My point here is that, in semiotics, believing in decoding is the same as John Deely believing that he saw me flexing a rubber pencil.

And, to some extent, he did. It always looks like rubber when you do that.

The same is true for decoding. If a semiotician connotes the illusion of a reality, then decoding is, indeed, possible.

Still, "decoding" is, in fact, nothing but an illusion.

Decoding is not really possible, and its "end," in the sense of a goal of some kind, is seldom considered in semiotics since it necessarily serves as a strategic "myth" (in Roland Barthes’s sense) for the existence of semiotics as a discipline (or whatever it is).

There is undeniably an agenda, 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 endowances to fix...

An apt illustration of this is found in the common belief (Pierce, 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, do not 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 transcendental signified, despite infinite semiosis. "The impossibility of an ultimate finitude of meaning implies that there have to be partial significations: There is no end in sight, endlessly.

Humans, Nietzsche maintains, have arranged an epistemological "paradigm shift" 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 true and binding designation is invented for things, and this designation of language establishes the first laws of truth" (1873-1889). This is how we "invented knowing" - "Truth is a system of signs, a self-legitimizing and self-legislated enterprise, a belief in the nature of the world, in the dominance of the signified over the signifier" (891). Decoding, accordingly, could be viewed as a "nouveau of a metaphor" (892) or a "conceptual crap game" (893).

**The End of Decoding PART 1**

By Scott Simpkins

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essentially equivalent to the convincing sight of the rubber pencil. Such dishonesty or inaccuracy, however, is accomplished by “creating counterintuitive [theological] evidence,” of course. No longer is decoding a fraudulent enterprise, a hat trick, an act of legendarium, a tremendous con job — a rubber pencil. Yet, a basic practice on a lie remains unaltered, lightly dismissed,” he maintains. “To base a plot upon the (imbolc) the spelling of his name (lower-case letters, although Reinhart also changes his name to “Cummings”). The point here is that whatever gains Reinhart makes, comes with at least an equal risk. If not greater, even 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 reads young patients through group “differential diagnosis” to crack the code of each week’s puzzling malady. During the differential, he and his team throw out diagnosis hypotheses based on even the lowest existing symptom with the way that specific medical problems present themselves. Often, even one member will propose excluding one or more symptoms in order to consider a potentially “valid” hypothesis. If we leave out the hypothesis...). This usually leads to a sarcastic denigration that of this hypothesis proposal since it doesn’t sink into the vast, ever-changing data. The decoder can now focus on 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 hypthesis, but in the end, they will see the situation differently and come up with something (and this happens almost every week) that does include all of the symptoms (which the decoder is close to). But when the patient is suffering from two different medical problems at the same time, and thus the second set of otherwise excluded symptoms actually matches up with those characteristic of the second malady, the decoder will have to wonder if he or she has overlooked some key information that House or his team can literally uncover to produce a substantiable diagnosis. (“Everybody lies,” is Dr. House’s motto, and this is surely for medical semantics as it is for semiotics as a whole. In other words, everybody in semiotics lies — a position consistent with Reinhart’s notion of the unknowability of signifying possibilities of the minister’s appearance, a decoding framework which, while on the surface (as the decoder cannot assert definitely that this figure is the originalpositor of the great mercies of God that ‘s au lieu sans noms”) the decoder which enacts a type of operant conditioning (since it doesn’t gain erlasst sich lesen translation the second time), arguably establishing a semiotic yoking between the encoder and decoder which exacts a type of operant conditionings upon the decoder. 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 as 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 the 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 inhabits an extraneous reality, is an outsider, 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 at the moment of last word of the stranger’s un-nameability: “This old man,” I said at length [and to whom he is speaking], he is ‘the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the revenge of the real world, the order to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is the grossest book that is ever written,” the “Horratian” (i.e., Hawthorne’s) and the demarcation of the great mercies of God that ‘s au lieu sans noms”) this closing line hinges back to the opening reflection that certain men “will not suffer themselves to be revealed” (515-516). This 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 Miniver Black Veil” ([1836], a short story which begins when the parsonesses of the Reverend Mister Hooper “beheld the semblance of” him “pacing slowly his meditative walk towards the meetinghouse” (37-38). Hawthorne’s decision, just prior to the tale’s end, in that “semblance” suggests both resemblance as well as an entity that is a lesser version of an original. The only way to decode the narrator’s veiled hypothesis, indeed, is for the reader to wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper’s pulpit” (18), yet the reader is not given sufficient information to account for this. Conventionally, the reader’s task is to wade only place this “sight” in the category of what Barthes identifies as an “enigma” (52, a sign-vendor read all the more problematic as it is encoded as something unsual, something escaping or even perhaps rendering intelligibility.

