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The End of Decoding
PART 1

By Scott Simpkins

In her collection of essays, *Anecdotal Theory*, Jane Gallop proposes an alternative to a formal academic rhetoric by using an initiating personal anecdote as a theoretical basis for a thesis presentation. In order to "produce a more *literary* theory," Gallop writes, she "experimented [in the 1990s] with writing in which [she] would recount an anecdote and then attempt to 'read' that account for the theoretical insights it afforded" (2002: 2, emphasis added). "Anecdotal theory would cut through" the "oppositions" of "anecdote" and "theory," she adds, "in order to produce theory with a better sense of humour, theorizing which honours the uncanny detail of lived experience." To apply that principle here, I will begin with a story about John Deely, the contemporary American philosopher and semiotician.

Rubber Pencil

About ten years ago, I was editing a volume of conference-proceedings with John, and I visited his office with the camera-ready manuscript I had typeset. John is meticulous about such things and while we were arguing about something on a page that he claimed wasn't centred, I told him he was wrong; that what he perceived as off-centred was just an optical illusion. Then I added: "You know, like a rubber pencil." He gave me a strange look of non-comprehension and asked what that was.

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

But he said he wasn't.

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

John Deely was astonished!

"Where did you get that from?" he demanded. "Did you put that on my desk?"

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

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

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

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

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

Decoding is not really possible, and its "end," in the sense of a *goal* of some kind, is seldom considered in semiotics since it necessarily serves as a strategic "myth" (in Roland Barthes's sense) for the existence of semiotics as a discipline (or whatever it is). There is undeniably an agenda, a purpose, a remainder behind the concept of "decoding," as it enables a belief in the "success" of semiotic analysis – the ability, in other words, to "crack" the code of a given signifying entity.

But, nevertheless, decoding is surely nothing more than what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call a "literalization which fixes the differences of a relational system" (1985: 114). Or, perhaps one could modify this to read: which *endeavours* to fix...

An apt illustration of this is found in the common belief (Peirce, Eco, *et al.*) that "infinite semiosis" is not truly infinite; that a transcendental signified of some kind will be reached, even if, as Peirce has it, as soon as the end is found, semiosis immediately kicks into action again. Laclau and Mouffe observe that the transcendental signified carries with it "the possibility of fixing a meaning which underlies the flow of differences" (1985: 112). Signs, in effect, don't refer only to other signs, this argument maintains; some sort of end –understanding or knowledge or even truth – will be the eventual, progressive outcome. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that a signifier ultimately refers to a transcendental signified, despite infinite semiosis. "The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning," they suggest. "Every relation of representation is founded on a fiction: that of the presence at a certain level of something which, strictly speaking, is absent from it. But because it is at the same time a fiction and a principle organizing actual social relations, representation is the terrain of a game whose result is not predetermined from the beginning" (119). This argument is not very compelling, however. (In fact, the same contention is also found in reader-response literary criticism that maintains that the reader can't do just whatever she wants with a text; that the text, in effect, exerts some control of some kind just by virtue of being a text.) Yet this view of semiosic restriction provides an opening for further consideration of the concept of decoding.

A hyperbolic example of this phenomenon can be raised with a scenario such as this: to locate the monosemous "denotation" (yet another myth) of a word, look up its definition in a dictionary (Ruhl; Simpkins 2001). Then look up the definition of each word in that definition. *Et cetera.* Rather than leading to an absurdly pointless exercise, eventually some sort of "definition" of that first word will emerge – a sense of what that word means to someone, in effect, through a process of what Gilbert Ryle (1968) and Clifford Geertz (1973) discuss as "thick description."

For semiotics, acceptance of the viability of "decoding" arguably serves as a rationale to justify itself. If semiotics can provide an *outcome* for decoding a sign vehicle, leading to the equivalent of a sum or remainder, then somehow it has an edifying purpose. But, as numerous examples can show, it appears that nothing of any certainty or finality can ultimately be "gained" from decoding texts without accepting that these results are manufactured (or to use Nietzsche's term, "invented" [1873]) by the apparatus employed. Ultimately, then, any decoding would simply be a new encoding even further "away" from the truth of a signifying *origin*. And the process of semiosis carries on, endlessly.

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

Given the unarguably *human*, impositional, even fabricational component of what we call decoding, Nietzsche's perspective actually holds positive consequences for semiotics. It acknowledges that decoders don't just passively decode sign vehicles: they make them anew. Otherwise, if semioticians continue to pretend that decoding is a disinterested process with no "taint" of subject input (similar to some components of the scientific method), they are not being honest or even accurate about what happens in the course of decoding.

This is understandable, after all, for as Stanley Fish notes, the illusion of materiality, or consensus, or reproducibility of results, is undeniably seductive. Fish emphasizes the immense seduction of the materiality of the page in this regard. While he avers that "the objectivity of the text is an illusion," it nevertheless is "a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing. The illusion is one of self-sufficiency and completeness. A line of print or a page or a book is so obviously there – it can be handled, photographed, or put away – that it seems to be the sole repository of whatever value and meaning we associate with it" (1970: 82). The text, along these lines, then, is

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essentially equivalent to the convincing sight of the rubber pencil.

Such dishonestly or inaccuracy, however, is accompanied by a concomitant "theological" reward, of course. No longer is decoding a fraudulent enterprise, a hat trick, an act of legerdemain, a tremendous con job – a rubber pencil. Yet, a practice based on a lie remains just that: a foothold that carries with it a compromise that undoes whatever progress is seemingly accomplished.

Jonathan Culler argues that accepting certain strategic compromises (decoding, for example, or in his case, institutionalized literary interpretation) is necessary in order to establish a profession or discipline. "The claims of schools and universities to offer literary training cannot be lightly dismissed," he maintains. "To believe that the whole institution of literary education is but a gigantic confidence trick, would strain even a determined credulity, for it is, alas, only too clear that knowledge of a language and a certain experience of the world do not suffice to make someone a perceptive and competent reader" (1975: 108-09).

Peanuts

An article in *The New York Times* (January 14, 2009) titled "Listening to Schroeder: 'Peanuts' Scholars Find Messages in Cartoon's Scores" offered a teaser description on the bottom of the front page (declaring "'Peanuts' Decoded") that seemingly reinforced the aforementioned belief that such an action can occur. (Elsewhere, on an inside-cover promotional area, was a description of the article titled: "Deciphering the Peanuts Gang" [A3].) At first glance, this sense of "decoding" appears to mean that someone believed there actually was a way to crack the code of this American comic strip, but instead, the article focuses on William Meredith's work as the director of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies at San Jose State University. "When Schroeder" – the boy who plays piano in the comic strip – "pounded on his piano, his eyes clenched in a trance, the notes floating above his head were no random ink spots dropped into the key of G," we are told from Meredith's perspective. "Schulz carefully chose each snatch of music he drew and transcribed the notes from the score. More than an illustration, the music was a soundtrack to the strip, introducing the characters' state of emotion, prompting one of them to ask a question or punctuating an interaction" (C1). Accordingly, instead of detailing the "final" decoding of Peanuts, the article explores how one analyst adds yet another layer to the reader strategies already in place in the analysis of this comic strip. In the case of thick description, this would merely be only one more approach to the text. It is clear, however, that the reference to Schulz's "careful" use of musical intertexts carries with it an accompanying belief in the ability for an encoder to craft a type of monosemous control into a sign-vehicle that presumably, in turn, can be located and decoded "successfully" if equal care is exercised by the decoder (in a manner similar to "close reading" in literary interpretation).

Nina Auerbach, for example, argues that codes create a stable and coherent signifying construct. Regarding one of the main characters in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, for instance, she asserts that "the incoherence underlying Edmund's authoritative vocabulary tells us that the word ["ought"] recurs anarchically" in his speech, "for there is no objective code to endow it with consistency" (1985: 36).

A far more reductive form of this conception of decoding can be seen in the ingenious poetics analysis by Tanya Reinhart (1976) of a famous poem by e. e. cummings (titled "anyone lived in a pretty how town"). Read in a (hypothetically posited) conventional manner, the poem appears self-contradicting and relatively opaque, if not at least translucent, in terms of determining its signification possibilities. There are no characters in any conventional sense in the poem, just vague references to "anyone," "someone," "no one," and so on. This clearly short circuits any conventional methodological analysis derived from the field of literary semiotics and seems to beg for the discovery of a decoding grid that "naturally" fits as an overlay to the poetic text that, in turn, reveals an underlying structure of intelligibility that otherwise remains effectively invisible.

