Time and Translation

Cabak Rédei, Anna

Published in:
The Semiotic Review of Books

2011

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
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 lively 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: 2, 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, "anecdote" and "theory," she adds, "in order to afford" (2002: 2, emphasis added). "Anecdotal rhetoric by using an initiating personal anecdote as a strategic "myth" (in Roland Barthes's sense) for the text," she claims is "a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically objectivity of the text is an illusion," it nevertheless gains" 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 system. And the process of semiosis 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 immediately kick into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the end is found, semiosis carries with it "the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences" (1985: 112). This is understandable, after all, for as Stanley Fish notes, the illusion of materiality, or consensus, or reproducibility of results, is undeniably 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," it nevertheless is "a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically compelling. The text, along these lines, then, is

The End of Decoding

PART 1

By Scott Simpkins

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 centered, I told him he was wrong, that what he perceived as off-centered was just an optical illusion. Then I added: “You know, like a rubber pencil.” He gave me a strange look of non-comprehension and said, “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 was an end to...

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

But, nevertheless, decoding is surely nothing more than what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe refer to a transcendent signified, despite infinite signifiers, this argument maintains; some sort of end – understanding or knowledge or even truth – will immediately kick into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the end is found, semiosis 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 immediately kick into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the end is found, semiosis carries with it “the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences” (1985: 112). This is understandable, after all, for as Stanley Fish notes, the illusion of materiality, or consensus, or reproducibility of results, is undeniably 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,” it nevertheless is “a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically compelling. The text, along these lines, then, is

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To better appreciate this anecdote, know that John was about 55–60 at the time, is well read and arguably smart, a world traveler, produces at least a book a year, is familiar with American culture, and so on. Accordingly, I didn’t think he could have been serious about this – he had to be joking.

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).

John’s reaction to this was: “Where did you get that from?” he demanded.

“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 Deeply 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 for 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 undoubtedly 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 was an end to...

An apt illustration of this is found in the common belief (Peirce, Eco, et al.) that “infinite semiosis” is not truly infinite, but a transcendental signified of some kind will be reached, even if, as Peirce has it, as soon as the end is found, semiotics immediately kicks into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the end is found, semiosis 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 immediately kick into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the end is found, semiosis carries with it “the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences” (1985: 112). This is understandable, after all, for as Stanley Fish notes, the illusion of materiality, or consensus, or reproducibility of results, is undeniably 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,” it nevertheless is “a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically compelling. The text, along these lines, then, is

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essentially equivalent to the convincing sight of the rubber pencil. Such dishonesty or inaccuracy, however, is accomplishing some communal, counter-cultural ideological task, of course. No longer is decoding a fraudulent enterprise, a hat trick, an act of legendary, a tremendous con job — a rubber pencil. Yet, a practice based on a lie remains a lie, a Southern lie, a caricature of the site in order to establish a professional or discipline.

The claims of schools and universities to offer literary training unwittingly, lightly dismissed, he maintains. To believe that the whole institution of literary interpretation is but a gigantic confidence trick, would strain even a "The claims of schools and universities to offer literary interpretation) is strategic compromises (decoding, for example, or inaccomplished.

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He is the man of the crowd. Veiled Meaning A useful illustration of this resistance to<ref>deictically also appears in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), a short story which begins when the paragraphist of the Reverend Mister Hooper "beheld the semblance" of him "pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meetinghouse" (17-18). Hawthorne's depiction seems less primary, indeed, rather, in "that semblance" suggests both resemblance as well as an entity that is a lesser version of an original. The only way to tell which is which is to become thoroughly versed in the way the narrator's voice is "clearly家务 at that he is speaking", here, "the story is a semiotics<br/>
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He refuses to be alone.

Are you sure it is our parson?" one of the crowd asks the sexton, who functions apparently as the subject who is supposed to know (1836: 38). Again, Hawthorne draws attention to the process of decoding by virtue of this display of inter-observer agreement. When the sexton asserts that "O! a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper", other characters do not even pause to ask a question, or to be revealed. It is its evident that the sexton is a semiologist who attempts to mediate the story, to provide for the reader a more subtle interpretation of what Barthes identifies as an "enigma" (5/2). A sign-vehicle rendered intelligible.