“Are you sure it is our parson?” one of the crowd asks the sexton, who functions apparently as the subject who is supposed to be known (38). 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,” or one of the decoder has to wonder how the sexton knows this or anything in the semiotic universe, for that matter, with “certainty.” To return to the narrator’s identification of Hooper’s “semblance,” the decoder cannot assert definitively that this figure 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 crow’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 significance of this particular character, in that the black veil actually serves to open an increasingly larger array of contradictions. 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 off-handedly, that this is indeed “Mr. The New York Times (January 14, 2009) titled “Listening to Schroeder: Peanuts’ Scholar Finds Meaning in the Comics” 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. [34] At first glance, this sense of “decoding” appears to mean that someone believed there actually 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 F. Atkinson’s London Library’s “Peanuts at San Jose State University.” “When Schroeder — the boy who plays piano in the comic strip — "pounded on his piano, his eyes clenched in a trance, the notes floating above his head," Munson wrote, "no random ink spots dropped into the
بة ( inser)
Hooper" (1836: 38). The “one thing remarkable in his appearance,” the narrator adds, is “Swathed about his neck, and hanging, as it were, to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil.”

As is found in film, the narrator appears capable of zooming in on the minister for “closer” inspection, shifting the standpoint to encoding possibilities, all this does is increase the semiotic distortion of the sign vehicle, rather than clarifying it. Without detailing how this perspectival shift is accomplished, we note that “on a nearer inspection,” the view “seemed to consist of two folds of crepe, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but, to no one who intercepted his further to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things.” The emphasis on conjecture is clear here, as the narrator refers to these decodings as actions of “semiotic signifiers” that “are at issue.”

The narrator continues to freight his description of Mr. Hooper with convoluted accretions, noting that he is walking “with this gloomy shade before him...at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men” (1836: 38). So, now the register here is one of gloom and abstraction, the latter of which appears to refer rather to distance. Either the narrator is engaging in the common technique of reflecting the consciousness of the onlookers instead of providing the reader with straightforward, omniscient perspective, or the narrator is merely perceiving Mr. Hooper negatively.

In either case, though, the impression signified by Mr. Hooper is increasingly steered away from a positive, or even neutral, perspective. Although Mr. Hooper “seemed to come friendly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps,” so “wonder-struck were they that his greeting was not returned,” we are told (1836: 38). Here, of course, the interpretive operation vacillates in the other direction, since “wonder-struck” is clearly at least in the neutral decoding zone, and even could be taken as a compliment. Yet the negative infintude appears throughout the story, however. After the non-required greetings, the word on the street is not favourable. “I can’t really feel as if good Mr. Hooper’s face was before me,” one person remarks. “I don’t like it,” another muttered. “He has changed himself into something awful, only by his face.” “Our parson has gone mad!”

Indeed, like the decoding of unintelligible stummi as “noise” (see the Barthes and Atali commentary to follow), Hawthorne’s characters frame the development of Mr. Hooper as a decipherable countriness as “some unaccountable phenomenon,” the narrator reports (1836: 39). Yet, it becomes accountable to common sense: delimiting it as such by labeling it that which cannot be decoded. This quells somewhat the “perturbation” experienced by Mr. Hooper’s parishioners. As Mr. Hooper “passed by the door where the keeper explored still another instance of new-reframing of his significance.” It was strange to observe, how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor,” the narrator notes. “He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder.” The veil becomes in this instance a “mysterious emblem.” “It struck with his measured breath, as he gave it an immobilizing touch of security between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance: as though it were extraneous to all the realm of symbolism: ‘Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?’ theopacity of the veil’s significant force grows so forcefully that “Such was the effect of this simple piece of crepe, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house.”

