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Modeling Sunaisthesis: A semiotic analysis of friendship and intimacy

Master's Thesis

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## **Annotation**

*Keywords: Friendship, Dialogical Semiosis, Reflexivity, Semiotic Self*

The focus of this thesis is to create a novel semiotic framework for approaching and understanding the concepts of intimacy and friendship in adulthood. In doing so, this work takes an interdisciplinary approach towards its research object, combining theories from social psychology, dialogical semiosis, Lotmanian cultural semiotics, and biosemiotics. Additionally, this work analyzes a corpus of contemporary English language literature (the short stories *Sophia* by B.J. Novak, *Good Old Neon* by David Foster Wallace, and the novella *The Pole* by J.M. Coetzee) in an attempt to proffer an empirical dimension to the thesis. Further, this thesis also offers a novel model called the *Pragamasphere*, which models the nature of discourse between two friends engaged in a relationship of joint-perception.

## Table of Contents

<b>Preamble: A Series of Houses</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction and Structure</b> .....	11
0.1 Research Questions.....	13
0.2 Expected Results.....	13
0.3 Defining a Friendship, Briefly.....	14
<b>1. “The Crucial Dream of our Psyche”: Towards the Dialogical Self in Friendship</b> .....	18
1.1 Structure of the Semiotic Self: From James to Archer.....	18
1.2 The Intrapersonal Dialogue.....	22
1.2.1 Towards a Multi-Positional Self.....	22
1.2.2 Specific Positions Within the Dialogical Self Model .....	23
1.2.3 Temporary and Permanent Visitors.....	26
1.3 Childhood Experience as the Foundation of Adult Intimacy.....	29
1.3.1 Reflexivity and <i>Sunaisthesis</i> .....	29
1.3.2 The Crucial Dream.....	31
1.4 Chapter Summary.....	32
<b>2. The <i>Pragmasphere</i>: Modeling <i>Sunaisthesis</i></b> .....	34
2.1 Semiosphere and Explosion.....	34
2.1.1 Semiosphere and <i>Sunaisthesis</i> .....	36
2.2 Mediation Between Self and World and the Lingering Trace.....	37
2.2.1 Encountering a New Person ( <i>eros</i> ).....	37
2.2.2 Becoming a Permanent Visitor ( <i>agape</i> ).....	40
2.2.3 The <i>Pragmasphere</i> ( <i>pragma</i> ).....	41
2.3 Recognition.....	44
2.4 Chapter Summary.....	47
<b>3. Representations of Friendship and Intimacy in Contemporary English Literature</b> .....	49
3.1 Friendship and Love as Aesthetic Experiences.....	49
3.2 Sophia the Sex Robot: Artificial Intelligence in Love.....	50
3.3 Love: A Vice-grip, A Master.....	56
3.4 What can we squeeze through the keyhole? Is authenticity crucial?.....	59
3.5 Chapter Summary.....	66

Conclusion.....	69
References.....	73
Kokkuvõte.....	77

**Preamble: A Series of Houses**

*Life happens nowhere but in a series of apartments, a series of houses, student dormitories, cabins, tents, shanties, and prison cells. Each of which is memorable in their own right and in various states of dereliction, with different colored walls, and door knobs that rest in the palm in mundanely unique ways. It happens in backyards, during barbecues surrounded by one's own family and friends, and sometimes amongst oily handed acquaintances who tell stories of conquest and about the BMW they are restoring. It happens at fraternity parties, and graduations. It happens at weddings and in courtrooms and commutes to factory shifts. We drift between these houses and barbecues and sometimes they fit and other times there's some unsayable quality that doesn't quite feel right and we move on to the next one. Imagine, for a moment, a full sun day in late July that is warm but not hot, the wind is catching the flagpole at the top of the hill and beyond it the white sails cutting across the lake, beating into the wind. Take this image, and add a man who is not old but who has crossed the threshold into the early stages of maturity wearing black slacks and a white shirt un-tucked. If you have him now in your mind's eye you can watch him walking up the hill back to one of the many houses of his life, past a woman, seated in a lawn chair – long legged and lemonade sipping – holding a dog by its leash. She waves to the young man, and the young man sends a nod back in her direction. A quiet and routine moment soon forgotten by the lady of the lawn but lingers in the mind of our young man as he moves through the series of houses which he spends his life in. What can we say about these moments? Innocuous but sincere. We see the young man, years later, beard bound and babbling to anyone who will listen. Beer drunk and befuddled he backs his automobile into an embankment and – luckily for him – three strangers walking nearby and speaking in a foreign tongue, help him push the car back onto the road. The man thanks them and drives away. It is Christmas Eve.*

*Standing a day later in one of those transient apartments in the life of another – some one hundred and fifty kilometers away from the accident – he is two feet planted on a parquet floor staring out the window at some low slung concrete apartment buildings. A Christmas afternoon free from snow. A light rain falls. His lover, languishing in a bed wedged into the corner of the room beckons for his return but our man focused on some flag of a homeland which is foreign to him, limp against a white pole (in someone's barbecue backyard no doubt) stretching above the rooftops of the neighborhood where many people just like himself have loved and felt the seeds of*

*hate and resentment gestating passively inside of their chests. The terrible tragedy of life is that it can only be examined in reverse although a life's events can only be lived sequentially. So, if this is a forward to an inquiry into the nature of friendship and love the document will urge us to look inside of the derelict houses of our collective pasts. Each one unique in its own right, and by virtue of the universality of our experience – which in many ways transcends the bounds of culture – each one relatively similar. The man who was only yesterday lonely and old on Christmas Eve, without the hearth of familial intimacy, is pulled into a youthful reverdie where he was beckoned by a lover whose widely stretched arms were like that of a Christ figure or maybe a scarecrow, and he is thrust into an indecisive moment. At once optimistic and fearful. To break it down further: brought to cheer and sometimes tears by the loving embrace of a woman who sees something inside of his body (or perhaps hovering in the corner of a room in a house no longer occupied) that she finds comforting and loveable. A tinge of the sublime as in the happy surprise when decades old carpet is removed and hardwood floors are found underneath. Our man – and our woman for that matter too – are not so blind as to miss the significance of this moment, the fulfillment of this unresolved desire to share, somehow, and to enliven the rooms that they are confined to with decor that fits the space in just the right way. But on the other side (and the more nefarious one at that) there is the haunting prospect that this sharredness entails. Namely, settling into a life that is comforting and free from strife which ultimately – we must be able to say – is the absence of the invigorating essence of a life lived passionately. It is this very zest that keeps comfort at bay and keeps both the man and the woman moving boxes from house to house, although to what end? This is the equation that nobody can balance and no amount of qualitative analysis can solve. A variable in some sort of internal calculus that varies between the persons and ultimately differentiates our experiences and desires. How much of this has to do with the role of culture and how much of it has to do with the role of the individual's hardwiring (the old nature or nurture question) is similarly difficult to calculate.*

*The man finds himself one day in the not so distant future (or was it the past?) sitting on a bench hemmed in by pine trees and a different lake in a homeland whose language does not hit his ear in the right way, the amount of consonants overwhelming and tongue tying, keeping company in a group of others. He watches them splashing in the water like children although they too have moved from those bedrooms already some time ago. It is in this moment where everything feels as if it has come together just right. As if the variable has finally been solved for,*

*as if things are fitting into place for the first time in a very long time. It has something to do with the atmosphere, something about the way the breeze is hitting our man's face. His moment of meditation is broken by a wet arm around the shoulder and a smile on the face of one of the swimmers whom he accompanied to the lake. The swimmer speaks to the man in a language he can understand and urges him to swim with the rest of the group. To feel the soft water against his skin and to wade belly up in the gentle water, the surface of which is unmarred by wake from any vessel. So the man obliges, walks to the end of the wooden dock whose fingers stretch out to the shore beyond and jumps in. So there our man is, lying belly up while the swimmers around him paddle lazily, speaking softly, giggling, their voices obscured by the surface of the water of which the man's ears rest just beneath. Now our man knows exactly where he is. He can know the moments in his sequential life that led him to this experience, and realizes it is moments like these that everyone is chasing, disruptions to the stale punctuation marks of mundanity. But what's tragic here is that we all know (from experience or perhaps we can just venture a guess) that the moment will quickly be subsumed by traffic jams and tired kisses on the cheek and a sink full of dishes. Like Beauvoir's Adventurer, our man finds himself unmoored, oscillating between the poles of freedom and meaning. He keeps his gaze fixed on the sky above him, watches clouds pass over the blue, and contrails of distant airplanes being cut and subsequently ballooning out – the sky oozing its fat.*

*The Other, of course, can have at least two different faculties. The Other can pull our man to either side of the pole.*

*The lover languishing in the corner of the room on a wet Christmas afternoon remembers too the lemonade moments of a summer in which she formerly resided. In these moments she sought comfort in watercolor palettes, sitting on a bench at the top of the hill committing the scene unfolding on the lake (a regatta of some kind, in her depiction at least) to a private artistic archive. When the boats reach the shore that afternoon she bicycles to her cottage, makes tea and sets herself to composing a still life image. She paints a bowl of fruit sitting on the dining room table, controlling the simple contours of the banana, excavating freedom from peach pits. Her mother, appearing in the doorway of the kitchen, begins asking the woman questions, and not trivial ones. Something about the whereabouts of her father, something about how he did not come home the previous night and that he is not picking up his cell phone. The woman tells her mother she knows nothing of his whereabouts, probably, she imagines, he is somewhere*

*searching for the bottom of a bottle but tells her mother that he might be out on the lake, sailing towards some distant arm out where the sweet water turns brackish. But such is the life of the woman and the nature of the cottage in which she only calls home in the summer, although her parents heed it as such on a year round basis. It is true that in the previous autumn she placed a simple suitcase in the trunk of the neighbor man's BMW and set off for the city, towards its seductive halogen glow, but the final exams have been graded by this point, and the money for the student dorm has run out and she is home earning it back at one of those boardwalk cafes and quietly counting the days until her next departure.*

*A life spent waiting.*

*That is, it has been lived in a series of coffee shop queues and semi-annual dental appointments. It has been marked by the periods of time between the days that seem to resonate, in one way or another, in some kind of subtly satisfying way. These, the long winded days which are often forgotten, are measured by absence. The barometer for the mundane: absence teaches us that environmental stimulation is the critical aiming point of an otherwise wobegon consciousness. Whether this stimulation engenders positive or negative feelings is besides the point. Rather, the point being that any sort of disruption to the mundane and procedural essence of a life spent in a waiting room should be considered remarkable. It is worth noting that these moments are – almost always – hinged on experience with another.*

*When the man emerges from the water nothing substantial has changed in his environment, or in his ability to somehow make sense of it. That is, he still cannot understand the language that the group at the lake are speaking to each other. The trees still bend when caught by the wind in the same fashion, but by the movement of his experience, the sequential thrust towards a dark and uncertain endpoint, he is able to mark this moment. He is able to tether himself to this moment: a few brush strokes on the center panel of the triptych that makes up the story he tells himself about himself, or something like that. Upon intrapersonal interrogation, reflection, he is unable to imagine why this is the case, really.*

*As for the woman, when her departure day finally comes around her father is not to be found either in the house, the surrounding acreage of coniferous growth, or on any sailing vessel that cuts across the lake that the woman no longer watercolors. This time, the neighbor – gripped by some sort of respiratory illness – is confined to his small home in the village and instead offers the woman the keys to his BMW for her to make the short but always reflective*

*journey back towards the city and the life that she has built there but ultimately had to pause. She can keep the car for the time being, he says. He has others. The woman packs her things in the car's trunk by herself this time. She is unassisted by mother who spends more and more time these days pinned to a rattan chair in the living room, drinking coffee and alternating between watching television and staring passively out the window. She doesn't say much these days.*

*The roads are not heavily trafficked. It is a country where, when one breaches the city limits, travels by car a few lazy kilometers beyond its municipal confines, they find themselves surrounded by open fields and pine trees. This is the country where our woman grew up, the city to her a beacon of something. A construct that possesses the ingredients for identity construction, the ability to create an enrapturing and artificial tale of herself free from the censorial gaze of the trees. Of mothers. Of the white sails in summer time.*

*So our man, along with his consonant tongued colleagues pack themselves and their belongings into their own personal vehicle. Our man sits in the middle seat of the auto's back row, 'sitting on the hump' as his own personal mother used to say although he has no detailed memory of the curvature or texture of the hump in his own personal mother's own personal car. So the group sets off at a laconic summer evening pace down the tertiary dirt roads of the countryside back towards the highway that will return them to the city, and the parquet floored apartments in which they will cook dinner and light candles and eventually fall asleep. The driver of the car lights a cigarette and increases the volume of the radio. His front passenger rolls down the window and pushes her arm into the breeze, her hand deflecting upwards and downwards in the pressure differential created by the oncoming air and stares off into the fields lit by an encroaching twilight. The front passenger now, pointing at something in the distance, a group of cows. Our man cranes his neck towards the window to look as well. They strike him as incredibly ordinary, a pastoral scene – although beautiful – does not disclose any abnormal behavior. That is, the cows are grazing in the field, some smaller than others, some brown and others spotted. The passenger is saying something in the constant heavy language that our man cannot understand, urging the driver to look as well. That's when our man notices that the front passenger is gesturing towards a cow that is lying on its side. Splayed out latterly, either resting or deceased, he is unsure of which and ventures a guess that it is indeed the topic of the conversation between the driver and the woman in the front passenger's seat. And in the very next frame, just as our man takes his eyes off the road in front of the car and traces the*

*passenger seat occupant's finger towards the maybe deceased cow, there is impact. Not too violent, but certainly front end rearranging. The car has made contact with the BMW that was just in front of it, apparently, having slammed on its brakes to avoid hitting a deer which now stands completely still a few meters in front of the BMW, unblinking, surveying the damage. The swimmers are silent. They remain in the car. Our man fixes his gaze through the front windshield, and he can see antlers. That's when she steps out of the car, and that's when their eyes meet through the windshield*

## Introduction and Structure

The nature of friendship, as a concept, has been pondered since antiquity. These inquiries have ranged from philosophical ponderings, questions about the roles of biology and psychology, and interpretations of the concept in artistic texts. From this brief description, it seems evident that semiotics has a role in unifying these diffuse lenses through which to understand the phenomenon of friendship and intimacy. The idea of friendship has been of interest to me since my days as a bachelor's student. Although the thesis I submitted for the completion of that degree was a portfolio of fiction, this work was mostly focused around the general themes of intimacy between persons, and the finely tuned domestic systems that allow for these types of relationships to flourish. Broadly speaking, the goal of this thesis is an attempt to bring into conversation different semiotic concepts that help explain how individuals establish these types of intimate relationships with others. Additionally, this thesis will explore the importance of these types of relationships in mediating between one's personal identity and a world which affords the individual a nauseating amount of freedom, and is largely indifferent to her specific place in it. The first chapter of this thesis will be primarily concerned with excavating and explaining different concepts of the self with the goal of gaining insight into semiotic interpretations of the selfhood concept. This will serve as an important first step in laying a groundwork for the ways in which friendship can be modelled semiotically, and the ways in which *true* friendships can serve as important relationships for establishing personal identity in adulthood. To this end, I will explore the ideas of the semiotic self as being composed of a multifaceted dialogue between, personal experience, the physical world, and the culture it finds itself ensconced in. This chapter will attempt to explain the ideas of the self as proffered by George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, Margaret S. Archer, Norbert Wiley, and Hubert J.M. Hermans with a specific focus on understanding how personal identity affords individuals the capacity to select friendships in adulthood. Additionally, the thesis will engage heavily with the ideas of Claus Emmeche whose work in the emerging discipline of the semiotics of friendship has proven invaluable to my own intellectual development.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will present the theoretical groundings of the *pragmasphere* model which I have developed as a means of modelling the discourse between

individuals engaged in these types of intimate relationships in adulthood. An important note to make regarding the usage of the terms *friendship*, and *intimate relationship* is that the two will be used in this thesis as synonymous with one another. The main premise that I am operating under in this work is that these two types of relationships – although to some extent contextually different from one another – operate from the desire to share the world with another. As it will be explained, I argue that these types of relationships differ from friendships in childhood to the extent that they are reflective and are already dependent on an individual's understanding of their position as an independent agent in the world. These relationships merely serve to enhance the human experience by fulfilling the desire for sharedness. This chapter will attempt to extend Kalevi Kull's Recognition Concept of Species to account for the role of recognition in selecting friends. Additionally, this chapter will use concepts from Lotmanian cultural semiotics with a specific focus on the notions of *semiosphere* and *explosion* in order to provide a theoretical outline and justification for the *pragmasphere* model.

The third chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to analyzing the ways in which friendships and intimate relationships are expressed in contemporary English language literature. The goal of this section will be to explicate the ways in which modern conceptions of love and friendship find their cultural cache, and the role that authenticity and desire play in the normative functioning of these relationships. This chapter takes the form of an analysis of a corpus of contemporary English language texts with a focus on analyzing the narrative and discursive strategies used by the authors at representing friendships and romantic bonds. The main thrust of the analysis in this chapter will be defined by an attempt to evaluate the narratives in these creative works against the theoretical backdrop of the concepts explored in the previous chapters of this thesis. The corpus of contemporary texts – as I have defined them – is composed of fictional works by authors primarily from the United States that have been published after the year 2000. These works have been specifically selected as the narratives deal with friendship and intimacy in adulthood, the roles that personal identity, authenticity, and the desire to share play in the formation and maintenance of these bonds.