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

The same situation can be found right now on the American television show "House, M.D." in which a gifted medical semiotician trains young doctors through group "differential diagnosis" to crack the code of each week's new puzzling malady. During the differential, he and his team throw out diagnosis hypotheses based on connecting existing symptoms with the way that specific medical problems present themselves. Often, though, one member will propose excluding one or more symptoms in order to consider a potentially "valid" hypothesis (e.g., If we leave out the hypertension...). This usually leads to a sarcastic denigration of that hypothesis proposal since it doesn't include all the data. This, in turn, produces at least two potentially fruitful results based on what has happened on the episode up to this point. Either this will lead the group to dismiss the proposed dishonest hypothesis, but in the process, they will see the situation differently and come up with something (and this happens almost every week) that does include *all* of the symptoms. Or, they will discover that the patient is suffering from two different maladies at the same time, and thus the second set of otherwise excluded symptoms actually matches up with those characteristic of the second malady. Often, too, on "House," it turns out that the patient withheld some key information that House or his team can literally uncover to produce a substantiatable diagnosis. ("Everybody lies," is Dr. House's motto, and this is as true for medical semiotics as it is for semiotics as a whole. In other words, everybody in semiotics lies – a position consistent with Eco's famous contention about semiotics as fundamentally the study of lying [1976].)

People Watching

Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Man of the Crowd" (which appeared in the journal *Atkinson's Casket* [1840]), portrays a related detection scenario through a narration by a man who, while reposing in leisurely convalescence following an illness, prides himself on his ability to perform a typological decoding of the passers-by in the crowds of mid-nineteenth century London. He implies that he has repeatedly used this skill successfully over and over again on those who walk past him. "At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn. I looked at the passengers in masses, and thought of them in their aggregate relations," he notes. "Soon, however, I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (507).

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

But the narrator suddenly finds himself stymied by one unusual character who does not mesh with his decoding system. Stalled by this inscrutable individual, he follows him relentlessly (in a dramatization of techniques derived from the principle of "close" reading and the larger tenets of textual criticism related to literary semiotics). Eventually, the narrator concludes that this passerby resists what could be called a conventional interpretive regimen. Nevertheless, by desperately pulling a rabbit out of his hat, the narrator suddenly produces an interpretive *deus ex machina,* concluding that this character *can* be successfully decoded as the individual who refuses to be read.

Perhaps significantly, Poe's epigraph ("*Ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul*", from Le Bruyère [1840: 506]) remains untranslated, but the opening lines of the story incorporate yet another quote, this time in German ("*er lasst sich nicht lesen*", from Grünninger [515]), which *is* translated and frames the story by appearing again at the conclusion. The use of two non-English quotes in the space of the first textual utterances draws attention to them, especially the latter, which is shown to be relevant at the conclusion when it is repeated (*sans* translation the second time), arguably establishing a semiotic yoking between the encoder and decoder which enacts a type of operant conditioning upon the decoder. This raises the question of whether Poe is the ultimate encoder of his stories (on this issue, see Foucault, "What is an Author?" [1970]). Poe *qua* author is well-known for having his narrators incorporate languages other than his "base" language of English (he uses Ancient Greek in this story as well, for instance).

A parallel scenario, then, is portrayed in the declaration of the narrator's conclusion of what the man of crowd signifies: that which "does not permit itself to be read" (i.e., the second quote, translated [506]). The subject who resists signification, who inhabits an extra-semiosic realm, in *other words* (and, indeed, given the quote in German, in other words as well), leaves the text of the story in the upper hand of the narrator, who has the last word by virtue of naming the stranger's un-nameability: "'This old man'," I said at length [and to whom is he speaking here?], 'is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd.* It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is the grosser book than the "Hortulus Animae," and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that '*er lasst sich nicht lesen*'" (515). This closing line harks back to the opening reflection that certain men "will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed" (507), a refusal which the narrator nevertheless manages to override by virtue of giving a name to that which resists naming.

Veiled Meaning

A useful illustration of this resistance to decodability also appears in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), a short story which begins when the parishioners of the Reverend Mister Hooper "beheld the semblance" of him "pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meeting-house" (37-38). Hawthorne's diction here presumably signals a query, in that "semblance" suggests both resemblance as well as an entity that is a lesser version of an original. The onlookers "with one accord" are seen "expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit" (38), yet the reader is not given sufficient information to account for this. Conventionally trained readers would likely place this "sight" in the category of what Barthes identifies as an "enigma" (*S/Z*), a sign-vehicle rendered all the more problematic as it is encoded as something unusual, something escaping or perhaps even preceding intelligibility.

"'Are you sure it is our parson?'" one of the crowd asks the sexton, who functions apparently as the subject who is supposed to know (1836: 38). Again, Hawthorne draws attention to the process of decoding by virtue of this display of inter-observer agreement. When the sexton asserts that "'Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper'," once more the decoder has to wonder how the sexton knows this or anything in the semiotic universe, for that matter, with "certainty." To return to the narrator's identification of Hooper's "semblance," the decoder cannot assert definitely that this figure is Hooper himself. This is an issue that Hawthorne further troubles by having the minister block facial signification by way of wearing a black veil.

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

Hooper" (1836: 38). The "one thing remarkable in his appearance," the narrator adds, is that "Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil."

As is found in film, the narrator appears capable of zooming in on the minister for "closer" inspection, but again, from the standpoint of decoding possibility, all this does is increase the semiotic distortion of the sign vehicle, rather than clarifying it. Without detailing how this perspectival shift is accomplished, the narrator notes that "on a nearer view," the veil "seemed to consist of two folds of crepe, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things." The emphasis on conjecture is clear here, as the narrator refers to these decodings as actions of "seeming" and "probability."

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

In either case, though, the impression signified by Mr. Hooper is increasingly steered away from a positive, or even neutral, perspective. Although Mr. Hooper is "nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps," "so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return," we are told (1836: 38). Here, of course, the interpretive operation vacillates in the other direction, since "wonderstruck" is clearly at least in the neutral decoding zone, and even could be associated with the positive. The negative refrain appears throughout the story, however. After the non-requited greetings, the word on the street is not favourable. "'I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crepe'," one person remarks. "'I don't like it'," another "muttered." "'He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face'." "'Our parson has gone mad!'," yet another "cried."

Indeed, like the decoding of unintelligible stimuli as "noise" (see the Barthes and Attali commentary to follow), Hawthorne's characters frame this development with Mr. Hooper's inexplicable countenance as "some unaccountable phenomenon," the narrator reports (1836: 39). Yet, it becomes *accountable* by virtue of semiotically delimiting it as such by labeling it that which cannot be decoded. This quells somewhat the "perturbation" experienced by Mr. Hooper's parishoners. As Mr Hooper "passed his oldest parishioner," the narrator explores still another instance of new re-framing of his significance. "It was strange to observe, how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor," the narrator notes. "He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder." The veil becomes in this instance a "mysterious emblem": "It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance." This leads to further extrapolation into the realm of symbolism: "Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?" The opacity of the veil's significative force grows so forcefully that "Such was the effect of this simple piece of crepe, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house."

Then, however, the narrator introduces a directional reversal into this dynamic by speculating on the encoder's perspective; how the veil, in effect, alters the semiotic effect of those Mr. Hooper sees through this altered "lens." For, now the consideration turns to the parishoners: "Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them" (1836: 39). This becomes an increasingly prominent issue as the story progresses, drawing attention as it does to the encoder's perspective on those to whom he disseminates messages.

The primary consideration remains on the impact on the decoders who find Mr. Hooper's transmissions strangely mediated by the veil. Even though he is delivering his usual, "mild" sermon:

> there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. (1836: 40)

The narrator maintains that through the veil as a semiotic scrim, "A subtle power was breathed into his words," turning what is ostensibly a generic sign-vehicle into one that is seemingly targeted toward each individual decoder (admittedly, an already common response among such audiences for this "speech genre" [Bakhtin]). "Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought." The narrator notes that in the course of the sermon, "there was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, at least, no violence," while nevertheless "with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper." The parishoners found themselves experiencing "indecorous confusion" and even "amazement," noting to themselves as well feeling "conscious of lighter spirits, the moment they lost sight of the black veil." The veil, it could be said, again heightens attention to the opacity – not genuine translucence, and certainly not transparency – characteristic of any signifying vehicle in the act of signification. Every sign when "manhandled" (Barthes) by the decoder is treated in this manner, in other words, as a *semblance* of signification rather than signification itself.

This challenge to the parishoners' decoding expertise diminishes as they offer interpretive frameworks that gain purchase. "A few" of them "shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery" and even "one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade" (1836: 40-41). This "naturalization" of the veil's myth (also in Barthes's sense) clearly alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to their social-semiotic system. Narrativization rescues the veil from the realm of the unintelligible, in other words, transferring it into one that safely harbours the practice of storytelling. To the narrator, Hooper becomes visible as someone with a "veiled face," with this synecdoche apparently responsible for the "strange and bewildered looks" with which his parishoners "repaid him" as he engages in his usual ministrations (41). The narrator registers an enigmatic response from the parishoners by framing the minister's departure from the scene in a semiotically obtuse manner: "He returned…to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared."