Then, however, the narrator introduces a directional reversal into this dynamic by speculating one can envision the effect of the veil, in its effect, alters the semiotic effect of those Mr. Hooper sees while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance: as though it were extraneous to all the realm of symbolism: “Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?” The opacity of the veil’s significant force grows so forcefully that “Such was the effect of this simple piece of crepe, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house.”

Yet the response from the group is much more decidedly negative, as indicated by the remarks of “a lady who says she is surprised...that a simple black veil, such as any women might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper’s face?” (emphasis added). The reply of her husband, the local physician, is, eventually, the same. “In other words,” remarks “the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor’s face, throws its influence over everything, and makes him look ghastly like from head to foot.” “I would not be alone with him for the world,” the wife concedes, adding: “I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself.” In response, the biblical statutes probably the strangest remark about this veiling development, when he adds that “Men sometimes are so.” Unless this is the non-rendered and “men” as in “mankind,” etc., this is a curious urtenance, 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 diffusation when Mr. Hooper “cross dresses” in this manner. Or, rather, it could be read that he reigns the gendered orientation of the veiled by virtue of wearing it). This could further reflect an anxiety about the horror of confronting the transcendental signified in all its semiotic finitude. Would this be akin, then, to the dividing line between the signer and signified; the final elision of significant differential in which a sign ends its oscillation?

In Notes from Underground, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s narrator argues that women 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 decodings of the veil (Does the corpse resemble a face on the other side of the veil? the dead over the body in the casket! Did the body shudder at the sight?, it also provides the audience with a type of ethereal-intestinal which offers a very different reading in his benediction: “The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be read, as humanly martyred, as having been, for the dreadful hour that should unlace 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 “bathed” by facing the holy page, thus making them a sign-vehicle instead of a transparent (or even just translucent) signifier.

The subsequent supernatural associations of some citizens imagining that they see the minister “walking hand in hand with a specter” following this scene (something corroborated by inter­observer 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 newly married couple. The glasses clinked, a strain of mild pleasantness that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the heart. At that instant, the figure in the looking glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shrank, the wine untasted upon the cup, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil. (44)

In order for the twofold to satisfactorily decode this resistant signifier, a group was changed with the task to "put the onus on the signifier; something he did this thing." This would imply a belief in the ability of the encoder to identify a privileged signified that links to this principal signifier. In turn, ironically, the impetus behind this mission was located in “a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed,” elicited by the veil. In other words, the veil appears to be a symbol, but hardly one that is easily or at all easily and clearly conveyed and/or significantly concealed. It neither shows nor hides.

This extra-signifying capacity is arguably what impels the community members to bring it into the scene. The fixed signification, one way or another, “There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper’s forehead, and concealing every feature above his plucked mouth, on which no other earthly visage had ever been glanced, the glimmering of a melancholy smile,” we are told. “But that piece of crepe, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and theirs. Were the veil but lifted aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then”
In the course of the narrative, the minister engages in an explicit semiotic framework, both projecting his own secret and challenging the decoder's practices. He indicates that "as his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to unveil his consecrated heart" (1836: 45). Here, the minister relates that Elizabeth does this very thing: "a new offering, a token that I am no longer mine" (1836: 47). The minister's use of the word "veil" (as well as the literal use of the veil garment) by aligning the two, now, figuratively: "'There is an hour to come,' said he, 'when all of us shall be worthier of our solemn 'veil.'" The minister explains that "the veil is a type and a symbol," he says as his last words (1836: 47). The minister's view of the veil provides an additional layer of meaning, suggesting that the veil is not merely a physical object but also a symbol of the encoder's hidden meaning.

As a paratextual supplement, Mr. Hooper's story demonstrates the encoder's desire to have his message perceived only by a select few. He also acknowledges the decoder's increased ignorance at this point, providing a linguistic supplement to the non-linguistic signifier of the veil. The minister's view of the veil extends beyond its physical appearance, suggesting that it is a symbol of the encoder's hidden meaning.

