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Introduction: Barthes's relevance today

Roland Barthes (1915–1980) was one of the leading scholars who developed semiotics into an academic discipline and gave it intellectual credibility in the latter half of the 20th century. Barthes's theoretical reflection and analytical case-studies covered a vast field. His work on theory was based on Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Hjelmslev, but his texts refer also to Roman Jakobson, Sigmund Freud, the Ancient philosophers and rhetoricians, and even to Charles S. Peirce. In case-studies, he focused on topics as diverse as, for example, toys, cars, cinema, photography, cities, fashion, and literature, which remained central all through his career. It is fair to say that Barthes's importance for semiotics is matched only by few exceptional figures, such as Juri Lotman, Umberto Eco, and Algirdas J. Greimas.

However, Barthes has a peculiar position in the pantheon of semiotics. Firstly, as a criticizer of myths, he might have wanted to deconstruct evaluations that lift few scholars above others and to show how interpretations are motivated first and foremost by the historical context of reception and the power structures that prevail in it. He argued that there is no privileged meta-language that could not be superseded by another language, distributing the material according to new distinctions, and this holds also for our contemporary interpretation of his work. In Barthes's analysis, "pantheon" of any science might have turned out to be just another bourgeois myth.

Secondly, Barthes was an elusive thinker, not building just one theory and not interested in working out in detail the consequences of his arguments, but rather keen on pursuing theorizing as an open process according to the questions and problems that the empirical cases presented to his critical gaze. As a result, it is not always clear how many Barthes there actually are and how their mutual relationships should be understood. It has been asked whether Barthes the

essayist resists time better than Barthes the theoretician and also of which theoretician one is actually talking about: the structural or the textual one? The temptation to make distinctions between Barthes's different aspects and periods is strong.

After Barthes's death in 1980, there seemed to be a tendency to play down his scientific work and to emphasize his value as a literary author, that is, as a brilliant essayist, a master of the fragment and a renovator of the genre of autobiography. Support was searched for in his own writings, and especially in his late expressions of the *fatigue* he felt towards the modern experimental writing he had been introducing and defending in France. However, we now know that until the very end he also openly claimed to have remained a semiotician, which for him meant methodological work with and on oppositions, codes and their articulations. The very same elements had earlier provided him the theoretical means for the defence and interpretation of the literary experimentations of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Philippe Sollers and other contemporary writers. If Barthes distanced himself from the avant-garde literary disputes he had alimanted earlier, he argued for his case with the same methods and concepts he had been using before.

In his posthumously published Collège de France lecture course on the neuter, Barthes defined semiotics, or *sémiologie*, as "*écoute ou vision des nuances*" ("listening to or vision of nuances", Barthes 2002a: 37). The methods and concepts of semiotics were for him first of all tools for the exploration of differences in signification. This meant also an active work of interpretation. Barthes did not venture into interviewing informants and establishing statistical evidence for the social significations he was analysing, but rather exposed different possibilities of interpretation that he saw as available, behaving more like Faust than an ordinary laboratory scientist and occasionally even at the risk of "*bêtise*" (Ette 2002; Marty 2006: 125–139). If we consider literature as an interpretation of socially and culturally significant reality, as a means to semioticize and to inquire what is already semioticized, then it is clear that semiotics in Barthes's understanding of the word did not stand in opposition to literature, but rather was the necessary way to access it, the approach that had to be incessantly developed further in order to be capable of attaining the complexities of signification that are typical for literature and constitute a large part of its cultural value.

It is thus possible to argue that literature (or writing, *écriture*) and theoretical research were necessary companions to each other in

Barthes's work, and that no abusive hierarchization should be established between them. Furthermore, it has been claimed that the linguistic inventions and figures Barthes developed in his specific, more literary than traditionally scientific way of writing were actually for him the means to do philosophical research (Milner 2003; see also Marty 2006: 9–17). There was a nurturing and inspiring relation between theory and literature in his work, and research has to take both into consideration. Barthes's insightful analyses and challenging theories only exist accompanied with his literary work on language and discourse, and vice versa.

Research today can profit from the posthumous publication of the lecture courses Barthes held at the Collège de France. The three volumes present Barthes's reflections on the neuter (Barthes 2002a), on communal forms of living (Barthes 2002b) and on the writing of a novel (Barthes 2003). They have been edited respecting the unfinished nature of the manuscripts, showing Barthes's original notes as well as the omissions and precisions he made in lecturing. Barthes himself considered his appointment to the Collège de France as marking the beginning of a new era in his life, one consecrated even more fully than before to literature and especially to the project of writing a novel. Consequently, scholars have often focused on the last period from this angle. Arguments have been presented for and against about whether the novel project was a failure or a success and about terms in which it should be understood (see for example Compagnon 2002, Knight 2002). This interest in Barthes the author was obviously spurred already by his autobiographical writings in the 1970's and the posthumous book *Incidents* (Barthes 1987). It is not exaggerated to say that he counts today as one of the important French authors of the latter half of the 20th century. On the other hand, Barthes's theoretical works from the earlier periods are still instrumental for general reflections on literature (see for example the discussions on Barthes in Culler 2007 and Compagnon 1998). In teaching semiotics, Barthes's early *Mythologies* (1957), despite the 51 years that separate the present from their publication, is hardly superseded as an introduction to critical social-semiotic analysis. The same holds for his essays on images and music.

Barthes's signification for today's research is thus strong and varied. He is a classic in semiotics and literary studies, read as one of the main historical figures in these fields. But he is also a continuously inspiring, challenging and even provoking thinker whose heritage is far from being fully elucidated. The articles in this special issue

explore Barthes's relevance for semiotics, literary studies, musicology and cultural studies, proposing novel ways to read his works and connecting them to questionings and analyses that are pertinent to contemporary research. The key idea has been to apply Barthes's thinking in novel ways and to look for unnoticed continuities or connections in his works, pursuing reflection rather than stopping for reconstruction. The fact that the writers' affiliations range from semiotics to literary studies, French studies and cultural studies, already reflects Barthes's importance 28 years after his death. All the texts are based on presentations given at the international symposium "Barthes Relevance Today" held at the University of Helsinki Institute for Art Research in December 13, 2007.

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Writing the Present: *Notation* in Barthes's Collège de France lectures

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Abstract. In his lectures at the Collège de France in 1978–1979, Barthes focuses at length on the activity of '*la notation*' (in English, *notation*): grabbing a fleeting event or impression as it happens, and registering it in your notebook. This article explores the ramifications of *notation*, as outlined in the lectures (where it is associated with *haiku*, Joycean epiphany and Proustian impressionism), linking it to Barthes's longstanding interest in the ontology of modes of signification. Allied to his concept of the 'third meaning', and to later terms such as the *incident* and the *romanesque*, *notation* is seen to be central to the preoccupation with affect, subjectivity and individuality we associate with Barthes's later work. Linked with the fantasy of writing a novel, *notation* also chimes with the "fantasmatic pedagogy" of Barthes's lectures where ideas are explored in a highly personal way through the accumulation of discontinuous traits. Through *notation* the affect-driven, de-centred Barthesian subject finds its voice.

In his penultimate set of lectures at the Collège de France in 1978–1979, the first year of the two-year course he devoted to *La Préparation du roman* (Barthes 2003; *Preparing for the Novel*),¹ Barthes focuses at length on the notion or activity of '*la notation*' (hereafter, in English, *notation*). Its sphere of application is everyday life, the ambient world from which the would-be novelist is deemed to derive his materials. In the simplest terms *notation* consists in grabbing a fleeting event or impression quickly, on the wing, as it

¹ "Preparing for the Novel" is as yet untranslated into English. The title and all other citations are given in my own translation.

happens, and registering it in your notebook. *Notation* is inseparable from the kinds of things that prompt it, which Barthes calls *notanda*: not big, heavy, ponderous things, or meanings that need to be worked at or worked out; but little stray things, linked to moods, whims, transience, banality, circumstance.

I want to explore the ramifications of *notation* — as concept and activity — in the context of the Collège de France lectures, but also in the wider context of Barthes's work. '*La notation*', I will argue, is at the core of late Barthes and thus central to one of the many 'Barthes' who are still so relevant today: the Barthes of affect, of subjectivity, of the body, and so forth. *Notation* ties in with the exploration of photography in *Camera Lucida*, as well as with Barthes's concepts of the *incident* and the *romanesque*. But I also want to suggest how *notation* — the values and affects it stands for — is a perennial feature of Barthes's writing and sensibility and of his theoretical endeavour. Writing to his friend Georges Perros on 11 April 1961 Barthes congratulated him on his *Papiers collés*, a book consisting of a series of disconnected notes and observations on everyday life, literature and philosophy. Praising the way Perros's non-fictional writing captured reality in a new way Barthes wrote: "it's extraordinary that it should be possible to *tap in (capter)* by means of something other than the imaginary. But in the end what you write is always half-way between dreaming and thinking" (Barthes 1988: 107). Perros went on to develop his art of notation and annotation in two further volumes of *Papiers collés* (which bear this text on their back covers: "decisively, lazily, haphazardly, Georges Perros *notes*. Bits and pieces; explosions, rages, despair, quiescence, in response to moods, to books, to places, in short the way we all live: in moments, flashes, dazzles" (Perros 1961: back cover). Barthes's enthusiasm for his friend's cult of the note and the fragment as a way of catching fleeting experience clearly made a deep impression on him.

One of the things that led Barthes towards linguistics and semiology was his fascination for the different ways in which meanings are articulated. But perhaps his central contribution to the convergence of the linguistic and the literary lay in his interest in the affective or existential dimension of meaning production and reception. Barthes is always interested in the effect certain forms of meaning production had on him. He is less concerned with what meanings mean (message), or how meanings mean (code), than with the affective

impact of certain processes of meaning. In this affective economy, less is generally more: Barthes is led to the *minutiae* of meaning, what happens in the gaps between obvious meanings. In a famous text of 1970 he talks about the 'third meaning': not the first, the message, or the second, the symbolic or connotative level, but the third meaning, which he labelled *obtusé*, because of its wide compass, and also because it is the meaning that is only there in the first instance for the singular, embodied, individual — not the intellectual subject but the obtuse one, the idiot in us (Barthes 2002, III: 485–506). And of course we find a similar distinction in *Camera Lucida* between the *studium*, the obvious meaning of a photograph, the one we are supposed to see, and the *punctum*, the stray detail that makes an impact on me here and now when I look at the image (Barthes 2002, V: 785–894 *passim*).

Even in his out and out semiological phase, in *The Fashion System* for example, Barthes is interested in the existential dimension of the modes of signification he progressively taps into as he develops his analyses in various fields.² Already in *Writing Degree Zero* he is haunted by the allure of a mode of signification, an *écriture*, that would be a sort of degree zero, a 'white writing' that would elude ready-made ideology. *Mythologies* is concerned with the heavy-handedness of ideology, as it manifests itself in operations of meaning production that were current in the mass media of the 1950s. If Barthes spent much time looking at the opposite of what appealed to him in the sphere of meaning, this was partly because the third meaning, the *punctum*, the *notandum* — the thing grasped by notation — whilst being very real, is associated with what is concrete, and therefore very hard to grasp, or to found anything on. Increasingly, the forum for Barthes's semiology became not the literary work but the city street, not the page but what he called "the page of life itself", and "the live writing of the street" (Barthes 2002, III: 412). Hence, in late Barthes we are dealing more and more explicitly with ways of living, lifestyles, *art de vivre*. Like Michel Foucault in the same period, Barthes moved towards the "care of the self", a search for a posture, a way of being in the world.

² See "Barthes and the Everyday" in Sheringham 2006.

* * *

Barthes's account of '*la notation*' (which in French means the activity of noting things down and not, as more commonly in English, a script or idiom for doing so) occurs primarily in the set of lectures he delivered at the Collège de France in 1978–1979. Following his election, thanks to Foucault, to a chair in literary semiotics at the Collège in 1977, the challenge for Barthes was to adapt the form of teaching he had evolved at the Ecole des hautes études, where the staple was the seminar, to the format of the *ex cathedra* lecture. In his inaugural lecture at the Collège, titled *Lesson*, Barthes announced that his aim was to provide what he called a 'fantasmatic teaching', of a fragmentary and digressive kind. He would, he told his audience, explore, over the thirteen weeks of the series, the ramifications of a fantasy. And over the next four years, until just two days before he was fatally injured in a street accident, Barthes delivered four remarkable sets of lectures in which he combined intensely personal and idiosyncratic preoccupations with immensely wide literary and philosophical reference points. In his lectures, Barthes is always present as a singular human being, speaking in the first person, with specific memories and desires. The quest he embarks on each year is seen to have a bearing on the direction of his own life, and events such as the death of his mother, or his desire to adopt a new kind of writing — perhaps a sort of novel — are incorporated into his endeavour.

Barthes devoted his first series of annual lectures to the question of "How to live together?", exploring, via the resonances of a single concept, that of *idiorhythms*, the best balance between being on one's own and living with others. His second series took 'The Neutral' as its central focus. In December 1978, Barthes told his audience that he was now embarking on a longer-term project that might occupy him for a number of years. Having reminded them of his commitment to human subjectivity after its obliteration by orthodox philology, by Marxism, and by certain kinds of structuralism — "better the blinds of subjectivity", he observed, "than the impostures of objectivity. Better the imaginary of the subject than its censorship" (Barthes 2003: 25) — Barthes set out his most personal fantasy yet: that of making a radical change in his life and deciding to write some sort of novel.

The title of Barthes's last course is ambiguous: the preparation 'of' or 'for' the novel refers to his own process of working out what sort of

novel he might write (he explains that he has not yet acted on his life-changing fantasy), but also to what he has gleaned from his consideration of two key aspects or stages of how other novelists prepare for the novels they are to write. The first step or stage is to effect the transition “from life to work” (the sub-title of the first set of lectures). Taking it as evident that novelists draw on their own observations of life (not necessarily autobiographical but experiential) Barthes is concerned in the first lecture course with how the novelist collects and processes the materials out of which the work will be made. And it is here that the activity of *notation* will be central. In the second set of lectures, subtitled “the work as will”, Barthes considers how writers take the next step: how they convert the desire to write a novel into novel-writing itself. Drawing on the letters, diaries, and plans of a number of writers, including Chateaubriand, Balzac, Flaubert, Proust and Kafka, Barthes considers the kind of life the writer chooses to live in order to make writing possible.

* * *

How does the activity of *notation* fit into Barthes's conception — or more accurately his fantasy — of ‘Preparing for a novel’? Barthes explains that his fantasy springs from particular novels, above all Proust, but also Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and he asserts that for him the novel is always in some sense affirmative. But if the novel is a generous genre, its way of celebrating experience often depends on memory, on preserving a cherished past. This does not, however, fit Barthes's fantasy because, he tells us, he suffers from a poor memory. Apart from brief flashes (as illustrated by the ‘anamneses’ sequence of *Barthes by Barthes*, which consists in fact of a series of rapid notations; Barthes 2002, IV: 836–847), he has no long-term memory, and does not dwell upon or seek to reconstitute his past. Perhaps then the novel is not for him, despite his fantasy?

To avoid this impasse Barthes steers his meditation round to the view that the kind of novel he might write would have to be charged by other energies, that can also be found in the novels he likes, and charged above all by the fact that underlying these novels is what he takes to have been the author's profound engagement with his own present, at least prior to the start of composition. For Barthes tells us

that his own affective link is not with his past but always with the present, his present “in its affective, relational, and intellectual dimensions” (Barthes 2003: 45).

But the present is what is right there, at the end of one’s nose. How can one reconcile this proximity with the distance implied by the kind of enunciation that characterises writing and particularly novel writing? If Barthes is convinced that the novelists he admires shared his conviction that literature is always “made from life”, it is also clear to him that life is always present life. Hence, for him, *preparation for the novel* refers to “grasping that parallel text, the text of ‘contemporary’, concomitant life” (Barthes 2003: 45). If he believes — and this is what he will seek to demonstrate throughout his discussion of *notation* — that one can “write the present by *noting* it — as it “falls” on you or under you (before your eyes or in your ears)” (Barthes 2003: 45), he is less clear about whether you can make a novel out of such present writing. For it may be that the novelists he admires have, at a certain stage, made the transition from life to work, have transformed “present writing” into novelistic form, have gone from the discontinuity, the fragmentariness, of *notation*, to the continuity of narrative structure. This may be what happened, in Proust’s case, when *Contre Sainte-Beuve* turned into *A la recherche du temps perdu*: Barthes is obsessed with this hypothetical moment which he links to the death of Proust’s mother, just as his own decision to write a novel was linked to the death of his own mother.

The issue then might be, Barthes surmises, whether in fact he is searching for a ‘third form’, a sort of hybrid ‘novel through fragments’. To investigate this he decides to look at two seemingly diametrically opposed ways of incorporating the *notation* of the present into literature: on the one hand the mode of extreme brevity enacted in the Japanese poetic form of haiku; and on the other hand the profuse writing by which Proust converted his own life into the endless flowing sentences of *A la recherche*.

Interestingly, Barthes says that to illustrate the activity of noting the present he could have focused on writers’ notebooks or biographical diaries (Barthes 2003: 47). Why did he choose haiku? One answer is that Barthes’s passion for haiku, which had arisen a decade earlier through his visits to Japan from 1966 onwards, had always been associated with the idea of writing the present. At the core of *Empire of Signs* — Barthes’s book on Japan, or as he puts it, his book

about a fantasy country he calls Japan, which has a series of short fragmentary essay on aspects of everyday life in Tokyo — are four key fragments devoted to haiku. Initially he focuses on the way westerners tend to want forcibly to inject meaningfulness into haiku, ignoring the fact that, according to Barthes, the Japanese see haiku as a “practice aimed at bringing language to a halt [...] breaking [...] the inner recitation that constitutes our person [...] working on the very root of meaning” (Barthes 2002, III: 408). Switching in his characteristic way from modes of signification to the field of lived experience, Barthes sees the particular semantics of haiku as the touchstone of a particular quality of event, the ‘incident’, where it is not what happens but the fact of happening that counts.

Transposed onto “the page of life”, haiku, as incident, has the quality of a “light fold”, as it is rapidly read “in the live script of the street” (Barthes 2002, III: 408). Haiku is associated with “an awakening before the fact of the event” (Barthes 2002, III: 410). “Haiku isn’t a rich thought reduced to a brief form; it is a brief event that has found its appropriate form” (Barthes 2002, III: 411). Rather than reminding us of something in the past, haiku “probes the memory of what has not happened to us: it makes us recognise a repetition without origin, memory without persons, speech without moorings” (Barthes 2002, III: 412). For Barthes haiku is of a piece with “any discontinuous trait, any incident in Japanese life as it offers itself for me to read”, and points in the direction of an equivalent way of living, “a graphic mode of existence” (Barthes 2002, III: 415), where human agency is enshrined in micro-gestures that are akin to delicate brush-strokes. Haiku suspends meaning and prompts the response: “that’s right, that’s exactly it”, where ‘it’ isn’t something special, a hidden meaning, something symbolized by the event, but *is* the event itself (Barthes 2002, III: 415).

In his account of *notation* Barthes devotes many pages to haiku. But because he sees it as epitomising the act of *notation* as writing the present, he in fact progressively builds up a set of traits, properties or parameters that are of far wider application. For example, before embarking on his discussion of haiku (which will provide the framework for the account of *notation*), and in order to forestall impatience with the apparently technical considerations that will follow, Barthes insists that his concern is with a “interrogating a practice” (Barthes 2003: 49), a technique, or — key word — a gesture. But he adds that

for him every action, technique or gesture has its own ethos and ethics. And thus he claims that his account of haiku as an act of *notation* is an investigation of the intersection of the aesthetic and the ethical. Whatever intellectuals may think, an interest in the technical aspect of writing, in how novelists gather their materials, organise their lives, and so forth, is for Barthes an interest in the ethical. Because, he goes on to say, the privileged field where the aesthetic (in the shape of techniques and gesture) and the ethical coincide, is in the *minutiae* of the everyday, the domestic realm. Perhaps the desire to write a novel is the desire to partake in a ‘domestic’ practice of writing. Just as Proust compared his novel in progress to the dress the seamstress cuts and pieces together, so Barthes casts himself in the role of a housewife, anxious to get the right ingredients for his home-made offering (Barthes 2003: 51).

A discussion of haiku occupies the central core of the first lecture course on *La Préparation du roman* in 1978–1979. Eight of the thirteen sessions are devoted to haiku, following three introductory sessions. Two entire sessions are devoted to conclusions, and it is here that what Barthes now calls “the daily practice of notation” (Barthes 2003: 137) becomes the central focus. This helps us to understand that everything Barthes says about haiku, the many traits he progressively elucidates, are related to the desire to talk about a practice of capturing present experience, and about the place of such a practice in the process of writing a novel.

In embarking on his discussion of haiku Barthes offers this definition of “my haiku”:

haiku = the exemplary form of the Notation of the Present = a minimal act of enunciation. a form that has maximal brevity, the atom of a sentence that *notes* (marks, homes in on, glorifies, endows with *fama*) a minuscule element of ‘real’, present, concomitant life. (Barthes 2003: 53)

Barthes concedes that this definition is not canonical: he is talking about “my haiku”, and he defends the overall principle of his lecture course whereby the subject (not the narrow narcissistic ego, but the voice of subjectivity) is allowed to be voiced, uncensored. He also concedes that the haikus to which he responds have been translated into French (he lists the various anthologies he quotes). The material parameters of haiku: three lines, a fixed number of syllables, tenuous presence on the page, are all ones he responds to in mediated form,

and moreover via haiku's written rather than spoken forms (in Japan they are often read aloud).

Barthes's slow unfolding of the traits he identifies with haiku proceeds through a series of five rubrics:

(1) In *The Desire for Haiku* (Barthes 2003: 61–66) Barthes talks about the way haiku is a desirable or desire-bearing form, because in Japan ordinary people want both to write them and to read them. Haiku writing is a daily activity which fits in with the way haikus capture “a vibration of the world”. Barthes accounts for the happiness haikus induce by citing their unhierarchical quality, their acceptance of what seems futile and tenuous. A haiku can talk about anything: it posits “the emergence of absolute immediacy”, the co-presence of contingent elements. In a haiku the co-presence of items is not metonymic, antithetical, or causal: we are confronted with “a neutral consecutiveness”. Haikus circulate in a community, playing down authorship, authority, possession. Haikus, Barthes says, posit “a quintessence of subjectivity”, but not an author. A haiku belongs to anybody. And thus, Barthes affirms, “haiku is Desire, in so far as it circulates”. Haiku is “made at life's own level, *without remainder*”.

(2) In *Le Temps qu'il fait* (Barthes 2003: 66–84) Barthes starts from the idea that the only rule regarding the content of a haiku is that it should contain a reference to the season. This links what is placed before us, in a haiku's three brief lines, with the cosmos: not via description, but by summoning up directly the essence of the season itself, the essences of summer or autumn. Barthes connects this with references to the weather, and he bemoans the poverty of French where the same word, *temps*, is used for the English words *time* and *weather*. Yet he argues that the way the French language gets round this, via the expression ‘*le temps qu'il fait*’, when referring to the weather, adding a modal verb (with the verb *faire* — ‘to do’ or ‘to make’), shows that what is at stake when we refer to weather conditions is “the active relation of the subject and the present” (Barthes 2003: 71). A remark to a neighbour on the subject of weather is not just phatic but existential: it alludes to the “subject's sense of being, to the pure and mysterious sensation of living” (Barthes 2003: 72).³ In adverting to “*le temps qu'il fait*” haiku tends towards what Barthes calls “the individuation of the hours of the day” (Barthes 2003: 74).

³ See also *Le Plaisir du texte* (Barthes 2002: 252).

Haikus always aim at the particular rather than the general: homing in on variations of weather endows a single day with variegation, a range of nuances, “a mottled, differentiated range of intensities” (Barthes 2003: 75). In a haiku, each hour of the day is a level of sensitivity. Haiku is a discourse that articulates states and levels for which there are no set words. At stake here is a principle that Barthes, citing Deleuze’s recent work, calls Individuation or Nuance. Individuation is a notion that links irreducible singularity, ‘*la nuance fondatrice*’, to particular moments, to weather, colour, phenomena. On this view, subjectivity (Barthes cites Nietzsche and again Deleuze) is essentially mobile, not fluctuating but constituted by a network of mobile points: subjectivity is not like a river, even a changing one, but a mutability that is discontinuous (and yet smooth [*ahéurtée*]). Ambivalent, or dialectical, individuation shores up the subject in its individuality, its sovereignty, but at the same time “undoes” (*défait*) the subject, multiplies it, pulverises it, absents it (Barthes 2003: 79).

This makes it clear that what is at issue in Barthes’s account of haiku as *notation* is the status of the subject. And he goes on to make a range of comments that connect nuance to a poetics of emptiness, to difference, always with weather, “*le temps qu’il fait*”, on the horizon. Drawing on Blanchot’s readings of Mallarmé, Barthes links haiku and indeed “all *notation* to a falling back on one’s native impressions, a route back to the sheer sensation of life, the feeling of existence” (Barthes 2003: 84). It is worth noting that in this section Barthes quotes passages on exchanges to do with weather from a diary he kept in July and August 1977 in his summer retreat in the Basque country. The diary was one of the forms Barthes toyed with in his quest for a literary form in which to channel his desire to write and his passion for the present. In an important essay, *Délibération*, he discusses the reasons why he judged his experiment in diary writing to have been a failure (Barthes 2002, V: 668–681).

(3) Barthes considers next haiku’s relation to the ‘*Instant*’ (Barthes 2003: 84–93). He stresses that the dimension of time haiku grasps or saves is not the past but the present: “Time is saved right away [*tout de suite*] [through] a concomitance of the note (of writing) and of what incites it” (Barthes 2003: 85) — what he will further on call the *notandum* — the thing to be noted. Paradoxically, ‘*Notatio* (the fact of noting something down)’ — the Latin word *Notatio* underscoring the fact that Barthes construes it both as a practice (exemplified by haiku)

and as a rhetorical strategy like disposition or elocution — is also linked to the desire to remember. In fact haiku, and notation in general, convert immediate sensation into memory:

This uncompromisingly *pure* Instant, which seems to resist any type of duration, any kind of return, any setting aside, any freezing (this absolutely fresh *Instant*, as if one were eating the noted thing, straight from the tree, like an animal grazing on the living grass of sensation), this Instant also seems to say: *to remind me* — when I reread. An Instant that aspires to be a Treasure: Tomorrow: memory. This contradiction would express itself as follows: haiku [involves] a new and paradoxical category: ‘immediate memory’ as if *Notatio* (the fact of noting) permitted one to remember *there and then*. (Barthes 2003: 86)

(4) Under the heading *Pathos* (Barthes 2003: 93–111) Barthes focuses on affect and emotion. In haiku, affect is linked to perception, not in the banal sense of a faculty, but as an action, an event. In 1970 Barthes had written a set of brief ‘notations’ of his experience in Morocco, which were only published posthumously under the title *Incidents*. The following year, in an essay on Pierre Loti, he further elaborated the notion of the incident and of what just ‘falls’, ideas he links with haiku in *Empire of Signs*:

The incident is simply *what falls*, softly, like a leaf, onto the page of life. It is this fleeting, weightless fold in the fabric of days; it is what can *scarcely* be noted: a sort of zero degree of notation, just enough to enable *something* to be written. (Barthes 2002, IV: 109)

In his lectures Barthes connects the idea of the incident to another of his abiding preoccupations: the presence of tangible objects (*tangibilia*) in literary texts. For Barthes, the “passage of the tangible” gives us “a flash of the referent” that can be linked to fantasy and desire (Barthes 2003: 95). Regarding emotion, Barthes notes that haikus display a localised emotiveness (*‘émoi ténu’*) marked by the frequent use of exclamatory syllables like ‘oh’, and ‘ah’, although he goes on to stress that discretion is a key characteristic of haiku. “Haiku”, he writes, “is assent to what is [...] a happy assent to fragments [*éclats*] of the real, to affective inflexions” (Barthes 2003: 111).

(5) In another rubric, *The Reality effect* (Barthes 2003: 113–127), Barthes considers “how haiku’s way of saying produces a reality effect”, a term referring to instances when language gives way to a

sense of certainty that the real has been attained (Barthes 2003: 113).⁴ In a few pages Barthes adumbrates the key arguments he will develop in *Camera Lucida* regarding the “this has happened” side of the photograph, and he proposes that haiku comes very close to the ‘noem’, the epistemology, of the photograph: ‘ça a été’: ‘it has been’. And he goes on to suggest that while haiku articulates nuance and variegation, in showing how the world is infinitely divisible it also chooses a point at which to posit the real:

It is obvious that the world (the Notable, *Notandum*) can be infinitely divided (physicists do it) [...] so it follows that freeze-framing a notation has a certain arbitrariness [...] at a certain point [haiku affirms] that I have *posited*, *affixed* language. Yet, at what point in the *descent* into the infinitely subtle did I decide to affix language? (Or: why note this rather than that?). Perhaps the *decision* (and the little *satori* it provokes in reading) arises when metrics encounters a fragment of reality and makes a knot in it, stops it; a moment when the real is raised aloft by a combination of 5–7–5 syllables and allows this moment to be stated. (Barthes 2003: 119)

For Barthes this is what poetry does. And what it achieves is an experience he characterises by the word ‘Tilt’ (Barthes 2003: 123–127), from the expression used in pinball, ‘*faire tilt*’, when the game is stopped momentarily by an abrupt gesture that sets all the alarms ringing: “a good haiku engenders a ‘tilt’ in the reader. But a haiku can also represent the tilt, the ‘that’s it’: the brusque apparition of the referent in the stroll of life” (Barthes 2003: 123).

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The two sessions of Barthes’s lecture course where, after the focus on haiku, he opens up the discussion and works towards some conclusions, are together titled *Passages* (Barthes 2003: 137–161). Here he returns to the connections between “the fragmentary notation of the present” (Barthes 2003: 137) and the novel. How much ‘*notation*’ can be carried over into the novel? Barthes looks at this under four headings. He firstly considers *notation* “as a daily practice”. Since it is an act that aims to capture a “sliver of the present” (Barthes 2003: 137) as it strikes you, *notation* poses a number of practical problems.

⁴ Cf. the famous essay *L’effet de réel* (Barthes 2002, III: 25–32).

Barthes explains that his own practice involves always being equipped with a retractable biro (no need to take the cap off) and a pocket notebook. The 'copeau' or sliver consists in what he calls "my personal, inner *scoops* (*scoop*: spade, sheath, the action of scooping, a grab, a round-up, a first flowering)", which he wants to gather on life's very surface (Barthes 2003: 137). Suddenness, and a sense of *kairos*, the opportune moment, are key here: and so *notation* is a kind of reportage, not directed at 'la grosse actualité' (the big news), but at, 'my own little news'. Thus the impulse to note is unpredictable and *notation* is essentially "an *outdoor* activity — not the desk but the street, the café, with friends" (Barthes 2003: 137). Barthes's practice is to make what he calls a *notula*, often just one scribbled word, in his notebook, and then later to turn this into a *nota* by expanding it into a sentence on an index card. "Notable phenomenon: I forget the idea if I don't make a mark (*notula*) however elliptical; equally, once I've registered the *nota* I clearly remember the idea as a whole and even its form (its sentence)" (Barthes 2003: 137). Another practical consideration is making oneself available ('*disponible*'): noting things as they come up in life ('*à même la vie*') requires time and also what Freud called 'floating attention'. Barthes also observes that *notation* can become like a drug, or a mother from whom we are reluctant to be weaned, and he links this to Protestantism (citing Gide and Amiel as autobiographical diarists) since *notation* involves direct contact with the truth rather than mediation. *Notation* involves the "direct articulation of the thinking subject and the sentence-making subject" (Barthes 2003: 139).

Next are 'The levels of notation'. Reiterating a point he has often made elsewhere, that "meaning depends on the level or scale of perception" (Barthes 2003: 140), so that if you were to blow up five square centimetres of a Cézanne painting you would have a Nicolas de Staël canvas — Barthes argues that homing in on the minuscule does not necessarily imply brevity: in Proust for example the experience of the tenuous often leads to long flights of investigative prose.

He then goes on to consider what he calls the unit of notation, the *notandum*, and the various roles it can play (the various "justifications" it can receive). A *Functional* role, as when a character's minor trait "serves to indicate something necessary to the system of the Story" (Barthes 2003: 142). A *Structural* role, where the *notandum* is determined not by its content but by the rhythm of its appearance,

its infrequency for example, or its very futility. A *Symbolic* role, as when the thing noted is a sign of something else (as example Barthes gives a long citation from Kafka). An *Aesthetic* role: here Barthes cites an incident from his own recent life, when, waiting for a bus in Paris he had seen a woman with a curious way of walking. In this instance the *notandum* was aesthetic because a particular type of sentence structure was required in order to register the impression it gave. The sentence had to be both contrastive and exclamatory, something like: “well, if a man walked like that he’d be called effeminate” (Barthes 2003: 144).

Summing up the question of levels, Barthes argues that, in formal terms, as a ‘*forme brève*’, *notation* is what cannot be summarised. A *notation* is a syntagm, a basic unit of signification. Barthes then posits that the brusque emergence (*surgissement*) of a *notation* is that of a sentence: the impulse, the *jouissance* of notation, is that of producing, or hatching, a sentence. Observing that a whole course could be devoted to this, Barthes makes a series of remarks on the nature of the sentence, notably around the idea of “sentence fetishism” (associated with Flaubert), a condition where, like poor Emma Bovary, we become victims of the fatal allure of certain kinds of statement (Barthes 2003: 149). As a ‘*leurre*’, a ‘blind’, the sentence, he says, wipes out (*scotomise*) everything else (Barthes 2003: 149). And he cites holiday advertisements that make us see the white sand, the beautiful women, and the cocktails, but omit the airport hold-ups, the frightful crowds and the painful sunburn.

Finally, getting back to the novel “as Utopia, Fantasy, Sovereign Good” (Barthes 2003: 151) — or at least to the last and most important relay towards what he now calls the “modern *nota*” — Barthes considers two final facets of *notation*, its quiddity, associated with Joyce, and its truth, associated with Proust.

Joyce’s famous epiphanies were originally composed (in 1900–1903) to stand alone, but were then incorporated into his first novel *Stephen Hero*, itself a step on the way to *Ulysses*. In the same period, Proust went from the scattered writings of his early years to the vast continuum of *A la Recherche*. Fascinated by these two instances of passage, of transition from *notation* to experimental novel, Barthes considers the Joycean epiphany, defined as “the sudden revelation of the quiddity — the whatness — of a thing” (Barthes 2003: 151), as a model for his own experimentation with the form he called the ‘inci-

dent'. Drawing on Richard Ellman's biography of Joyce, and quoting one of Joyce's texts, Barthes is fascinated by the fortuitous, discrete, spasmodic character of epiphanies, which depend on an artistic posture of receptivity and availability:

This Joycean experiment with epiphanies is very important to me, and corresponds exactly to my own search for a similar form, which I call the *Incident*: a form I experimented with in snatches in *The Pleasure of the Text*, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, *A Lover's Discourse*, an unpublished text (*Au Maroc*) [later *Incidents*], and my chronicles in the *Nouvel Observateur*. (Barthes 2003: 152)

The reference at the end is to a weekly page Barthes wrote for the famous French weekly news magazine, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, during more or less the exact duration of his lecture course (Barthes 2002, V: 625–653). As he lectured week by week on the difficulties of writing the present, probing, via haiku, the parameters of such an enterprise, Barthes was supplying his listeners at the Collège de France (who often read his weekly column on the way to his lectures), and a much wider readership of over half a million, with a sample of his own experimentation with the form he called the *incident*. Each weekly *Chronique* comprised an average of four separately titled and unconnected entries ranging from a few lines to a couple of substantial paragraphs. In each case Barthes formulated concretely his subjective reaction to things that had grabbed his attention that week, for example an encounter at the hairdresser's, media coverage of the collective suicides of a sect in Guyana, a rumour that mayor Chirac planned to outlaw busking, advertisements and health campaigns. The first *Chronique* appeared on 18 December 1978, two days after his third lecture. His final column would appear on 26 March 1979. But already in his last lecture, on 10 March 1979, where Barthes discusses Joycean epiphany, he adumbrates the terms in which, in his final column, he would announce the suspension of his *Chronique*, and explains why he deemed the search for an adequate form to have failed. What he says in the lecture is that a common property of the haiku, the epiphany, and the Incident is that they should posit “immediately signifying events”, that they should eschew all commentary:

the difficulty of the haiku, the epiphany, and the incident is the constraint of not-commenting [...] the extreme difficulty (or courage) [lies in] not giving the meaning, any meaning; deprived of commentary, the inconsequentiality of

the incident is laid bare, and to let this inconsequentiality stand is almost heroic. (Barthes 2003: 153)

Yet, Barthes explains, in view of the large circulation of *Le Nouvel Observateur* he had felt that "it was impossible not to give to each incident its moral" (Barthes 2003: 153). And thus (as he would enlarge in his final column in the magazine) his *Chronique*, in failing to let incidents speak for themselves, was a failure. In this instance Barthes had not found a form to match his ambitions. And he wonders if Joyce too, in abandoning his epiphanies in their original form, and bringing them into the framework of his novels, had not confronted the same problem of feeling that the Western reader needed interpretation and could not tolerate elliptical brevity.

In Proust's case, Barthes argues, the fragmentary moment that exists in a problematic relation with any established form, is not connected with the quiddity of things, but with what he calls "the truth of affect" (Barthes 2003: 155). This has an affinity with haiku and epiphany because for Barthes it is enshrined in what he calls "the moment of truth", a moment which, as in haiku, prompts the reaction: "That's just it!" (*C'est ça*), an experience of 'Tilt'. The moment of truth is readerly rather than writerly, and for Barthes it is associated supremely with two moments in fiction — the death of Prince Boltonski in *War and Peace*, and the death of the narrator's grandmother in *A la recherche* (this insistence on death is of course poignant given the death of Barthes's own mother which had prompted his decision to think about writing a novel). The essence of such moments for Barthes is their radically concrete nature, rendered through details such as the grandmother's gestures, or her ruffled hair, painstakingly combed by the servant Françoise (Barthes repeats the word *concrete* six times in one page of his lecture).

Moment of truth = solidity, compactness, firmness of affect and writing, an indivisible block. The moment of truth is not an unveiling but on the contrary the sudden *emergence* of the uninterpretable, the last degree of meaning, of the 'after that there is no more to be said', hence the filiation with haiku and epiphany. (Barthes 2003: 159)

Not surprisingly perhaps, Barthes ends his lecture course on an ambivalent or pessimistic note. He suggests that even if one could devise a mode of reading that would be founded on receptivity to such mo-

ments in fiction, they are in fact at odds with the novel itself. In the end, the possible convergence between *notation*, *notandum*, and the novel, anticipated and hypothesised all the way through *La Préparation du roman*, never takes place, the two curves remaining asymptotic.

In truth the Novel [...] with its long flow, cannot sustain 'truth' (that of the moment): this is not its function. I see it as something woven (= Text), a vast spreading canvas painted with illusions, blinds, invented things, 'fakes' if you like [...] punctuated, threaded with [rare] moments of truth that are its absolute justification [...] when I produce *Notations*, they are all 'true': I never lie (I never invent), but precisely, I do not accede to the Novel; the novel begins not with the false, but when one mixes without warning the true and the false: the absolute, glaring truth, and the brightly coloured brilliance of a falsity that stems from Desire and the Imaginary [...]. Perhaps managing to write a novel (this is the perspective — the vanishing point — of this lecture course) means ultimately accepting to lie. In the end, resistance to the novel, an incapacity for the novel (for this practice) is a *moral* resistance. (Barthes 2003: 161)

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A fascination with *notation* — a way of grasping the 'third meaning' that eludes (or subverts) both denotation and connotation — is at the heart of Barthes's late work, and in discussing it explicitly in his penultimate lecture course Barthes drew together many strands of his thinking. The passion for *notation* can be linked to a number of 'turns' in late Barthes: an affective turn — towards intensities; an everyday turn, amplifying his abiding concern for everyday life; a turn towards the 'romanesque', the stuff of the novel, but without the alibis of fiction and narrative. The desire for *notation* accompanies and informs Barthes's quest for new modes of writing, as he sought, after years of reacting to avant-garde currents, to give his own creativity a proper outlet. Through autobiography; the simulation of a lover's discourse; diary writing; the *incident*, the *chronique*, and other '*formes brèves*'; and ultimately through the photograph, Barthes sought to find a form that would realise his ambition of "writing the present".

The lure of *notation* is also connected with Barthes's fascination with lives, with the raw materials, the bits and pieces that human lives, considered outside any teleology, are made up of. In a famous state-

ment in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* Barthes called these bits and pieces — stray facts, anecdotes, memorabilia — ‘*biographèmes*’, and in the last years of Barthes’s life Proust was at the centre of this concern. When he went on to give his last set of lectures the following year, continuing the theme of preparing for the novel but going on to consider “the work as effort of will”, Barthes included many *biographèmes* from the life of Proust and also from other favourite writers (Chateaubriand, Kafka, Flaubert), drawn from letters, diaries, and correspondence, as he sought to pin down how writers organise their lives, and their time, in order to write. This fascination with ‘*biographèmes*’, and with the stuff of lives, relates of course to Barthes’s long-standing passion for details (fashion details for instance), and for variegation, difference of degree (which he called ‘*bathmologies*’ in *Barthes by Barthes*). He coined the term ‘*Marcellisme*’ to convey his curiosity about the life of Proust (or Kafka, or Flaubert) — fuelled by his enthusiasm for George Painter’s biography of Proust. This can of course seem like quaint obscurantism. But when situated in the context of the project of grasping the present, and reflecting on the epistemology of *notation*, Barthes’s obsession with the writer’s life is a fascinating route into new ways of thinking about the human subject.

Ultimately, then, *notation* is the vehicle, the sounding-board, for the subject that seeks articulation in late Barthes, a subject whose voice we hear most clearly, not in *Incidents* or *Chronique*, but in *Camera Lucida*. Yet now that they have been published at last, and are beginning to receive the recognition they deserve, it is to the four series of Collège de France lectures that we should perhaps look for a glorious flowering of the Barthesian subject. Consisting in a stream of *notations*, gathered up into a series of “traits”, labelled with a key word and then presented in a randomized, unhierarchical order, the “fantasmatic pedagogy” of the lectures confirmed the key place of *notation*, and the third meaning it registers, in the signifying economy of Barthes’s work. If his search for a new kind of *romanesque* never burgeoned into anything resembling a novel it surely flourished here in the wonderful affective and intellectual feast his lectures provided for their audiences in the 1970s and for a new readership in the twenty-first century.

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Записывающая настоящее:

нотация в лекциях Коллеж де Франс Ролана Барта

В своих лекциях 1978–1979 гг в Коллеж де Франс Ролан Барт сосредотачивался на понятии '*la notation*': запись прошедшего впечатления или события во время его случая. Настоящая статья анализирует виды *нотаций*, приведенные в лекциях (там виды *нотаций* связывались с хокку, эпифанией Джойса и прустовским импрессионизмом), связывая их с долговременным интересом Барта к онтологии разных видов обозначения. *Нотация* находится в одном ряду с понятием «третьего значения» и более поздними терминами «инцидент» и «романный» и кажется центральным в проявившемся в поздних работах Барта интересе к аффекту, субъективности и индивидуальности. Так как *нотация* связана с фантазией написания романа, то это понятие отзывается и в «призрачной педагогике» бартовских лекций, где все идеи развиваются в сверхличном стиле посредством нагромождения различных не связанных между собой элементов. Бартовский децентрализованный, действующий аффективно субъект говорит именно в смысле *нотации*.

Olevikku kirjutades:

ülestähendamine Barthes'i Collège de France'i loengutes

Oma 1978.–1979. aasta loengutes Collège de France'is keskendus Roland Barthes mõistele '*la notation*' (inglise keeles '*notation*'): mõõduva mulje või sündmuse üles tähendamine märkmikusse selle aset leidmise ajal. Käesolev artikkel analüüsib *ülestähendamise* liike, nii nagu nad loengutes välja toodud on (loengutes on *ülestähendamise* liike seostatud haiku, Joyce'i epifaania ja prustiliku impressionismiga), sidudes neid Barthes'i

pikaaegse huviga erinevate tähistusviiside ontoloogia vastu. *Ülestähendamine* kuulub samasse ritta 'kolmanda tähenduse' mõiste ning hilisemate terminitega 'intsident' ja 'romaanilik' ning paistab sellisena olevat keskne Barthes'i hilistes töödes väljenduv huvis afekti, subjektiivsuse ja individuaalsuse vastu. Et *ülestähendamine* on seotud romaani kirjutamise fantaasiaga, kõlab see mõiste vastu ka Barthes'i loengute 'kummituslikus pedagoogikas', kus kõiki ideid arendatakse üliisiklikus stiilis erinevate omavahel mitte seotud elementide kuhjamise läbi. Barthes'i afektide ajal toimiv ja detsentraliseeritud subjekt leiab väljenduse just nimelt *ülestähendamise* mõistes.

Barthes's positive theory of the author

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Abstract. While it is well known that Roland Barthes consecrated his last lecture series at the Collège de France to the theme of the preparation of a novel, it is less known that his first writings on literature focused on the same question, but from a less individual point of view. The interrogation that motivates *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953) and many of the essays in *Essais critiques* (1964) is the question of how to write, of what procedures one can follow in preparing a literary work of art. At the two ends of Barthes's career one finds the same themes of writing as action and of the writer's possibilities and motivations in writing. The article explores the hypothesis that there is ground for a positive theory of the author in Barthes's work. It seeks to discover similarities between writings from the early and the late period that concern three themes: (1) writing as action, (2) the deferral of its achievement, and (3) writing as representation. The article ends with a discussion on the relationships between Barthes's positive theory of the author and related important issues that have been discussed recently in literary criticism.

At the last stage of his life, during the short period as professor at the Collège de France, Roland Barthes spoke more and more explicitly of his desire to write a novel, focusing in his last series of lectures in 1978–1979 and 1979–1980 on the topic of *la préparation du roman* and working privately on plans for a novel the title of which was to be *Vita Nova*. Given that Barthes had published in 1968 the provocative essay *La mort de l'auteur*, it is not surprising that this enactment of a writer's role has given rise to a lively scholarly discussion. Interpretations vary. It is possible to see Barthes's project as a failure and a logical outcome of his work on the neuter and the related themes, such as silence and abstinence, for example (Comment 1991); as an

existential choice of a specific form of life where the phantasm of writing a novel expresses devotion to literature (Compagnon 2002); or as a success, the outcome of which was not a novel, but the autobiographical prose published as the posthumous book *Incidents* in 1987 and preceded by the half-theoretical, half-literary essay *Délibérations* in the revue *Tel Quel* in 1979 (Knight 2002).

Even though the generic extension of Barthes's achievement as a writer is yet to be established — was he also a literary writer in addition to the largely recognized brilliant essayist? — it is clear that he has become an author in the strong sense of the word. As research develops, arguments become more and more backed up with references to Barthes's *Oeuvres complètes* and manuscripts and conjectures on his intentions and desires. This “authorialization” of Barthes as a writer goes often hand in hand with a re-evaluation of his career in the light of the themes and projects of the last period. While some researchers have argued that Barthes's career was a coherent one (Buffat 2002), others have interpreted Barthes's late interest in the writer's work and the desire, the will and the intentions it involves, as well as his confession-like statement of being tired of the (post)modern literature he had defended earlier, as an abandonment of the textual theory of the 1970s and even as a sheer negation of the theoretical projects of the earlier years (Brenner 1993).

What I am about to do is another type of analysis of Barthes and the question of the author. While it is well known that Barthes consecrated his last lecture series at the Collège de France to the theme of the preparation of a novel, and that he approached the topic by methodologically analysing his own phantasms of writing and the literary texts that resonated with them, it is less known, or at least less discussed in research that Barthes's first writings on literature focused on the very same question, but only from a less individual point of view. The interrogation that motivates *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953) and many of the essays in *Essais critiques* (1964) is the question of how to write, of what procedures one can follow in preparing a literary work of art, within the specific context of post-war France. These aspects in the early essays have been overshadowed first by the structural period and its focus on systematicity and conventionality, and then by the textual period and its insistence on the text and the reader as the producers of signification. However, at

the two ends of Barthes's career one finds the same themes of writing as action and of the writer's possibilities and motivations in writing.

The hypothesis that I want to explore is that there is actually ground for a positive theory of the author in Barthes's work. By "positive" I mean that this line of thinking is not mostly interested in what the writer is not — that is, not an authority, not the granter of meaning, not the privileged participant in communication, as the essay on "the death of the author" has so clearly argued — but rather in what the writer does, what are his or her possibilities for action and the acts through which he or she sets premises for meanings to develop. By "theory" I imply that there is generality in Barthes's thinking, that his treatment of the topic transcends his own experience and those of the writers he has written about, and that his reflections can be interpreted as constituting an organized whole that offers a coherent understanding of the topic. I will not pay attention to the differences of historical context between the texts, but instead I will try to discover similarities between writings from the early and the late period. The similarities concern three themes, which will be discussed in the following order:

- (1) writing as action;
- (2) the need to endlessly restart writing, or the deferral of its achievement;
- (3) writing as representation.

I will end my analysis with a discussion on the relationships between Barthes's positive theory of the author and some of the important concerns in recent discussions in literary criticism, addressing thus the main theme of this special issue of *Sign Systems Studies*, Barthes's relevance today.

Writing as action

Barthes's first work, the collection of essays *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, published in 1953, sketches a short history of French literature from the classical period to the post-war era. Barthes's approach is based on the notion of writing, *écriture*, which he defines as the dimension of choice and thus of liberty situated between the collective system of language and the biologically grounded style. The overall discussion is determined to a great extent by the intellectual

debates of the time, and especially by Sartre's theory of engaged literature. This emphasis on the historical and the political seems to be far from Barthes's concerns in the Collège de France lectures in 1978–1980, where his method in analysing the topic of “*la préparation du roman*” is based on the exploration of the subjective phantasm of writing a novel, and especially of the activities that precede the act of writing (such as taking notes), and where the historical dimension of literature is marginal if not non-existent.

Nevertheless, these differences between the early and the late work can be overcome, if Barthes's understanding of history in *Le Degré zéro* is clarified. In this book, Barthes reads works from the classical period and the 19th century from the point of view of the writer's condition in relation to the literary language of his or her time. What Barthes analyses are the political and cultural significations that the different forms of literary language — writing in his terminology — carry along and the writer's responsibility in choosing among the different forms and their significations. Even though forms and significations change, the writer's condition, his or her responsibility in choosing a writing and thus affirming his or her social and political position, remains the same. Different historical contexts are thus linked together by this recurring general condition.

It is important to notice that writing is defined as instrumental activity in *Le Degré zéro*. Barthes's history of literature begins and ends with cases where the writer has at his or her disposal a form of literary representation that functions as a perfect instrument for communication. For the classical writer, writing is not a problem, since the social significations the forms of literary representation carry are concordant with the vision of the world he or she shares with the reading audience. For Camus, who marks the other end of Barthes's historical timeline, writing is also unproblematic, not because of ideological concordance, but because his *écriture blanche* has reached a level of semiotic non-markedness that resembles mathematical equations and permits him to “discover and deliver” (Barthes 1953: 57) the human condition without disturbing social significations. In between these two extremes cases, Barthes situates a series of writers for whom writing, the forms of literary representation at their disposal in their specific historical context, has been a problem, since they have not accepted the significations brought into the communication by the forms of literary representation. Writing is thus an instrument, but an

instrument with a social dimension and with a history and consequently with significations that are brought into the action of writing by these dimensions. The "writer's formal identity" (Barthes 1953: 14) is based on the selection of the forms of literary representation he or she decides to use, and, metonymically, on the selection — or refusal — of the significations the forms carry with them.