Yet the response from the group is much more decidedly negative, as indicated by the remarks of "a lady" who says: "'How strange…that a simple black veil, *such as any woman might wear* on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!'" (emphasis added). The reply of her husband, the local physician, is even more telling, as he remarks: "'the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot'." "'I would not be alone with him for the world'," the wife concurs, adding: "'I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!'" In response, the husband utters probably the strangest remark about this veiling development, when he adds that "'Men sometimes are so'." Unless this is the non-gendered use of "men" as in "mankind," etc., this is a curious utterance, considering that gender has not entered into this discussion so far (The exception to this is the remark about the garment resembling a woman's veil, which arguably establishes an economy of gender diffusion when Mr. Hooper "cross dresses" in this manner. Or, rather, it could be said that he reassigns the gendered orientation of the veil by virtue of wearing it). This could furthermore reflect an anxiety about the horror of confronting the transcendental signified in all its semiosic finitude. Would this be akin, then, to removing the dividing bar between the signifier and signified; the final elision of significative differential in which a sign ends its oscillation?

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

While Mr. Hooper's performance at a funeral service later that afternoon provides further opportunities for supernatural decoding of the veil (Does the corpse see his face when Mr. Hooper leans over the body in the casket? Did the body shudder at the sight?), it also provides the audience with a type of authorial-intention decoding of the veil when he mentions it in his benediction: "The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces" (1836: 42). Of course, although he could be referring to the more common practice of face veiling, the crowd assumes that he is turning his literal veil into a metaphorical reference, one with semiotic implications insofar as it asserts that everyone is "veiled" by facial-signifier distortion, an opaque sign-vehicle instead of a transparent (or even just translucent) signified.

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

> After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple, in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil. (44)

In order for the townsfolk to satisfactorily decode this resistant signifier, a group was charged with the task to "put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing." This would imply a belief in the ability of the encoder to identify a privileged signified that finds this privilege through a semiotic origin, in turn. Ironically, the impetus behind this mission was located in "a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed," elicited by the veil. In other words, the veil appears to signify from a position almost clearly conveyed and/or significantly concealed. It neither shows nor hides.

This extra-signifying capacity is arguably what impels the community members to bring it into the realm of fixed signification, one way or another: "There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile," we are told. "But that piece of crepe, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then"

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

In effect, the smile serves as only another impediment to signification, further imbricating the already existing layers of resistance to meaning initiated by wearing the veil. The tenacity of this blockage, moreover, is dramatized by the failure of the decoder who should be able to share in the encoder's "intention" of this sign-vehicle: the "one person in the village, unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself" – his spouse (1836: 45). Given the assumptions of a hierarchy-based "community of interpreters" (Fish 1980) that the minister resides in, the commonly held assumption is that "as his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed." Again, this issue of decoder "privilege" arises with the attendant assumption that the minister possesses the semiotic key to the veil's (thus-encoded) signification. Despite the metaphorical assertion that "close" reading results in more accurate decoding, "she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: it was but a double fold of crepe, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath."

Points of Privilege

On this point consider, for example, the endings of Ernest Hemingway's short story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," in which the narrators specifically decode events that take place and thereby impose possession of privileged decoding by a given (narrative) agent. A similar situation appears at the conclusion of James Thurber's "The Catbird Seat," in which the only plausible decoding is based on character history yet it is, in fact, a mis-decoding (see Simpkins 2001). Or, again, see the refused decoding following the vision given to the main character in Flannery O'Connor's story, "Revelation," in which Ruby Turpin doesn't want to accept a message from God, apparently. Or, finally, see the ways in which a non-response (silence) leads to a nevertheless transparent decoding in Jane Austen's unfinished novel, *The Watsons*, when the main character has to refuse an indecorous ride proposal without actually saying so while being scrutinized at the same time by an audience of women who are judging her character.

As will be discussed later, this becomes essentially what Barthes posits: the signifier without a signified. A signifier that effectively conveys only itself instead of a relational sum: "'No', said she aloud, and smiling, 'there is nothing terrible in this piece of crepe, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on'" (1836: 45). Here, Mrs. Hooper engages in a bid for mutual encoding-tool usage by way of her own smile. Yet this common-ground effort meets with only an impermeable semiotic membrane, as is suggested when, in response, "Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly" (46). Even more importantly, the minister's signifying supplement – one, moreover, associated with an important facet of speech construction (as witnessed by the colloquial expression made famous by George H. W. Bush: "Read my lips!") – is detached from the speaking subject: *it* is his smile; *he* is not smiling. In a related development, Mr. Hooper re-configures the connotative frame for his use of the word "veil" (as well as the literal use of the veil garment) by aligning the two, now, figuratively: "'There is an hour to come'," said he, 'when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crepe till then'." His wife, in turn, extends this non-literal use of "veiling" (if this is even possible, contra Nietzsche) by declaring that "'Your words are a mystery, too'," and urging him to "'Take away the veil from them, at least'." Clearly, though, words can no more be stripped of translucent/opaque metaphoricity than any other sign-vehicle can (including the presumed class of signs deemed transparently "iconic").

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

When Mrs. Hooper asks her husband to decode the veil's signified for her, he draws upon an explicitly semiotic framework, although expressing it in the subjunctive mood, as if to imply that this process is fundamentally conjectural, or perhaps suggesting that the encoder has no special privilege in terms of specifying an essential meaning. "'If it be a sign of mourning'," replied Mr. Hooper, "'I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil'" (1836: 46). His wife, however, observes that it is this very polysemous condition which could lead to stigmatizing interpretations by others. "'But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?' urged Elizabeth. 'Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!'" In response to this, Mr. Hooper "smiled again – that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil." This seems to indicate that he has accepted the condition of semiosic uncontrollability that Saussure identified in his *Course* when he noted that even an artificially constructed language cannot be controlled by its creator as soon as it is released into circulation among other sign users. Moreover, rather than producing the signified that the minister proclaims the veil represents hypothetically ("'I hide my face for sorrow'"; "'I cover it for secret sin'"), all the decoders he encounters necessarily project their own signifieds onto it.

In fact, right after this assertion, the narrator relates that Elizabeth does this very thing: "a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him" (1836: 47). The minister pleads for an empathic decoding by Elizabeth at this point, providing a linguistic supplement to the non-linguist signifier of the veil:

> Have patience with me, Elizabeth!...Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil–it is not for eternity! Oh! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!

What the minister learns here, something that frustrates so many sign users, is that the encoder truly has no leverage over the decoder's practices. Ironically, when the minister declines Elizabeth's request to see beneath the veil for one last time, she leaves, and his response is not insignificant: "Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness." What he realizes here, of course, is that Elizabeth is confusing the materiality of the signifier (like those who get upset over the purely symbolic gesture of flag burning) with the signified itself.

Following this scene, the minister's decoder community abandons its efforts at finding the "mysterious" signified of the veil ("From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide" [1836: 47]), although some of them employed the strategy of according it a form of null signification (as was seen in Poe and will be seen in Barthes) – which, in turn, grants it semiotic significance, at least in some way ("By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity" [47-48]). Mr. Hooper's signifying status transfers into the realm of "fable," we are told, which in turn leads even him to begin to believe in the possibility of decoder semiosic competence (he starts to align himself with the community of interpreters – i.e., "the multitude" – who believe the veil signifies his dreadful secret"):

> Their instinctive dread caused him to feel, more strongly than aught else, that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime, too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. (48)

Consistent with Susan Sontag's assertion in *Illness as Metaphor* that figurative language gains greater power in direct relation to the decoder's increased ignorance, the veil actually makes Mr. Hooper an even more powerful encoder. "Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman," the narrator remarks. "By the aid of his mysterious emblem – for there was no other apparent cause – he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin" (49).

Up to his death scene, Mr. Hooper maintains the opacity of the veil, using only speech and his extra-linguistic signifier of a "faint, sad smile." At the end, he articulates the signifying dilemma represented by his veil as he suggests that any sign vehicle is hampered, semiotically, by the same situation, no matter how transparent or iconic it may appear on the surface. "'What'," he says as his last words:

> but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil! (1836: 52)

As Hawthorne's story demonstrates, the arguably human motivation that fuels the desire for a belief in the possibility of decoding in general, and the relative certainty of this operation in particular, becomes a type of theological quest, motivated by the apparent awareness that this is nevertheless a constructed, "deliberate belief," as Joseph Conrad's Marlowe calls it in *Heart of Darkness*. This, perhaps, accounts for the otherwise seemingly inexplicable confidence of interpretation seen in Charles Baxter's short story, "The Next Building I Plan to Bomb," in which the main character finds a piece of gray paper with an apparently related drawing and a related linguistic utterance written on it in purple ink, and shows it to other people for their opinion of what it signifies, or what it might mean in a larger context (evidence of a terrorist plot, etc.).