The story of Mr. Hooper and Elizabeth illustrates the intricate relationship between the encoder and decoder, and the complexities of interpreting hidden meanings. The encoder's intention is to communicate a hidden message, while the decoder's task is to interpret it. The story raises questions about the nature of communication and the role of language in conveying meaning.

In conclusion, Mr. Hooper's story offers a compelling exploration of the relationship between encoder and decoder, and the complexities of interpreting hidden meanings. The encoder's intention is to communicate a hidden message, while the decoder's task is to interpret it. The story raises questions about the nature of communication and the role of language in conveying meaning.
On the upper lefthand corner someone had scrawled the phrase "THE NEXT BUILDING I 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 arches 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 paper, her thumb and finger at its corner, and said, "The next building I plan to bomb." Her tone was light and urbane. 'That's La Guardia, in Chicago.' She smiled. 'Well, Harry, what are you going to do with this? Some nut case did this, right?" (1997: 66)

At the police station: Sergeant Bursk asked, "Mr. Edmonds, you got any kids?"

"Kids? No, I don't have kids. Why?"

"Kids did this," Sergeant Bursk told him, waving the paper in front of him as if he were driving it off. "My kids could've done this. Kids do this. Boys do this. They draw torture chambers and they make threats and thank you. That's what they do. It's the youth. But they're kids. They don't mean it...That's Grand Central. In New York, on Forty-second Street, I think. I was there once. You can tell by the clock. See this clock here?" He pointed at a vague circle, "That's Grand Central, and this is the big clock that they've got there on the front." (1997: 67-68)

The "kid" Harry meets in a bar:

"I know this fucking place...I've, like, traveled, you know, all over Europe. This is in Europe, this place, this is fucking Deutschland we're talking about here...Oh, yeah, I remember this place, I was there, two summers ago! Hamburg! This is the Dammotor Bahnhof." (1997: 68)

"Never heard of it," Harry Edmonds said.

"You never heard of it? You've never been there, then. You have to fuckin' be there to know about it." The kid squinted his eyebrows together like a professor making a difficult point. "A bahnhof, no, thats a train station, and the Dammotor Bahnhof is, like, one of the stations there, and this is the one that the Nazis rounded up the Jews to. And, like, sent them off from. This place, man. Absolutely. It's still standing. This one, it fucking deserves to be bombed. Just blow it totally the fuck up, off the face of the earth. That's just my opinion. It's evil, man." (1997: 68-69)

And, finally, Harry's therapist: "This building!...Oh, it's the Field Museum, in Chicago. And that's not a theory. It is the Field Museum." (1997: 70)

The decoding conviction in these semiotic assessments of the text is implicit in all but the last, in which the therapist's follow-up comment draws attention to that feature of the previous ones, and employs the "lastword" technique to draw out this implication in the others.

Significantly, Harry never offers his own interpretation of the found text except to make his own drawing - and this is clearly anticipated by the process of semiotic deferral characterized by some semioticians; "It is the personal act of paper and no. 2 pencil. At the top of the pad, Harry writes, 'The next place I plan to bomb,' and then very slowly, and with great care, begins to draw his own face, its smooth clear shaven contours, in courteous halfsmile." (1997: 71)

It is revealing, too, that Harry reconfigures the original drawing and recreations of his own drawing, emphasizing the personal, contributive, constructed nature of decoding by substituting himself for the building in the original drawing and alternatingly titling his own drawing as "The Next Building 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 "reading" (Sampkins 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 parallels the endless referential slippage of semiotics 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 could 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 in 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 his 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 encoder.

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 magicians' code of maintaining professional secrecy when he explains the illusion behind decoding by revealing how something that appears to be non-signifying can be hardly transported into the realm of the intelligible through the process of artful decoding. Barthes's paired decodings offer a striking example, however, in that 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 cora to Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" in which the narrator offers a satisfactory although truncated at best, decoding of Bartleby's malady? Or, is it like Joe'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 inscrutable stranger?"