Read in this way, *Le Degré zéro* is parallel to Barthes inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, which serves as an introduction to his further work at the institution. Barthes argues in the lecture, published as *Leçon* in 1978, that language and reality are incommensurable, and that the representation of the real is thus impossible, but also that this unbridgeable gap is constantly denied (Barthes 1978: 21–22). This refusal produces a continuous utopian effort to represent the real by language in literature. The devices used in this effort vary, and their changes constitute the history of literature. Like in *Le Degré zéro*, we find here different historical contexts linked together by a recurring general condition, defined by the fact that language and the real do not have a common measure¹. If literature in general is defined in *Leçon* as a utopian effort to transcend this condition, to represent the real, then it is logically possible also to analyse the agents implied in this effort and their actions, that is, writers engaged in representing. This is the line of thought that leads from *Le Degré zéro* to *Leçon* and to the Collège de France lectures.

I will return to the question of representation at the end of my paper. Let us now focus on writing as action and try to see, at the level of praxis, what Barthes has to say in the Collège de France lectures about the writer's work and how the early and the late writings can complement each other. The theme of selection or of choice is present here as it was in *Le Degré zéro*, but it is situated at a different level. On the one hand, selection and choice determine discussions on the writer's relation to reality and its thematization in the act of writing

¹ This standpoint rests on a preliminary separation of language from what is considered as real. This idea, shared by most French structural and textual theoreticians of the 60s and 70s, is problematic, since it abstracts language from its everyday entanglement with action, experience and emotions. It is also curious, given that the theoreticians that lay their argumentation on it often understand language as having a tremendous power in conditioning thought and action. Language is first abstracted from the real, then exaggerated and finally brought back to the real just to notice that it is no more commensurable with it.

down observations, impressions and ideas ('notation' in French). On the other hand, selection and choice have an important role in the writer's performative use of genres.

When Barthes analyses the role of writing down observations, impressions and ideas, he defines it as an act of marking, of drawing of boundaries and of isolation (Barthes 2003: 45–48, 137–141²). From the multidimensional and layered realm of the real, the act of writing down selects certain items and isolates them from the rest. This act foregrounds epistemological and ontological commitments and the question of values. One can always ask why one item is written down and not another, what justifies the act of selection and isolation. The action is thus in need of legitimization, and this can only be based on the writer's conception of reality (ontology) and his or her personal knowledge and experience of the real (epistemology). Moreover, the further work on what is written down, the copying of notes for use in writing a literary text, thematizes their social relevance, since they become now a part of a potential act of communication. This is where writing actually begins, since the writer's private work of writing down, situated at the intersection of language, personality and the real, acquires now a social dimension. Through being copied, notations are redirected towards possible readers, their appreciation, criticism and feedback.

The act of copying, of rewriting the notes in view of the literary work to be, has to be related also to Barthes's discussion on genres. In this respect, Barthes's Collège de France lectures stand in an explicit opposition to his essays from the 1960s. If in the *Essais critiques* in 1964 writing was defined as an intransitive verb, meaning that writing is first and foremost linguistic activity, play with literary and ordinary language, and not oriented to the representation or communication of something that would exist prior to the text³, in Collège de France lectures Barthes writes that he is no longer sure whether this understanding is correct (Barthes 2003: 35–36, 203–209). He argues instead that one always writes something: for example a novel, a poem, or an

² The pages are where Barthes discusses the topic most explicitly, but it runs through almost the whole volume, and other pages could thus be mentioned. This holds also for further references to Barthes 2003.

³ The introduction to *Essais critiques* contains, however, other comments on the writer's situation that are relevant for our purpose and are discussed in the following chapters.

essay. Writing in this respect is always determined by the codified aspects of the genre, like speech is determined by the system of language.

This does not mean, however, that the writer would be entirely subjected to genre. Barthes understands in his lectures writing as a performative work on the genres. The genre functions like a codified form for the private phantasm of writing. It sets the model to follow in seeking to realize the will to write as others have done — as Proust did, as Joyce or Dante did. Genre is not only a structure or a repertoire, but rather a signifying element in a network of references that extends to the authors who have used the genre and the values they represent. It permits a mimetic identification of the writer with exemplary figures from literary history. But the realization of the genre in one's own work has also a creative dimension. The performance of genre can give rise to new emerging aspects in the literary work. In this sense, the dialectic relation of a codified genre and its realization in writing has a creative dimension that constitutes the writing subject as author. It is in relation to the genre and to those who have practiced it with success that the writer establishes his or her identity through similarity and difference at the same time, through a successful remaking of a codified form and an individual deviation from it.

The deferral of achievement

The discussion so far has put forward the first elements of a positive theory of the author. In Barthes's thinking, writing as action is selection and organization — selection among the possible forms of literary representation, marking and isolation of items to note, selection among notes to copy, their organization in regard to a potential act of communication, and choice of genres to follow, realize and transform in writing. Through these acts, the writer emerges as a cultural and social subject, as an agent that performs literary structures and categories and establishes epistemological and ontological commitments that cannot be reduced to pre-existing elements and do not acquire meaning by difference alone, but instead constitute relations of continuity and similarity that give him or her positive consistency.

Having exposed this, we can turn to the second topic, which is the need to endlessly restart writing, or the deferral of its achievement,

based on the social and the individual condition of the writer. In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Barthes's diagnosis of the historical development of writing is pessimistic. All forms of literary representation acquire cultural and social significations that are foreign to the intentions of the writers who use those forms. This holds for the classical writing, which became obsolete once the classical understanding of man and society collapsed, and it holds also for Camus's *écriture blanche*, which will inevitably be turned into a myth by the literary institution and lose its functional purity. Literature is in this sense a pursuit of a transparent instrument that always ends in a delusion. In *Leçon*, Barthes defined this semiotization of form as the constituting force of literary history: it is because writing acquires historical significations that are independent in regard to its purposes of representation that writing has to be developed and experimented with (Barthes 1978: 21–22).

This conflicting relationship between a writer's intentions and the codified aspects of language and literature is at the core also in the introduction to the 1964 volume of *Essais critiques* (Barthes 1964: 9–18) which is actually one of Barthes's most substantial discussions of the writer's position and work, but which has been overshadowed by the emerging structural theory developed elsewhere in the essays. In the introduction, Barthes argues that ordinary ways of expressing emotions (his example is a letter of condolence) make, because of the conventionality of the expression, the emotions appear cold, even though they were true and expressed sincerely. The only way to communicate the singularity of the emotions is to vary the form. This is the condition of literature, and the writer resembles a friend looking for sincerity in that both are listening to their use of language and show concern for its affective effects on the listener at the level of the content expressed and of the form that expresses. In this way, literature, and all use of language as expression of emotions, is an endless play of variation, of resistance to the banality of conventions.

In the Collège de France lectures, Barthes describes a similar kind of a process of deferral of achievement, but this time it is based on the individual condition of the writer (Barthes 2003: 219–229). He applies the psychoanalytical concepts of *Moi idéal* and *Idéal du Moi* to describe what he understands as a projection of an ideal understanding of oneself as a writer, which motivates writing, but which is always deceived by the outcome of the activity. Writing is the realm of the

Ideál du Moi, the exalting and exigent place provided by the symbolical dimension of language for the construction of oneself. The *Ideál du Moi*, however, does not coincide with the *Moi Idéal*, which is the imaginary understanding of oneself outside of writing, and which fundamentally motivates writing. This difference between the imaginary *Moi Idéal* and the literary representation of oneself as *Idéal du Moi* is what makes writing an endless work. This is how Barthes describes the process:

[...] On pourrait dire que l'écrivain raisonne (ou «marche», fonctionne) ainsi: «*Je veux être un type bien (Moi Idéal) et je veux que ça se dise, que ça se sache (Idéal du Moi).* » [...] mais en même temps je constate que: non, ce que j'ai écrit n'est pas *tout moi*; il y a un reste, extensif à l'écriture, que je n'ai pas dit, qui fait ma valeur entière, et qu'il me faut à tout prix dire, communiquer, «monumentaliser», écrire: «*Je vau plus que ce que j'ai écrit.*» (Barthes 2003: 222–223)

[...] One could say that the writer reasons (or “proceeds”, functions) this way: “*I want to be a good guy (Moi Idéal), and I want it to be said, to be known (Idéal du Moi)*”. [...] but at the same time I realise that: no, what I have written is not *all of me*; there is a surplus, extensive in relation to writing, something that I have not said and that makes my value complete, and that I will have to say at all costs, communicate, “monumentalize”, write: “I am more worthy than what I wrote”.⁴

The notions of *Moi Idéal* and *Idéal du Moi* thus describe at the same time the individual motivation for writing literature, its deception and the need to begin writing again that it produces. The points of view in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* and the Collège de France lectures are different, but they describe basically the same phenomenon, which is the social and cultural dimension of literary semiosis as opposed to the individual one. The literary institution and the reading public will interpret texts in ways that can not be controlled by the writer, and in *La mort de l'auteur* Barthes forcefully stated their right to do so (Barthes 1984: 63–69). This is also true for the different forms of literary representation the writer has at his or her disposal. The literary text and its form, be it conceived as an instrument for representation or a screen for the projection of the writer's understanding of oneself,

⁴ All translations into English from French originals are by the author of the article.

stand always at the intersection of the private and the public, and mark thus the intrusion of otherness into the writer's work, which undermines the ego-logical purity and perfection of writing.

If the reader is free in interpretation only at the cost of the death of the author, as Barthes provocatively claimed at the end of the famous essay in 1968, then his reflections in the Collège de France lectures show the writer as split between two irreconcilable positions. The writer as author seeks to dominate the work and its significations, subjecting it to the logic of origin, expression and authenticity, whereas the writer as reader of his or her own work perceives the work according to the logic of textuality, as developing multiple significations that resist the paternalizing grip of authority and show the failure of the writer as author. However, despite the emphasis on the deferral of achievement, which might be interpreted as yet another element in a negative theory of the author, it has to be emphasized that Barthes's description of the social and individual deception in writing constitutes also a positive understanding of the writer. By exposing the reasons why literature is a process of quest and delusion, Barthes helps to understand what motivates the multiple acts of selection that constitute writing as action and make the writer emerge as a cultural and social subject endowed with creativeness and individual consistency. The will to write the idealized understanding of oneself and the search for transparent instruments can be adopted as hypotheses that permit to analyze motivations in a writer's series of actions, and also help to understand the writer's production as a dynamical process with intentions, coherence and rationality, even though it were an endless process of failure from the writer's point of view.⁵

⁵ Antoine Compagnon (2002: 223–224) interprets Barthes's *Moi Idéal* and *Idéal du Moi* as establishing a typology of writers. This is clearly not the case. For Barthes, the two aspects of the self establish a logic of deferral that is common to all writing.

Writing as representation

To consider writing as representation seems to stand in an open contradiction with what is generally considered as the core of (post)structural literary theory, namely the argument that texts are production and simulation, not representation and mimesis. Barthes himself can be regarded as a fervent partisan of the poststructural understanding of literature, and a great deal of his writings in the 1960s and early 1970s forcefully criticize theories of realism and expression and claim that, instead of making present a message that would pre-exist the text and of depicting reality in any faithful way, literary texts are only play with codes, intertexts and rhetoric effects of reality. Nevertheless, Barthes's late works, as well as some of the early writing up to the introduction to *Essais critiques*, can also be read as reflection on literature as representation. In order to understand this, it is necessary to define what he actually means by representation in these works and especially what he understands as the object of representation. This discussion will then lead us back to the question of the author.

It is common to discuss representation as a relation between the world and the text, to consider it as linguistic description or narration of characters, events or settings, of things and processes that are not linguistic themselves and that exist somehow independently of the text, and to judge the success of representation in terms of equivalency or concordance between the depiction offered by the text and the non-textual understanding of the items represented. Seen in this way, representation is evidently difficult, if not impossible, since the very notion depends on a primary separation of language and reality and the secondary effort to make them match again. As Barthes wrote in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, language is one-dimensional and the world is multidimensional and thus the effort to make them meet in representation is a utopian wish (Barthes 1978: 21–22).

But this is not the idea of representation we find in Barthes's late works, nor in some of the early ones. Here it is not the question of representing real persons, actions or settings by linguistic means; instead, it is the question of affects and their communication by the means of literature, and of a search for transcendence by these means. In the introduction to *Essais critiques*, Barthes claims that writing is

motivated by desire and understands it first of all as a form of communication. It is because the conventionality of language and of forms of writing intervenes in the communication process and threatens the originality and singularity of the emotion to be expressed that writing becomes a work on language. Only through a play of variations of form one can wish to convey one's emotions to the addressee in an exact way. Seen from this perspective, Barthes's (post)structural period and his theory of textuality, initiated by *Essais critiques*, can be considered as derived, if not even based on, an understanding of literature as communication and expression.

During the 70s, Barthes moved gradually from an antirealist textual paradigm towards a more moderate understanding of literature. This process was accelerated by the death of his mother, soon after he had been elected to the Collège de France. It seems as if, after this acute loss, it would have been difficult to speak of the real as consisting of codes, citations and intertexts only. The late essays and the Collège de France lectures do not propose a return to the naïve theories of representation that were criticized earlier. Rather, they propose a theory of literary texts as mediated representations of emotions and affects, and especially of "moments of truth", which Barthes sees as represented in works by for example Proust, Gide, Stendhal, Tolstoi and Fellini (Barthes 2003: 40–41 and 151–161, Barthes 2002: 177–180). These moments can be described as emotional crises where the subject is confronted, on the one hand, with the bare finitude of bodily human existence, and above all with sickness and death, and, on the other hand, with manifestations of deep emotions, such as pity and love. These moments can find in writing a literary representation that gives them form and the power to move the reader, so that the "moment of truth" can not actually be separated from its writing, and becomes shared in the act of reading. Barthes describes this as follows:

Au plan de l'écriture: Moment de vérité = solidarité, compacité, fermeté de l'affect et de l'écriture, bloc intraitable. Le Moment de vérité n'est pas dévoilement, mais au contraire *surgissement* de l'ininterprétable, du dernier degré de sens, de l'*après quoi plus rien à dire* [...]. (Barthes 2003: 159)

At the level of writing: Moment of truth = solidarity, compactness, strong hold between affect and writing, inseparable unity. The moment of truth is not

unveiling, but on the contrary appearance of what can not be interpreted, of the last degree of signification, of the *after which nothing more to say* [...].

Let us point out two aspects in this citation. Firstly, it is important to notice that the inseparability of the affect and its writing establishes a specific type of temporality. The "moment of truth" is not revealed in writing, as if writing would only be a means for the communication of something that exists independently of the text and before it; on the contrary, "the moment of truth" emerges in writing, acquires consistency in writing. In this sense, representation is a creative process, although it is also a process of giving of form to an affect that is not itself literary or linguistic. Writing makes a qualitative difference: an affect represented is also at least potentially shared, communicated, and thus transcends the finitude of individual experience. Secondly, it is important to see that the "moment of truth" marks also the limit of interpretation. It is the last degree of signification, the appearance of something that cannot be further explained. What this means is that, like the *obtus* and the *punctum*, the moment of truth defies the generality of codes and sign systems and resists paraphrases. It belongs to the domain of the singular and the momentary, and is as such opposed to rational explanations that seek to integrate all the elements of the text within one interpretative perspective. In this sense, it demands a new type of pathetic critical reading that is based on the punctual moments in the text and seeks to understand their value and force.

This, however, does not mean that the "moments of truth" would only take shape as opposed to the structural elements of narration and the codified elements of the genre and language. In one of his unfinished and posthumously published essays, *On échoue toujours à parler de ceux qu'on aime* (One always fails to speak of the beloved ones, Barthes 1984: 353–363), Barthes discusses Stendhal's love for Italy and the problems in its representation. According to Barthes, Stendhal's travel books on Italy failed, because they sought to give a direct expression to the emotion, and were consequently reduced either into stereotypical representations, or then into aphasia. Instead, Stendhal managed to represent the emotion in his novel *La chartreuse de Parme*, because the narrative and the symbolical structure of the novel permitted him to transcend his private situation and to express the emotion in a mediated form that made it not only readable and

interpretable by others, but also felt, experienced. The novel as genre permits thus not only the shaping of the writer's identity through performance, as was discussed earlier, but also the representation of the affect, through its narrative and symbolical structures that give the affect form, consistency and transcendence.

In the Collège de France lectures, Barthes emphasises further the interpersonal ethical relationship this search for communication of affects implies. According to Barthes (2003: 225–227), the recognition of the other that the reader is constitutes a necessary condition for transcendence in the act of writing. The writer can not seek communication of affects and acknowledgement for his or her value (the *Moi Idéal*) without a preliminary acknowledgement of the value of the others. If this condition is satisfied, the novel — and Barthes is inclined to include in the genre all works that seek the transcendence of egotism — can become an occasion for a relationship of “mimetic sympathy” (Barthes 2003: 226) between the writer and the reader. Again, literature is understood as communication, but not in the sense of a simple transfer of pre-existing emotions, but as a search for communion where the effect produced in reading corresponds to the emotion that motivates writing.⁶ Since the only way to attain this is through taking into account the reader in writing, one can finally say that the birth of the writer can only be at the cost of the birth of the reader.

Barthes positive theory of the author and its relevance today

Barthes theory of the representation of affects may give rise to critical and even sceptical comments. One may ask whether there really is transcendence, or even communication in this process, or whether it is rather a question of the reader's private experiences only. What gives rise to the “moment of truth” in reading may originate in calculated use of literary devices from the writer's part; the experience in writing and in reading may not meet, and the reader may fall in the trap of emotional fallacy.

⁶ See also Miller (1992: 49–51), who argues that in Barthes's novelesque writing the relationship between the writer and the reader is above all erotic.

These remarks may hit a point, but they still are not, in my opinion, enough to disregard Barthes's insights. Literature certainly is communication at risk, a process where the end product is rarely if ever similar to the original. Barthes's reflections on the social and cultural semiosis of form give ample ground to defend this position. But dissemination is not a handicap; it is rather an advantage. The fact that literature offers a mediated way to represent emotions and affects may be exactly the factor that makes it suitable for the exploration, development and analysis of aspects of human existence that do not easily find place in other forms of representation or discourse. This is especially the case in the novel which as a genre permits a specific heterology of true and false (Barthes 2003: 161). The delegation of action, emotions, and commitments of all kinds to characters and narrators may be exactly the reason why literature permits writers to reveal, expose and narrate different aspects of human existence, from the sublime to the scatological.

Barthes makes this point in the essay on Stendhal. A similar kind of argument is made by Jørgen Dines Johansen in his recent book *Literary Discourse. A Semiotic-Pragmatic Approach to Literature* (2002). Dines Johansen argues that literature as mediated representation permits a specific type of exploration of aspects of human existence. It is because the subjectivity in the text is and is not concomitant with the subjectivity of the author that writers can at the same write about their innermost experiences and do it in veiled forms sheltered by poetic licence that screen off simple identifications. Like Barthes, Dines Johansen also considers the search for transcendence as one of the fundamental *raisons d'être* of literature. Writing can be motivated by the will to overcome time and by the will to give a public, shared and durable expression to emotions and experience and their objects; it can be an effort to bear witness. Interestingly, Dines Johansen's frame theory is Peirce's doctrine of signs, whereas Barthes remained faithful to structural methodology all through his career. It is in considering literature as action and writers as agents involved in this action that the Peircean and the Saussurean traditions of semiotics seem to best support each other.

From *Le Degré zéro* until the last texts Barthes emphasized that writers' action takes place in historical contexts, and that these historical contexts are semiotic situations. Each act makes sense in relation to cultural and social significations that are local and temporal, and for

research on authors to make sense these factors have to be recognized. This argument is made also by Antoine Compagnon in the chapter he dedicates to the author in *Le Démon de la théorie. Littérature et le sens commun* (1998). He argues also for ethical responsibility towards the author. If writing is a historically situated and bodily grounded activity that is motivated by the will to bear witness, the reader may not be entitled to treat texts just as any objects. Literary texts are intentionally produced entities shaped by processes of selection and organization carried out by authors in specific contexts. Literary research can study these factors, but it can also disregard them. The choice is a scientific one, and an ethical one. Barthes's call for pathetic criticism is here in line with Compagnon's argumentation. Furthermore, Barthes helps to understand the inherently delusive logic at work in writing. Writing is, on the one hand, performative work on genres, application, realization and transformation of coded forms of narration and description. On the other hand, writing can give rise to deception only, since the *Idéal du Moi* and the *Moi Idéal* never meet. Subjectivity — the subjectivity of the author — thus emerges in writing, but in an inherently deceptive process marked by a continuous deferral of perfection.

Literary theory has been under attack during the past years. Scholars have argued that theoretical reflection has become a speculative musing detached from “real” concerns (Eagleton 2003; Patai, Collar 2005). It is not rare to mention Barthes in these occasions. Barthes's reflections on the author show, however, that theoretical sophistication need not deprive literary research of concerns that are vital and real, such as loss, suffering, love and desire, and their communication. It has been my intention in this article to show that Barthes's work, which has in some occasion been unfairly reduced to the essay *La mort de l'auteur* and other militant writings from the textual period, provides basis for a positive theoretization of the writer's work and position within the literary field. The question of the author runs through Barthes career, stimulating reflection on possibilities and impossibilities of expression, communication, and communion. The posthumously published Collège de France lectures, due to their sketchy, unfinished nature, show us Barthes at the work of thinking, before ideas coalesce in their final form. In the introduction to the *Essais critiques*, Barthes wrote that the “the material text (the Book) may have, from the writer's point of view, an unessential character”

(Barthes 1964: 11). The same holds for theory. The point is not to establish the final theory, but to continue coherent and general reflection that debunks naiveties and exposes complexities. Barthes work shows how to continue in this line in theorizing the author.

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Положительная теория автора у Барта

Общеизвестно, что Ролан Барт посвятил свою последнюю серию лекций в Коллеж де Франс подготовке романа, но гораздо меньше знают, что и его первые работы о литературе сосредоточивались на той же теме, хотя и с менее индивидуалистской точки зрения. Вопросы, как писать и какие процедуры соблюдать в ходе подготовки

художественного произведения, являются основой развития мысли как в «Нулевой степени письма» (1953) так и для многих эссе в сборнике «Критические эссе». Как в начале, так и в конце карьеры Барта рассматриваются темы: письмо как действие и возможности и мотивация автора при писании. В настоящей статье делается попытка доказать гипотезу, что в работах Барта наблюдаются начала положительной теории автора. Статья изучает совпадения между ранними и поздними работами Барта в трех аспектах: 1) письмо как действие; 2) задержка продукта письма; 3) письмо как репрезентация. Статья заканчивается рассуждением о положительной теории автора у Барта и о ее связях с новейшими дебатами в современной теории литературы.

Barthes'i positiivne autoriteooria

On teada-tuntud tõsiasi, et Roland Barthes pühendas oma viimase loenguteseeria Collège de France'is romaani ettevalmistamise teemale, kuid märksa vähem teatakse seda, et ka tema esimesed kirjutised kirjandusest keskendusid samale teemale, ehkki vähem individuaalsest vaatenurgast. Küsimused, kuidas kirjutada ja milliseid protseduure kunstiteose ettevalmistuse käigus järgida, on aluseks mõttearendustele *Kirja nullastmes* (1953) ja paljudes esseedes kogumikus *Kriitilised esseed*. Nii Barthes'i karjääri lõpus kui alguses leiavad käsitlemist teemad nagu kirjutamine kui tegevus ja autori võimalused ning motivatsioon kirjutamisel. Käesolev artikkel üritab tõestada hüpoteesi, et Barthes'i teostes on täiesti olemas positiivse autoriteooria alged. Artikkel uurib sarnasusi Barthes'i varaste ja hiliste tööde vahel kolmes valdkonnas: (1) kirjutamine kui tegevus; (2) kirjutamise saaduse viibimine; ja (3) kirjutamine kui esitus. Artikkel lõpeb arutlusega Barthes'i positiivsest autoriteooriast ja selle seostest kaasaegse kirjandusteooria uusimate aruteludega.

Ways of keeping love alive: Roland Barthes, George du Maurier, and Gilles Deleuze

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Abstract. The article examines Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* (1977) in conjunction with du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) in order to present an argument about the similarities they share with the male masochistic fantasy as theorised by Deleuze in his *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989). Barthes's insistence on the connection between art and love directs my approach. *Trilby* deals with love and aesthetics in the contexts of art, music, and narrative. The discourses of *Trilby's* competing lovers over the same woman serve as a point of comparison against which I read Barthes's dramatisation of a lover's discourse. I argue that Barthes's lover shares a number of central discursive figures with the Deleuzian masochistic lover. I examine Barthes's suggestion about the tension between the non-narrative discourse of love and the metalanguage of conventional love stories. I focus on those figures in a lover's discourse that Barthes identifies as keeping this discourse from turning into a love story. My argument is that many of these figures are among the hallmarks of the masochistic fantasy. In particular the formula of disavowal safeguards the lover's discourse, hindering it from turning into a conventional narrative about love.

Roland Barthes explains that he wrote *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977; *A Lover's Discourse* [1978]) by simulating the action of primary language, the language of love. He purposefully avoids providing a metalanguage of love; instead, his aim is to paint a structural portrait of the discursive site of love. This is the site of an amorous 'I' speaking within himself, confronting the silent love

object. Such a discursive site includes solely figures, that is, scenes of language showing the lover at work (Barthes 1978: 3). *A Lover's Discourse* consists of a sample of what Barthes calls the thesaurus of figures, or fragments of discourse expressing things that have been read, heard, and felt about love. Barthes explains that a figure is established once a lover can say: "That's so true! I recognize that scene of language" (Barthes 1978: 4). He further clarifies that the figures enable the lover to make sense of what "befalls" him; however, as they occur to him in a random order, they do not organise his experience as a narrative. Barthes structures his discussion of these figures alphabetically in order to underline their non-syntagmatic and non-narrative nature (Barthes 1978: 6–7). This emphasis suggests that a metalanguage begins to work once a lover's discourse is narrativised. It thus appears as if the discourse Barthes dramatises were inherently hostile to love stories. Although he does not specify what he means by love stories, they seem to designate conventional narratives organised in accordance with the so-called classical model such as Balzac's *Sarrasine* that Barthes analyses in *S/Z* (1970). Consequently, he appears to start from the premise that a conventional love story, in its emphasis on sequence, causality, and organisation with a beginning, middle, and an end, already provides the first metalanguage of the lover's discourse.

A Lover's Discourse is Barthes' most popular book, a fact partly explained by its perennially topical subject. Steven Ungar (1983: 117–119) emphasises the uniqueness of this book, for while it addresses problems of analysis and interpretation familiar from traditional concerns of literary critics, it does so in a wholly new manner. It is part and parcel of Barthes's search for "another semiotics" that is not tied to structuralism. Instead of an analysis based on metalanguage, Ungar observes, Barthes sees the affirmation of love as his goal. "To look for no more than the affirmation of love," Ungar writes, "is then not at all a simple task when that affirmation calls for an attention whose rigor and sensitivity are none other than those of critical reading" (Ungar 1983: 118). The plethora of literary and critical texts on which Barthes draws in demonstrating how a lover's discourse functions suggests that any examination of this discourse must be placed in contexts allowing love to speak for itself. Literature and the arts in general are pivotal to this discourse, because, claims Barthes, any lover is always an artist.

Barthes's insistence on the connection between art and love directs my approach, for I juxtapose *A Lover's Discourse* with a novel about love, George du Maurier's best-seller, *Trilby* (1894). What makes *Trilby* a suitable reference point for Barthes's book is that it centres on the notion of the lover as an artist by exploring pictorial art, music, and fiction in relation to love. *Trilby* is a *Künstlerroman* focusing on the artistic development of two men, the painter Little Billee and the musician Svengali. Both love the same woman, Trilby, and both regard her as indispensable material for their creative work. A third man, a nameless artist-novelist, narrates this triangular love story. *Trilby* thus deals with love and aesthetic creation in the contexts of art, music, and narrative fiction. The rivalry of the painter and the musician over Trilby demonstrates their differences as lovers. In anticipation, I show that Little Billee's discourse as a lover adheres to what Gilles Deleuze (1989) calls the masochistic fantasy, in which the male lover and the female love object mutually agree that he submit himself to her. In contrast, Svengali's discourse is that of the demon lover bent on destroying the love object. The distinct discourses of *Trilby's* two competing lovers serve as a useful point of comparison against which I read Barthes's dramatisation of a lover's discourse. More specifically, I argue that Barthes's lover shares a number of central discursive figures with the Deleuzian masochistic lover. The similarities and differences between the discourses of these lovers form the first focal point of my essay.

My essay's second focal point is grounded in Barthes's suggestion about the hostile tension between the non-narrative discourse of love and the metalanguage of conventional love stories. Once a lover's discourse starts turning into a love story, maintains Barthes, the end of this discourse looms. The lover actually encounters pressure to shift from discourse to conventional narrative, thanks to the "scandalous" nature of love: in its sentimentality, it defies the humdrum nature of daily life (Barthes 1978: 175–179). In his own words, "The love story [...] is the tribute the lover must pay to the world in order to be reconciled to it" (Barthes 1978: 7).

In the following pages I focus on those specific figures in a lover's discourse that Barthes identifies as keeping this discourse from turning into a familiar love story. My argument is that many of these figures are among the typical hallmarks of the masochistic fantasy as formulated by Deleuze in his *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989). This is to

say that by exploring the workings of a lover's discourse Barthes is actually illustrating many — although certainly not all — of the basic tenets of the masochistic fantasy. I maintain that these shared connections rest on one formula in particular that Barthes mentions repeatedly: “I know full well, but nevertheless [...]” (Barthes 1978: 22, 62, 132, 177). As I subsequently show, this is the formula of disavowal that I then link to Barthes's observations about waiting and suspense as typical figures of a lover's discourse. It is this formula that safeguards the lover's discourse, hindering it from turning into a conventional narrative about love. As it happens, the figures associated with it are among the characteristics that build up the Deleuzian masochistic fantasy.

Finally, I consider the tension Barthes perceives between discourses and narratives about love. In this context, the fate of love plays a great role: does the end of an affair always terminate a lover's discourse? What motivates my examination is that with *A Lover's Discourse* Barthes encourages us to pay attention to the particular ways in which lovers talk, write, and read, while at the same time promoting the study of the various discursive and narrative strategies with whose help we not only deal with this perennially fascinating subject but also give it form.

At the time of its publication, *Trilby* was immensely popular, but since it is probably unknown to most present-day readers, I will briefly recall its plot line: *Trilby* deals with an artists' community in Paris in the 1850s. The plot evolves around the triangle formed by the English painter Little Billee, a German-Jewish musician Svengali, and Trilby O'Ferrall, a nude model for various artists. Little Billee falls in love with Trilby; pleased by his love, Trilby stops modelling. After Trilby finally consents to his proposal of marriage, Little Billee's mother arrives on the scene, demanding that the engagement be called off. Trilby then vanishes from Paris, and Little Billee has a mental breakdown. Personal setbacks, including severe headaches, make Trilby seek help from Svengali who had previously eased her pain by mesmerising her. Aware of Trilby's powerful voice, but her complete tone-deafness, Svengali uses mesmerism in order to turn Trilby into an instrument for his musical ambitions. After rigorous training, Trilby starts performing to international audiences, causing a sensation wherever she goes. She and Svengali then re-encounter Little Billee. The meeting makes Svengali take revenge on both, for he is

embittered that Trilby has never ceased loving Little Billee. During a performance in London, he does not mesmerise Trilby, and she sings out-of-tune. While the shocked audience is protesting, Svengali suddenly dies. Trilby goes mad, wasting away her last months in Little Billee's care. Soon after Trilby's death, Little Billee dies too. Only the narrator remains to recount the story of his former acquaintances.

In the throes of ravishment

Ravishment, to quote Barthes, is the "supposedly initial episode [...] during which the amorous subject is 'ravished' [...] by the image of the loved object" (Barthes 1978: 188). In more familiar terms, the figures dealing with ravishment dramatise the lover's falling in love. When Trilby first meets Little Billee, she unwittingly touches the springs of his artistic sensibility by displaying her bare foot. He is "bewildered to find that a real, bare, live human foot could be such a charming object to look at" (du Maurier 1998: 15). Little Billee associates Trilby's foot with "Olympian dignity" (du Maurier 1998: 15) and angels (du Maurier 1998: 20), that is, with classical Antiquity and the sublime. Ravishment affects the lover's discourse, because it causes a reversal in subject-object relationships. It is the loved object that overwhelms the loving subject, not the other way round. The lover is thus subjected to the loved one. Barthes's cautious phrasing — "supposedly initial episode" — shows, however, how difficult it is to characterise a lover's discourse without recourse to the narrative terms familiar from love stories that typically assign love a particular starting point.

The lover's ravishment begins with his sudden experience of a fascinating image such as the line of the shoulders, the slenderness of a silhouette, or the form of a foot (Barthes 1978: 191; see also 20, 71). Barthes links such an enchanting image with what Jacques Lacan calls *le petit objet a* (Fink 1997: 52), which appears to accommodate exactly a lover's desire, although the lover knows nothing of it consciously. This object is the unsymbolisable remnant of the lover's symbiotic relationship with his first caretaker, usually the mother. The lover experiences the encounter with this object as personal fulfilment, as the conduit back to the lost union he once supposedly enjoyed with the mother. Given that ravishment, evoked by *le petit objet a*, springs

from the lover's earliest experience of love might explain Barthes's reluctance to assign love's discourse a definitive starting point. If this interpretation is correct, then this discourse cannot, in fact, have a nameable beginning, because the lover has been surrounded by love in the arms of his mother from time immemorial. Moreover, what serves as *le petit objet a* for one lover does not function in this role for another: "I cannot classify the other," writes Barthes, "for the other is, precisely, Unique, the singular Image which has miraculously come to correspond to the specialty of my desire" (Barthes 1978: 34). No discourse or narrative can fully characterise this special object, a fact that further accounts for the difficulty of fitting the experience of love to any ready-made schemes.

Little Billee is dazzled by his first meeting with Trilby. Her beautiful bare foot inspires him to sketch it on the studio wall. He paints it from memory, and this painted foot, the novel's narrator maintains, "was still to him as the thing itself — an absolute reality" (du Maurier 1998: 24). In keeping with Barthes's argument, Little Billee's ravishment with Trilby takes place after the fact; that is, he does not fall in love with her when he sees her foot, but when he sketches this foot on the wall. Obviously, the foot is a fetish for Little Billee; and, indeed, Barthes conflates *le petit objet a* with a fetish. In psychoanalytic theory, fetishes are any objects that refer to the childhood fantasy of the mother as having a phallus. The lover's fetishes are paradoxical in nature: although they focus on a bodily part, they nevertheless represent that part as a whole, as everything. This fascinating wholeness makes language falter, because it fits the lover's desire perfectly, making him exclaim, "That's it! That's it exactly (which I love)!" (Barthes 1978: 20). This exclamation is all he can say of the love object. Thanks to the failure of language in the face of such perfection, the lover's discourse cannot but imitate the fragmentary nature of various bodily fetishes. Thus, the hostility this discourse shows towards conventional love stories seems to be based on the fact that this discourse is moored in fetishes.

Barthes grounds the lover's discourse in the lover's experience of a fetish that defies language. Such a basis in turn suggests that the fetish serves as a gateway to another order of reality. In fact, Barthes maintains that a lover's discourse does not derive from this world, but originates in a hallucinatory kind of image repertoire transporting the lover to another realm (Barthes 1978: 28, 99, 107, 127–128). We can

begin to probe this other realm with the help of the narrator's rhapsody in *Trilby* on the foot as an amorous fetish. The narrator explains the effect that the sudden sight of Trilby's foot has on Little Billee in the following fashion:

[W]hen Mother Nature has taken extra pains in the building of [a foot] [...] the sudden sight of it, uncovered, comes as a very rare and singularly pleasing surprise to the eye that has learned how to see! Nothing else that Mother Nature has to show, not even the human face divine, has more subtle power to suggest high physical distinction, happy evolution, and supreme development; the lordship of man over beast, the lordship of man over man, the lordship of woman over all! (du Maurier 1998: 16)

Little Billee thinks Mother Nature provides the substance of art. He also associates this substance with his own mother. Trilby, his new love object, has a special way of looking at him. The narrator describes this look in the following fashion: "and in a waking dream Little Billee would remember that his mother had often looked at him like that when he was a small boy, and she a beautiful young woman" (du Maurier 1998: 65; see also 175). At the novel's end Trilby declares that she loves Little Billee just like his mother does (du Maurier 1998: 269). This notion of love enabling the lover to rediscover the lost union with the mother reverberates throughout *A Lover's Discourse*. Speaking of Goethe's Werther, Barthes describes this union in these words: "nothing but the two of us [...] Werther forms for himself a child's body in which phallus and mother are united, with nothing left over" (Barthes 1978: 128). Little Billee's ravishment with Trilby demonstrates how the lover's sense of such a union dominates the first phases of love during which he ecstatically explores the perfection of the loved being. The seeming correspondence of the fetish with the lover's desire produces this experience of the love object's flawlessness (Barthes 1978: 197). Simultaneously, a trajectory emerges within this discourse: a fetish enables the lover to re-experience the symbiosis of the lost maternal union, which in turn makes available to the lover what Barthes designates as another realm. This is the space of the image repertoire both feeding the lover's discourse and keeping it alive.

In discussing the figures of falling in love, Barthes identifies two features as particularly weighty: the lover's fetishisation of the love object's body and the return to the maternal union. In fact, Carol

Mavor (2007: 139) claims that the Barthesian lover's discourse is wholly grounded in what she suggestively calls *motherotic*, the eroticisation of the mother. Taken together, these two features suggest that the love object associated with the mother lacks nothing symbolically. Little Billee's actions as a lover even imply that Trilby's fetishised body generates the symbolism through which he expresses himself. After having sketched Trilby's foot, Little Billee develops in leaps and bounds as an artist. Under the auspices of this fetish he starts finding his own individual style.

When we begin to tie these observations of the lover's discourse to the masochistic fantasy, the first thing to notice is that the fetish plays the same role in both: it serves as a conduit back to the lost maternal union. A further uniting characteristic is the notion that this union then makes available the realm of the imagination. What is more, the fetish associated with the mother appears to generate the symbolism in terms of which both the Barthesian lover and the Deleuzian masochist expresses themselves (Deleuze 1989: 63). It thus seems that whatever similarities there are between these two types of lovers, they are grounded in the roles played by the fetish and the mother. I next explore these features in more detail.

"I know full well but nevertheless..."

The lover keeps his discourse alive only by preventing it from turning into a love story, which would foresee the end of this discourse. Barthes says that keeping love's discourse afloat requires that the lover protect the image repertoire feeding love. But how does the lover accomplish this task? Barthes suggests two tactics to this end: disavowal and a balance between what he calls the 'two embraces'. I discuss them in this order.

Barthes argues that the lover's persistent affirmation of love in the face of all disparaging efforts to depreciate, limit, erase, and demystify it is encapsulated in the phrase: "I know, I know, but all the same [...]" (Barthes 1978: 22). This is the basic formula, but it takes other forms, too, such as "I have no hope, but all the same" (Barthes 1978: 62); "I know perfectly well [...] but all the same" (Barthes 1978: 132–133); and "it's stupid [...] and yet ... it's true" (Barthes 1978: 177).

Now, as Deleuze points out, this is the formula of *disavowal*, one that invariably emerges with the fetish. The fetishist — and both the Barthesian lover and the Deleuzian masochist is always one — uses it in order to deny the fact that the mother does not have the phallus. In effect, he says, “I know the mother doesn’t have the phallus, but all the same I believe it’s hidden somewhere about her; what is more, I have this fetish as proof of its hidden existence” (Fink 1997: 184–185). Such disavowal opens up a fantasy space in reality’s stead. It means that the fetishist knows how things stand in reality, but chooses to disregard this knowledge in favour of fantasy. His aim is to secure an ideal that is suspended in fantasy. In Deleuze’s words, this type of disavowal consists in “radically contesting the validity of that which is: [disavowal] suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it” (Deleuze 1989: 31). For Barthes in *A Lover’s Discourse*, this fantasy realm is the space of the image repertoire and of the imagination; similarly, for Little Billee in *Trilby*, it is the space from which all the arts spring. Deleuze even claims that the disavowal typical of the masochistic fantasy is “nothing less than the foundation of imagination, which suspends reality and establishes the ideal in the suspended world” (Deleuze 1989: 128). Thus, for Deleuze masochism is primarily an art of fantasy (Deleuze 1989: 72). I want to suggest that the fetish serves the same function in the Barthesian lover’s discourse as it does in the Deleuzian masochistic fantasy: in both it enables the lover to access an imaginary realm of fantasy. In turn, it is this space that safeguards each lover’s discourse — but whether these discourses tally point-for-point with one another remains to be seen.

This intimate link among disavowal, the imagination, and fantasy helps to explain why Barthes characterises the lover as an artist. The reason is that the space opened up by disavowal involves sublimation. Suzanne Stewart (1998: 43) explains that “[a]n instinct is sublimated when its aim has been redirected and when its object has been replaced by a socially valued (nonsexual) one.” While associating love with sublimation is certainly familiar from many contexts (for example, aesthetic and religious discourses), it does raise questions about the role genital sexuality plays in a lover’s discourse. *Trilby* illustrates how disavowal feeds fantasy, enabling the enamoured artist to sublimate his instincts. That only Little Billee knows how to look at *Trilby*’s foot sets him apart from his artist friends, accounting for his

superiority over them. Only his “girlish purity of mind” (du Maurier 1998: 9) and his “quick, prehensile, aesthetic eye” (du Maurier 1998: 15) can perceive that the foot functions as a conduit to a higher order of reality. Little Billee seizes on this unexpected sight in order to disavow reality. His artistic gift is based on this connection between disavowal and sublimation, exhibiting a trajectory that moves from the fetish through disavowal to the opening up of a fantasy space in reality’s stead.

Little Billee’s reaction on unexpectedly encountering the nude Trilby in a studio specifies further the role sublimation plays in his discourse as a lover. Trilby models in the same full-frontal position in which the painter Ingres’s painting *La Source* portrays a woman. Little Billee explains his stupefaction: ‘I saw her, I tell you! The sight of her was like a blow between the eyes, and I bolted!’ (du Maurier 1998: 80); the narrator says that “as soon as [Little Billee] caught sight of [Trilby] he stopped and stood as one petrified, his shoulder up, his eyes staring” (du Maurier 1998: 82). Nudity as such is not at issue — “nothing is so chaste as nudity” (du Maurier 1998: 67) remarks the narrator — but rather Little Billee’s sudden confrontation with a display of sexual difference. A woman’s nudity in art does not speak of sexual difference, but of sublimation: in the narrator’s words, “[t]he more perfect [a woman’s] unveiled beauty, the more it appeals to [the artist’s] higher instincts”; also, “[a]ll beauty is sexless in the eyes of the artist at his work” (du Maurier 1998: 67). But for Little Billee, sublimation necessitates the existence of one veiled woman, whose phallic quality comes into view as through a curtain. As we have seen, Little Billee associates such a woman, the necessary basis of his art, with his mother. What this means is that he could never have sexual intercourse with Trilby, because it would destroy both his love and his art.

Little Billee’s discourse as a masochistic lover and an artist cannot accommodate sexual intercourse, but does such a danger threaten the Barthesian lover’s discourse? Barthes actually identifies intercourse as an unfavourable element to this discourse, because having sex, he claims, sends the image repertoire to the devil (Barthes 1978: 104). What Barthes calls the two embraces are relevant in this context. The protection of the lover’s fantasy space takes place in discourse, specifically, in talk and speech. These, in turn, are grounded in suspension and waiting. Here is how Barthes describes the lover’s

speech: "To speak amorously is to expend without an end in sight, without a crisis; it is to practice a relation without orgasm" (Barthes 1978: 73). Further, Barthes refers to what he calls the "voluptuous infantilism of sleepiness" (Barthes 1978: 104) that takes place when lovers cradle one another. In this drowsy state they speak to each other. This intimate chatting marks a return to the mother, and here is what Barthes has to say about it: "In this companionable incest, everything is suspended: time, law, prohibition: nothing is exhausted, nothing is wanted: all desires are abolished, for they seem definitively fulfilled" (Barthes 1978: 104). This companionable incest seems to share similarities with the masochistic fantasy in which the lover ostensibly pines after intercourse, but actually wants obstacles and detours in his way towards fulfilment. It seems that in both types of lover's discourse, pleasure is generated by suspension and endless waiting, the purpose of which is to protect the union with the mother. In Mavor's (2007: 157) phrasing, "Barthes prefers a state of sustained illusion, with both his mother and his lovers". Katherine Kolb's examination of the sexual politics of Barthes's *S/Z* lends further support to my argument. She maintains that in his analysis, Barthes adheres to Balzac's nineteenth-century view of artists as lovers, according to which "sexuality is a loss and a danger for men of action and thinkers and above all artists, who must conserve sexual energy for the sake of artistic potency" (Kolb 2005: 1571).

A closer look at Barthes's two embraces elucidates further the role played by intercourse in the Barthesian lover's discourse. In describing the companionable cuddle of intimate talk, Barthes makes the following observation:

Yet within this infantile embrace, the genital unfailingly appears; it cuts off the diffuse sensuality of the incestuous embrace; the logic of desire begins to function, the will-to-possess returns, the adult is superimposed upon the child. I am then two subjects at once: I want maternity and generality. (Barthes 1978: 104–105)

The Barthesian lover's discourse is characterised by a pendulum movement swinging back and forth between idealisation grounded in disavowal and the actual sexual relationship. The moment of fullest fulfilment, however, takes place during the incestuous, but non-genital embrace — and this notion pervades the masochistic fantasy as well.

There is a crucial difference, however, between the Barthesian lover's discourse and the masochistic fantasy: the lover's discourse accommodates the sexual relationship, while the masochistic fantasy rejects genital sexuality altogether. After Trilby finally agrees to marry him, Little Billee writes about the planned marriage to his mother (du Maurier 1998: 226), knowing full well that the mother will do everything in her power to hinder the marriage. She does indeed force Trilby to give up Little Billee. Paradoxically, Little Billee's communication to his mother ensures that he retains the image of Trilby as an unattainable love object, thus enabling his growth as an artist.¹

In this fantasy, Slavoj Žižek (1994: 95) explains, sublimation relies on elevating a flesh-and-blood woman to an inaccessible, impossible object resisting symbolisation. This is the position of the cruel Lady familiar from courtly love. Little Billee's action is in keeping with what Žižek (1994: 96) calls "the paradox of the Lady": while ostensibly the masochistic lover desires intercourse, he actually wants obstacles in his way towards fulfilment. These obstacles ensure that he is arrested in a state of suspension and endless waiting. In the masochistic fantasy the cruel Lady functions as an object of desire that coincides with the force preventing its attainment (Žižek 1994: 96). While usually the symbolic father prohibits the son from pursuing the mother, now the mother assumes this function. Thus, instead of working through the oedipal prohibition, the masochistic lover resexualises it by positing woman as the seductive source of what du Maurier's narrator calls "the lordship of woman over all" (du Maurier 1998: 16). Associating the cruel Lady with the oedipal prohibition ensures that genital sexuality never takes place. Little Billee is a masochistic lover, for he turns the suspension of genital sexuality into the pleasure of being reborn as a true artist.

¹ To reach the state of suspension, the masochist strikes a deal with the love object. This deal may even take the form of a private, written contract as in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's works. George du Maurier's variation is to make the artist's mother strike this deal with Trilby: it is as if the first cruel Lady abdicated from her throne in favour of a second one. The women together ensure that Little Billee's love never reaches the genital stage. Although he suffers a breakdown, he nevertheless returns to England and begins to make himself a name as an artist.

The significance that disavowal enjoys in the two types of lover's discourse under scrutiny here introduces differences between them. We just saw that the masochistic lover tries hard to make disavowal a permanent state of affairs. To be sure, the Barthesian lover also prizes those moments when the oedipal prohibition and the law are suspended, making the incestuous maternal cuddle with its endless talk possible. But he also prizes those moments when this prohibition and the law are intact, for they enable the actual sexual relationship. In one crucial aspect, however, these two discourses converge: disavowal suspends reality. For the Barthesian lover this suspension is what hinders his discourse from being affected by narrative movement based on plotting and change. It has this effect, because it ensures that the lover's discourse stays in a perpetual present. Without a past and a future a discourse cannot turn into a love story. The suspending role of disavowal that safeguards the present thus explains why intercourse may threaten the Barthesian lover's discourse. As we turn next to the larger social context in which love affairs take place, we gain insight into the threats that may crush this discourse and turn it into a familiar story of (unhappy) love.

Show me whom to desire

Lovers never have full control: the loved one may die, she may leave, or love may simply evaporate. Love relationships frequently lead to disappointment, tears, grief, and breakup. Thus, no matter what a lover does, outside forces may turn his discourse into a conventional love story with a beginning, middle, and an end. Barthes identifies the imitative nature of love as one factor causing breakups. He claims that no love is original: it always proceeds from other people, language, books, and so on. What this means is that "the loved being is desired because another or others have shown the subject that such a being is desirable" (Barthes 1978: 136). Every rival has first been a master or a guide, and this setup leads to difficulties. The lover says, "Just show me whom to desire, but then get out of the way!" (Barthes 1978: 137). The rival is, however, the one person with whom the lover can best talk about the loved object, because only the rival knows her unique merits. *Trilby* usefully illustrates this situation. When Trilby visits the artists' studio for the first time, both Little Billee and Svengali are

present. Each man immediately notices her uniqueness: the artist sees her feet, while the musician hears her voice. The two men serve as mirrors for one another, each imitating the desire the other shows, although they choose different parts of Trilby's body as fetishes.²

Triangulation and rivalry provide further instructive points for comparison between the lover's discourse and the masochistic fantasy. Deleuze shows that the latter usually tests its strength through a triangular situation, because the presence of a rival, also interested in the love object, adds to the masochist's suspended, yet pleasurable pain.³ Svengali plays the part of this third wheel in *Trilby*, and I look briefly at what happens when he gets hold of her. Svengali represents yet another mode of a lover's discourse, namely, that of the demon lover bent on destroying the love object. Although Trilby is tone deaf, she has a magnificent voice and an unusually propitious physique for producing sounds. Svengali regards her as the voice he lacks. By mesmerising Trilby, Svengali is able to plant himself in her unconscious: "That Trilby was just a singing-machine [...] just the unconscious voice that Svengali sang with" (du Maurier 1998: 299).

² Little Billee, Svengali, and Trilby are all depicted as internally divided figures. The artist's two names convey his double nature: he is Little Billee, a private man, and also William Bagot, a publicly displayed artist. This distinction is central to *Trilby*, because the artist is born through the private man's participation in the masochistic fantasy. Svengali, in turn, is a German Jew, a mixture of high artistic ambitions and vulgarity. As for Trilby, she is of English-Scottish parentage, but has lived all her life in Paris. In light of Deleuze's analysis, one may say that her French side represents the South, associated with nature, passion, and heat, while her English side represents the North, associated with morality, restraint, and coldness. Little Billee prizes her Northern side. For him, Trilby must "take place as a picture," an event enabling him to put fantasy into pictures in the first place (see Stewart 1998: 77–78). This requirement reorganises Trilby's characteristics so that restraint prevails, while hinting at the existence of passion and ensuring that it never bursts through. She must embody an arrested state of the perpetual postponement of pleasure. In contrast, Svengali cultivates Trilby's Southern side: he dresses her up as a "Trilby of marble" (du Maurier 1998: 299), a classical statue, but the music he makes her perform draws on a wide register of feelings. Passion thus bursts through the classical attire. The rivals' contest over Trilby targets both the nature of the love object and its function as the springboard for art.