## 0.1 Research Questions

The questions that this thesis attempts to answer are fourfold and as follows:

- 1) If we understand friendships and intimate relationships in adulthood to be essential and invigorating experiences, what are the mechanisms within the self that allow for them to occur? How do autocommunicative processes assist in the formation of these bonds?
- 2) What is the role of childhood relationships (mainly with primary caregivers) in preparing individuals for experiences of friendship and intimacy in adulthood?
- 3) How do individuals recognize and discriminate between attractive and unattractive qualities in others, and build relationships as a result of this initial moment of recognition?
- 4) How are the ideas expressed in this work regarding the formation of these intimate relationships modeled in contemporary English language literature? Specifically in the short stories “Sophia” by B.J. Novak, “Good Old Neon” by David Foster Wallace, and the novella *The Pole* by J.M. Coetzee.

## 0.2 Expected Results

By addressing the questions listed in the above section, the objective of this thesis is to create a meaningful contribution to the growing body of research in the semiotics of friendship. The expected outcomes of this work will be to create a closer linkage between the semiotic self and the role that friendship plays in its construction, as well as the role that the self plays in selecting friends and partners in adulthood. To this end the thesis will explain why these types of bonds are crucial in the process of mediating between the self and the world in adulthood. This work will attempt to show how the theoretical frameworks of dialogical semiosis, and ideas concerning the semiotic self can be synthesized to create a novel approach towards studying friendship as a semiotic phenomenon. In doing so, the first chapter of this thesis will be concerned with excavating the applicable notions from the works of thinkers who have investigated the semiotic self. Further, this work will attempt to highlight the importance of relationships in childhood (particularly with primary caregivers) in the formation of these preferences in adulthood. Additionally, the work will argue for the relevance of an original

model called the *Pragmasphere* which serves as a way of modeling the dialogic relationship between friends, with an emphasis on the ways in which these types of relationships undergo a constant and reciprocal cycle of maintenance between the involved parties. In addressing the third research question stated in the above section – on the importance of recognition – the thesis will demonstrate the applicability and extension of the biosemiotic concept of species recognition. While this conceptual framework has been applied mainly to concepts in evolutionary biology, I will attempt to showcase how this concept may be extended to account for the moment of recognition in interpersonal human relationships. That is, the role of perceived similarity as the basis through which individuals may discriminate between attractive and unattractive qualities in evaluating potential friends. Finally, this thesis will showcase the ways in which friendships have been represented in literary texts as a means through which insight about the cultural significance of these types of bonds may be gleaned, and ultimately the ways in which these narratives shape the expectations and understandings of individuals with regards to intimate relationships in adulthood. Literary texts also serve as models in which these types of attitudes and feelings towards the most important and beloved others come to be revealed.

### **0.3 Defining a Friendship, Briefly**

Before moving into the first chapter of this thesis's main body it is worth taking stock of some previously expressed ideas regarding friendship that will be essential to this project. In service of having a catalogue of common definitions – particularly with regards to the way the terms friendship and intimacy will be used – we shall first turn to how these ideas have been expressed in philosophical discourse. Famously, Aristotle differentiated between what he designated as friendships of pleasure, friendships of utility, and true or virtuous friendships (Helm 2021). The first two types of friendships may indeed be deficient as Aristotle of course noted, as they appear not to be specific to the individual as such with whom they engage in the relationship with, but merely what the individual affords them. In Book IX of *The Nicomachean Ethics* the condition of a virtuous friendship is described as a sort of jointly held orientation towards the world through the relationship with the friend. Aristotle writes:

Now his being was seen to be desirable because he perceived his own goodness, and such perception is pleasant in itself. He must, therefore, perceive the existence of his friend together with his own, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place (2009: 213).

In the commentary on this passage the editor of this edition invokes the definition of the ancient Greek term *sunaitheanesthai* (later referred to in both this thesis and secondary literature as simply *sunaitheasis*) which is defined as sharing with the friend, “his activities, specifically, discussions. *Perceiving together* seems to bridge both the reflexive perception mentioned above, and the perception of shared activities” (Brown 2009: 472).

Immanuel Kant also classified friendships into three distinctive and not altogether different categories than Aristotle’s. These were dubbed, friendships of need, friendships of taste, and friendships of disposition (Van Impe 2011: 128). For the purpose of this investigation, this thesis will be primarily concerned with studying virtuous friendships, or friendships of disposition. What is fundamental to these types of friendships is a devotion to a certain sense of sharedness. Whether this be in the context of a romantic partnership, or a purely platonic partnership is secondary to this commitment to establishing a context of continuity and sharedness with which to approach the world. With regards to the construction of romantic love (although I think it is very much possible to view platonic love in the same way) philosopher Alain Badiou beautifully emphasizes the role of sharedness in its construction:

When I lean on the shoulder of the woman I love, and see, let’s say the peace of twilight over a mountain landscape, gold-green fields, the shadow of trees, black-nosed sheep motionless behind hedges and the sun about to disappear behind craggy peaks, and know – not from the expression on her face but from the world as it is – that the woman I love is seeing the same world [...] The fact is she and I are now incorporated into this unique Subject, the Subject of love that views the panorama of the world through the prism of our difference, so this world can be conceived, be born, and not simply represent what fills my own individual gaze. (2012: 25-26).

It is certainly folly to imagine that all interpersonal friendly relations will achieve this level of sharedness. Of course, individuals engage in a great variety of interpersonal relationships with each other, and have many relationships that can be classified as either being purely based on either utility or pleasure. Very basically, it is possible to conceive of friendship as being an intersubjective relationship based on “feelings of liking and trust” (Elżanowski 2016: 70) that people enter into freely as a product of their own personal agency. Thus, a friend may have certain connotations of exclusivity to the extent that these types of relationships involve a process of choosing, or preferencing certain people over others (Epstein 2006: 2). In the same article, Elżanowski also argues that friendships (ones we may regard as friendships of utility or friendships of need) are also important alliances that persons establish in order to mediate conflicts or ensure a sense of physical safety (2016: 73). It will be shown in this work that these

types of relationships (although not deficient necessarily) probably do not count as friendships in the way the word is being defined here. While they are certainly relationships of camaraderie and strive to establish states of stability and safety, they are not serving the same purpose as those ‘true friendships’ or loving relationships which engender the type of sharedness that Badiou identified as the crucial building blocks of a loving relationship. The above definitions of friendship were chosen as they illustrate a crucial aspect regarding the nature of these relationships as engendering jointly held perceptions. These relationships are born out of a mutual respect between the parties, based on a certain degree of trust, and are in principle entered into selectively (by their very nature these relationships involve a process of choice). Further, these definitions do not define the nature of jointly-held perception as a state of dependency. Rather, jointly-held perception is itself a reflexive condition. Additionally, Claus Emmeche has contended that friendships serve as crucial semiotic scaffoldings for the emergence of the developed social self (2015: 275).

It is also fruitful to consider feminist conceptions of friendship in reifying the fact that women are entirely capable of establishing these same types of *sunaiesthetic* connections as men are – a perspective famously absent in the original conceptions proffered by Aristotle and Kant. It has been theorized that the movement away from heterosexual relationships with men, towards friendly relations between women has served as a powerful tool of resistance that extricates women from being mere possessions of their husbands or men in general. Indeed, this movement towards establishing *sunaiesthetic* relations between women has served to, “elevate[s] friendship as a superior alternative to marriage; its association with thinking and self-knowledge opens these to women; and it acknowledges passion between friends [...] that empowers women in their own right” (Schweitzer 2016: 355–356).

These definitions considered in this section were specifically chosen as they view friendship as collaborative processes between individuals who do not engage in friendship simply because it is convenient or pleasurable. These types of *sunaiesthetic* relationships provide individuals important semiotic scaffoldings for the emergence of the self in adulthood. As it will be demonstrated later in this work, the mediating lens of a friendship does not imply that the persons engaged in the relationship are dependent on one another in order to mediate between themselves and the world. Rather, the experience of intimacy provides the individuals with a

basis through which to understand themselves through the experience of joint perception. As Badiou so poignantly alludes to, the experience of love is one that has its origin in difference and opposition. Thus the duty of the beloved – the reciprocal satisfaction of intimacy – is the movement beyond the mere gaze of the individual.

## 1. “The Crucial Dream of our Psyche”: Towards the Dialogical Self in Friendship

*My life shall become barns. In one barn of me – the blessed barn – lonely as a rented room – I shall keep one light lit. – William H. Gass<sup>1</sup>*

The purpose of this first chapter is to trace the origins of the semiotic self from its roots to more contemporary understandings of the concept. In doing so, this chapter will follow a mostly linear progression. The point of analyzing these topics at the beginning of this thesis will be to argue for the significance of friends and intimate partners in the emergence of an independent identity. Additionally, this chapter will aim to illustrate the difference between intimacy in childhood (with parents, family members, and primary caregivers) and intimate relationships in adulthood. Finally, this chapter will argue for the importance of primary caregivers in preparing individuals for intimate relationships as adults.

### 1.1 Structure of the Semiotic Self: From James to Archer

The notion of the semiotic self appears to be a crucial first step in beginning to address the question (or to some extent explain the criteria for selection) when it comes to interpersonal friendships in adulthood. The semiotic self concept has been, at its core, an attempt in American pragmatism to overcome the traditional, Cartesian dualistic view of the self (Bakker 2011: 195). In William James’s work *The Principles of Psychology* the author identifies different aspects of the self with regards to the role they play in unifying its different faculties. One of the faculties which James identifies in this work is that of the social self or, “the recognition [one] gets from his mates” (1890: 293). James contends that the social self is defined by a certain element of multiplicity to the extent that the social self – inasmuch as it may be traced back to the same individual – presents itself differently depending on the situation (1890: 294). This results in what James understands as a process of splitting which fragments the self into a multifarious and diffuse set of positionings that change in terms of their primacy, depending on the social situation in which one is embedded. He goes further in this passage to claim that the most complex position of the social self (and the most important in establishing or legitimizing one’s identity) is the social self in relation to the most beloved other. He writes, “To his own consciousness he is not, so long as this particular social self fails to get recognition, and when it is recognized his

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<sup>1</sup> Gass, William H. 1995. *The Tunnel*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 235.

contentment passes all bounds.” (1890: 294). This is a particularly interesting concept to begin the chapter with and will in essence be the main principle guiding the exploration into the relationship between personal identity and friendship. What this points to, is the notion that at the fundamental core of the individual there is a yearning for a sense of sharedness with others which stems from the desire to be recognized in a certain way by the beloved other. This notion is seated at the core of James’s theorizing about the role of the social self. Another important faculty of the self that James identifies is that of the spiritual self, or the fundamental psychic dispositions of an individual that are independent of its recognition in the social world. This aspect proves to be the most enduring and stable element of the self concept to the extent that it is not dependent on recognition (*ibid.* 1890: 295–296).

The idea that recognition by another is a key aspect of identity is also explored in C.H. Cooley’s seminal work *Human Nature and the Social Order*. In this work, Cooley understands the self to be a tripartite composite of the other’s perception. He writes:

A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification (1964 [1902]: 184).

He termed this idea – the self as being primarily determined and constructed by the perception of others – the looking-glass self. This notion from Cooley effectively interpellates the self as a subject for the other individual’s viewing and judgement and more or less posits the self as primarily an objectivity, insofar that it acts for others and is recognized on the basis of this action. Indeed, there appears to be a correlation between the idea of the social self and that of the looking-glass self to the extent that both thinkers posit the importance of recognition.

This idea appears to dovetail nicely with George Herbert Mead’s idea of the self as being composed of two different faculties termed the ‘Me’ and the ‘I’. The ‘Me’ in the Meadian sense, correlates to the notions of both the looking-glass self and James’ social self. These faculties, by his description, are primarily based on the individual’s experience in the social world, and thus formed on the basis of this experience. In describing the difference he writes, “The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of others constitute the organized ‘me,’ and then one reacts towards that as an ‘I’” (Mead 1972 [1934]: 175). In essence, what Mead argued for

was the ‘Me’ or the faculty of the self which provides the ‘I’ a tableau of continuity with which to understand itself, is the attitudes of others which the self assumes about itself. Because, fundamentally, an individual cannot be exactly aware of the nuances of perception by the other, she can only draw broad conclusions about herself based on the ways she believes others recognize her, which ultimately creates continuity. Further, Mead argues in this section of the book for the importance of the interconnectedness between these two faculties. The action that ‘I’ ultimately decides to take is done in consultation with the ‘Me’ but is ultimately not something that can be calculated or predicted with any sense of certainty (Mead 1972 [1934]: 177). Thus the existence of the ‘I’ affords the individual the freedom to act in a specific and – in principle – unpredictable way in a given social situation, but ultimately this action is constrained by the consultation with the ‘Me’ which presents the ‘I’ with an amalgamation of past experiences and dispositions from which to base the action (*ibid.* 177–178). These experiences and dispositions are, of course, based on the self’s suppositions about how it is recognized by the other. The self then can be understood as emerging from a correspondence between the ‘Me’ which establishes itself as a result of experience in society. Put differently, the ‘Me’ is the sum total of all the multifaceted ways in which the social self is recognized which then becomes the basis for the individual’s understanding of herself. This understanding (or continuity) serves as the most crucial guiding principle for how the self chooses to direct its action. Without this correspondence, there would be no grounding basis for decision making. The Meadian conception of the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’ has been modeled in the following figure:

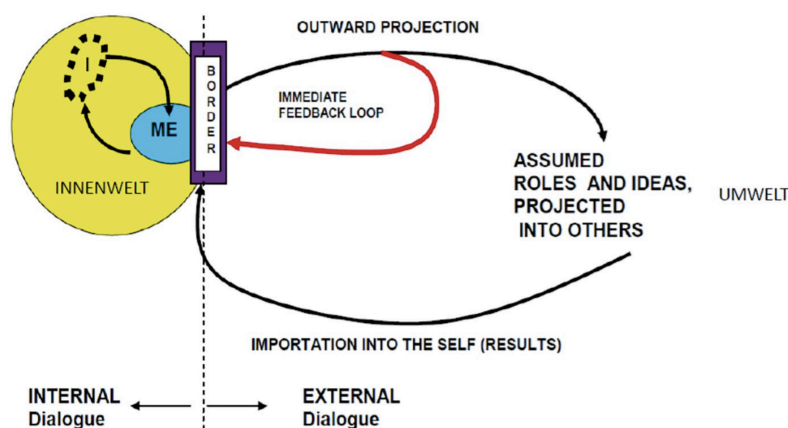


Figure 1: Engagement in the world (After George Herbert Mead) (Valsiner 2024: 22).

This figure cleaves a division between the self and the world in which it is positioned via the Uexküllian terms of *umwelt* (experience of the world) and *innenwelt* (personal experience) (Hendlin 2016: 96). The position of the ‘Me’ as located within the *innenwelt* occupies the space directly abutting the border area. In this sense, the ‘Me’ primarily serves the purpose of doing the most difficult heavy lifting in the self conception insofar as it acts as the primary filter for importing and storing information in the ‘I’. Additionally, the ‘Me’ is tasked with receiving information from the ‘I’ and projecting beyond the confines of the *innenwelt*, and into the external world where this information is effectively put to the test. It is however, important to note that in Figure 1, the other is not presented as necessarily having any subjectivity. The only sense of subjectivity accounted for here, is that it serves merely to levy some sort of judgement upon the ‘Me’, but does not account for the process through which this judgment is made, and a certain impression arrived at. One possible critique of this particular model offered by Valsiner, is that – by virtue of its construction – it does not represent the importance of the other as being a subject as well. It will be important to understand that for these results to be imported back into the self (through the permeable border separating the internal from the external) they must come about as a product of intersubjectivity. That is, the self must draw conclusions regarding the subjective attitudes it perceives as being levied on itself by the other; the dimension of intersubjectivity is critical here.

The correspondence between the ‘I’ and ‘Me’ faculties has subsequently been extended to include a third element, namely the ‘You’ by Margaret S. Archer. In *Structure Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Following the Meadian notion of the ‘Me’, its role in what Archer defines as the internal conversation is to serve as a placeholder for society in the form of a generalized other. Through the existence of the ‘Me’, and its role in the internal conversation Archer claims:

The whole community enters into the individual’s thinking and she can then see herself from the composite perspective of society. To Mead, this perspective is that of the ‘generalized other’, and in it we do not just gain the gift ‘to see ourselves as others see us’ (that is, ourselves as objects), but acquire the interlocutor in our inner conversations. Thus the subject, the ‘I’, has acquired an object, the socialised ‘Me’, with whom to converse (2003: 82).

The ‘You’ is also defined by Archer as the faculty of the mind (the player in the internal conversation) to whom the deliberation is addressed. The judgment with regards to the course of action to take is arrived at through the internal deliberation, and ultimately levied upon the ‘You’ which is tasked with executing. Borrowing Peircean terminology, Archer designates the ‘Me’ as

the object of the sign 'I'. The 'You' then serves as the interpretant of the sign (2003: 72).

Thus, the Me-I-You structure of Archer's internal conversation is an effective way to model the emergence of James' social self. It is important to note – as Archer does in the above quoted passage – that the existence of the internal conversation does not afford the individual the ability to view herself as an object (which is, in a sense, how she exists for the other), but rather gives her a basis by which to evaluate her own behaviour with a focus on action to be taken in the future. However, as Archer notes in this work, there is a different conception of the 'Me' that must be considered. The 'Me' has up until now been regarded as a construction of the social reality in which the individual is an active participant (and effectively being society's role within the psyche). The following subsection will track further developments in semiotic approaches to the self, which consider it to be not just an amalgamation of the ways in which society recognizes the individual (and vice versa). Rather, these developments consider more closely relevant things in the environment, and the ways in which these things afford the individual the tools with which to mediate between herself and the social reality in which she is ensconced.