In an email exchange, Baxter responded to my query regarding a bibliographical code explanation of this specificity regarding the paper, ink, etc. of the "text" Harry finds by observing:

> My first thought in answer to your question is, "I don't remember." But I think I
>
> "do" remember. It seems to me that whenever you receive a note that is freighted with meaning, particularly meanings that lie below the surface, you begin to check the peripheries, as if they held the meanings that are withheld at the level of the text. The hapless guy who receives that note has begun to experience the bleeding of meaning into the peripheries. Thus the interest in fonts, etc. (August 30, 2008)

The only seemingly neutral or disinterested response to the piece of paper and its "contents" appears when Harry Edmonds first comes upon and examines it:

> On the upper lefthand corner someone had scrawled the phrase: THE NEXT BUILDING I PLAN TO BOMB. Harry unfolded the paper and saw an inked drawing of what appeared to be a sizeable train station or some other public structure, perhaps an airport terminal. In the drawing were arched windows and front pillars but very little other supporting detail. The building looked solid, monumental, and difficult to destroy. (1997: 65)

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

Harry's girlfriend: "Lucia examined the soiled paper, her thumb and finger at its corner, and said, 'The next building I plan to bomb.' Her tone was light and urbane. 'That's Union Station, in Chicago.' She smiled. 'Well, Harry, what are you going to do with this? Some nut case did this, right?'." (1997: 66)

> At the police station:
>
> Sergeant Bursk, asked, "Mr. Edmonds, you got any kids?"
>
> "Kids? No, I don't have kids. Why?"
>
> "Kids did this," Sergeant Bursk told him, waving the paper in front of him as if he were drying it off. "My kids could've done this. Kids do this. Boys do this. They draw torture chambers and they make threats and what-have-you. That's what they do. It's the youth. But they're kids. They don't mean it…That's Grand Central. In New York, on Forty-second Street, I think. I was there once. You can tell by the clock. See this clock here?" He pointed at a vague circle. "That's Grand Central, and this is the hig clock that they've got there on the front." (1997: 67-68)
>
> The "kid" Harry meets in a bar:
>
> "I know this fucking place…I've, like, traveled, you know, all over Europe. This is in Europe, this place, this is fucking Deutschland we're talking about here…Oh, yeah, I remember this place. I was there, two summers ago? Hamburg? This is the Dammtor Bahnhof."
>
> "Never heard of it," Harry Edmonds said.
>
> "You never heard of it 'cause you've never been there, man. You have to fucking be there to know about it." The kid squinched his eyebrows together like a professor making a difficult point. "A *bahnhof,* see, is a train station, and the Dammtor Bahnhof is, like, one of the stations there, and this is the one that the Nazis rounded up the Jews to. And, like, sent them off from. This place, man. Absolutely. It's still standing. This one, it fucking deserves to be bombed. Just blow it totally the fuck away, off the face of the earth. That's just my opinion. It's evil, man." (1997: 68-69)
>
> And, finally, Harry's therapist: "This building?…Oh, it's the Field Museum, in Chicago. And that's not a theory. It is the Field Museum" (1997: 70).

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

Significantly, Harry never offers his own interpretation of the found text except to make his own drawing – and this is clearly anticipated by the process of semiosic deferral characterized by some semioticians: "He reaches for a pad of paper and a no. 2 pencil. At the top of the pad, Harry writes, 'The next place I plan to bomb,' and then very slowly, and with great care, begins to draw his own face, its smooth clean shaven contours, its courteous half-smile" (1997: 71).

It is revealing, too, that Harry reconfigures the original drawing and re-captions his own drawing, emphasizing the personal, contributive, constructed nature of decoding by substituting himself for the building in the original drawing and alternately titling his own drawing as "The Next Place I Plan to Bomb," thereby turning the unspecified link between the original's drawing and linguistic text into, in this case, a personal decoding rendition signified by "titling" (Simpkins 1990). This is exactly what happens in decoding as well.

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

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

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

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

Time and Translation

Review of Susan Petrilli, *Signifying and Understanding: Reading the Works of Victoria Welby and the Signific Movement*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

By Anna Cabak Rédei

In the majestic book *Signifying and Understanding: Reading the Works of Victoria Welby and the Signific Movement*, Susan Petrilli is returning to the topic, first addressed in her *Significs, semantica e semiotica. La teoria del significato di Victoria Lady Welby* (1984), of semiotic history and Victoria Welby's importance for contemporary semiotics. The book consists of a selection of Victoria Lady Welby's (1837–1912) published and unpublished writings (including her correspondence with important scholars of her time as well as her scientific writings), contributing to modern semiotics on a general level (and in the correspondence with Charles Sanders Peirce in more specific ways). But more importantly perhaps, the selection of writings illustrates Lady Welby's contribution to the Signific Movement in the 1890s, which eventually flourished in the Netherlands within the Dutch Significs Group.

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

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

Who was Lady Welby?

Lady Welby was born as Lady Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart–Wortley into the highest circles of the English nobility. She was named

after Queen Alexandrina Victoria, who was her godmother. In 1863 she married Sir William, the Earle Welby. Lady Welby lacked formal education. She studied on her own through, among other things, travelling, reading and experiencing life with her mother as a child and later on through her extensive correspondence. Lady Welby communicated with 450 interlocutors, who were to make up the 'Welby Circle'. Lady Welby's intellectual work was very much developed in dialogue with others.

During 1870–80 Lady Welby expanded her correspondence significantly and it came to include a wide range of interests, and many important names within contemporary philosophy such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Henri L. Bergson, Michel Bréal, Rudolph Carnap, Thomas A. Huxley, Henry and William James, Charles K. Odgen, Bertrand Russel, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, George Bernard Shaw and Ferdinand Tönnies. Last but not least, Lady Welby's correspondence with women such as Lucy L. Clifford and Mary Everst Boole was important for her intellectual expression. With the former, to give an example, Welby discussed the issue of identity, and in a polemic with positivism advocated a relational and semiotic perspective (146). Welby's understanding of subjectivity involves the idea that it is dialogical in nature and as such a result of the interchange between "a plurality of selves" (149). Peirce expressed much the same view in his conception of 'tuism'. However, as Sonesson (2000) points out, the limit between ego and alter is erased in Peirce's version, and might perhaps not be totally clear in Welby's conception, either.

Lady Welby's research areas were wide and involved, apart from philosophy, religion, theology, linguistics, mathematics, semiotics, sociology, anthropology and education – to mention a few. Welby manifested the model she shared with Peirce by "conducting research in the form of cooperation among the open community of investigators" (15). Of special importance for the research field before us is Welby's correspondence with Peirce, published in *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, edited by Charles S. Hardwick in 1977. Important also, in this connection, is the volume *Other Dimensions* (1931) where Welby's daughter Nina Cust included an exchange of letters between her mother and Peirce from the years 1903–1905 and 1908–1911. Since 1977 another four unpublished letters from Welby to Peirce have surfaced.

Semiotic and Significs includes also (apart from the correspondence between 1903–1911) Lady Welby's entry 'Significs' for *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911). This entry is, attentively by Petrilli, incorporated into the volume (chapter three). Welby's text gives a fine overview of Significs, as it gives us the voice of the author herself. Indeed, practising the philosophy of dialogue, Welby gives space to Bréal when quoting him on the importance of semantics for Significs – the latter apparently approved very much of Welby's entry already in the 1908 edition (see letter 5 May 1908 in Petrilli, 307). The quotation recalls the Russian philosopher Bakhtin who, in his critique of Ferdinand Saussure's conception of 'la langue' and its role for the study of languages, advocates consideration of how the 'author' enters the text in dialogue with his/her time and socio-cultural context, thus a study rather of 'le parole' (Bakhtin, 1995). Thus, Welby's quotation of Bréal (my translation from French) from his *Essai de sémantique* (1897):

> Extract from linguistics that which comes out of it / as nourishment for thought and—I do not dread to add—as a rule for our own language, because each of us collaborate / in the evolution of the human speech, / voilà, what merits to be brought to light, / [...]. (346)

Welby dwells a bit on semantics in her entry 'Significs' and is critical towards the word as used by, for instance, Bréal (185); only to put into play with Significs a term introduced by her in1896 to do justice to a more extended form of semantics, that is, the conception of the universe as "pervaded with meaning" (185) and her own triad of Sense, Meaning and Significance. In the Encyclopaedic entry 'Significs' (1911) Welby also wrote:

> To be content with mere reform of articulate expression would be fatal to the prospect of a significantly adequate language; one characterized by a development only to be compared to that of the life and mind of which it is or should be naturally the delicate, flexible, creative, as also controlling and ordering, Expression.The classified use of the terms of expression-value suggests three main levels or classes of that value - those of Sense, Meaning, and Significance. (346)

In the definition of the triad, one might see a debt to Peirce's triad firstness, secondness and thirdness, already present in Welby's earlier work *What is meaning?* However, at some places, a slightly different terminology is evident:

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

Welby's triad indicates three levels of meaning:

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

Peirce himself reviewed *What is meaning?* paying special attention to '"the three orders of signification"' (267), viewed within the frames of logic. The review was the starting point for an exchange of letters between the two of great value for semiotics. And in a letter dated 20 Nov. 1904, Peirce defines Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness as follows:

> Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Thirdness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other. (in Petrilli, 396).

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

> In any case, meaning – in the widest sense of the word - is the only value of whatever "fact" presents itself to us. Without this, to observe and record appearances or occurrences would become a worse than wasteful task. Significance is the one value of all that consciousness brings, or that intelligence deals with; the one value of life itself. (in Petrilli, 429)

As can be seen, the problem of the context's (which Welby defined in comprehensive terms) significance for conveying meaning to any word (or in broader sense, any sign), is at stake throughout these writings. As Petrilli (141) writes:

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

In connection with Welby's semiotic approach she wanted, on the one hand, to criticize what she thought was the reductive side of the term 'common sense' ('simple' meaning), and on the other, as something a priori to language. Welby theorized the latter (already present in *Links and Clues* from 1881) Welby within the frames of her conception "mother-sens," or "primal sense" (142).