This article will be continued in the next issue of the SBR 20.2 (2013).


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. Pettiti's ambition with this book is to communicate the theoretical bedrocks of signics and its evolution with a special focus on issues connected to the problem of "signs, meaning and understanding," i.e., with "language and communication" (xiv).

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 Pettiti'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 of Pettiti, illustrates the scientific and intellectual development of Welby.

Who was Lady Welby? After the death of 18-year-old Lady Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart–Wortley into the highest circles of the English nobility. She was named
Lady Welby's intellectual work was very much related to issues of identity, and in her correspondence with Peirce from the years 1903–1905 and Nina Cust included an exchange of letters between the two of great value for semiotics. And in a letter dated in the early essays “Meaning and Metaphor” (1893) and “Interpretation” (1896) that preceded What is meaning? Welby's triad indicates three levels of meaning:

- Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Significance is the one value of all that being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other. (in Petrilli, 396).
- Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Thrice (346)
of ‘significance’ (the third level of her meaning), was to be regarded as a “practical extension” of the concept of ‘meaning’ in Wittgenstein’s philosophical system. The discussion on time, which is here accounted for, to some extent at least, illustrates Peirce’s polyphonic (as well as Petrilli’s) methods of translation. This kind of translation involves dealing with Peirce’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 Linguistics as Aporia: Attempted Translation” (1959) which have been further developed by Petrilli elsewhere. In order to elucidate her ideas on translation and analogy, Welby presented an additional experiment: 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 interesting comparison between 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: “Translate thirdness into secondness’, that is, to translate ideational 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 methods”), which indicates the relation between her thesis of ‘significance’ and the search for translation in 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 associational, homological method searches for profound genital, structural, functional and dynamical relationships among the terms of reference in question. [...] Welby warned against the error of exchanging analogy or surface similarity with homology or genetic-structural similarity” (532).

Welby’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 the reflexive chain (552). Often enough this process implies a multiplying of signs, for instance, the number of words increases along the way. For example, Petrilli notes that the relation “is, paralleled 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 the issue of translation (or translation as ‘liaison’) which denotes the process of relating, “translation as an intellectual process. As Petrilli puts it: ‘Translate thirdness into secondness’, that is, to translate ideational 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 methods”), which indicates the relation between her thesis of ‘significance’ and the search for translation in 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 associational, homological method searches for profound genital, structural, functional and dynamical relationships among the terms of reference in question. [...] Welby warned against the error of exchanging analogy or surface similarity with homology or genetic-structural similarity” (532).
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 primal 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 “Torms 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 priscius. Alonous is the consciousness of a directly present other, secondly, withstandings us. Malusi is the consciousness of a thiness, or medium between priscius and alonous, leading from the former to the latter. It is the consciousness of a process of bringing to mind: [...] Alonous has two modes, Sensation and Will. Malusi has three modes, Abration, Suggestion, Association. (C.P. 555 in Petrilli, 577)

One is tempted to connect Welby’s notions of mother-sense and common meaning through Peirce’s definition of aloneness, 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 "rationalizing Intellect," also called "father reason," with Peirce scientific rigour in reasoning is connected to "motherwit" and to agapastic logical procedure, with the capacity to engender signifying processes at the highest degrees of otherness, creativity and responsibility [...]. From this point of view, Welby’s significa with its special focus on the conjunction between life, language and sense in all senses, prefigures present-day trends in the sign sciences, which now at last come together with the life sciences and ethics.