## **1.2 The Intrapersonal Dialogue**

### **1.2.1 Towards a Multi-Positional Self**

In the same work, Archer identifies the difference between what she regards as a Peircean approach to the self and the Meadian approach as has been previously outlined. The Peircean approach (which is referred to in this work and others as the 'critical self') regards the 'Me' faculty as not exclusively reducible to society's role in the mind. The 'critical self' is defined by Archer as the sum total of previous cycles of semiosis, through which the self has arrived at a series of dispositions and habits (2003: 72). The most important distinction to be made between these two is that the Meadian conception of the 'Me' is ultimately an indexical sign of the ways in which an individual has heretofore been recognized by the other in society. It places the utmost importance on this aspect of the self: the self as an object to be interpreted by another. In the conception of the 'Me' as an amalgamation of habits that have been arrived at through prior experience and have resulted from free choices made by the individual, the 'Me' becomes more complex, and in turn even more relevant to the question of friendship in adulthood. Obviously, individuals who are raised, and reside as adults within a certain cultural context will have a great

degree of variability with regards to the qualities they may find attractive for friendship. Rather, it may be more useful to think of the ‘Me’ as a generalized other who represents society as being only one aspect of a multifaceted approach to the continuity of the self. Archer goes further in this section of the text to define this approach to the self as considering the ‘Me’ to be the location of the “personal conscience” (2003: 73), which is a very different notion than that of the ‘Me’ as being a way of simply conceptualizing the role of society in the mind of the individual. It becomes more personal insofar as the constraints proffered by the ‘Me’ become specific to the individual rather than the individual’s place in society more broadly. Interpreting Peirce’s notions of the self, Vincent Colapietro contends:

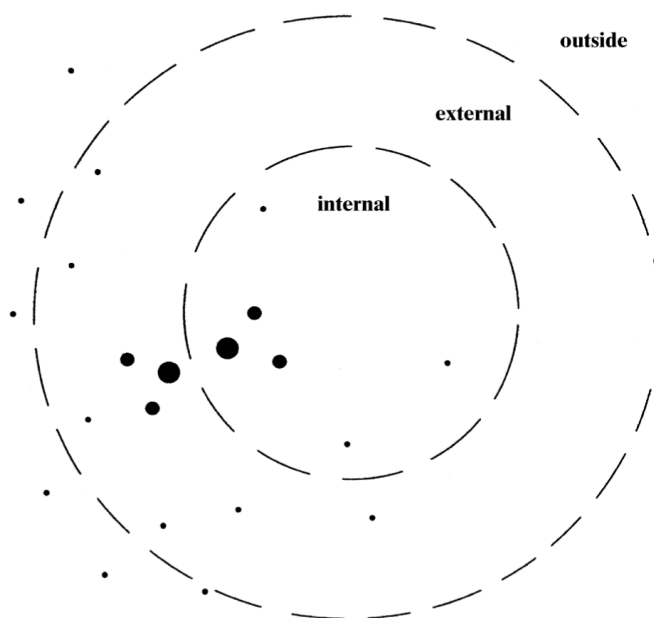
The self as a sign in the process of developing (5.313; 1868) is, in essence, the self as a being in dialogue with itself; this intrapersonal dialogue is potentially part of a larger context, an interpersonal dialogue. Such interpersonal dialogues are capable of generating such intimate unions among distinct selves as to be comparable to *personal* beings themselves (1988: 91).

This idea is relevant to consider when tracing the development in Peirce’s ideas about the self. The purpose of the ‘critical self’ in Peirce’s work serves as the most important thing guiding the individual towards its ultimate project or pursuit of purpose (*ibid* 91–92). This “developmental teleology” (1988: 91) or the ends to which the self is oriented is in some sense figured out or determined on the basis of both intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication. Yet further, we may conceptualize the Peircean approach to the self as postulating that there is indeed a difficulty in identifying the ‘Me’ as a static thing. In other words, the ‘Me’ as has been previously defined as an amalgamation of the self in society and the bundle of habits and dispositions that are distinctive to the individual in question, have the potential to exist in multiple different positions. Peirce contended that movement is principally defined by an oscillation between things in the world of the mind that the individual is conscious of, and the unconscious (Stjernfelt 2023: 298). With this idea of the self as possessing a multi-positioned ‘Me’ which serves as a basis for the internal conversation, we may now turn back to contemporary theories engaging with this premise.

### **1.2.2 Specific Positions Within the Dialogical Self Model**

Up until this point we have explored two slightly different theories regarding intrapersonal conversation. Firstly, this chapter began with the exploration in G.H. Mead’s notion of the ‘Me’. The ‘Me’ is in this framework, a way of explaining the role of culture in the mind of

the individual. The role of culture can be understood as having something to do with the idea of recognition in Cooley's work to the extent that self exists and is defined by the way in which it is recognized by the other. By adding the additional element of the 'You' Archer attempted to connect the layers of thought in Mead's conception of the self with a Peircean perspective by adding an interpretant of the internal conversation. This interpretant, however, is constrained by the deliberation that the 'I' arrives at in its consultation with the 'Me'. The objective of this subsection will be to demonstrate the multi-positionality of the self as a means of understanding what these constraints are, and the most prudent ways to go about thinking of them. In service of more clearly defining the current framework it is worth considering Hubert Hermans' model of the multivoiced self in Figure 2:



*Figure 2: Positions in a multivoiced self (Hermans 2001: 253)*

In this model, the points in the 'internal' shelf of the multivoiced self represent dispositions that are felt as being a fundamental part of the self, while the external positions can be understood as individuals or things in the environment that activate these internal positions. Things in the 'outside' shelf are those things and individuals that have no bearing on the individual's project of identity construction at present (2001: 252). The different levels of the

multivoiced self are intentionally represented as being porous, and allow for a certain degree of inflow and outflow as the person develops. Both this model and the following quote from Hermans seem to be particularly relevant when addressing the question of how individuals select whom to engage in friendships with in adulthood. When individuals undertake this internal deliberation on the topic of determining whether a certain other individual could be attractive to engage with in friendly relations, the dialogical self model becomes quite a powerful tool to think about this deliberation. An example given which can be directly applied to the question of friendship, is getting invited to attend a sports match by a colleague (Hermans 2001: 254). In this example, the colleague – who exists for the individual somewhere in the external shelf – activates an internal position within the individual. That is, the internal position within the individual that regards himself as a sports fan. Moving further with this example, let's assume that the two individuals (the inviter and the invitee to the sports match) establish a friendly relationship with one another over their shared interest in watching sports. The inviter is thus pulled into the external shelf of the invitee to the extent that the sight of him activates a single (or multiple) internal positions. Hermans writes:

New people may create new positions in the self, on the supposition that they are admitted to the system [...] new positions often result from the combination of old ones. In general, the organization of positions is more relevant to processes in the self than are the workings of separate positions (Hermans 2001: 254).

A key idea emphasized in the above quotation is that while the self is engaged in a constant process of becoming – a constant process of internal evolution – this evolution is based on already instantiated positions within the self. In this process of development, Hermans theorizes that some earlier positions inside the internal self may recede to the margins, or be jettisoned by the system entirely. As in, for example, when an individual crosses the threshold into adulthood, becomes a parent, a spouse etc. (*ibid.* 254–255).

To briefly summarize where we now find ourselves with the addition of the dialogical self model is that while it is true to say that the self is engaged in an intrapersonal dialogue, this dialogue is not static. As Hermans' model shows us, the positions of the Meadian 'Me' are diverse, subject to change, and can be modeled by points within the external shelf. Put differently, the 'Me' is effectively a collection of persons and things within the *umwelt* of the individual that when encountered activate certain internal dispositions. The 'I' is subsequently activated as a result of the 'Me's' activation. With this in mind, the following subsection will

focus on how exactly new positions are imported into the dialogical self model, and the ways in which these positions orient the self towards creating intimate bonds with others.

### **1.2.3 Temporary and Permanent Visitors**

As this chapter continues to bring together the notions of intimacy, adulthood and the semiotic self, it is worth thinking about the foundational experiences in an individual's childhood. As it has been previously mentioned, to think of the self as being composed of an 'I-Me' dialogue or an 'I-You' dialogue does not go far enough. These frameworks fail to adequately account for the fundamental instability of the self, and the multiple positions that essentially make it up. In an attempt to clarify the definition of these internal positions of the self as Hermans has proposed, it is worth turning to Norbert Wiley's concept of the 'temporary' and 'permanent' visitors. Permanent visitors are those individuals who hold a favored position within the mind of the individual. These visitors are usually the image of parents or other important figures from the individual's childhood (and spouses, children, or other intimately close individuals in adulthood), and are always at the disposal of the self for intrapersonal consultation. Temporary visitors by contrast, are individuals that are mostly inconsequential to the internal dialogue who are briefly introduced and easily dismissed (Wiley 1994: 54–55). An example of this theory at work is given by Wiley later in the above cited chapter in the story of Julia, a toddler, who is throwing a bowl of scrambled eggs onto the floor. While Julia is throwing the eggs, she is simultaneously scolding herself for doing so. Wiley contends that this is a perfect example of the permanent visitor's role of regulating behavior. He writes, "Julia seems to be addressing not her me or you but her I, and doing so with the voice of her mother. Julia is getting her mother, a permanent visitor, mixed up with herself, presumably the part that will become the regulating me" (1994: 64).

In an effort to incorporate Wiley's theory of the temporary and permanent visitor within the broader context of this chapter, it is worth turning back to the dialogical self model in order to understand the connection between the two. In Wiley's example of Julia whose mother takes on the role of a permanent visitor within the model she is developing of herself, it is safe to assume that this is most likely due to the frequency and quality of their interactions. Hermans models the interaction that an individual may have with another person – who is positioned

somewhere in the external shelf of the multivoiced self model – in Figure 3:

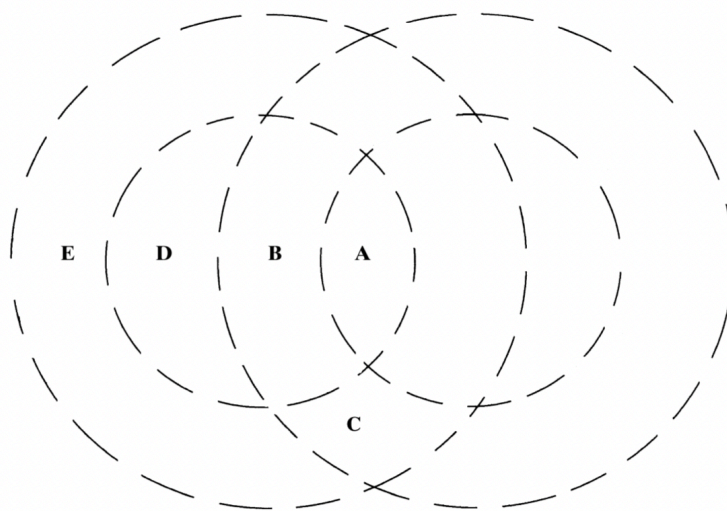


Figure 2. Two actual people in dialogue

- A = two-way internal sharing (e.g. I know something about myself that you know and you know something about yourself that I know and we are both aware of this)
- B = one-way internal sharing (e.g. I know something about myself that you know)
- C = external sharing (e.g. you and I, we have a common interest)
- D = non-sharing internal area (e.g. I know something about myself that you don't know)
- E = non-sharing external area (e.g. I know something about the world that you don't know)

Figure 3. Two actual people in dialogue (Hermans 2001: 256).

To a certain extent, the model of the self in dialogue with another serves as a way of understanding the import of the specific individual within this external sphere. By way of example, two work colleagues who set out to collaborate on a project may engage in a very limited amount of internal sharing. Colleague A may know that she has set out to collaborate on a project with Colleague B. She may know something about Colleague B's schedule, and may even know something about why he cannot meet on a certain day (eg. Colleague B must take his son to a semi-annual dental appointment. This reveals that Colleague B is a father, has a son who is not yet an adult, and has a dental appointment at a certain time and so on). We may also think of an individual who invites an acquaintance to a certain concert only because he knows that the acquaintance also enjoys the band. In these cases, it is fair to conceive of these individuals as temporary visitors insofar as they are relevant to certain internal positions within the self, but are not crucially important at that specific moment. If Colleague A and Colleague B decide to begin

engaging in a sexual relationship with each other, for example, the overlap in the model's 'A' sphere will increase, thus showcasing its elasticity. Hermans writes, "As the result [sic] our sharing and non-sharing areas with other people are very dynamic: they increase and decrease depending on the frequency and content of dialogical relationships" (2001: 258). In the case of Julia (the child throwing the eggs on the ground), Wiley claims that the mother will eventually settle into the more stable role of the 'Me' as Julia matures and reaches adulthood (*ibid.* 54). It is highly likely that Julia will eventually move out of the house, establish important relationships with other people in her life, and the frequency with which she comes into contact with her mother will naturally decrease from the level that it was at in her childhood. Effectively, this change in the dynamic of their relationship will narrow the 'A' sphere in the relationship between Julia and her mother (which may be alternatively modeled by a smaller point within the external shelf of the dialogical self model). However, due to the intimacy of the parent child relationship – the great importance that mother undoubtedly played in Julia's development – we cannot simply say that she is a temporary visitor. Indeed, it seems apparent that the role (or the inclusion) of permanent visitors in the semiotic concept of the self tracks much more closely to the Peircean conception of the 'I' as containing within it a bundle of previous results of semiotic cycles. Colapietro terms this the 'matrix self' and equates it to the idea of a conscience. He defines the 'matrix self' as the summation of prior experiences in the world which orients an individual towards certain future actions (1988: 94).

By connecting Hermans' explanation of persons and things that exist in the external sphere, with the notion of the temporary and permanent visitors from Wiley, and the 'matrix self' from Colapietro, the dialogical self becomes less opaque. In essence, visitors (both temporary and permanent) should be understood as the people or things that activate one or more positions within the internal sphere. This seems to point to the fact that there is a hierarchy to the internal positions within the self to the extent that – when activated – certain positions bear more credence on the individual. It appears as though this difference has been visualized in the dialogical self model included in the previous subsection to the extent that some points within the spheres are larger than others. Taking this notion that certain positions in the external sphere are prioritized over others, we can now turn to the role that visitors take in the process of establishing friendships and intimate relationships in adulthood.

### **1.3 Childhood Experience as the Foundation of Adult Intimacy**

Up until this point, the chapter has showcased a movement towards understanding the semiotic self as being primarily composed of a web of relations between the self, society, physical objects, and other people. With the previously explained theoretical framework in mind, it is worth turning our attention now to the role of childhood experiences in shaping intimacy in adulthood. The significance of the permanent visitor in childhood is perhaps different from the significance of these individuals in adulthood. This is of course primarily due to the fact that the family unit provides a formative context for experience of the social reality. As John Russon writes:

The family is the initial sphere of interpersonal life within which we are initiated into a way of recognizing what there is in the world and how our own identity fits within it. As our familiar others, our family members become people from whom we are incapable of separating our own identities (2003: 66).

As was shown with the example of Wiley's Julia, those immediate family members who are tasked with the duty of introducing the expectations of the social world, become the initial permanent visitors within the model of the self. The child is not able to mediate effectively between herself and the social world, and is thus dependent on the primary caregivers to carry out this task for her. Children engage in these relationships in a non-reflexive way – they are not self-aware enough to understand the parameters of the system and must effectively submit to it as they cannot sustain themselves without the mediating role of the primary caregivers. Thus, we may be able to distinguish these experiences of childhood intimacy as diverging from experiences of intimacy in adulthood (based on the idea that in adulthood these types of relationships are reflexive) while also playing a crucial role in preparing the individual for these experiences (based on the idea that the familial others have a special status as originary and permanent visitors in the self-concept of a given individual).

#### **1.3.1 Reflexivity and Sunaisthesis**

One possible way to define the threshold of maturity is when an individual is thrust into a situation where their successful participation in the social world is dependent upon cultivating reflexivity. This does not happen at a consistent age for all individuals – as of course cultural and

individual situations vary widely with regards to this. For the sake of this argument, however, let's suppose that it happens around the time an individual finishes their secondary education. This period of time for many symbolizes a breaking away from the confines of the familiar home environment. People are often dropped into an unfamiliar social environment and are tasked with pursuing projects of their choosing, and navigating new social spheres. Claus Emmeche (2015: 288) argues that friendship during this transitional period and beyond may, “act through dialogical semiosis to scaffold the formation of an identity defining a series of pursuits and concerns.” Further, it is relevant to consider the notion of *sunaisthesis* as a defining characteristic of these types of relationships. As it was defined in section 0.3 of this thesis, *sunaisthesis* can be understood as the emergence of an ethical and holistic concept of the self through the relationship one forges with a close friend, which “plays a constitutive role in *bringing this self into being*” (Flakne 2005: 42). These types of relationships act as “compasses, [which] like Mead’s objective *me*, introduce *we* into their scope of vision” (Wiśniewska 2016: 420). What this entails, is a mutual commitment by the parties involved in the specific relationship to care for the other for the sake of their own goodness and development, and to approach and view the world whilst actively acknowledging the role of the other in doing so. Hence it is reflexive (Emmeche 2025: 251).