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Hooper" (1836: 38). The "one thing remarkable in his appearance," the narrator adds, is "Swathed about his face, from head to foot'." "Our parson has gone mad!" yet "cried."[...

The primary consideration remains on the impact on the decoders who find Mr. Hooper’s transmission of meaning veiled 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 the sentence seem to have exerted an effortful 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 manner. Mr. Hooper trembled on the knee. The subject had reference to secret sins, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousions, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. (1836: 40)

The narrator maintains that through the veil as a semiotic, cinematic, or theatrical "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" [Bakhtin]). "Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened flesh, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hashed iniquity of deed or thought." The narrator notes that in the course of the sermon, "there was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper uttered of his own volition, or violence," while nevertheless "with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came at the moment of closing the door, was observed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful feeling "conscious of lighter spirits, the moment they lost sight of the black veil." The veil, it could be said, again heightens attention to the opacity – not genuine transience, and certainly not transparency – characteristic of any sign 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 parishoners’ decoding expertise diminishes as they offer interpretive frameworks that gain purchase. “A few of them ‘shook in their supernatural dreads,’ imagining 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 were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade” (1836: 40/41). This “naturalization” of the veil’s (also in Barthes’s sense) clearly alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to its social 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 “repeal him” as he engages in his usual ministrations (41). The narrator registers an enigmatic response from the parishioners by framing the impact on the decoders who find Mr. Hooper’s eyes so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade (1836: 40/41). This “naturalization” of the veil’s (also in Barthes’s sense) clearly alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to its social 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 “repeal him” as he engages in his usual ministrations (41). The narrator registers an enigmatic response from the parishioners by framing the impact on the decoders who find Mr. Hooper’s eyes so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade (1836: 40/41). This “naturalization” of the veil’s (also in Barthes’s sense) clearly alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to its social 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 “repeal him” as he engages in his usual ministrations (41).

Yet the response from the group is much more decidedly negative, as indicated by the remarks of “a lady” who says she fears 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 even more direct: “Mr. Hooper is a remarkable man; 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 the congregation, and makes him look like a ghostlike from head to foot.” “I would not be alone with him for the world,” the wife concurs, adding: “I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself.” In response, the bien-aimé utters probably the strangest remark about this veiling development, when he adds that “Men sometimes are so.” Unless this is the non-sequitor and is 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 difference when Mr. Hooper “cross dresses” in this manner). Or, rather, it could be said that he reassigned the gendered orientation of the veil by virtue of wearing it. This, in turn, reflects an anxiety about the horror of confronting the transcendental signified in all its semiotic finitude. Would this be the case, then, that the dividing line between the signified and signifier? The final elision of significative differential in which a sign ends its oscillation?

In Notes from Underground, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s narrator remarks that when he was 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” semiotics - 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 decentralization of the veil (Does the corpse’s face share in the phần that over the body in the casket? Did the body shudder at the sight?), it also provides the audience with a type of spiritual-intellectual which only occurs in the narrator’s mention 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, and understood, and constrain thing had 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 “paleness” by facing the “black veil” as signifier instead of a transparent (or even just translucent) signified.

The subsequent supernatural associations of some citizens imagining that they see the minister “walking hand in hand with a man in the 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 and joy to the innocent couple. The glass was then placed on a strain of mild pleasantness that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant the man in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His face shone white, and his hand rose to the...
it was but a double fold of crepe, hanging down from dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: more accurate decoding, “she fixed her eyes steadfastly to the veil’s (thus-encoded) signification. Despite the issue of decoder “privilege” arises with the attendant to know what the black veil concealed.” Again, this is that “as his plighted wife, it should be her privilege minister resides in, the commonly held assumption based “community of interpreters” (Fish 1980) that the “intention” of this sign-vehicle: the “one person in the impediment to signification, further imbricating “melancholy” and happy), it could be said to provide no clearcut significance at all.