Another substantial contribution to the field was the 'Welby Prize' for the best essay in the journal of significs, *Mind*, which Welby announced in 1896. The German sociologist and philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) was granted the prize for his essay "Philosophical Terminology" (1899/1900). Welby's notes on the prize are appended, as are the one by Tönnies (235, 245).

In 1911 Welby published her second book *Significs and Language: The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources*. Many of Welby's essays are published conference papers. Although she was not connected to any academic institution, she was a member of distinguished academic bodies like the Aristotelian Society, Anthropological Institute, and the Sociological Society. Petrilli has meritoriously included some of Welby's published lectures, which deal with issues relating to mental evolution and cognition, and are thus important for the history of modern semiotics, as for instance: "Is there a Break in Mental Evolution?" (Sept. 1890) and "An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution" (Dec. 1890). Welby also anticipated a specific field of modern semiotics, namely biosemiotics, or "global semiotics" (the latter paper contains references to Darwin, among others), with "her studies on the relation between signs and life, signs and evolution" (29), and she anticipated the branch of 'semioethics' of the Bari school, introduced by Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio.

Another genre important for Welby's mode of expression was the pamphlet (examples included in Petrilli's volume). They were short and privately printed. Apart from the major monographs mentioned earlier, Welby wrote two books on reflection (excerpts published in Petrilli's volume): *Grains of Sense* (1891) and *Links and Clues* (1881). Welby also wrote a childhood diary published in 1852. But the main part of her writings are still unpublished.

Grains of Sense marks a different phase of Welby's work, and moves away from the religious sphere to problems of scientific matter, such as anthropology, philosophy, pedagogy and linguistics in the light of significs. The importance of the notion 'sense' is given a more significant and elaborate role in *What is meaning?* (1903), as it is used to adequately define the value of 'experience'. The "highest value of sense experience is identified in 'significance', that is, in sense that emerges in the relation between signs and values, augmented in the ongoing translative processes from one sign and sign system to another" (20–21).

In 1896 in the essay "Sense, Meaning and Interpretation," Welby introduced the term 'Significs', alongside 'Sensifics' alluding to 'sensory' as a possible alternative. Petrilli (255) writes:

> 'Significs' evokes the verb 'to signify' which evidences the dual semantic valency of the concept of meaning, linguistic and valuative; and differently from 'semantics' and 'semiotics', it was completely free from technical associations.

However, as we have seen, Peirce viewed Welby's triad as part of logic but Welby insisted (in a letter to Peirce on the 18th Nov. 1903) that 'Significs', as a philosophy

of 'significance' (the third level of her meaning triad), was to be regarded as a '"practical extension"' of semiotics. In this way Welby highlighted "the structural and constitutive interconnection between the pragmatic-operative and ethical-valuative dimension of sign activity in human signifying processes" (272).

Later in another letter to Peirce dated 19 Jan. 1909, she set side by side the terms 'significs' and 'semeiotic' (as used by Peirce) in order to underline her own focus on the "ethical, aesthetic and what today is identified as the ideological dimension of human sign activity" in contrast to what she thought to be "a purely descriptive approach to studies on language, knowledge and expression" (289). This approach is further underlined in her monograph *Significs and Language* (1911), where the connection of signs to values is stressed as the "ultimate aim of signifies" (281). An important topic that Welby discussed with Peirce in their exchange of letters (notably between 1904 and 1905), initiated by the latter's review of *What is Meaning?*, was the issue of time – although their stances on it were different. Later in 1907 Welby devoted an essay on the topic with the title "Time as Derivative" published in *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*. Welby thought that time was an inferior concept to space, being derivative of it, something that she expressed already in a letter to him dated 20 Nov. 1904. She found a proof of this in language, a proof that Peirce disputed because, according to him, language did not manifest the dependent nature of time on space "'except in the matter of expression in speech'" (i.e. in a conventional way, language being symbols in Peircean terms). About a month later Peirce wrote to Welby:

> It appears to me that the method of designating temporal relations by their analogies with spatial relations must date from the very beginnings of speech. [...] I therefore imagine the method took rise between two persons who met and endeavoured to communicate partly by words and partly by signs. These persons would be together with a common spatial environment, which was visible, and in which special parts could be pointed out by gesture. It would therefore be particularly easy to form a terminology for spatial relations. [...] Hence, if you do not assume a dependence of Time on Space to be otherwise independently proved, it appears to me that circumstances would nevertheless infallibly drive those two persons to the expression of temporal relations hrough their analogy with spatial relations; and I see nothing in these circumstances to prove any dependence of Time on Space except in the matter of expression in speech. (in Petrilli, 393)

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

> There is one of the main branches of geometry, Topics, which alone occupies itself with properties of Space itself, namely, with the order of connecting parts. This has been little studied, and no regular method for treating it is known. But if I obtain the proper definitions of temporal relations, little more will be required to furnish me with definitions of the Spatial relations, and if this is rightly done, it must throw strong light on Topics, while if it is not rightly done it will do nothing for Topics. (in Petrilli, 393)

However, Peirce based his conception of time on the relation between his triad of signs (icon, index and symbol) and his triad of categories (as part of his ideoscopy). For Peirce, time belongs to the world of ideas (Thirdness), and in connection with his thought that all categories are real, but only secondness exists, one may perhaps conclude he meant that the latter is determinate. Be that as it may, only the indeterminate "belongs to ideas" (397) because, as Petrilli sums up (397), "Peirce maintains that from the point of view of the subsequent the previous is determinate and fixed, instead from the point of view of the previous the subsequent is indeterminate" (i.e, belonging to the realm of ideas). In contrast, Welby thought that indeterminacy should be classified as ignorance and not as something belonging to the domain of ideas (397). In fact, Peirce criticizes Welby for not including thirdness within her conception of time, thus excluding *an idea* of the future. Otherwise put, as Hjalmar Wennerberg brings forth in his outlines of Peirce's philosophical system:

> One reason for regarding laws as thoughts is that a law like a thought is 'general in referring to all possible things, and not merely to those which happen to exist' (1. 420). [...] Peirce formulates this point, which can be said to be a common-place in recent philosophy [Wennerberg with reference to *Letters to Lady Welby*, my addition], by saying that Thirdness is not reducible to Secondness (1. 420) (Wennerberg 1962: 38).

The above quotation demonstrates the link between 'general' to thirdness and fits well into the discussion on time between Welby and Peirce. Petrilli writes: "and only as the temporal relation grows in surface and volume does it acquire secondness and thirdness. Thus, Welby establishes a relation between her thesis of the secondary status of time, given that it derives from space, and the principle of reversibility formulated by Peirce." In a letter to Welby, 12 Oct. 1904, Peirce wrote:

> Everything that had happened would happen again in reverse order. These seem to me to be strong arguments to prove that temporal causation [...] is an action upon ideas and not upon existents. But since our idea of the past is precisely the idea of that which is absolutely determinable, fixed [...] as against the future which is living, plastic, and determinable, is a pure idea of Secondness [...]'. (in Petrilli, 397)

Welby included the idea of "mother-sense" in her conception of time, expressed as follows in a letter to Peirce (20 Nov. 1904): "To the race-motherhood there is and can be no difference in existential reality between the past and the future any more than between a mile just left behind and a mile just entered upon" (in Petrilli, 399). These lines suffice to illustrate the divergent views on time of Welby and Peirce.

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

> What is the ground of this assertion that time is a derivative from space? Am I right in saying that the only argument is the philological: that time-concepts are all expressed in language by spatial metaphors? I have not elsewhere seen so complete a working out of this question. But the question remains: does the fact that the time-concept is expressed in language in terms of space prove that the space-concept is prior in experience? May not the spatial expression be due simply to the greater permanence or fixity of space, nor to its priority in experience? (in Petrilli, 404)

Welby, in a letter to Sorley (from 1903–1905), continues by saying "that it is change and not time which like space is primordial" (406). And further on: "Again, he [Prof. Adamson] evidently leans definitively towards my own conclusion that time and space ought never to be coupled as they are, since it seems that time is dependent upon space but not conversely" (406).

The discussion on time, which is here accounted for, to some extent at least, illustrates Petrilli's polyphonic (to use a Bakhtinian notion) method when conveying Welby's ideas, namely by showing (in the form of excerpts and appendices) the context in which they emerged.

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

Welby's model reminds us of Peirce's interpretive-cognitive model, containing the idea that the meaning of a sign is further developed by another sign (its interpretant), in a continuous, never ending chain of signs, such that "*to translate is to interpret*" (552). Often enough this process implies a multiplying of signs, for instance, the number of words increases along the way. For Welby "Growth in knowledge [...] is paralleled by growth in significance," and involves the accumulation of knowledge not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative and ethical terms. The qualitative aspects in Welby seem to match Peirce's conception of the final interpretant (something to strive for). Translation is a topic central to other philosophers of language such as Bakhtin and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) and Petrilli shows aptly how Welby's thoughts may be linked to ideas present in these scholars' work. When it comes to Wittgenstein it is the issue of iconicity in language. Petrilli brings forward the relation between Wittgenstein's notion of "proposition" and Welby's "pictorial symbol" and "representative action," all being "signifying units" (541).