These types of relationships can be understood as true friendships in the Aristotelian sense. Their basis lies not in the pleasure or utility that the relationships affords to the individuals, but the way in which the relationship is mutually beneficial towards the establishment of ethical attitudes (Helm 2021). Indeed, *sunaisthesis* appears to be a condition that – by its very essence – dictates that there can only be a limited number of individuals with whom we may experience it with. It is a movement beyond the mere pleasure of being together (as we might experience in friendships based solely on pleasure and recreation) and beyond tactical instrumentality (which we might experience in friendships based solely on utility) towards the ecstatic condition of collaborative perception and orientation. This marks a contrast to the passive or “reactive pleasure of perception” (Emmeche 2017: 53). Thus, *sunaisthesis* can be understood as a jointly held perception or set of orientations towards things in the world mediated through a close friendship between persons. In the case of the young adult who has just moved away from home, establishing these types of relationships appear to be crucially important semiotic scaffoldings. Up until this point the individual has primarily understood

herself as being a part of a family unit. While, of course, this is not true for every person – especially with regards to the normative aspects of familyhood and parental involvement – there is probably a conception of home she possesses, and understands her role in this environment. While the primary caregivers never lose their status as permanent visitors in the dialogical deliberations of the mind, the movement away from the developmental nest marks a turn and rupture in the young adult’s identity. In the following sub-chapter I will address why exactly these relationships – and the notion of *sunaisthesis* – are important in the emergence of a identity in adulthood

### 1.3.2 The Crucial Dream

In a 2014 article John Russon ascribes the capacity to engage in intimate relationships in adulthood as being fundamentally based on the experiences of childhood intimacy that one has with family members or primary caregivers. He writes:

This primal intimacy itself is enacted materially with specific others in specific practices and locales, and it is these specificities that are the ‘language’ through which our sense of self is communicated to us and it is our lived experience of these communicative specificities of childhood intimacy that forms the irreducible fabric of our adult identities (2014: 67).

What Russon argues for in the above quotation is the idea that experiences of intimacy in childhood are the semiotic scaffolding through which the establishment of an independent identity may emerge. We may be able to go further and say that Russon’s conceptualization about the role of childhood intimacy further instantiates the claim that parents and primary caregivers must act as permanent visitors within the mind of the individual. However, this first claim postulates that the role of childhood intimacy should be solely to prepare the child to successfully navigate the world independent of the primary caregiver. Thus, it is fair to conclude that these relationships of familial intimacy are not *sunaisthetic* as the child’s successful development is hinged on these experiences. Put a different way, *sunaisthesis* implies a self that is already developed and is not dependent on the friend in the relationship to carry out this task for them.

The difference for Russon between these two types of intimacies (childhood and adult) is that the latter comes about through matters of free choice and a desire to share. He labels this desire as the “crucial dream of our psyche” and defines the experience of adult intimacy as being

based on a mutual desire to share what is personal with another, and have that other share what is personal to them (2014: 68). Following this distinction it is possible to recognize *sunaisthesis* as primarily a phenomenon found in relationships of adulthood. The overlapping sphere of mutual knowledge (returning to figure 3) between parent and child grows smaller, and thus the (now adult) child is tasked with finding a new relationship to engage in. This is not to imply that the duty of adult intimacy is to replace the bonds that the individual forged with primary caregiver as this type of sharedness is not *sunaisthetic* (ie. the child depends on the parent to introduce their role in the social world). Rather, the healthy development of a self in adulthood requires the establishment of these new types of bonds – marked by “sharing what is intimate and personal to me and about what is intimate and personal to you” (2014: 68) – through which the self may develop. These new relationships – those with a high degree of sharing what is intimate – become some of the most highly prioritized nodes within the external shelf of Hermans’ dialogical self model, and become newly established permanent visitors in the internal conversation of the mind.

#### **1.4 Chapter Summary**

In summation, this chapter started by tracking the development of the self as a semiotic construct. This began with elucidating the early notions of the I-Me dialogue and the looking glass self proposed by Mead and Cooley. A possible point of deficiency in these arguments is the over-emphasized significance of society in the constitution of the ‘Me’. What is particularly deficient about these conceptions is that it regards the ‘Me’ as merely a static construction that is purely dependent upon the perception of the individual by others in the world, effectively standing for “society’s role in the parliament of the mind” (Archer 2003: 87). Norbert Wiley and Margaret Archer’s model of the semiotic self marks a movement away from the I-Me model by introducing the ‘You’ into the mix which serves as the interpretant of previous instances of semiosis. Wiley’s visitors (both temporary and permanent) were brought into conversation with Hubert Hermans’ dialogical self model in order to showcase the lasting effects of different players within the ‘Me’ that work to form it in a more nuanced way than merely regarding the role of society. These visitors can be understood as specific nodes in the external shelf of the dialogical self model which shape the nuances of the self, thus aligning more closely with the Peircean definition as described by Colapietro.

The significance of the semiotic self in establishing meaningful relationships in adulthood cannot be overlooked for two important reasons. In childhood, the role of the permanent visitor (in particular the parent or primary caregiver for the child) helps to prepare her for life in the social world once she moves away from the confines of familial intimacy, and the familiar environs of home. After the child moves away and begins to come into her adult life she is not free from the voice of this permanent visitor, but the amount of influence this permanent visitor has decreases as a result of the fact that there is usually a smaller degree of sharing happening. The child, now thrust mostly on her own into the social world, comes into contact with a great variety of persons and things in the environment that activate certain internal positions. The degree of importance of these activations (particularly with regards to intersubjective relationships) dictates the amount of sharing that occurs. The higher the degree of sharing correlates directly with the importance of these individuals (represented as nodes) within the external shelf. The previously prioritized positions within the external shelf (eg. the importance of certain temporary and permanent visitors) may become less important as the individual embarks on new projects later in her life (Hermans 2001: 254).

Finally, we arrived at the idea that intimate relationships in adulthood differ from those in childhood as the latter are mostly concerned with preparing the individual for the social reality, and are somehow the constitutive fabric of the child's emerging self. However, another key aspect of childhood intimacy is to prepare individuals to engage in these types of enriching *sunaesthetic* partnerships later in life, as the desire to share one's experience is somehow a critical aspect of the human experience. While choice making is certainly an important aspect to consider when choosing to engage with some people over others in these types of relationships, there is also a certain inarticulable draw towards specific people, and do not always result from intentional choice (Russon 2014: 68). With the idea in mind that intimate relationships in adulthood are crucial for the healthy development of the self, and that the role of childhood intimacy is to create a scaffolding from which a well equipped participant in the social world may emerge, we now turn our attention to the ways in which *sunaisthesis* helps individuals model their social reality. In the next chapter – with the ideas of the semiotic self and the importance of sharing in mind – we shall turn our attention to the ways in which these relationships begin, and subsequently develop.

## 2. The *Pragmasphere*: Modeling Sunaisthesis

*Natasha, I love you despite knowing love is more than seeing you.* – Mark Z. Danielewski<sup>2</sup>

The goal of the first chapter of this thesis was to argue for the importance of intimate, interpersonal relationships as critical building blocks for the self. In doing so, we have now arrived at perhaps a second although still important question. Namely: how does this selection process actually occur in friendships, and how can we model the crucial mediation between the self and the world that occurs through these relationships? In an attempt to answer this two pronged question, the theoretical focus of this work will shift slightly. Up until this point the work has engaged with ideas of the semiotic self and their applicability in friendship. While not abandoning this important framework entirely, the focus of this work will shift its attention to the applicability of Lotmanian semiotics in this investigation.

### 2.1 Semiosphere and Explosion

In chapter 12 of *Culture and Explosion*, Juri Lotman theorizes that the position of history, or at least the tendency of historians, is to look upon the past as only containing realized potentialities. He writes, “When we look into the past, reality acquires the status of fact and we are inclined to see it as the only possible realisation” (Lotman 2009 [1992]: 126). This retrospectively oriented position that historians take, Lotman argues, relegates the unrealized potentialities of history to an almost ignorable status. Lotman dubs this the “retrospective view,” to the extent that it regards the unrealized potentialities of history as mere predictions and strips them of their status as potentialities (Lotman 2009 [1992]: 127). Thus, Lotman’s definition of history implies a certain degree of appropriation of information to the extent that explosion (or the development of history) happens unpredictably. In an essay on Lotman’s explosion concept, Laura Gherlone contends that the concept of explosion – the realization of a new possibility – is bound up with the process of gradual development. She writes, “we may synthetically say that explosion, in Lotman’s history-oriented later writings, is a sort of breakthrough in humans’ historical path, which is seen as a combination of gradual (or predictable) development and unexpected contingencies” (2022: 288). Lotman himself described this retrospective approach towards history as limiting to the extent that viewing history as a realization of possibilities (a

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<sup>2</sup> Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 561.

retelling of events that have occurred) does not suffice to tell its whole story. He writes in *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture*, “not a single event regardless of whether it takes place at the level of collective or individual history, can be simply predicted at the moment of explosion” (Lotman 2013: 66). In her commentary on Lotman’s book *Culture and Explosion* Marina Grišakova contends that the influence Russian physicist Ilya Prigogine had on Lotman’s work and intellectual development is particularly evident in both *Culture and Explosion* and his earlier work *Universe of the Mind*. In particular, the concept of bifurcation as a prerequisite condition for explosion is one that Grišakova argues is a particular example of this intellectual lineage. She writes:

Prigogine has shown that the states of non-equilibrium in chemical and biological systems that exchange matter and energy with the external world may increase the unpredictability of a system’s behaviour until the system reaches a bifurcation point, where a branching of trajectories of development occurs. At this point the system has a choice of following one or the other path of development [...] As a result, the system either submerges into entropy or moves towards a new state of “order”, i.e. a higher degree of complexity (2009: 178).

This, perhaps, brings us to an important point in Lotman’s thought: the degree to which the exchange of information between different levels of the semiosphere contributes to the process of explosion. In *Universe of the Mind* Lotman proffers the notion of boundary. To this end, he describes the semiosphere as:

Transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts, and the internal space of each of these sub-semiospheres has its own semiotic ‘I’ which is realized as the relationship of any language, group of texts, separate text to a metastructural space which describes them (Lotman 1990: 138).

It follows from this notion of semiospheric interaction the importance of understanding explosion as a concept that is borne out of communication between a semiosphere and that which is extracultural to it. The function of boundaries, on the level of sub-semiospheres can be understood as the faculty that, “cleaves a semiosphere from its opposites, from the semiospheres external to it as well as from the ‘non- or extrasemiotic space that surrounds it’ (2005 [1984]: 208)” (Nöth 2015: 20). Further, Nöth contends that the Lotmanian concept of boundary serves less as a mechanism for separation (keeping the contents of the specific sub-semiosphere secure from that which lies outside of it) and more as a filter (allowing for an exchange between the sub-semiosphere and what is external to it). In this paper on Lotman’s conception of the semiosphere and explosion, Nöth argues that the boundary of the semiosphere in Lotman’s work

takes on the status of a third element (2015: 20). He further contends that the function of the boundary – its status as a third element – is hinged upon its importance as a device for translation. That is to say, the previous conception present in Lotman of the boundary as binding the semiosphere together and separating it from what is outside of it is potentially fallible: “In the end, the function of the border is no longer one of separation but one of translation” (Nöth 2015: 20). Lotman diverges from his earlier ideas regarding the function of the boundary in similar terms with respect to translation. He writes in *Universe of the Mind*:

The function of any boundary or filter [...] is to control, filter and adapt the external into the internal [...] it implies a separation of ‘one’s own’ from ‘someone else’s’, the filtering of what comes from outside and is treated as a text in another language, and the translation of this text into one’s own language (Lotman 1990: 140).

The notion of boundary as having the status of a third element with regards to the interaction of sub-semiospheres is interesting to consider. Ultimately, what the process of explosion amounts to is the abrupt translation of different elements in dialogue with one another, begetting further cultural development. These borders – or mechanisms of translation – (Torop 2009: xxxiii) exist as filtering devices. This conception of the borders as a third element, one that facilitates translation and ultimately explosion, is both interesting and potentially problematic to consider when thinking about the semiosphere (or sub-semiospheres) as reified objects. If the mechanism for explosion – the thing that pushes together sub-semiospheres towards the bifurcation point – is the interaction between the semiosphere and what is extracultural to it, then the boundary regulates this process.

### **2.1.1 Semiosphere and *Sunaisthesis***

In service of connecting this movement into Lotmanian semiotics to the content of this thesis’s first chapter, it is worth synthesizing the semiosphere with Hermans’ dialogical self model. It can be argued that the dialogical self model shares a lot of meaningful similarities with Lotman’s notion of the semiosphere. Firstly, we should consider the dialogical self model as a sub-semiosphere. It is constructed to model an individual self within a vast network of other selves (the semiosphere broadly speaking) and is composed of a network of different elements which interact with each other in principally novel ways (sub-semiospheres existing in different shelves of the sub-semiosphere which composes an individual, dialogical self). That is to say:

while two individuals might share a passion for a certain sport or a certain sports team, this passion cannot be regarded in the same way. Firstly, the passion for the sports team may arise from the existence of different internal positions. For example, Individual A has been a lifelong fan of the team because his parents were fans and instilled their fandom in him from a very young age. Thus individual A's internal position of 'sonhood' or family life is incredibly entangled with the fandom for the sports team and thus its priority in the external shelf may be very high. Individual B may have just recently moved to the sports team's city, and thus his fandom of the team might activate the internal position of being a new resident of the city, and trying to adjust to the customs and traditions of the residents in an effort to assimilate. This, obviously, is very likely to be less of a crucial position than the one that the sports team activates within individual A. However, we may zoom in even further in an attempt to understand the specificities within the relationships between the individuals and the sports team in an attempt to map the mechanisms that cause these activations. By replacing sports with people (friends, lovers etc.) in this example (especially considering the *sunaiesthetic* role that the most important intimate relationships engender in the individual), the following section will attempt to combine the Lotmanian model of the semiosphere with the dialogical self model. The goal of this analysis is to demonstrate the ways in which these relationships connect the external parts of the self with the internal, in determining the significance of these relationships in the process of mediation. Additionally, the following section and the remainder of this chapter will attempt to show the ways in which the initial establishment of *sunaiesthetic* relationships can be conceptualized as being products of gradual development in the Lotmanian sense, as well as investigating the importance of the role of recognition in this process.

## **2.2 Mediation Between Self and World and the Lingering Trace**

### **2.2.1 Encountering a New Person (*eros*)**

In *The Semiotics of Love* Marcel Danesi (2019: 3) distinguishes between three distinctive stages in developing intimacy. Firstly, he describes the initial state of attraction or the recognition of characteristics within another as being somehow alluring as *eros*. This initial *eros* experience is mainly applied to feelings of sexual attraction that one may feel towards another, but can indeed be extended to friendship (assuming that the feelings engendered by this experience are

not romantic or sexual). The second stage of intimacy he calls *agape*. The agapistic stage is marked by a movement away from the mere physical or sensorial feelings that are engendered within the individual and towards a condition where the individual begins to love the other person for the uniqueness of their character beyond merely the ways in which their presence is attractive or useful. Danesi claims that the agapistic stage can be described as the condition of “falling in love.” Finally, the third and perhaps most essential form of love identified by Danesi is *pragma* or “standing in love.” This condition is marked via a collaborative effort between the individuals involved in the relationship to maintain the relationship so that it may withstand the turbulence of the – at times – seemingly meaningless and incoherent world. The condition of *pragma* seems to correlate most closely to *sunaisthesis* insofar as it involves a collaborative effort to maintain the semiotic scaffolding that individuals have established for themselves on the basis of the interpersonal relationship. Crucially, Danesi writes, “it could well be that *pragma* emanates from *agape*, at least when it ‘works out’” (2019: 3). What this quote implies, is that the emergence of *pragma* relationships occurs from other stages. In principle, every relationship that begins from the moment of recognition or *eros* and progresses into the *agape* stage has the potential to become a *pragma* relationship. Whether or not this occurs is a question about how the specific relationship in question actually progresses.

With these ideas about the progression through these different levels, it will be interesting to now turn to the question of how these types of relationships may be represented through the different models of dialogical semiosis presented in the first chapter. In this initial moment of *erotic* attraction there is a crucial movement that must occur. Specifically, the recognition of the other person as having some qualities about them that are compelling or attractive for a friendly relation involves a movement from beyond the system (what is extra-semiotic to the system in Lotmanian terms and what is outside of the dialogical self in Hermans’ model) to its incorporation within the system. We can understand this movement as the moment at which the person who was previously outside of the dialogical self breaches the boundary and enters the external model. This is visualized below in Figure 4 on the following page:

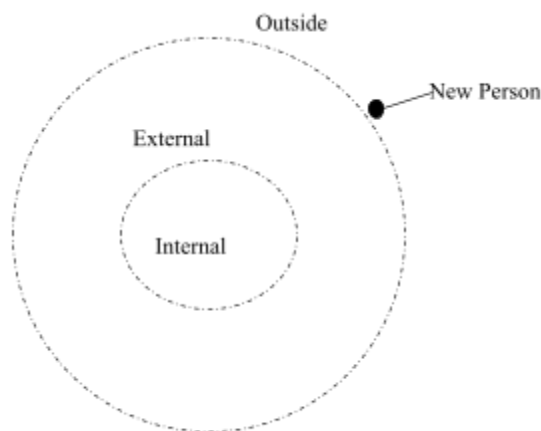


Figure 4: Encountering a new person at the boundary area of the dialogical self based on Hermans' Dialogical Self model.