³ The rival plays a central role in the masochistic fantasy. Although this fantasy shoos away the Father's law, this law, of course, never disappears. The rival's presence suggests the possibility that the absent father may return.

Under his tutelage, Trilby metamorphoses into La Svengali, a singing sensation. La Svengali performs clad in a classical robe with her bare, sandaled foot — the mark of her phallic nature — on a stool (du Maurier 1998: 209–210). Her triumph is vocalising Chopin's *Impromptu*. This piece confirms her standing as the cruel Lady elevated to the Thing, that is, as the object that cannot be integrated into the symbolic order, but that nevertheless resides in the subject as desire. On hearing her sing, Little Billee experiences "his old cosmic vision of the beauty and sadness of things, the very heart of them, and their pathetic evanescence," in short, "a glimpse behind the veil" (du Maurier 1998: 214).⁴ La Svengali's music revives Little Billee's ability to love by strengthening his subjection to her as his cruel Lady, but it also awakens his fierce jealousy of Svengali. What is most torturous for Little Billee is the thought that Svengali has turned Trilby into a perfect cruel Lady — a singing statue — the foundation of aesthetic creativity, while succeeding in having a sexual relationship with her. Svengali thus threatens to explode Little Billee's masochistic fantasy, but Svengali's sudden death postpones this event.

After the rival's demise, Little Billee takes Trilby under his protection. The now insane Trilby wastes away, growing "more beautiful in their eyes, in spite of her increasing pallor and emaciation — her skin was so pure and white and delicate, and the bones of her face so admirable!" (du Maurier 1998: 266). In a word, she has become a living statue. She is again Little Billee's cruel Lady — not Svengali's.⁵ It also appears as if pictorial art triumphs over music. This happiest phase in Little Billee's masochistic fantasy is shattered when Trilby receives an envelope containing Svengali's picture. Gazing at the picture is enough to mesmerise her, making her sing the *Impromptu* as never before. After the song ends, Trilby dies calling

⁴ Stewart (1998: 102) observes that music seeks to transcend word and meaning, and, in its climactic moments, verges on the cry. Thus, it may represent the moment when the human voice encounters the Real, that is, the realm of experience that cannot be symbolised.

⁵ Some critics such as Nina Auerbach (2000), Elaine Showalter (1995), and Mary Russo (1994) argue that as the novel's most powerful character, Trilby refuses to be contained by her two admirers. This impression, however, is an illusion that tallies with the masochistic fantasy. Thanks to the association of the cruel Lady with the Thing, Trilby must be larger than life. Yet the fact that Trilby has no real control over her fate — even what seems to be her free choice of leaving Little Billee has been manipulated by him — shows how restricted her role actually is.

out Svengali's name. A doctor pronounces her dead, claiming that her death had actually taken place fifteen minutes before the performance. It thus seems that Svengali has managed to snatch her from beyond the veil.⁶ This event destroys Little Billee's fantasy, and he sees no way out for himself other than death. He soon dies, "as if he were starting on some distant holy quest, like some gallant knight of old [...] in another life" (du Maurier 1998: 288). The novel's narrator suggests that this artist's masochistic submission to a cruel Lady is so strong that the fantasy continues even in the afterlife.

Little Billee's choice of death ends his discourse as a lover; the novel recounts a full-fledged narrative with a beginning, middle, and an (unhappy) ending. Barthes points out that all possible solutions are internal to the amorous system. It is always the lover who goes away or dies; if he sees himself as departed or dead, what he sees is always a lover. This, Barthes maintains, is the trap of love: the lover is inside love's system without being able to substitute another system for it (Barthes 1978: 142–143). This trap introduces another important difference between a masochistic lover such as du Maurier's Little Billee and the lover in Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*. The separating feature is this: the masochistic lover is not satisfied to let amorous madness cease of its own accord. He always pushes it to a violent crisis, which typically ends the love relationship and leaves him as the odd one out. In contrast, in the ideal case at least, the Barthesian lover knows that he cannot put an end to love's madness. What he can do, however, is to wait patiently for it to pass. The lover's lot is to let love's discourse run through him, raging at first, and then (perhaps) petering out of itself. This stance to love requires that the lover renounce his will to possess the other (Barthes 1978: 232–234). If, as was noted before, he has been within this discourse from birth onwards in the arms of his mother, then he can confidently submit himself to these fluctuating tides of love.⁷

⁶ Svengali's artistic vision is not masochistic. He never submits to Trilby in the same fashion as Little Billee does. He remains in charge, turning Trilby into a mechanical puppet.

⁷ Mavor (2007: 159) observes that Barthes wavers between being a smothering and a distanced lover, but she argues that he actually never really wanted to be the latter.

A lover's discourse versus a love story

I would like to dwell further on Barthes' suggestion that a lover's discourse does not mix well with conventional love stories. On this point it is worth quoting him at some length:

The lover speaks in bundles of sentences but does not integrate these sentences [...] into a work; his is a horizontal discourse: no transcendence, no deliverance, no novel (though a great deal of the fictive). Every amorous episode can be, of course, endowed with a meaning: [...] it follows a path which is always possible to interpret according to a causality or finality [...]: this is the love story, subjugated to the great narrative Other, to that general opinion which disparages any excessive force and wants the subject himself to reduce the great imaginary current, the orderless, endless stream which is passing through him, to a painful, morbid crisis of which he must be cured, which he must get over. (Barthes 1978: 7)

The Barthesian lover is a vessel open to love's discourse. Unlike the masochistic lover, he renounces the will-to-possess, which is a further differentiating feature between them. This characterisation of the lover as an open vessel elucidates the non-narrative nature of his discourse. This discourse washes over him — or it courses through him — which means that it resembles more a tide than a narrative. Even if love ebbs, the wise lover knows that it will eventually flow again. Certainly, there is movement and thus change, but they are not narrative in kind. A lover's discourse is cyclical and repetitious rather than syntagmatically linear. The narrative pattern of a love story is stamped upon it afterwards, often under outside pressure, because the excessive, disorderly nature of this discourse makes it distasteful to others.

In order to elucidate further the relationship between a lover's discourse and love stories, it is helpful to view them in the light of Barthes's analysis of *Sarrasine* in *S/Z*. As is to be expected, the hermeneutic and proairetic codes (the codes of enigmas or secrets and action sequences respectively) provide the backbone of love stories, because together they organise the material into a plot. As we know, plots are processed in a linear fashion from a beginning to an end; they are thus non-reversible. In contrast, the semic code (thematic qualities associated with characters, places, and objects), the cultural code (various types of knowledge and wisdom), and the symbolic code in particular resist — or rather may be made to resist —

recuperation into linear, non-reversible clusters of meaning. Barthes treats the various figures of the lover's discourse in a similar tabular, non-linear fashion as he deals with the narrative material he processes in terms of these three reversible codes. Consequently, he ensures the multivalent nature of these figures, fitting them to his notion of love as the realm of dreams and (pre-oedipal) fantasies. We may then conclude that discoursing as a Barthesian lover relies on the kind of construction that he illustrates in *S/Z*, one that disregards cohesion and unity, but keeps afloat multiple flickers of meaning (see Barthes 1974: 19–20, 151, 187–188, 214–217). Another way of putting this idea is to say that a Barthesian lover takes a writerly attitude to love.

Trilby is an instructive example in demonstrating how an author may contain the amorous excesses of his characters. The novel includes fragments of a lover's discourse, but they are controlled by being ordered as a love story. The novel accomplishes this control by separating the lovers from the narrator. In narratological terms, the narrator is extra- and homodiegetic; that is, he is part of the narrated world, but he does not participate in any of the events he recounts. He is an artist-writer, who has lived in Paris, frequenting the same circles as Little Billee. His position is that of a well-informed bystander. The random allusions to the narrator's biography suggest that he is a fictionalised version of George du Maurier himself, who is, as it were, doubly present in the novel through the roles of narrator and illustrator. The book includes numerous drawings of its main characters and key scenes by du Maurier. The feature uniting both narration and the illustrations is ironic distance. The narrator-illustrator's status as a bystander enables his wryly bemused comments about characters and events. From the fringes he looks into the teeming life of Bohemia. Mary Russo (1994: 130) remarks that by the late nineteenth century, Bohemia was a self-chosen subculture, a social and imaginative space where a young man could be an artist and live dangerously for a while. The narrator's distance from the world that is depicted is enhanced by his current status as someone who has settled for a bourgeois lifestyle, in a fashion similar to Little Billee's friend, the artist Taffy, at the novel's end. This social status is the best proof, of course, that neither Taffy nor the narrator was gifted enough to become a true artist — or a great lover.

Russo (1994: 140–141) draws attention to the grotesque discrepancy between the narrator's rapturous descriptions of *Trilby's*

fetishistic foot, Little Billee's sketch of it, and du Maurier's two illustrations of this foot. The first illustration displays Little Billee sketching the foot without showing the result, while the second one depicts the sketch and Little Billee with his artist friends admiring it. In this latter illustration, the scrawny sketch is actually a grotesque caricature, neither a representation of the classic perfection of Nature nor a testimony to Little Billee's artistic gifts. What Russo does not consider, however, is that the illustration is not Little Billee's original sketch, but the narrator-illustrator's rendition of it. Readers access everything through him; consequently, neither Little Billee's art nor Svengali's music is directly available. The grotesque gap between his actual illustrations and the lofty things he says about art serve, I think, as George du Maurier's self-reflexive comment on his own artistry.⁸ This grotesque discrepancy is one of the ways in which the pseudo-biographical narrator signals his recognition of his own artistic limits. He can write a best-seller and earn a good living as a caricaturist, yet he knows he will never reach the highest spheres of art. This awareness shapes his perspective: he remains an outsider both to the lover's discourse, the masochistic fantasy, and high artistic achievement. Although his narration is insulated against these discourses, they nevertheless reach readers through the fates of the male protagonists.

Throughout my essay I have deliberately treated the lover as a masculine subject. Given Barthes's goal of dramatising the structural site of a lover's discourse, his demonstration would ideally fit all lovers regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Yet Barthes's examples include only male lovers. Moreover, the figures that his lover's discourse shares with the masochistic fantasy further identify the lover as male. Mavor (2007: ch. 4) argues that the Barthesian lover's discourse is grounded in the special and limited case of Barthes's own life-long love for his mother, Henriette. Mavor (2007: 135) suggests that after Henriette's death, Barthes lost his will to live. In this reading then, Barthes's fate mirrors the destiny of the Barthesian lover — caught in the trap of love, the lover has only death as a way out. Barthes's biography may suggest as much, but Mavor's more significant observation concerns the Barthesian lover as "an eternal boy-child" (Mavor 2007: 143). Significantly, du Maurier

⁸ George du Maurier first recounted *Trilby's* plot to Henry James, asking the renowned author to turn it into a novel. James declined the offer, suggesting that du Maurier take up the task himself (Showalter 1995: x–xi).

shares this characterisation of the lover by depicting Little Billee as a boy. Not only is Little Billee slender and slightly built, but also he is childlike and innocent. His boyishness emerges against the masculinity emphasised in his artist friends (Showalter 1995: xv).⁹ Thus, in *Trilby* too the male lover is markedly a boy. And to borrow Mavor's phrasing, the love of such boys "is ultimately an exaggerated, if obsessive, tug on the skirt of Maman" (Mavor 2007: 159).

The title of Barthes's probing of a lover's discourse, whether in French or in English, stresses the indefinite article ('d'un' and 'a' respectively). It also emphasises the fragmentary character of this discourse. These are valuable clues to the nature of his undertaking, showing that the discourse he dramatises is *not* the one all lovers everywhere speak and write. It may be difficult, for example, for female lovers to identify fully with some of the figures Barthes discusses. Indeed, a closer look at Barthes's illustration of the workings of this discourse demonstrates its sexualised and gender-biased moorings. Moreover, reading *A Lover's Discourse* and *Trilby* side-by-side suggests that the Barthesian lover's discourse harkens back to nineteenth-century views about love, art, sublimation, and masculine lovers. It is this legacy that reverberates in the perceived hostility between love's discourse and love stories. A close reading of Barthes's book thus suggests the inevitable ties that any scrutiny of amorous discourse has with its historical contexts. It is truly fragmentary, as it carries echoes from many different sources. *A Lover's Discourse* opens up new avenues for future research: on the one hand, it encourages us to examine the links among gender, sexuality, and the particular ways in which lovers talk, write, and read; on the other hand, it promotes the study of the various discursive and narrative strategies with whose help we not only deal with the fascinating subject of love but also express it.

⁹ The narrator also mentions that Little Billee was "was especially in thrall to the contralto — the deep low voice that breaks and changes in the middle and soars all at once into a magnified *angelic boy treble*. It pierced through his ears to his heart, and stirred his very vitals" (du Maurier 1998: 43; italics added). The contralto merges a woman with a boy, and La Svengali is, of course, a contralto (du Maurier 1998: 209–210).

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Как сохранять любовь:

Ролан Барт, Джордж дю Морье и Жиль Делез

В настоящей статье автор проводит сравнительный анализ «Дискурса влюбленных» (1977) Барта и «Трилби» (1894) дю Морье, высвечивая похожесть в их мазохистско-мужских фантазиях, как это явление теоретически описал Делез в своей книге «Холод и жестокость» (1989). Автор статьи исходит из убеждения Барта, что любовь и искусство связаны между собой. «Трилби» говорит о любви и

эстетике в контексте искусства, музыки и нарратива. Речи соперничающих влюбленных, обращенные к одной женщине в «Трилби», являются основой сравнения с драматизацией речи влюбленного у Барта. По мнению автора статьи многие центральные фигуры речи влюбленного у Барта присущи и мазохистскому влюбленному Делеза. Рассматривая предположение Барта, что между ненарративным дискурсом любви и конвенциональными историями любви имеется определенное напряжение, и сосредотачиваясь на тех образах в речи влюбленного, которые по мнению Барта препятствуют ее становлению историей любви, автор утверждает, что некоторые из этих образов характерны для мазохистской фантазии. Более всего воспрепятствует превращению дискурса влюбленного в конвенциональный любовный нарратив формула отрицания.

**Kuidas armastust elus hoida:
Roland Barthes, George du Maurier ja Gilles Deleuze**

Käesolev artikkel analüüsib võrdlevalt Barthes'i *Armunu kõne* (1977) ja du Maurier'i *Trilby*'t (1894), paljastamaks sarnasusi nende mehelik-masohhistlikes fantaasiates, nagu seda nähtust on teoreetiliselt kirjeldanud Deleuze oma *Külmuses ja Julmuses* (1989). Artikli autori lähenemine lähtub Barthes'i veendumusest, et armastus ja kunst on seotud. *Trilby* räägib armastusest ja esteetikast kunsti, muusika ning narratiivi kontekstis. Rivaalitsevate armastajate kõned ühele ja samale naisele *Trilby*'s ongi aluseks, millega võrdlen armastaja kõne dramatiseerimist Barthes'il. Väidan, et mitmed Barthes'i armastaja kesksed kõnefiguurid on omased ka Deleuze'i masohhistlikule armastajale. Vaatlen Barthes'i oletust, et mittenarratiivse armastuskõne ja konventsionaalsete armastuslugude metakeele vahel on teatud pinge ning keskendun neile kujunditele armunu kõnes, mis Barthes'i arvates takistavad sel muutumast armastuslooks. Väidan, et nii mõnedki neist kõnekujunditest on tunnuslikud masohhistlikule fantaasiale. Paremini kui miski muu, kaitseb armunu kõnet konventsionaalseks armastuse narratiiviks muutumise eest salgamise valem.

On myths and fashion: Barthes and cultural studies

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Abstract. Roland Barthes's work has confronted contemporary culture with the question of what happens when an object turns into language. This question allowed Barthes to "construct" well known cultural objects — from novels to music, from images to classical rhetoric, from love to theatre — in an unthought way, and to create new, even more unknown ones — from contemporary myth to fashion, from Japan to food culture. In this paper, Barthes's cultural criticism is considered alongside with the issues raised by Cultural Studies. More specifically, Barthes's constant reflection on the myth undoubtedly entitles us to connect his cultural criticism to the work that, in those same years, was being produced by the English forge of Cultural Studies, namely the so-called "Birmingham school". Even today, Barthes's work makes it possible for semiotics to be, to use his expressions, both "the science of every imagined universe", and a *mathesis singularis*, rather than *universalis*, that is to say a systematic way to approach the singularity of the objects of knowledge. On the basis of this "transcendental reduction", we can therefore wish for a "second birth" and a transvaluation of linguistics and of semiotics, both to be applied through varied and disseminated forms of intellectual activism.

What happens when a garment, a dish or a car turns into language? When a photo strikes us with a meaning that we perceive in a neglected, secondary and even obtuse "corner"? When a sport event or the face of a star give rise to an epic narration? When a distant land and language are conveyed through writing? When a love discourse unravels through fragments?

These are but a few questions with which Roland Barthes confronted the entire contemporary culture and to which he already provided an answer, in his texts, just by making their formulation possible. Such questions constructed well known cultural objects — from novels to music, from images to classical rhetoric, from love to theatre — in an unknown way, and at the same time he created new, even more unknown, cultural objects — from contemporary myth to fashion, from Japan to food culture. Barthes established a style in both humanities and social sciences. When, in his writings of the 1950s and 1960s, he elaborated some applications of the theories of European linguistic structuralism — by Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Hjelmslev in the first place — he did it in a systematic, rigorous and almost maniacal way. But the field of “practical” application he chose was the seemingly futile systems such as the Fashion “described” in specialized magazines, through which he was able to show the exemplary workings of social signifying systems. Those same systems that he had well portrayed in his work *Mythologies* (Barthes 1974b [1957]), whose 50th anniversary falls this year and which treated, as he said, collective representations of mass culture as sign-systems.

Therefore a simple sign, such as the cover photo of a magazine of the 1950s (*Paris Match*), portraying a black soldier saluting the French flag, becomes a “form” capable of displaying an idea, or even an ideology: namely that of France, just before the Algerian revolution, with all the rhetoric of her colonial *grandeur*, claiming to keep together different people without any colour discrimination (Barthes 1974b: 198). The myth is thus deconstructed and unveiled, but it is also grasped in its ability to fascinate: Barthes manages to turn the *Tour de France*, the face of Greta Garbo, the strip-tease, the Citroën DS and even plastic, into sublime containers of the effect produced by any myth, which occurs at the crossroad between believing, making believe and wanting to believe. What a lot of material the contemporary world would offer him for his mythologies! How vast was his ability to look at the future anterior!

But what fabric are myths made of?

It is not simply the same stuff that dreams are made of, to paraphrase Shakespeare and Sam Spade. Myth, says Barthes, is a “second-order semiological system” (Barthes 1974b: 196). It is produced by its “semioclastic” dismantling and, at the same time, by presenting itself through traces, fragments, singular and obtuse

interstices that allow it to resonate. Myth, if recognized as such, establishes the ideological critique of the language of the so called mass culture, meant as “stolen language”, as mystifying transformation of the cultural into the natural, of petty-bourgeois culture into universal nature. But, at the same time, myth is also “speech”, that is to say a form, a signifying system subject to the laws of a discourse. A myth is not an object, but an object converted into language.

According to Barthes semiology is a science of forms, unlike those human sciences that can be defined as sciences of values — such as psychoanalysis, psychology or some types of literary criticism. That is to say, it does not look “behind” facts, but rather looks at their structures. There are, says Barthes, some “forms of life”, some “forms of ideas”, that are defined as such precisely by virtue of the values that they contain. “Mythology” studies precisely these “ideas-in-form” (Barthes 1974b: 199–200). Since Barthes first wrote about it, this science has been greatly needed, as the powerful development of mass communication and the presence of infinite old and new communication rites confirm that it is hard to find places or fields deprived of social meaning. Barthes’s original and foundational idea of not considering the myth in the classical, “archaic” or “traditional” context alone, and certainly also the idea of opposing the *mythologies* to Lévi-Strauss’ *mythologiques*, gave semiotics the possibility to establish itself as a social science, as critical sociosemiotics that can face the complexity of the present. Barthes quotes the example of himself before the sea, in itself a “simply” natural element. But as soon as we think of the sea as “beach”, the mythical material — or sociosemiotic material, we might say — appears through various types of signs, such as flags, slogans, signals, sign-boards, clothes, even suntan (Barthes 1974b: 194n.).

Giving account of the myth, Barthes cannot feel “estranged” from it, as his own position is shrouded in the intellectual fascination that the myth exerts. Sociosemiotic analysis, according to Barthes, can deconstruct it, but cannot demythify it, because the myth itself is an operational concept, it is the very condition of the possibility of social imagery. He made it explicit ten years after the *Mythologies*, in the *Fashion System* (1970 [1967]), when he analysed “described” fashion in specialized magazines as a realized myth, a structure of meaning organized through the functioning of a social discourse. In this analysis, he evoked the possibility for linguistics to address the

“countless objects that inhabit and comprise the image-system of our time” (Barthes 1970: xvi) and become “by a second birth, the science of every imagined universe” (Barthes 1970: xvi).

However, as he has warned us in his *Elements of Semiology*, such reborn linguistics is not “quite that of the linguist” (Barthes 1974a: 14). It is a kind of linguistics that elaborates a “poetic project”, as he later retrospectively defined it in *The Fashion System*, consisting in creating an intellectual object out of nothing, or very little, in fabricating under the reader’s eyes, little by little, an intellectual object emerging progressively in its complexity, in its overall relations. This multiplication of universes allows a possibility of a sort of transcendental reduction in a phenomenological sense, which Barthes recognized many years after the *Mythologies* and *The Fashion System*, in his book on photography, *Camera Lucida* (1980). Why — he asked himself in this text — mightn’t there be a new science for every object? A *mathesis singularis* and no longer *universalis*? A systematic approach to the singularity of the objects of knowledge, allowing a full involvement of the inquiring “gaze”, and always taking into account, or looking for, the risk of being wounded, involved, touched?

The myth always requires to be heard. Hearing means grasping its nuances, resonating together, exceeding the approximate and stereotyped knowledge of *endoxa*, through knowledge, a *savoir* which is also *saveur*, “flavour”. If *endoxa* is the “mythical” in communication, the “flavour of the myth” is to be found beyond communication. The myth is not simplistically the “bad thing” that has to be eliminated, the distorted material of ideology. On the contrary, myth, inasmuch as it is connected to its own discursivization, as well as to imagination, to fantasy, which makes its systematic quality possible, exerts a peculiar, we might even say obtuse fascination on the inquirer. In this sense, mythological analysis, while producing the objects and the models for cultural criticism, resists every possible institutionalization, even the one that places the “critic” in a defined social or academic role. In Barthes there has always been a tension to overcome his own position as “analyst” who tries not to become neither the scholar of social sciences, uninvolved in his “object”, nor the self-referential critic who becomes his own parody. In *The Fashion System* he made it clear by stating that “the semiologist is a man who expresses his own future death in the very terms in which he has named and understood the world” (Barthes 1970: 296).

Barthes's constant reflection on the myth undoubtedly entitles us to connect his cultural criticism to the work that in those same years was being produced by the English forge of cultural studies, more precisely the so-called "Birmingham school". Stuart Hall (2006a [1981]) wrote that cultural studies drew inspiration from two theoretical paradigms. On one side there is "culturalism" as such (with authors like Williams, Hoggart and Thompson) that was inspired by Marxism and focused on the description of culture as an activity woven into all social practices and forms of life. The second paradigm is that of "structuralist" inspiration (*via* Goldmann, Althusser, Lévi-Strauss) which paid attention to the internal *relations* of the practices that produce social meanings (Hall 2006a: 85). In regard to his background, Barthes should be placed in the second paradigm; but his position is clearly more complex and reaches beyond the limits of structuralism *tout-court* (this is why the label of "post-structuralism" was used also for Barthes, a label renowned in the North-American context, but less "fortunate" elsewhere, such as in Italy). Therefore the link between Barthes's cultural criticism and Cultural Studies goes beyond these same paradigms and can be found rather between the lines and in the margins than in rigid readings both of Barthes and of Cultural Studies.

As Hall writes, cultural studies see culture as the "actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society" (Hall 2006b: 224). "Culture" in this case assumes the Gramscian meaning of "popular culture", whose "diffused and dispersed" features make up common sense. Gramsci, whom Cultural Studies explicitly refer to, wrote that common sense is to be mostly found in folklore (understood precisely as popular culture, Gramsci 1929–1935: 90), journalism, literature, especially popular literature and proverbs¹. These are areas of semiotic production *par excellence* because they are made of language, images, customs, figurations and narrations of "facts"; they are areas where myths are born, grow and reproduce. Myths are ambivalent, as Barthes teaches us. And common sense is ambivalent as well: it is "ambiguous, contradictory and multiform", according to Gramsci (1929–1935: 1399). Sometimes it can be interpreted not only as conformist, stereotyped and repetitive but also, on the contrary, as "good sense", that is,

¹ Barthes (1974b: 233) also writes: "Myths tend towards proverbs".

the ability to identify the “exact cause, simple and to hand”, accompanied to “a certain measure of experimentalism”, and the ability to observe reality directly (Gramsci 1929–1935: 1334–1335). Therefore, in an ambivalent way, common sense codifies dominant values, but at the same time it is also able to express new ones.

Barthes’s notion of myth introduces a complex, semiotic vision of what we call “ideology”. Even for Gramsci ideology was not simply the static structure of a dominant thought, but also the strength capable of creating the “terrain on which men [*sic*] move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.” (Gramsci 1929–1935: 869). The semiotician and philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi owes much to this Gramscian sense of ideology. He distinguished between ideology conceived as mere “false thought” and ideology as “social planning”, meant as a sign structure, both verbal and non-verbal (Rossi-Landi 2005 [1978]). According to Rossi-Landi, we must differentiate between “programs of communication”, based on conservative ideologies of human alienation, and “social plannings” as the carriers of developing and transforming ideologies. The former mask their own discourses as non-ideological, thus giving rise to myths that claim to present some historically determined contents as extra-historical (Rossi-Landi 2005: 349), that is to say as natural and universal. The latter are permeated with the criticism of the already-given and are oriented towards open endings. Barthes’ myths are located between these two meanings — a conservative and an innovative one — of ideology. And the persistent oscillation between the two also shows the instability of the boundaries between “popular culture”, with its heroic epic of the myth, and “mass culture”, the product of the “bourgeois as an anonymous society” (Barthes 1974b: 218).

Barthes’s “semioclasm”, just like cultural studies, has revolutionized the study of culture, by removing any biased hierarchy between “high” and “low”, and including in the concept of “culture” even what English cultural studies at a certain point called “subcultures” (Hebdige 1983 [1979]). In this sense an article by Barthes on hippies, written in 1969 and published in *Communications*, seems extremely relevant. In *A Case of Cultural Criticism* (2006 [1969]) Barthes observes hippies in a peripheral context, rather than in “capital cities” like San Francisco or New York. From the standpoint of a provincial European city where hippies of various origins gather, Barthes describes them as contradictory figures. This contradiction is detected

through elements that may be defined as stylistic, that is to say aiming at grasping the “difference”, the “gap” between the hippie life style and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois world. Barthes identifies several oppositions: collective eating opposed to individual meals; roaming opposed to fixed abode; poor cleanliness in opposition to the American myth of hygiene; the confusion of the characterizing features of gender (hair, clothes and jewels) in opposition to the “natural” demarcation of the two sexes (Barthes 2006: 125). Moreover, Barthes considers the hippie clothing as the specific marked sign of a group, expressed in two forms, sometimes even co-present: on one hand, there is an unbridled imagination (flowers everywhere, brocades, tapestry cloaks); on the other, the “indiscreet borrowing of local costumes” (*djellabas*, Hindu tunics dresses, veils) as Barthes calls it (Barthes 2006: 125). The clothed body is therefore recognised as a distinguishing feature of hippy culture, one that can be considered as the symbol of a life style, as we would call it today, that is to say those tastes, common sense, ideology and values shared within a social group that are aestheticized and are therefore mainly expressed through visual semiotics. From the inside (in a Lotmanian sense) of hippie culture, these signs are not at all perceived as “fashion”. In fact, hippies explicitly rejected the institution of fashion as a bourgeois system. But from the outside of hippie semiosphere (always in a Lotmanian sense), it is evident that it was a form of fashion, meant in a wider sense as the manifestation of a complexity of tensions, meanings and values that are not only confined to the vestimentary dimension (Calefato 2007: 13).

Barthes sees a reactive force in hippies — in a Nietzschean sense (Barthes 2006: 126). “If only hippies put a little more intelligence in their adventure and research”, wrote Barthes, they “could be one of the prefigurations of the *Übermensch* (*Overman*), the one that Nietzsche ascribed to the last of the nihilists” (Barthes 2006: 126). Nietzsche’s “active nihilism” allows the possibility of a transvaluation of all values, up to the point of making their positive “recovery” impossible. Barthes rightly detected this potentiality of transvaluation in the hippie movement (a potentiality that, in the following decade was to be expressed in Europe by punk culture, though in a totally different form), and he also recognized some historical reincarnations of nihilism, such as Christ and Buddha, in hippie symbols. However, the limit of what might be called “imperfect nihilism” was precisely

its cultural relativism. If, says Barthes, in the United States the hippie was really a reactive figure, in that his cultural protest clashed with the “good consciousness” of the rich, elsewhere the distinguishing features of the hippie movement (poorness, frugal meals, common houses, rag clothes) were not “forces that helped fighting against the plethora of goods, but material forces that had to be fought” (Barthes 2006: 127). Besides, we have to consider that one of the essential myths of this movement, namely the East, was nothing but the product of the Orientalist vision (Said 1978) typical of imperialism. Such values as pacifism, Buddhism, the aspiration to the “trip”, meant both as “hallucination” and as a real trip to the East, risked losing the authenticity through which they were shared and perceived within hippie culture, thus becoming petty-bourgeois values themselves.

In this way Barthes points out the distance between cultural and political criticism, but at the same time he criticizes the limits inherent in both of them. The first one runs the risk of following practices of cultural narcissism, assuming symbols that are no longer “reactive”, in the Nietzschean sense, that are no longer a “game” (“highest form of symbolic activity”), but counterfeiting (Barthes 2006: 127). The second is not able to detach itself from intellectualism. “The militant keeps living as petty-bourgeois, the hippie as *reversed* bourgeois” (Barthes 2006: 128). Let’s remember that it was the year 1969. The atmosphere of May 1968 was still alive, especially in France, and as Barthes wrote in the article *Mythology Today*, published in *Esprit* in 1971, any student was then able to demystify and to demythify the forms of life, thought and consumption peculiar to mass society. But demythification had become, on its turn, a sort of catechesis and a figure of discourse (Barthes 1988 [1984]: 66).

We know well that in the history of the growing cultures (subcultures) of the second half of the 20th century, especially after punk, everything has been absorbed and re-contextualized within the reproductive logics of fashion and leisure wear industry. In the 1990s, for instance, precisely the punk was “sublimated” by Gianni Versace in a famous collection in which an evening black dress covered with safety pins — albeit studded with diamonds — stood out. And today we are witnessing a hippie revival, *mainstream* and “heroic”, expressed through the 1960s vintage fashion, in different fields: clothes, interior design, cinema, advertising, design, graphics, music,

and so on. In the postmodern context, therefore, the ever-present risk is that “cultural criticism” may become itself a myth.

But society is still filled with a growing amount of languages woven with habits, repetitions, stereotypes, set patterns, and keywords. Their alienation still requires demythification, which already back in 1970, Barthes sought to achieve by including the myth into a general theory of language that should be applied wherever stories are told — that is to say wherever discursivity is found: from interior language to conversation, from newspaper articles to political sermons, from novels to advertising (Barthes 1988: 65–68). Barthes called this semiotic practice “idiolectology” and its main keywords are “citation, reference, stereotype” (Barthes 1988: 67). The other possible names for this practice used by Barthes include “second birth” of linguistics described in *The Fashion System* (Barthes 1970), or the *mathesis singularis* in *Camera Lucida* (Barthes 1980).

About 15 years after the *Mythologies*, Barthes realized that the science of mythology was now part of common sense: it had become *endoxa*, that is to say an approximate knowledge, with its own mythological features. Today, on the contrary, it is no longer true that demythification is a form of diffused knowledge, a common sense: actually, today more than ever, the myth exerts its primary function, that is to say to naturalize the social, the cultural, the ideological and history, through an *endoxa* that, though no longer transmitted through firmly established great narratives, keeps reproducing as stereotyped and trivializing knowledge. Now more than ever, there is the need for a sociosemiotics that would draw inspiration both from Barthes’s theoretical indications and from the cultural criticism that he fostered, together with cultural studies. It could introduce a method that would not perform the demythification through a naïve “unmasking” or “rightening” of contemporary mythical discourse, but through the generation of paths “crossing” the semiotic matter, paths that would explicit the social discourses that produce its values and where new objects of research could be produced. As it was for myths and fashion, “a second birth” of linguistics and of semiotics is therefore to be hoped for: more generally, a transvaluation of humanities realized through multiple and disseminated forms of intellectual activism. This

could be Barthes's legacy to our times, his contribution to the rebirth of a new cultural criticism today.²

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² Translated from Italian by Angela D'Ottavio.

О мифах и о моде: Барт и культурология

Ролан Барт задал современной культуре вызывающий вопрос: что случится, если объект становится языком? Этот вопрос позволил Барту «конструировать» невиданным образом известные объекты культуры (от романов до музыки, визуальных образов, классической риторики, любви и театра), а также создавать новые, неизвестные объекты.

Данная статья рассматривает бартовскую критику культуры в связи с проблемами, возникшими в области культурологии. Постоянные размышления Барта на тему мифа несомненно позволяют связать его критику культуры с идеями современной ему английской культурологии, точнее, с бирмингемской школой. И в наше время именно бартовское творчество позволяет семиотике быть, если пользоваться словами Барта, «наукой всех возможных миров» и *mathesis singularis* (не *universalis*), то есть быть систематическим модусом для рассматривания особенностей объектов знания. На базе этой «трансцендентальной редукции» мы можем надеяться на «возрождение» и переоценку лингвистики и семиотики благодаря их применению в разных формах интеллектуальной деятельности.

Müütidest ja moest: Barthes ja kultuuri-uuringud

Roland Barthes on esitanud kaasaegsele kultuurile väljakutsuva küsimuse: mis juhtub siis, kui objektist saab keel? See küsimus võimaldas Barthes'il "konstrueerida" seniolematul viisil tuntud kultuuriobjekte (romaanidest muusika, visuaalsete kujutiste ja klassikalise retoorika, armastuse ning teatrini välja) ning luua ka uusi, senitundmata objekte kaasaegsetest müütidest moe, Jaapani ja söögikultuurini välja.

Käesolev artikkel käsitleb Barthes'i kultuurikriitikat seoses kultuuri-uuringute valdkonnas esilekerkinud probleemidega. Barthes'i pidevad mõtisklused müüdi teemadel lubavad tema kultuurikriitikat kahtlemata seostada oma kaasaegse Inglismaa kultuuri-uuringute, täpsemini selle Birminghami koolkonna, ideedega. Ka tänapäeval on just Barthes'i looming see, mis võimaldab semiootikal olla "kõigi võimalike universumite teadus" — kui kasutada Barthes'i enda sõnu — ja *mathesis singularis* (mitte *universalis*), see tähendab, olla süstemaatiline moodus teadmise objektide erilise käsitlemiseks. Nimetatud "transtsendentaalne reduktsioon" annab lootust lingvistika ja semiootika "uuestisünniks" ning ümberhindamiseks tänu nende rakendamisele mitmesugustes intellektuaalse tegevuse vormides.

Voicing *Le Neutre* in the invisible choir in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*

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Abstract. Roland Barthes was suspicious about the ability of music and voice to signify, as revealed in many of his writings. However, his somewhat limited views on music and voice need not to restrain from profiting his semiotic theorising and his reasoning, which can be adapted for musical instances in ways not envisaged by Barthes. The Neutral (*Le Neutre*) is a recurrent topic in Barthes's oeuvre from his first book, *Writing Zero Degree* (1953) up to his 1978 lecture series on The Neutral in Collège de France (published in 2002). This paper explores how Barthes's Neutral may enhance a special kind of listening. The enigmatic sonorities emitted by the Invisible Choir in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) serve as the foil in this task, more precisely a phrase voiced by female altos and male tenors ("*Nehmet hin meinen Leib [...]*", Act I). It is not its semantic content mediated by (written) language that is of interest here but how this phrase has been voiced, and furthermore, how Barthes's Neutral may be heard in and beneath it. Several commercially available live recordings made in Bayreuth have offered playground for listening to and for The Neutral. As my analysis shows, the audible Neutral is not a separate entity but works in conjunction with other modes of signification: visual, textual, biographical, spatial.

Roland Barthes is an interesting semiotician for a musicologist, because voice and music were his passions, and he wrote about them on several occasions. However, they remained for him much too enigmatic for the needs but also for a competence of a music specialist. In his research, voice and music are in a continuous danger of being swallowed by an all-embracing *jouissance*, which undoes the culturally determined codes and liberates them from the burden of signification (cf. also Välimäki 2005; Sivuoja-Gunaratnam 2007). In

this article I want to carry this burden a little further and argue for the possibilities of audible voices to signify, not something in general but something specific: Barthes's *Le Neutre* (2002; 2005). The enigmatic sonorities emitted by the Invisible Choir in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) serve as the foil in this task. A single phrase is sufficient for the needs of this article. It is not its semantic content mediated by (written) language that is of interest here but how this phrase has been voiced, and furthermore, how The Neutral¹ may be heard in and beneath it. Several commercially available live recordings made in Bayreuth (listed in the bibliography) have offered playground for listening to and for The Neutral.

1. Tracing the Barthes's Neutral

The Neutral has a curious history within Barthes's own oeuvre. It surfaces in his literary production every now and then since his first book, *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953) where Barthes sets the neutral writing against the *petit-bourgeois* realistic tradition (Barthes 1984: 56–63). Neutral writing does not pretend to express or represent anything. Instead, neutral writing tends to free itself from social and historical contexts. In the chapter *Writing and Silence* there are manifesto-like formulations that idealize the neutral as a literary practice:

This transparent form of speech, initiated by Camus's *Outsider*, achieves a style of absence which is almost an ideal absence of style; writing is then reduced to a sort of negative mood in which the social or mythical characters of a language are abolished in favour of neutral and inert state of form; thus thought remains wholly responsible, without being overlaid by a secondary commitment of form to a History not its own. (Barthes 1984: 64)

The Neutral has an entry in Barthes's autobiography (Barthes 1994: 132–133; 1995: 119). In its first sentence Barthes states that the Neutral is “[...] a back-and-forth, an amoral oscillation [...].” He also gives a short list for the Figures of the Neutral, which includes white writing, exempt from any literary theatre, the principle of delicacy, the empty, the vacancy of the ‘person’ and *jouissance*. In the end of this

¹ *Le Neutre* has been translated as The Neutral (cf. Krauss, Hollier 2005: xiv–xv).

entry Barthes asserts that the Neutral is not the third term — zero degree — but the second term in a new paradigm where the primary term is violence (for instance combat, victory, arrogance). Many of these figures and designations formulated by Barthes in the mid-1970s are later (Barthes 2005) elaborated at length. In fact, Barthes (2005: 174) mentions that his course on The Neutral is a remake of his *Writing Zero Degree*.

Beside these two examples mentioned above, The Neutral shows itself in many other instances in the Barthes's oeuvre (for instance in 1977 and 1990). But the parading of The Neutral takes place only late in Barthes's literary career, in his lecture series on The Neutral, held in Collège de France during the spring term of 1978.² In his first lecture Barthes allowed himself almost to define what his Neutral might be.

I define the Neutral as that which outplays {*déjoue*} the paradigm, or rather I call Neutral everything that baffles [*déjoue*] the paradigm. For I am not trying to define a word; I am trying to name a thing: I gather under a name, which here is the Neutral. The paradigm, what is that? It's the opposition of two virtual terms from which, in speaking, I actualize one to produce meaning. [...] My definition of the Neutral remains structural. By which I mean that, for me, the Neutral doesn't refer to 'impressions' of the grayness, of 'neutrality,' of indifference. The Neutral — my Neutral — can refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states. "To outplay the paradigm", is an ardent, burning activity. (Barthes 2005: 6–7)

This quasi-definition echoes to a great extent what Barthes wrote some 25 years before in his *Writing Zero Degree* (Barthes 1984: 64): "[...] we know that some linguistics establish between the two terms of a polar opposition (such as singular-plural, preterite-present) the existence of a third term, called a neutral term or zero element [...]". Curiously these two (1984 and 2005) descriptions of the Neutral do not quite seem to match with the one given in his autobiography, where Barthes (1994: 33) does not equate the Neutral with the third term or degree zero. This "not quite matching" discloses Barthes's Neutral at work; it pivots and oscillates about in such a way that hygienic classifications to neat paradigms are outplayed. These kinds of definitional discrepancies are not that uncommon in Barthes's oeuvre, for instance there is an ardent oscillation going on around

² The manuscript for the lectures was posthumously published in 2002, and translated into English in 2005.

pleasure and bliss (*jouissance*) in his *The Pleasure of the Text* (s.v. *Dire and Droit*; Barthes 1990: 19–20, 22).³

Barthes was not willing to give up his binarism even regarding The Neutral. So there is an anti-Neutral, which is not a Figure of its own right but unavoidably attached to the Figures of the Neutral. Under the Figure of Wou-Wei he describes the anti-Neutral as follows: “Pure expression of the anti-Neutral: obligation to choose, no matter what side: the Neutral is more enemy than the enemy: it’s the beast to kill, to exclude: tyranny of the paradigm in all its purity” (Barthes 2005: 183).

The Adjective is for Barthes “[...] the anti-Neutral par excellence, as though there were a constitutional antipathy between the Neutral and the adjective” (Barthes 2005: 52). It is an aggressive tool for predication, setting up paradigms, and keeping them straight. Barthes’s dislike for the adjective is evident elsewhere, too (e.g. Barthes 1987: 29–36; see particularly footnote 12⁴). His *The Grain of the Voice* (originally from 1972) begins with pouring out his mistrust with the predicative supremacy of adjectives in describing music and Barthes (1997a: 268) asks: “Are we doomed to the adjective?” Barthes’s aversion towards adjectives is certainly methodological but perhaps also quite personal. In his lecture series Barthes (2005: 56) admits that “[...] I always receive the adjective badly, as an aggression, and I do so in all cases, no matter which value is attributed to it by the figure under which it is addressed to me”.

The relationship of the adjectives and voice is particular for Barthes. The concept ‘Grain of the Voice’ was designated for addressing music, particularly voice, in a way that would avoid the adjectives and their predicative power (Barthes 1997a: 268–269). Also later Barthes regarded voice as an instrument that frustrates adjectives: “voice = ‘object’ that resists: sparks off adjectives (soft, startling, white, neutral, etc., voice), but nothing more” (Barthes 2005: 78).

³ The oscillation between *plaisir* and *jouissance* is further (and unintentionally) reinforced by translations, where their difference is not recognized. Also, signification (*signification*) and signifying (*signifiance*) are in the risk of being confused in translations. See also footnote 22!

⁴ I thank Maria O’Sullivan for bringing this last mentioned adjective-list to my knowledge.

2. Androgyne as a Figure of the Neutral

The Androgyne is the last Figure of the Neutral delivered by Barthes in his course. He had prepared three more Figures — Intensities, To Give Leave and Fright — which he did not have time to speak but they nonetheless have been published in the book. Barthes says that he could have begun with The Androgyne, had his aleatoric system of arranging the order not thrown it the last (*dernière*), but not final (*ultime*) (Barthes 2005: 186).

Barthes (2005: 191–192) strongly distinguishes hermaphrodite from the androgyne. For him hermaphrodite is a kind of farce mode of androgyne, because it stays at the level of genitality. Androgyne proper is a metaphor, not a medical case, and in this metaphor genitality has been dispersed to secondary attributes, from femaleness and maleness to femininity and masculinity:

The androgyne thus is the Neuter, but a Neuter conceived as the complex degree: a mixture, a dose, a dialectic, not of man and woman (genitality) but of masculine and feminine. Or better yet: the man in whom there is feminine, the woman in whom there is masculine. (Barthes 2005: 193.)

Those Barthes *connaisseurs* familiar with his *S/Z* and particularly his essay *Masculin, féminin, neutre* (1970)⁵ — both of them addressing the castrato La Zambinella, a fictive character in Honoré Balzac's short story *Sarrasine* — would probably have expected Barthes to discuss castrati as a typical case of The Androgyne and of The Neutral. However, he does not do that. In the beginning of the lecture on The Androgyne, he briefly mentions a radio program where countertenors had been heard (Barthes 2005: 186), but there is no further elaboration of their possible interconnection. Here or elsewhere Barthes never really acknowledges the castrato's voice, their *raison d'être*. Instead of accepting castrati's vocal (and aural) dimension, Barthes approaches them as visual phenomena, considering their costumes (*distribution*

⁵ Barthes (1970: 899) erroneously claims that the two last castrati had died in 1846 and 1861. Obviously he was not aware of Alessandro Moreschi (1858–1922) whose recordings from 1902–1904 have survived (see, e. g., Clapton 2004). Hear also *Alessandro Moreschi: The Last Castrato. Complete Vatican Recordings*. Opal CD 9823 (1984, 1987). The glorious vocal virtuosity of the castrati should not be deemed on the basis of this recording.

vestimentaire) and how to show their gender in a text (Barthes 1970: 900, 905–907). Barthes emphasizes seeing when in the Balzac's *Sarrasine* the sculptor Sarrasine witnesses an opera performance starred by La Zambinella. Yet in Balzac's short story the musico's voice is described at length (see below). Furthermore, Barthes doesn't even mention the voice when he lists proofs for why Sarrasine deduces that (La) Zambinella must be a woman (Barthes 1970: 902, 904–905). (La) Zambinella's three decisive feminine predicates⁶ for Sarrasine — according to Barthes — are: (1) La Zambinella's beauty; (2) her fragility and weakness; and (3) Sarrasine's own passion which he can only imagine to be roused by a woman.⁷

In *S/Z*, Barthes's more extensive study on Balzac's short story, he devotes some passages not actually for La Zambinella's voice but for the effects it rouses. This is not quite in line with Balzac's text where the singer's voice is the most ravishing channel to Sarrasine: "When La Zambinella sang, the effect was delirium" (Balzac quoted in Barthes 1992: 238; fragments 230–231). In his interpretation Barthes (1992: 115) symptomatically again ignores the castrato's voice. The voice and the act of singing only refer to 'Theater' and to 'Aria.' Barthes's reluctance or rather, refusal to address voice is even more salient in his comment on the following fragment (Nr. 243) in Balzac's short story, which describes La Zambinella's voice:

Last, this agile voice, fresh and silvery in timbre, supple as a thread shaped by the slightest breath of air, rolling and unrolling, cascading and scattering, this voice attacked his soul so vividly [...]. (Balzac quoted in Barthes 1992: 239; fragment 243.)

In his interpretation Barthes (1992: 118) completely bypasses the first part of the fragment that concerns voice and concentrates on being penetrated by the voice. This is, besides being unfair to Balzac's excellent sentence, yet another instance when voice alone, without tied

⁶ Unlike Barthes, Sarrasine was not suspicious about adjectives and predications and had to pay highly for his error.

⁷ This assertion is questioned by Dame (1994: 146–147) who claims that Sarrasine feels repulsion for every woman. I do not share her interpretation at this point: Sarrasine did have a sexual relationship for instance with Clothilde before his journey to Rome and his baffling encounter with La Zambinella in Teatro Argento.

to a natural language, means practically nothing for Barthes.⁸ The castrato's voice is a double nothing, because besides voice also castrato stands for a void or absence in signification (Barthes 1970: 900–901).

In order to make any progress, I had to drop the Barthesian lead on castrati, as it turned out to be a blind alley regarding voice and signification. But I did not drop Barthes. Instead, I read his chapter on *The Androgyne* further down and found his remarks on Leonardo da Vinci based on Freud's famous study about Leonardo's childhood memory (Freud 1984). Although they seemingly had nothing to do with voice, they nevertheless guided my aural perception of the Neutral in the voices. And furthermore, Leonardo da Vinci's art forms a surprising bridge between Barthes (after Freud) and Wagner, which rests on the *neutrum/Le Neutre*.

3. Bridging Leonardo da Vinci, Wagner, Freud, and Barthes through *neutrum*

Sigmund Freud's famous study on Leonardo da Vinci's childhood memory is a screen through which Barthes looks at Leonardo's paintings and reads about his life. In *The Neutral* there is no reference to Leonardo without Freud (Barthes 2005: 168, 177, 194–195, and 207–208). Both Freud and Barthes share an interest in Leonardo's childhood memory: a vulture (or more correctly: a kite) had landed down to Leonardo's cradle and stuck the infant several times with its tail (Freud 1984: 29, 33). For Barthes (after Freud) this scene depicts a fantasma of a maternal vulture deity, combining both masculine and feminine features, the phallus (tail) and the breast. Referring to Freud Barthes emphasizes the androgynous (and not hermaphrodite) nature of this kind of mother. Like Freud, also Barthes brings in homosexuality embedded in this scene, but Freud takes a longer detour than

⁸ Barthes's indifference to voice as a signifiatory practice often remains unnoticed. For instance, Mary Ann Smart sums up *S/Z*'s meaning for opera studies as following: "Although Roland Barthes's *S/Z* predates musicological interest in gender issues by nearly two decades and has only episodically had any influence on writing about opera, Barthes's multifaceted reading of Balzac's story 'Sarrasine' marks out an attractive theoretical ground by showing how exploding the fundamental opposition male/female can lead to the collapse of other epistemological categories, including that between systematic analysis and operatic *jouissance*" (Smart 2000: 8).

Barthes into the Leonardo's alleged sexual history, whereas Barthes keeps away from Leonardo the person and confines himself to this (textualized) scene only. (Barthes 2005: 194; cf. Freud 1984: 29–50.)

Barthes obviously chooses only few issues from Freud's abundant essay. Unlike Freud (1984: 20–29) Barthes doesn't address Leonardo's dual nature as an artist and researcher, which is a topic not far removed from Barthes's own approach (cf. Barthes 2005: 64). This pivoting between art and research is for Freud yet another feature signalling Leonardo's unstable (sexual) identity. Freud even mentions that homosexual men willingly would refer to themselves as a "third sex", an interpretation not accepted by Freud himself (1984: 47); and again there is no reference to this in Barthes.

For me, the apical issue in Leonardo's childhood memory is the mouth, as it is the locus of voice and language. In many of Leonardo's paintings the mouth becomes a particularly active site when both feminine and masculine traits are androgynously intertwined in the oral zones: see for instance *Mona Lisa*, *Leda* (in *Leda and the Swan*), *St. John the Baptist* or *Bacchus* (Barthes 2005: 195; cf. also Freud 1984: 57–68; Fig. 1). When I look at these paintings, I also recognize the pivoting of femininity and masculinity. But even more titillating is to imagine what kind of voices these figures would have had and how would they have spoken.



Figure 1. Leonardo da Vinci, *St. John the Baptist* (1513–1516, oil on walnut wood, displayed at Louvre) (from Mannering 1987: 70).