Petrilli reads Welby's theory of translation in the light also of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's (1921–1985) works. Notably she establishes a theoretic link between Welby's concept of "common language" (from *What is Meaning?*), also expressed in terms of "common sense" or "common meaning" and Rossi-Landi's concept "common speech" later developed in the term "social reproduction" (542–3). Petrilli relates "common meaning" to the notion of "semiotic material" to underline the idea that different languages are part of and form a "single historical-natural language, as well as the different historical-natural languages, cultures and signs systems" (544–5). "Common meaning" implies a sphere of reference that is in some sense universal, "an a priori community" generating differences and variations through expression.

It seems to me that the "common meaning" used by Welby might be connected to another fundamental term in her work, namely, "mother-sense" (or "primary-sense," as her publishers preferred). And it is via Peirce that we may not only explain Welby's term mother-sense, as Petrilli so interestingly links it to Peirce's notion of "primisense" (577), but also the connection of the former to "common meaning." Petrilli productively suggests that Welby's triads might be further explored in the light of Peirce's three categories (discussed above), and thereby in connection with his notions qualisign, sinsign and legisign or the triad of qualisense, molition, and habit.

Welby writes in a paper entitled "Primal Sense and Significs," dated 15 April 1907:

> The connection between Mother-sense and Significs may be put like this: Primal Sense is what takes up and supplies to us the material of immediate awareness, conscious and interpretative. It is thus at once primordial and universal, at all stages of human development [...]. (in Petrilli, 574)

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

> Feeling is the momentarily present contents of consciousness taken in its pristine simplicity, and might be called *primisense*. *Altersense* is the consciousness of a directly present other second, withstanding us. *Medisense* is the consciousness of a thirdness, or medium between primisense and altersense, leading from the former to the latter. It is the consciousness of a process of bringing to mind. [...] *Altersense* has two modes, Sensation and Will. *Medisense* has three modes, *Abstraction, Suggestion, Association*. (CP 7.551 in Petrilli, 577)

One is tempted to connect Welby's notions of mother-sense and common meaning through Peirce's definition of altersense, and in doing so, establish a link (at least in some respects) between the former term, in its turn, to this triad of Peirce (as mother-sense gives rise to the "rationalizing Intellect," also called "father reason," with which it is in a dialectical relation). Petrilli, on the basis of the correspondence between Welby and Peirce, extends these connections, when writing: "Opening the ethical sphere before and beyond the strictly cognitive, with Peirce scientific rigour in reasoning is connected to 'mother-wit' and to agapastic logical procedure, with Welby to 'mother-sense'. In fact, to recover the relation between logic, sense and values means to conceive the possibility of extending logic beyond its strictly cognitive boundaries in the direction of ethics and aesthetics, or what we propose to call 'semiotics'" (580).

"Mother-sense" and "father reason" are also valid in evolutionary terms. However, mother-sense does not exclusively exist in women (although it finds its most elaborate expression in women), but is present in both sexes, as is father reason analogously (584). Petrilli concludes: "Original, primal, mother-sense converges with the capacity to engender signifying processes at the highest degrees of otherness, creativity and responsibility [...]. From this point of view, Welby's significs with its special focus on the conjunction between life, language and sense in all senses, prefigures present-day trends in the sign sciences, which now at last come together with the life sciences and ethics."

Petrilli has also included some interesting hitherto unpublished manuscripts that Lady Welby wrote between 1903 and 1910 dealing with the issue of selfhood. Petrilli shows that Welby took a similar position in this question as Peirce by regarding the self as consisting of"'sign material, verbal and nonverbal" which entails that the subject is in a constant state of becoming, as a result of its sign-character and therefore in "an ongoing process in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogic interrelationship with other signs" (610).

In conclusion, Petrilli achieves her aim in this book of giving an outline of Lady Welby's "thought system" (with a specific focus on Welby's studies on Significs) on the basis of her selected writings. At the same time, *Signifying and Understanding* will greatly assist and inspire those who would like to extend this line of inquiry. Petrilli's work in the archives is priceless for the research field, not only concerning Significs, but also of semiotics and semantics. However, Petrilli's outlining of Welby's "thought system" might have gained from a more rigorous editing, as the reader is from time to time interrupted by the many appended texts within Petrilli's compelling discussions. These appendices might have been assembled at the end of the chapters, or preferably perhaps at the end of the book.

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2010 McLAREN-LAMBART AWARD

Alan Cholodenko is the recipient of the 2010 McLaren-Lambart Award for Best Scholarly Article on animation, for his essay "The Animation of Cinema," which appeared in *The Semiotic Review of Books* 18.2 (2008): 1-10.

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

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

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

Information Enough

By Inna Semetsky

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

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

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

The blend of old and new theories is seen in the titles of the book's twelve chapters, which occupy nearly 500 pages and include the following (slightly paraphrased for brevity): "The Problem of the Information-Processing Paradigm as a Candidate for a Unified Science of Information"; "The Self-Organization of Knowledge"; "An Ethological Approach to Cognition": "Bateson's Concept of Information in Light of the Theory of Autopoiesis"; "Von Foerster's Construction of Second-Order Cybernetics"; "Embodied Metaphors"; "Integration of *Umweltlehre,* Ethology, and Peircean Biosemiotics"; "An Evolutionary View on the Threshold between Semiosis and Information Exchange"; "The Cybersemiotic Model of Information, Signification, Cognition, and Communication"; "The Five-Level Cybersemiotics". In addition, Brier offers a chapter on the practical problem of information and documents retrieval that, he claims, can be solved by means of cybersemiotics.

The overall paradigm that assists Brier in developing his new theory is Peirce's triadic semiotics; but the sources are many. Here are the few: Bertalanffy, Bohm, Deely, Emmeche, Gadamer, Heidegger, Hoffmeyer, Hesse, Husserl, Jantsch, Lakoff and Johnson, Lorenz, Merleau-Ponty, Noth, Popper, Ruesch, Sebeok, Spencer-Brown, Suzuki, Varela, Wiener, Wittgenstein. Among Brier's extensive endnotes I would like to single out his fine commentary on Herman Hesse's masterpiece *Magister Ludi* also known as the *Glass Bead Game* and which is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of the whole of culture not unlike the organist playing pipes on the organ. However the range of this magisterial 'organ' is the entire intellectual cosmos and, hence, is capable of reproducing, at least in theory, the full intellectual content of the universe.

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

The word 'enlightenment' in this context seems, however, to be slightly problematic. Rather than using a specific word that traditionally highlights reason as the over-rational paradigm of modern thought, I think that creative *postmodern illumination* will have captured Brier's idea better. Indeed, Peirce (as Brier's major intellectual inspiration) appears to be the first *post-modern* (post-positivist) philosopher (Deely 2001; Griffin 1993) and his semiotics as the *science* of signs partakes of post-modern critique of the Cartesian *subject* who stays forever separated from the world of *objects* that he can *observe* with the cool gaze of an independent spectator, a scientist, informed by the positivist paradigm stemming from modernity's culture of Enlightenment.

The triadic nature of a Peircean sign, however, makes a "scientific observer" the very *participant* in the process of semiosis. A genuine sign as such encompasses a triad comprising, as John Dewey said, "the observer, the observing, and the observed" (Dewey 1991: 97). The act of observing plays the role of a Peircean interpretant: knowledge is embodied in action making a *transaction* defined as an "unfractured observation" (Ibid.) the minimal unit of analysis. Such participation in the reality of that what is produced was indeed a distinguished feature of mystical, *pre-modern,* thought. In this regard, Brier's reference to Peirce's mysticism and transcendentalism (383) is very appropriate even if Peirce himself emphasized intelligence as specifically *scientific* yet *inseparable* from experience. Peirce asked "what *must* be the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say, by an intelligence capable of learning by experience" (CP 2.227; Peirce's italics).

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

Brier concludes his book by telling his readers that he "developed an informational theory that accepts several 'levels of existence'" (437). In this respect his cybersemiotics seems to partake of complexity theory as a broad contemporary paradigm applicable to natural and socio-cultural systems alike (cf. Cilliers 1998; Byrne 1998). What is the governing dynamic of multileveled systems? It was Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, the founder of general systems theory, who was first to address the insufficiency of analytical procedures of classical science based on linear causality between two basic variables and attracted our attention to "new categories of interaction, transaction, teleology" (1972: xix) as problematizing the old mechanistic paradigm.

The interactions between more than the two objects create, sure enough, an unsolvable problem – but only within the equations of *classical* mechanics, at the level of Peircean Seconds. As a mediation, the interactions pertain to Peircean Thirdness, to the evolutionary process of semiosis and signs-becoming-other-signs in the processes of interpretation and acquisition of meaning. Importantly, the "interactions do not have to be *physical*; they can also be thought of as a transference of *information*" (Cilliers 1998: 3).