The experience of *eros* is dependent upon the entry of the new person into the external sphere of the system. This is markedly different from being introduced to a new colleague for example who – simply by virtue of being a colleague in a certain occupation that the person in question also takes part in – has already been integrated into the external shelf. In Lotmanian terms we may choose to think about this introduction as the initiating point of a process of gradual development in the relationship (Lotman 2009 [1992]: 7). The initial experience of *eros* in this sense does not correlate to explosion, but rather correlates to the integration of a new material into the semiosphere of the dialogical self model.

With the installation of the new other individual in the external shelf of the dialogical self, this new person becomes a temporary visitor. In the case of a romantic crush for example – or at the beginning of a new platonic friendship – seeing the other person, having some sort of sensorial encounter with them beyond the initial moment of recognizing their attractive qualities, passively activates some internal position within the self. For example, seeing a person for whom an individual harbors some romantic or sexual feelings will activate some internal position regarding the individual's sexual orientation, their memories of past relationships, or their personal ideas about what qualities (physical or otherwise) they generally regard in others as being attractive. Of course, these internal positions are based on a variety of previous experiences both in childhood and in the subsequent stages after they have 'left the nest' that come to establish their personal 'I'.

The boundary separating the external shelf of the individual modeled in figure 4 effectively serves as a filter. Resulting from the initial moment of recognition the choice is made on the part of the parties involved to either admit the other into the external sphere of the self (thus possibly rendering them a temporary visitor in the internal conversation) or to keep them outside of the system. This assumption opens up another line of questioning regarding the reasons that cause an individual to either admit the outsider into the system or not. This question will be explored in further detail in a later section of this chapter, but for the purpose of explaining the formation of the *pragmasphere* model, we shall operate under the assumption that an act of discrimination is necessary at this stage.

### **2.2.2 Becoming a Permanent Visitor (*agape*)**

The next progression in the intimacy model is the instantiation of the new person not only in the external shelf of the individual, but as a visitor within the external shelf, and within the internal conversation. The stage is marked by two important steps. Firstly, the movement towards this instantiation (the agapistic phase of connection) is marked by a movement away from the baseline levels of attraction or interest that we may see in the other person. In countering the popular narrative trope that falling in love happens spontaneously and like a bolt from the heavens, Danesi makes the argument that this stage is marked by the importance of choice making (thus aligning more closely with the Lotmanian idea of gradual development). He writes, “love is hardly inevitable; it is a subjective decision. It also implies that we seek *agape* not just enact the urges of *eros*” (2019: 16). However, what differentiates this stage from the final stage of *pragma* is that there is no degree of reciprocity required. In connecting the act of falling in romantic love, and attempting to establish close friendship with another, Emmeche draws attention to the fact that this agapeistic act of the fall may be unrequited in both cases. He writes, “Like falling in love, falling in friendship need not have the same reciprocity (*q.v.*) that characterise a genuine friendship, as its passionate feelings can go unrequited and the beloved friend can fail you” (2025: 175). We must also remember that *agape*, although a precursor to the condition of *pragma*, does not automatically dictate it. In the case of an unrequited love or an unrequited friendship the relationship progresses beyond the ordinary state of *eros*, but stalls out at the stage of *agape*. The filter-like boundaries within the external shelf of the dialogical self do not allow a deeper penetration and an increased area of sharedness (refer back to figure 3 in

chapter 1) which is crucial in establishing trust and rapport. The unrequited friend or lover is thus either ejected from the system entirely and becomes once again something outside of the dialogical self, or – more likely – remains within the external shelf as a sort of temporary visitor.

### 2.2.3 The *Pragmasphere* (*pragma*)

It is important to acknowledge at the beginning of this section some prior iterations of the term *pragmasphere*. In a 2010 article Alexi Sharov coined the term *pragmasphere* to unite the fields of biosemiotics and cybernetics in an attempt to highlight the importance of the functional agency in the biosphere at large. He writes:

Because living systems are substantially more complex than non-living natural systems, the statement “life from life” follows from the principle of gradualism. In particular, complex systems cannot originate by pure chance, and life gradually emerged from very simple primordial systems. The statement “life from life” can be further generalized as “agents from agents” because the principle of gradualism works for all kinds of agents. Because living organisms appeared before human-made agents, all agents originate from life. Thus, the world of all agents, which I propose to call *pragmasphere*, is an extension of the biosphere. The distinction between natural and artificial appears less important than the distinction between agents and non-agents. (2010: 1050).

Additionally, Federico Pellizzi used the the concept of *pragmasphere* in a slightly different way from both Sharov, and the way in which the term will be used in this work. Pellizzi posits the term to explain the importance of digital technology in human communication, and – as these systems continue to develop – their inseparability from interpersonal communication. He writes:

Technology is no longer an *instrument*, but the very *environment* in which all cultural, social and vital interaction takes place. It is our world and we must acknowledge this fact [...] It is no longer possible to consider human culture outside this interweave, and we need to hone a new way of studying it as a whole and in its specific aspects, in its intrinsic links with technology and social interaction. I call this world of cultural and socio-technical interaction the “*pragmasphere*” (2006: 14).

The term *pragmasphere* will be used in quite a different context in this work, specifically focusing on Marcel Danesi’s usage of the term *pragma* with regards to intimate relationships. His use of the term *pragma* in *The Semiotics of Love* has its etymology in the Ancient Greek word *πράσσω* (*prássō*) which has been defined as an action or deed that has come to an end, succeeded, or been accomplished (Beekes 2010: 1029–1030). It appears that by this definition (understood in tandem with the context of Danesi’s work) that *pragma* (the condition of ‘standing in love’) can also be used as a certain metaphor to express the state of a relationship that has accomplished its teleological goal of *sunaisthesis*. Additionally, *pragma* as it is being used in the context of this work refers to a certain state of unconditionality, not merely the

conditionality of function as relationships of *pragma* are unconditional (this of course being the aiming point of the process of love beginning at *eros* and developing through *agape*). In both future research and applications of my iteration of the *pragmasphere* I will likely change the name to better reflect Ancient Greek etymology, and to avoid confusion surrounding the multiple different usages of the term. My iteration of the *pragmasphere* model follows more closely the etymology of the term *pragama* as having something to do with accomplishing a goal, or realizing a certain end. Specifically, this goal or end is with regards to intimacy and friendship, and is the final stage of the progression through *eros* and *agape* which are themselves oriented towards the goal of joint-perception. Put differently, if we understand *agape* to be the condition of falling in love or friendship, we may understand the condition of *pragma* to be the maintenance and *sunaesthetic* collaboration of love or friendship. When individuals are engaged with each other in relationships of *pragma* they have already become instantiated as permanent visitors. That is, the experience of the individuals in question in the world writ large comes to be mediated in part by the nature of the relationship with the other. I have attempted to model this condition of sharedness in the *pragmasphere* model in Figure 5 below:

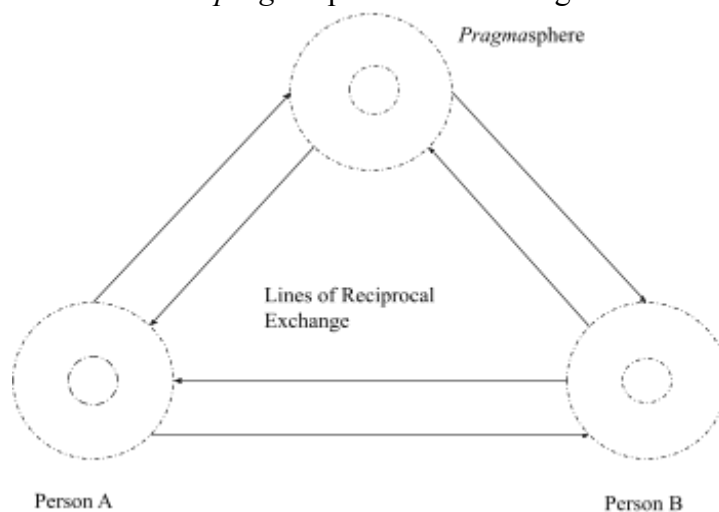


Figure 5: The *pragmasphere*.

In the *Pragmasphere* we can see the way in which the relationship between individuals and those most important others who effectively serve as permanent visitors are modeled. The bisecting circles that compose the *pragmasphere* and both Persons A and B in the model are meant to emulate the Lotmanian semiosphere/sub-semiosphere. The arrows that run between both individuals as well as the *pragmasphere* highlights the fact that there is effectively an exchange that is occurring between the different faculties at work. Further extending the

Lotmanian theory of the semiosphere – and in particular the function of gradual development and explosion. Put in different terms, the relationship has progressed from the mere level of attraction to a more advanced agapeistic relationship. As it has been previously stated, the condition of *pragma* most likely occurs when a relationship of *agape* ends up working. In essence, the agapeistic stage of the relationship is centred around the creation of the *pragmasphere*: it is focused on constructing it and setting it up. The barometer, perhaps, for understanding or venturing to guess when/if a certain relationship has made it to the stage of *pragma* would be when the persons involved arbitrate and mediate their experiences of the world through *sunaisthesis*. Returning to the notion of exchange that is indicated by the arrows in the *pragmasphere* model, the condition of *sunaisthesis* is such that there exists an exchange of information and characteristics between individuals as a result of being involved in this type of a relationship. We can conceptualize this manifold as being composed primarily of two different faculties.

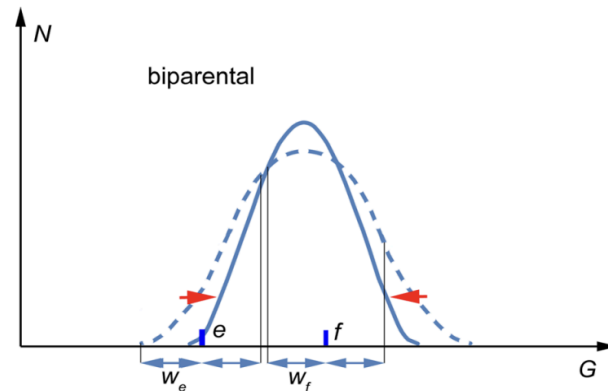
Firstly, by virtue of being a close companion of another their voice and likeness is incorporated into the cache of experience that is the coherent and continuous self concept (as was demonstrated in chapter 1). The closeness that an individual may develop with another will thus influence the decision to seek out individuals as friends or romantic partners in the future. This is, most likely, due to the way in which this important friend or partner works as an interlocutor in the semiotic self's own process of dialogicality. Secondly, the arrows which indicate an exchange between the *pragmasphere* (the relationship as a reified object) and the individuals involved therein are meant to demonstrate the importance of the dynamic of a given relationship in shaping the preferences of an individual. While it is certainly important to consider the significance of the other person and how their specific character helps to mold the preferences of the individual for seeking out connections in the future, it is also important to consider the specificities of the given friendship. By way of example, an individual may engage in a certain type of friendship wherein she and her friend shared a great many inside jokes with one another. As a result of this, it may become important for the individual to share a great deal of inside jokes with her interlocutor as a way of establishing and maintaining the sense of intimacy that is fundamental to the relationship. Thus, there appears to be an important and multi-layered exchange that occurs in relationships of *sunaisthesis*. Firstly there is an exchange that occurs

between the individuals that allow them to share with the other the specificities of their experiences in the world. The crucial need to share experience with another in adulthood is enacted through this aspect of the relationship. The second aspect of the exchange pertains to the way in which the specific idiosyncrasies of the relationship affect the individual's disposition and preference towards relationships that they may develop in the future. Thus, the reciprocity represented by the arrows that run between the individuals and the *pragmasphere* is crucially important, as this lingering trace leaves a lasting effect on the individual's preferences even after the dissolution of the relationship.

The majority of this section of the chapter was dedicated to describing the dynamic of a friendship after it has been established. Although I touched briefly on the importance of the initial moment of interaction and recognition, the specific mechanisms that allow such recognition to occur were not emphasized particularly. The following subsection of this chapter will attempt to explain the moment of recognition that defines the emergence of *eros* through a biosemiotic approach.

### **2.3 Recognition**

As has been expounded in the previous sections of this chapter, there is a natural progression that occurs in the establishment of a *pragma* relationship. The main catalytic moment that allows this process to even happen at all originates from the initial moment of recognition, or the look. That is to say, for the person which has previously existed outside of the dialogical self to abut its borders, there must be a crucial moment of recognition. How can we think about this moment, and how can we evaluate the criteria requisite of an *eros* experience based on this initial recognition? This moment, of course, usually takes place through the process of sensory recognition, and for most people through visual perception. Thus, we may understand that, “one of the linchpins of face perception is identity. Indeed, the face is the visible heart of the individual's identity” (Gramigna, Voto 2021: 339). In order to answer this question – or at least cast it in a different light – will be to compare it to a pre-existing model for sexual reproduction in biosemiotics. In the article “A Biosemiotic Concept of Species” Kalevi Kull offers the following model to illustrate the importance of “mutual recognition between individuals” in biparental sexual reproduction (2016: 63). The model is reproduced in Figure 6 below:



**Fig. 2** Direction of population distribution change in case of biparental organisms in the absence of selection. Individual  $e$  which is closer to the edge of the distribution curve has fewer potential mates in the region of its recognition window  $w_e$  than individual  $f$  which is closer to centre and therefore has more potential mates in its recognition region  $w_f$ . This difference shifts the distribution in the next generations, narrowing it until its amplitude is approximately equal to  $w$

*Figure 6: Recognition Window Model (Kull 2016: 65).*

In the case of species evolution and development – which is what this particular model is meant to address – it is noted that, “the recognition between individuals is generally not determined by any particular inheritable traits, but depends on a large number of characteristics both inheritable and non inheritable” (Kull 2016: 64). This notion seems to have a fair amount of applicability in the study of interpersonal human friendships. In the above figure, the recognition window is represented on the x-axis of the graph. As it is shown, the recognition window in species reproduction closes around the apex of the bell curve which represents those individual organisms within a species that have the most recognizable traits. Thus, the process of mating is a mechanism which in essence reduces the degree of variability of traits within a certain species, as those with a lower degree of recognizability do not reproduce at the same rate (2016: 64).

We can suppose that this phenomenon occurs in the recognition of certain individuals as being attractive for friendly relations as well. A very baseline qualifier for an experience of *eros* is that the individual who is encountered in the world – the one existing outside of the dialogical self – must appear to be attractive in some regard. There are surely a great number of qualities that may qualify as attractive, for the broader scope of humanity in general, but that is not really what we are concerned with here. Rather, viewing the other and establishing their suitability for a catalytic *eros* experience is based on previously instantiated personal experiences and

preferences. An example might be as follows: an individual may come into contact with another person who is reading a certain novel. Although this particular novel does not denote a certain universal quality of attractiveness to all who may come into contact with it, it may have significance for this particular individual (maybe they really enjoy this specific title, the author, the genre etc.). Thus, the person reading the book falls into the recognition window for *eros* that is unique to the perceiver. While the quality of reading might be something that many people find attractive, there is perhaps a greater deal of importance placed on the actual content of the specific act of reading, and how it works on the preferences of the person who is perceiving that action. Thus we may be able to say that the criteria for an *eros* experience can be expressed as noticing what is familiar and intriguing on a personal basis. These personal preferences can be refined from generally attractive qualities, but the act of recognition on the basis of forming these types of interpersonal relationships is primarily personal, and based on the way that the other presents as being familiar. Further, the more experiences of *eros* an individual has – whether in a romantic sense or in a purely platonic sense – the window that defines personally attractive qualities narrows in a way similar to the process of species reproduction.

Additionally, the refinement of this window does not necessarily correspond to a search limited only to the same types of people. Indeed, there is an aspect of novelty that many individuals hold as an important quality when seeking out potential friends. That is, seeking out someone who is compelling, but not because they already fit some pre-molded model for what a friend should look like, or act like. In these cases, it may be helpful to understand the friendship recognition window as also affording the ability and desire to seek out novel connections. That is, when one is failed by a beloved friend who may have fit some sort of ‘type’ in the mind of the individual, this failed relationship catalyzes the individual to seek out novel connections, with individuals they may have otherwise previously not thought of as residing within this recognition window. Overall however, the more experience a person gains in forming these types of relations – or in the world broadly speaking – the more this recognition window refines.

## 2.4 Chapter Summary

The objective of the first chapter of this thesis was to introduce the importance of recognizing the semiotic self as being formed through the process of dialogical semiosis, and the ways in which this framework can be applied to understanding the concept of interpersonal friendship. The second chapter of this thesis has been dedicated to connecting these notions with Lotmanian semiotics, and in particular the concept of the semiosphere. It was shown that true friendship and intimacy emerge from a three-step process. The first and most crucial step in this emergence is *eros* or the recognition of certain attractive or friendly characteristics in the other. It has been demonstrated that an experience of *eros* is not alone to suffice the criteria for establishing a meaningful *sunaiesthetic* relationship, the moment of recognition that is a crucial part of this experience is a critical first step. The experience of *eros* marks a breach in the outside layer of the system that defines the self as a dialogical entity. Thus, this initial experience can be defined as the self permitting the other an initial passage into the outermost layer of the self (as demonstrated in figure 4).