Petrilli has also included some interesting hitherto unpublished manuscripts that Lady Welby wrote between 1903 and 1910 dealing with the issue of selfhood. Petrilli shows that Welby took a similar position in this question as Peirce by regarding the self as consisting of "sign material, verbal and nonverbal" which entails that the subject is in a constant state of becoming, as a result of its sign-character and therefore in an ongoing process in the interpersonal and interpersonal dialogic interrelationship with other signs" (610). In conclusion, Petrilli achieves her aim in this book of giving an outline of Lady Welby’s “thought system” (with a specific focus on Welby’s studies on Significa) on the basis of her selected writings. At the same time, Signifying and Understanding will greatly assist and inspire those who would like to extend this line of inquiry. Petrilli’s work in the archives is priceless for the research field, not only concerning Significa, but also of semiotics and semantics. However, Petrilli’s outlining of Welby’s “thought system” might have gained from a more rigorous editing, as the reader is from time to time interrupted by the many appended texts within Petrilli’s compelling discussions. These appendices might have been assembled at the end of the chapters, or perhaps at the end of the book. "Anna Cabak Rédei is Research Fellow at Centre for Cognitive Semiotics, at the Centre for Languages and Literature, at Lund University, Sweden. Her research field includes cultural semiotics, pictorial semiotics (especially film), narrative, translation theory, cognitive science, perception and social psychology."

References


2010 McLAREN-LAMBART AWARD


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

This article revisits the idea of animation as a precursor to the cinematic form, drawing on research into the works of one of its historical progenitors, Emile 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 Stamper, Chris Carter, Adam de Beer, and Romana Turina. Dr. Cholodenko 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.
This review essay is a series of musings inspired by J.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstrom's *Cybersemiotics: Why information is not enough* (2008). It is almost ironic how instrumental rationality in the modern age is reducing humanism and mysticism into a pair 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 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 scientific objects rather than 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 cybersemiotics 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 superseded all of them. 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 only if we will have recontextualized it very much. 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 physician and philosopher Basarab Nicolescu. I think that both sources not only 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 with the old ones.” 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 twelve chapters, which occupy nearly 503 pages and include the following (slightly paraphrased for brevity). “The Problem of the Informations-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 Autoepoiesis”; “von Foerster’s Cybernetics and Peircean Thirdness”; “Embodied Metaphors”; “Integration of Intuitions, Ethology, and Peircean Biomesiotics”; “An Evolutionary View on the Threshold between Semiosis and Information Envelopment”; “The Interaction of Science of Information, Signification, Cognition, and Communication”; “The Five-Level Cybersemiotics”. In addition, Brier offers a chapter on the practical problem of information and discourse, which he claims, can be solved 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, Lakoff and Johnson, Loriger, Merleau-Ponty, Noth, Popper, Ruesch, Sebok, Spencer-Brown, Suzuki, Varela, Wiener, Wittgenstein.

Among Brier’s extensive endnotes I would like to single out one: a very fine commentary on 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 organ 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 partakes 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 symbol, albeit hierarchically, expression. Brier concludes that “Magister Ludi is a manifesto for the reintegration of intellectual life with the ‘real’ world, of intellectual and mythic 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 as the over-rational paradigm of modern thought, I think that creative intuitions will illuminate what has captured Brier’s idea better. Indeed, Peirce (as Brier’s major intellectual inspiration) appears to be the first post-modem (post-postmodern) philosopher (Deely 2001; 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 observer, 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 “unstructured observation” (Bld.3) the minimal unit of analysis. Such participation in the reality of that what is produced was indeed a defining feature of Peircean observability (Ibid.) the minimal unit of analysis. In this regard, Brier recognizes that science conceived as the over-rational paradigm of modern thought is very much appropriate even if Peirce himself emphasized intelligence as specifically non-rational (Peircean to the core). The boundary between science and the arts is very much informed by virtue of the ‘both–and’ science of a coordination dynamics.

Different disciplines have their own complementary pairs that, rather than being alien to each other in the mature 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–cause; ego–other; rationalism–emotivism; science–humanities; organism–environment; immuno–transcendence; body–mind; nature–nurture; yin–yang being–being–constancy–certainty; material–spiritual; and so on ad infinitum.