* * *

Curiously, some thirty years before Freud, another German genius had discussed Leonardo's certain painting as a case of a *neutrum*, namely Richard Wagner (1813–1882).⁹ In March 1859, Wagner had visited Milan and the nearby Santa Maria delle Grazie which houses Leonardo's famous *Last Supper* (1495–1498; Fig. 2). In his autobiography Wagner describes the event as follows:

Yet I gained a deeper insight into the effect produced by the purely artistic significance of a painting when I stood before Da Vinci's *Last Supper* and had the same experience as everyone else. The original work has deteriorated so badly that the paint is almost entirely ruined, yet after one has examined more closely the copies reconstructing the original, which are placed permanently alongside it, and then turns again from the copies to the ruin of the original, everyone experiences, as I did, that one's eye has become visionary, and one suddenly perceives with the greatest clarity what it is that cannot be copied. (Wagner 1992: 584–585; cf. also Glasenapp 1905a: 308)



Figure 2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper* (1495–1498), a detail (from Mannering 1987: 43).

⁹ Here Freud makes no reference to Richard Wagner. His name surfaces in Freud's writings very seldom, mainly through the accounts of his patients. Freud's silence of Wagner's output has raised justified questions among scholars (see Diaz de Chumaceiro 1993). It is undeniable that in his operas and writings Wagner processed issues that were to become topical in Freud's research: father-son relationship, castration, love, dreams and fantasies.

The subject matter of the Leonardo's painting, the Holy Communion, became topical to Wagner when he was composing both the text and the music for his last opera, *Parsifal*¹⁰. During the composition process Wagner needed to settle how to build up as music the Holy Communion, and particularly the Institution of the Lord's Supper, which according to Christian scriptures quotes Christ's words. In Wagner's imagination Christ's voice had to be something extraordinary, as he had expressed to his wife Cosima:

But in order to impart the spiritual quality of Christ's words, their detachment from all material things, he intends to use a mixture of voices: 'A baritone voice, for example, would make it all sound material; it must be neither man nor woman, but neuter'¹¹ in the highest sense of the word'. (Cosima Wagner's diary entry 26 Sept 1877; Wagner 1994: 289)

A couple of years later Wagner made a direct reference to Leonardo's *Last Supper* in which he had been inspired by the almost womanly Christ with a beard. But, as he had mentioned to his wife, Christ's head in Leonardo's sketches for the *Cena* was too feeble (*weichlich*). Curiously, Nattiez underestimates the Leonardo connection:

The allusion to Leonardo da Vinci might suggest that we were in the presence of that ambiguous androgyny typical of the end or the nineteenth century and much prized by the pre-Raphaelites. But there is almost certainly no truth in this interpretation. Ambiguity is not sexual neutrality. (Nattiez 1993: 172)

Wagner's own words penned down by his wife Cosima Wagner testify the contrary of what Nattiez claims:

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Wagner Androgyne* (1993) is not discussed here at length because it does not deal with voice but mainly Wagner's artistic person. Nattiez considers Richard Wagner to have two sides intertwined, the male (librettist) and the female (composer of music). According to Nattiez, their emphases have varied during Wagner's long career in his person, his writings and operas. Nattiez considers *Parsifal* to represent "asexual androgyny that transcends all racial differences" (1993: 171; emphasis in the original). See, however, for instance, Stein (1950), Gutman (1968) and Weiner (1997) who convincingly argue for strong racist (particularly Anti-Semitic) currents in Wagner's writings and music dramas, including *Parsifal*. Elsewhere I have discussed *Parsifal* as a case for abjection (Sivuolja-Gunaratnam, forthcoming).

¹¹ In the original, Wagner uses the word *neutrum* (Wagner 1982a: 1073).

Thereafter he [Richard Wagner] plays the *first* theme from Parsifal and comes to me explaining how he has the choir to enunciate the words, so that he [Christ] does not appear either as feminine or masculine; the Christ must be quite extraordinary, not woman or man. This has been also what Leonardo has tried to achieve in his Cena with almost a womanly [*weiblich*] head with the beard. He should not appear either old or young; the God in human. (Cosima Wagner's diary entry on 27 June 1880; Wagner 1982b: 556; translation and emphasis mine — A. S.-G.; cf. also Glasenapp 1905b: 363)

The words in question are as follows: “*Nehmet hin meinen Leib, nehmet hin mein Blut um uns'rer Liebe Willen*”. This is not a verbatim quote from any of the Gospels although it emulates closely the Institution of the Lord's Supper.¹² A speciality of the moment is further enhanced by having the Grail Cup radiate at the moment these sacred words are pronounced, as instructed in the score.¹³

Nattiez (1993: 171) erroneously connects Cosima Wagner's diary note (27 June 1880; see above) to the *final* chorus, which he claims to be the only mixed chorus in the work. First of all, to be precise, there is not a single mixed chorus in *Parsifal*, because in the four-part choral writing the highest voices are occupied by boy sopranos (*not* female sopranos), which considerably bends the timbre. Therefore the mixed chorus is not a correct designation. Secondly, as the beginning of the diary entry clearly shows, the words to be voiced are connected to the *first* theme of the *Parsifal*, which obviously is not located in the end. The final chorus is only partly associable to the first theme¹⁴ whereas the theme in “*Nehmet hin [...]*” is exactly the same as *Parsifal*'s first theme, so called *Liebesmahl-Spruch* (see, for example

¹² “Take my body, take my blood, in token of our love!” (cf. Luke 22: 17–19; Mark 14: 22–24; Matthew 26: 26–28). The order was reversed in the sketches; first was blood and thereafter came the bread (Minor 2005: 5, fn 9; Kinderman 1995: 90). In the Gospels (except for Luke) and in St. Paul's account (1 Corinthians 11: 23–26) the bread is always the first, as it was to be also in *Parsifal*.

¹³ Heinrich Porges's (2002: 37) observations confirm that this was actually executed in the first performance, 26 July 1882. The moment of Grail's radiation was indicated already in first and the second versions of the *Parsifal* libretto in 1865 and 1877 respectively (Geck, Voss 1970: 72, 81).

¹⁴ For instance, the final chorus lacks the distinctive *Schmerzenfigur* motive embedded in the *Liebesmahl-Spruch*. Furthermore, the final chorus begins with a Thoren-Motive, not to be found in the *Liebesmahl-Spruch*. (Wolzogen [s.a.]: 17, 63, 81.)

Wolzogen [*s.a.*]: 17–18, 38–39, 80–81, and Fig. 4). Furthermore, it is false to equate the Invisible Choir with Christ (Sivuoja-Gunaratnam 1993: 347) and consider all its utterances as originating from Him. The words in the final chorus are not to be attributed to Christ but to a less specific divine agent. As the author of the *Parsifal* libretto, Wagner used quotation marks when an utterance should be considered as a quote. There are no quotation marks in the final chorus; but there are ones around “*Nehmet hin [...] Liebe Willen*”.

Wagner’s solution for achieving the *neutrum* for this particular phrase was quite extraordinary: mixture of female altos and male tenors, which are close to each other in their timbre and vocal range. Their combination produces a strong chest resonance, because the tessitura of the vocal line lies quite low (see Fig. 4). They sing in unison, which further enhances the intelligibility of the text lines: the comprehensibility of the divine words is not risked. Also, the unison unites many voices as a one voice.

In his *St. Matthew’s Passion* J. S. Bach has a bass singer (Jesus) sing the Institution of the Holy Communion. Bach’s Jesus (not Christ!) is also visible, flesh and blood, and clearly a male, a human.¹⁵ In *Parsifal*, He belongs to the divine order, surpassing human and therefore Wagner was struggling a special way to voice Him. Four-part choral texture, suggested by Nattiez (1993: 171) would be quite a standard choral writing whereas having altos and tenors in unison is not.

Had he wanted, Wagner could have assigned the alto part to boy-alts, as the tessitura and vocal range of the alto part would have been easily within their reach. This pondering is relevant because the Invisible Choir also include boy sopranos (*Knaben*).¹⁶ Why not boy altos, too? This would have led to a different timbre, as the boy altos would have less loud voice and much less chest resonance than female altos. Also it would have been a totally female-free choir, and as a result, the desired androgynous blending of male and female voices, the *neutrum* Wagner desired, would have been lost.¹⁷ But although

¹⁵ It is well known that Wagner knew *St. Matthew’s Passion* as well as other Bach’s pieces (Gregor-Dellin 1980: 785).

¹⁶ N.B. The boy sopranos do not sing in this particular phrase. The next sung phrase in *Parsifal* with boy sopranos and female altos calls for another article.

¹⁷ Similarly, omitting all the tenors would destroy the chance for the vocal *Neutrum*, a point missed by Minor (2005: 4 fn 8) as he states that the “inclusion of

Wagner employed the voices of female altos, he made a linguistic travesty by casting the women altos as males: they appear as Youths (*Jünglinge*) along with the tenors in the list of *dramatis personae*.

The Invisible choir is traditionally placed in the cupola of the Bayreuth opera shrine, high above the stage, on two layers. In the first performance the boy sopranos and four altos were on the highest level in the cupola and the rest, tenors and altos on the middle high level (Geck; Voss 1970: 136). The layered choir remains invisible to the audience (see Fig. 3). The absence of visual clues gives no support to the audience's attempts to sex the voice(s), automatically ignited when one hears a human voice. When the gap between visible (absent) and audible (present) cannot be overcome, the distance of the vocal source cannot be accurately defined (Dolar 2006: 67).¹⁸ Mladen Dolar points out that these kinds of acousmatic voices are typical representations of deities in various religious rituals. He even proposes that there is

[...] a direct hidden link between the acousmatic voice and divinization. The voice whose source cannot be seen, because it cannot be located, seems to emanate from anywhere, everywhere; it gains omnipotence. Could we go so far as to say that the hidden voice structurally produces 'divine effects'? (Dolar 2006: 62)

In this case the answer is yes. But the invisibility of the choir is only one attribute of the divine. In addition, the quasi-Biblical text, androgynous voices and the acting out of the Holy Communion contribute to the divine effects as well as the temple-like architecture of the setting modelled after the Siena Cathedral (Skelton 1965: 56).¹⁹ The dimensions of the sets are huge, which effect also how the voices sound. The vertical distance from the stage and reverberation caused by the cupola walls contribute to the ethereality and immateriality of the voices (cf. also Minor 2005: 6–7 who focuses on the unique space created by the voices.) According to Porges (2002: 37), Wagner had described the desired timbre as a cloud traversing the sky.

tenor voices in some of the treble chorus's music (at the same pitch level) is similarly unintelligible".

¹⁸ This applies also to the layering, which cannot be deciphered either visually or audibly (Minor 2005: 4 fn 8).

¹⁹ Gutman (1968: 403–404) points out that also Dresden's Frauenkirche may have served as a possible model for the Grail temple.

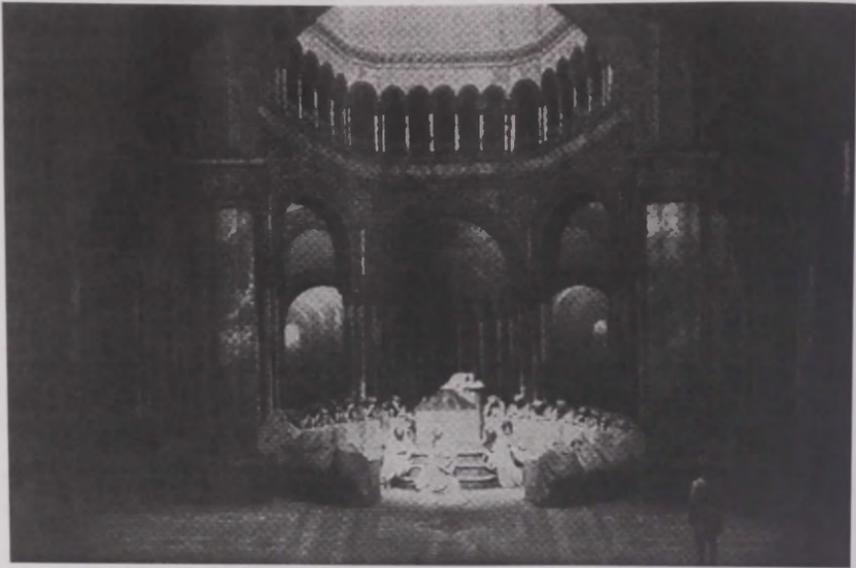


Figure 3. The Hall in the Castle of the Grail (Acts I and III). (Bie 1931, Nr. 74.) This setting was designed by the Russian painter Paul Joukowsky in a strict collaboration with R. Wagner. It remained unaltered up to 1933. As can be seen, the choir in the cupola remains invisible, whereas the Knights of the Grail are seated around the table, Parsifal standing aside. The Vessel of the Grail is in the middle.

4. Listening for the Neutral

In the previous chapters the Neutral was discussed in the contexts of Barthes's semiotic theory and Wagner's *Parsifal* score, his autobiography and Cosima Wagner's diary. The analysis would remain deaf and incomplete without addressing the Neutral in its audible dimension. Therefore I have listened closely to several *Parsifal* recordings in order to trace the sonorous Neutral. The recordings are with one exception live recordings from the Bayreuth Festspielhaus performances. The only studio recording in my list is the oldest one, from 1927 by Karl Muck (1859–1940). It is most probably based on the *Parsifal* production given that summer in Bayreuth. It is also the first comprehensive *Parsifal* recording released commercially. In his times Muck was a considerable *Parsifal* authority as he conducted the

work in Bayreuth from 1901 to 1930. All the *Parsifal* performances up to 1933 followed Richard Wagner's original plan from 1882, which was modernised under the Nazi-regime by Hans Tietjen and Alfred Roller for the 1934 performance.

The *Parsifal* recording tradition cannot be discussed without the legendary Hans Knappertsbusch (1888–1965) who conducted the infamous 1951 performance of *Parsifal* which exemplified Wieland Wagner's new austere style of staging, so called *Neu-Bayreuth*. This *Parsifal* remained in the Bayreuth programme from 1951 till 1973. Knappertsbusch conducted *Parsifal* every summer from 1951 till 1964 (with one exception: 1953). He also made several *Parsifal* recordings from the live performances in 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956, and 1958–1964. The recordings listened to for this article are from the 1951, 1962 and 1964 performances. After Knappertsbusch, Pierre Boulez, Eugen Jochum, and James Levine have both conducted and recorded *Parsifal* in Bayreuth. Closest to Knappertsbusch's score comes James Levine (1943–) who has conducted *Parsifal* in 1982–1985 and 1988–1993; the 1982 marking the centenary of *Parsifal*'s first performance with the new staging by Götz Friedrich. But he has made only one live recording of *Parsifal*, in 1985. Pierre Boulez's (1925–) *Parsifal* account contains the performances in 1966–1968, 1970 as well as 2004–2005, the last ones for the revolutionary staging by Christoph Schlingensiefel. The two recordings, both considered here, are from 1966 and 1970.

I have chosen to limit myself to the live recordings from Bayreuth — the only exception being Karl Muck — because the room acoustic as well as dimensions of the stage, orchestra pit and cupola would remain the same. Also, the relatively slow pace of new stagings gives some stability to the performances. What obviously has changed is the recording technique (e.g. a passage from mono to stereophony and to multi-channel digital technique), including microphones and their placement, editing and post-production. As the listening mode is not here *hi-fi*, this will not be addressed in detail. In order to help the close listening I extracted the short music examples from the original CDs, placed them on a sample CD and listened to the samples several times individually and in succession.²⁰ Although I refer to recordings,

²⁰ I have listened some of the excerpts with Hannu Norjanen, the Finnish conductor, and my American colleague José A. Bowen and want to thank them for sharing their expert opinion with me.

I want to stress that I have close-listened for this analysis only the phrase presented in Fig. 4. What I wanted to find out is whether the Neutral would in fact be audible and if yes, how.

87

Alt.
Alto.

Sehr langsam. *p*

STIMMEN aus der Höhe.
VOICES from above.

1^{er} Tenor.
1st Tenors.

Nehmet hin mei-nen Leib, nehmet hin mein Blut,
"Take ye this bo-dy Mine, take ye this My Blood,

Nehmet hin mei-nen Leib, nehmet hin mein Blut,
"Take ye this bo-dy Mine, take ye this My blood,

Sehr langsam.

ppp
una corda (sempre trem.)

marcato

p *p*

W1071

88

Alt.
Alto.

Sehr langsam. *p*

STIMMEN aus der Höhe.
VOICES from above.

Ten. - um an-er-er Lie - be Wil - len!¹⁴
Ten. - so be our love be-to - - - kened!¹⁴

um an-er-er Lie - be Wil - len!¹⁴
so be our love be-to - - - kened!¹⁴

(Während Amfortas andachtvoll im
stummen Gebet zu dem Kelche sich
neigt, verbreitet sich eine überdich-
tere Dämmerung über die Halle.)
(Amfortas bows devoutly in silent
prayer before the chalice, the light
in the Hall gradually wanes to a
more dusky glimmer.)

pp

p *p*

Figure 4. Music example: Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, Act I (Piano score, p. 87–88). This Grail Motive also inaugurates the opera, but here it appears for the first time with the text. Wagner conceived it as the kernel of everything in *Parsifal* (Kinderman 1995: 88–91).

In Muck's recording the tenors overpower to the extent that the maleness of the sonority is firmly established and the female altos are not audible at all. Therefore there is no audible Neutral present. Although this might be an effect of the recording conditions; equipment, placing of the microphone etc., the audible image is what remains and it does not even suggest the presence of altos. Muck's whole recording, including this excerpt, gives a curious testimony of unevenness in articulation and intonation as well as rhythmic inexactness. In this excerpt the choir is hardly in unison, although it should be, and the rhythmic and timbral deviations are more than obvious. The singing body is so uneven that occasionally individual singers can be distinguished. In Muck's version, Christ appears very male and very divided.

The Knappertsbusch 1951 recording sounds as if the tenors did not sing at all. Besides the female altos what can be heard is the distance: the voices come from afar; they are not close by as are for instance the Grail Knights. Particularly the first word '*Nehmet*' emerges as if from nowhere, barely distinguishable as a voiced sound invested with language. Unlike in Muck, here the articulation is exact producing a homogenous singing body, but devoid of male timbre.

Also in Knappertsbusch's legendary 1962 recording the female voices dominate but the distinct tenor timbre comes forward particularly in long held tones or where the tenors' vocal line touches the high (= difficult) tones, for instance in the '*Leib, nehmet hin*' or particularly in the last syllable of '*Liebe Willen*'. This occasional oscillation of the female and male brushes the Neutral, without however allowing it to be fully present.

In Knappertsbusch's last recording (1964) the tenors are overshadowed by female voices, but as a difference to the previous two versions considered, they are nevertheless audible. The darker timbre of the tenors is faintly present for instance in '*um uns'rer Liebe Willen*'. This is not obvious though, and in order to capture this fleeting tenor timbre a version with even more pronounced female vocal presence needs to be called for comparison. Such a recording is Boulez's first *Parsifal* (1966). Here the alto timbre is much brighter than in any of the previous recordings, and the tenors are not audible at all except for a vanishing moment in '*Liebe Willen*'. Boulez was notorious for his fast tempi on *Parsifal*, and this applies also for this as

well as the next excerpt, which are much faster than for instance the three Knappertsbusch versions considered previously.

In Boulez's 1970 recording the female and male voices are melted into a curiously homogenous voice, as if there were only one voice singing, a voice that is at the same time dark and bright, male and female. In Levine's recording (1985) the phrase is voiced even more homogeneously, and because of its much slower tempo, the Neutral lingers longer. The vocal intensification in the word '*Liebe*' is quite effective; however, this is against the prescription of the score, which asks for a soft nuance (*piano*). Perhaps there is a touch of rapture in the otherwise perfect unison with the very last syllable '*Willen*' which lets through slightly more tenor timbre.

Both Boulez 1970 and Levine 1985 offer rare moments of asserting the Neutral by having tenors and altos intertwined to one voice with a balanced mixture of both female and male timbres. The difference between these two with Knappertsbusch's 1962 recording is that while both Boulez 1970 and Levine 1985 unfold the Neutral in simultaneous oscillation, in Knappertsbusch 1962 the Neutral oscillates in succession (and with dominating altos). Referring to Leonardo, Wagner spoke about seeing in Christ a woman and a man at the same time. This applies for my listening experience too. According to Barthes,

[...] we might perhaps say that the Neutral finds its feature, its gesture, its inflection embodied in what is inimitable about it: the smile, the Leonardian smile analyzed by Freud: Mona Lisa, St. Anne, Leda, St. John, Bacchus: smiles at the same time of men and women, smiles-figures in which the mark of exclusion, of separation cancels itself, smiles that circulate from one sex to the other [...]. (Barthes 2005: 195)

Listening revealed that although the vocal Neutral had a clear grounding in Wagner's score, its audibility was not automatically assured; in the case of Muck (1927) and Boulez (1966) it did not materialize at all. Perhaps they could be considered as examples of anti-Neutral because only one predominant vocal gender had to be chosen, in the Muck's case it was the tenors and in Boulez's production the altos, voicing both a kind of tyranny of vocal paradigm, but in different ways. A visual metaphor, relevant in this particular case would be Richard Wagner's opinion about Christ's head in the sketches for the Last Supper; it was too feeble (*weichlich*) or perhaps

also effeminate (*weiblich*); the point here being a kind of tyranny of a single gender paradigm.

Listening these pieces of music as foils for the Neutral retuned my ears for the micro-differentiations of vocal qualities in this choral passage. It enhanced a new kind of listening that focussed on the intimate oscillation of vocal genders. However, the more standard modes of listening, e.g. the exactness of the pitches, rhythms, tempo, melodic profile, phrasing, and harmonic progression were not exactly bypassed but they remained in the shadow of the vocal Neutral. Beside passionate and engaged, my listening was also very focused and conscious. The edited examples offered a good chance for this. But, as this article concerns voice in a Barthesian context, a pivotal question remains: was there *jouissance*? And how does *jouissance* relate to the Neutral?

As mentioned above, Barthes's autobiography lists *jouissance* as one possible Figure of the Neutral. However, this is a line of thought which he did not develop in his lecture series (Barthes 2005). Both *jouissance* and the Neutral situate in the threshold of signification and *signifying* because they both outplay the paradigms. This is what they have in common. But whereas there are qualitative and signifiatory differences *within* the Neutral, as exemplified by Barthes himself (2005), *jouissance* unfolds as undifferentiated singular, as absence of signification, loss of self. Symptomatically, there is no headword for *jouissance* in *Plaisir du texte* (Barthes 1990) as it cannot be defined, but there is a whole lecture series about diverse shades of the Neutral.

In my analytical working there were times that I did not have words for what I heard, and occasionally I had to reach for them with an effort. These absences of language might approach the threshold of *jouissance*. But it worked also the other way round; with the help of words, concepts, naming and signification, my listening became more precise: the ability to reach for the audible Neutral emerged, not as a singular revelation but in conjunction with other modes of signification; bodily, visual, textual, biographical, spatial.

5. Conclusion: Signification and Voice reconsidered after Barthes

Beside voice and signification, Barthes was also suspicious about music and signification, and he did not recognise the semantic possibilities of music or its enormous power to signify in a given culture (e.g., Barthes 1997b: *passim*). “Then what is music?” asks Barthes, and answers immediately relying on Panzéra’s art: “a quality of language” (Barthes 1997b: 284; emphasis in the original). Therefore it is not surprising that there is not much said about music in Barthes’s lecture series; Barthes (2005: 103) for instance mentions that music is “a drug-consciousness.” For his defence it must be remembered that Barthes (1915–1980) died before the bloom of musical semiotics, particularly its semantic branch. Of this major corpus,²¹ only Tarasti’s *Myth and Music* (1978) had been published. Nattiez’s early pieces, for instance his seminal *Fondements d’un sémiologie de la musique* (1975) does not address the semantic dimension of music.

As is well known, Barthes was a great admirer of Charles Panzéra (1896–1976), a French baritone singer. It is wrong to assume that Barthes loved Panzéra’s voice *per se*. He loved something else: “I myself have a lover’s relation to Panzéra’s voice: not to his raw, physical voice, but to his voice as it passes over language, over our French language, like a desire: no voice is raw; every voice is steeped in what it says” (Barthes 1997b: 280). By this Barthes actually denies the existence of voice disengaged from the language. Panzéra’s way to articulate French ravishes Barthes, not Panzéra’s voice [*sa voix brute*]. Similarly, Barthes’s dislike for Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1925–) is not caused by his voice but his way of singing in German (!) language (Barthes 1997a: 269–273). Again, there is no voice alone for Barthes. Yet, in *The Romantic Song*, Barthes (1997c) acknowledges the familiar voice types in opera, bass, mezzo [contra-alto, *sic!*], soprano and tenor but here nor elsewhere does he address the voice pertaining to signification (see Richardson 1999 for a very different reasoning below). For Barthes, voice as a quality offers a highway to *jouissance*, beyond meaning and language. Adriana Cavarero, for one, has criticized Barthes for this:

²¹ See also Grabócz 1986; Tarasti 1994; Monelle 1991; and Hatten 1994.

Indeed, in Barthes's writing, the voice and body are categories of depersonalized pleasure [*sic!*]²² in which the embodied uniqueness of each existent (something Barthes never thematizes) is simply dissolved along with the general categories of the subject and the individual. In other words, Barthes encourages us to focus on a vocality that far from being pure and simple sonority, or a mere bodily remainder, consists in a power relating to speech. And, at the same time, he discourages every perspective that would find in uniqueness and in relationality the fundamental sense of this power. (Cavarero 2005: 15)

Cavarero's own recipe is to address unique personal qualities in saying instead of concentrating on the semantics of what was said. By this she wants to free voices from the prison house of logo-centrism where they have been given a subservient role in relation to the semantic dimension of the language ('meaning') while their uniqueness has been ignored (Cavarero 2005: *passim*). Cavarero's programme leaves me puzzled because it seems to entail that also for her voice alone would not signify except for its uniqueness and that it is always someone's voice. For me this is not enough. When faced with voice and signification I refuse to back off and join the company of Barthes and Cavarero. The voices do have the ability to signify, not just something in general and in theory, but also something specific and in lived-in practice.

Yet I do not wish to deny the enormous power of music and voice to arouse, seduce or ravish, but this need not to be divorced from signification. In one of the early pioneering studies on voice and gender, Elizabeth Wood (1994: 27) explores a mode of listening that has a similar undercurrent to Barthes's erotic listening related to genosong, the materiality of the body in voice (Barthes 1997a: 270–271). However, Wood's theoretical approach stems from elsewhere, from feminism and gender studies (for instance, Cixous), and not from Barthes at all. Wood's Sapphonics is a lesbian space for making emotional and erotic relationships among those who sing and listen singing. A Sapphonic voice resonates in and about lesbian difference and desire and it challenges the boundaries of voice types as well as sex and gender categories, refusing hence standard categorization

²² There is a grave error in translation. In the Italian original (Cavarero 2003: 22) the term is *godimento*, which should have been translated as *jouissance* (or bliss). In her original Italian Cavarero (2003) makes a systematic distinction between *piacere* (pleasure) and *godimento* (*jouissance*), not respected by the translator.

(Wood 1994: 28, 30). The binary division is surpassed in a Sapphonic vocal synthesis of female and male voices to a transvestic enigma (Wood 1994: 32). Such a synthesis may be found within one voice only. As exemplary cases for the Sapphonic and Sapphonic voice Wood mentions the low baritonisque register of Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821–1910), the castrato-like falsetto register of Emma Calvé (1858–1940), and their effects on the listeners (Wood 1994: 29–33). Wood's Sapphonic and Sapphonic voice resonates strongly with Barthesian Neutral and more precisely with his Androgyne with that important (dare I say: essential) difference that Wood listens and desires unambiguously as a lesbian, and furthermore, she brings this into her apprehension. In Barthes the subject often (although not exclusively) has a male basis, even when he writes about his Neutral or Androgyne: "Neuter: "a man in whom there is feminine." But perhaps not just any feminine (perhaps there are many of them)" (Barthes 2005: 194; cf. also Dame 1994: 146–147).

Wayne Koestenbaum (1993) listens and desires opera and operatic voices explicitly fuelled by homosexual desire, more precisely that of an Opera Queen. His surprising parallels of gay and opera culture celebrate gay *jouissance* in every fold of his exposition. In the end of the book he makes a long list of queer moments in the standard opera repertoire, which enhance gay sensitivity. For my purposes the chapter *Queen's Throat*, which in fact extends also to other vocal organs, is the most poignant. Falsetto voice, compared with chest voice, is deemed artificial, effeminate and unnatural (and Koestenbaum finds it parallel to homosexuality; 1993: 164–165). It is in the threshold of the registers, for instance head vs. chest, where the split within one voice between male and female occurs (Koestenbaum 1993: 166–167). I find this culturally coded division significant also when listening to a group of voices, hearing female and male timbres and registers resonating either simultaneously or in a tight succession. Their inseparable intertwinement calls for the Barthes's Neutral.

In his book on Philip Glass's opera *Akhnatén* (1983) John Richardson (1999: 137–157) discusses the vocal gender of the main character, the Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaten, whom Glass has cast as a countertenor, a possible vocal follow-up for castrati (Dame 1994: 149). In *Akhnatén* the vocal colour of a countertenor is highly significant as an aural embodiment for a transgressive gender. The trio with Akhnaten, his wife Nefertiti (contra-alto), and his mother Queen Tye

(lyrical soprano) is a vocal power play between these three characters, imbued with manifold erotic bondings. In the fourth and fifth stanzas of the trio Akhnaten is vocally capsulated by his mother from above and his wife from below which positions him in an in-between state in many ways:

Caught between what he perceives as divine and earthly love, Akhnaten elects to partake of both. What is more, he evidently views this equilibrium between the internal and the external, between inbreeding and outbreeding, as further evidence of his own semidivine status. One who combines the masculine and the feminine; who traverses the path between the mundane and the eternal [...]. (Richardson 1999: 155)

What Richardson describes here would undoubtedly make a case for multiple Figures of the Neutral, not just Androgyne (e.g. Ideospheres, Rites, Retreat, Oscillation). Voice and more precisely vocal registers are one significant factor in this, and as Richardson shows, they are inseparably intertwined with other modes of signification (here for instance ideological, visual, and textual).

Välimäki's (2005: 301–327) research on k. d. lang's vocalism is a particularly nuanced criticism of Barthes's central concepts, including *jouissance*, geno-song, feno-song, *signifying* and the Grain of the Voice which she combines with acoustic mirror. When put to strict scrutiny, the dividing line between geno-song (body as voiced) and feno-song (voice as communication) turns out to be much more problematic than Barthes's article (1997a) would have it. On the basis of her analysis she concludes that no feature is purely *pheno* or *geno*. Also the very act of researching turns any 'genuine' *geno* to *feno*, by naming it. The same notion concerns also signification and *signifying* in the act of listening (Välimäki 2005: 326). Thus in the practice of analysis their borderlines — possible hideouts for the Neutral — remain in constant oscillation.

Koestenbaum, Wood, Richardson and Välimäki address voice in a way that combine erotic desire and signification. Their writings show that the binary splits between voice and body or body and language, *signifying* and signification need not to be permanently postulated. Thus they pave a way towards an understanding that bridges voice, language, meanings and desire in culture and in particular sub-cultures embraced also in this article. Their research, as I have above attempted to show how, also resonates with Barthes's Neutral.

Besides the famous *jouissance*, *signifying* etc., there are a myriad of concepts and designations in Barthes's oeuvre that may enhance sensitivity regarding voice and its modes of signification. Barthes's somewhat limited views on music and voice need not to restrain from profiting his semiotic theorising and his reasoning, which can be adapted for musical instances. This kind of research can be further enhanced by combining Barthes's *semioticing* with other more specific conceptions on voice and vocal cultures. Even though this is not a path taken by Barthes himself, it nevertheless is a valid option. The price to pay would be the loss of not-knowing, un-fetishizing sound, voice and music. As Susanna Välimäki puts it:

We may truly be looking for something as uncoded as possible (the *signifiante* evading the tyranny of communication and signification) but the moment we find it, it becomes coded. [...] For example, to hunt the grain of voice in [k.d.] lang's music transforms our quarry into a code. Research cannot be done without a system and an explicated research setting. This is a problem that Barthes did not bother to address. (Välimäki 2005: 326)

Agreed. Within Barthesian frame all the music undoubtedly could be deluged into *jouissance*. But music and vocal qualities need not to be doomed to remain as *jouissance only*, despite what Barthes himself continuously postulates in writing. Rather than studying voice Barthes suggested another interesting approach: to study the resistances that prevent from addressing voice (Barthes 2005: 78–79). Such a project could well start from his own writings.²³

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²³ Earlier version of this paper was delivered in the international symposium *Barthes's Relevance Today*, organised by Harri Veivo, University of Helsinki, Dec. 13–14, 2007. I thank Harri for this inspiring forum as well as his encouragement to do research on *The Neutral*. I also thank him, John Richardson and Laura Wahlfors for their accurate comments on the previous version of this paper.

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Озвучивание Нейтрального в Невидимом хоре «Парсифаля» Рихарда Вагнера

Многие работы Ролана Барта свидетельствуют о том, что Барт был скептичен в вопросах способности к означиванию музыки и голоса. В то же время его несколько ограниченное понимание музыки и голоса не значит, что мы не можем использовать его семиотические теории, поскольку неучтенным самим Бартом образом их можно применить и при анализе музыкальных произведений. «Нейтральное» (*Le Neutre*) является повторяющейся темой в работах Барта, начиная с его первой работы «Нулевая степень письма» (1953) и кончая серией лекций 1978 года в Коллеж де Франс, посвященных понятию «нейтральное». Данная статья анализирует, каким образом бартовское «нейтральное» способствует слушанию определенного типа. Материалом анализа являются загадочные звуки, производимые Невидимым хором в «Парсифале» Рихарда Вагнера, точнее одна конкретная фраза в первом акте (“Nehmet hin meinen Leib [...]”). В данном случае нас интересует не столько семантика этой фразы, столько то, как эта фраза озвучена и как в этой фразе и на ее фоне доносится бартовское «нейтральное». Слушание этого «нейтрального» возможно по нескольким концертным записям. Мой анализ показывает, что «нейтральное» не является чем-то обособленным, а действует вместе с другими видами обозначения (визуальное, текстуальное, биографическое).

Neutraalsele hääle andmine Richard Wagneri *Parcifali Nähtamatus Kooris*

Mitmed Roland Barthes'i tööd annavad tunnistust sellest, et Barthes oli skeptiline muusika ja hääle tähistamise võime suhtes. Samas ei tähenda tema enda pisut piiratud arusaam muusikast ja häälest seda, et me ei tohiks tema semiootilistest teooriatest ja mõttearendustest inspiratsiooni ammutada, kuivõrd neid on võimalik muusikalistele allikatele rakendada

Barthes'i enda poolt ettearvamatutel viisidel. 'Neutraalne' (*Le Neutre*) on korduv teema Barthes'i töödes, alates tema esimesest teosest *Kirja nullaste* (1953) kuni 1978. aasta 'neutraalse' mõistele pühendatud loenguseeriani Collège de France'is (avaldatud 2002. aastal). Käesolev artikkel analüüsib seda, kuidas Barthes'i 'neutraalne' soodustab teatud sorti kuulamist. Analüüsi taustaks on mõistatuslikud helid, mille toob kuuldavale Nähtamatu Koor Richard Wagneri *Parsifalis* (1882), täpsemini üks konkreetne fraas altide ja tenorite esituses ("Nehmet hin meinen Leib [...]"; esimene vaatus). Antud juhul ei huvita meid niivõrd (kirja)keele abil esitatud semantiline sisu, vaid see, kuidas nimetatud fraas on kuuldavale toodud ja täpsemalt, kuidas selle fraasi sees ja taustal kostub Barthes'i 'neutraalne'. 'Neutraalse' kuulamine on võimalik mitmes Bayreuthis tehtud kontsertlindistuses. Mu analüüs näitab, et 'neutraalne' ei ole midagi eraldiseisvat, vaid toimib koos teiste tähistamisviisidega (visuaalse, tekstuaalse ja biograafilisega).

L'effet de réel revisited: Barthes and the affective image

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Abstract. This article addresses Barthes's development from a structuralist semiotician towards an affectively responding reader in terms of 'post-rational' subjectivity. In light of his whole oeuvre, Barthes anticipates the understanding of emotion as an integral part of cognition presented in contemporary social neuroscience. To illustrate Barthes's growing awareness of the importance of this epistemological move, the article starts from his textual 'reality effect' as a critical vehicle of realist representation. It then shifts to his attempt at conceptualising an affective reading which resists the universalising idea of one ideologically determined signified. Barthes's progress towards embracing the actual reader's embodied self-feeling is prompted by two conceptual milestones: the obtuse meaning found in cinematic stills, and the experience of *punctum* felt in photos. In light of his lectures in the Collège de France, Barthes substitutes the Husserlian disembodied method of introspection with the Chinese *wu-wei* as a reading practice. As a result, his Zen-Buddhist concentration on bodily feelings elicited by visual/verbal images becomes a method capable of creating a fruitful link between language and wordless cognition. Finally, the article proposes an idea of the 'embodied reality effect' by reading affectively two similar scenes interpreted by the early and late Barthes himself.

I have a disease: I see language.
Roland Barthes¹

¹ Barthes 1977: 161.

When Roland Barthes in 1968 gave the description of Charlotte Corday in prison as a typical example that conveys *l'effet de réel* in Michelet's *Histoire de France*,² he left the problem of the lost signified open for further explorations. For Barthes, the peculiar effect of a realistic discourse is a "direct collusion of the signifier and the referent" (1986a: 147), while the signified is entirely turned out from the signification process. Seen in the perspective of his whole oeuvre, for Barthes the nature of the signified is a nodal centre in the mediation process of 'reality',³ which he has approached ever since in numerous ways and theoretical frames. Especially when adopting the Kristevian notion of *signifiance* in *Le troisième sens* in 1973, he orients towards the bodily sensing of images. Also his demand of a theory of reading verbal and visual signs in *Sur la lecture* published in 1976, supposes new answers to be found with a reformulated notion of a reading experience. But what is most exciting for the purposes of this essay is his proposed answer to the problem of the lost signified — an absent content — from a temporal perspective to reality in *La chambre claire*, published originally in 1980. He makes it, for instance, by musing affectively before the photograph of Lewis Payne, who was prosecuted for an attempted assassination of the Secretary of the State W. H. Seward (Barthes 1981: 95–96). Strikingly, just like Corday, Payne is sitting in prison just before his execution and posing not for a painter, but for a photographer.

The similarity of the two images of Corday and Payne is the starting point for this essay by revealing for me the late Barthes's deep devotion to the bodily experience in reading. My purpose is to illuminate Barthes as one of those thinkers who, besides understanding the experience of image/text as a culturally mediated rhetoric construction, challenges the very nature of the notion of 'rational' by taking the corporeally lived, emotional aspect of the experience as an integral component of signification.

Throughout his entire career, Barthes addresses the questions of body and affect in relation to the problem of textual referentiality; the 'text' referring extensively to all cultural signifying systems, including

² The original scene can be found in Michelet, Jules 1967, *Histoire de France, La Révolution*, vol. V. Lausanne: Ed. Rencontre, 292 (Barthes 1986a: 141).

³ With 'reality' and the 'real', I refer to Barthes's usage of these concepts in *L'effet de réel*. There they denote the lived world as something, which in the end defies any representation and meaning (see Barthes 1986a: 146).

those where the body is presented as an erotic object of consumption.⁴ A gradual but clear development continues in his work: from a reader leaning on textual autonomy to a reader feeling affectively the movements of and within the body. Parallel to acting in the realm of the post-modern textual epistemology which tended to exclude signs of the lived body from semiotics, Barthes's early ideas of image as a mediated experience lay the basic concepts of social semiotics for the ideological critique of our everyday practices. Already then, when analysing the usage of non-linguistic signs in social situations such as fashion and commercial advertisements, he often points to the role of emotion in the signification process. This tendency increases towards the middle of the seventies, when Barthes openly begins to celebrate his affective, multiple, bodily experience in and of the world.

Finally, Barthes ends up with a systematic introspection of his own intrinsic reactions to photography in *La chambre claire* (1980). This was made possible through his experiences in Japan where he developed an enthusiasm for Zen Buddhist concepts and their scope of meaning beyond Western binary thinking systems. In my view, he later uses this orientation for an embodied seeing and reading of cultural objects in an experiential presence, which leaves behind Western theorisation without losing scientific precision. More precisely, as Barthes heads towards the pleasure of aesthetic plenitude felt in a historical body, he moves from the lost signified and textual alienation towards a reading in which emotion is recognised as a mode of processing knowledge in an intimate connection of cognition.

Drawing from this developmental trajectory, I will envision Barthes's progress towards the concept of a multisensory, affective body as the central historical site of an experiential human being, be it a writer, reader or viewer. In the light of his late writings comprised of the lectures held in the Collège de France in 1976–1979, and *La chambre claire* (1980), Barthes's concept of a textual ego pervaded by *jouissance* fuses with a Taoist, non-possessive, lived body in favour of a synaesthetic, euphoric vision of the world. This trajectory shows Barthes in search of a concept of subjectivity reminiscent of the theoretical idea of an embodied mind elaborated by cognitive psychology and social neuroscience from the beginning of the nineties

⁴ See, for example, 'Le Corps' in the essay *Société, imagination, publicité* (Barthes 1994/ 1995: 514–516; originally published in 1968).

on. On this basis, my goal is finally to propose a renewed interpretation of his ‘reality effect’ in terms of our innate faculty of experiencing the world through sensory and perceptual routes in the presence of a seamless cooperation of emotion and cognition (Knuuttila [in press]). This process is included in the idea of a ‘post-rational’ subjectivity, which is characterised by an innate, immediate ability to mirror other people’s intentions and meanings.⁵ Seen in this frame, anticipating a theory of empathic reading/writing as a mode of witnessing the ongoing history of ordinary people, and not a history of experts and scholars, Barthes stands with those thinkers who partake in the long project of reformulating Cartesian rational subjectivity.

The missing emotion of the reality effect

One persistent thread in Barthes’s writings is his many-sided commentary on the relationship between connotation and referentiality in literature and historiography.⁶ Committed to analyse all types of representations as a vehicle of political power, he systematically challenges automatic meanings elicited by verbal and visual discourses by uncovering the processes of mythologisation in the context of everyday life.⁷ Two of his central, though extreme positions deal with such processes. First, the ideological critique of the sixties

⁵ My term ‘post-rational’ originates from Vittorio F. Guidano, who emphasises that “while thinking usually changes thoughts, only feeling can change emotions” (Guidano 1991: 96). As he states, rationality is intrinsically relativistic, while the self-organising, self-referential system of every subject continuously reorders “immediate experiencing (“I”) into a conscious sense of self and the world (“Me”)” (Guidano 1991: 95–96). However, a “stable, and at the same time, dynamic demarcation between what is real and what is not in [a subject’s] ongoing praxis of living” (Guidano 1991: 95), is enabled only through distinguishing perception from illusion verbally in a social interaction with other people (Toskala & Hartikainen 2005: 27).

⁶ Barthes’s early interest in an empty signifier which has no definite signified has its resonance in Roman Jakobson’s ‘zero signs’ in linguistics as well as in Louis Hjelmslev’s non-signifying sign elements, *figurae* (Chandler 2002: 74–75; Barthes 1994).

⁷ See Barthes’s model of the mythologisation of sign in the chapter of “Myth today” in *Mythologies* (1994: 18); about its connection to Louis Hjelmslev’s preceding model in his *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, see Silverman 1983: 26–27.

attacks literary realism by claiming its signifier to be emptied of all content in prosaic representations. Second, the visual explorations of the seventies unveil the inability of canonised analytic studies of media to include the presence of the embodied aspects of life. Already in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953), Barthes juxtaposes the discourse of modernist poetry with classical realist texts, thereby foretelling his characterisation of the aesthetic mission of modernism as “challenging the age-old aesthetic of ‘representation’” presented in *L'effet de réel* (Barthes 1986a: 148). Starting from an obvious conflict between verisimilitude and truth, he iteratively calls for counter-narratives⁸ which could put into effect the task of modernist aesthetics: the “disintegration of sign” (Barthes 1986a: 148). To shed light on his aspirations for alternative subtexts, I will concentrate on two of his articles considering the details of literary and cinematic mimesis: first, *L'effet de réel* (1968), and second, *Le sens obtus* (1970). Together these texts illuminate his semiotic account of the problems of referentiality in the verbal and visual image.

The outline of Barthes's progress in thinking about referential aspects of image is roughly as follows.⁹ First, after laying the basis for his concept of reality effect in 1966–1967,¹⁰ he gives in *L'effet de réel* a concise analysis of the process of emptying the signified in realistic representations in favour of his much debated “direct collusion of the signifier and referent” (Barthes 1986a: 147). He uncovers the naturalising discourse of the realistic novel and historiography as an ideologically marked chain of signifiers, which rather points to the absence of reality from realistic discourses than to the lived ‘real’ itself. In the mood of his post-modern contemporaries, he tries to resist the normative, controlling, political practice of texts similar to that of classical rhetoric in France. But while seeing human experiential truth as reduced to a decorative rhetoric, Barthes does not

⁸ For example, in *Le troisième sens*, Barthes understands the *sens obtus* to be an “epitome of a counter-narrative; disseminated, reversible, set to its own temporality” (Barthes 1982: 328).

⁹ For my description of Barthes's development at the turn of the decade I am indebted to Auli Viikari's insightful article *Ancilla narrationis vai kutsumaton haltiatar? Kuvauksen poetiikkaa* [Ancilla narrationis, or an uninvited fairy? Poetics of description] (Viikari 1993).

¹⁰ In the articles *Introduction à l'analyse structurale de récit* (1966) and *Le discours de l'histoire* (1967).

reject the idea of textually produced pleasure and embodied presence. Quite the contrary, his neglect of the sensory and affective power of metaphor is temporary, even purposeful. Dazed by *haiku* poetry and the Zen Buddhist notion of *satori* after his Japanese journey,¹¹ he soon turns to analyse his own ephemeral feelings elicited by Sergei Eisenstein's stills so as to transform them into the idea of *sens obtus* in *Le troisième sens*. While this move makes visible the emotional component of image through Eisenstein's theory of the vertical reading of the still, it lays the basis for the idea of *punctum* as an affective practice of seeing — feeling — a photograph. And while Barthes uses an introspective method he elaborated via an Eastern philosophical roundabout in order to avoid the terms of Husserlian phenomenology, the development of his ideas culminates in the practice of an embodied, affective reading of images with the mind's eye, textualised in *La chambre claire*.

In *L'effet de réel*, Barthes crystallises the problem of normative content in realism in the concept of an emptied signified. He finds it typical for all representative discourses, which try to mimic the truth of reality, including the efforts to enliven the 'real' world with photographs or exhibitions of authentic objects (Barthes 1986a: 146). Critical towards structuralism, he claims that the central devices transmitting a truthful world for a modern reader of realism are narratologically meaningless and non-functional descriptions and details of the everyday reality, termed the 'reality effect'.¹² To illuminate the effect of this device in the long continuum of Western rhetoric as a contrast to medieval fantasy and classical eloquence, Barthes uses short passages that he understands as verbal efforts to create a feeling of verisimilitude. They are, for example, the scene of Corday in Michelet's historiography mentioned above, or the bour-

¹¹ Originating from Barthes's visit to Japan, the parallelism of image and text presented in his *L'Empire des signes* (1970) is one example of an invisible interconnection of visual and verbal presentations meant to provoke a double signifying register of the unconscious and conscious activities in the reader's preconscious (see Silverman 1983: 72; Barthes 1994/1995: 745).

¹² Barthes's distinction between classicism and modernism lies between Balzac and Flaubert (Barthes 1967: 32), while the 'real' world signifies for him the historical 'flesh world' we live in. And when he chooses Flaubert's text as an example of literary realism, he emphasises its historical simultaneity with the tradition of writing absolute History, which represents for him a rather short period of some decades in French historiography.

geois setting in Flaubert's short story *Un coeur simple* where a barometer may play the role of a meaningless object. For my purpose, however, the most telling example of Barthes's critical position to realism is his approach to Flaubert's ekphrasis of Rouen in *Emma Bovary*.¹³ Making Rouen palpable by a few verbal substitutions of the historical place, the lyrical exactitude of this passage is for him one "jewel of a number of rarely brilliant metaphors" of the novel (Barthes 1986a: 144). It reads as follows:

[L]es mâts comme une forêt d'aiguilles, les îles comme de grands poissons noirs arrêtés, les nuages comme des flots aériens qui se brisent en silence contre une falaise [...] Ainsi, vu d'en haut, le paysage tout entier avait l'air immobile comme une peinture. (Barthes 1994/1995: 482)

[T]he masts like a forest of needles, the islands like huge motionless black fish, the clouds like aerial waves silently breaking against a cliff [...] Thus, seen from above, the whole landscape had the motionless look of a painting. (Barthes 1986a: 144–145)

According to Barthes' post-modern reading, the beauty of the three impressive similes of the passage is "subject to the tyrannical constraints of what we must call aesthetic verisimilitude" (Barthes 1986a: 145). When he prefers to read the image as a mimetic portrayal of the 'real' world, Flaubert's heavy, threatening scene hardly seems to point to the 'real' world in itself. Rather, being a verbal copy of a painting-like visual representation, the scene carries a functional chain of familiar connotations. It thus limits itself to a reduced signified whose sole denotative meaning is evoked by another, already thought-out signifier, whereupon the whole scene attains a status of a mere "irrelevant" yet necessary excess in the construction of the artificial world. As a result, producing an absence of the signified of the 'real', the signifier of realism passes over all connotative signified by substituting them with one normative referent which tends to naturalise history (Barthes 1986a: 145).

Conspicuously, while refraining here from all explorations of how a mental representation of a past or fictional world is constituted in mind, Barthes puts aside the actual reader's perceptual and affective responses to the atmosphere of the image, which would characterise an act of creative reading. He discards deliberately the sensory charge

¹³ Ekphrasis refers here to "the verbal representation of visual representation" (on the historical usages of the term, see Mitchell 1994: 151–152).

of the multitude of Flaubert's modernist signified in favour of his idea of an obscure collusion of the textual signifier and one normative referent. Thus the early Barthes seems to ignore the simultaneity of those direct and indirect figural devices which can "point to emotions and suffering without pointing at them", using Philippe Roger's words of Barthes's late writings (Roger 2001: 531). However, he fairly soon sketches out the analytical system of connotative codes in *S/Z* (1973), and the interpretative exercise of still — a kind of visual parallel to Flaubert's ekphrasis — by Eisenstein's vertical reading in *Le troisième sens* (1973). But at the historical moment of 1968, Barthes commits himself to deconstruct the naturalising tendency of realistic discourse as an ideological gesture. His ambition is to uncover its pretended nature as a representation, which is to persuade, assure, and convince the reader of a predefined order in the world. As an outcome, the signified is conflated with the referent, while the signifier given is understood to evoke just one consistent, safe, and illusory world typical to the ideological goals of bourgeois realism and the history of scholars.