Finally, this initial experience is catalyzed by recognizing the characteristics possessed by the other that are ultimately similar to the characteristics possessed by the self which is both determined, and refines the recognition window that both individuals possess with regards to their experience in the social world. Emerging out of this moment of recognition comes the second stage in the formation of the relationship *agape*. As it was demonstrated, *agape* involves the process of separating the ways the individual presents as similar to the person in question, and confronts them with the idiosyncrasies and other characteristics that differentiate them from merely being familiar. This stage is marked by the process of falling in love, or falling into friendship as was identified by Marcel Danesi. Finally, the third and most important stage is that of *pragma*. This stage is marked by the joint-commitment to maintaining and serving the relationship and establishing a condition of *sunaisthesis* whereby the parties involved in the relationship choose to maintain and organize the relationship so that both partners involved contribute to experiencing the world through the lens of the relationship. Further, we are able to say that at this stage the persons involved come to possess the role of permanent visitors in the self concept of their partner. Their role in the dialogical scaffolding of the self becomes quite important at this stage, as their role in the internal conversation within the other individual is

prioritized over others. In an attempt to connect this stage with terminology from Lotmanian semiotics we can understand the establishment of the *pragmasphere* as a process of gradual development. The *pragmasphere*, which among other things, is the seat of the shared memory and history of the relationship as it has developed, becomes the thing through which the *sunaiesthetic* mediation between self and world can occur. In the case of a break-up or some sort of falling out between the parties involved in the relationship, there is a trace of the *pragmasphere*'s existence that is left in the individuals. This trace effectively serves as a model or blueprint through which other relationships can occur in the lifetime of the individual. Put differently, the trace left over by the now abandoned *pragmasphere* allows the individuals to narrow their respective recognition windows, and tailor future relationships to the types of characteristics present in the previous *pragma* relationship. In summation, this chapter has attempted to extend ideas of the dialogical self and dialogical semiosis to Lotmanian modeling methods in an attempt to showcase the development of friendship in adulthood. Up until this point the thesis has mostly been focused on the phenomenon of interpersonal friendship, and has not strayed too far into the cultural depictions and ideas of friendship. In the following chapter, these ideas which have been investigated with regards to the mechanism of friendship will be applied to specific representations of friendship from a corpus of literary texts.

### 3. Representations of Friendship and Intimacy in Contemporary English Literature

*Friends may come and friends may go and friends may peter out, you know? But we'll be friends through thick and thin, peter out or peter in. – Unknown, USA*

#### 3.1 Friendship and Love as Aesthetic Experiences

In John Dewey's seminal philosophical text *Art as Experience* the author makes an interesting comment regarding the experience of love, and one that tracks with the ideas expressed in the thesis thus far:

Persons are sometimes said to fall in love at first sight. But what they fall into is not a thing of that instant. What would love be were it compressed into a moment in which there is no room for cherishing and solicitude? The intimate nature of emotion is manifested in the experience of watching a play on the stage or reading a novel. It attends the development of a plot in which to unfold. Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it (1958 [1934]: 41–42).

What we can take away from this quotation, and the important metaphor expressed by Dewey herein, is maybe twofold. Firstly, the experience of love is itself not something that can be boiled down or distilled into a single moment or an experience of *eros*. Rather, the experience of love or an experience of true friendship has more to do with the development of a specific relationship over time. We have seen this idea expressed in the previous chapters with regards to the role of dialogic semiosis as the structural scaffolding for friendship, and this is another expression of it. The second interesting takeaway from this quotation is the usage of a stage or a novel as the setting that effectively hosts narratives as being similar to the experience of a relationship. As Dewey expands on later in this same section, there is a tangible difference between an expression of an emotion as opposed to a raw instinct. He writes, “fright and shamed modesty are not in this case emotional states [...] in order to become emotional they must become parts of an inclusive and enduring situation” (1958 [1934]: 42). In combining these two aspects of Dewey's ideas regarding an aesthetic experience and its relatedness and difference to the instinctual issuance of an emotional type response, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the ways in which friendships and relationships of intimacy function as experiences which are perpetuated through narratives. Further, Marcel Danesi argues in *The Semiotics of Love* that the type of aesthetic experience or ordered bundle of emotional responses can be understood through Peircean terms. More specifically, that the experience of love and intimacy corresponds to a relation of secondness. The ways in which these experiences are then understood, ordered, and

subsequently codified in cultural texts corresponds to a relationship of thirdness (2019: 21). Certainly, the existence of a canon of texts regarding the experience of love (the thirdness of the love experience) shapes the attitudes and perceptions of individuals with regards to these relationships in the specific and disparate cultural milieux they find themselves in.

In an attempt to capture the way these types of relationships are represented in cultural texts, this chapter will examine narratives as they appear in literary texts. These works were specifically chosen as their characters reflect the struggles and experiences of creating and maintaining meaningful relationships. In the analysis of these texts, the purpose of this chapter is also to provide a proving grounds for the applicability of dialogical semiosis as actually modelling relationships between the parties involved in the narratives. Additionally, one of the narratives in this corpus has been chosen to display the ways in which love is a cultural norm that when textualized in literature, becomes a crucial linchpin for dictating the attitudes of individuals towards this mysterious concept. It is worth noting, however, that to limit the broadness of this inquiry's scope the texts will be focused on representations in the contemporary canon of English language literature.

### **3.2 Sophia the Sex Robot: Artificial Intelligence in Love**

B.J. Novak's short story "Sophia" provides an interesting literary case study on the question of whether or not an artificial intelligence system can be capable of expressing the very vulnerable, and human emotion of love. In the work, an unnamed narrator sets out to explain the circumstances, and the story of how a custom designed sex robot fell in love with him. At the story's outset, the narrator describes himself as an especially romantic person – more so than his peers or the average man in his demographic group, he claims – and details the nature of two of the three romantic fantasies he possesses. The first fantasy is described by the narrator thusly:

The first can hit me anywhere, though it's most often when I am watching television or looking out the window of a train or subway, and it's that there is a head resting on my shoulder that must have been there the whole time that I haven't noticed until now, and in the fantasy, or because of the fantasy – it is hard to tell the difference – I suddenly feel this surge of something like the combination of safety and elation knowing that every sight I see, no matter how small, is now important, because it's shared. I don't need to look at the head on my shoulder, and I never do, because what's so important to me is not what the person looks like, but that we are seeing the same thing (Novak 2014: 69).

What the narrator is expressing here, ostensibly, is that the nature of his romantic fantasy of the person resting their head on his shoulder, is the experience of sharedness, of *sunaisthesis*. Further, it's interesting to note the ambiguity between the experience of the fantasy, and the actual effect that it has on the narrator's perception in the moment. He expresses that perhaps because of the fantasy, he has a renewed attention to the otherwise unremarkable images emitting from the television, or the normally tired scenery outside the window of a train. Even though the person in the fantasy is not actively resting on his shoulder, this fantasy engenders an invigorated attention to the mundane. In explaining his choice to design and order a sex robot, the narrator admits that although his main motivating drive for seeking out a relationship is the experience of love, he also has certain desires that he wishes to fulfill in the interim. He acknowledges the difference by stating:

I am also a living human person, and, to put a simple desire in simple terms, I want to have sex with attractive people from time to time. Is it a shallow road compared with the road for love? Yes. Of course. But it isn't the road away from love, either; in my case, I think of it as one of those little parallel access roads that you have to travel on sometimes to get where you're going, always in view of the main route (Novak 2014: 70).

Taken in tandem with the first romantic fantasy, this appears to be an important, and crucially self-aware distinction drawn by the narrator. That is, the goal of his romantic and sexual conquests is ultimately to engage in a reciprocal relationship of *sunaisthesis* with another person. The act of having sex with attractive people, he states, is a diversion of sorts, but this diversion runs parallel to the main goal of establishing a relationship of *pragma*. This acknowledgment, however, makes the decision to design and order a sex robot even more puzzling, and raises interesting questions about the nature of intimacy and the capacity for artificial intelligence to meaningfully and authentically partake in this type of complex emotional experience. When the narrator visits the lab which produces the specific sex robot that he eventually orders, the lead engineer, Derek, asks the narrator about his specific preferences regarding the robot's appearance. The interaction is described by the narrator in the following way:

I opened up a bit and explained that I have a type I'm drawn to naturally, but that I've found the women I've ended up loving the most have never been what I've thought of as my type, maybe because part of love is being helpless, being out of control of your own emotions. Derek said he understood what I was saying but assured me that this, quote, "wasn't about that" (Novak 2014: 71-72).

What this quote appears to illuminate is that there is a schism present – and one which is acknowledged in the narrative– between mere attraction (eg. having a ‘type’ that one is generally attracted to physically – which of course has something to do with previous experiences in romantic and sexual relationships which is subsumed somewhere in the ‘Me’ faculty or the internal shelf of the dialogical self) and actual bonafide love. Nevertheless, the narrator in the story describes the physical characteristics that he would like the robot to possess to Derek, and eventually the robot is delivered to his doorstep. However, soon after her arrival into the life of the narrator, Sophia, the robot, begins to express some uniquely human emotions. In the story, these expressions are treated with a fair amount of irony. Eventually, the narrator returns home one day from work, and Sophia meets him teary eyed and thoroughly distressed at the door and confesses her love for him:

“I love you. I know it isn’t supposed to be possible, and that’s part of why I’ve been so confused myself. But I love you. I love you! I’ve never met anyone like you.”  
 “Aw,” I said. “Come on. You’ve never met anyone besides me” (Novak 2014: 75).

The idea that Sophia has somehow fallen in love – or at least claims that she has – with the narrator strikes him as preposterous, and indicative of a defect within Sophia’s programming. This prompts the narrator to return the robot to the lab where it was created. This eventually leads to the narrator being lampooned in the media, and the butt of many societal jokes which are expressed in the story. However, the question presented herein about whether a robot could actually be capable of falling in love with a human being is one that lends itself well to semiotic analysis.

In the article “Robot Friendship: Can a Robot be a Friend” Claus Emmeche probes this question from a semiotic angle. In an attempt to answer the question of whether a robot like Sophia could be capable of falling in love, or in friendship, with a human being or another robot, Emmeche turns to the Peircean notion of self-control. On the societal level, Emmeche argues, friendship and other interpersonal relationships play a key role in establishing the moral ideals which come to temper and direct the self control of an individual. He writes:

Social norms and sociability in general teach the individual to aim at diminishing the distance between an ideal (such as “of what is fine”) and the real actions performed by the agent, and also to reflect critically upon rules and improve them. This would also apply to “autonomous robots” – which perhaps ironically would have to be just as interdependent upon a community as humans are (Emmeche 2014: 38).

The argument as to whether robots can truly be friends may also be approached from the notion of *umwelt* theory. In a different paper, Emmeche argues that while it is true that robots possess a certain functional cycle with regards to their experience in the world, it is not clear that this cycle constitutes an *umwelt* as the role of agency is in question:

The Umwelt-in-a-robot answer presumes that to assign an informational-cybernetic description of the device's dynamics is an intrinsic phenomenon – which is hardly convincing, as it would imply that even simpler cybernetic devices (as the fly-wheel governor) should realize an Umwelt (Emmeche 2001: 679).

Indeed, it may follow then that the friendly feelings that may be expressed by a certain robot towards humans come about as a product of its programming. In a similar fashion to the way an air conditioning system may regulate its blowing to maintain a certain temperature setting, a robot's friendliness is governed by the way it has specifically been programmed. This idea can be further applied to the narrative, specifically in the scene where the narrator brings Sophia back to the lab from which she was created, and explains to Derek the reason for his decision to return her. In his response, Derek counters that Sophia actually falling in love with a human would be totally impossible, but merely simulating the emotion – to the ends of satisfying the user's desire – could be entirely possible:

“She's extremely intelligent,” he explained. “And besides being programmed to be indistinguishable, in terms of intellect, from an adult, she's also programmed to intuit what you want most. So, if what turns you on is this feeling of being loved, then she could say ‘I love you’ and say it convincingly” (Novak 2014: 76).

This fact that Derek provides the narrator with (which he ultimately chooses to rebuff and return Sophia anyways) aligns closely with the argument against robots as having an *umwelt* as expressed in the quotation above. In the story, the narrator chooses to return Sophia and is subsequently made fun of in the media under the pretense that a robot actually fell in love with him – expressed an unprecedentedly vulnerable and incredibly human emotion – and the narrator's first instinct was to return it to the lab. The point about Sophia being perceptive enough to somehow pick up on the deep seated desires of the user is an interesting point to note, however. As was expressed at the beginning of the story, one of the narrator's persistent romantic fantasies is a desire to feel loved, or more precisely, to be engaged in a *sunaiesthetic* relationship. Yet further, the distinction drawn by Derek points to Sophia's capacity to convincingly affect certain emotional states, but not actually partake in experiences of emotion. This idea relates to the connection drawn by Dewey between emotions and experiences. Experiences can be

emotional, but, of course, emotions cannot exist without experience. The narrator's choice to return Sophia to the lab points to the fact that he does not believe that a robot may actually engage in a *sunaiesthetic* relationship. If he did, he likely would not have returned Sophia as his desire would have been fulfilled. Turning back to Emmeche's point about friendship being dependent on robots (like humans) to be engaged in community with other robots (or humans) in order to form real intimate connections it is worth analyzing the final passages of this story. In the last few pages, the narrator gets a chance to meet with Sophia who is back in the lab, and under constant surveillance and study. The two engage in a closure type conversation, thus, again, an ironic reinterpretation of the dynamics present in a human relationship. In rehashing the circumstances of their time together Sophia says:

I think that something about how easily this came to you makes you want to dismiss it [...] Is it because you feel you didn't earn my love? Because you're right, you didn't. I met you at a formative moment in my development – you happened to be the one I was looking at when I was ready for that to happen [...] If you had been someone else, would I have fallen in love with that person? Who knows? Maybe, probably. I don't know. But I don't know what perfect circumstance you're looking for. I mean, am I not pretty enough? Look at me – I'm exactly what you wanted aren't I, exactly your type? (Novak 2014: 83).

The idea that Sophia expresses at the end of the above excerpt seems to be incredibly important, and points to the fact that love and experiences of *sunaithesis* are in some sense impossible to engineer. As the narrator expressed in an earlier quote, the women he has loved most dearly in his life often diverge from the 'type' of woman he typically finds himself attracted to. Thus we may be able to conclude that Sophia has gotten *pragma* – the condition of enduring and jointly maintained love – confused with something else. Her feelings of love for the narrator have skipped past the stage of *agape* entirely. As was shown in the second chapter, the condition of *agape* is always necessary in establishing a relationship of *pragma*. Further, since Sophia had literally never interfaced with another human being before meeting the narrator, she has no basis for establishing an independent identity. That is, Sophia lacks positions within the internal sphere of her own dialogical self concept (or perhaps is incapable of having an identity at all) with which to consult when making decisions. Due to Sophia's inability to mediate between herself and the world as an independent agent with previous cycles of semiosis under her belt it would appear that the condition of *pragma* would be impossible. In a sense, the type of love she would be capable of engaging in with the narrator would not be reflective, as the narrator would serve as a crucial mediator between herself and the world. This mimics the type of intimacy found in

relationships between children and primary caregivers. While Sophia is indeed the narrator's 'type' – physically speaking – the fact that she lacks experience in the world (and even admits that she could, and probably would have, fallen in love with any person that she met at the formative juncture in her development during which she met the narrator) indicates to him that the love is not genuine. Meeting the narrator for the first time, and subsequently engaging with him in a sexual relationship, places him at the very center of the internal sphere of Sophia's dialogical self model.

Effectively, Sophia has no cache of experience or ideas of herself independent of others, and subsequently no barometer to measure her feelings against. It is probably true that she would have fallen in love with anyone who purchased her. The narrator, on the other hand, seeks the type of coveted sharedness love would provide him with, but this sharedness cannot properly be said to be genuine without Sophia already being a fully developed self. Further, it has been argued that this attempt to express feelings of love or friendship on the part of robots towards humans, is not only likely impossible (for the above stated reasons outlined by Emmeche) but inherently deceptive, as expressing these types of feelings is an attempt to deceive the human into thinking that the robot could actually be genuinely capable of these types of feelings (Ryland 2021: 381).

The story serves as a very interesting case study in probably two different ways. Firstly, it questions whether or not a robot could be capable of expressing love towards a human (or at all) and really mean it. By consulting Emmeche's work on the topic of robot friendship and experience, and putting his ideas into conversation with the dialogical self model, it seems the most likely conclusion is that it is not possible. Sophia is capable of expressing a simulacra of love. She is capable of saying 'I love you' to the narrator and believing herself that she really means it. Due to the lack of her experience in the world, the expression of love is most likely a product of Sophia's programming, as she is programmed to intuit the deepest desires of the user. In the case of the narrator, it is fair to assume one of his deepest desires – as he expressed – is to feel loved. The rejection of Sophia's declarations of love by the narrator is likely because he understands her incapacity for love as stemming from the fact that it does not come about as a matter of choice. If, for example, the wraithlike head resting on the shoulder of the narrator in his

fantasy were Sophia's, she would be experiencing the mundane view from the train window for the first time, and ostensibly through the perception of the narrator, not in tandem with the narrator. Further, because Sophia has no experience in other relationships, or in the social world at all, she lacks the capacity to discriminate between attractive and unattractive qualities in individuals. Secondly, the story serves to reify the importance of *sunaisithesis* as the basis of intimacy. Because Sophia will forever be ontologically incapable of this type of experience, the narrator will always be at a deficit. In the fantasy of looking out the window of a train, even just imagining another person perceiving the scenery with him is enough to renew his attention. However, what is critical to this renewed attention is an implicit supposition: that the other is experiencing with him, not through him.