Such transference is the defining feature of the *new science of coordination dynamics* as a paradigm for "The Complementary Nature" which is also the title of the book by J.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstrom (2006). While Peirce's genuine sign represents a self-referential semiotic structure, it was "sentience and *self-reference* [that] have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries" (2006: 253; italics mine). Kelso and Engstrom use a squiggle, *tilde* "~", for pinpointing the *relation,* the symbolic punctuation for reconciling the apparently dualistic opposites and assert that in "the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy~matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self-other" (2006: 253). A self-referential relation is what establishes the meaningful correlations between/across the different levels constituting a complex system.

Different disciplines have their own *complementary* pairs that, rather than being alien to each other in the manner of Cartesian dualism, are connected via what Kelso and Engstrom specify and present as *coordination dynamics*. Among complementary pairs in which the terms are related, or coordinated in a bi-polar interdependent manner are the following: cause-effect; *res cogitans-res extensa*, rationalism-empiricism; science-humanities; organism-environment; immanence-transcendence; body-mind; nature-nurture; yin-yang; being-becoming; certainty-uncertainty; material-spiritual; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Different "selfother" (self-not-self) pairs do belong to the variety of discourses; their commonality derived from the same relational dynamics, which is "contained" in the logic of the included middle. Brier's one chief "enemy" is logic – but I think we should be careful here to not confuse the logic of the *excluded* middle that continues to haunt us since the time of Aristotle with the creative logic of the *included* middle (cf. Semetsky 2008) as foundational for semiotics understood as the *science* of signs; notwithstanding the fact that the *same logic* was also a province of mystical experiences (even if unbeknown to mystics per se).

The included middle is grounded in the *relational* dynamics enabled by *likeness*; sympathy, correspondence, or analogy having been established between different levels of reality. Peirce, for example, emphasized the utility of *likeness* to mathematicians and compared an algebraic formula to an iconic sign, rendered such by the rules of commutation, association and distribution of the symbols. Such an unorthodox logic as semiotics (really, a contradiction in terms within a strictly analytic reasoning) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman calls virtual, or archaic, logic that "goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility" (Kauffman 1996: 293) as well as beyond given facts into a world of interpretable symbols, meanings and values. The emphasis on communication indicates that there is an interdependent network in which each level as 'speaks' to each other, desperately trying to understand each other's expressive 'language', thus creating *shared* meanings along the communicative link expressed by the tilde.

Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites and thusly coordinated complement a theoretical *episteme* with practical *phronesis* resulting from the feedbacks between knowledge and action. The apparent dichotomies and antinomies of 'either-or' habitual thinking are transcended and traversed by virtue of the 'both-and' science of a coordination dynamics equally applicable to natural and socio-cultural systems that together are embedded in a flow of semiosis. The infamous 'observer' (one or many) comprising the

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

As Deely points out, "at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretive structure mediated and sustained by signs" (Deely 1990: 5). The levels in the complex semiotic system are not immediately connected with each other but *mediated* by the inclusion of the third category; the generic 'interpretant', either human or non-human; and, it is the very mediation or interpretation that enables the *emergence* of novelty; the creation of information *for the interpreter* in the form of meaning. As Peirce said, signs are in fact signs only when interpreted. Still, the information is always already here, embedded in semiosis even if in its implicit, potential, virtual form. Meaning is "altogether virtual ... [it is contained] not in what is actually thought, but in what this thought may be connected with in representation" (Peirce CP 5. 289). Being virtual, it does not make its potential informational content less real (cf. Deleuze, 1994).

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

Signs are the patterns of coordinated, interpretive activity comprising "embodied cognition" (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 89) analogous to that invoked by Brier (referring to Lakoff and Johnston). However, what is important in such coordination, or sign-, dynamics is that the interaction (the included third, the interpretant in the Peircean triad) is a priori *informational*; and the dynamical (or sign-) systems are "informationally based" (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 9): information is what establishes psychophysical unity thereby confirming what Peirce was saying more than a century ago: "The old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance, will hardly find defendants today" (Peirce CP 6. 24, quoted in Brier, 203).

However, and again in agreement with Peirce, old habits of thought die hard. In the language of the science of coordination dynamics, a genuine Peircean triad would be represented by a complementary signo~bject pair, in which an interpretant is designated by a symbol of reconciliation, '~', and which serves as a novel syntax to make the two poles a *couple*, a Janus-faced sign! Coordination dynamics as such offers a "ubiquitous science of life" (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 76) permeated with "functional information" (Ibid., 98). Re-conceptualizing information as functional makes the notion that "information is not enough" misleading.

What is surely not enough is our perception of information as *solely* quantitative or measurable. It is *meaningful* in a pragmatic, Peircean sense as productive of observable *effects*. Hence, according to Peirce's pragmatic maxim, information is real, objective, and a precondition for communication. Language is a type of functional information: it can change the coordination patterns. Functional information is, in short, the very interaction used by a system "to coordinate itself" (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 101), to self-organize. A sign is not a sign unless it is interpreted; but so is the fundamental stuff in the physical – exceeding the actually observable, Peircean Secondness – universe: "a photon is not a photon unless it is measured [and] *creates* information" (Ibid., 101; italics in original).

Applying this 'bit' (pun intended) of information in our practical life at the level of action – by using it – makes this information meaningful. But the field of potential meanings was always already implicated at the different level of order, which is virtual or implicate. In this sense, it is not that "information is not enough": rather, it is more than enough. The semiotic code-duality (cf. Hoffmeyer and Emmeche 1991) seems to be patterned on, "in Leibniz's words: a dance of particles folding back on themselves" (Deleuze 1995: 157): analog (virtual) – digital (measured) – and analog again at the level of human actions (actual).

The reference to Leibniz brings to mind yet another of Brier's targets: algorithmic cognitive science as a project began by Leibniz and today continued, without much success, by research in Artificial Intelligence (AI). And here lies, I feel, the fundamental yet common misconception. Leibniz did not present his universal characteristics as 'bits' of information. Leibniz conceived of a *lingua characteristica* as a universal *pictographic* or *ideographic* alphabet of human thought comprising *arcana*, diagrams, pictures as complemented by *calculus ratiocinator* and reflecting *ratio* embedded in Nature. As ideographic, this unorthodox alphabet is always in need of interpretation. Leibniz's is a poetic language of interpretable symbols irreducible to propositions that directly refer to the empirical objects of logical positivism.

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

Seth Lloyd addresses the whole universe as a giant quantum computer (accordingly, with a giant cosmic *memory*) and stresses that universal computation proceeds in a dual analog-digital mode (2006). He specifies the structure of the computational space in terms of a circuit diagram representing both logical gates (the places where *qubits* – bits of *quantum* information – *interact* thus exchanging/transforming information) and, importantly, causal connections , which are represented by the connecting 'wires' or paths along which the information flows. The computational space is expressible in multidimensional geometry which models knowledge that apparently "we know but cannot tell" (Rockwell 2007: 128).

Sure enough, we can hardly express this deep knowledge because we habitually stay in the prison-house of verbal language and use the language of propositions that subscribes to the logic of the excluded middle, to yes or no, to true or false, etc. A novel language of expression pertaining to *shared, even if as yet virtual, meanings* is needed. Such is the would-be alphabet of Leibniz's *iconic*, ideographic, characters. I earlier posited the universal, pictorial or cartographic, language of signs (cf. Semetsky, 2006; also Semetsky, in press) as encompassing all three of Peirce's categories, icons, indices and symbols. This is the language not confined to a *private* mind of the Cartesian subject. Leibniz included "various graphic geometrical figures" (Noth 1995: 274) as the medium of such a symbolic language and acknowledged that the 64 combinations of the *I Ching* ... was a forerunner to his thought" (Merrell 2002: 136).

Leibniz envisaged a universal *ars inveniendi* for the invention of new truths as well; still his "fragmentary project ... remain[ed] utopian" (Noth 1995: 274). Ultimately, Leibniz's "characters were to be isomorphic with the concepts designated by them; [and] the universal signs were to be isomorphic with the facts of nature" (Idem) – precisely like Peirce's triadic signs. Incidentally, as Lloyd (2006) tells us, neutrons embedded in the *informational universe* are capable of 'saying' both yes and no simultaneously; this means that the informational universe is relation-, or sign-based; and we can construct yet another complementary yes~no pair. Signs are described in shades of grey!

Recently, systems theorist Ervin Laszlo (2004/2007) posited the *informational field* – that is, a *public* space – as conceptually equivalent to what the ancients called the Akashic field. The word *Akasha* in Sanskrit means the all-pervasive space that encompasses, in addition to the four elements of physical nature, also the fifth, quintessential, element. It is appropriate here to recall Deely's assertion that, at some point, "the physical universe ceases to be merely physical [that is, conforming merely to its classical description]" (Deely 2001: 621, brackets mine): it is perfused with signs, indeed. The fifth field is thereby a field of potential information from which emerges all that we can perceive by our senses, at the level of Peircean Secondness. It is a *semiosic* field. As Merrell points out, semiotics alters a traditional theory of meaning. Semiotics is "about meaning engendered when signs are in their act of becoming signs, a becoming that includes sign interpreters as participating agents in the very *semiosic* process of becoming" (Merrell 1997: xi).