Nevertheless, as Michael Sheringham points out, what typifies Barthes's production from his early writings to the late is his aspiration to a third level of meaning formation that emerges by virtue of some unknown residues of signification which exceed the normative ones (Sheringham 2006: 194). Indeed, Barthes's cogent criticism of referential illusion proposes that whereas the signified of denotation is erased from the realistic speech-act; the 'real' "*returns to it as a signified of connotation*" (Barthes 1986a: 148, italics added). This statement leaves the door open for the whole spectrum of a signified arising from an actual reader's personal flesh world and her/his specific cultural context. But while insisting on one signified as determined by the bourgeois context for canonised realist narratives, Barthes is not aware of the impact of post-modern ideology on himself which compels him to stick to an analysis of automatic denotations creating fallible feelings of 'reality'. He thus happens to ignore the indexical, affective and procedural, aspect of the interpretant elicited by any discourse in the reader's individual body.¹⁴ Therefore,

¹⁴ In my view, taking into account the embodied, historical indexicality of the interpretant, we can specify how discourses act as referential bridges from text to world in semiosis, an idea proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Paul Ricoeur, and Edward Said. Indeed, as Eelco Runia succinctly notes, Barthes's theory points to

Barthes's critique of realistic discourse cannot yet be suggestive of a theory of representation which recognises emotion as a (missing) component of cognition in the long venture of rectifying the Cartesian rational concept of subjectivity. The result is that, while neglecting the sensing, affective body as a source of knowing by his somewhat mystical collusion of signifier and referent, Barthes's interpretation seems to perpetuate the Cartesian idea of a bodiless mind at this stage of his intellectual progress.

Towards a lived body in presence: The poetics of still

Today, as the relationship of emotion and cognition in human intellectual activity is under a profound re-evaluation, it is possible to see more clearly the limited role of emotion in Barthes's early writings. From the beginning of the nineties, a revised concept of an embodied subjectivity is gradually formulated by cognitive psychology, especially in its line of radical constructivism, assisted and supported by the remarkable empirical evidence of contemporary neuroscience.¹⁵

the possibility of presence in the absence of history/reality as a "stowaway" through common metonymies, which act as "temporal *fistulae*" between past and presence (Runia 2006: 1, 16). This idea is akin to Barthes's own statement that *vraisemblance* is expressed merely through common opinion (Barthes 1986a: 147). However, Runia does not consider our innate faculty to respond to perceptual material affectively as an embodied mirroring in the production of mental representations of other people and the world, nor does he discuss the evidence that such mirroring is evoked also by linguistic expressions (see Keen 2006: 209).

¹⁵ The renewed concept of subjectivity is effectively formulated by the cognitive theorist Vittorio Guidano, who in his work *Self in Process* (1991) lays a fruitful basis for a concept of a processual self developing in a mutual affective and embodied connection with the m/other. The roots for Guidano's and Gianni Liotti's theoretical approach of radical constructivism, developed in the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Rome, are based on the ideas of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana originating from the seventies, while the theory of emotion is reformulated by Joseph LeDoux and, especially, Antonio Damasio and numerous other cognitive neuroscientists in the nineties. Moreover, despite doubts concerning the relevance of neuroscience to psychoanalytical practice, an active international debate continues on the position and nature of Freudian psychoanalysis in this developing configuration, while a theoretical line called

The concept of a feeling, post-rational, subjectivity allows for the seamless cooperation of emotion and cognition as a foundation for human intellectual activity and social capacity (Damasio 2003; LeDoux 1996). Currently, emotion is understood as ubiquitous and dialogical in all cognitive activity in the regulation of our choices and reasoning. What is more, it is the basis of our social capability, for it partakes in our innate mirroring of the other person's intentions and feelings through a continuous registration of the flow of non-verbal signs (Rizzolatti *et al.* 2001; Gallese 2005; Iacoboni 2005; Keen 2006).¹⁶ Furthermore, the theory of an embodied subjectivity supposes that a wordless, visuo-spatial and procedural — multisensory, visceral, and proprioceptive — knowing is on an upper level in the functional structure of human consciousness in relation to language (Toskala 2006; Guidano 1991; Damasio 2000). For literary and media studies this implies, for instance, that the affective and dynamic visuo-spatial component of metaphor has to be taken along as an integral part of information processing when reading cultural representations, whereupon a place for an embodied historical reader is prepared (Knuuttila [in press]; Miall 2006). On this ground, to introduce a consistent theory of reading, one has to postulate an embodied, affective historical reader, and embrace the role of the indexical aspect of the sign as a component of reading response.

In this theoretical frame, I follow how the sense of a feeling body increases in Barthes's theorising on image towards the end of the seventies. The embodied response he reports to have in face of visual material evokes the idea of an indexical referentiality residing in an affective perception of filmic and photographic images. An impressive prologue to this phase is a passage in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*, where Barthes indicates his enthusiasm for the violent autonomy of modernist poetry (Barthes 1967: 35–43). In contrast to the controlling economics of classical realism, he experiences the verbal imagery of new poetry (since Rimbaud, not including Baudelaire) to be endlessly

neuropsychanalysis points to some important ideas relevant for a renewed concept of transference.

¹⁶ The neural correlate of mirroring the other person's intentions, feelings, and motivations seems to be a complex mirror neuron system, which, however, can never be equated with the system of psychological functioning, while the incompatibility and incommensurability of these two disparate representative systems is doomed to remain eternal (see Damasio 2000: 83).

liberating due to the explosive power of its multiple signified. As if anticipating the idea of *obtus*, Barthes views the intellectual and emotional condensation of modernist poetry to give birth to a *vertical discourse* (Barthes 1967: 40),¹⁷ which opens the way for an unexpected but ripened thought in and through a co-presence of arbitrary words.

However, although it marks a revelation of truth for Barthes which he expresses in one of his most beautiful passages, he feels that modernist poetry excludes the reader by changing Nature into isolated, frightening objects without continuity. Reading modernist poetry seems for him to plunge one terrified into an existential thrownness in an estranged world, and leave one detached from social connections with other people (Barthes 1967: 42).¹⁸ This experience leads Barthes — a future master of poetic fragments — to characterise modernist poetry as an unhistorical and unethical “climate” arisen from the fragmentary qualities of a discourse where there is “no humanism” (Barthes 1967: 42–43). But what is more important, his own existential curiosity propels him towards the idea of an ephemeral third meaning, the *obtus*. This quest compels him to ask the most relevant questions concerning the anti-Cartesian reformulation of a feeling subjectivity.

It is surprising how clearly the absence of emotion from the theory of mind can be seen in Barthes's search for the essence of the obtuse meaning when reading an image. In terms of his triple division of meaning presented in *Le troisième sens*, Barthes was not interested in the first mode, information transmitted in communication. Rather, he wanted to scrutinise the fundamental nature of the second, symbolic signification in relation to the third, the obtuse meaning. In contrast to the obvious, the obtuse meaning corresponds in the first place to Julia Kristeva's term *signifiante* as a bodily process, which has more to do with the signifier than the signified (Barthes 1982: 319). Being convinced that there exists a kind of excess of visual content in Eisen-

¹⁷ He writes: “Fixed connections being abolished, the word is left only with a vertical project, it is like a monolith, or a pillar which plunges into a totality of meanings, reflexes, and recollections” (Barthes 1967: 40).

¹⁸ More precisely, while Nature becomes a “succession of verticalities”, and “objects filled with all their possibilities”, the reader is left alone with “inhuman images of heaven, hell, holiness, childhood, madness, and pure matter” (Barthes 1967: 42).

stein's stills, Barthes observed that the signified of this "evident, erratic, obstinate" meaning was extremely hard to explicate. He writes: "I do not know what its signified is, at least I am unable to give it a name, but I can see clearly the traits, the signifying accidents of which this — consequently incomplete — sign is composed: a certain compactness [...]" (Barthes 1982: 318).

Today this eloquent textual groping evokes a certain kind of embarrassment, for it seems to indicate symptomatically our huge ignorance of the role of emotion in intellectual thinking throughout modernism. Strikingly similar to Barthes's insignificant reality effect and the unknown *obtus*, emotion has been taken for an excess while still being the necessary opposite to reason in the Western concept of subjectivity in its long Cartesian history. This gap makes Barthes's endeavour to identify the signified of the obtuse meaning still more valuable, even when he draws on euphemisms in describing the essence of this 'something' whose unknown existence he never seems to doubt, and which seems to imply a wordless, emotional mode of cognition occurring on the core level of the subject (see Damasio 2000: 169, 174).

Barthes specifies the impact of stills on himself by itemising his felt responses to a selected cavalcade of images of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*. The third meaning is an emotional, evaluative process where the reader is dismantled by the sign — the same procedure completed with the *punctum* in relation to photographs in *La chambre claire*. But how does this disarming take place? In a way, the problem of *obtus* echoes the question in *Rhetoric de l'image* (1964) of what remains in the image when all connotative messages of the iconic sign are deleted, but when its literal denotation remains uncertain and without a symbolic code (Barthes 1977a: 36, 42–43).¹⁹ In the form of *obtus*, this uncertainty is defined as a "spasm of the signified" which is not empty; rather, it accentuates some transition point of desire emerging on the boundary of before and past (Barthes 1982: 327). But importantly, Barthes argues that *obtus* is not the gestural or facial expression of an emotion, which belongs to the realm of obvious meaning of a realist, decorative image (Barthes 1982: 322).

¹⁹ Already in 1964, Barthes speaks about the temporal double structure of the photograph: *being-there* and *having-been-there*, whose repercussions one can hear, again, in *La chambre claire* (see Barthes 1977a: 44).

This limit draws my attention to the most telling example illuminating the incipient transition typical to *obtus*: the still of an old Russian woman just before emitting an open cry of grief. I am prone to interpret this fleeting moment as that of the non-cognitive appraisal occurring in the body at the kindling point of a strong affect. Here this ephemeral moment of an emerging emotional feeling begins with an impediment of breathing when a person is not yet aware of the intrusive change of her/his bodily condition, but which can be recognised non-verbally by another sensitive person.²⁰ An apposite theoretical tool for grasping such an embodied psychological change is the concept of 'felt emotion' as defined by Don Kuiken. In accordance to 'felt emotion', *obtus* supposes the "experience of inner tensions related to the response-organising activities of the basic emotions, such as fear, anger, and sadness" (Kuiken 1995: 142). Furthermore, *obtus* may essentially be related to the psychic phenomenon of 'felt engagement', defined as an "experience of inner tensions related to positions and actions taken vis-à-vis the environment" (Kuiken 1995: 142).²¹

Drawing on these psychological premises, I define *obtus* as a feeling of wordless, embodied cognition that emerges during the transition from one emotional condition to another, supposing that this transition can come into consciousness only *when not verbalised*, as Daniel N. Stern observes. However, as he notes, only an awareness of such a felt experience provides the material for a possible verbal

²⁰ The fleeting moment at the beginning of an emotional wave is termed the non-cognitive appraisal in the judgment theory of emotion (see Robinson 2005: 41–42; Knuuttila [in press]). Yet, to speak about 'beginning' of an emotional feeling implies that the emotional process is understood to be a continual phenomenon where the lower and higher waves of embodied feelings tend to emerge in turn so as to form a temporal contour of vitality affects (Stern 2004: 64).

²¹ Behind both these concepts is Rudolf Arnheim's aesthetic notion of 'felt presence' of an image, which implies that outer objects themselves have perceptible tensions that have a direct effect on the experience of the spectator (Kuiken 1995: 142–143). I propose that 'felt presence' could be a pertinent device to deal with Barthes's obtuse emotional reacting to the visual details of Eisenstein's stills, such as the "tenuous relationships between the contrasting curves of the woman's low headscarf, her closed eyes, and convex mouth" (Barthes 1982: 322). And when the visual object represents a human being, felt presence belongs to the realm of mirroring the other, which makes the whole issue more complex.

recounting (Stern 2004: 32). This approach explains Barthes's intention to stop at one certain still where the uncertainty of the affect is at its height, and reveals the beginning of a violent emotional process in one bodily flash which normally is beyond conscious perception. But because the obtuse meaning "does not copy anything" like the obvious one, to describe the emotion value it carries is impossible (Barthes 1982: 326). But tellingly, Barthes finds a suitable verbal articulation for his experience of *obtus* in the *haiku* (Barthes 1982: 327).²² This might be the same experience of embodied knowing that makes Barthes write later: "I can neither read nor write what you produce, but I *receive* it, like a fire, a drug, an enigmatic disorganization" (Barthes 1977c: 118; his italics).

Barthes's elaboration of a new method of deciphering image through the third meaning is based on the idea of vertical reading which Eisenstein adapted in his still frames. According to Eisenstein, being a passage from language to significance, *obtus* is a counter-narrative which, with its "*accentuation within the fragment*" — "*the element 'inside the shot'*" — "creates another film" by "structuring it differently [from within] without subverting the story" (Barthes 1982: 332; his italics). Most importantly to literary interpretation, this idea suggests a reading practice that is based on an undulation of wordless, directly felt, embodied micro-narratives occurring as emotional transitions at the core level of a sensing subject (see Stern 2004: 58). Such a practice is put into effect in Barthes's own version of vertical reading ten years later, which marks his first step toward a systematic usage of introspection as a method of exploring affects elicited by photographic details.

Vertical reading could also have relevance as a method in the interpretation of literary ekphrasis, which is comprised of a palimpsest of affective metaphors, such as Flaubert's verbal image of Rouen quoted above. This idea gets a good sounding board in Barthes's reading of stills which in a way responds to his request for a theory of reading in the seventies. Already *La mort de l'auteur* (1968), longs for a theory of reading with its concept of a reader as an intertextual space

²² Barthes cannot explicate the effect of the woman's figure, except by the simile "like a fish out of water" (Barthes 1982: 322). However, he finds a more subtle expression in the *haiku* by which he manages to bring about the co-presence of visual details to create the emotional meaning in the experiencing reader: "Mouth drawn / Eyes shut squinting / Headscarf low over forehead / She weeps" (Barthes 1982: 326).

where all multiple aspects of the text meet in the experience of reading. Going further, *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973) begins to express Barthes's own responses to texts he desired to read along with his personal predilections and affections. In *Sur la lecture* (1976), he states at first: "Unfortunately, reading has not yet encountered its Propp or its Saussure" (Barthes 1986b: 34). Then, specifying his earlier demand concerning "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977b: 148), he describes the bodily disorder of a feeling, desiring reader. With the benefit of hindsight, I see these undertakings as calling for a theory of reading where emotion has a recognised function in processing knowledge not only as a catalyst, but also as a dimension of non-verbal, embodied cognition (Knuuttila [in press]).²³

Affective introspection as a method: *punctum*

A flesh world begins to show up more clearly in Barthes's orientation toward the indexicality of the feeling body in *Le Plaisir du texte*, where he formulates his concept of the mundane subject as an enjoying entity full of erotic pleasure. With his dialectical style by alternating 'I' and 'he' in *Barthes par Barthes*, he incarnates the internal division of a dialogical, plural body, whose dialectics he exemplifies by echoing some earlier discussion: "Which body? We have several" (Barthes 1977c: 60). Oscillating between suffering and pleasure, his body is "especially: *emotive*: which is moved, stirred, depressed, or exalted or intimidated, without anything of the sort being apparent" (Barthes 1977c: 60–61, his italics). Being aware of his own panic provoked by the language used in domestic quarrels in his childhood (Barthes 1977c: 159),²⁴ he continues to underline the

²³ In empirical literary research, the episodic simulation of a textual passage is called 'expressive enactment', where a felt emotion and felt engagement of the reader work together with the felt presence of the object, and produce in the reader an emotional shift between bodily enacted episodes. This reaction is individual and depends on the autobiographical experiences of the reader (Kuiken *et al.* 2004: 269, 281–284; on emotion in metaphor and reading, see also Miall 2006, *passim*).

²⁴ In this connection, Barthes comes up with a paradoxical maxim: "[A] cessation of language is the greatest violence that can be done to the violence of language" (Barthes 1977c: 159).

role of language in creating subjectivity. In the fragment of “Nouvelle sujet, nouvelle science”, he claims: “He [Barthes] wants to side with any writing whose principle is that *the subject is merely an effect of language*. He imagines an enormous science, in the utterance of which the scientist would at last include himself — the science of the effects of language” (Barthes 1977c: 79, his italics). Is this daydream of drowning himself in scientific language ironic? Anyhow, to counteract the scientific “madness of language”, he complains that we — Western researchers — throw a shadow of suspicion on every utterance by revealing their graded meta-levels, whereby we call this abyss of language as an act of utterance. He notes: “I write: this is the first degree of language. Then, I write that *I write*; this is the second degree of language” (Barthes 1977c: 66, his italics).

Barthes’s weariness with meaningless theorising and his active search for the immediacy of presence is finally concretised in the lectures of Collège de France. He begins to explore certain Eastern concepts as substitutes for a number of Western ones that cannot easily mediate the subtle qualities of his craved, “antirelevant” experiences of Zen (Barthes 2005: 117). I find this turn a necessary pathway to the introspective method of image whose indispensable results are seen in the verbal jewels of *La chambre claire*. In *Le Neutral* (1977–1978), Barthes prepares himself this pathway towards a new research technique by exploring two key notions: Greek *kairos* and Chinese *wou-wei* (Barthes 2005: 169–171). Only then was he ready to adopt introspection as a systematic method of analysing his own affective reactions to photographs in a contemplative awareness of his own body. Emphasising the Taoist *wou-wei* as an attitude of non-involvement, he completes it with the *kairos* of the philosophical Sceptics of the ancient Greek Academy to underline the non-dogmatic nature of an “a-power” of *wou-wei* (Barthes 2005: 170).²⁵ From these elements, he develops a variation of Husserlian phenomenological

²⁵ *Ho kairos* refers to a right, appropriate measure, an appropriate, timely moment or opportunity. It points to the right, relaxed moment of an occasion (Barthes 2005: 169). *Wou-wei* implies non-action which guides one not to direct one’s strength, but rather to “suspend his judgment in cases where it is a question of arriving at the truth”. Its deepest attitude is “not to choose” (Barthes 2005: 176). Together, these two form an Eastern analogue to Husserl’s introspection, where unconscious or subconscious experiences may unfold into consciousness (see, e.g., Vermersch 1999).

reduction, however, with the difference that he substitutes its term *epochè* — the gesture of suspension — with the non-action of *wou-wei* combined with *kairos* — the right moment (of acting).

In this frame, Barthes's last period can hardly be characterised as a time of laziness (Saint-Amand 2001); by contrast, he purposefully propagates an active non-action as an alternative to the capitalist, commercialised, and hectic routines of Western life. Similar to Husserlian *epochè*, but seldom using this term (see Barthes 2005: 118), Barthes uses *wou-wei* to imply an abstinence from all judgments in order to find a lived, experiential presence in the corporeal awareness of (his) personal existence. Thus, instead of dealing with the abstract Husserlian transcendental ego, Barthes promulgates a contextual and temporal bodily presence in flesh. And when turning inwards, he does not forget an outward movement which guides him implicitly toward a renewed concept of indexical referentiality of perceived objects transmitted through a sensing and feeling body (see Knuuttila 2007: 40–46, 49).

Eventually, during his mother's terminal period of life, Barthes touches the unresolved nature of human procedural and emotional memory by exploring his bodily feelings evoked by photographs. The detailed self-reflexive response to these feelings presented in *La chambre claire* completes his lengthy philosophical predilection for visual historical objects. In the light of his last lectures, *La chambre claire* can be identified as a result of an introspective *epochè*: a standstill with photos in deliberate submission to the affective power of *punctum*: “desire, repulsion, nostalgia, euphoria” (Barthes 1981: 21). When verbalising his mental movements, Barthes reads photographs as if exemplifying the method of an empathic reading. Yielding himself to the image, he lets the visual sign dismantle himself through the ‘expressive enactment’ of a multitude of sensations and affects (Kuiken *et al.* 2004: 269, 281–284; see note 23). He writes it down poetically, thanks to the free acceptance enabled by the Zen Buddhist state of *satori* (Barthes 1994/1995: 745). But still more fruitful is the distance he takes from the Western phenomenological reduction, which tends to decontextualise the subject. Assuming a position of *wou-wei*, as he surrenders to the insecure awareness of all his affects and thoughts, Barthes relates them to his culture in *studium* by going through all those subconscious details of his autobiographical existence that are elicited by the procedural, perceptual, and

visceral memory of *punctum*. Hence, the intentional object of Barthes's introspection is twofold: when attempting to become conscious of his unconscious material, he also wants to be aware of the act of introspection itself. In other words, as he observes the structure of emerging affect with all its multisensory and perceptual components, he simultaneously explores the spontaneous verbalisation of these emerging components.

As a result, the Barthesian combination of two signifying practices of *studium* and *punctum* shows the subject as a continuous process between preconscious and conscious: the embodied, implicit memory and the symbolic, explicit memory.²⁶ According to the radical constructivism of embodied subjectivity, non-verbal, multi-sensory cognition precedes our verbal constructions of the world, while emotion ubiquitously pervades the cognitive activity of a socially competent, empathic subject. I interpret the late Barthes to exemplify this capability on the core level of subjectivity. Following logically from this idea, his method of introspection and its verbalisation as a viewer of historical documents indicates his strong protest against a monological, possessive Western mind in favour of a subjectivity which is continually reconstructed in human relationships and cultural contexts. This method is most fruitful in Barthes's finding that the *noema* of the photo is the temporal double structure "this will be" and 'this has been', which fuses into an existential experience of the viewer's own mortality (Barthes 1981: 96). The duality of this *noema* is profoundly historical to Barthes who wants the temporal paradox to continue in effect through touching figures. And being visual and verbal images of historical individuals, such affective figures may remain in force by exciting our bodily memory by virtue of their interactional, indexical power.

²⁶ A detailed analysis of this procedure is presented in Knuuttila 2007. The tension between *studium* and *punctum* is similar to the tension which prevails between the experiential 'I' and self-reflexive 'Me' in Guidano's cognitive terms, and to the Freudian fundamental dynamic tension between enactment and representation. A functional bridge between these two poles, as Kaja Silverman proposes, could be the early Freudian preconscious which is the potential source of our figural talent, for it mediates between unconscious and conscious in the double-signifying register of thing-presentations and word-presentations (Silverman 1983: 72, 86).

Conclusion: *L'effet de réel* revisited

To sum up, in light of *La chambre claire*, I will reinterpret Barthes's example of Charlotte Corday compared with that of Lewis Payne, who are in the same position as they are committed to death and will soon be executed due to their political actions. As presented in this essay, Barthes's later writings offer a model of multisensory affectivity in reading images with an awareness of one's own bodily and emotional reactions. This model prompts me to suggest a renewed notion of an *embodied reality effect* when reading verbal portrayals of persons and milieus. Earlier, as Barthes questions the meaning of "insignificant" textual details in *L'effet de réel*, he claims their ekphrastic role in the creation of a truthful sense of the lived world to be conventional and naturalising in the realistic novel and historiography in the sense of mere "luxury" or excess (Barthes 1986a: 141). He then passes over, in terms of lost signified, the immersing *signifiante* of the visuo-spatial and affective details of the setting for a philosophical interpretation of the image, such as Corday's posture between the painter and the small door through which Corday is soon going to be executed. However, twelve years later, when mindfully regarding Lewis Payne's photograph taken by Alexander Gardner in 1865 in a similar situation in prison, Barthes feels affectively the double temporal structure of a historical document: the simultaneity of "this will be" and "this has been", but reversed into an existentially touching combination of "*Il est mort et il va mourir*" (Barthes 1994/1995: 1177). Extrapolating from the parallelism of these two images, I show the significance of an embodied reading to Michelet's concise — one sentence long in Barthes 1968 — but visuo-spatially and affectively effective ekphrasis of the historical figure of Corday.

As Michelet indicates, just as Payne for the photographer, Corday poses for a painter who is completing her last portrait before her legally-planned execution — a sign of man-made trauma. Similar to Payne's posture and direct gaze at the photographer, the text on Corday evokes at one verbal swoop a mental image where the prisoner is supposedly looking at the painter when sitting in the front of the small door that leads to her only possible destiny: death. This scene is doubly compelling to the reader in terms of the sensory and affective perspective of a post-rational subject. According to the theory of wordless cognition and mirror neuron functioning, the viewed as well as the narrated gestures and qualities of

the object activate the recipient's body, which exhibits the feelings and intentions of that object in an inner drama of their embodied simulation.²⁷ But this act is fundamentally dialogical, for when the reader adopts unconsciously the position of the painter or the photographer, s/he also identifies her/himself with the role of the posing prisoner through her/his mind's kinaesthetic and affective, multisensory eye — a "second sight" (Barthes 1981: 47). Being the route to the reader's individual embodied memory, such a response implies unavoidably the creation of "another (emotional) film" of the scene in the body: an embodied simulation of the wordless dialogue emerging from the dramatic tension between both accomplices of the still as based on their mutual 'felt engagement'.

Furthermore, as Barthes mentions, the careful knocking on the prison's small door enhances the reader's dramatic sense of reality. But besides announcing the moment of death, the knocking increases the reader's emotional confusion in her/his imagined place of a third person — a witness — as s/he is oscillating between the opposite roles of the painter and the prisoner. The result is a persistent ambiguity: while the spatial and objectifying identification with the painter offers the reader an important role as an observer in relation to Corday who is soon to be executed, the identification with Corday tends to immerse the reader in the obtuse 'felt emotion' of her/his own definitive death.²⁸ The compelling outcome from this embodied reality effect is that the reader is to bear testimony of historical atrocities from an ethically evaluative position of a living, yet mortal historical person.

In conclusion, Barthes's emphasis on experiential truth in reading these items of cultural media can be seen as a foreshadowing of a theory of empathic reading and the coming formation of the concept of emotionally knowing subjectivity. Regarding his examples, since death through a planned execution is posed in the absolute past in the visual example of Payne, Barthes finds his experiential self in the fear of a historical "catastrophe which has already occurred" (Barthes 1981: 96).²⁹ The trembling textual Barthes then manages to shift the

²⁷ See Keen 2006: 209, 225 n3.

²⁸ As presented earlier in this essay, 'felt emotion' refers to an "experience of inner tensions related to the response-organising activities of the basic emotions, such as fear, anger, and sadness" (Kuiken 1995: 142).

²⁹ This experience points to an adaptive psychic process where the dissociated emotional part of the personality is integrated with the apparently normal part of the personality in the act of embodied viewing/ writing/ reading (cf. Howell 2005:

feeling of the double temporality of “this has been” and “this will be” into the flesh of the viewer in *La chambre claire*. Likewise, the realistic portrayal of Corday as a potentially dead person is not merely to produce a sense of referential illusion by saying “I am reality” in a frame of one dominant and unique emplotment (Jay 2001: 473, 475). Instead of one temporal signified — that of the imminent arrival of death/executioner — for an embodied recipient of a documentary, a multitude of signified may open up in the experiential truth of her/his own corporeality through the awareness of the living body at the moment of reading. Finally, this is indicative of the return of a multiple, multisensory, though disquieting, signified to a realistic representation, traced originally by Barthes himself.

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132–133). For me, such an integration indicates the way in which one’s sense of metonymical (indexical) contiguity may recover from numbness.

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Еще раз об «эффekte реальности»: Барт и аффективное изображение

Настоящая статья посвящена развитию Ролана Барта из структуралистского семиотика в чутко реагирующего (сверхчувствительного) читателя в смысле «пост-рациональной» субъективности. Рассматривая творчество Барта как одно целое, можно его считать предшественником современной когнитивной науки, так как Барт считает эмоцию неразрывной частью познания. Чтобы показать, как осознанность Барта этого эпистемологического изменения постепенно углублялась, данная статья начинает свой анализ с бартовского понятия «эффекта реальности», который является основным носителем реалистической репрезентации. Далее Барт обращает свое внимание на образование понятия аффективного чтения, которое противостоит общепринятому пониманию об одном, идеологически заранее определенном обозначаемом. Дорогу Барта к пониманию чувств реального читателя поддерживают две идеи: «бесчувственность»

значения кинокадров и опыт *punctuma* в фотографии. В лекциях, прочитанных в Коллеж де Франс, можно наблюдать, как Барт заменяет в своей читательской практике гуссерлевский метод бестелесного внутреннего наблюдения китайским методом *wu-wei*. Благодаря этому из бартовского дзенбуддистского интереса к чувствам, вызванным визуальными/вербальными образами, вырастает отдельный метод, который может создать плодотворную связь между языком и внеязыковой перцепцией. В конце статьи предлагается понятие «бестелесного эффекта реальности», поддерживаемое примером аффективного чтения двух похожих сцен, которые сам Барт истолковывал в ранней и поздней стадии своей карьеры.

Taaskord 'reaalsusefektist': Barthes ja afektiivne kujund

Käesolev artikkel on pühendatud Barthes'i arengule strukturalistlikust semiootikust tundeliseks lugejaks 'post-ratsionaalse' subjektiivsuse mõistes. Vaadates Barthes'i loomingut tervikuna, võib teda pidada moodsa sotsiaalse neuroteaduse eelkäijaks, kuivõrd Barthes peab emotsiooni tunnetuse lahutamatuks osaks. Illustreerimaks, kuidas Barthes'i teadlikkus sellest epistemoloogilisest muutusest järjest süvenes, alustab käesolev artikkel analüüsi tema tekstianalüütilisest mõistest 'reaalsusefekt', mis on realistliku esitusviisi põhiliseks kandjaks. Edasi pöörab Barthes oma tähelepanu afektiivse lugemise mõiste kujundamisele, mis astub vastu valitsevaks muutuvale arusaamale ühest ja ainulisest ideoloogiliselt määratud tähistatavast. Barthes'i teed reaalses lugejas kehastunud tunnete mõistmise poole sillutavad kaks ideed: filmikaadrite tähenduse tuimus ja *punctum*'i kogemus fotograafias. Collège de France'is peetud loengutes võib näha, kuidas Barthes asendab lugemispraktikas husserlliku kehata sisevaatluse meetodi hiina *wu-wei* meetodiga. Tänu sellele saab Barthes'i zen-budistlikust huvist visuaalsete/verbaalsete kujundite tekitatud tunnete vastu eraldiseisev meetod, mis suudab luua viljaka sideme keele ja keeletu taju vahel. Artikli lõpuosas pakutakse välja 'kehalise reaalsusefekti' mõiste, esitades afektiivse lugemismäite kahest sarnasest stseenist, mida Barthes'i ise kirjääri varases ja hilises järgus tõlgendanud oli.

Vico and Lotman: poetic meaning creation and primary modelling

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Abstract. The article is based on theories of meaning creation and the concepts of archaic mind of Juri Lotman and Giambattista Vico. It compares the notions *fantasia*, *ingegno*, *memoria* and poetic logic by Vico with Lotman's concepts of text, memory and modelling systems. Donald Phillip Verene's and Marcel Danesi's interpretations of Giambattista Vico's work are also taken into consideration in the analysis. The article aims to bring out the characteristic features of archaic meaning creation. The archaic mind is considered to be fundamentally poetic. Its main mechanism of generating new meaning is metaphorical identification of two otherwise separate elements. The creativity of this act lies in the presumption that imagination is needed to bring these two elements together — they cannot be identified with each other by the means of syllogistic logic. The archaic mind does not operate mainly with generic concepts, as rational mind does. It forms imaginative universals instead, which are based on the sense of identity between objects or their parts, not on the sense of similarity/ dissimilarity of distinct features of objects. This process forms the basis of poetic modelling, which is primary in relation to verbal modelling.

We find not Occam's razor, but Vico's magnet.
Donald Phillip Verene

Introduction

The aim of this article is to bring out some specific features of the archaic mind based on the works of two rather different authors: the

18th century Neapolitanian philosopher Giambattista Vico and Juri Lotman, a semiotician of the Tartu–Moscow school. The works of Giambattista Vico and Juri Lotman have previously been compared only once — by Marcel Danesi (2000) in his article *A note on Vico and Lotman*.

According to Giambattista Vico, the archaic people organized their world in a principally different way from the bearers of modern mind. Vico's main premise is that the archaic mind is poetic. He maintains that the poetic principle also has an important role in the modern mind, especially in the process of meaning creation. Juri Lotman and Boris Uspenskij (1978b) also proposed a form of thought that operates differently from descriptive thought in their article *Myth — Name — Culture*.

There are many views on the concept of archaic mind. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl with his notion of “savage mind” is usually considered to be the first who saw the archaic thought to be essentially different from the modern (Harkin 1998: 365). The best known treatment of the matter is Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1969 [1962]). The present article takes it that the notion of poetic thought sets Giambattista Vico to be the first who saw the so-called primitive mind as typologically different. More than two hundred years before Lévi-Strauss, Vico described a mind that operates on the basis of *poetic logic* instead of syllogistic logic. According to Vico, the archaic mind is essentially poetic and metaphorical, it has the capacity to generate language due to a primordial imagination. In Vico's system, human thought began with, as Danesi (1993: 52) puts it “[...] primordial mind that would have had the capacity to generate language. The essential feature of this mind is imagination. It was therefore a mind that did its work on the basis of bodily experience, not analysis and deduction”.

Vico's treatment of the matter bears much resemblance to Lotman's notion of mythological thought as a type of consciousness. Both authors base their analysis on the proposition that by analysing the structure of culture, it is possible to define the structure of consciousness. Vico sees imagination as the nexus of the beginning of human semiosis, Lotman (2005: 162) claims that “at first there was semiotic experiment”.

The concepts of primordial knowledge and meaning creation of Vico and Lotman will be viewed here as partly coinciding and complementary. We treat the primordial poetic mind as an indepen-

dent and specific type of consciousness, but do not presuppose its actual occurrence in “pure” form.

Outlining his concept of the archaic mind, Vico claims that we cannot access the primordial thought directly. “It is beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men” (Vico 1984: 378). Trying to make sense of it, “we had to descend from these human and refined natures of ours to those quite wild and savage natures, which we cannot at all imagine and can comprehend only with great effort” (Vico 1984: 338).

The incapability to imagine the archaic world means that the modern mind is not able to model it completely — although it is possible to recognize the existence of a basically different type of consciousness and acquire adequate knowledge of it to some extent.

The Tartu–Moscow school’s view on mythology is compatible with this approach.

Consistently mythological stage should pertain to a period of development that is so early that it cannot be observed both for chronological reasons and because of the basic impossibility of coming in contact with it [...] mythological consciousness in principle *cannot be translated* into the level of a different description, is in itself closed. (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b: 218–219)

Linking mythological thought with primordial knowledge, the primal form of semiotic thought, and approaching the workings of the mind through the analysis of the semiotic world it creates, *The New Science* of Vico has inspired several interpretations by semioticians in the past two decades (Danesi 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Sebeok 2001; Verene 1991, 1995). The semiotic interpretation of Vico is relatively coherent, probably partly because only two authors — Donald Phillip Verene and Marcel Danesi — have so far aimed to apply Vico’s concepts directly to semiotic theory.

Vico’s approach to the notion of metaphor contains views that have been considered innovative even in the last two decades. Frank Nuessel (1995) notes in his essay *Vico and Current Work in Cognitive Linguistics* that, for example, George Lakoff’s view on metaphor, language and imagination is Vichian in its nature, although having had no direct influence from Vico.

1. The elements of poetic meaning creation

In Vico's mind, the beginning of human world is linked to the appearance of language. Vico describes the genesis of linguistic capacity, not of speech. Language appears as poetic characters (*caratteri poetici*) (Vico 1984: 34), which are not verbal. According to Vico, the primal language was mute (Vico 1984: 401, 434; also Ponzio 2006: 238). Although Vico considers verbal speech to be neither the first nor the only expression of the capability of language, he approaches the question with a philological-philosophical method — by trying to discover the primordial iconic nature of words in etymology. Verbal expression, although not uniquely, mirrors the modifications of the mind. Vico's apprehension of consciousness and culture has a common base with Lotman — they both believe that the structure of consciousness can be described through the structure of culture, and use the analysis of texts to draw conclusions about the human mind. Obviously, the materials Vico uses when modelling the archaic consciousness are products of a more contemporary mind — the epics of Homer, for example, are texts that mirror the archaic mind, although they were born in the process of translating myth into poetry. The only way to understand the archaic mind is through such kind of translation.

Lotman and Uspenskij propose that from the standpoint of mythological consciousness, poetry is impossible (1978b).

On the other hand, Lotman concedes that “the functional confrontation of art and myth is born on the account of the possibility to ‘read’ mythological texts in a non-mythological way” (Lotman, Mints 1981c: 46). For Vico, myth is poetic and at the same time it is primordial. In *The New Science*, ‘poetic’ signifies certain firstness, a category prior to logical abstraction. “In Vico's view the poetic, or what in more modern terms we would call the myth, is the beginning of knowledge” (Verene 1995: 203).

Lotman's cultural-typological discrimination that excludes poetry from mythological world is grounded on defining poetry as free art of words. But Vico sees the poetic creation as a kind of true narration, rather than as free art of words (Vico 1984: 401) — as myth in modern terms.

Thus, in describing primordial meaning creation, Vichian tradition has used the term ‘poetic’, whereas the Tartu–Moscow school uses the

term 'mythological'. Both approaches discriminate between the modern and archaic culture by distinct features of the meaning creation mechanism. In the current treatment, the term 'poetic' will be favoured. Both terms have many meanings that have little to do with this discussion, but 'poetic' is — for its connection to metaphor theory — more apt for the sense intended here.

1.1. Lotman's notions 'memory' and 'text' in connection with Vico's '*fantasia*', '*ingegno*', '*memoria*'

Vico's view on meaning creation can be presented through the notions of *fantasia*, *ingegno*, and *memoria*. For Vico, these terms signify primordial capabilities that allow for the primary operations of the human mind. (Vico 1984: 494–497). In Vico's mind, all primary cognitive functions are attached to imagination. The three terms describe three main functions of the primordial mind: *fantasia* — the ability to imitate and change; *ingegno* — the ability to create correspondence between things; *memoria* — the ability to remember (Vico 1984: 819).

Fantasia, *ingegno* and *memoria* integrate through identification, all of them being forms of imagination.

Imagination however, is nothing but the springing up again of reminiscences, and ingenuity or invention is nothing but the working over of what is remembered. [...] since the human mind at the time we are considering [...] had not developed its powers of abstraction by the many abstract terms in which languages now abound, it exercised all its force in these three excellent faculties which come to it from the body. (Vico 1984: 699)

1.1.1. Textuality

Individual human mind can be seen as a text. It is at least bilingual semiotic monad (Lotman 1997: 10). No text can exist in isolation. A text functions only in reciprocal relations with external elements, which means that the text is continuously in the situation of translation. "The very existence of culture implies the construction of a system, of some rules for translating direct experience into text"

(Lotman, Uspenskij 1978a: 214). In Vico's treatment of the primordial mind, this system is formed in the activity of *fantasia* and *ingegno*.

Fantasia as the ability to imitate is interpreted by Marcel Danesi as the capability to form mental images. "The *fantasia*'s image-making capacity is a primordial power of the human mind that makes cognition itself possible" (Danesi 2000: 103). The creativity of *fantasia* lies in its ability to separate an object from its direct context, so that it can be included in the process of thought as an arbitrary image and can as such serve as the basis for creating new mental entities by entering freely into new connections (Danesi 2000: 102). *Fantasia*, *ingegno* and *memoria* are the powers necessary for creating and preserving mental images — they are the foundation of human meaning creation and free combining. This view on the peculiarity of anthroposemiosis is in accordance with John Deely's conception, where uniquely human capability of creating textuality is characterised by

signs whose relation to what they signify, over and above associations among perceptible objects, is grounded in the codes of an apprehension socialized through free play among objects understood in their detachability from the perceptible means whereby they are brought into experience in the first place or any given case. (Deely 1991: 545)

Fantasia's nature and function, as described by Danesi, are also compatible with Lotman's view on the premises of the appearance of semiotic world:

The transformation of the world of objects into the world of signs is founded on the ontological presupposition that it is possible to make replicas: the reflected image of a thing is cut off from its natural practical associations (space, context, intension, and so on), and can therefore be easily included in the modelling associations of the human consciousness. (Lotman 2001: 54)

Human being is able to make replicas owing to *fantasia* — he/she imitates, creates mental images based on perceptual information; uses *ingegno* to relate images to each other; and is able to preserve the images by *memoria*. According to Danesi, *ingegno* is the power that allows for the appearance of entirely new entities within the mental space (also Verene 1991: 105):

the *ingegno* is a derivative of *fantasia* — a kind of “epiphenomenal” activity, stimulating the mind to carry out its creative handiwork. It is thus not connected directly to neural processes, operating totally within mental space as it configures and creates models of world events. (Danesi 2000: 104)

Similarly to the model based on the terms ‘*fantasia*’, ‘*ingegno*’ and ‘*memoria*’, Lotman describes text as an intellect-like mechanism, the main characteristics of which are that: “it has memory, where it can concentrate its previous meanings, and, at the same time, it has the ability to produce new nontrivial messages when connected to a communicative chain” (Lotman 1981a: 7). *Ingegno* produces imaginative structures — new units of meaning — presupposing the existence of perceptually obtained images (*fantasia*) and the capacity to save them (*memoria*).

Text functions as a meaning creating mechanism if the process of associating the so far incompatible, translation in the situation of untranslatability, takes place (*ingegno*’s function in Vichian system). “The asymmetrical relationship, the constant need for choice, make translation in this case an act of generating new information and exemplify the creative function both of language and of the text” (Lotman 2001: 14–15).

The archaic human mind was not a passive system that suddenly obtained the capability of language and rational thought — these faculties appeared as an extension of bodily experience. For Vico, imagination is a primordial innate power that is strongly attached to body and senses. “It is true that these faculties (*fantasia*, *ingegno*, *memoria*) appertain to the mind, but they have their roots in the body and draw their strength from it” (Vico 1984: 819). Primary textuality that enables to recognize a stimulus as semiotic, originates from the body. So for Vico meaning creation departs from body and individual consciousness. For Lotman individual consciousness is central: “the intersection of meaning-spaces, which gives birth to new meaning is connected to individual consciousness” (1992: 36).

1.1.2. Memory

It is clear that for Lotman, one of the necessary properties of text/intellect is memory (Lotman 1981a: 7; 1995: 9; 2001: 18 and elsewhere). Memory also has a special place in Vico’s system. He

understands memory not as some passive storage space, but as an imaginative faculty. Nevertheless, Vico does not analyse memory explicitly in *The New Science*; he only mentions that memory is the mother of muses (Vico 1984: 699; 819). Another point of departure analysing the Vichian notion of memory is its identifiability with imagination. Vico calls *fantasia*, *ingegno* and *memoria* the three aspects of memory (Vico 1984: 819). In Vico's system, which allows identity between the elements, such a statement is not in the least paradoxical. In a certain sense, *fantasia*, *ingegno* and *memoria* are one and the same and they can be seen as three aspects of the same phenomenon. Still, it is necessary to discriminate between *memoria* and memory that embraces all the three above-mentioned terms. *Memoria* is more specific and signifies "memory when it remembers things" (Vico 1984: 819). To avoid mix-up between the two forms of memory, Verene proposes the notion "recollective *fantasia*".

Each term of Vico's "three memories" — *memoria*, *fantasia*, and *ingegno* — is inseparable from others. They are a totality. [...] I wish to use "recollection" for this composite sense of memory [...], more precisely — recollective *fantasia*. (Verene 1991: 101)

Recollective *fantasia* is a form of imagination that makes it possible to reflect over images. It comprises *memoria*, primal imagination (*fantasia*) and invention (*ingegno*), but it is not just a sum of them — it is formed by imaginative universals created by the three faculties. It is the level of primal reflection — reflection by images, not by concepts. It can be considered the primordial cultural memory that is structured imagistically, that is by imaginative universals (Verene 1991: 99).

Memory gives us the opportunity of going back and reflecting over the initial state, the point of departure. If we are dealing with a new unit of meaning, the moment of its appearance can never be defined conclusively — memory constructs it over and over again with each attempt of return, at the same time never really losing contact with the primal sensational stimulus.

In Vico's view memory [...] has the power to take the knower back toward the level of sensation, to place the mind back in touch with the original powers of sensation. Memory is corrective of the mind in its thrust toward conceptual abstraction. (Verene 1991: 103)

Memory thereby ensures, re-controls the operation of the mind. Undoubtedly, this leads to creating new links between elements, while the primal imaginative structure may persist besides the new one. This situation can be characterized as one, where consciousness is semiotic "food" for itself (Lotman 1997: 10). Lotman also describes the function of memory as the ability to turn back:

Memory connects into the mechanism, allowing us to return again to the moment preceding the explosion and go through the whole process once more, but already in retrospect. Now it is as if there are three layers in the consciousness: the moment of the original explosion, the moment of editing it in the mechanisms of consciousness, and the moment of its new duplication in the structure of memory. (Lotman 1992: 232)

The corrective function of memory appears in Lotman's conception as well. The moment of new duplication may be understood as the moment when saved images enter into new connections and the above-mentioned process of self-transformation of the semiotic monad is initiated. Although Verene claims that memory in Vico's view allows us to return to the level of sensation, it is clear that the process is retrospective — memory is turning *back* to the sensory sign. Memory in Vico's sense has the peculiarity of being preconceptual and imagistically structured — so the relatively direct connection between the image and the percept makes access to the primal situation, the moment of saving the images, more immediate. Lotman and Uspenskij describe the process of saving an element in memory as follows: firstly, the object must be recognized as existing; then it has to be identified with a certain element in languages in order to be connected to memory. Next, the element is evaluated according to the hierarchical relations of language. When set into the hierarchy of language, the image turns into an element of memory as text (Lotman and Uspenskij 1978a: 214).

1.2. Metaphorical identification as the base for creating imaginative universals

In *The New Science*, Vico describes imaginative universals (*universali fantastici, generi fantastici*) that differ principally from the generic concepts used in conceptual thinking.

the first men [...] not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is, imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them. (Vico 1984: 209)

Vico discriminates between *generi intelligibili* and *generi fantastici* typologically. Poetic thought is organized in a specific way and it is not merely a simplified form of conceptual thought — poetic thought is an independent form of organizing the world. The notion of imaginative universals is difficult to interpret in standard philosophical terms, because it is a theory of image rather than a theory of concept in traditional sense (Verene 1991: 68).

The generic concepts of traditional Aristotelian logic are formed by the mind's power to select from a multiplicity of particular things those features that are common to all. Objects are collected into classes in terms of their possession of some common property. (Verene 1991: 72)

The basis of imaginative universals is metaphorical identification, which is not based on dividing the objects into properties. The role of tropes in language has been of interest for many scholars in the last decades and the number of publications on metaphor is enormous, as Danesi (1993: 122) indicated already more than ten years ago. But the assertion that archaic consciousness structured itself primarily metaphorically is not at all trivial. Direct parallels to this argument of Vico's may be found not sooner than in the metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who assert that it is hard to find a general subjective experience, which would not be conceptualized metaphorically (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 45). In addition, Lakoff and Johnson describe, similarly to Vico, primary conceptualization as an outgrowth of bodily experience (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 6).

Imaginative universal is a particular kind of metaphor. Vico does not understand metaphor in its usual sense, but as an image-creating process, that conveys identity not similarity (Haskell 2000: 354; Verene 1995: 206). "Every metaphor [...] is a fable in brief", writes Vico (1984: 404). At the basis of metaphor is

the principle of the true poetic allegories which gave the fables univocal not analogical meanings for various particulars comprised under their poetic genera. They were therefore called *diversiloquia*; that is, expressions

comprising in one general concept various species of men, deeds, or things (Vico 1984: 210).

So we are dealing here with a process, where there is no analogy in its ordinary similarity based sense and the particular is connected to the general not by common features, but by identity. This peculiar feature of imaginative universals — being based on “a primordial sensory identity” (Haskell 2000: 354) — is the key to their primacy. “The verb ‘to be’, ‘is’ always points at once in two directions — to the being or existence of the thing and to its sense as copula, as the relation of two orders” (Verene 1995: 206). When the archaic people created the first imaginative universal, two things emerged — the ability to sense something as existing (a mental image brought to consciousness by *fantasia*) and its relation to something else.

“When men are ignorant of the natural causes producing things, and cannot even explain them by analogy with similar things, they attribute their own nature to them” (Vico 1984: 180). Thus interpreting the world started with attributing bodily nature to the surrounding environment — foremost to the sky, which came to be the first imaginative universal Jove. “Jove as an imaginative universal is the first expression of ‘isness’. Something now *is* where before only momentaryness reigned. Jove both *is* in the sense of being something and *is* in the sense of being related to something” (Verene 1995: 206). All through *The New Science* Vico speaks of Jove as the *first* imaginative universal. He assumes that Jove appeared induced by fear: “It was fear which created gods in the world; not fear awakened in men by other men, but fear awakened in men by themselves” (Vico 1984: 382). In Vico’s view the stimulus for the first identification was an individual bodily experience — fear of thunder. This had to be strong enough, so that the momentary perception of thunder would be connected persistently to the emotion and the experience would be preserved outside its context in consciousness as an image (Haskell 2000: 353). The first universal is a starting point for the formation of social institutions.

Jove is a kind of sensory *topos* (*topica sensibile*) from which they can draw forth all the further meanings their surroundings and create the *sensus communis* or *il senso comune*, the “communal sense” that is the basis of human mentality and society. (Verene 1995: 206)

For Vico the first god is created in fear and at the same point rises *il senso commune*. Lotman describes the appearance of the phenomenon of thought as well as a moment of extreme incertitude that conditions the need for religion and culture.

On the one hand, it would be natural to compensate the increase of uncertainty and lack of knowledge with turning to protective beings, who are omniscient. The emergence of religion, coinciding with the stadium of the genesis of thought, is, without a doubt, not a coincidence. [...] The second means for overcoming the emerging difficulties was appealing to a collective mind, that is, to culture. (Lotman 1978: 16)

In the article *Myth — Name — Culture*, Lotman and Uspenskij (1978b: 219) understand metaphor as an entity that belongs to the sphere of descriptive thought and that is impossible in the mythological consciousness. They define metaphor differently from Vico: as tied to similarity — to a mechanism that also in Vico's view does not belong to primordial poetic consciousness. Vico's understanding of the metaphor finds a parallel in the notion of mythological identification — isomorphism. "Mythological identification is in principle of an extratextual nature, arising on the basis of the inseparability of the name from the thing" (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b: 224). As a result "mythological identification presupposes the transformation of the object, which occurs in concrete space and time" (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b: 226). In mythological thought, the copula does not mark a relation based on descriptive logic, but direct identification (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b: 212). So the two orders that are connected do not relate to each other as object-level and metalevel, but can replace each other in the consciousness by means of transformations.

Describing mythological consciousness, Lotman notes that: "This powerful identification that lies in the base of this type of consciousness forces to see signs of *One* phenomenon in the different phenomena of the real world and view a *Single Object* in the diversity of objects belonging to one class" (Lotman 1978: 6). What seems to be a set of similar objects to the bearer of modern consciousness, is an expression of one object for the bearer of archaic mind.

Lotman and Uspenskij (1978b: 221) describe mythological cognition as such, "where signs are not attributed, but recognized and the act of nomination itself is identified with the act of cognition". Thus the first time cognition is at once the first time nomination — and the

whole process is apprehended as recognition — at this level of consciousness there is no discrimination between the sign and the object, they appear simultaneously in the consciousness.

Vico phrases the thought process of the archaic mind as follows: “By their logic they had to put subjects together in order to put their forms together, or to destroy a subject in order to separate its primary form from the contrary form which had been imposed upon it” (Vico 1984: 410). The archaic mind operated with units that were not dividable into distinct features; bringing the meaning units of poetic logic to the elementary level, we do not get a list of features, but a part of the unit that is a whole in itself. Imaginative meaning units were formed by combining the parts or understanding the primal image as a universal: “particulars were elevated into universals or parts united with the other parts together with which they make up their wholes” (Vico 1984: 407).