Different “selfother” (self–notself) 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 not to confuse the logic of the eschid middleg that continues to haunt us since the time of Aristotle with the creative logic of the included middle (cf. Semetsky 2008) 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; sympathy; correspondence; or any other relationalities established 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 (really, a contradiction in terms within a strictly analytic reasoning) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman calls virtual, or archaic, logic “that goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility” (Kauffman 1996: 293) as well as beyond words given to expression a world of uninterpretable symbols, meanings and values. The emphasis on communication indicates that there is an interdependent network in which each level as ‘speaks’ to each other, desperately trying to understand each other’s expressional “language”, thus creating shared meanings along the communicative link expressed by the title. *Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites and truly coordinate complement a theoretical epiphenomenon with practical poiesis resulting from the feedback between both realms, each other’s expressive ‘language’, thus creating shared meanings along the communicative link expressed by the title.*

Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites and truly coordinate complement a theoretical epiphenomenon with practical poiesis resulting from the feedback between both realms, each other’s expressive ‘language’, thus creating shared meanings along the communicative link expressed by the title. The infamous ‘observer’ (one or many) comprising the

By Inna Semetsky

Information Enough
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 Deeley points out, "at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience is mediated by symbols," and he explores the interplay of signs within a complex semiotic system.

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. Deely emphasizes the importance of signs in neural network terminology, where the "bit" (or "information unit") is fundamental. "Information" is "allegorically virtual..." and is "contentious" in what is actually thought, but in what this thought means is "becoming" (Deely CP 5. 289). Being virtual, it does not make its potential informational content less real (cf. Deleuze, 1994).

What is sufficiently not enough is our perception of information as solely quantitative or measurable. It is meaningful in a pragmatist, Peircean sense as productive of observable effects. Hence, according to Peirce's pragmatic maxim, "it is nothing more or less than a complete coordinate system..."—as in the Salmon-pair, in which an interpretant is designated by a symbol of reconciliation, "", and which serves as a sign of a sign system. "The old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance, will hardly find disciples today" (Deely CP 6. 24, quoted in Deely, 2003).

However, and again in agreement with Peirce, old notions of thought die hard. In the language of the science of coordination dynamics, a genuine Peircean triadic sign system, is a coordinate system. Signs, dynamics is the interaction (the included third, the interpretant in the Peircean triad) of a priori information and the dynamic (or sign) systems is "informationally based" (Kello and Engstrom 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 language are "complementary pairs" (Deely, 2006: 44; brackets in original). Indeed, as physicist and cosmologist David Bohm emphasized in his holomovement, there is no direct causal connection except for the relation of signs, being interwoven into a whole by means of the intertwining network of quanta. Semiosis as such is "a symbiotic network connection between all different locations in space and events in different points in time. Such connections are..." nonlocal" in the natural science and "transpersonal" in consciousness research" (ibid., 69).

Physicist David Bohm emphasized that in holomovement there is no direct causal connection except for the relation of signs, being interwoven into a whole by means of the intertwining network of quanta. Semiosis as such is "a symbiotic network connection between all different locations in space and events in different points in time. Such connections are..." nonlocal" in the natural science and "transpersonal" in consciousness research" (ibid., 69).

In the universe per se, signs "information and computation are everywhere: it is all there in The potential is powerfully active everywhere, yet "it is actually active, only where and when it can form to the..."-empathy (Bohm and Hiley 1996: 30). The complex semiotic universe must express itself in a dual mode of matter and energy. Lloyd points out that "most information is immaterial..." and it takes the form of information (to compactify it, in a way, that is, to make it relatively visible at the level of physical observable world. The basic material elements such as "Earth, air, fire, and water..." are not in their original form but in the new forms they take are determined by information. To do anything requires energy. To specify what is done requires information. Energy and information are by nature inseparable. Lloyd 2006: 44; brackets in original. Indeed, as physicist and cosmologist John Archibald Wheeler stated, all physical things are information-theoretically original.