In effect, the smile serves as only another impediment to signification, further intimidating that decoding is the only way to make sense to matters initiated by wearing the veil. The tenacity of this blockage, moreover, is dramatized by the failure of the decoder who should be able to share in the encoder’s “intuition.” Harry Edmonds first comes upon and examines it: “one person in the village, unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself” – his spouse (1836: 45). Given the assumptions of a hierarchy-based “community” there is an interesting (Fahnestock 1993) that the minister resides in, the commonly held assumption is that “as his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed.” (1836: 46). When Mrs. Hooper asks her husband to decode the veil’s signified for her, he draws upon an explicitly semiotic framework, even expressing it in the intuitive and, to imply that this process is fundamentally conjectural, or perhaps suggesting that the encoder has no special privilege in terms of speaking an explicit meaning. “If it be a sign of mourning,” replied Mr. Hooper, “I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil” (1836: 46). His wife, however, observes that it is this very polysemic condition which can lead to stigmatizing interpretations by others. But “what if 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, Hooper simply said 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 accepted the common understanding that the black veil is uncontrolled by its encoder. That further rephrasing that the minister proclaims the veil represents hypothetically (“I hide my face for a season, for secret sin”), all the more if the decoder encounters 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-signer of the veil: “Have patience with me, Elizabeth!...Do not look on the piece of cloth, or the veil itself, for to the veil as he suggests that any sign vehicle is hampered, semiotically, by the situation and context whether 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? When the friend discovered that the minister was reconciled to his friend’s stroke to his friend’s beloved; when man does not vanish from the eye of his Creator, loathsome treasuring up the secret of his sin, the monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, on every visage a Black Veil! (1836: 52)

As Hawthorne’s short story demonstrates, the arguably human desire that the veil should be a type for a belief in the possibility of decoding in general, and the relative certainty of this operation in particular, becomes a type of theoretical position taken by the apparent awareness that this is nevertheless a constructed, “deliberate lies,” as Joseph Conrad’s Marlowe calls it in Heart of Darkness. This, perhaps, accounts for the other side of the image, the invariable confidence of interpretation seen in Charles Baxter’s short story, “The Next Building I Plan to Bomb,” in which the main character finds a piece of gray paper with an apparently related drawing and a related linguistic utterance written on it in purple ink, and shows it to other people for their opinion of what it signifies, or what it might mean in a larger context (evidence of a terrorist plot, etc.).

In an email exchange, Baxter responded to my query regarding a bibliographical code explanation of this specificity of the paper, ink, etc. of the “next Harry’s Veil.”

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 meaningless, you begin to check the peripheries, as if you begin to check the peripheries, as if you held the meanings that are withheld at the level of the text. The hapless guy who receives that note has begun to experience the blinding of meaning into the peripheries. Thus the interest in fonts, etc. (August 30, 2010).

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:

(1836: 45). As a paratextual supplement, Mr. Hooper’s smile becomes the sole indication of any intelligible meaning. Yet, it too, stands as an inscrutably ambiguous signifier insofar as it delimits no real field of distinct signification. In the previous instance, it is a seemingly “primitive” form of expressive mimicry (for the sake of mimicking its mother [see Thibault], indicating perhaps no more than a mere reflection of that which is conveyed to him by others. Or, given its oxyymoronic register (both “melancholy” and happy), it could be said to provide no clearcut significance at all.

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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-signer of the veil: “Have patience with me, Elizabeth!...Do not look on the piece of cloth, or the veil itself, for to the veil as he suggests that any sign vehicle is hampered, semiotically, by the situation and context whether 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? When the friend discovered that the minister was reconciled to his friend’s stroke to his friend’s beloved; when man does not vanish from the eye of his Creator, loathsome treasuring up the secret of his sin, the monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, on every visage a Black Veil! (1836: 52)

As Hawthorne’s short story demonstrates, the arguably human desire that the veil should be a type for a belief in the possibility of decoding in general, and the relative certainty of this operation in particular, becomes a type of theoretical position taken by the apparent awareness that this is nevertheless a constructed, “deliberate lies,” as Joseph Conrad’s Marlowe calls it in Heart of Darkness. This, perhaps, accounts for the other side of the image, the invariable confidence of interpretation seen in Charles Baxter’s short story, “The Next Building I Plan to Bomb,” in which the main character finds a piece of gray paper with an apparently related drawing and a related linguistic utterance written on it in purple ink, and shows it to other people for their opinion of what it signifies, or what it might mean in a larger context (evidence of a terrorist plot, etc.).

In an email exchange, Baxter responded to my query regarding a bibliographical code explanation of this specificity of the paper, ink, etc. of the “next Harry’s Veil.”

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 meaningless, you begin to check the peripheries, as if you held the meanings that are withheld at the level of the text. The hapless guy who receives that note has begun to experience the blinding of meaning into the peripheries. Thus the interest in fonts, etc. (August 30, 2010).