Coming back to the faculties of the archaic consciousness: metaphorical identification is made possible by the workings of *fantasia* and *ingegno*.

For Vico *metaphor* is a mental capacity that results from the interaction of the *fantasia* and the *ingegno*. As these two deep-level faculties perform their function *in tandem*, they generate metaphor, which can be defined as a kind of epiphenomenal amalgam of *fantasia* and *ingegno*. (Danesi 1995b: 72)

In Danesi's interpretation the cooperation of *fantasia* and *ingegno* takes place wholly in the mental space. Perceptual images are restructured and the entities that result in this process have no direct relation to perception (Danesi 1995b: 72). Although it is clear that the human mind allows for noncontextual free combining and genesis of new units of meaning purely within the mental space, *fantasia* understood as a bodily imagination can be seen as a bridge between body and consciousness.

2. Poetic logic as the deep structure of a primary modelling system

2.1. The theory of modelling systems

'Modelling systems' is originally a term of the Tartu–Moscow school. Modelling systems were described as primary or secondary. In the original conception natural language was the primary modelling system. Secondary modelling systems were superlinguistic systems with two or more layers, which were translatable into natural language (Ivanov *et al.* 1998: 80–81; Lotman 1967: 131). In his theses *Art Among Modelling Systems*, Lotman (1967) describes modelling activity and modelling systems in the following way:

Modelling activity is human's activity in creating models. In order for the results of this activity to be received as the analogies of an object, they have to comply with certain (intuitively or consciously defined) rules of analogy and, consequently, correlate to one or another modelling system.

Modelling system is a structure of elements and rules of their combination, existing in a state of fixed analogy in relation to the whole domain of the object of cognition, recognition or organisation. For this reason, a modelling system may be regarded as a language. (Lotman 1967: 130–131)

The two main characteristics of modelling systems can be found here. Firstly, it expresses itself as a structure based on a number of elements and a set of rules for linking them. Secondly, a modelling system has a fixed relation to its object, which is expressed in certain rules of analogy.

Apparently, Lotman understands language here in a more general way — not in the narrow sense of verbal semiosis. In some cases, Lotman uses 'language' in the sense of an organization of whatsoever kind. For example, he defines trope as a phenomenon appearing at the point of contact of two languages (Lotman 2001: 44) and describes the usage of tropes in zoosemiotic communication, where the two 'languages' in contact are in fact animal communication systems (Lotman 2001: 38). Thus, it would be unadvisable to conclude that in Lotman's view all modelling systems, that is, languages, are related to verbal code.

The relation between a modelling system and an object is tied to the nature of the model:

A model differs from a sign as such in that it does not simply substitute a denotatum, but substitutes it in a useful manner in the process of cognising or organising the object. This is why if the relation of language to the denotatum in a natural language is historical-conventional, then the relation of the model to the object is determined by the structure of the modelling system. In this sense, only one kind of signs — iconic signs — may be equated to models. (Lotman 1967: 131)

Therefore, models are created in the process of cognizing and organizing the object. The model and the object are not connected conventionally but iconically. Information that the iconical sign carries is inseparable from the modelling language and the structure of the model (Lotman 1967: 131).

Lotman has been criticized for his concept of the natural language as a primary modelling system, mainly by Thomas A. Sebeok. In fact, Lotman *did not* rule out the possibility that nonverbal systems could function as primary ones.

Primary coding, according to Lotman (1990: 58 [here 2001: 58]), is not restricted to verbal language. Much of the reality of human life evinces primary coding, which begins with the perceptual act of filtering cognitively significant from nonsignificant elements, a process which takes place at each level of coding, but separates the semiotic from the nonsemiotic world at the lowest level of semiosis. (Nöth 2006: 257–258)

In his article “In what sense is language a ‘primary modelling system’?” Sebeok (1988) interprets Lotman differently. He bases his modelling system theory on the discrimination between verbal and non-verbal communication systems. At the same time, he mentions that it is very likely that the *Homo habilis* had the capability of language without any verbal expression (Sebeok 1988: 75; also Danesi 2000b: 127). Thus, the differentiation between verbal and nonverbal does not coincide with the distinction between linguistic and nonlinguistic. In the current discussion, the emphasis is on the last one, because it is more directly related to the subject of mental processes involved in creating universals. Therefore, Sebeok’s conception of nonverbal modelling as the primary one does not fit in this treatment.

The Forms of Meaning by Sebeok and Danesi (2000) has remained the only thorough treatment of the subject of modelling systems. The authors base their analysis on the thesis that modelling is proper to all

life forms: modelling is a derivative of semiosis (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 5). Sebeok and Danesi divide the modelling systems into three groups according to the Peircian three types of sign relations: firstness, secondness, thirdness — primary modelling systems are iconic, secondary indexical, and tertiary symbolical (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 10). Thus the differentiation is based on the types of signs, even though the peculiarity of anthroposemiosis is not determined by the types of signs we use, but how we create and organize them (Ponzio 2006: 240). Sebeok and Danesi (2000: 52, 95, 121) themselves note that other animals use symbols just as well as icons and indexes. Thus in their discussion they are forced to use the terms ‘artificial’ and ‘verbal’ (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 60) to indicate phenomena belonging exclusively to human semiosis, and the term ‘natural’ (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 60, 95) to indicate modelling systems proper to all species. Such differentiation does not allow for the specification of how human modelling systems are different from zoosemiotic modelling systems. Putting the emphasis on verblality leads to phonocentrism; the contra-distinction artificial-natural is quite useless if not theoretically specified.

2.2. Poetic modelling

Modelling systems that are proper to all life forms are a part of anthroposemiosis. “More fundamentally and inclusively, anthroposemiosis comprises all of the sign processes that human beings are directly involved in” (Deely 2005: 33). Human beings are influenced by all sorts of sign processes — from the cellular level to interpersonal verbal communication. Although there is no reason to doubt that the human biological being and the capability of language are intertwined, it may not be useful to consider language as secondary or tertiary among the bio- and zoosemiotic systems. In the original differentiation of primary and secondary modelling systems, there was no ambition of universality. In his article *Yuri Lotman on Metaphors and Culture as Self-Referential Semiospheres*, Winfried Nöth (2006) notes that the terms were relational:

[...] primary vs. secondary is never a categorical but always a relational opposition. What is primary at a higher level may be secondary from the

perspective of a lower level and even twice secondary from the point of view of a still lower level. (Nöth 2006: 259)

Not trying to determine the absolutely primary modelling system, Lotman defined cultural phenomena as secondary modelling systems for the reason that they need to be translated into natural language at some stage (Lotman 1967: 131). In the context of this discussion, it is not useful to transfer the relational opposition to an absolute scale. In addition, it is impossible to deny the particular role of linguistic thought in the human conception of the world. “However, insofar as that sensory system or any other biological system is articulated and described in language, its priority and transparency would be compromised and undermined” (Chang 2003: 11).

Therefore, we can speak of the primary level of language and the primordial poetic mechanisms of meaning creation as primary modelling — as far as we are dealing with specifically human modelling systems and bear in mind their relation to biosemiotic processes. Similarly, Augusto Ponzio argues in his article *Metaphor and Poetic Logic in Vico* that language is a modelling capacity specific to humans, which has its roots in the body and is to be considered primary (Ponzio 2006: 238–239). The first scholar to note the parallel discussed here between Lotman’s notion of modelling and Vico’s concept of meaning creation was Marcel Danesi, who marked: “Essentially, as I read Lotman with ‘Vichian eyes’, I see his notion of creative modelling as *fantasia*” (Danesi 2000: 103). However intriguing, the comparison of the two great semioticians in Danesi’s article *A Note on Vico and Lotman: Semiotics as a “Science of the Imagination”* (2000) remains somewhat unsatisfactory for it suggests many parallels, but discusses almost none of them explicitly.

2.2.1. Poetic modelling activity

The work of Vico’s *fantasia*, *ingegno* and *memoria* can be seen in Lotman’s terms as primary *modelling activity* — an activity that has certain rules of analogy for creating models and that is connected to a certain modelling system (Lotman 1967: 130–131).

According to the definition by the cognitive scientist Robert E. Haskell, the poetic logic produced by *fantasia*, *ingegno* and *memoria* is “a nonconscious set of primitive ‘metaphorical’ cognitive

operations which only later become abstracted into what we now understand as logic” (Haskell 2000: 352). The term ‘logic’ itself presupposes the existence of some operational rules, at the same time taking into account that when Vico speaks of primordial consciousness, it is clear that ‘logic’ is not understood directly in his notion of poetic logic. In Vico’s words, “That which is metaphysics insofar as it contemplates things in all the forms of their being, is logic insofar as it considers things in all the forms by which they may be signified” (Vico 1984: 400). In Vico’s view, logic occupies itself with the forms of signification. The rules that direct the process of signification are based on metaphorical identification, not on syllogistic operations. Generally speaking — the elements of the modelling system that are produced by poetic logic are imaginative universals.

Poetic logic is not a means for objective perception of the world, it is a means for creating the world, that is, modelling activity. The notion of modelling can be linked to the *verum-factum* principle of Vico. *Verum-factum* signifies the affinity of the truth and meaning creation. This principle is first expressed in an early work of Vico *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians* as “*verum* (the true) and *factum* (what is made) are interchangeable, or [...] they are convertible” (Vico 1988 [1710]: 45). The true and the made are one and the same. Humans can gain no direct knowledge about the world; as Vico sees it, they have an external relation to the world created by god. Trying to make sense of this world, people produce images of it. These images are those that people have an inner relation with; they are an expression of an accessible truth (Verene 1991: 36–37). By making sense of the world, by giving it signification, people create their world and true knowledge about this world is to be found in the modifications of the human mind.

And they should have begun with metaphysics, which seeks its proof not in the external world but within the modifications of the mind of him who meditates it. For since this world of nations has certainly been made by men, it is within these modifications that its principles should have been sought. (Vico 1984: 374)

Humans are capable of creating a realm that is to a certain limit independent of the physical reality as it forms the mental space of possible worlds. “The species-specific trait of the human being is a modelling device capable of inventing many worlds, differently from

other animals” (Ponzio 2006: 238). This capability is a derivative of imagination (*fantasia*) and Vico believed it to be provided by nature — its roots are in the human body. People were “furnished by nature with these senses and imaginations” (Vico 1984: 375). Augusto Ponzio (2006: 238) interprets this statement in terms of evolution and concludes that the humans were furnished with the capability of language when they appeared as a species. Thus the human beings have an *Umwelt* just like all other life forms do, but they have a peculiar relation to it. Their *Umwelt* is a ground for exclusively human mental processes that lead to multiplicity of imaginative structures and choices. According to Deely, the essence of the different nature of human *Umwelt* is ‘idea’ in a specific semiotic sense — that is:

the relationship itself constituting signification, grasped according to the being it has as distinguishable both from a given signified and from a given sign-vehicle, and therefore as detachable from any given vehicle and attachable to any other vehicle, and as directable to some other object as well, or to the same object only, in its new attachment. (Deely 1991: 544)

Thus human beings are capable of cognizing sign relations and the arbitrariness of signs. Therefore, “the mind can, with a little cleverness, turn every element of experience and discourse into a plaything *ad infinitum*” (Deely 1991: 561).

For all organisms, the contact with external reality is mediated and selective as such. The selection is determined biosemiotically, but in case of humans, imagination interferes in this process — as it forms poetic meaning, creating connections between some perceptual images, thus multiplying their importance, and declares some images nonexistent. This process is characterized by the modelling potential of culture:

[...] that is, either the ability to describe as wide a range of objects as possible, which would include as many as yet unknown objects as possible, this being the optimal requirement for cognitive models, or it should have the capability to declare these objects which it cannot be used to describe as nonexistent. (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978a: 222)

The modelling potential of a system depends on how many objects it is able to describe. Poetic logic is flexible and prepared for creating new relations. Imaginative universals, considering their openness to entering into new unpredictable connections, have a bigger modelling

potential than descriptive class concepts. At the basis of cultural modelling, there is the selective inclusion of phenomena in meaning creating processes.

The first and most important act of any semiotic modelling of a culture is to pick out the layer of culturally relevant phenomena in the surrounding world. To do this there has to be some primary encoding. This primary encoding may be realized by identifying real-life situations with mythological ones, and real people with the people of myth or ritual. (Lotman 2001: 58)

Lotman no more than describes the elements and the processes already existent in the mythological mind. Vico tries to find the beginning of them.

2.2.2. The iconicity of models

Poetic forms created by *fantasia* may be seen as models. It is important to repeat here that according to Lotman (1967: 131), only iconic signs may be seen as models — as signs that relate to their object in a way determined by the modelling system they belong to.

Danesi equalizes the Vichian poetic forms with iconic signs — units of thought that stand for their referents in a direct way (Danesi 2000: 102). Vico describes Vulgar Latin¹ as a language “which has formed almost all its words by metaphors drawn from natural objects according to their natural properties or sensible effects” (Vico 1984: 444). As mentioned above, models follow certain rules of analogy as they stand for an object in a system. In the case of primary modelling, it may be presumed that these rules were based on iconic representation.

In the article *Myth — Name — Culture*, Lotman and Uspenskij claim that “although iconic signs are to some extent closer to mythological texts, they are, just like conventional signs, a phenomenon of a principally different type of consciousness” (Lotman, Uspenskij 1973: 294)². This argument is probably based on the narrower definition of the icon as similarity (see Lotman 2001: 54). As Lotman and

¹ The terms ‘vulgar’ and ‘nations’ are used in *The New Science* in the sense of culturally primordial.

² I refer here to the Russian original of the article, since the passage has been omitted from the English translation (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b).

Uspenskij (1978b: 219) exclude metaphor from the mythological text, there cannot be any icons either. As shown above, in the Vichian tradition, the metaphor is not based on similarity. The icon is understood as a perceptual relation of whatever kind between the sign and the object. In spite of the differences in terminology, both Vico on one hand and Lotman with Uspenskij on the other, suggest that the archaic mind did not operate by means of similarity relations.

Although the iconic signs used in modern culture are more or less arbitrary and based on similarity, it is theoretically still possible to construct the primal iconic signs — images based on sensory identity that were part of the early poetic consciousness.

Vico says about the primal mute signs that they were “in their own right the best emblems, for they carried their meaning in themselves” (Vico 1984: 484). The origin of those signs was, in Vico’s view, the human body: meanings were fixed by natural relations; that is by identity relations based on perceptual information (Vico 1984: 444). The senses are the sole way of knowing something (Vico 1984: 374). Danesi divides the iconic processes taking place in the poetic logic into two. Internal iconicity “presents an imagistically modelled referent to perceptual memory for appropriate storage” (Danesi 1993: 69). External iconicity represents “the imagistically modeled referent outside the mind through some form of visual mimesis” (Danesi 1993: 69). The concept is somewhat simplified for it seems to presuppose that the iconic units are visual and not related to any other sensory channels.

Lotman does not describe the relation between iconic signs and perception, but he mentions the possibility that the binary organization of an intellectual unit could be the result of the need to integrate perceptual information from different sensory organs.

While transforming the external irritations in a similar way, paired sense organs are spaced apart and “see” the world from different angles. This renders the constructed image stereoscopic. The next step in structuralisation is the formation of structurally contrasted pairs: unifying two visual aspects of an object is easier than the integration of visual and auditory images of the world. But exactly for the reason that these images are rationally untranslatable into each other and an effort is required for their integration, they represent an important phase in the genesis of the asymmetry of the brain hemispheres. The structure of other meaning generating systems is analogical. (Lotman 1981a: 10)

Vico and Lotman have quite a different starting point: Vico is interested in the formation of the image and trope based on sensory information, Lotman suggests that the activity of sensory organs is the basis for the appearance of translation mechanism. But both turn to body and senses in order to explain essential intellectual phenomena.

The peculiarity of the model is that because of its iconic nature it is able to stand for an object in a useful way in the process of structuring the world. Iconic modelling brings to the world of signs partially the structure of the perceptible object — the structure of the sign is in accordance with the structure of the object. This is the key to the usefulness of the icons — they are *as if* objects, and at the same time they are free from any physical restraints.

2.2.3. Bilingualism

In Lotman's conception, the binary organization of a unit is a precondition for any semiotic creativity in it. In Lotman's view, all intellectual units have an invariant structure.

An invariant for all these will be a bipolar structure, with a generator of discrete texts located on one pole and a non-discrete texts on the other. In the output of the system, these texts interfuse, forming a unified, multi-layered text where the mutually untranslatable codes intertwine in a multitude of ways. When gating a text through such a system, we get an avalanche-like self-reproduction of meanings. If a block of new messages is integrated into the system, that are declared "appropriate" in accordance with certain rules, and a memory mechanism for saving these messages, we get the structural invariant. (Lotman 1981a: 10–11)

Although the translation between the discrete and the continuous texts is the main mechanism of meaning generation, it is not the only one. "The opposition 'discrete-continuous' is merely one possible form, an extreme one, of producing tropes of semantic untranslatability" (Lotman 2001: 38). The precondition for the activity of an intellectual unit is, as mentioned above, the integration of two or more structures that model the external reality differently (Lotman 1981a: 10). In the archaic mind, the verbal-discrete thought was not fully developed. In Danesi's view, the primordial signs are iconical continuous images (Danesi 1993: 84) that are connected by the mechanism of metaphorical identity. As the images are linked together and so are in

turn the images formed in this way, the structure becomes more and more complicated, until it calls for an organization of a different kind.

As it [metaphor — *T. R.*] proceeded to generate more abstract concepts by connecting those of the second order, the rational mind, with its syntactic abilities, emerged to stabilize the increasingly complex surface-level system. (Danesi 1993: 121)

As Danesi sees it, syntactic organization could not have been the discrete language in the meaning creating translation processes in the archaic consciousness. Apparently, Danesi understands syntax as a linguistic-verbal entity.

Ponzio, on the other hand, does not tie syntax to verbal language; he claims that the syntactics of language is the capacity that allows for the combination of a finite number of elements in infinite number of ways, so that a new meaning arises in each combination (Ponzio 2006: 241). He uses the term syntactics on purpose, rather than the term syntax, in order to avoid associations with the linguistic-verbal meanings of the latter. For Ponzio, the syntactics of language can be described as writing — a procedure of combination that precedes verbal language and is a precondition for it (Ponzio 2006: 241).

To signify with the same elements through different positions is already writing, and articulation of verbal language and *through* verbal language [...] takes place on the basis of this type of signification through position. (Ponzio 2006: 241)

The existence of discrete units and the possibility to position the same unit differently is the precondition for free combination. In Vico's system, *fantasia* creates the images that can be separated from the context, and *ingegno* arranges them into different relations. The primal capability of combining (Ponzio's writing) is the basis for the emergence of linguistic-verbal syntax.

Poetic meaning creation process is based on metaphorical identity. The meaning units arising from this identification can in turn be identified with each other. In order to identify two units so that a new meaning arises, there has to be some dissonance between them — it need not be the opposition of discrete-continuous. The creativity of primal metaphors lies in the fact that they juxtapose two or more independent elements that could not have been connected without

using imagination. In a state where the fixed associations are scarce, almost all acts of identification have to be metaphorical and creative.

In his article *On the Semiosphere*, Lotman claims that elements of the iconic and verbal language cannot be directly isomorphic, but “each of them, in a variety of ways, is isomorphic in the extra-semiotic world of reality, which they represent in a given language” (Lotman 2005: 216). In Vico’s terms, the isomorphism with reality is a product of *fantasia* and the isomorphism between images is a product of *ingegno*. The relations established by *ingegno* would be meaningless if they were not based on perceptual images.

Danesi also interprets Vico’s theory of primordial images in terms of the cognitive functions of hemispheres. The left hemisphere is responsible for rational analytical thought, the right hemisphere for spatial memory, intuition and the capability of synthesis (Danesi 1993: 97). Danesi presents the results of neuropsychological studies that support the hypothesis of the iconic nature of the archaic consciousness: the brain centres occupied with perception and mental images are the same; right hemisphere functions are iconic in their nature; right hemisphere is active in understanding and saving new information; right hemispheric capability to produce images is phylogenetically prior to left hemispheric capability of abstract conceptualization; the flow of information goes “from right to left” in case of acquiring new information — from image-based to abstract (Danesi 1993: 98).

If archaic thought was iconic, then it had to be the right hemisphere that controlled the main primordial mind processes and only later the role of the left hemisphere increased as the power of abstraction grew (Danesi 1993: 85). Still, both hemispheres had to be involved from the beginning: complex thought only arises when both hemispheres work in tandem (Danesi 1993: 97). In the process of metaphor both hemispheres are involved:

In the case of MLP [metaphorical language programming — *T. R.*], the RH [right hemisphere — *T. R.*] can be said to control the iconic context-structure of metaphor and the LH [left hemisphere — *T. R.*] its form-structure and ultimate conceptualization. (Danesi 1993: 138)

Lotman (2001: 54–62) emphasizes the meaning creating potential of iconic representation. The primacy of iconic signs in Lotman’s concept is proposed in the claim that iconic signs are close to mytho-

logical texts (Lotman, Uspenskij 1973: 294). Iconicity is considered to be the dominating organizing principle in the mythological consciousness: "a living myth is iconic-spatial and is realised as a sign in activities and the panchronic being of drawings, in which, for instance, in cave- and petrolyphic drawings, there is no linearly fixed order" (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978b: 7). At the same time, in the mythological consciousness as in any other type of consciousness, there has to be a discrete language to oppose the continuous one. The dialogue between the two hemispheres, one of which creates continuous organization and the other discrete organization, is in the focus of Lotman's understanding of meaning creation (Lotman 1981b: 9–10; 1978: 8).

Lotman derives the invariant structure of a meaning creating unit from the comparison of the dual organization of the human brain and the principles of functioning of the structure of text and culture.

The left and right hemisphere of the human brain, different language subtexts of a text and the principal polyglotism of culture (bilingualism being a minimum model) form a single invariant model: any intellectual unit consists of two (or more) integrated structures. (Lotman 1981a: 10)

Danesi ends up interpreting Vico through the functioning principles of the hemispheres, on the ground of Vico's assertion that image based thinking is primordial. Generally, linguists have in most part been interested in the functions of the left hemisphere, but following the Vichian line of thought, it is inevitable that the workings of both hemispheres have to be considered. This type of approach leads to understanding the consciousness as a dialogical phenomenon. As Lotman remarks on the co-existence of verbal-discrete and iconic languages:

Although on different stages of human history one or the other of these universal language systems pretends for globality and may indeed achieve a dominant state, the bipolar construction of culture is not thereby destroyed, but takes more complicated and secondary forms. (Lotman 1978: 6)

Lotman states that translation and dialogue are the preconditions of meaning creating processes. Vico has never explicitly made such a claim, but developments of his theories easily come to the same conclusion.

Conclusion

The primordial images and textuality arise in the course of a process of poetic translation. The dominant type of models in the archaic consciousness is icons that are formed on the basis of sensory information. Iconicity dominates also in the organization of the models themselves. At the same time, these iconic and iconically organized images can be positioned and combined in an infinite number of ways — this feature, the primal syntactics or writing as Ponzio puts it, plays the role of discrete organization in the meaning generating translation process. The primal syntactics does not follow the rules of descriptive logic as it generates texts. The distinctive characteristic of archaic consciousness is using the mechanism of identity rather than that of similarity, and dividing the object into parts rather than into features.

The identity-based poetic logic is at the basis of primary modelling, the linguistic-verbal modelling being secondary to it. It may be claimed that at some point, linguistic-verbal texts need to be translated into the language of images, that is, into the language of some poetic modelling system. The language of images does not only form one counterpart in a bilingual (continuous-discrete) meaning generating unit — although at a higher level it functions as such — it is also capable of acting as an independent heterogeneous meaning generating system.

The Vichian-Lotmanian approach does not only give us the elements and rules of the poetic modelling system, it also presupposes its bodily origin. It inevitably includes body as a primary source of meaning creation in the description of consciousness and thus brings forth the derivative nature of the dualistic mind-body conception.³

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Вико и Лотман: поэтическое смыслообразование и первичное моделирование

В статье рассматриваются идеи Юрия Лотмана и Джамбаттиста Вико о смыслообразовании и архаичном мышлении. Сравняются, с одной стороны, такие понятия Вико, как *fantasia*, *ingegno*, *memoria* и поэтическая логика, и с другой — концепция Лотмана о тексте, памяти и моделирующей системе. При рассмотрении идей Вико автор статьи основывается во многом на работах Дональда Филипа Верена и Марселя Данези. Цель статьи — показать характерные черты архаического смыслообразования.

Архаическое мышление по существу является поэтическим. Главным механизмом его смыслообразования является метафорическое

отождествление двух отдельно стоящих элементов. Такая деятельность генерирует новые смыслы значения — элементы, отождествляемые с помощью воображения, не могут отождествляться средствами логики силлогизмов. Архаическое мышление не оперирует абстрактными понятиями, как рациональное мышление и создает имажинативные универсалии. Имажинативные универсалии основываются не на подобии/различии свойств объекта, а на тождестве объектов или их частей. Процесс отождествления является основой поэтического моделирования, что первично по отношению к вербальному моделированию.

Vico ja Lotman: Poetiline tähendusloome ja primaarne modelleerimine

Artikkel põhineb Juri Lotmani ja Giambattista Vico arusaamadel tähendusloomest ja arhailisest mõtlemisest. Võrdluse alla tulevad ühelt poolt Vico mõisted *fantasia*, *ingegno*, *memoria* ja poetiline loogika ning teiselt poolt Lotmani teksti, mälu ja modelleeriva süsteemi kontseptsioon. Vico käsitlemisel arvestatakse olulisel määral Donald Phillip Verene'i ja Marcel Danesi käsitlusi tema töödest. Artikli eesmärgiks on tuua välja arhailise tähendusloome iseloomulikud jooned.

Arhailine mõtlemine on põhiolemuselt poetiline. Selle põhiliseks tähendusloomemehhanismiks on kahe eraldiseisva elemendi metafooriline samastamine. Taoline tegevus on uut tähendust loov — elemendid, mis samastatakse kujutlusvõimet kasutades, ei ole süllogistilise loogika abil samastatavad. Arhailine mõtlemine ei opereeri üldmõistetega nagu ratsionaalne mõtlemine, vaid loob hoopis kujutluslikke universaale. Kujutluslikud universaalid ei põhine mitte objektide omaduste sarnasusel/ erinevusel, vaid objektide või nende osade omavahelisel samasusel. Samastamisprotsess on aluseks poetilisele — verbaalse modelleerimise suhtes esmasele — modelleerimisele.

Towards a semiotic theory of hegemony: Naming as hegemonic operation in Lotman and Laclau

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Abstract. The article concentrates on the possibilities of bringing into dialogue two different theoretical frameworks for conceptualising social reality and power: those proposed by Ernesto Laclau, one of the leading current theorists of hegemony, and Juri Lotman, a path breaking cultural theorist. We argue that these two models contain several concepts that despite their different verbal expressions play exactly the same functional role in both theories. In this article, however, we put special emphasis on the problem of naming for both theorists. We propose to see naming as one of the central translating strategies in the politico-hegemonic discourse. Our main thesis is that through substituting some central categories of Laclau's theory with those of Lotman's, it is possible to develop a model of hegemony that is a better tool for *empirical* study of power relations in given social formations than the model proposed by Laclau, who in his later works tends more and more to ground it in psychoanalytic ontology.

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Introduction

The term “political semiotics” finds more and more usage among scholars in the field of social sciences. Yet seldom if ever does it refer to a discipline with clearly defined aims and scope. Rather it is a somewhat vaguely applied synonym for expressions like “political signs” or “political images” etc. Our purpose in this article is to address the problem of what would political semiotics as a discipline require. We are of course well aware that for a discipline to arise it takes much more than a single article, monograph or conference. Providing an elaborated conception of that discipline (or even some “grounding principles” for such an elaboration) is not the task we set for ourselves. Instead we try to make a contribution to the dialogue between political science and semiotics by way of introducing Juri Lotman’s categories from theory of culture to one of the most advanced conceptions of hegemony in contemporary political theory — the one proposed by Ernesto Laclau.

The general problem our article deals with is that of political power. We strive to give some hopefully fruitful hints for dealing with this issue from the semiotic point of view. Political power has gained much theoretical and methodological attention among disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and political science, but has occurred somewhat sporadically along the field of semiotics. The theses we propose are very much preliminary in nature — they form no coherent research report or conception, but are more like glimpses of the future. Our theses stem largely from what we see as a set of apparent theoretical congenialities between Juri Lotman, a semiotician, whose interests moved more and more towards issues usually governed by social or political theory,² and Ernesto Laclau, a political theorist whose conception of hegemony has had several stages of development ranging from Marxist tradition to post-structuralist discourse theory.

Our general idea is that the theoretical frameworks or metalanguages that these two eminent thinkers propose for conceptualizing social reality contain several concepts that despite their different verbal expressions play exactly the same functional role in both

² It is interesting to refer in this connection to a quite recent volume of essays that is largely dedicated to the theoretical resources that Lotman’s semiotics of culture provides for conceptualizing power, hegemony and social reality as such (see Schönle 2006).

theories. By this we mean that the central categories of each theory can be substituted with each other without losing any theoretical coherence or epistemological value of either of the theories in question. For example, if we substitute the vocabulary of “logic of equivalence” in Laclau with Lotman’s idea of “continuous coding” (see below), we would not lose the point that Laclau is making by his theory. And the reason is that these two notions bear the same functional role in each theory. Of course, which conceptual matchings are there between those two approaches, is a matter of analysis, and this article tries to enlighten some of its aspects. But an important thing to stress in this connection is that despite their resemblances, the two theories have important differences that make mutual combination between these approaches a fruitful undertaking. Otherwise we would just reiterate the same points with different words.

In this article, however, we chose only to focus on Laclau’s conception of “empty signifier” as a *name* that functions as a precarious and hegemonic ground for a discourse. Our intention is to complement this conception with Lotman’s fundamental idea of rhetorical translation between discrete and non-discrete coding systems and to view naming as one of the translation strategies through which hegemonic relations are established. This way we can avoid the psychoanalytically oriented conception of ‘radical investment’ that is the basis of Laclau’s conception of naming (see Laclau 2005a: 112–117), and substitute problems of *affect*, *desire*, and *drive* with the problems of *translation*. And our main thesis is that through this substitution it is possible to develop a model of hegemony that is a better tool for *empirical* study of power relations in given social formations than the model proposed by Laclau, who in his later works tends more and more to ground it in psychoanalytic ontology.

The first task for us, therefore, is to give a brief sketch of the theoretical steps that lead Laclau to that direction. After that we can introduce some basic ideas of Lotman and bring them into dialogue with Laclau. In this article we dedicate a little more room for discussion on Laclau than to that on Lotman, because the latter’s positions are assumingly better known among semioticians than are Laclau’s ideas.

Laclau's conception of *the political*: some background remarks

What are Laclau's theses concerning political power? Addressing this question calls first for a very brief sketch of Laclau's major theoretical affinities with a family of political thinkers. The most apparent of them is, of course, Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist theorist and political activist. His main contribution to political theory consists in elaborating a concept of hegemony as a form of power that is very different from mere *force*, *coercion* or *domination* (*dominio*) and depends largely on the so called *spontaneous* consent of those who are in the subordinated position. From the perspective of those groups who subordinate others in a society, we can say with Gramsci that

The supremacy of a social group is manifested in two ways: as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group is dominant over those antagonistic groups it wants to "liquidate" or to subdue even with armed force, and it is leading with respect to those groups that are associated and allied with it. (Gramsci 1975: 2010, quoted in Fontana 1993: 141)

The latter form of supremacy is, of course, what Gramsci calls "hegemony". It should be noted, however that the terms "alliance" and "association" he uses when writing about "hegemony" refer "to a system of reciprocal links and relations whose common elements are consent and persuasion [...] In other words, the "alliance" is based on mutuality of interests and an affinity of values" (Fontana 1993: 141). So we can agree with Steedman when he argues, using more traditional vocabulary for political scientists, that, when there is public or state control "the control must also be seen as legitimate. Gramsci's hegemony is what the ruling class achieves when it can secure popular consent for the state's use of coercion" (Steedman 2006: 139). But we have to add that this hegemony is not purely a result of propaganda or brainwashing, nor is it just a matter of rational selfinterest or values, but has to do with everything in this list. This is what opens up in Gramsci the possibility of conceiving a relation of hegemony as a certain type of formation of *contingent* meanings or discourses in culture and society. Gramsci, however, did not take this step — at least according to some theorists, Laclau among them.

Despite many advantages of Gramsci's approach, the main shortcoming for Laclau is his tendency to ascribe the ultimate unifying

power in hegemonic formations to an economically defined fundamental class (Dallmayr 2004: 38). That is the main remnant of *essentialism* in Gramsci for Laclau and his coauthors (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 137–138). So, one of the aims of Laclau's theorizing of hegemony is to totally reject any ontological class unity and to acknowledge on the theoretical level the proliferation of very different and often incommensurable political struggles in the late capitalist society. That is one set of theoretical steps taken by Laclau in his conception of hegemony. Following his advice, we could call it a movement from Marxism to *post-Marxism* (Laclau, Mouffe 2001: ix).

But another very important family of steps needs to be highlighted in this conception. And that we could call: the movement towards a notion of *discourse* as the primary terrain of *objectivity*, hegemonic and power relations. Important parallels can first be drawn with Michel Foucault whose emphasis on the *positive* or productive aspects of power, especially its ability to produce discourse has reoriented the whole corpus of power studies. "What makes power hold good," for Foucault, "what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and *produces* things, it *induces* pleasure, *forms* knowledge, *produces* discourse" (Foucault 1980: 119 — italics added). The general reorientation in the conception of power is that "It needs to be considered as a *productive* network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault 1980: 119 — italics added). The general methodological precaution that follows from this reorientation is

that we should direct our researches on the nature of power not towards the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the State apparatuses and the ideologies which accompany them, but towards forms of subjection and the inflections and utilizations of their localized systems, and towards strategic apparatuses. We must eschew the model of Leviathan in the study of Power. (Foucault 1980: 102)

The old questions like "who *has* power?" or "who is *repressed* by power?" make no sense anymore. The focus of studying political power moves away from the sovereign forms of power like state or administrative apparatuses and the hitherto systematically concealed forms of power — especially the power of discourses — enter the center of attention in the social sciences.

This, of course, means disavowing the *liberal* tradition of conceptualizing power that informs the lion's share of current political science. This is a tradition that starts with philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and moves through several quasi-philosophical steps to the sociology of Max Weber, and through his influence it becomes a *common sense* view among the political scientists in the United States. And the main message of the liberalist tradition concerning power is something like this: power is — ontologically speaking — a *thing*. It is something that can be *possessed* or *distributed*. But what kind of thing is it? A thing that can be used to make somebody do something that he would not otherwise do. In other words: power is a *means of repression*.³

One of the indications of how influential this *liberalist* tradition is, is the fact that even the most well-known critics of liberalist political philosophy — most notably the Marxists and the so called communitarians — use the same vocabulary when it comes to the notion of *power*. Even Louis Althusser, the most eminent Marxist theorist of our time, despite his theoretical attempt to ease up the determinate nature of the relations between the basis and superstructure, had to concede that to his knowledge, “*no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses*” (Althusser 1993: 20, italics by the author). As for the “communitarians” — a family of political theorists who oppose the notion of abstract or “unencumbered” self (see Sandel 1998) that supposedly underlies the liberalist conception of society — we can cite Michael Walzer, the most quoted among them, as a way of illustrating their vocabulary for grasping power. “Politics is always the most direct path to dominance,” he indicates in his book *Spheres of Justice*, and continues: “and political power [...] is probably the most important, and certainly the most dangerous *good* in human history” (Walzer 1984:

³ It should be noted that the liberal tradition has entertained conceptions of “soft power”, “power of non-decision” or of “agenda-setting” that purport to indicate the alternative forms of power. Though this makes the liberal tradition seem more ambivalent on this question, we believe that these notions of power are nevertheless reducible to the old question of who gets whom to do what the latter would not otherwise do. In other words, they are reducible to the problem of repression.

15, italics added). And the talk of power as some sort of “good” is very extensive in this classic book.

Now, this is the notion of power that we have to dismiss if we take seriously the methodological instructions of Foucault. Laclau certainly agrees with Foucault in this respect. But what is problematic for him is Foucault’s conception of *discourse*. For Laclau the discourse is not an object among many, as it is for Foucault (see Foucault 1969; 1984), but the *primary* terrain of objectivity as such (Laclau 2005a: 68). Laclau refers to Wittgenstein’s idea of a ‘language game’ (see Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 108; Laclau 2005a: 106) and Jacques Derrida’s notion of ‘undecidability’ (see Laclau, Mouffe 2001: xi; cf. Norval 2004: 142) when he characterizes his concept of discourse.

For Laclau, nothing is constituted outside the discourse. Yet this has nothing to do with the debate between realists and idealists. Laclau does not deny that earthquakes and other physical phenomena exist. But whether an earthquake is constituted in terms of the “wrath of God” or in terms of “natural disaster” depends on discursive structurations (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 108).

So the problem of the constitution of social and political reality becomes for Laclau the problem of the *constitution of discourse*. We concentrate on the general logic of discourse that he proposes in terms of the Saussurean idea that a signifying system or discourse is a system of *differences*, and try to sketch out the main ways in which he complements this idea in terms of ‘empty signifiers’ and ‘naming’.

Laclau’s concepts of discourse, hegemony and naming

For Laclau, hegemony is to be understood only on the terrain of discourse: a hegemonic relation is a *certain* kind of articulation of meanings, namely an articulation that takes place “in a field criss-crossed by antagonisms and therefore suppose[s] phenomena of equivalence and frontier effects” (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 135–136). This articulation requires that a particular difference loses its particularity and becomes a universal representative of the signifying system as a whole. Why is this kind of representation needed at all? Because through that a *closure* for that system is provided. Since every system of signification is essentially *differential*, its *closure* is the precondition of signification being possible *at all* (Laclau 1996a:

37). But any closure requires the establishment of *limits*, and no limit can be drawn without, simultaneously, positing what is *beyond* it.

But how can you posit what is beyond the limits of the system of *all* differences? Laclau's answer is: only through radical or antagonistic *exclusion* (Laclau 1996a: 37). To put it in more simple terms: you have to exclude "them" radically or antagonistically in order to fully form "us" as a coherent system. For example: "it is through the demonization of a section of the population that a society reaches a sense of its own cohesion" (Laclau 2005a: 70). But this exclusion operates through two contradictory logics: on the one hand it makes possible the system of differences as a coherent *totality*; but, on the other hand, *vis-à-vis* the *excluded* element, the differences that now form a *totality* are no longer merely different but also *equivalent* to each other. To put it another way, their identity that is based on their more or less clear difference from each other tends to be corrupted or subverted by their being also equivalent to each other (Laclau 2005a: 70).

This insurmountable tension between the logic of difference and that of equivalence is unavoidable in the constitution of every discourse. But a very important conclusion from this tension is that *discourse* or *systemic totality* of differences is an object that is, at the same time, *impossible* and *necessary*. First it is impossible, because there cannot be a final victory of one logic over the other: purely differential discourse would be just meaningless noise or "discourse of the psychotic" (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 112); and purely equivalential discourse would be just silence. And since tension between those logics is insurmountable, there is no *literal* object corresponding to a discourse. You cannot recognize the "True" meanings. But the totality of discourse is not only an impossible object, it is also a necessary one: it *has* to be created because without that object there would be *no signification whatsoever*. And this in turn implies that "Any 'closure' is necessarily *topological*. This means that those discursive forms that construct a horizon of all possible representation [i. e. signification] within a certain context, which establish the limits of what is 'sayable' are going to be necessarily *figurative*" (Laclau 2006: 114).

And in explaining this logic of figural construction, Laclau coins the category of "empty signifier" (Laclau 1996a: 36–46). The idea is roughly this: in the formation of discourse the differences lose their identity based on differentiability — in other words: the signifiers that

form the discourse tend to get emptier and emptier from the point of view of their specific meaning. Consider the signifier “Bronze soldier” or “Bronze night”⁴. Its meaning is far less specific at the end of the 2007 than it was a year earlier. Now, this emptying of the signifier takes place through proliferation of different meanings that are attributed to it (cf. Laclau 1996b). But some signifiers tend to get emptier than others. Of course, in practice no signifier can lose its differential meaning altogether, yet Laclau’s idea is that the one that does it the most — the so called “empty signifier” — can also, in some circumstances, represent the discourse as a whole and incarnate the *totality* of the whole system of differences. Which of the signifiers assumes this function, is contingent in the sense that it cannot be determined *a priori*, but is constituted through hegemonic operation. If it could be determined *a priori*, the relation between the empty signifier and all the other differences would be a *conceptual* relation: a relation where the empty signifier would express a common core of all the particular differences belonging to the discourse. But that is exactly what Laclau denies (see Laclau 2006: 108–109). The relationship between the empty signifier and the discourse as a *totality* is the relationship between a *name* and an object (Laclau 2006: 109).

So, the problem of naming is at the center of his theory of discourse and hegemony. Through the act of naming the hegemonic relations are established. But how are names and objects related to each other? Laclau takes here a radically antidescriptivist stance (Laclau 2005a: 101–110; Laclau 2006: 109). Antidescriptivism as it stems from the works of Saul Kripke holds that naming does not involve any conceptual mediation but is a primary baptism through which a name is assigned to an object (see Kripke 1980). But Laclau with his references to Slavoj Žižek (1989) goes even further and asserts that the object is not something pre-given, not something that a name can be assigned to. Rather the unity or identity of the object is the result of *naming* it. Objects are (so to speak) *created* through naming. The name is the ground for the thing — not the other way round!

⁴ “The Bronze Night” (Estonian: pronksöö), also known as the April unrest (27–29 April, 2007), refers to the riots and controversy surrounding the 2007 relocation of the “Bronze Soldier”, the Soviet World War II memorial in Tallinn, Estonia.

This means that the study of naming strategies is of utmost importance for political analysis. For example: names like “Bronze night” and “Bronze Soldier”, “war against terror” or “struggle against fascism” function as *grounds* for certain political discourses — not just as some ancillary labels. They, of course, change the differential nature of signifiers that might end up being part of the corresponding discourses.

But a very important question arises concerning this logic of discourse: what are the *forces* behind these operations that enable naming to be the ground for discourse? And this is the point where our view starts to distance from Laclau’s answer, which draws mostly from Lacanian psychoanalytic conceptions of affect, desire and drive. We do not think psychoanalytic approach to be illegitimate in itself; in fact we even believe that it is a coherent general speculative ontology. But our aims are more *empirically* oriented. That is why we believe that we should dismiss the vocabulary of affect, desire and drive from the model of hegemony, and substitute it with Lotman’s cultural semiotic vocabulary of translation and bilingualism.

Lotman’s ontological background

According to Lotman it is characteristic to all thinking mechanisms — starting from the structure of the brain to the organization of culture in all its levels — that they are heterogeneously structured. Every meaningful structure consists “of (minimally) two semiotic mechanisms (languages), which are mutually untranslatable and yet similar to each other, since each models, with its own means, the same extra-semiotic reality”⁵ (Lotman 2004f: 641) Therefore, every meaningful totality (Lotman’s text, Laclau’s discourse) is at least bilingual and this also implies that semiotic meanings do not get their full constitution through correspondence to some monolingually graspable “reality”.

⁵ “[...] состоящую (минимально) из двух семиотических механизмов (языков), находящихся в отношении взаимной непереводаемости и одновременно подобных друг другу, поскольку каждый своими средствами моделирует одну и ту же внесемиотическую реальность.”

Lotman speaks about discrete and non-discrete (or continuous) coding systems. According to him, the mutual untranslatability of those coding systems is due to their fundamentally different structuring principles. In a discrete system, “the basic bearer of meaning is the segment (= sign), while the text or the chain of segments (= text) is secondary, its meaning being derived from the meanings of the signs” (Lotman 2001: 36). In the discrete coding systems the signs are linked to signs. Linear, causal, logical or chronological sequences characterize texts of this type (Lotman 2004d: 572).

In the continual (or non-discrete) systems, the primary bearer of meaning is the text “that does not dissolve into signs, but is itself a sign or isomorphic to a sign. Here, not the rules of linking signs are active, but the rhythm and symmetry (or arrhythmia and asymmetry, respectively)”⁶ (Lotman 2004d: 577). The sign is transformed into its other manifestations or becomes equivalent to the corresponding blur of meaning on some other level. Phenomena that appear *different* gain ability to become *equivalent*; various analogies, homomorphisms and isomorphisms become possible that are characteristic to poetic texts and partly also to mathematic and philosophical texts (Lotman 2004d: 572). Using Jakobson’s distinction we could say that in the non-discrete linkage the paradigmatic pole of language prevails, and in the case of discrete linkage the same holds for syntagmatic pole (Jakobson 1971 [1956]: 239–259).

And here a problem arises: how is this antagonism or tension between the two types of coding systems (temporarily) overcome? In fact the situation is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, these two languages are mutually untranslatable. Yet, on the other hand, this bilingual antagonism is *constitutive* (as is the tension between the logic of difference and that of equivalence in the formation of a discourse in Laclau’s sense), because bilingualism is the condition for any thinking structure. According to Lotman this “minimal structure contains a third component: a block of contingent equivalences, a

⁶ “который не распадается на знаки, а сам является знаком или изоморфен знаку. Здесь активны не правила соединения знаков, а ритм и симметрия (соответственно аритмия и асимметрия).”

metaphorogenous device that makes possible operations of translation in the conditions of untranslatability”⁷ (Lotman 2004f: 641).

This mechanism of rhetorical translation integrates the antithetic semiotic structures (the discrete and continuous coding systems) into a unified whole. This unity is necessary for translation to occur and produce positive results, despite the apparent impossibility of any translation (Lotman 2004d: 573). As an elementary condition for semiotic communication, these antithetic tendencies have to disappear in a unified structural totality. Otherwise, any positive meaning-generation would be impossible. And it is important to notice that it is a two-way (and simultaneous) movement: the continuous text (= sign) is translated by way of setting the discrete units into regular sequences, and the discrete sequences can also be conveyed through continuous texts (Lotman 2004e).

The function of Lotman’s mechanism of rhetorical translation is analogous to the one attributed to empty signifier in Laclau’s conception: it links the different signifiers into a chain of equivalence. And through that operation the signifiers lose their differential identity and become dominated by the logic of equivalence. Using Lotman’s vocabulary for making the same point, we could say that in the political discourse there prevails the non-discrete strategy of translation. It means that discrete and clearly differentiated signs are translated into non-discrete totality. “The main feature of such a world is universal resemblance of everything to everything; the main organizing structural relation that of homomorphism”⁸ (Lotman 2004d: 570). This continuous translating strategy “makes one see manifestations of the One phenomenon in the various phenomena of the real world, and observe the One Object behind the diversity of objects of the same type”⁹ (Lotman 2004d: 571).

⁷ “Минимальная структура включает в себя и третий элемент: блок условных эквивалентностей, метафорогенное устройство, позволяющее осуществлять операцию перевода в ситуации непереводаемости.”

⁸ “Универсальным законом такого мира является подобие всего всему, основное организующее структурное отношение — отношение гомеоморфизма.”

⁹ “заставляет видеть в разнообразных явлениях реального мира знаки Одного явления, а во всем разнообразии объектов одного класса просматривать Единый Объект.”

Yet one question concerning this strategy still remains unanswered: in what way is this One all encompassing phenomenon represented? In other words, the question is: through which act is the discourse closed as a meaning-bearing totality? This problem leads us directly to Lotman's semiotic concept of naming.

Lotman on naming as a translating strategy

As is well known, Lotman's answer to the previously posed question is: naming. As soon as the *outside* world (and that can also be a world that is coded in some *other* language) is set forth, it is also *named*, in other words: it is semiotized at least on the surface level (Lotman 2004f: 646).

The pure act of naming (uttering the words "Bronze Night", for example) is discrete in nature. But the meaning of the name can function as a representation of a continuous totality or in the extreme case — it can *become* that totality. This extreme case, as is observed by Lotman, is the logic of *mythological* naming or identification: "Mythological identification is in principle non-textual in character, emerging from the inseparability of the name and object. What may be at stake in such cases is not substitution of equivalent names, but transformation of the object itself"¹⁰ (Lotman 2004c: 541).

In Laclau's sense it would be a case of not just equivalence between the name and the object it names — but one of identity. In such a case, the altering of the name would imply altering the object that is named. The name "Stalin" in the Soviet Union of 1940s did not just stand for the "Soviet people" — in the official discourse, it *was* the Soviet people.

At the other extreme we could imagine the act of naming a completely discrete unit. That would be a completely conventional naming. In that case no transformation takes place in the object when its name is changed into something else.

¹⁰ "Мифологическое отождествление имеет принципиально внетекстовый характер, вырастая на основе неотделимости названия от вещи. При этом речь может идти не о замене эквивалентных названий, а о трансформации самого объекта."

In neither of the extremes is politics or hegemony possible, because “We have an end of politics when the community conceived as a totality [the object], and the will representing that totality [the name], become indistinguishable from each other. In that case [...] politics is replaced by administration and the traces of social division disappear” (Laclau 2005b: 48). And “the asymmetry between community as a whole and collective wills is the source of that exhilarating game that we call politics, from which we find our limits but also our possibilities” (Laclau 2005b: 49).

Conclusion: Laclau and Lotman in dialogue

Let us try to summarize our discussion. We have tried to show that the political discourse is always constructed as a bilingual system. Its main specificity consists in the tendency towards translating discrete elements into a non-discrete totality in the Lotmanian sense or difference into the chain of equivalence in the Laclaudian sense. The main operation that provides the closure of discourse is that of naming. And every closure is more or less hegemonic depending on the degree to which the name functions as the *ground* for continuity.

And we can combine Laclau’s insights on hegemony as an act of grounding a unity between differences through naming with Lotman’s insights on mythological naming through which the name and the thing that is named have a tendency to become indistinguishable. As a way of illustrating this point with concrete examples, we could indicate the proliferation of expressions like “accused of organizing the Bronze night” or “during the Bronze night” etc in the current Estonian mass media. The “Bronze night” is not a conventional name for certain events, it tends to become more and more inseparable from the object it names (no matter how fictitious or abstract that object might be). And this means that the Estonian media has a tendency towards the prevalence of mythological-continuous consciousness over the logical-discrete one. But we can problematize the name “Bronze night” itself and think of alternative names. If the *prevalent* name for the events of April 26–27 was, for example, “The Tallinn spring” or just “The April riots” the discursive articulation of those

events would be of very different sort. In other words the *meaning* of those events would be very different.¹¹

And finally we arrive directly at the tasks for empirical researchers. For Juri Lotman, different tendencies towards discreteness or non-discreteness form the ground for a typology of cultures¹². Through a combination of Lotman's work with the theoretical framework developed by Laclau and others, an immensely rich typology for empirical studies of political communication opens up. All those possibilities need theoretical as well as empirical consideration. And this is the task we intend to engage with in our future work.¹³

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¹¹ We can also indicate to the fact that the name “The Prague Spring” was used only in the Western media and among dissidents of the Eastern block. In the official discourse of Czechoslovakia and other Warsaw Pact countries it had no usage whatsoever.

¹² Cf. Lotman 2004a, 2004b, etc.

¹³ The article is based on our paper presented at the conference *Naming in Text, Naming in Culture* held at the University of Tartu on December 14–15, 2007. This research is a part of ETF6484 “Nomination and Anonymity in Culture” and of the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory.