As Laszlo comments, this invisible field named Dirac-sea (after physicist Paul Dirac) of virtual particles – a zero-point field also called the quantum vacuum – is everywhere while the observable visible world just floats on its surface. Vacuum or nothingness does not make this field less 'informational'. According to Merrell (1995), the three Peircean onto/logical categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, require the existence of some extra principle holding them together, the as yet undifferentiated "field within which semiosis plays out its drama" (Merrell 1995: 217), acknowledged by Peirce as pre-Firstness or nothingness. Still, it is this apparent nothingness as a virtual potential informational "field [that] produces *effects*, and these can be perceived" (Laszlo, 2004/2007,:73; italics mine) in a Peircean pragmatic sense at the level of the observable, sensible, world in which we live.

Brier asserts that "[i]nformation... becomes the organizational aspect of nature" (354), but notices that with regard to information "a full-fledged metaphysics" is underdeveloped. Laszlo (2004/2007) refers to the experiences of the *Apollo* astronaut Edgar Mitchell who stated that information "is present everywhere ... and has been present since the beginning" (Laszlo 2004/2007: 67). This information signifies "a subtle ... connection between things at different locations in space and events in different points in time. Such connections are ... 'nonlocal' in the natural science and 'transpersonal' in consciousness research" (Ibid., 68).

Physicist David Bohm emphasized that in holomovement there is no direct causal connection except for the *relations* between events that are being interwoven into a whole by means of the interconnecting network of quanta. Semiosis as such is this interconnected network; and quanta are Peircean signs full of implicit information that continuously change their mode of expression in fluctuating between polar opposites. Thereby, among bi-polar complementary pairs there should also be a relation described as novelty-confirmation. The structural coupling of 'matter-energy describing the physical world is necessarily grounded in the logic of the included middle representing *information*. In this sense we cannot state with certainty that 'information is not enough'. Information is just right! It is on the basis of this information that the universe *computes* its own dynamical evolution and in this process it is capable of actualizing potential reality as the computation proceeds.

In the universe perfused with signs information and computation are everywhere: it is all there is! The information is potentially active everywhere, yet "it is actually active, only where and when it can give form to the ... energy" (Bohm and Hiley 1993: 36). The complex semiosic universe must express itself in a dual mode of matter and energy. Lloyd points out that "most information is invisible" and it takes energy to process information (to compactify it, in a way), that is, to make it relatively visible at the level of physical observable world. The basic material elements such as "Earth, air, fire, and water...are all made of energy, but the different forms they take are determined by information. To do anything requires energy. To specify what is done requires information. Energy and information are by nature (no pun intended) intertwined" (Lloyd 2006: 44; brackets in original). Indeed, as physicist and cosmologist John Archibald Wheeler stated, all physical things are information-theoretic originally.

Therefore we may consider matter, energy and information "intertwined" in a self-referential, *triadic*, relation that is structurally and functionally isomorphic (keeping in mind that the flow of semiosis is unlimited) with the Peircean triadic sign. Noth (1995: 90-91) presents a synopsis of a triadic sign tracing its definitions and disparate terminology from Plato, to Stoics, to Frege, to Peirce, to Ogden and Richards and notices that in order to construct a semiotic triangle connecting, in the

generic terms, sign-vehicle, sense, and referent, the path of *mediation*, represented by a dotted line between a sign-vehicle and a referent, *must* be present.

The coordinating relation (akin to the dotted line) is ubiquitous. Kelso and Engstrom, however, point to some nuances: while the laws of coordination, like physical laws in general, are matter-independent, they are function- and context-dependent; they govern (hence make relatively predictable!) "*the flow of functional information*" (2006: 100; italics in original). It is the coordination that produces meaning (or "sense" in Noth's triangle). This means that *mystical*, Neo-Platonic, 'equation' One=Many demonstrates itself *relationally* in the framework of *science* of coordination dynamics; it is expressed in the form of another complementary pair, unity~diversity. Kauffman (2010) gives an example that unites one with many: the Moebius band, which appears to be a paradoxical structure if not for understanding that it is the perspective of an observer and context that produce a paradox.

This also means that our very sentience is an emergent property and not rule-based, that is, it cannot be founded on merely propositional thought and logocentrism. Perhaps this is what Brier is getting at when he argues against algorithmic computation. The attention to different regimes of signs becomes imperative and Leibniz's unfinished project must be completed. Kelso and Engstrom indicate the *non-linguistic* origins of intentional action. The project begun by Leibniz reflects the injunction of knowledge representation. In analytic philosophy the representational system presupposes a class of things represented which are *not* representations themselves, hence 'outside' language and outside thought. On account of this, poetic or pictorial, metaphorical language, which 'represents' symbolically or indirectly via mediation, cannot be 'objective' in describing reality. But the reality is habitually taken as the empirically observable physical reality reduced as such to the level of Peircean Secondness ignoring the fact that:

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

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

To conclude, I would like to refer to the project of *transdisciplinarity* addressed by Basarab whose book *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* was published in 2002. The research program of Nicolescu's Center for Transdisciplinary Research should become a valuable complement to any research project in semiotics. Nicolescu advocates overcoming the split between sciences and humanities and comments that the term 'transdicisplinarity' was initially coined by Jean Piaget in 1970 to indicate something across and between the disciplinary divides. Transdisciplinary knowledge belongs to what Nicolescu specifies as *in vivo* knowledge that exceeds scientific knowledge of the external world as independent from the subject. Bound to the internal world of human subjectivity, it necessarily includes a system of values and meanings exceeding objective facts alone. Yet, transdisciplinary knowledge does not reject science; what it rejects is scientism. Below is a Table 1 addressing disciplinary and transdisiplinary modes of knowledge:

Table 1. Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary knowledge. Adapted and considerably developed in the context of this paper from Nicolescu at **http://www.metanexus.net/conference2005/pdf/nicolescu.pdf** (accessed on 15 November, 2010).

Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge stay in a *complementary* relation to each other. Disciplinary, *in vitro*, knowledge is based on the classical logic of the excluded middle that induces a separation between subject and object and reduces the meaning of knowledge to knowing merely the facts of the external world. The new transdisciplinary or *in vivo* knowledge is founded on the logic of the included middle so that subject and object *correspond* to each other. They are in a triadic contra dyadic relation; they are in correspondence (NB: Francisco Varela designated such a correspondence as a *conversation* between different levels in a complex, *autopoietic*, that is, self-referential, system structured, sure enough, as a network of signs; Brier indeed acknowledges the importance of Varela's contribution to his cybersemiotics; see Index on p. 476).

Transdisciplinary knowledge is based on the logic where terms form a bi-polar *complementary pair* versus being binary opposites. *In vivo* knowledge is not a static knowledge of the facts *per se* but a dynamic understanding of meanings that by necessity brings in the dimension of values which is traditionally (*in vitro)* considered 'subjective', that is, located outside 'normal' science. *Epistemology and ethics alike* transcend the confines of an individual Ego or Cartesian *Cogito* and cannot be separated from the collective, social, domain: the individual-society, too, is a complementary pair in which the terms of the triadic relation sustain each other by the reconciling symbol '-'! In the latest issue of the journal *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion*, Nicolescu (2009: 240) points out that a "new system of values can appear only through the dialogue between different domains of knowledge, between different cultures and different religions. This system does yet not exist".

I think that this ethical dimension should now become the core of semiotic research so in establishing what Noth has recently called "intercultural competence" (2010: 9) and which is an urgent matter in the present context that displays diverse "signs of the times" (Semetsky 2010b) amidst cultural conflicts and the clash of values at the global level. The language of signs that can 'speak' in characters denoting meanings and values – *shared* meanings and values – needs to be understood.

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KNOWLEDGE (Disciplinary)	KNOWLEDGE (Transdisciplinary)
IN VITRO	*IN VIVO*
Limited to the objective knowledge of external world (cf. spectator theory of knowledge)	Correspondence, analogy, conversation, sympathy as a *relation* between the external world of objects and the internal world of subjects
Static knowledge of facts	Dynamic understanding of meanings
Analytic conceptual thought – separation between mind and body; mind *observing* the world; disembodied cognition.	Synthetic holistic intelligence – harmony or correspondence between mind and body; mind *participating* in the world; embodied cognition.
oriented towards power, possession and separation from, and control over the 'other'	oriented towards sharing, cooperating with, and integrating the 'other'
logic of the excluded middle /dualist philosophy	logic of the included middle /non-dualist philosophy as **SEMIOTICS**
exclusion of values	inclusion of values

The Future of Wikileaks

By Gary Genosko

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

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

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

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

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

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

What kind of collaboration does Wikileaks encourage? Its partial namesake Wikipedia recreated collaboration around known, sharable histories, in compact narratives like encyclopedia entries. Wikileaks cooperates with self-entrepreneurial whistle-blowers. Yet as cybertheorist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi (2010) has recently stated, there is a growing connective intelligence at work in support of Wikileaks:

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

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

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

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