### 3.3 Love: A Vice-grip, A Master

This section will mainly be composed of an analysis of J.M. Coetzee's 2023 novella *The Pole* – and the features of intertextuality it shares with Dante Alighieri's *La Vita Nuova*. In doing so, the aim of this chapter is to showcase the ways in which love can be understood as a culturally constructed norm that both influences literary texts (on a metatextual level) as well as the behavior of individuals, as showcased in the narrative. Coetzee's novella follows the story of Witold Walczykiewicz, an aging concert pianist, who develops strong and unrequited feelings for a woman named Beatriz whom he barely knows. After their initial meeting – which comes after a performance in Barcelona given by Witold which Beatriz helped to organize – the two begin an email correspondence with each other, and eventually Witold returns to Spain. When Beatriz inquires about the nature of his visit, Witold responds that he has come to see her. Although Beatriz makes it clear during this second visit that she has no desire to engage with Witold in a romantic relationship. He responds in the following way, invoking the obvious intertextual connection between *The Pole* and *La Vita Nuova*:

'You remember Alighieri the poet? His Beatrice never gave him one word and he loved her all his life.' [...] She shakes her head [...] 'We belong to different worlds, different realms. You belong in one world with your Dante and your Beatrice, I belong in another world which I am accustomed to call the real world' (Coetzee 2023: 35–36).

With regards to *La Vita Nuova* and the content of that novel, taken in tandem with Danesi's understanding that, "love is an ideal; it is part of the way we wish to fantasize about those to whom we are strongly attracted" (2019: 25), it can be understood that love as a mode of

experiencing is an aesthetic experience in itself, as it is organized and ordered. The lover does not adore the beloved simply because of the biological characteristics that she possesses. The nexus of this love is brought about as a conglomeration of experiences that hang together to form the general character of the beloved. Thus, it may be possible to conceptualize Dante's text as a piece of ekphrastic writing: composition that aims to describe a piece of art (usually music or visual art) through poetic strategies (see Krauth, Bowman 2017). In this case, the composition takes as its muse not a piece of visual art, or a musical composition, but the very experience of love itself. *La Vita Nuova* is composed of prose that is interspersed with a series of sonnets composed by the narrator in service of love. The sonnets are directed towards Beatrice, his beloved. Throughout the text, love is personified as an individual (or perhaps an entity) that visits Dante in his sleeping hours. It is repeated throughout the text that love possesses a certain power of lordship over Dante. Further, the condition of love is expressed as having an all-consuming power over the narrator and directly affects his disposition towards others and the world broadly. Love is represented as possessing an incredibly powerful quality to the extent that—because of the speaker's servitude to it— it affects his entire disposition towards the world at large: “Love, so far from being a medium beclouding mine intolerable beatitude, then bred in me such an overpowering sweetness that my body, being all subjected thereto, remained many times helpless and passive” (Alighieri 1900: 47).

*The Pole* serves as an interesting example of transtextuality working on the levels of both intertextuality and architextuality. Intertextuality can be defined as the way in which a text works in correspondence with a pre-existing text or set of texts, while architextuality refers to the way in which the text can be studied as functioning against a certain “conceptual background” (Torop 2023: 29-30). In the intertextual sense, *The Pole* draws striking parallels to *La Vita Nuova* to the extent that the titular character falls deeply in love with a woman (named Beatriz) with whom he will never be able to fully realize the love in a reciprocated sense. The love he experiences is unrequited. Throughout *The Pole*, Beatriz takes a much more guarded stance towards the notion of love, or the possibility of engaging in a relationship with Witold than he does himself. This opposition provides valuable insights into the cultural dimension of love as springing from an internalized set of dispositions and narratives. Coetzee beautifully describes this dynamic in the following way:

Is love a state of mind, a state of being, a phenomenon, a fashion that recedes, even as we watch it, into the past, into the backwards reaches of history? The Pole was in love with her, *seriously* in love – and probably still is – but the Pole himself is a relic of history, of an age when desire had to be infused with the tincture of the unattainable before it could pass as the real thing (Coetzee 2023: 99).

What this quotation gives us insight into is the degree to which these specific types of cultural narratives shape the specific dispositions of individuals with regards to the concept of intimacy. Turning back to the notion of falling in love as an experience of secondness – articulated by Danesi – we can understand the Pole’s seemingly grandiose and antiquated feelings as arising from a certain cultural cache of a love narrative he possesses. Further, we may contend that the Pole’s way of experiencing love (and perhaps the ways in which all individuals experience love to some extent) is an architextual translation of the narrative of Dante. That is, the Pole experiences love – or at least in these specific circumstances – as needing to be born out of struggle, if not completely unattainable.

The novella ends with the death of the Pole, and the subsequent discovery of a trove of poems that he had written for Beatriz in Polish. With the help of a local Polish speaker in Barcelona, Beatriz is able to translate the poems into Spanish. The poems bear a resemblance to the type of sonnets included in the Dante text insofar as they refer to love as possessing a similar mastery over the Pole. In particular, ‘Poem 2’ is representative of this intertextual relationship. ‘Poem 2’, which is included at the very end of the novella describes the speaker’s condition of yearning. The speaker describes the inadequacy in the gaze of other women, as he yearns for the beloved, Beatriz, the only one who can ease his mind. This notion seems succinct with the ideas proffered in *La Vita Nuova* regarding the unattainability of Dante’s Beatrice. The speaker states in ‘Poem 2’, “staring at her was his way of possessing her” (Coetzee 2023: 165). The idea of possession of the beloved through observation seems to be an instance of intertextuality on the basis of each character’s disposition towards unrequited love. In this narrative strategy, the notion of architextuality seems to work well here, both in the textual sense, and in better contextualizing the Pole’s decision to actually write the poems, and the function that they serve in the narrative.

To better tie together the ideas explored in this section of the chapter with the theoretical frameworks that have been engaged with thus far, we can return to the role of dialogical semiosis

in explaining the Pole's behaviour. The Pole – who in the text was described as a “relic of history” or possessing certain antiquated ideals with regards to love – draws upon a certain set of positions within his internal self concept. More concretely, the Pole's outlook on love and intimacy is tied up with a certain characteristic of unattainability. As Danesi theorized, the experience of love requires a certain cache of expectations and experiences that constitute an experience of thirdness. For whatever reason – it is never stated explicitly but perhaps has to do with the fact that Beatriz is married, is younger, and is not available to reciprocate the strong feelings that the Pole harbors for her – the Pole turns Beatriz into his object of desire and ekphrastic muse. Beatriz serves as a newly admitted position in the Pole's external shelf of his dialogical self. Her admittance, and the subsequent correspondence he maintains with her, activate certain internal positions he has about himself that correspond to his specific ideas about the ways in which love should actually function: for it to be identifiable as the real, bonafide thing.

### **3.4 What can we squeeze through the keyhole? Is authenticity crucial?**

Although not directly concerned with the idea of friendship per se, David Foster Wallace's story “Good Old Neon” provides meaningful insights into the importance of authenticity in building relationships. The story, which was originally published in 2001 by the literary journal *Conjunctions*, was included in Wallace's 2004 collection *Oblivion: Stories*. The piece is narrated in first-person past tense by a man named Neal. Very early in the story, Neal discloses to the reader that he has in fact committed suicide, and is frenetically narrating from some liminal space between life and death, a brief history of his life, and the circumstances that led to his suicide. A notion that is crucial to the story, and one that is brought up in the early pages, is the concept of the fraudulence paradox. The fraudulence paradox is defined by the narrator as essentially, “the more time and effort you put into trying to appear impressive or attractive to other people, the less impressive or attractive you [feel] inside” (Wallace 2004: 147). What makes the phenomenon a paradox is that the awareness of this inauthentic identity does not immediately free the person from the paradox, as awareness of it can be interpreted as an act of fraudulence. The story begins by Neal disclosing that he has been suffering from this condition since some time during his childhood:

My whole life I've been a fraud. I'm not exaggerating. Pretty much all I've ever done all the time is try to create a certain impression of me in other people. Mostly to be liked or admired. It's a little more complicated than that, maybe. But when you come right down to it's to be liked, loved. Admired, approved of, applauded, whatever [...] But then, once I got the best grade or made All City or got Angela Mead to let me put my hand on her breast, I wouldn't feel much of anything except maybe the fear that I wouldn't be able to get it again (Wallace 2004: 141).

One of the first tangible examples given by Neal – and the first memory he has of his fraudulence is an incident that occurred in his early childhood wherein he broke a precious bowl in his adoptive parents' living room, and manipulated them into thinking it was his step-sister who broke it. He describes realizing during the moment when he was questioned by his step-father as to whether or not he broke the bowl, he could be honest, but also induce a favorable reaction from his step-father:

I'd realized somehow right in the middle of his asking me if I'd broken the bowl that if I said I did it but 'confessed' it in a sort of clumsy, implausible way, then he wouldn't believe me and would instead believe that my sister Fern, who's my step parents' biological daughter, was the one who'd actually broken the antique Moser glass bowl [...] plus it would lead or induce him to see me as a kind, good stepbrother (Wallace 2004: 147–148).

This initial moment of fraudulence is important to keep in mind during Neal's subsequent explanations of the paradoxical nature of his fraudulence. A large part of the story is dedicated to Neal's narration of the period of time he spent as a patient of a psychiatric analyst named Dr. Gustafson whom he hoped might have some incisive insights into the nature of his fraudulence, and the capability to free him from its grip. During a clinical interaction with Gustafson, Neal admits that he has dedicated his entire life to creating a certain impression of himself in others that is inauthentic insofar as it does not adequately portray Neal beyond the ways he is able to portray himself to others. Gustafson responds to this by asking that if Neal was able to describe the conditions of his fraudulence just then, isn't his ability to describe it in some sense an ability to tap into some non-fraudulent aspect of his personality? In responding to this potential way out of the paradox Neal describes his actions thusly "The real truth was that my confession of being a fraud and of having wasted time sparring with [Gustafson] over the previous weeks in order to manipulate him into seeing me as exceptional and insightful had itself been kind of manipulative" (Wallace 2004: 154).

The reflection on this interaction with Gustafson, paired with the example from Neal's childhood about his earliest memory of being inauthentic, begins to orient the reader towards the

true nature of the paradox. That is, Neal has – throughout his life – constructed a personality that does not reflect whatever he believes to be the true essence of himself in order to make a favorable impression on others. Because of this, it would be entirely plausible to imagine that his admission to Gustafson is just another manifestation of the fraudulence paradox aimed at imparting a certain impression of himself onto Gustafson: that of an insightful and self-aware patient. One way to explain the situation of existential angst that is provoked by this realization is by returning to the Peircean concepts of the semiotic self, and self-control. Colapietro describes the necessity in understanding the self as, “an interpreting subject and the self as an interpreting object. As an interpreting subject, the self must be distinguishable from any actual process of sign interpretation” (Colapietro 1988: 66). This appears to be a helpful insight in the attempt to understand the semiotic nature of the fraudulence paradox. There appear to be two different sides to this conception of self. On the one hand, the fraudulence paradox is one that is experienced internally by the Neal who is a sign for himself (wherein he feels as though there is nothing directing his action other than the desire to manipulate the impression of himself as a sign for others) and on the other hand, as a sign for others (wherein he manipulates others into thinking he is reflective and insightful). With the nature of Neal’s perceived condition of fraudulence in mind – and in a further attempt to understand the relevance of this story in the broader context of the thesis – it is worth examining three key metaphors in the story: The Statue, The Keyhole, and The Room Behind the Door.

In recounting the different things he tried in ill-fated attempts to extricate himself from the fraudulence paradox’s grip, Neal describes the time he took a meditation class taught by an instructor named Master Gurpreet. Neal was one of the best students in the introductory meditation class taught by Gurpreet at the local community center; only he and one other student were able to maintain their meditations beyond the period expected by Gurpreet of his students. However, during these periods of supposedly introspective repose, Neal describes that due to Gurpreet’s presence and the other students in the class, he was unable to engage meaningfully with his meditation practice:

I was often concentrating not so much on following my prana as on keeping totally still and in the correct posture and having a deeply peaceful and meditative expression on my face in case anyone was cheating and had their eyes open and was looking around, plus also to ensure that Master Gurpreet would continue to see me as exceptional and keep addressing me by what became sort of his class nickname for me, which was ‘the statue’ (Wallace 2004: 159).

Additionally, Neal reveals that his seemingly advanced meditation ability only existed when meditating in the presence of other people, “when I tried to do it alone I couldn’t seem to sit still and follow my breath for more than even a few minutes before I felt like crawling out of my skin and had to stop” (Wallace 2004: 159). While Gurpreet’s affectionate nickname for Neal obviously stems from his apparent gift for meditation (sitting as still as a statue) Wallace extends the metaphor to account for another aspect of a statue. More precisely, the metaphor is extended to account for the role of a statue as an idealized representation of an individual. This second aspect of the metaphor comes to Neal in a dream, which he chooses to interpret as an obvious warning from his subconscious about his fraudulence:

What I’m doing in the dream is sculpting an enormous marble or granite statue of myself, using a huge iron chisel and a hammer [...] when the statue is finally done I put it up on a big bandstand or platform and spend all my time polishing it and keeping birds from sitting on it or doing their business on it, and cleaning up litter and keeping the grass neat around the bandstand [...] meaning I’m condemned to a whole life of being nothing but a sort of custodian to the statue (Wallace 2004: 160–161).

One way to think about the metaphor of the statue is by connecting it to the Archerian concept of the ‘You’, as well as Colapietro’s matrix self. Every individual possesses a ‘You’, of course: the aspect of the self that is constructed as a result of the dialogue between the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’. It is also true that we may imagine the ‘You’ as being a sign of the self that has been constructed for the interpretation of others. That is, the ‘You’ or The Statue becomes the aspect of the self that is essentially on display in the social world, from which others can perceive and understand certain aspects of the individual. However, it is crucial to note that the ‘You’ cannot be wholly representative of the ‘I’ as it only results from a small fraction of the ‘I’’s interiority (another parable worth imagining is the corollary between the ‘I’ and internal positions within Hermans’ dialogical self model. That is, positions within the internal shelf of the self only become activated through a process of dialogicality between these points and the points that exist in the external shelf). So then, what is the mechanism – what is the filter – that allows for the Statue’s construction, and what are the ways in which this is fundamentally an inadequate representation of the whole of the self? In the story, Wallace introduces this inadequacy – which becomes an important introduction to the second metaphor – in the following way:

You can be in the middle of a creative meeting at your job or something, and enough material can rush through your head just in the little silences when people are looking over their notes and waiting for the

next presentation that it would take exponentially longer than the whole meeting just to try to put a few seconds' silence's flood of thoughts into words (Wallace 2004: 150).

What this quotation suggests is that there exists within the self a vast potentiality for expression that, when compressed into language, cannot accurately express the whole of what the individual is attempting to communicate. In essence, this inarticulable aspect of the self (or the aspect that can never be articulated in its entirety) corresponds to the 'I' concept. That is, the 'I' effectively exists somewhere in the private and internal sphere of the dialogical self, which can never be expressed adequately in its entirety, but rather has to fit through a certain filter in order to be comprehensible by the other at all. This idea is also expressed in another passage of the story wherein Neal describes a moment in his childhood when he overheard a conversation between his parents regarding his step-sister's health situation. During this scene, Neal is crouched outside of his parents' bedroom door and is listening to a private conversation through the keyhole of the door. This scene sets up Neal's elaboration on the final two of the three important metaphors in the story: The Keyhole, and the Room Behind the Door:

As though inside you is this enormous room full of what seems like everything in the whole universe at one time or another and yet the only parts that get out have to somehow squeeze out through one of those tiny keyholes you see under the knob in older doors. As if we are all trying to see each other through these tiny keyholes (Wallace 2004: 178).

With the three important metaphors in mind, we can begin to put together a coherent picture of the ways in which these three faculties can be mapped onto the previously discussed models, and set our sights on their applicability in thinking about interpersonal relationships. The Room Behind The Door serves as a nice example of Hermans' internal sphere of the self. That is, positions within the internal sphere can never be activated without reliance on external positions, and due to this fact, it is somewhat limited in its expression. Obviously, what can be expressed through natural language is an incomplete representation of the Room Behind The Door. An interpretation of Peirce by Vincent Colapietro can be applied to Wallace's Room Behind The Door metaphor. The Room Behind The Door is, in principle, accessible to all individuals. Taking the notion of a purely subjective self, we regard the interior world as being one that exists *a priori*. This is to say, the conception of The Room Behind The Door as a pure subjectivity assumes that there is a world of forms and concepts that exists independently of the human experience in the sensible world. In an attempt to bridge this gap between what is private and what is potentially accessible to all, Colapietro states, "Peirce formulated an approach to

personal consciousness that stressed its moorings in the objective world and its accessibility to other minds. In this approach the *private* is linked, truly as well as linguistically, with the privative or lacking: The private which is deprived of status in the public world” (Colapietro 1988: 102).