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**К проблеме семиотической теории гегемонии:
называние как «гегемоническая операция»
у Юрия Лотмана и Эрнесто Лакло**

Настоящая статья является попыткой спровоцировать диалог между двумя разными теоретическими системами концептуализации социальной реальности и власти: это теория гегемонии Эрнесто Лакло, одного из ведущих современных ученых в области политической теории, и семиотико-культурологический подход Юрия Лотмана. Более отдаленная цель — выработать концептуальные средства для более ясного освещения соотношения между социальной реальностью и властью. Несмотря на различия в плане выражения этих двух авторов, мы видим в их разработках существенные содержательные и функциональные точки пересечения: понятие границы, антагонизм, называние и т. п. В данной статье мы сосредоточиваемся на функции номинации в процессе конструирования политической реальности. Мы предлагаем возможность замены некоторых главных теоретических категорий Лакло категориями семиотики культуры Лотмана. Это позволило бы лучше эмпирически изучать стратегии конструирования социальной реальности и избегать привнесения психоаналитических трактовок, характерных для поздних работ Лакло.

**Semiootilise hegemooniateooria poole:
nimetamine kui hegemooniline operatsioon Lotmanil ja Laclaul**

Käesolev artikkel on katse arendada dialoogi kahe erineva teoreetilise lähenemise vahel — need on kaasaegse poliitilise teooria ühe juhtiva teadlase Ernesto Laclau hegemooniateooria ning Juri Lotmani kultuuri-semiootiline lähenemine — mille kaugem eesmärk oleks välja töötada kontseptuaalsed vahendid hõlmamaks selgemini sotsiaalse reaalsuse ja võimu vahekordi. Hoolimata nendevahelisest verbaalse väljenduse erinevustest, näeme nende käsitlustes olulisi sisulisi ja funktsionaalseid lõikumispunkte — piiri mõiste, antagonism, nimetamine jne. Antud artiklis keskendutakse nimetamise funktsioonile poliitilise reaalsuse konstrueerimisel. Me pakume välja võimaluse asendada mõned Laclau peamised teoreetilised kategooriad Lotmani kultuurisemiootika kategooriatega. See võimaldaks paremini uurida empiiriliselt sotsiaalse reaalsuse konstrueerimise strateegiaid ning vältida psühhoanalüütilise käsitluse sissetoomist, mis on Laclau hilisematele töödele omane.

Semiotics of the 20th century

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Abstract. Semiotic and linguistic studies of the 20th century have been important mostly in two senses — (1) they have opened a road for comparative research on the origin and development of language and other systems of signs adding a new dimension to the history of culture; (2) they have shown a possibility of uniting different fields of humanities around semiotics suggesting a way to trespass separation and atomisation of different trends in investigating culture. In the 21st century one may hope for closer integration of semiotics and exact and natural sciences. The points of intersection with the mathematical logic, computer science and information theory that already exist might lead to restructuring theoretical semiotics making it a coherent and methodologically rigid discipline. At the same time, the continuation of neurosemiotic studies promises a breakthrough in understanding those parts of the work of the brain that are most intimately connected to culture. From this point of view semiotics may play an outstanding role in the synthesis of biological science and humanities. In my mind that makes it a particularly important field of future research.¹

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My presentation consists of the three parts: in the first I discuss the results of the study of cultural prehistory and history of mankind viewed through the sign systems that were used at different periods; in the second I am giving a survey of the development of the science of signs in the 20th century; in the last part I am offering some suggestions about the possible nearest future of the science.

1. The origin and development of semiotic systems

The history of the achievements of human thought and culture is intimately connected to the rise and elaboration of signs and texts through which they have been expressed. Understanding of our language and other sign-systems constitutes a part of self-recognition necessary for our consciousness. Modern science is asking questions concerning the beginnings and evolution of the Universe, of our planet and of the self-conscious life on it; an interest in the origin and development of human sign systems is consistent with this general tendency to search for the roots. The main trends of semiotic research of this century have enriched our view of cultural history by enlarging the perspective on the development of signs. A brief summary of the most important results of these evolutionary investigations and of the problems still to be solved follows.

1.1. Biological communication systems

To understand the initial stage and the main direction of the development of human sign systems, it is necessary to study their evolutionary origins as seen in the pre-sign forms of the behavior of animals². A particularly interesting case is presented by the social insects. It is understandable that a large society needs some cybernetic network of control and information. The behavior of social insects that offers extremely interesting parallels to human societies is governed mostly by chemical signals. Signalization system of social insects rests on transmission of a restricted set of chemical substances (pheromones), which may be compared typologically to primitive forms of chemical regulation (perfumes, alcohol, drugs) in human societies.

But in the same societies that are controlled by the pheromones much more refined special systems of transmitting information evolved. Brilliant experiments by Frisch have shown the way dances

² Although designation *Zoosemiotics* as well as its alternative *Biosemiotics* became widely spread, it lacks sufficient scientific ground. It is still not proven whether really one can speak about signs (signifier, signified etc.) in respect to the systems of signals used by animals, see below on apes that might constitute an important exception (as probably also some marine mammals).

are used by bees to encode the information about a source of food (Frisch 1976).³ This language is specialized. It can transmit only information about a source of food, a direction of the flight towards it and a distance between it and the bee-hive; the message is never directed to a concrete individual, it is always addressed to everybody in the bee-hive⁴. There are two main types of dance. The general message about a rich source of food being available not far away from a bee-hive is given by a round dance: a bee is turning around, first to the right, then to the left and is repeating circles now and again for some time. To inform about a distant source of food a "tail-wagging" dance is used: a bee is running a short distance straight ahead wagging the abdomen rapidly from side to side, then makes a 360-degree turn to the right, again running in a straight line for some time and then turns to the left repeating the same pattern again. The distance to a bee-hive is rendered by a number of turns the bee makes.

The dance may be called a total performance addressing to several senses. It transmits an audio-visual message as the movements of a dancing bee produce sounds.⁵ But the odour of the food a specimen of

³ Such a writer of the beginning of the 20th century as Maeterlinck who was interested in the bees (and other social insects to each group of which he dedicated a special book) wrote also about 'the intellect of flowers' (*intelligence des fleurs*) in connection to the bee-flower interaction. From this point of view the signaling role of the colors and smells of plants (much later used in the human culture as a part of human sign systems) might be studied. But a systematic research on the pre-sign aspect of the world of plants might belong to the goals of sociobiological and semiotic experiments of the future century.

⁴ Principal differences from human natural language were examined in an article by Benveniste (1952) as well as in Hockett's works (Hockett 1960).

⁵ An attempt to come to an equation connecting different values of the bees' dances led to a formula in which the speed of sound appears. At one of the American cybernetic conferences of the time of the *Sturm und Drang* of cybernetics a remark was made that to a hypothetical bee-scientist this speed might have had an importance comparable to the speed of light in human physical theories. The interesting side of the joke refers to a probable link between the size of an organism and the speed limitations. In any case the bee is considered to be an example of a smallest (and particularly successful) flying creature already in the Hattic-Hittite myth of the God Telepinu (2nd mil. BC) in which it is opposed to the eagle as a large one. A particular role is ascribed to bees and honey not only in Greek mythology (where the influence of Ancient Oriental images seems possible), but in the other parts of the world as well. Here (as in many other cases) modern scientific interests were anticipated by the myths.

which is brought by a bee is transmitted directly during the tactile contact between the bees and the followers. It is like some types of advertising in modern society. Of all the different senses used during a dance, the optical one is the most important. The direction of flight is indicated with respect to the position of the Sun.⁶ During the running part of the tail-wagging dance the bee takes such a position that it sees the Sun at the same angle as during its previous flight to the feeding place. If a bee dances on a perpendicular honeycomb inside a hive, it is usually quite dark there. The bees cannot see the Sun, but rely instead on the direction of gravity. They orient the straight portion of the dance at the same angle to the direction of the gravitational force as the angle they have flown with the respect to the Sun in their previous flight to the source of food. In this sense one may speak about rudimentary applied astronomy and geometry among the bees. But this knowledge as well as the communicational possibilities are used only in connection with the specific goal of this system of transmitting information.

Among the animals that are considered to be on a higher level of evolution and have a much more complicated nervous system there are many who live mostly in large groups (like wolves or elephants). Communication between the members of such groups is important for the survival. In most known cases the systems of such signals (calls) are predominantly vocal (birds, marine mammals and primates are particularly important for a comparison with human sign systems).

1.2. Origin and development of human primary sign systems

By primary sign systems those that are directly realized by the signals perceived through senses (vision, hearing etc.) are understood as different from secondary sign systems encoded by the signs of another system⁷ (see on different types of secondary systems below, 1.3). As

⁶ The ability to use the Sun (and also an artificial source of light, e.g. a lamp in a dark room) as a sort of compass was discovered also for the ants by Felix Santschi (as early as in 1911), but only the bees inserted this kind of knowledge into their communication system.

⁷ The difference was introduced in the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school that used this terminology. The borders between the two types are not absolute, as, for

some types of signalization similar to human primary semiotic systems are known among the animals, particularly primates, it is possible to study their origin on a comparative base.

1.2.1. Gestures

Predominant use of gestures in connection to intellectual tasks characterizes large apes (chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans). For all these high primates a particular importance of the visual mode is characteristic.⁸

To reconstruct the probable earliest types of gestural signalization of a common ancestor of humans and all the large apes (including orangutans whose split from the rest is dated more than 11 mill. years BP) recent observations on the communicational possibilities and learning of orangutans are particularly important. The experiments with a young orangutan Chantek made in 1979–1986 have been described in detail.⁹ Being immersed into a human cultural environment he acquired 127 gestural signs combining them later sometimes in groups of two signs following each other (chimpanzees in similar experiments could combine several signs although they were learning them more slowly than Chantek did). Situations in which Chantek signed were connected to food and drinking (a favorite topic of the ape-human symbolic interaction in all the experiments of the last decades), playing and some details of the everyday life. Each sign referred to a very large complex of objects linked through associations. Thus a sign referring to a bug could designate different insects, but also a picture of a graph shaped like a butterfly, tiny brown pieces of cat food, and small bits of feces. A sign denoting a dog referred also to pictures of a dog and of a cheetah and to some other animals

instance, some gestures may be receded in words (see below on numerals) and thus different sign systems are interrelated historically.

⁸ Gibbons (*Hylobates*) that are the closest relatives of the great apes use vocal signalization to much larger extent. It may be supposed that at some point in the evolution of the higher branch of primates there occurred a shift to gesture signalization and visual mode, traces of which can be seen in human traditions as well. Chimpanzees use vocal signals (calls), but their function is different from that of gestures.

⁹ An informative documentary film is also available.

(including orangutans on television and a tiger at the circus), to barking noises at the radio and to a noisy (“barking”) helicopter (Miles 1994: 528). Chantek preferred to use proper names and not pronouns while addressing people. That can be compared to a similar behavior of a small child experiencing difficulties in the use of personal pronouns and other shifters. In comparison to a human child an orangutan educated by his caretakers could reach the level of Piaget’s sensorimotor period moving towards the preoperational one.

Methodology and theoretical conclusions of many similar recent studies on the use of gestures and other visual (such as modern artificial computerized) systems of communication among common chimpanzees, pigmy chimpanzees (bonobos) and gorillas rest disputable. Still it seems that the number n of basic signs learned by apes in the human-ape interaction does not exceed two hundred:¹⁰

$$n \leq 2 \times 10^2. \quad (1)$$

A quantitative difference from the size of an average everyday vocabulary of any human language is very large: the latter includes no less than 2×10^3 words, the whole amount of the lexical items reaching up to 2×10^4 . But numerically and semantically analogous system was used by very small children (up to 3 years old) talking to adult members of an American Indian Comanche tribe. In this specialized language there are approximately $40 = 2^2 \times 10$ words that usually refer to a very broad range of objects: [[?]uma[?]] may be translated as “good; beautiful; let me do your hair; let me put a dress on you” (words of a mother addressed to her child), also “look, what a good dress! what a beautiful toy!”; the same word can designate any beautiful, colored or bright thing attractive for a child; it renders the colors “red”, “yellow”, “blue” (Casagrande 1965: 245–246).¹¹ A necessity to refer with one

¹⁰ According to some preliminary data the largest number of signs has been found in gorilla-human communication (Patterson, Linden 1981), but one should distinguish between the basic set of signs and one-time compounds (cf. Terrace 1984).

¹¹ A sign [[?]] refers to a glottal stop as in a dialectal American English [wo[?]e] instead of ‘water’. It seems that a small vocabulary may be a characteristic feature of such “pidgins” created to facilitate the interaction between creatures with different communicational capacities. From the same point of view the sets of words (mostly interjections, very often of onomatopoeic character, but also equivalents of proper names) used in addressing different domestic animals in

sign to many different objects may be a result of these quantitative limitations. Such objects are linked to each other by associations that are far from being logical; a comparison to "complex thinking" of a child as described by Vygotskij suggests itself.

In some cases the associations used by chimpanzees are of the same kind as those of orangutans: a sign denoting a dog is also used for barking. Chimpanzees are able to create new combinations of signs. Thus instead of the standard combination {"cold" + "box"} suggested by Gardners to Washoe to denote refrigerator she invented herself another one: {"open" + "food" + "drink"} (Gardner, Gardner 1972: 38). In comparable data on the communication with a gorilla (Koko in F. Patterson's experiments) particularly interesting are the cases where she tries to deceive a teacher transmitting a lie or probably joking, but at the same showing some elements of logical thinking when she acknowledges her lie. Particularly interesting are the unexpected linguistic successes of a pigmy chimpanzee (bonobo) Kanzi. In his early childhood he had learned meaning of several oral sentences of English and could fulfill the tasks given to him orally using at the same time a whole set of possible combinations of signs of an artificial visual system of communication that he had understood himself by observation without special teaching directed at him (Savage-Rumbaugh, Lewin 1994).¹²

Such studies have shown the ability of apes to imitate, partly develop and distort communication systems taught to them by humans in artificial conditions. Much more rewarding should be the data on gestural communication of large apes in natural environment. Some of the common gestures of gorillas are comparable to those of humans, as for instance, iconic signs representing the degree of social closeness between individuals by the spatial relations (signs similar to handshake and embrace). But some of such signs that might have been inherited (genetically or culturally) have different functions; thus, a sign of putting out one's tongue means extreme surprise among gorillas and in some human cultures of the Far East, but has another

different languages (first of all in specialized dialects of cattle-breeders) might become particularly interesting.

¹² On a possible explanation of Kanzi's abilities connected to his exposure to English at an early age cf. Deacon 1997: 126–127. Kanzi's passive understanding of human vocal commands that he could not reproduce reminds similar possibilities of some dogs.

(offensive) meaning in Europe. Such comparisons are still isolated as there is no systematic description of natural sign systems of different cultural groups of large apes.

Studies in primate communication made it possible to suppose that gestures were more important for the intellectual operations of early hominids although they coexisted with a relatively small number of sound signals (calls, similar to those used by some other high mammals) that had not yet developed into a phonemic language. The common origin of the latter and the gestural communication may be reflected in the relation between the modern systems of gestures and the left (dominant) hemisphere (Poizner, Klima, Bellugi 1987). The emerging difference between gestural communication and human acoustic codes (language, songs and music) has been crucial for the emergence of human brain.

Languages of gestures belong to those systems of signs that are widely used as substitute of natural language. For the mankind not only linguistic diversity but coexistence of different semiotic systems seems to be very important starting with the earliest periods of history. In modern societies gestures substitute natural phonemic language only in some pathological cases (such as the communication of deaf-mute people¹³) as well as in some exceptional social situations.¹⁴ But the extraordinary importance of this type of semiotic systems not only for communication (particularly between tribes speaking different phonemic languages), but also for the archaic intellectual processes still might have been observed among American Indians in the previous century. The great American anthropologist Cushing (1857–1900) who had been introduced into the mysteries of the Zuñi tribe performed an experiment that Lévy-Brühl called possible for a genius only: he achieved the formation of manual concepts connected to gestures¹⁵; it was only in our century that the experiment was

¹³ For semiotic studies particularly important were the works of A. I. Sokolianskij and his followers on blind-deaf-mutes, see Ivanov 1998: 490–494. Through this example, it proved possible to study relations between different (hieroglyphic and alphabetical) sign systems and the ways to acquire one of them after another.

¹⁴ For instance, a prohibition to speak is observed by members of some monastic orders. A similar substitution of the oral language by a gestural one is observed in connection with funerary rites and some other rituals among the Aranta tribe in Australia.

¹⁵ In a recently published letter of 1880, Cushing wrote that among the Zunis “a most elaborate gesticulation accompanies excited or emphatic oral demonstrations

appreciated and repeated by the great Russian cinema-maker and a forerunner of semiotics Sergei Eisenstein who was fascinated with Cushing's discovery.

To the areas in which for a long time gestural signs had coexisted with their synonyms in natural language (originally their own linguistic names) belonged the system of finger counting (Cushing 1892).¹⁶ The link between counting and gestures of fingers goes back to the period when the left temporal zone of the brain of *Homo sapiens sapiens* was shaped. A damage to this zone may result both in finger agnosia (incapacity to recognize one's own fingers) and aculculia (incapacity to count).¹⁷ As Vygotskij remarked in his studies on the fossilized traces of ancient signs in the behavior of modern men, early finger counting is an elementary form of cultural arithmetic. It appears both among small children in modern cities and in the ancient societies such as the Egyptian one where it was necessary to show one's ability for finger counting to reach the privileged position in the Netherworld.¹⁸ Most native peoples of Australia and

— yet many of the signs thus used being too artificial to have had origin in simple natural conceptions, and from this not only but also from their close affinity to those of other tribes, we must infer that they have been remotely acquired or at least that they are survivals of an ancient intertribal gesture speech" (Cushing 1990: 98–99).

¹⁶ In a recently published manuscript *On Zuni language* Cushing remarked that "the Zunis, although they have the words for the expression of numbers [...] always use the fingers in counting" (Cushing 1990: 106). From the linguistic designations of numbers and fingers he reconstructed "the time when the Zunis or their ancestors could not express the number without the use of the fingers" (Cushing 1990: 107; cf. also Cushing 1892: 292–296).

¹⁷ Combination of these deficiencies with the loss of the binary spatial opposition left-right and also with agraphia (damage done to writing) was called "Gerstmann syndrome" after the German neurologist who discovered it in 1930. Later studies have shown that each of these incapacities may appear isolated also. Nevertheless, for cooperation of cultural and neurosemiotic studies it seems important that all these different abilities are shown to be represented in the same area of the brain. As to writing, its possible original link to counting is supposed by the recent discoveries discussed below. Particularly interesting is the possibility to connect these features of the parietal zone of the dominant hemisphere of the human brain to the partly similar spatial incapacities (unilateral neglect) found in case of a damage to corresponding parietal zones of the brain of monkeys. Here it is possible to suggest a way from the earlier spatial capacities to those connected to such special human semiotic gifts as counting and writing.

the Pacific area have continued to use similar archaic systems of body parts counting until 20th century and it may be supposed that in this particular area a shift from gestural code to oral language occurred relatively late.¹⁹

1.2.2. Acoustic signals. Natural language

To discover the order in which different sign systems might have developed in the course of human history and prehistory one may try to combine data of biological sciences including molecular biology and those of linguistics and other semiotic disciplines. Some numerical characteristics of systems of the vertebrate communication make it possible to reconstruct the earliest stage of the prehistory. In all these systems the number n of different signals can be expressed by the inequality (2)²⁰:

$$10 \leq n \leq 50 \quad (2)$$

¹⁸ In an ancient Egyptian conjuration studied by Sethe a dead king asks a ferryman (a double of the Greek Kharon) to take him to the Eastern part of the channel in the Otherworld. The ferryman retorts: "Have not you brought a man who can not count his fingers?" In reply to this the king recites a poem in which each line corresponds to a finger and the order of lines is determined by the pattern of the ancient Egyptian finger counting. In modern Coptic tradition continuing the ancient Egyptian one, gestures are still used in the system of organizing musical performance partly similar to modern conducting. In Egypt starting from the Dynasty period and later, pictographic and hieroglyphic (logographic) signs were used which represented archaic gestures corresponding to musical scores and designated to conduct musicians (as it is continued also in the modern Coptic tradition, cf. Coptic "PTΩPE", that means "to clap hands, to sing accompanying song with gestures". In ancient Egyptian "*ir tr*" = "dance", "...*rt*" = "hand"). The expression "to sing with a hand" is attested already in ancient Egyptian hymn to the river Nile. Gestural signs connected to music find parallels in Egyptian gestures linked to counting and in "manual concepts" of many archaic cultures.

¹⁹ In such modern languages as English the old gestural counting system can still be discovered through the etymology of terms for 5 and 10.

²⁰ Those systems that have been taught by humans to apes in the experiments discussed above are much larger. But it has still to be investigated whether anything comparable might be found in the natural environment (such suggestions were made, for instance, about bonobos, but they have not been confirmed by actual observation).

As the average number of the signals in different primate vocal communication systems is around 40 it can be supposed that the main difference in the process of hominisation consisted of the change of the level of organization. The number m of the elementary sound units or phonemes in different languages of the world can be expressed by the inequality (3)²¹:

$$10 \leq m \leq 85 \quad (3)$$

The number of the elementary sound signals has remained the same as in the other vocal primate communication systems. But in the latter each of these units has a certain semantic function. Each of them refers to some situations that are important for the whole group of animals (for instance, a signal of danger). Phonemes of human natural languages do not have a direct semantic function. They are combined into sequences rendering certain meanings. In modern languages a relatively small number of phonemes m is used to produce many thousand words.²²

²¹ The smallest number of phonemes ($10 \leq m \leq 15$) is known in the languages of Pacific area from the Ainu language on the Hokkaido island in the north to Polynesian languages of the Austronesian family in the south (the amazingly small number of consonants in these languages was discussed from this geographical point of view by Haudricourt) and also in some parts of the Amazonian zone in Southern America (originally maybe connected to the Pacific area) as well as those Australian languages that have only one series of stops. The largest known number of phonemes is represented by Modern North-Western Caucasian languages as Abkhazian and its dialects with $m \approx 80$ (or exactly 82) phonemes. For the protolanguage of the whole North Caucasian family a very rich system with a comparable number of consonantal phonemes has been reconstructed. Thus it seems that the rich consonant systems have been characteristic of the Caucasian area for last several thousand years.

²² Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss supposed that such creation of multi-level systems on the base of much simpler ones inherited from the previous stages of development is characteristic not only of the development of language but as well of the other aspects of human cultural evolution (such as tools to produce tools and the incest prohibition with its social consequences) specific for man only.

A long discussion on the anatomical possibility of an oral phonemic language for Neanderthals has not lead to a definite conclusion.²³ It is supposed that some development of an inferior frontal lobule in the Broca area as well as of the inferior parietal lobule corresponding to Wernicke area is observed already on the endocasts from the skulls of *Homo habilis* that may point to a progress in linguistic capacities connected to these speech zones. But they might have been connected initially not only to vocal calls, but to other signs (for instance, gestural). A definite conclusion on the functional asymmetry of the brain and a probable dominance of the oral language connected to the left hemisphere may be made on the base of the skulls of the humans of the Upper Paleolithic time. Connecting data of physical anthropology, archaeology, paleoneurology and molecular genetics several scholars have started the investigation of a probable ancient distribution of the varieties of language of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Data of other sciences can be linked to those of comparative linguistics.

Classical Indo-European comparative grammar created and developed in the 19th century was successful in reconstructing a common ancestor of a whole family of languages. In the late 19th and 20th centuries these methods were applied to most of the languages of the world that gave a picture of their history in the last millenia. In the 1950s and 1960s an important achievement was made by the American linguist Moris Swadesh (1909–1967) and his followers who introduced lexicostatistical methods of establishing glottochronology of cognate languages by finding percent of historically identical words belonging to lists of 200 or 100 most often used basic terms (such as, for instance, 'to come', 'to drink', 'long', 'black' etc.).²⁴ The calculated time t between the present (or the moment when the vocabulary is observed) and the split of dialects of an ancestral language giving rise to its descendants is estimated according to the formula (4):

²³ Lieberman (1984, 1991) suggested that the structure of a reconstructed throat excludes possibilities of a human-like speech; but it was supposed that a recently found Neanderthal hyoid bone was compatible with an oral language.

²⁴ The empirical conclusion on a relative stability of the basic vocabulary is corroborated by the necessity to continue contact between generations starting with the age when the native language is learned. In the last decade methods of computational cladistics have also been applied to find formal criteria of the degree of closeness of related languages.

$$t = \log C / 2 \log r \quad (4)$$

where C is the portion of coinciding words in the lists for both languages and r is a coefficient of preserving the basic vocabulary for an interval of historical time (empirically deduced as 0.81 to 0.86 in one thousand years). Glottochronology has shown an approximate age of many known linguistic families and the degree of lexical closeness between their members inside each family. But this technique works safely only if the distance between languages is measured no more than by 5–7 thousand years; otherwise the number of disappearing words grows and the results would become less reliable. For theoretical studies of the approaches to the category of time in the science of the 20th century it seems interesting to notice parallel use of quantitative methods to establish linguistic time in glottochronology and the molecular clock in the genetical studies comparing corresponding parts of genomes of related species.

Most of the existing and known (dead written) languages are grouped into several hundreds of linguistic families. Dispersal of most of them has taken place relatively late. That means that the proto-languages of these families (their hypothetical ancestors) had existed no earlier than some millenia ago (and thus the lexicostatistical method can be successfully applied to them).

The next step permitting an in-depth reconstruction has been inaugurated by Vladislav M. Illich-Svitych (1934–1966). Developing the idea put forward by the great Danish scholar Holger Pedersen (1867–1953), Illich-Svitych (e.g. 1989, 1990) has laid foundation for an exact comparative study of the *Nostratic* macro-family that includes as its separate branches Indo-European, Kartvelian (Southern Caucasian including Georgian and Svanetian)²⁵, Uralic (Finno-Ugrian and Samoyed)²⁶, Altaic (Turkic and Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu,

²⁵ Some amazing coincidences of Kartvelian and Indo-European had been discovered already by the founder of the Indo-European comparative grammar Franz Bopp who dedicated his last book to this question. In the 20th century Gamkrelidze and Machavarini have demonstrated the extraordinary similarity of the whole systems of Indo-European and Proto-Kartvelian nominal derivation and root structure.

²⁶ Yukagir (now spoken by few people in the North of Siberia) seems to be an archaic language distantly related to Uralic. Close connections between Uralic

Korean and Japanese), Dravidian²⁷ and probably Afro-Asiatic (Semitic-Chamitic including Semitic, Ancient Egyptian, Cushitic, Berber, Chadic and Omotic) family²⁸. The new aspect of comparative studies of a macro-family introduced by Illich-Svitych consisted in a rigorous phonetic comparison of the reconstructed protolanguages of separate families included into a larger unit. The technique of comparison and reconstruction is the same as in the traditional historical linguistics, but the objects of study are pushed back at the temporal distance that exceeds that of the previous comparisons more than twice (the estimated time of Proto-Indo-European — 4000–5000 yr, the estimated time of Proto-Nostratic — more than 10,000 yr)²⁹. A similar attempt to reconstruct a large macro-family has also been made

and Indo-European were first discovered by the Swedish scholar Collinder and studied later by the Slovene scholar Chop and the Finnish linguist Koivulehto.

²⁷ According to McAlpin's hypothesis, Dravidian is related to Elamite, one of the ancient Oriental languages attested in a very old series of monuments (in the Western Iran). Although several groups of researchers attempting to decipher the Proto-Indian inscriptions of 3–2 mill. BC suggest a Dravidian character of their language, there is no definite reading of the texts as yet.

²⁸ Some scholars following Illich-Svitych suppose that Afro-Asiatic is included into Nostratic while according to another point of view it is a separate macro-family but distantly related to Nostratic. Several scholars include also Eskimo-Aleut and Chukchee-Koryak families into the Nostratic macro-family.

²⁹ As the methods of Illich-Svitych and his strict followers are not different from those used in the traditional historical linguistics, a certain neglect of the achievements of this school seen in many American linguistic publications can hardly be defended. There are still several real methodological problems in connection to the long-distance reconstruction of macro-families. First, as the number of words (or morphs) being substituted by innovations or borrowings grows, only few elements remain on which the comparison should rest. Second, for a very distant time some objects might have become cultural achievements, the names of which might have been interborrowed. Third, as the long-distance reconstruction depends on the comparison of protolanguages the unsafe results of the latter might be detrimental to the more distant studies. Another problem is connected to the possibility to demonstrate main macro-families by multilateral comparison of lexical items as attempted by Greenberg in respect to languages of Africa (where his classification has been accepted by specialists), America (rejected by many specialists; a similar hypothesis was hinted at by Sapir and developed 25 years ago by E. Matheson using traditional technique of reconstruction) and the Indo-Pacific area (where most languages, as Papua groups on the New Guinea) are still not sufficiently known; the last suggestion partly coincides with the one made later by Wurm.

concerning the family that includes Northern-Caucasian³⁰, Yenisseyan³¹, Sino-Tibetan and probably Na-Dene³². It can be supposed that all the known languages of the world are descendants of no more than 10 macro-families such as (besides those enumerated above) Khoi-San³³, Niger-Kordofanian (including Benue-Congo to which belong all the widely spread Bantoid and Bantu languages), Nilo-Saharan³⁴,

³⁰ The comparative grammar of North Caucasian has been built by the great Russian *énigré* scholar Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoj and developed recently by Nikolaev and Starostin (Nikolaev, Starostin 1994). As shown by Diakonoff (1983) and Starostin, Human (attested in the 3rd–2nd mill. BC in Northern Syria, Northern Mesopotamia and Asia Minor) and Urtian (documents in the area of the Lake Van and Armenia, 1st mill. BC) belonged to the same family; a similar hypothesis seems to be proven in connection to Hattic (a sacred language of the Hittite Empire, dead by the beginning of the 2nd mill. BC). Northern Caucasian origin of Etruscan (brought to Italy from Asia Minor) is not yet definitely shown, as the texts have not been interpreted. A hypothesis on a relationship of North-Caucasian and Basque is been discussed, but the definite proof has not been given.

³¹ Now the family is represented only by the Ket language spoken by several hundreds people in the Western Siberia. In 1962 I had yet an occasion to work with the old women who were the last speakers of a related Yug language that disappeared several years after that. In the 19th century castren described Kot that belonged to the same family, but was dead soon after he had made his notes. Words and forms of some other languages and dialects of the same group have been written down by travellers in the 18th century. As the brilliant scholar A. P. Dulson has shown, in the old times the rivers of the Northern part of Central Asia had names related to Yenisseian words for river and water. That proves the wider spread of the family before it had been ousted by the newcomers. A distantly related language of the same macro-family Burushaski (in the Himalayan mountains) has some grammatical features reminding of Yenisseian.

³² The idea of Sapir concerning a Sino-Tibetan connection of Na-Dene has been revived in the recent studies. But some specialists (without relevant arguments) generalized fashionable scepticism suggesting some faults in the Na-Dene reconstruction as well.

³³ This group of languages (including so called Bushman and Hottentot) has a chance to be the only relictal trace of the speech of original African population and thus may be crucial for the picture of the early development of human language. Unfortunately these languages have not been studied thoroughly enough and may soon disappear. Thus an international endeavour at their description seems to be among the urgent tasks of the linguists of the future century.

³⁴ A hypothesis on a possible larger macro-macro-family — “Congo-Saharan” (previously called “Sudan”) including both Niger-Kordofanian and Nilo-Saharan has not yet been widely accepted. As there are some features common to Afro-

Austro-Thai (to which belong the Austro-Asiatic and Thai languages of the Southern Asia and the Austronesian languages of the Pacific islands), Australian and Amerindian. The recent comparative historical research on large macro-families of Eurasian languages suggests a possible common origin of all of them although the whole problem of long-distance linguistic relationship has remained controversial. If the hypothesis on the common origin of such macro-families as Nostratic, Afro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan-Yenisseian-Northern-Caucasian is proven, it might be connected to the idea of the African homeland of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.³⁵ The genetic data on the oldest waves of the dispersal of the early humans migrating from Africa seem to correspond to recent linguistic hypotheses (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, Piazza 1994).³⁶ Differentiation of languages and the dispersal of original macro-families was the result of later movements across Eurasia and the other continents. For a period after the Neolithic revolution a spread and dispersal of macro-families and

Asiatic and Niger-Kordofanian, one may speak about a chain relating all the groups of the languages of Africa with the exception of Khoi-San. It is exactly this isolated position that makes the latter a particularly important object for historical studies.

³⁵ In that sense the myth about the existence of one language in the earliest times such as can be found already in the Sumerian texts and is continued in the story of the tower of Babel, anticipated modern scholarly research. While supposing that the existing linguistic families (with some possible exceptions, cf. above on Khoi-San as a probable trace of those African languages that had remained in Africa) go back to a single language, modern scholars do not exclude the possibility of the disappearance of some of the most ancient languages. The over-all picture is not yet quite clear because many of existing (and rapidly dying out) languages have not yet been described and several old languages were put down in the written form that has not yet been deciphered (for instance the Cretan Linear A and Hieroglyphic writing, an unknown writing system of the Central Asia of 1 mill. BC many monuments of which have been recently found etc.). The place of several culturally important languages (for instance, Sumerian) and of several unclassified ones (as Ainu that has been spoken on the islands Sahalin and Hokkaido) in the whole scheme has not been found.

³⁶ Not only cultural achievements, but also natural catastrophes (such as the cyclic warming of the Central Asian climate or a sudden flooding of the Black Sea around 5500 yr BC) might have caused migrations of the type found in the history of the speakers of Indo-European dialects. A return to the idea of the importance of catastrophes seems a feature of the recent development of several sciences.

families having split from the former is connected to the diffusion of new inventions and explained by economic trends.³⁷

Modern studies of endangered languages suggest that no more than 600 languages out of 6,000 that exist in the world may survive in the next generation (Robins, Uhlenbeck 1991). This possible catastrophe of the nearest future might be even more serious than the one studied by the specialists in ecology. Mankind is rapidly losing the degree of linguistic diversity that it had for last thousands of years.

As it is supposed that a large part of the world's population will live in large cities in the 20th century, the future of linguistic and other semiotic systems will depend of the urban situation. We may identify two main types of the large city in the last 9 millennia of the history of civilization. The first type is characterized mainly by the linguistic diversity of the population. A large city of this type was either at least bilingual in its oral and/or written linguistic network of communication or multilingual like already the large cities of the ancient Western Asia starting with Ebla (Northern Syria, the middle of the 3rd mill. BC), Ugarit (Northern Syria, 14th–15th century BC) etc. In the second type of cities the semiotic diversity is normal, whereas the linguistic one may be minimal or reduced (as Athens of the 5th c. B.C. where most of the semiotic systems of European arts and sciences have been founded). In post-industrial American large cities, such as New York, Boston, Chicago, as well as in the large cities of California, both types are united. The linguistic diversity in its utmost form (approximately 150 different languages in Boston, etc.³⁸) coexists with a very large number of specialized semiotic systems (of religions, sciences, humanities, arts), including the mass media and other sign systems (such as advertising, traffic signals etc.) that are addressed to the average citizen. However, there have been no large

³⁷ Recent series of studies by Colin Renfrew (1996), Peter Bellwood (1997), and other scholars. Renfrew uses the conclusions of Johanna Nichols on the difference between the languages having spread at the early times and those which might have diffused much later in connection to the technological achievements. These results are based mostly on typological data.

³⁸ In Los Angeles no less than 200 languages are spoken, with more than 10 of them having a large number of speakers from several millions (Spanish being second only to English) to several hundreds thousands (Armenian, Persian, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Khmer, Russian).

cities without a complex network of linguistic and/or other signs — a network comprised of no less than two (and usually more) systems of such signs.

1.2.3. Music

There are several problems of animal communication that probably will be solved only in the future century. These include the semantic aspect of the long acoustic messages transmitted (and sometimes repeated) by cetaceans (whales and dolphins).³⁹ Among different species acoustic communication is particularly developed by those animals that are connected to the air as the main element of their environment (birds, partly gibbons that are most vocal among the apes that can be partly explained by the arboreal ecology of their life on the branches) or to water like whales, dolphins and other marine mammals. Some striking analogies found in the respective asymmetries of nervous system may be due to parallel development. In the bird singing and cetaceans' messages possible parallels can be found to personal songs that characterize an individual.⁴⁰ This method might be older than the use of personal names.⁴¹ In these biologically ancient cases musical text has an individual as its signifier. But later on also the social structures may find direct iconic representation in music (Putilov 1980). The investigation into probable origins of a genetically transmitted specialization of certain zones of the right (non-dominant)

³⁹ Besides echolocation, the acoustic messages of cetaceans include for instance long song-like messages of bowhead whales, complex utterances of humpback whales, high-energy clicks of sperm whales and highly developed communication systems of dolphins. Only some elementary signals like those of danger have been decoded so far, in spite of a number of serious studies and a lot of popular writings about dolphins' capacities.

⁴⁰ For instance among Kets, Saami and Siriono (an American Indian tribe in Bolivia) As first noticed by Kandinsky in 1919, the principle is also very close to Wagner's use of leitmotifs to characterize a particular hero. This device was later used in some films by Fellini (*Otto e mezzo*).

⁴¹ As remarked by such logicians as Russell, names do not have a corresponding concept (there is no notion like **peter-ness* associated to *Peter* etc.). Thus a preference for names in the animal and man-domestic animal interaction (see above on apes) may be an indirect argument for a non-sign character of a large part of animal communication.

hemisphere where main musical capacities can be localized, might become a particularly rewarding evolutionary analysis. To understand the evolutionary relationship between different sign systems the problem of gradual separation of language and music is of utmost importance. There should have been some selective pressure (in the Darwinian sense) for musical abilities to become genetically transmitted. Rhythmic structure might have been among the oldest biologically important constituents of musical messages. Beside the probable concrete positive physiological value of the rhythm (see below on this in connection to rites) it represented a symbolic image of *harmonia mundi* in later human culture.⁴²

Artificial capacities of musical instruments were added to natural human vocal resources (arising with the emergence of human throat that made singing possible) at a relatively early stage of cultural evolution, as it has recently been discovered. At the beginning of the semiotic activity of modern man, one can find first traces of special devices such as those made of reindeer toe bones with blowholes in them. They were found in France and date from around $2^2 \times 10,000 = 40,000$ yr BP. It is possible that they were used as signalling whistles if not as instruments in a modern sense. In the Bronze Age stringed instruments of the lyre or harp type became important not only for music and vocal performance it accompanied, but for the poetry and ritual in general. The links between their shapes and names in Greece and ancient Orient indicate the integration of the whole large area where later European cultural tradition was anticipated and prepared for. As musical instrument technology was considered to be among the main aspects of the religious life of the society its international development has been spreading on a scale and with a speed comparable to modern achievements in the most advanced fields of technology.

The 20th century saw an attempt to restore the ancient social function of music.⁴³ The music of the 20th century influenced by the

⁴² See below on a possible (at least partial) explanation why the early fundamental role of music may be connected to the function of singing it accompanies.

⁴³ First studies on the semiotics of music attempted analyses fashioned according to the pattern of structural linguistics. As it was also in the case of film, it is very slowly that those specific features of music have been recognized that make it quite different from natural language. Of these features, particularly the absence of any element equivalent to a word (=sign) has become evident,

ideas of Wagner and Nietzsche has struggled for synthetic global constructions as in Mahler's compositions and stood in direct iconic relation to this epoch like Shostakovich's symphonies or Schönberg's *Eyewitness from Warsaw*. Probably the most courageous attempt was initiated by Scriabin, who died in 1915 without finishing his project *Mysterium*. The necessity of a holistic semiotic approach to it follows from Scriabin's wish to impress all the senses of the audience, not only using sound and colour, but addressing also tactile and olfactory perception and taste. Scriabin was composing a sound-and-color music based on the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence of the colours and elements of the harmonic structure. Approximately at the same time when Scriabin worked on *Mysterium*, but later than *Prometheus* (1911; the work had been composed at 1910), Schönberg introduced a similar line into the scores of *Die glückliche Hand* (op. 18, 1913; the work had started at 1909). As Eisenstein supposed, these ideas of Scriabin could be developed in the modern coloured film (as in the second series of *Ivan the Terrible* and other audio-visual arts of the future.

The performance of the *Mysterium* that Scriabin had planned to take place in India⁴⁴ in 1917 was supposed to put an end to the world history. This problem had been studied by him long before it became fashionable after Fukuyama's work. As Scriabin was thinking about the deepest problems of the religious philosophy of his time using all the most radical devices of modern avant-garde art his *Mysterium* might have become a decisive breakthrough in the cultural history.

The main problem remains. Keeping in mind Berdyaev's idea about modern politics as a kind of continuation of the avant-garde art, one may ask whether the performance planned by Scriabin has been continuously rehearsed after his death by the forces that determine the modern history of the world.

although music and poetical discourse (as distinguished from the everyday speech) may share some characteristics. Recently temporal structure of music has been elucidated from a semiotic perspective. Different periods of the European music history have been studied from the point of view of their semiotic features.

⁴⁴ For Scriabin India was important not only because of the ancient Indian thinkers with whose ideas he became acquainted through theosophy. Scriabin studied Sanskrit and remarked that one had to go through it to come to something that is higher. We can draw a parallel here with the great Russian futurist poet Hlebnikov who studied Sanskrit in his search for a new international language.

1.2.4. Visual art

It may be supposed that no less than 200,000 years ago the red colour (ochre) already entered the symbolic triangle red-black-white, which is universally represented in all the languages and cultures of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. If the earliest human societies could use both gestural signs and phonemic language to express the set of notions of the primitive culture, the next major step was achieved with the beginning of visual art (Leroi-Gourhan 1964, 1965). The earliest visual signs of the Upper Paleolithic art according to radio-carbon dates for symbolic statuettes found in Vogelherd (the Southern Germany) are attested already 30,000–29,000 years BP. New discoveries in Southern France have shown that cave painting begins also at that time — approximately 10,000 years after *Homo sapiens sapiens* had appeared in Europe. Such widely represented cave painting images as hands seem to be connected with gestural communication, thus it may be supposed that there was a direct connection between different forms of visual representation and gestural symbolism. In modern man, the visual art oriented towards holistic images belongs (like musical creativity) mostly to the functions of the non-dominant hemisphere. But the dominant one is responsible for details of the images that are characteristic of the early period of the history of cave art. According to chronology established by André Leroi-Gourhan (1965: 205–256; 1986: 79–144; 1983: 145–151), after an early pre-figurative period (35,000–30,000 years ago) the Aurignician and Gravetian styles I and II appear (30,000–20,000 years ago). At that time mostly very large details of animals are represented; the signs that are symbolic show their connection to images of genitalia. The next (Solutrean) period is characterized by the archaic style in (20,000–15,000 years BP) in which proportions are not natural with the head being shown much smaller than the body of an animal. The signs become more abstract; this tendency develops during the next period. In the Magdalenian period (15,000–11,000 years BP) the classical style III appears and the figures of animals acquire realistic proportions.

As the joint French-American studies of the Lascaux cave have shown, to produce excellent paintings found on its walls such advanced methods as wooden constructions (of the type used until

recently in order to reach high parts of the wall surfaces) and high temperature needed to prepare red paint had been applied.⁴⁵

The art is not only highly developed technically, but its semiotic structure seems already complicated. Some of the binary oppositions that determine the structure and semantics of cave painting may be expressed by several different images. It is supposed that the figures of horses and bisons denote the same poles of the male and female principles that are also expressed by the sex signs.

In the later history of arts some of the motifs of the Upper Paleolithic art reappear. But it is supposed that such main symbols as the world tree are introduced at a later time and determine the schemes of most religious (Christian and Buddhist) works of the next periods⁴⁶. The 20th century saw a combination of most advanced experiments in the visual art and of their theoretical analysis. An attempt to find a new technique of semiotic art analysis based on the idea of discovering elementary units of artistic perception has been made by the Orthodox Priest Pavel Florenskij in his studies of spatiality in the visual arts.⁴⁷ He supposed that human perception divides any picture into several areas the borders between which are shown by the painter.

⁴⁵ Both the way to raise the temperature and the kind of the bone catalytic mixture added to the iron ore to produce the red paint are similar to those used at the beginning of the Iron Age (more than 10 thousand years later!). One may suggest that theoretically inhabitants of Lascaux could have produced iron (and iron weapons that at this early age might have lead to complete disappearance of the whole species). But they preferred to make excellent pictures. To them religious and aesthetic values connected to these pictures were so important that all the potential of the culture had been exhausted to produce them. In this a possible answer can be found to the question put by Lévi-Strauss in his *Pensée sauvage*: why people of the Stone Age did not invent the atomic weapon although their mind was already capable of doing it?

⁴⁶ V. N. Toporov who has published a serious of works to this question suggests a term "the epoch of the World Tree" for the period that includes also the classical European art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

⁴⁷ Florenskij's work from the middle of the 1920s, long before he was arrested for the second time and executed, has been published recently: the most complete text was translated into Italian by N. Misler: Florenskij 1995 (a shortened Russian version: Florenskij 1993). For the general semiotic theory of art a three-volume book of Ernst Cassirer was particularly valuable; in it a difference between the symbols (signs) of art and of those of natural language and myth have been studied (Cassirer 1924–1929). A similar approach was developed by Spet and his collaborators at the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (Misler 1997).

A semiotic theory of the inverted perspective as opposed to the linear one was exposed by Florenskij in connection with a distinction of the two main views of the space in the history of culture.⁴⁸ Florenskij started to work on an encyclopedic dictionary of signs of different cultures called *Symbolarium*.⁴⁹ But after his death only the first chapter dedicated to the sign of a point was found and published. It seems that after Peirce, Florenskij was the scholar who had the broadest view of different aspects of human semiotic activity.

1.3. Secondary modelling systems

There are several types of secondary sign systems. First, there are ways to recode the elements of another code as written language in its relationship to the oral (natural) one or to express the elements of one code (for instance, literature) by means of another one (the natural language). Second, there is a possibility to use elements of the everyday life (dwelling, dress, food) in a symbolic sense. The process is partly similar to the one studied by Vygotskij in respect to what he called 'higher psychic functions': such abilities as memory existed earlier than the time when they were reinterpreted as elements of the new psycho-cultural social structure. Third, there is a possibility of combining different elements into one complex semiotic system, as ritual in an archaic society or movie in a modern one.

⁴⁸ Approximately at the same time working independently of Florenskij, Panofsky published his version of the symbolic concept of perspective. He has studied a series of works by Francastel from the point of view of the historical transformation of perspective in Western European art. Among several parallel studies of perspective as a symbolic (semiotic) device carried out in the first part of the 20th century those begun by Eisenstein seem particularly interesting in comparison to the one accomplished by Florenskij. To both of them the linear perspective seems particularly hostile as it was associated with the official style introduced by the totalitarian regime. In that case a semantic and pragmatic interpretation of an artistic device has been forced upon a scholar by the society. Eisenstein's views on perspective were connected to his studies of the structure of the depth composition of a shot in cinema.

⁴⁹ Most numerous collections of signs (or "symbols", although in Peirce's terms one would prefer to call most of them icons and indexes) that were published as special reference books almost exclusively deal with visual semiotic units with addition of some signs met in mythology and folklore.

1.3.1. Tokens. Hieroglyphic and alphabetic writing

The oldest archaeological traces of a visual system that encoded the earlier finger count are discovered on the Paleolithic monuments. According to an important discovery made almost simultaneously by Marshack (1972, 1976) and Frolov (1974), the oldest tallies have numerical function. Tallies and notches that are found from the earliest period are divided into sets with 5 or 10 members each that makes a comparison with finger counting evident (Frolov 1974: 116). Marshack supposes that the groups of signs represent a lunar calendar. Later the development of pre-writing devices was caused by the new functional needs of a growing food-producing society. Schmandt-Besserat reckons that the tokens considered by her as the first precursors of writing appeared after the Neolithic revolution in connection with the necessities of developing economy of production (Schmandt-Besserat 1992).

Numerical quantifiers exist in several natural languages. They are used with specific nouns denoting objects to be counted. A similar tactile and visual three-dimensional system has been developed after the Neolithic revolution covering the whole area of the Near East⁵⁰. The earliest deciphered writing appeared in ancient Egypt. During recent excavations at Abydos (near Cairo) inscriptions on the ivory labels attached to oil jars have been found. They record in hieroglyphs where the jars come from. Of a similar applied character are the oldest Mesopotamian ("Proto-Sumerian") inscriptions on the administrative tablets known from the very end of the 4th mill. BC. Chronologically

⁵⁰ For each type of commodity a special three-dimensional token was used. The regular solids (cones, cylinders, spheres, tetrahedrons) and some other geometrical figures represented objects (grain, cattle etc.) to be counted. To make a transaction safer the tokens were put in a special clay envelope. The next step consisted of impressing the tokens on the surface of an envelope. When a three-dimensional symbol had been represented by a two-dimensional one, a possibility of creating writing appeared. Some of the archaic cuneiform signs are supposed to have arisen from respective tokens. One of the most interesting discoveries consisted in finding the special token-based signs on the oldest tablet that had preceded cuneiform writing. The set of regular solids used as tokens is interesting for two reasons: on the hand, in order to apply some geometrical ideas to the history of writing; and on the other hand, to prove the suggestion according to which a restricted number of visual images constitutes the alphabet seen in primitive art and religion.

close are Proto-Elamite and Proto-Indian inscriptions. The language of the latter rests unknown.⁵¹ As the signs on a Vincea inscription found in the area of the old Balkan culture of the 4th mill. BC are very close to Proto-Sumerian, it is possible that there was a link between these two areas of the early writing. But since the ancient Balkanic writing (used in a number of monumental inscriptions of the 6th–4th mill. BC in different parts of the Balkans and also in Hungary) has not yet been deciphered, it is not known whether really writing appeared in the Southern-Eastern Europe two millennia earlier than in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

An important innovation in the information-preserving system in Ebla (3rd mill. BC, Northern Syria) consists in the existence of a large and well-organized archive — a multilingual library of cuneiform documents. Many general semiotic principles of modern libraries and archives have been known since the middle of the 3rd mill. BC.

The early hieroglyphic sign systems based on pictorial or pictographical representation slowly moved towards *logographic* link to the *phonemic* language. A major step in the development of the semiotic systems was a shift from logographic representation of words to the later alphabetic principle. In the development of a normal child in a modern society, after the child achieves a certain degree of knowledge based on learning holistic (global) images, the acquisition of literacy makes it possible to perform successive operations not only on letters but also on natural numbers and other sequences of discrete symbols. With this opens a possibility of understanding the notions of order and set and of rational and legal reasoning. Diachronic historical research on a similar change from logographically oriented ancient Oriental cultures towards those built on the discrete alphabetic principle (as started in Western Semitic traditions and continued in the Ancient Greece) has revealed the role of the elements⁵².

⁵¹ See above on Dravidian. Absolutely unknown is the origin of the ancient Chinese characters (there exists a theory about a connection to some special types of Western Eurasian astrological symbols, but this hypothesis has not been proven) and of the MesoAmerican (Mayan and Aztec) writing and of the old Peruvian (Inkas') (mostly) mathematical knot writing *quipu*. Although Trans-Pacific cultural influences seem possible in this case (as in many other aspects of Pre-Columbian cultures), definite proofs have not been found.