Therefore we may consider matter, energy and information "intertwined" in a self-referential, triadic relation of signs. "Information is information" (keeping in mind that the flow of semiosis is unlimited) with the Peircean triadic sign. Noth (1995: 90/91) presents a synopsis of a triadic sign tracing in definitions and disparate terminology from Plato, to Storge, to Eros, to Peirce, to Ogden and Richards and notices that in order to construct a semiotic triangle connecting, in the
The coordination relation (akin to the dotted line) is ubiquitous. Kelso and Engstrom, however, point to aspects of causality, 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 the chains of statics in original. It is the coordination that produces meaning (or "sense" in Noth's trilogy). This means that, as Brouwer, "equation" (Engstrom) indicates a self-referential relationship to the framework of science of coordination dynamics; it is expressed in the form of another complementary pair, unity–diversity. Kauffman (2010) gives an example that unites one single equation into a band, which appears to be a paradoxical 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 non-logistic origins of intentional action. The project begun by Leibniz reflects the intersection 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 the world of intuitions. On account of this, poetic or personal, metaphorical language, which 'represents' symbolically or indirectly via mediation, 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 Secondees 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 is a sound argument. And let us compare it rather with a painting - with a poem and symphony - just as every true poem - for every fine argument is a great work of art.

The making the total effect is our "ken" we will be able to appreciate in some measure the resultant Quality of parts of the whole (Peirce, CP 3. 119 quoted in Brier, 384).

I think that this ethical dimension should now become the core of semiotic research so in establishing what Noth has recently called "intercultural competence" (2010: 9) and which is an urgent matter in the present context that displays diverse "signs of the times" (Semetsky 2006: 10) which 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.

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References


— (2010b) “Interpreting the signs of the times beyond Jarring”, Social Semiotics Vol. 20 issue 2, pp. 103-120.


Table 1. Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge.

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<td>Limited to the objective knowledge of external world (cf. spectator theory of knowledge)</td>
<td>Correspondence, analogy, conversation, sympathy as a relation between the external world of objects and the internal world of subjects</td>
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<td>Static knowledge of facts</td>
<td>Dynamic understanding of meanings</td>
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<td>Analytic conceptual thought – separation between mind and body; mind observing the world, disembodied cognition.</td>
<td>Synthetic holistic intelligence – harmony or correspondence between mind and body; mind participating in the world; embodied cognition.</td>
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<td>oriented towards power, possession and separation from, and control over the ‘other’</td>
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Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge stay in a complementary relation to each other. Disciplinary, in turn, 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 correspond to each other. They are in a triadic contra dica relation; they are in correspondence (NB: Francisco Varela described such a correspondence as a correspondence between a complex, autopoietic, that is, self-referential, system structured, sure enough, as a network of signs; Brier indeed acknowledges the importance of Varela’s contribution to his cybersemiotics; see Index on p. 470).
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 their source, but does not make the 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 rather than on established journalist partners, especially The Guardian, Der Spiegel, El Pais, 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 outstrips 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 sense, however, is quantitative instead of qualitative, but 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. Certain, Assange has made some deals with blue chip mainstream news corporations and has a group of hackers - Anonymous - to defend his interests and countersignature (via what they call a LOIC, Low Orbit Ion Cannon type of DenyXs 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 of the site for Library of Congress staff. Wikileaks’s countersassay that credit card companies like more stable revenue streams from porn and gambling is acute. So, too, is this rurality, and uncomfortableness because use of the LOIC is traceable and, as 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 (Pras et al 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned (Pras et al 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned (Pras et al 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned (Pras et.al, 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned (Pras et.al, 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned (Pras et.al, 2010).

When Assange is personally threatened, Wikileaks cannot possibly catch-up and right this declassification by three to five times (Galison 2004). The lesson of Wikileaks is not revealed in the content; we know that diplomats are paid to lie and that the military get paid for shooting civilians. But in the actuation 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 corporeal 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 coalesces 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 (Neoolseus 2008), the critique of which, according to those who propagulizes 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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The Semiotic Review of Books is a multi-disciplinary journal publishing review articles and original research. It endeavours to monitor those domains in the Humanities, the Social and the Natural Sciences which bear upon symbolic and communicative behaviour, culture and innovation, cognitive systems and processes, and the study of information, meaning and signification in all forms.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>$30 USD</td>
<td>$40 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>$35 USD</td>
<td>$45 USD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                |             |              |
| **Two Year Subscription** |             |              |
| Canada         | $55         | $75          |
| USA            | $55 USD     | $75 USD      |
| Others         | $65 USD     | $85 USD      |

*Cheques payable to Lakehead University.*