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 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 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’re going to take this 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, ‘Harry, what are you going to do with this? Some nut case did this, right?’” (1997: 66)

At the police station:

Sergeant Burks asked, “Mr. Edmonds, you got any kids?”

“Kids? No, I don’t have kids. Why?”

“Kids did this,” Sergeant Burks 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 what have 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 Dammtor Bahnhof.”

“I’ve never heard of it,” Harry Edmonds said.

“You never heard of it? You’ve never been there before? You have to fucking be there to know about this.” The kid squinted his eyebrows together like a professor making a difficult point. “A building, no, it’s not a train station, and the Dammtor Bahnhof is, like, one of the stations there, and this is the one that the Nazis round 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 away, 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 other.

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: “In the process of a reading of a piece of paper and a 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, repositioning himself in the process, identifying the personal, contributive, constructed nature of decoding by substituting himself for the building in the original drawing and alternately titling the building 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 “writing” (Simpkins 1989). 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 whorl of otherwise 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 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 can 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 is 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 magicians’ code of maintaining professional secrecy where he explains the illusion behind decoding by revealing how something that appears to be non-signifying can be hastily transported into the realm of the intelligible through the process of artful decoding. Barthes’s paired decodings offer a striking example, however, inasmuch as the closing 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 coda with Herman Melville’s “Barbary Scriver” in which the narrator offers a satisfactory although transitory best, decoding of Barthle’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 inscrutable stranger?

This article will be continued in the next issue of the SRB 20.1 (2013).
Lady Welby's intellectual work was very much developed in dialogue with others.

Between 1875–80 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 L. Bergson, Michel Bréal, 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 expression. With the former, to give an overview of Significs, as it gives us the voice of the author, to give space to Bréal when quoting him (1891). The volumes Other Dimensions (1931) where Welby's daughter Nina Cust included an exchange of letters between her mother and Peirce from the years 1903–1905 and 1908–1911. Since 1977 another four unpublished letters from Welby to Peirce have surfaced. As can be seen, the problem of the context's (which particular sociocultural context, thus a study rather of ‘le parole’ in its turn suggestively connotes in the light of significs. The importance of the notion ‘sense’ is given a more significant and elaborate role in sense that emerges in the relation between signs and the world of sensual perception, perceptual experience, to the properly being and the forms of cognitive significance in and 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 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. Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Thirdness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second and into relation to each other. (in Petrelli, 396).

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 of the term – is the only value of whatever "face" presents itself to us. Without this, to observe and record appearances or occurrences would become a mere accidental task. Significance is the one value of all that consciousness brings, or that intelligence deals with, the one value of life itself (in Petrelli, 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 symbol) is at stake throughout these writings. As Petrelli (441) writes:

"Significance... marks a different phase of Welby’s work, and moves away from the religious sphere to problems of scientific matter, 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? (1903), 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 relation between signs and values, augmented in the ongoing process from one sign and sign system to another” (20–21).

In 1896 in the essay "Sense, Meaning and Interpretation," Welby introduced the term ‘Significs’, alongside the term ‘Signific’, as a possible alternative. Petrelli (255) writes:

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of ‘significance’ (the third level of her meaning triad), was to be regarded as a ‘practical extension’ of the notion of signs, in the way in which the structural and connative interconnection between the pragmatic-operandive and ethical-motivational dimension of sign activity in human signifying processes (Petrilli, 2011) is treated by Peirce in his essay ‘The Volunteer’ (1903). The present essay confirms this by highlighting the relation between sign activity and reference to Peirce in their exchange of letters (notably between 1904 and 1905), instigated by the latter’s review of What is Meaning?, was the issue of time – although its stance on time was not one a month later Peirce wrote to Welby:

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 yet known. In Peirce’s view, the topics exist in time and obtain the present definitions of temporal relations, little more will be required to furnish me with details of the 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 use a Bakhtinian notion) concept of meaning by showing 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 a Difference Aspects of Translation” (1959) which have been further developed by Petrilli elsewhere. In order to elucidate her ideas on translation and analogy, Welby presented a double experimental translation of Dr. Hughl’s “On the Nervous System” (1884) which physiology is turned into religious language use. She also made an inventory of 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 things is to interpret the signs, to explain their meaning and to draw 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 (Petrilli, 2015). The latter indicates what Welby coined the ‘holomorphic method’ (along with the ‘analitical method’), which she developed together with her hypothesis that the language did not manifest the dependent nature of time on space “except in the manner of expression in speech” (i.e. in a conventional way, language being such an inherent term). Terms.