⁵² Latin *elementa* (rendering Greek *stoikheia*) was derived from the names of the letters *l-m-n* in the middle of the alphabet (cf. *a-b-c* in its initial part). In alphabetic cultures elements usually are called by nouns (e.g. *atoms*, *molecules*,

Historically a particular and very complicated question concerns the development of the written musical notation for songs. Long after written signs had been used to encode the oral speech in its semantic and phonic form, a similar attempt was made in connection to the music and verbal text of a song.⁵³

1.3.2. Space. Architecture. Urban semiotics

The huts and the cultural habits of constructing them have some rudimentary parallels in the ape behavior and are known as early as 200,000 years BP (already at the Paleolithic site of Terra Amata). But a step ahead led to the “domestication of space” to use André Leroi-Gourhan’s expression. One of the important achievements in the semiotic study of early culture of *Homo sapiens sapiens* consisted in establishing the structure of the space of the caves on the walls of which animals have been represented. It appeared that to the main couple $A+B$ (usually a horse and a bison) a third animal C (mostly an ibex or a mammoth, sometimes a stag or a doe) is added. There might also be a fourth or a fifth animal (D , a rhinoceros, a feline beast). Distribution of these images on the walls permits to understand the structure of a cave (Leroi-Gourhan 1986: 98–118⁵⁴).

After the Ice Age such buildings as temples were built partly as reproductions of the old habitation. A proof may be seen, for instance, in stalagmites and stalactites brought to a temple in Çatal Höyük (one of the oldest cities in Asia Minor, 7th–6th mill. BC); it can be presumed that a similar function was transferred to candles much later. There was a steady growth in the semiotic potential (and the linguistic

genes, quanta, particles, strings, phonemes in the European scientific traditions) different from the verbs as the main linguistic means of description in such languages as Iroquois (for instance, Onondaga) and many other American Indian ones (cf. Ivanov 1993a).

⁵³ The first known example is a song in Human with notation for strings of a harp and possible intervals between their pitches found in the international city of Ugarit (Ras Shamra), 13th century BC. Such a system had been first elaborated in Mesopotamia from which corresponding Akkadian terms were borrowed into Human just as Italian musical terminology spread in European languages in the post-Renaissance period.

⁵⁴ On the base of the studies of Leroi-Gourhan, V. N. Toporov gave a semiotic description of the prehistory of space in art.

potential) of a large city beginning with the Neolithic Revolution (City Revolution in terms of Gordon Childe.) Not only cities themselves tended to become larger and larger according to the laws of so-called "social physics" but also their sign systems. The old sign systems (such as those of natural languages and visual signs based on the languages of gestures and other archaic and/or archetypal symbols), some of which had been inherited from the ancient eras in which early settlements were founded (i.e., the Upper Paleolithic caves), were reinterpreted and integrated into the new urban semiotic webs of communication. In the first known cities of Asia Minor (such as Çatal Höyük according to Mellaart's studies), and in other parts of the ancient Near East, new complicated systems of visual signs, partly based on reinterpreted archaic symbols, were constructed. These new complex systems were mostly employed in the most important communicational city centres of that period (and much later) — the temples (in Çatal Höyük, for example, these buildings had specific symbols incorporated in them such as bucranias and columns, symbols of the right and left hands, etc.). The role of a temple as the main information-preserving centre of the city has remained significant throughout history until modern times. No matter what other urban activities (particularly military and commercial) became important, the temples remained the main places of informational activity. Therefore, one may speak of a temple-oriented stage in the semiotic history of the cities. This stage continued for many millennia and can still be seen in the importance of temples and churches, both as religious centre and as the most important element of the preserved cultural semiotic history of cities.

An important iconic role has been attributed to the spatial scheme of a whole village or a city. Thus in a society with dualistic organization the opposition of the two moieties (opposed exogamic halves of the tribe) and their subsections was reproduced in the arrangement of huts or houses of their members. A city is considered a model of the universe.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Its structure corresponds to the scheme of the relations between the main gods of the pantheon: for example, the four temples of Ebla are devoted to the four main Semitic gods and are oriented according to corresponding cardinal points (a similar semiotic scheme was preserved in Nenevia and, may be seen in a transformed form in later cities of Ancient and Medieval Western, Central, Southern and South-Eastern Asia).

If for most of the Middle Ages the main communicative and particularly information-preserving or information-transmitting functions were fulfilled by monasteries, during the next stage of the semiotic history the universities fulfilled this role. The differences between entire areas in Europe may be defined as monastery-oriented city versus a university-oriented city.

1.3.3. Dress as symbol

Although dress (at least in countries to the north of tropical areas) may be important for the survival, and also serves as a ternary sexual feature, it acquires the role of a sign (of an ethnic group, social position).⁵⁶ As archaic culture is partly based on the ritual inversion of the structure (or on the anti-structure according to Victor Turner), it is symbolized by the carnival dresses; in the archetypal carnival men dress as women and women dress as men. Accordingly the role of masks becomes prominent⁵⁷.

As dresses and some other objects of the everyday life (for instance, kitchen utensils, means of transportation) become a part of semiotic life of a community, the role of such devices as ornaments grows. Ornament is based on symmetry. Its study is an important link between such natural sciences as physics, redefined as completely based on the notion of symmetry (Yang 1996) and semiotics objects obeying similar laws at another level.

1.3.4. Food and drink as symbols

As sacrifices to the gods were considered mostly as serving food and drink (sometimes also smell of burned food) for them, this aspect has become one of particularly significant elements of religion.⁵⁸ Some

⁵⁶ Hjelmslev (1943) emphasized particularly the innovative character of P. Bogatyrev's study of the dress as sign, created in the atmosphere of the Prague Linguistic Circle of the interwar period.

⁵⁷ It is worth noticing that the notion of a person in European languages goes back to Etruscan (originally Greek) term designating a theatrical mask.

⁵⁸ In a motif repeated in the mythologies of several ancient Oriental peoples and also in the archaic folklore of some European countries (for instance, in Latvian

tribes (for instance, Xihkaryana in Brazil) consider difference in diet and observing food taboos the main difference between humans and animals. Some restrictions (as prohibition of cannibalism and eating some animals) reveal most striking ethnic and cultural differences. In this respect Spaniards accepted at Montezuma's court suffered their first terrible shock. Comparable differences between Indian castes are connected with fundamentals of the Hindu religion.

1.3.5. Sexual urge and love

Sex being understood from a purely physiological point of view is different from those infrastructures of social (see above on kinship in Lévi-Strauss' view), religious and aesthetic character that are superposed on it at the level called "sublimation" in psychoanalysis. Already in the signs of the cave art interpreted as symbols of genitalia one may suspect a broader meaning. They might have been connected, for instance, to the social and religious binary opposition of a dualistic society. As a later example studied in comparative poetics one may cite the notions of the "mad love" and "fair lady" as developed in medieval Judeo-Arabic and some other Oriental⁵⁹, Spanish and Provençal traditions. As it intersected with Gnostic ideas, it influenced Dante and his followers in modern European literature. An interesting side of the 20th century culture might be seen in a systematic attempt to return from such infrastructure to its supposed physiological roots using procedures prescribed by psychoanalysis.⁶⁰

folk songs) gods decided not to kill mankind since they will lose their source of food in that case. This god-human relation appears to be mutual. In the 2nd mill. BC an expression "to drink a god", "to eat a god" is attested in ritual texts of Asia Minor, and it is there that the origin of an image developed much later into the concept of communion can be found.

⁵⁹ The introductory stanzas of *Vepxis tqaosani* ("A Knight in the Leopard's Skin") by Rustaveli has been studied by a great specialist in Caucasian philology N. Marr who developed ideas from Veselovskij's treatise on the same motif in the medieval European poetry.

⁶⁰ In modern literature, for instance, in Joyce's *Ulysses* and in many works influenced by this novel, there was also an attempt to ignore all other cultural taboos connected to physiological functions of human organism. This systematic anti-semiotic attitude might be understood as carnivalistic Anti-Structure;

1.3.6. Myths and Rituals

Some of elements seen in these early synthetic rituals may be older than *Homo sapiens sapiens*.⁶¹ Those signs that appear in modern pantomimic arts and ballet are probably historically linked to the old syncretic art that combined music and gestures. According to the theory proposed by the great Russian specialist in historical poetics Alexander Veselovskij, the original syncretic performance of the early times joined together elements of what we now might have designated as music, song, dance, drama, ballet. For all these most ancient forms of art integrated into a syncretic ritual performance, the rhythm seems to be the decisive constructive principle. Modern neurophysiological research has shown the connection of different forms of rhythmical activity (such as rhythmic music, dance or jogging) to the positive action of endogeneous opioid peptide neurotransmitters like the five amino-acid enkephalins, endorphines and dynorphin. The latter are mimicked by the drugs spreading in the modern society. It can be suggested that one of the main reasons for this may be connected to the loss of the main function of the art (particularly of music) that rendered *harmonia mundi*. Historically this function might have been the most important one. It could have antedated the social mnemotechnical role of singing that grew more and more valuable as the amount of knowledge to be memorized and transmitted became larger with the development of culture.

1.3.7. Songs. Folklore

According to a probable hypothesis music and singing became necessary for the cultural survival of the illiterate societies.⁶² It seems that

according to Bakhtin, the use of the images of "the bottom of the body" is characteristic of folk carnival.

⁶¹ Thus rain dances and rain charms documented in very old texts and attested in different societies especially as relictal childhood forms find interesting analogies in recently studied precultural patterns of behaviour in many groups of chimpanzees.

⁶² This function might have remained in those early Neolithic societies in which prewriting in the form of tokens and later writing served only to encode bureaucratic lists of objects and were not yet applied to put down mythopoetical and legal texts. If one compares the spread of computers to the introduction of

for several thousand years the memory of culture was mostly connected to songs accompanied by music. Important discoveries made by Lord studying the Southern Slavic folklore have shown the formulaic character of the original poetry yet inseparable from singing and music. By comparing experimental facts on Slavic and Central Asiatic Turk (Uzbek, Kirgiz a.o.) rhapsodies one comes to the conclusion that each of them could reproduce (with possible variations) texts containing as much as 107 bits of information.⁶³ The role of singers in such societies as the modern Southern Slavic, comparable to the Homeric audience, suggests that they were initially responsible for the transmission of all the mythological historical heritage of the tribe.⁶⁴ If artificial methods of information transmission were absent or underdeveloped they might be substituted by memorizing and repeating such combinations of words of the natural language that had been transformed into parts of poetical compositions which were performed with the musical accompaniment.

1.3.8. Literature

Literature has originally been connected to folklore. As Propp remarked, the first literary texts (as *Gilgamesh*) were simply folklore compositions put in the written form. The possibility to write down such compositions did not come easily.

Caesar formulates the opposition of the religious use of the traditional memorization of the oral texts and a possible use of Greek

writing one might suppose that the predominant use of sophisticated sign-transformational computing machinery for business and administrative work (as different from creative activity) repeats a similar delay as that experienced by the early Neolithic societies.

⁶³ For such exceptional singers as the Kirgiz Pulkanshair who could dictate up to 25×10^4 lines, the estimated quantity of the transmitted information may be even more and approaches the upper limit of the memory as suggested in experimental psychology. For a general view on the importance of aesthetical rhythms in connection to social memory cf. also Leroi-Gourhan 1965.

⁶⁴ That makes plausible the idea of the great Russian poet Nikolaj Gumilev (executed by the Bolsheviks in 1921): according to his recently published studies in comparative poetics interrupted by his death, he supposed that an archaism had been preserved in the role of druids and poets ("bards") in the Old Irish society (cf. modern views tracing these institutions back to the Proto-Indo-European.

letters to render simple everyday sentences in Gaulish (as documented later in the Gaulish inscriptions). This seems important for understanding analogous facts in other areas. It can help to explain why writing in many societies (as Mycenaean Greece and early Mesopotamian cities of the pre-Sumerian or Uruk period) was not used for rendering sacred or mythopoetic texts still transmitted only orally. A tension between conversational folklore elements of literature and those aspects that are connected to the written speech are characteristic of later periods of its development. Social linguistic differences caused by urban life are reflected in the works of authors who started to introduce features of this new urban language in such genres as short stories (in China first developed by Pu Sung Ling-Liao Chai). But the use of hieroglyphic writing made this particular aspect of the literature quite different from the one based on the principles of alphabetic cultures. Thus, for instance, although in the Chinese tradition the genre of the detective story (a genre strongly based on the criminality and communicational features of a large city) developed in the Tang period; however, Pu Sung Ling's detective stories, characterized by archaic semiotic methods of divination by dreams, were antithetical to the alphabetic detective principles of the first detective stores about Paris (written by Poe) more than two centuries later.

Language not only became the main topic of philosophical disputes in the 20th century: a discussion of its role for literature became crucial both for poets (T. S. Eliot, Mandelstam, Brodsky) as well as for critics and literary scholars (New Criticism, Russian formalists).

1.3.9. Theatre

Modern anthropological studies (particularly those of Victor Turner — Turner 1982, 1992⁶⁵) have shown the close relationship of the ancient ritual and theatre. Olga Freidenberg (1977) remarks in her

⁶⁵ After this great ethnologist-semiotician had moved to America, his main semiotic interests were concentrated on the anthropology of performance. Not only did he study the ritual as a protoform of a theatrical performance. He himself participated in theatrical activities serving as an aesthetical experiment. A parallel to Eisenstein's attempt at a "revival of a myth" in his Wagner's *Die Walküre* performance of 1940 (and a series of theoretical works on the same topic) is striking.

writings on the subject that theatrical space and a bidding of a theatre has long preserved the character of a model of the whole universe.⁶⁶ A particular social and semiotic role of the theatre became most evident in classical Greece. Theatre had an important unifying function in an extraordinarily diversified system of different sign systems and texts, many of which had been established in the Pericles' age (tragedies, comedies, geometry, architecture, sculpture, rhetoric, to name just a few).⁶⁷ Theatrical performances contained verbal parts, action, dances, singing and music, representing a later transformation of the original syntactic or total performance as reconstructed by Veselovskij. The conversational features of a local city dialect representing a social dialect are pronounced in genres such as an Aristophanic comedy. One may compare this phenomenon to partly similar linguistic features of the plays of great Old Indian authors, like Kalidasa, in which personages speak different Indo-Aryan languages (Sanskrit and a variety of Prakrits) according to their social position and gender. Different from Greece, India did not know the genre of tragedy.⁶⁸

In modern Europe starting from Diderot and up to Vygotskij, the philosophers, aestheticians and psychologists have been analyzing the semiotic features of an actor. A capacity of playing another person becoming a signified in theatrical semiosis constitutes one of the amazing features of modern culture that has its continuation in cinema.

⁶⁶ It was reflected in such terms as French '*paradis*' (originally a word for '*Paradise*' — "the top gallery", "The Gods" in British English), Russian *rayok* (originally diminutive from *ray* "paradise") in the same meaning.

⁶⁷ Approximately 1000 free citizens of the city might have attended a given theatrical performance according to the calculations of the mathematician, A. N. Kolmogorov. There as also at the sporting games the whole adult active population was present and these were places where it was possible for all the members to exchange information. Such meetings are different from the small symposia, described by Plato, in which relatively restricted groups, for instance, of Socrates' pupils engaged in dialogues were present.

⁶⁸ V. N. Toporov, one of the main founders of the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school, has studied the semiotic aspects of classical Sanskrit drama in a recently published book. In early Roman literary theatrical masterpieces one may find traces of the original multilingual situation of the ancient cities, for instance, in the Punic, i.e. dialectal Phoenician-Semitic parts of Plautus' play *Poenulus*. Its Latin title uses the Etruscan designation for a Carthaginian person speaking Punic. This fragment helps to reconstruct Western Semitic (Punic) genre of comedies that influenced also Etruscan theatre (the latter can be reconstructed on the bases of those features of Roman comedy that can be traced back to the Etruscan influence).

1.3.10. Audio-visual media and cinema

The general tendency towards a synthesis characteristic of the first half of the 20th century has manifested itself in the creation of audio-visual media. This aspect of modern communication acquired extraordinary importance for entertainment, advertising and other commercial and political goals. From the aesthetic point of view cinema has remained the most interesting achievement. Here a completely new semiotic system has evolved which made the combination of theoretical analysis with an aesthetic experiment possible. In modern semiotics and in the neighboring area of humanities, particular attention has been given to film language, the study of which was begun already by Sergei Eisenstein. In the *semiotic studies of cinema* the first stage consisted of the comparison of a movie's structure and a verbal text. Specialists were interested in finding units corresponding to words and sentences in a cinematographic discourse.⁶⁹ With the development of sound movies, it appeared possible to reduce the importance of short-cut montage, building a whole film on the plan-sequence (as, for instance, Renoire did); Bazin became the main theoretician of this new wave.

The next stage in the development of semiotic theory of cinematographic discourse was connected with Roman Jakobson. He introduced a difference between metaphorical movies (to which early silent films using montage imagery belonged) and metonymic films in which close-up and other methods based on spatial contiguity became prominent (Jakobson 1990).⁷⁰ Enormous possibilities opened up by

⁶⁹ As Eisenstein and other great film-makers of his generation were particularly interested in *montage* as the main device they were approaching the film as a text comparable to texts in linguistics. Most of all they were interested in the possibility of finding discrete units or cadres-shots equivalent to words and montage phrases built from sequences of these elements. Eisenstein's montage theory included a comparison to hieroglyphic writing. Eisenstein planned movies in which the avant-garde montage technique would be used to create intellectual cinema.

⁷⁰ As shown by Jakobson, the opposition between metaphoric movies and metonymic ones is similar to those found in other fields of semiotic activities, for instance, rites (similarity-based magical rituals as opposed to those where an object is substituted by its part according to the *pars pro toto* principle). The general problem of the parts and wholes in different semiotic texts has been investigated in the light of Husserl's phenomenology. Recent developments of

computerized montage may be seen as a new vista for experimental film semiotics. At the same time it becomes possible to start analysis of semiotic foundations of new audio-visual systems that are technically ripe for being used, but have not yet become true art.⁷¹ Even the position of the TV as an independent semiotic system is not yet clear. The future century might bring quite a new breakthrough in this field.

1.3.11. Sciences

From the point of view of semiotics, different sciences are considered as a separate secondary modeling semiotic network. The independence of each of them is connected to elaboration of a specific sign system. The oldest specific notation in the area of humanities intersecting with modern semiotics has been invented by ancient Indian linguists (no later than in the middle of the 1st mill. BC if not much earlier). The construction of the artificial — and to a large extent formalized — metalanguage of Panini's Sanskrit grammar had been made possible by the character of Sanskrit as an "elaborated" language (*sams-kṛta* "following the rules of grammar"). It had remained an example of formal description for Bloomfield (1887–1949) who initiated a formal trend in the American descriptive linguistics of the 20th century.⁷² As it was discovered by Egyptologists of the 20th century, some special forms and constructions different from texts of the other genres can be found in ancient Egyptian scientific (mathematical and medical) texts. But a new language for mathematics has been elaborated in the European tradition starting with the ancient Greece. The mathematical

semiotic film analysis included an application of metalinguistic methods of analyzing the utterance, particularly deictic relations as well as pragmatic dimension.

⁷¹ The situation can be compared to the one that Hocart (1936) found similar in the development of ritual and social institutions and biological organs: a special technical device exists long before its function appears.

⁷² The purely formal character of Panini's grammar made it also possible to manipulate with its symbols in search for internal reconstruction of the past of the system (as it was done in the 19th century by Saussure and in the 20th century by Benveniste in his *Origines*). As the great Danish linguist Otto Jespersen declared in his speech at the 4th International Congress of Linguists, "the chain between Panini and Trubetzkoy is unbroken". The formal analysis started by Panini was continued both by comparative studies and in structural description.

sign system for analysis, as developed by Newton and Leibniz, is the best example of a completely new semiotic system.⁷³

2. Semiotic science

2.1. Logical semiotics

Peirce (1839–1914), a great universal mind exploring almost all the kinds of semiotic systems, has laid down the foundations of this science in its modern shape. In the beginning of the 20th century returning to his previous studies Peirce was emphasised the importance of “General science of the nature of Signs” for modern knowledge (Peirce 1966 [1908]: 378).⁷⁴ In his later works Peirce anticipated an important field of modern semiotic studies devoted to *comparative*

⁷³ Hilbert, who founded modern metamathematics, declared: “hierin liegt die feste philosophische Einstellung, die ich zur Begründung der reinen Mathematik — wie überhaupt zu allem wissenschaftlichen Denken, Verstehen und Mitteilen — für erforderlich halte: *am Anfang* — so heisst es hier — *ist das Zeichen*” (Hilbert 1928: 1). As he has remarked in another work of the 1920s, a main point of reference is, “die konkreten Zeichen selbst” (Hilbert 1926: 89). From this point of view, semiotic study of the signs of mathematics might clarify its theoretical foundations (Bogarin 1991).

From the point of view of the founder of the quantum mechanics Niels Bohr, mathematics is a special language created on the bases of natural language. Language has remained a main object of reflections for physicists and philosophers.

⁷⁴ In 1895–1902 in a treatise on *Speculative Grammar* Peirce has elaborated his exhaustive classification of signs from the point of view of their function that has remained the most detailed one so far attempted. While discussing the relation of a sign to an object he was developing ideas of Classical Greek, Roman and medieval philosophers and logicians whose works he discussed at length. But he went far beyond the usual logical sphere of interests. He also touched upon different ways of the logical categories related to corresponding forms in natural languages giving as examples, for instance, the ancient Egyptian use of pronouns in a function of a copula different from its expression by verbs or a particular role of nouns in Basque (Peirce 1960: §§ 4, 6). He was insisting on the necessity to get rid of the influence of some chance grammatical particularities of Indo-European languages. Peirce suggested that a linguist should participate in work on the general theory of signs. Being (among other things) a professional specialist in chemistry, Peirce was the first to notice the similarity of the structure of some new chemical compound names of substances and of incorporated forms in American Indian languages.

grammar of natural and scientific (particularly, logical) languages (Reichenbach 1947).⁷⁵ This kind of research has become particularly important much later in connection to artificial intelligence. Thus while writing a set of rules for an automatic translation from Russian into a predicate calculus it has appeared necessary to introduce a special equivalent to a category of adjectives that is absent in most logical languages.⁷⁶ In modern generative semantics and related fields of mathematical linguistics, the comparison of the functional elements of mathematical logic and corresponding forms and words in natural languages (such as a universal quantifier \forall and English *all*) has become the favorite object of studies.⁷⁷

One of the main theoretical results of these studies has been the introduction of a notion of a *metalanguage* coined to discuss an *object language*. In the case of the conversational natural languages that do not strictly obey grammatical rules only some fragments of a system may be discussed in terms of such universal metalinguistic elements as Jakobsonian differential phonological features.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Among later semiotic studies in this area one may mention a series of outstanding works of J. Chmielewski who has shown an exact correspondence of the syntax of Archaic Chinese and the structures of mathematical logic.

⁷⁶ A comparison to such natural languages as Yukagir (in Northern Siberia) where a verb is used where in English corresponds an adjective, helps to see that one may speak of different degrees of similarity between natural and artificial means of communication.

⁷⁷ Among those logical schools whose contribution to modern semiotics is prominent, the Warsaw-Krakow one succeeded in discovering main features of semantics of formalized languages as well as in finding elegant solutions to the description of syntactic relations. Logical semiotics has become the most advanced formalized area of research on sign systems. The "linguistic turn" in the history of thought of the 20th century was so influential mainly due to the work of such scientists, who, like Russell and Wittgenstein, had started with the investigation of the logical languages and then applied similar concepts in an attempt to understand the everyday speech. In Hjelmslev's words, "modern logistics has revealed the fact that scientific sign-systems, e.g. those employed in mathematics, must be languages, and that the structure of such languages is by no means fundamentally different from linguistic structure as a whole. That is why modern logicians consider the languages studied by linguists as a particular case within a larger class" (Hjelmslev 1973: 121). According to Carnap, the task of philosophy is semiotic analysis, including the study of the abstract part of everyday language and of the language of sciences (Carnap 1942).

⁷⁸ In case of metamathematics, *metasemiosis* (Curry 1977: 61, 89) can be applied only to a language of a formalized structure.

2.2. Linguistics as a branch of semiotics

A difference between logical trend in semiotics founded by Peirce and the concept of semiology based on linguistics as developed by Saussure (1857–1913) is not necessarily as large as may be inferred from many recent publications.⁷⁹ Among important new ideas contained in Saussure's Course (the first posthumous edition: Saussure 1916) was that of the oppositions constituting the semiotic system. Being influenced by Durkheim's general sociological outlook, Saussure was the first to develop a new theory of natural language as a social institution. Stressing the role of value for a semiotic system of natural languages, Saussure pointed out resemblances between the sign systems and economic systems also based on an axiological principle.⁸⁰ Although this idea opens a new vista not only in semiotic studies, only

The modern theory of formal grammars oriented towards mathematically concise definitions can be valid only in so far as the requirement for metasemiosis is fulfilled. Two most important examples of grammars in the history of linguistics are built for the languages following exact rules: Panini's Sanskrit grammar in ancient India and the *Palais Royal* grammar of French constructed for a formalized system of the language. In Europe for de Saussure the latter represented a paradigmatical example of a synchronous linguistic description. Trying to apply the notion of metalanguage to non-formalized linguistic systems, Hjelmslev suggested a completely new approach. According to his innovative idea, the term *metasemiology* may be used in the sense of a scientific metasystem studying the semiotic objects (called *semiologies*) that are not in themselves sciences. Metasemiology is describing the *substance* of the signs: the objects designated by the signified and the sounds (or graphic and other visual elements) of the signifiers.

⁷⁹ Peirce joined the trend of logical thinking about signs that started in antiquity and continued through the Middle Ages. Saussure's sign theory developed certain ideas from the rational grammars of the post-Renaissance period which were another offshoot of essentially the same line of thought. Saussure's connection to early Greek concept of sign has been explored recently.

⁸⁰ The intrinsic value of the elements of a system was made clear by Saussure already in his work postdicting the "sonantic coefficients" (later known as laryngeals) at an early stage of Indo-European. Comparative linguistics still remains the main example of an exact humanitarian semiotic science as its postdictions (conjectures about the history) can be falsified (in Popper's sense): thus in 1927, Kurylowicz found in Hittite (after its decipherment by Hrozny) traces of these phonemes that were reconstructed by Saussure long before. The best account of the algebraic character of that work of Saussure in relation to his Course was made by Hjelmslev (Hjelmslev 1959: 29).

a few special studies deal with this topic in the economic and social theory.

In the early 1940s Louis Hjelmslev sought to rethink Saussure's *semiology* by combining results of modern structural linguistics and of the first applications of similar methods to anthropology, as well as the ideas of the Vienna and Warsaw-Krakow logical schools. Hjelmslev began the appropriate section of his as yet underestimated *Prolegomena* by suggesting a necessity of an *immanent* (internal logical) approach to sign systems that would make it possible to study from the same general point of view such different fields as literature, art, music, history and also logic and mathematics. Still, he supposed that natural language is in a privileged position among all other semiotic structures since they all may be translated into it. This may be explained by the extraordinary freedom in the shaping of new linguistic signs combined into longer texts consisting of an unlimited number of words (even if false, contradictory, inexact, or unaesthetic). Natural language differs in this respect from other goal-oriented semiotic structures (Hjelmslev 1943).⁸¹ Hjelmslev was particularly interested in the analogy between language and games; later on a synthesis was suggested in an image of linguistic games developed in the later writings of Wittgenstein. Hjelmslev chose some quite *simple semiotic systems* to be analyzed such as traffic signals, dial telephone, striking turret clock, Morse code, systems the prisoners use while knocking at the wall in jail. This kind of research was developed by Zaluzniak in his excellent study of street signals. In this work Zaluzniak pointed out some concrete relations to which equivalents (like, for instance, synonyms) may be found in natural language. He has also paid attention to the possibility to compare some of the problems discussed in connection to these simple systems to main problems of the semiotic study of *law*.⁸² At approximately the time

⁸¹ Similar ideas on the role of natural language have led to the distinction made in the works of the Moscow-Tartu Semiotic School between linguistic primary systems and the secondary modelling ones using language as their plane of expression.

⁸² Particularly detailed are semiotic studies in the field of primitive law or pre-law. At an early stage of the development the pre-law systems are still very closely connected to the other types of signs, particularly those of magic. Thus it becomes possible to clarify the strictly semiotic character of some of these systems and to apply to their reconstruction methods close to those of comparative linguistics.

when Hjelmslev had worked on his main book, the semiotic ideas of Saussure were developed by Buysens (1943, 1956) who gave a first sketch of different sign systems and suggested principles of their functional classification. Later general surveys of systems of signs had Buysens's work as their base that they have tried to expand.

2.3. Syntax, semantics, pragmatics

In the twenties and thirties it appeared to most scientists that a purely syntactical analysis without the consideration of meaning might be sufficient for a description of a sign system. The notion of meaning as well as pragmatic context of the signs use had escaped the attention of scholars as well as of the avant-garde artists and art historians to whom the internal structure of an object seemed the only relevant object of study.⁸³ In all the fields of semiotic activities, beginning with Malevich's suprematic geometrical figures to Carnap's logical syntax and similar research of his colleagues of the Viennese circle, the internal (purely syntactical) relations among the elements seemed much more important than their semantic interpretation or pragmatic use. The Russian formalist (or "morphological") school of literary studies declared (beginning with Viktor Shklovskij) that the color of a banner positioned on the top of a fortress was not relevant. In a way, modern avant-garde art performed a peculiar semiotic experiment divorcing the plane of expression from that of content. However, it becomes increasingly questionable whether or not the isolation of the syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic branches of semiotics is indeed possible and viable.⁸⁴ Games (such as chess in Saussure's famous

⁸³ Hilbert's program of axiomatic approach to formal mathematical systems (Hilbert 1926, 1928) still remained attractive (for instance, Hilbert's views were cited as exemplary in Kurylowicz's well known work on theoretical linguistics). Although Gödel's theorem had been proved by that time, its results had not yet been generalized (see a discussion in Penrose 1990).

⁸⁴ With the development of Propp's model, semiotics became associated to the technique of narratology. When analyzing Propp's perception in the West, one is amazed at the long period that divided the continuation of his formal syntactical analysis of the morphology of the fairy-tale (1928) and the apprehension of the importance of his following work on the semantic and pragmatic interpretation of the same scheme (cf. on this difference: Ginzburg 1989: xii). The speech acts

example, also used independently in metamathematics) as well as logical calculi and some aesthetic structures (in music) were seen by Hjelmslev as systems showing only the pure scheme of the structure as such. These semiotic structures cannot be interpreted in a logical or mathematical sense. This gives them a specific semiotic status. The same semiotic problem in connection to modern visual art and music was discussed by Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1964). The absence of one of the planes means a deformation of the aesthetic sign⁸⁵.

2.4. Semiotics of texts

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) was the first to discover a difference between an abstract linguistic system of signs and a concrete utterance in which each sign gets another “metalinguistic” function due to its role in the whole of discourse.⁸⁶ Twenty years later, this distinction was rediscovered by the great French linguist Émile Benveniste (1902–1976).⁸⁷ This field of research studying discourse as a field

theory helped to find adequate ways of description of such pragmatically important units of natural language as performative sentences.

⁸⁵ Hjelmslev has shown that one-plane semiotic systems that cannot be interpreted have semiotic features different from natural language (Hjelmslev’s so called commutation test as generalization of phonological methods was introduced to study relations between the expression plane and the plane of content in natural language).

⁸⁶ Following the research of Hermann Cohen and Martin Buber in philosophical anthropology, Mikhail Bakhtin discussed the problem of the relation of *I* and *Thou* (*Other*) also from a linguistic and general semiotic point of view. Starting with his early aesthetic writings, Bakhtin became interested in the way the speech of a person interacting with the author had been represented in artistic writings. The results of Vossler’s school, particularly Spitzer’s stylistic studies (1961, 1988) have been incorporated in metalinguistic research of this kind. The different forms of direct speech, quasi-direct speech, reported speech, transposed discourse and pseudo-objective motivation as studied by Vossler, Lerch, Lorck and Spitzer were subsumed into a larger metalinguistic scheme. These new perspectives of philological analysis trespassing the restrictions of a traditional linguistic one appeared to be close to the philosophical study of the Other. The aesthetic problem of the relation between author and hero had been a continuation of the study of indirect speech and other types of discourse.

⁸⁷ This gap between system and text constituted the main point of his semiotic theory. He suggested that the semiotic approach would be possible only insofar as linguistic signs or separate words are concerned, whereas the structure of texts

much broader than a sentence (which has remained the upper limit of strictly linguistic study) became quite popular among the scholars applying pragmatic methods. In the writings of the Tartu–Moscow School an attempt was made to overcome the line separating system and text (that was evident at least for semioticians following Bakhtin and Benveniste). In the works of the scholars belonging to this school, literary, folkloric⁸⁸ and mythological texts as well as works of different arts became the main objects of study.

2.5. Information theory

Although the works by Carnap, Bar Hillel and other scholars aimed at measuring semantic information⁸⁹ were very close to the goal of semiotic research, there still remains a problem of the relationship between the latter and the mathematical theory of information. This branch of mathematics as founded by Shannon, Kolmogorov and other scientists studies information of every kind and its transmittance through channels. The case of discrete transfer of information is relevant for linguistic studies as well as for all other (secondary) modeling semiotic systems using discrete code of natural language as their plane of expression. As shown by Roman Jakobson, the informational

should be studied by semantics. At the time when this idea became popular among French semioticians, Barthes introduced the term “*translinguistics*” (Barthes 1969) corresponding to what Benveniste (1969) had suggested to call *semantics* and Bakhtin had designated as *metalinguistics*.

⁸⁸ The special attention given to folklore genres starting with the pioneering works of Bogatyrev and Jakobson of the late 1920s can be explained by a transparent character of the rules of generating a text belonging to this category (as shown, for instance, in the above-mentioned classical book by Propp). Mythological studies helped to link a narratological point of view and the discovery of a ritual scheme explaining the origin of a folklore one (cf. Watkins 1995). Thus Propp suggested that the morphology of fairy tales and the sequence of stages in archaic initiation rites are in an isomorphic relationship. In this way formal analysis has led to universal insights into general laws governing human societies (as in the book on kingship by Hocart published almost simultaneously with Propp’s study: Hocart 1927). A similar approach was used in lectures by Olga Freidenberg to support a semiotical critical study of traces of the irrational archaic features preserved in such modern institutions as court, state and army (cf. Freidenberg 1997).

⁸⁹ Hauffe 1981 with references.

dichotomy of code and message clarifies some important points referring to the relation between a language system and a text.

In the electroacoustical works of Fant and other scholars, based on Jakobsonian universal system of phonemic differential features, the latter are studied from the point of view of the information theory. Continuous messages that are particularly important for mass media are still much less investigated by semioticians, with the only important exception being film semiotics.

Particularly important seem general semiotic problems related to information and its role in modern scientific outlook⁹⁰ and their exploration in connection to language and poetry. Kolmogorov who worked on mathematical foundations of the theory of information suggested main principles of the probabilistic poetics. It appears possible to combine it with the statistical study of verse founded by Andrej Belyj (1980–1934), particularly in his articles of 1910 (Belyj 1985). In these early studies Belyj suggested a whole program of turning aesthetics into an exact science using experimental methods.

⁹⁰ Pavel Florenskij (1882–1937; executed in the time of Stalin's purges after being kept in a Northern Russian camp for political prisoners) was among the first to suggest the opposition of *Logos* or "ectropy" (represented by culture and cult) to the second principle of thermodynamics determining the growth of *entropy* (cf. Ivanov 1995). Approximately at the same time Szilárd (1898–1964) published his study on the entropy being diminished by an interference of a thinking person measuring a physical process and serving as a paradoxical Maxwell's demon (Szilárd 1929). According to later cybernetic works by Wiener and Brillouin a probable explanation of the difference in the minus/plus sign between the "negentropy" (negative entropy = Florenskij's ectropy) or *information* (in the sense of Shannon's mathematical information theory) and entropy may be understood in a similar vein. Suggesting a special *pneumatosphere* (from Greek πνεύμα "soul, spirit" to Florenskij) — *semiosphere* (sphere of signs in the sense of Lotman 1990) based on the principles of exact science. In that case we may say that the works of Teilhard and Vernadskij suggest a general tendency of the growth of the amount of information. The arrow of time in the human biological evolution as well as in the history of noosphere/ pneumatosphere/ semiosphere is defined by this tendency just as the time direction in the physical world is measured according to the second law of thermodynamics.

2.6. The theory of decipherment

Semiotic studies of the typology of writing were connected to the successes of the decipherment and cryptography theory. The latter was developed in the light of Shannon's mathematical theory of information. In his article on this subject Shannon suggested a general probabilistic approach showing that a relatively short text (not exceeding 20 signs) is sufficient for the decipherment if a language is known. Several magnificent successes in decipherment have been connected to a sophisticated system relating the type of writing to a certain linguistic set of characteristics.⁹¹ Outstanding successes in deciphering a number of unknown systems of writing are significant not only from an internal semiotic point of view. They show the generally high level of research connected to fundamentals of human knowledge. In a way an important part of natural sciences can be interpreted as similar to cryptographic work.⁹²

⁹¹ One of the most remarkable achievements in this area was made by a Russian linguist Nevskij (1892–1937; executed at the time of Stalin's terror). To discover the shape of Tangut (Hsi-Hsia) words he studied their Tibetan transcriptions as well as correspondences to the other Sino-Tibetan languages. His first publication in the field has remained the best introduction to the Tangut language even for those who did not agree with some of his results; although delayed, 40 years later a publication of his other works that contained a large comparative dictionary of the dead Tangut language caused a revival of Tangut studies in Russia, Japan, China and Europe. Gelb's (1963) theoretical study of writing that has remained the main semiotic work in the field was a continuation of his important contribution to the decipherment of Luwian hieroglyphics. The marvellous achievement of Ventris and Chadwick was based on the interpretation of Ventris' grid and Kroeber's triads. Approximately at the same time, Yuri Knorozov achieved important results in deciphering Maya glyphs (cf. Kelley 1976) basing himself on a formal quantitative theory of the layers of language in its relation to writing. Shevoroshkin's study of typology of sound chains in different languages helped him in the general description of Carian writing. Although some details of the phonetic interpretation of letters of Carian alphabet have been corrected in the light of recently studied Carian-Egyptian bilinguals, the general conclusion about the closeness of the language to Luwian has been confirmed.

⁹² This approach was shown to be not only a metaphor when Gamov first suggested a linguistic model in genetic studies. Although his original attempt at decipherment was not successful, later achievements were partly due to this general attitude.

2.7. Neurosemiotics and the functional asymmetry of the brain. Biology and culture

If the achievements of human knowledge were made possible by the coevolution of brain and language,⁹³ the main part of it should be connected to the dominant (in a major part of population, left) hemisphere that is responsible for speech, logical thinking, counting and other operations with discrete signs and objects. According to Eccles, self-consciousness is connected to particular zones of the left hemisphere (Popper, Eccles 1977; Eccles 1994; 1995). Since the linguistic abilities are directly connected to shaping the structure of the speech zones of the dominant hemisphere, it seems that the coevolution of brain and language is a cross-point of the biological and sociocultural development of the noosphere. The first glimpses of understanding the respective role of the two large hemispheres of the brain were known by the middle of the previous century. But it was the great English neurologist Hughlings Jackson (1835–1911) who came to the general conclusion on “the duality of the brain”⁹⁴ (Jackson 1958). Due to the research on aphasia, split-brain studies and other new experimental methods, the neuropsychological and neurolinguistic studies have become one of the most promising fields of research.

⁹³ The idea was widely discussed in several evolutionary and paleoneurological studies of the last decades, see references in Ivanov 1998; Monod 1970; Eccles 1995; the last comprehensive study (almost completely neglecting an important aspect of the hemispheric specialization maybe as a sort of counterbalancing a somewhat exaggerated interest in it in the previous literature): Deacon 1997.

⁹⁴ Roman Jakobson who considered Jackson to be one of the founders of the modern linguistics (Jakobson 1990: 116, 125–126, 485, 511) paid particular attention to his discussion of the distinction between automatic verbal utterances like *Thank God* and the normal speech (Jackson 1958: 135). As Roman Jakobson has commented on Jackson’s conclusions summing up some results of the recent Russian experimental work: “It is characteristic that these zero parts of the speech get easily misinterpreted or simply lost by subjects with a fully active left but simultaneously inactivated right hemisphere. The same situation frequently befalls violent swearing or cursing words and, on the other hand, endearments and other ritualized formulas of courtly etiquette” (Jakobson 1990: 505). These conclusions of the neurolinguistic studies seem important for the understanding of the different functions of linguistic communication.

2.8. Symbolism of psychoanalysis and archetypes

In Freud's book on the interpretation of dreams published just in the very beginning of the 20th century, a whole system of the symbolism of the unconsciousness and some methods of their interpretation have been discussed. During the following century the concepts of psychoanalysis have been studied and criticized from different points of view including the semiotic one. As shown by Benveniste in a special article, many comparisons of this system to those of natural languages suggested by Freud are not valid. But the symbols themselves are extraordinarily interesting as many parallels to them are found in archaic mythologies as pointed out by Freud. Among those later developments that originally were connected to psychoanalysis, Jung's teaching of archetypes has been particularly well explored from this historical point of view. Many visual archetypes found by Jung in primitive art and religion as well as in the imagery of children and mentally ill people are important also for the semiotic study of human creative psychology.

2.9. Possible non-human sign systems

In connection to the search for other extraterrestrial civilizations several specific semiotic problems have been studied. N. Kardashev has attempted to give a measure of the global amount of information that is contained in all the libraries of the world and to compare it to the energetic possibilities to transmit it to the other possible civilizations. Studying the probable energetic capacities of the civilizations that spread all over their native planetary system specialists in semiotics suggested that another type of sign systems might be used by them. As a message bearing an enormously large amount of information may last a very short period of time, it has been suggested that in such a text there might be no discrete signs at all. The civilization based on a hieroglyphic global text principle may not have equivalent to our system of numbers and that may make the use of our mathematics for the purposes of interstarry communication more difficult than it was supposed, for instance, by Freudenthal in his *Lincos* project.

2.10. History of semiotic studies

Early prehistory of semiotics has been enriched by recent studies on the Greek origins of its name. As Gregory Nagy remarks in the introduction to his important study of the topic, “the word *semiotic*-[...] may be perceived in a new light if we look again at its Greek origins” (Nagy 1990: 200). As stressed by a great Russian semiotician G. Spet (1879–1937; executed at the time of Stalin’s terror) in his important manuscript of 1918 (published recently) and by later historians of science (Coseriu 1975: 122–129), the foundations for a general study of sign were laid down already by St. Augustine in whose writings many future ideas of Peirce had been anticipated. Medieval sign theory recently has been revived due to the work of such authors as Eco. He not only studied it with his associates (Eco 1984; Eco, Marmo 1989), but also based on it a part of his famous first novel (cf. Coletti 1988). It has also been discovered recently that such postmedieval authors as John Thomas (John Poinset, 1589–1644) who synthesized the results of the scholastic theory of signs may be considered as predecessors of Peirce particularly in their classification of signs (Deely 1985; Herculano de Carvalho 1961). Development of semiotics in post-Renaissance times has become an object of a series of fundamental studies.

3. Some questions for the future studies

A. Place of semiotics among exact disciplines. Semiotics and natural sciences. Information and message in physics.

Although the connections to mathematical logic and the theory of information point to a possible position of semiotics among exact sciences, still most of these possibilities have not yet been fully explored. The exact borders between disciplines are not easily delineated.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Widely spread popular articles and books on sign systems are far away from a strictly defined research. Semiotics is being misused by a number of writers mixing this term with postmodernist literature or superficial trivialities connected to an old-fashioned behaviouristic approach. In many recent books propositions have been repeatedly made concerning a possible future separation of several semiotic disciplines. It remains to be decided whether semiotics should be one

A possible future development of humanities may be connected to establishing a bridge between them and modern natural sciences. Just as tremendous achievements of the molecular biology have been based on the use of the methods and results of chemistry and physics, the time has come to build a new synthetic picture of human culture and its history uniting the facts discovered in the traditional fields of research and the new approach inherent to such disciplines as neuropsychology.

Modern physics has been interested in the problems of the transmission of signals and in the relation of the observer, the device used by the latter and the information received, thus several topics unite semiotics and other sciences.

B. Historical tendency.

The general views of noosphere in Vernadskij's theory (as well as the semiosphere of Lotman) were based on the rational notion of the movement towards the highest type of reasoning while Teilhard (and partly also Florenskij) interpreted a similar idea in a Christian way. Teilhard combined the final aim of the movement (his *Omega*) with the image of Jesus.⁹⁶ The movement towards *Noosphere* (the realm of the Thought and Reason) was suggested as the main trend of the human evolution by Teilhard de Chardin and Vernadskij. According to the *anthropic principle* developed in modern physics the beginning of the movement starts with the formation of the Universe. Particular role of different sign systems and symbols of language, art, mythology and religion in this movement may be discussed. Different kinds of linguistic and semiotic diversity are compared in an attempt to see the possibilities of their preservation in a global capitalist world.

field of research or several. The differences between fields where semiotic methods are applied seem to speak in favour of a split between them. At the same time it is apparent that if there is a certain common core of ideas about signs it might be valid in relation to all the possible kinds of them. Thus if semiotics becomes a science, it is supposed not to be split in two.

⁹⁶ It seems that just a religious aspect of Teilhard's ideas looked hostile to such scientists as Monod (see a remark on Teilhard's Jesuit theology in Monod 1970: 45; 1971: 33, which appears strange having in mind the resolute opposition of the Jesuit order to Teilhard's concepts and works). At the same time some of Monod's statements look pretty close to Teilhard's notions of the direction of time in connection to the development of the brain and the Noosphere.

C. Future of semiotic systems.

What could be the result of the substitution of the methods of cultural transmission (libraries, archives) that have existed for the last 5000 years? Is it possible that the new ways of cultural transmission (mainly through computerized systems linked to the other electronic devices, systems of the virtual reality reconstructing the past etc.) will change some of the human high psychological systems such as memory? Can radical transformation of the present-day systems of elementary and high education be suggested on the base of the modern knowledge concerning the possibilities and early critical ages of acquiring different specific systems of signs (mathematical, artistic)? Combining research in artificial intelligence with *neurosciences* promises to yield in the foreseeable future *automatic devices* of a new type to solve problems (for example, the perception of visual signs) that pose great difficulties for computers today. Computer methods form the basis of bio-information technology and bio-technology, which promise radical advances in applied molecular biology and medicine. Natural languages may and should be compared not only to the software of computers, but also to the different artificial languages of mathematical logic to which the programming languages are connected historically. Semantics of the natural languages can be approached (as Zadeh suggested) by the fuzzy structures. Is it possible to build artificial systems oriented towards less rigid logical classification and closer to human imagery of art? If computers are models of the logical operations of the left hemisphere, can we try to imitate the non-exact (or fuzzy) way of reasoning of the right hemisphere? How can the system of the genetic transmission of information through messages that is studied in molecular biology be compared to the transmission of culture through linguistic and other symbolic (sign) systems? What are the analogies to genetic mutations in the cultural transmission of information? Is it less stable and reliable than the genetic one?

Pavel Florenskij in his posthumous works suggested the importance of *organoprojection* (the continuation of our body through some technological devices). The same idea was discussed by Niels Bohr in some of his philosophical essays: to him a scientist and his device are united, they constitute one observer. Can a border between a scholar and his library be drawn (compare the episode of the destruction of Don Quijote's library in Cervantes' novel)? The problem of the

borders of our body and our self (mind, consciousness) is not solved in the European science and philosophy. In some Oriental schools of thought (Buddhism) the reality of Self (Cartesian ego) is denied and it is thought that the existence is continued through other bodies. Can a computer program continue some features of its creator? What is the present-day relationship between interiorized signs (in the sense of Piaget and Vygotskij) and the exteriorized computational devices? What are the limits and restrictions of some of the most advanced modern computers in so far as the rigorous thinking is concerned (since most computers compute with approximations with quite inexact results)? How are our concepts of space-time (Bakhtinian *chronotope*) influenced by the modern linguistic and semiotic research? What world-views are compatible with the results of the modern neurosemiotics? Is the role of causality changed in the studies of man?

Conclusion

Semiotic and linguistic studies of the 20th century have been important mostly in two senses: on one hand they have opened a road for comparative research on the origin and development of language and other systems of signs adding a new dimension to the history of culture (this aspect is studied in detail in the first part of my paper). On the other hand, they have shown a possibility of uniting different fields of humanities around semiotics suggesting a way to trespass separation and atomisation of different trends in investigating culture (that side of the development is described in the second part of the paper). In the 21st century one may hope for closer integration of semiotics and exact and natural sciences. The points of intersection with the mathematical logic, computer science and information theory that already exist might lead to restructuring theoretical semiotics making it a coherent and methodologically rigid discipline. At the same time, the continuation of neurosemiotic studies promises a breakthrough in understanding those parts of the work of the brain that are most intimately connected to culture. From this point of view semiotics may play an outstanding role in the synthesis of biological science and humanities. In my mind that makes it a particularly important field of future research. To practical applications of these

studies a work on possible engineering models of the brain may belong that will be oriented to solution of problems, which have remained beyond the possibilities of modern computers. Understanding the sign-and-texts transmission and transformation in the brain may give an impetus to new technological achievements. I am personally very much interested in a possibility to apply a rich set of audio-visual technological means that are now at our disposal to create truly new methods of sign transmission and texts construction not only in the arts and media but also to revolutionize education. In combination with the advances in computer sciences these new potential technologies may completely change the way the young generation learns about the world and its history.

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Семиотика XX века

Семиотические и лингвистические исследования XX века были важны главным образом в двух смыслах — (1) они открыли дорогу для сравнительного исследования происхождения и развития языка и других систем знаков, добавив новое измерение к истории культуры; (2) они показали возможность объединения различных областей гуманитарных наук вокруг семиотики, предлагающей способ нарушить обособленность и раздробленность различных дисциплин, занимающихся исследованиями культуры. В XXI веке можно надеяться на большую интеграцию семиотики и точных и естественных наук. Пункты пересечения с математической логикой, информатикой и информационной теорией, которые уже существуют, могли бы привести к реструктурированию теоретической семиотики, превращая ее в последовательную и методологически стойкую дисциплину. В то же время, продолжение нейросемиотических исследований обещает прорыв в понимании тех частей работы мозга, которые наиболее тесно связаны с культурой. С этой точки зрения семиотика может играть выдающуюся роль в синтезе биологической науки и гуманитарных наук. Полагаю, что это делает семиотику особенно важной областью будущих исследований.

Kahekümnennda sajandi semiootika

XX sajandi semiootilised ja lingvistilised uurimused olid olulised eelkõige kahes mõttes: (1) nad avasid tee keele ja teiste märgisüsteemide päritolu ja arengu võrdlevatele uuringutele; (2) näitasid kätte võimaluse erinevate humanitaarteaduse valdkondade ühinemiseks semiootika ümber, mis pakkus välja mooduse seni eksisteerinud distsiplinaarsete piiride ületamiseks. XXI sajandil on veelgi suurem lootus integreerida semiootika ja täppis- ning loodusteadused. Olemasolevad lõikepunktid matemaatilise loogika, informaatika ja informatsiooniteooriaga võiksid tuua endaga kaasa teoreetilise semiootika restruktureerumise, muutes ta järjekindlaks ja metodoloogiliselt pädevaks distsipliiniks. Samas lubab neurosemiootiliste uuringute areng läbimurret kultuuriga tihedalt seotud ajuosade tööprintsibiist arusaamises. Sellest vaatepunktist võib semiootikal olla otsustav roll bio- ja humanitaarteaduste sünteesis, mis on minu jaoks eriti oluline tulevaste uuringute valguses.

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(guest editor: Harri Veivo)

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