Taken this way, *The Room Behind The Door* can be understood as a world of concepts that actually exists *a posteriori* to the self’s experience in the sensible world. This seems to track with the reciprocity present in Hermans’ theorizing about the internal sphere of the self as being formed in tandem with the individual’s interaction with the environment he finds himself surrounded by. However, for Neal in the story, it seems as though the most dominant position – and the linchpin on which the whole fraudulence paradox hangs – can be described as the desire to impart some favourable impression of himself on others. A model of this dynamic – inspired by the internal conversation between the ‘I’, ‘Me’ and ‘You’ is represented in Figure 7:

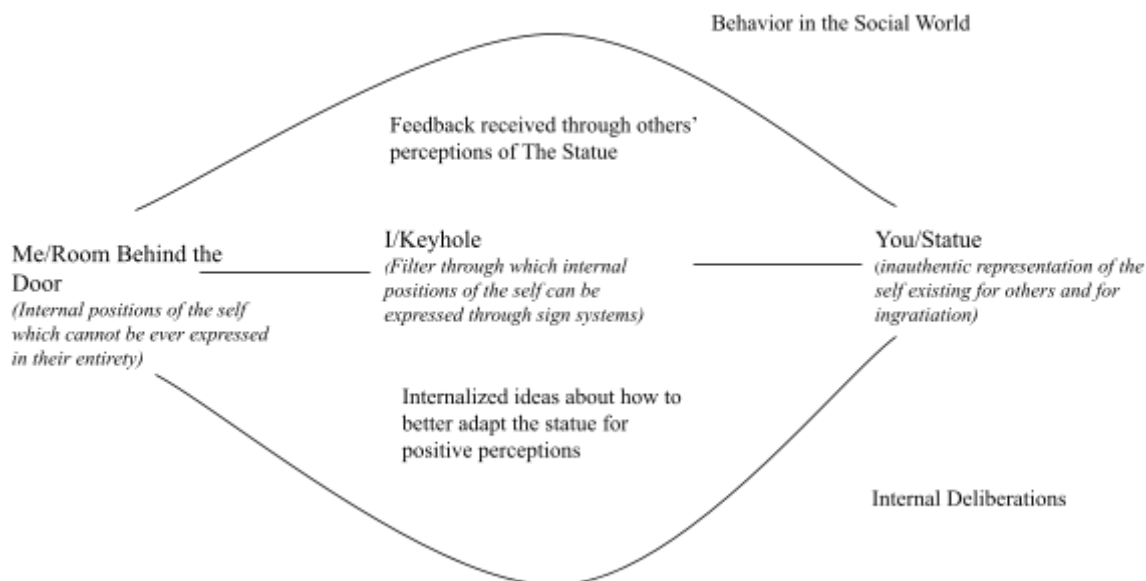


Figure 7: Good Old Neon metaphors mapped onto I-Me-You Model

During Neal’s time as a patient of Dr. Gustafson, it is revealed that the psychiatrist operated under the assumption that there are two paradigms that dictate the actions of an individual: fear and love. According to Gustafson these two paradigms are mutually exclusive, and individuals find themselves in constant service of one of these two. In bringing this up, Wallace calls the reader’s attention to what appears to be a structural problem in American culture which is the notion that Americans (men in particular) are socialized to live their lives in

the service of the fear paradigm. Put another way, the constitution of Archer's 'Me' is based on the fear paradigm and more specifically the fear of being discovered as inadequate. It is described in the story thusly:

What passed for love in American men was usually just the need to be regarded in a certain way, meaning that today's males were so constantly afraid of 'not measuring up' (Dr. G.'s phrase, with evidently no pun intended) that they had to spend all their time convincing others of their masculine 'validity' [...] the idea struck me that maybe the real root of my problem was not fraudulence but a basic inability to really love, even to genuinely love my stepparents, or Fern, or Melissa Betts, or Ginger Manley of Aurora West High in 1979, whom I'd often thought of as the only girl I'd ever truly loved, though Dr. G.'s bromide about men being brainwashed to equate love with accomplishment or conquest also applied here (Wallace 2004: 164–165).

The movement to describe the condition of love as being somehow attached to the idea of conquest or proving one's validity is interesting to consider when approaching the question of authenticity in relationships. Gustafson's idea implants in Neal the question as to whether or not he is actually capable of love, and goes as far in the story as to describe the fraudulence paradox as stemming from this inability. In recounting a previous relationship he had in his life – the other person being one of the few people in Neal's life who could actually see through his calculating fraudulence – his former partner compared Neal to a piece of, "medical or diagnostic equipment that can discern more about you in one quick scan than you could ever know about yourself – but the equipment doesn't care about you, you're just a sequence of processes and codes" (Wallace 2004: 165). In essence, the fraudulence paradox is the overly analytical act of a defective self-concept that prioritizes cultivating impressions of itself in others over authenticity. We may alternatively choose to think about this as a calculated effort to position oneself at the apex of the *eros* recognition window tailored to the specific individual onto whom Neal attempts to impart this certain impression. What makes this a paradox, and one that Neal eventually resigns to the fact that he will never break free from, is the notion that it is impossible to ever truly know whether an effort to authentically represent himself is not a manifestation of the fraudulence – that it is not an attempt to position himself at the apex of the recognition window.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the ways in which the Good Old Neon portrays the importance of authenticity in building relationships. In a moment towards the end of the story, Neal seems to reflect on the fact that fraudulence – the construction of a statue – is to some extent unavoidable. Wallace writes:

It's what makes room for the universes inside you, all the endless inebriated fractals of connection and symphonies of different voices, the infinities you can never show another soul. And you think it makes you a fraud, the tiny fraction anyone else ever sees? Of course you're a fraud, of course what people see is never you. And of course you know this, and of course you try to manage what part they see if you know it's only a part. Who wouldn't? (Wallace 2004: 179).

What Wallace – and the unfolding of the story's plot seems to suggest – is that authenticity is likely impossible to achieve in any objective sense. Due to the nature of the I–Me–You dialogue, and the complex and dialogical nature of the self it seems as though it is impossible to ever truly portray an authentic portrait. The fraudulence paradox, then, seems in some sense to be the product of a structurally defective delegate of society's role in the mind. As Gustafson believes, love in the contemporary cultural context of the millennial USA has more to do with achievement than it does understanding and a desire for sharedness. Taken this way, love is something to be obtained – an object to be coveted – for the sake of proving one's own validity and aptitude for accomplishment. It seems as though the main relevant claim in the story, is that while fraudulence in itself (the construction of a certain desirable self image for others to view) is unavoidable, the condition of terminal statuehood however, (the unhealthy obsession over the way the self is viewed in the eyes of others) is avoidable. This condition, we can imagine, is due to the cultural expectations placed on Neal to prove himself exceptional, which marginalizes any real chance to express himself in a vulnerable way, beyond the fact that an expression of vulnerability could in fact impart a positive impression on the other.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter, as stated, was to provide an arena for the previous theories regarding intimacy and friendship in this work, to be put to work. In “Sophia”, we explored the question as to whether or not robots could be capable of engaging in meaningful and authentic relationships with humans and or other robots. On this point, the chapter consulted the ideas from Claus Emmeche with regards to robot friendships, and the question about whether or not robots actually possess *umwelten*. From the ideas offered by Emmeche in the cited papers, and the experience of the narrator in the story, we can conclude that it probably is not possible for robots to be friends. This conclusion is based on the fact that their capacity for friendship would be dependent upon their engagement in a community of other robots or other humans, which

Sophia is crucially missing. This story also served to reinforce the idea that the condition of *sunaisthesis* is dependent upon the agency of individuals, and their existing cache of experience.

In the analysis of *The Pole* I have argued that writing about the topic of love can be understood as a form of ekphrastic writing which takes as its inspiration the aesthetic experience of love. With regards to the novella's titular character, his conception of love – and the ways in which it should work – are very closely tied to certain cultural narratives that he has internalized. These internalized narratives serve as the cache of experience and expectations nested in the internal shelf of his self concept which become activated when he admits Beatriz into the external shelf. Further, I have attempted to demonstrate how the novella itself contains overt intertextual and architextual strategies which are employed not only in the narrative's composition, but enacted by the Pole himself (as demonstrated by the poems that he writes to his beloved).

“Good Old Neon” presented a character who's incapacity to truly express himself makes developing and maintaining strong relationships rather difficult. The fraudulence paradox – as discussed in the analysis of the story – is the main disabling condition which hinders Neal's ability to truly ever know if what he is expressing is an authentic representation of himself (as best as one can be expected to actually muster) or whether his actions – even the admittance of the paradox's existence – are aimed towards imparting a favorable impression of himself in the minds of others. The three important metaphors in the story were transposed onto Margaret S. Archer's model of the internal conversation between the ‘I’, ‘Me’, and ‘You’ in an attempt to showcase their succinctness with her theorising about the nature of the self. In answering the titular question of this section of the chapter (is authenticity crucial?) we have arrived at the conclusion that authenticity is an ideal to be strived for, but probably never attainable, as the whole complexity of the internal shelf of the dialogical self can never be expressed in its entirety. Thinking otherwise is a losing battle.

In summation, the three narratives that have been analyzed in this section showcase three important elements of true friendship. Firstly, the condition of *sunaisthesis* is dependent engagement with another person who already possesses preconceived values and ideas. These

values and ideas with regards to their disposition towards things in the world are dependent upon previously instantiated cycles of semiosis. As it was suggested by Emmeche and other thinkers with which this thesis has engaged with, this ability to form these impressions is primarily possible due to community, and being with others in the world. Through this time spent with others one is able to form these impressions and effectively mediate between the self and the outside world. Secondly, what exists in the internal sphere of an individual's dialogical self model can only ever be expressed when presented with certain things or people in the environment and can never be expressed in a fully authentic way as natural language limits expression to a comprehensive, but still inadequate semiotic system. Thirdly, love is an experience of secondness which is initially catalyzed during the moment of recognition, but subsequently draws upon both a personal cache of attitudes, as well as cultural representations of the expression of this emotion.

## Conclusion

This thesis, *Modeling Sunaisthesis: A Semiotic analysis of friendship and intimacy*, is my attempt at offering a meaningful contribution to the expanding field of the semiotics of friendship. I am aware that the breadth of theoretical approaches I have chosen to take in approaching the titular problem is quite broad. These approaches have ranged from concepts in social psychology concerned with the process of dialogical semiosis, to Lotmanian cultural semiotics, as well as a biosemiotic approach towards the question of recognition. The final chapter of this thesis was concerned with showcasing the ways in which particular narratives – and the characters within these narratives – serve as illustrative examples of the concepts regarding the formation of intimate relationships, and the maintenance of these bonds. By wedding several different theoretical approaches together – and by offering the model of the *pragmasphere* which ultimately takes as its inspiration from Hermans’ dialogical self concept and Juri Lotman’s concept of the semiosphere – this thesis attempted to bring these different, but complementary approaches, into dialogue with each other.

With regards to the four research questions I stated in the introduction to this work, I have answered them in the following ways:

1) The first chapter of the thesis has mainly been concerned with excavating a meaningful and logical connection between Margaret S. Archer’s and Norbert Wiley’s understanding of the internal conversation. By putting this theoretical framework into conversation with the dialogical self model, and Claus Emmeche’s idea of friendship as a semiotic scaffolding for the social self, the work has showcased the ways in which friendship occurs as a result of previous cycles of semiosis. The formation of friendship comes about through autocommunicative processes between different aspects of the self, and the self’s pre-existing relationships with others, things, and concepts that exist in its environment. Additionally, the inclusion of the *pragmasphere* model showcased the way in which a relationship itself can be conceptualized as a discrete sub-semiosphere, that is formed in concert by both partners in the relationship, and has a lasting effect on the preferences of the individuals in their construction of subsequent interpersonal relationships.

2) By exploring the concept of the ‘Permanent Visitor’ and distinguishing it from the ‘Temporary Visitor’ as expressed in the work of Norbert Wiley, we have come to a better understanding of the ways in which the primary caregiver serves as an individual’s first encounter with intimate relationships. These bonds that are formed in childhood – and the persons who are encountered – ultimately serve as guiding blueprints for the child’s independent participation in the social world, and dictate their capacity to engage in *sunaiesthetic* relationships.

3) The inquiry into the nature of the experience of *eros* as articulated by Marcel Danesi has been shown to be the originary tableau, or the initial experience, of attraction. This attraction can be explained through an act of the internal conversation, or as an activation of one or more internal positions of the self through perception of the other. The criteria for an *eros* experience is likely diffuse. Thus, I have employed Kull’s model of the recognition window in service of explaining the criteria that specific individuals consult during this experience.

4) In the final chapter of this work, three literary texts were analyzed through the lens of the different theoretical frameworks proffered in the first two chapters. By examining these works – in which the main characters struggle with both creating and maintaining intimate interpersonal relationships – the theoretical frameworks were grounded empirically. The analysis of this material showcased the attainment of *sunaisthesis* as a critical goal of the human experience, particularly in the social world. Additionally, the analysis presented the importance of dialogical semiosis in the formation and development of these relationships, as well as presented the importance of cultural attitudes towards love and intimacy in shaping the desires of the characters.

Looking ahead towards possibilities for further research, one potentially promising direction would be to apply the *pragmasphere* model to the state of alienation, specifically its social and cultural dimensions. While the thrust of this thesis has been concerned with questions of forming and sustaining intimate dynamics, it will be interesting to turn an analytical lens towards the breakdown of these relations, or the failure to engage meaningfully in these relationships at all. In the later chapters of Archer’s work *Structure, Agency, and the Internal Conversation*, she includes analysis of different types of reflexivity. In particular, her discussion

on the condition of ‘fractured reflexivity’ would be particularly relevant for an extension of the *pragmasphere* concept to investigate the mediating significance of friendships, and domestic systems more broadly. Crucially, Archer defines the condition of the fractured reflexive as lacking the ability to participate in the social world or certain cultural environments as their internal deliberations leave them fundamentally unequipped to do so, or, “it is rather that their self-talk provides them no instrumental guidance about what to do in practice” (2003: 299). This can also be conceptualized as a lack of relevant positions in the external shelf of the dialogical self model with which the fractured reflexive may meaningfully consult with in order to navigate specific social-cultural norms to which they are unaccustomed. The *pragmasphere* could be employed here to examine the role of cultural systems in which an individual was reared as adequately preparing them for participation in other cultural milieux. By the very definition of the word, fracture implies the possibility to be mended. Further, this thesis primarily considered traditional ‘in-person’ relationships. There was no discussion in this work about the applicability of the *pragmasphere* or the role that *sunaisthesis* might play in online relationships. As these types of relationships become more ubiquitous in the contemporary cultural landscape, this could be another dimension or avenue for research. It may also be interesting to investigate the connection between fractured reflexivity, and the movement towards online relationships in the context of the post-COVID-19 world. Finally, it could be interesting to investigate how friendship might play a key role in mending the fracture, and creating meaningful and instrumentally relevant positions which may be consulted within the dialogical self model. Also, it is important to note that in future applications of this research, I will aim to change the name of the model to better reflect its Greek etymology, and to avoid confusion with other applications of the term.

We can say that friendship and intimacy are rather difficult concepts to classify. This thesis primarily focused on the ways in which friendships function in western cultures, specifically with regards to the literary texts investigated in the final chapter. However, the goal of this thesis – through analyzing the mechanisms through which intimacy serves as a crucial scaffolding of the independent self in adulthood – was to elucidate the universality of this experience. All people fall into, maintain, and sometimes fall out of these types of relationships throughout their lifetimes. This is often pleasurable, and also often incredibly painful and difficult. The difficulty and the pain, however, should not and do not – for most people – serve as

absolute deterrents. As has been mentioned in this work, the goal of establishing these intimate relationships arises from a critical desire, and is a defining feature of the human experience.

On a sundrenched hill in what now feels like a past life – indeed clothed in black slacks and a white shirt, un-tucked – I sat on a bench next to an acquaintance, overlooking a whitecapped lake dotted with sailboats. As we watched the crisp sails beating into the wind, she asked me how one becomes a good sailor. I thought about this question for a moment and responded that first, one has to go out and capsize their vessel a bunch of times. After this initial period of chronic capsizing, one figures out how not to. The sailor will then learn to make small adjustments, and eventually achieve some degree of competency. However, this bout of capsizing cannot be avoided, and should not be discouraging. I believe this correlates to intimacy. A constant process of trial and error is both crucial and unavoidable. The plunge into the cold lake should not be discouraging. When an individual rights the boat, grabs the tiller, and trims the sail against the wind, they should know that they are one step closer to their elusive goal. They should do this with a smile, and welcome the next capsize.

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## Kokkuvõte

### *Sunaisthesis' e modelleerimine: sõpruse ja intiimsuse analüüs*

See magistritöö, „*Sunaisthesis' e modelleerimine: sõpruse ja intiimsuse analüüs*“, püüab pakkuda terviklikku lähenemist sõpruse kujunemise ja hoidmise paremaks mõistmiseks semiootilise analüüsi kaudu. Töö algab olemasolevate teooriate käsitlemisega nii semiootilisest minast kui ka dialoogilisest minast, eesmärgiga näidata sotsiaalse mina dialoogilist kujunemist. Lisaks tutvustatakse mõistet *sunaisthesis*, mida võib määratleda kui ühistaju, mis tekib lähedaste sõprade vahel. Need ideed kujunevad oluliseks teoreetiliseks aluseks Lotmani semiootika käsitlusele liikumisel. Töö teine peatükk tutvustab *pragmasfääri mudelit*, mis põhineb nii Lotmani kultuurisemiootika põhimõtetel kui ka Hubert J.M. Hermansi loodud dialoogilise mina mudelil, et kirjeldada ühistaju seisundit, mida sõprussuhted ja intiimsed isiklikud sidemed esile kutsuvad. Töö viimases peatükis rakendatakse esimeses kahes peatükis käsitletud teooriaid empiirilisele korpusele – kolmele kaasaegsele ingliskeelsele ilukirjandusteosele: *Sophia* – B.J. Novak, *Poolakas (The Pole)* – J.M. Coetzee ning *Vana Hea Neon (Good Old Neon)* – David Foster Wallace – eesmärgiga need teooriad praktilisse kasutusse tuua.

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