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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 criticise, but also to reason out the contents of consciousness taken in its pristine simplicity, and might be called primisense; Alternis is the consciousness of a directly present other, second, withstanding us. Medisense is the consciousness of a thirdness, or medium between primisense and alternis, leading from the former to the latter. It is the consciousness of a process of bringing to mind. [...] Alternis has two modes, Sensation and Will. Medisense has three modes, Abstraction, Suggestion, Association. (C.P. 2:551 in Petrilli, 577)

One is tempted to connect Welby’s notions of mother-sense and common meaning through Peirce’s definition of alternisense, 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 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 Significs, but also of semiotics and semiotics. 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), narrativity, translation theory, cognitive science, perception and social psychology.

References


2010 McLAREN-LAM BART AWARD

Alan Cholodenko is the recipient of the 2010 McLaren-Lambart Award for Best Scholarly Article on animation, for his essay “The Animation of ‘Cinema,’” which appeared in The Semiotic Review of Books 18.2 (2009) 1-10.

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 exploration 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 Stampy, 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.

SRB 19.3 (2010) - 8
This review essay is a series of musings inspired by a book, Information Enough, by Inna Semetsky. The title refers to semiotics, cybernetics, and the idea of information enough to sustain both sides of the binary of nature and culture. The overall paradigm that assists Brier in constructing a new science of coordination dynamics is an "unfractured observation" – a "visionary cosmology," an "electro-magnetic world," an "electro-magnetic reality." Brier's volume not only problematizes this logic by bringing semiotics into discourse in science, but also breathes life into science per se.

Important, 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 supernumerates all of them. He is motivated by the desire to create a knowledge paradigm independent from ideologically concerns (I leave it to readers to decide whether it is ever possible or even desirable). Brier begins his "quest for semiotics" (3) by revisiting cognitive evolution 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 recontextualized in very 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 physician and philosopher Basarab Nicolescu. I think that both sources not only 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 co-creative and transcendentalist (383) is very appropriate even if Peirce himself emphasized intelligence as specifically scientific yet insensible from experience. Peirce asked "what must be the strategy of all those who have been used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say, by an intelligence capable of learning by experience" (SCP 2.227, Peirce’s italics).

Herman Hesse’s conceptualizations are Peircean to the core. The boundary between science and mysticism is blurred when both conflate to form unitary "evolutionary cosmology, in which all regularities of nature and mind are regarded as products of growth" (Peirce quoted in Brier, 382). As Niels Bohr who coined the term "complementarity" pointed out, the extremes of materialism and mysticism alike must be avoided by means of balancing analysis and synthesis. Whether information, then! Not enough or just the right amount!

Brier concludes his book by telling his readers that he "developed an informational theory that accepts several levels of existence" (437). In this respect his cyber-microscopic-scale view of complex systems theory as a broad contemporary paradigm applicable to natural and social-cultural systems alike (cf. Cilliers 1998, Byrne 1998) What is the governing dynamic of multidisciplined systems? It is the co-creative and Peircean, the founder of general systems theory, who was first to address the insufficiency of analytical procedures of classical science based on linear combinations of two basic variables and attracted our attention to "new categories of interaction, transaction, teleology" (1972: xix) as problematizing the old mechanistic paradigm.

The interactions between more than the two objects create, sure enough, an unsolvable problem – but only within the equations of classical mechanics, at the level of Peircean magisterial signs. The interactions pertain to Peircean Thirdness, to the evolutionary process of semiosis and signs-becoming-otherwise in the explosive potential of the acquisition of meaning. Importantly, the "interactions do not have to be physical, they can also be thought of as a tranceformation of information" (Gilliers 1998: 3).

Such transference is the defining feature of the new science of coordination dynamics as a paradigm for "The Complementary Nature" which is also the title of the book by L.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstrom (2000). While Peirce’s genuine sign represents a self-referential semiotic structure, it was "sentence and selfreference" (4) that have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries! (2006: 235) italics mine. Kelso and Engstrom use a squareigle, tilde ~, ‘for pinpointing the salient, the symbolic punctuation for reconciling the apparently diaphanous 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-other" (2006: 233). A self-referential relation is what establishes that all these 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 bi-polar interdependent manner are the following: cause-effect; so-called 'explanation', rationalism-empiricism; science and humanities; organism-environment; immunity-transcendence; body and mind; nature and nurture; yin and yang being-here and becoming; certainty and uncertainty; material and spiritual; and so on ad infinitum.

Different "selflother" (self-nont-self) pairs do belong to the variety of discourses; their communality 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 excluded 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; sympathy; correspondence; or, rather, an idea of likeness 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 given signs into the provision of interpretable 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 break each other’s expressive "language", thus creating shared meanings along the communicative link expressed by the tilde.

Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites and truly coordinate complement a theoretical episteme with practical praxis resulting from the feedback between the mind’s expressive "language", the apparent dichotomies and antinomies of ‘either/or’ habitual thinking are transcended and traversed by virtue of the "both-and" science of 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
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 triadic system of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, a triadic structure mediated and sustained by signs" (Deely 1990: 5). The levels in the complex semiotic system are not immediately connected with each other but mediated by the interpretant of the third category: the genus 'interpretant', either human or non-human; and, it is the very mediation or interpretation that enables the emergence of the "domain of potential meanings was always already implicated by using it – makes this information meaningful. But the information from which the universe proceeds in a dual analog­digital mode (2006). He specifies the structure of the computational space in terms of a circuit diagram representing both logical gates (the places where qubits – bits of quantum information – interact thus exchanging/transferring information) and, importantly, causal connections, which are represented by the connecting 'wires' or paths along which the information propagates. The computational space is expressible in multidimensional geometry which models knowledge that apparently "we know but cannot tell" (Rockwell 2007: 120).

Surely we can hardly grasp this deep knowledge because we habitually stay in the prison-house of verbal language and use language of propositions that subscribes to the logic of: the excluded middle, to yes or no, to true or false. A novel language of expression pertaining to, shall we say, the quasi-aesthetic, that is immaterial and not reducible to what in physics would be called particles. They are moments in the form represented at large by analog (and not solely digital) information. Leibniz's law of the indiscernibility of Peirce's process of semiosis – and defined as discrete 'bits' within a certain context only, that is, always holistically as parts of the whole (cf. Rockwell 2007: 120).

In this sense Leibniz's unifying 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 also reducible to what in physics would be called particles. They are moments in the form represented at large by analog (and not solely digital) information. Leibniz's law of the indiscernibility of Peirce's process of semiosis – and defined as discrete 'bits' within a certain context only, that is, always holistically as parts of the whole (cf. Rockwell 2007: 120).
**KNOWLEDGE (Disciplinary)**

**KNOWLEDGE (Transdisciplinary)**

**IN VITRO**

**IN VIVO**

Limited to the objective knowledge of external world

Correspondence, analogy, conversation, sympathy as a relation between the external world of objects and the internal world of subjects

Static knowledge of facts

Dynamic understanding of meanings

Analytic conceptual thought – separation between mind and body; mind observing the world, disembodied cognition.

Synthetic holistic intelligence – harmony or correspondence between mind and body; mind participating in the world; embodied cognition.

oriented towards power, possession and separation from, and control over the ‘other’

oriented towards sharing, cooperating with, and integrating the ‘other’

logic of the excluded middle

logic of the included middle

/non-dualist philosophy

Inclusion of values
The Future of Wikileaks

By Gary Genosko

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 data exfiltration, US Army soldier 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 ThGUandian, 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 outstrips declassification by three to five times (Galison 2004). Wikileaks cannot possibly catchup 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 qualitatively or, more importantly, 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 counteract (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 garlic is acute. Such is this cyberwarfare, and unmistakably so because use of the LOIC is traceable and, as has been recently shown, not ‘anonymous’ for hacktivists at all (Peut 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 (Wilson, 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 arm-in-arm with the state and private business the ‘cyberprofessionals’

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 SRB is published three times each year.

**General Editor:** Gary Genosko  
**Address:** Department of Sociology, Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 5E1  
Tel: 807-343-8391  
Fax: 807-346-7831  
Email: gary.genosko@lakeheadu.ca  
web: www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb