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SEMIOTICS AND ITS RANGE

PRESEMIOTICS

If it is true that semiotics has tried to establish itself as an autonomous science starting with Saussure and Peirce, in imposing itself as a cultural fashion since the 1960's, due especially to Roland Barthes and his interest in the language of connotations, it is also true that from ancient treatises of medicine to books of magic, from rhetoric to logic, from nature to science, symbols—even from different points of view—have been the object of passionate reflections.

While leaving aside the developments which it has had in China, in India, in Islam, here we will give at least an indication of the depth and continuity of a Western philosophical tradition by trying to project some of the problems cited by authors on the lines of research today.

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

From the beginning of its history, Greek thought about the question of the adherence of language to reality confronted semiotic problems.

Translated by Michael Crawcour.

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A good approach to the semiotic theories of Greek antiquity based essentially on the dispute between *physis* and *nomos* (or thesis), that is between the "naturalism" and "conventionality" of linguistic symbols, remains Plato's *Cratyle*.

In particular, for Plato, names and ideas do not coincide: their rapport is mediate since names (which have no meaning if they are not involved in the argument) reflect—by imitation—only some particulars of ideas. Linguistic symbols are instruments for representing things which are only shadow in the eyes of the man imprisoned in the cave. Someone, formalizing this conception of the *segnico* process in three elements:

<div align="center">shadow (reference)</div>

<div align="center">name (symbol)   ideas (metaphysical reference)</div>

has pointed out its resemblance to the famous and controversial one by Ogden and Richards (cf. Calabrese, 1975).

Aristotle, who like Plato, dedicated an entire work to language (*De Interpretatione*), consciously used, for the first time, the word "symbol" in the modern sense of "reference to something else."

His idea of the symbol as the relationship implying three elements: "graphic symbols" or "phonics," the "affections of the spirit" (concepts as mirror images of things) and "things," is succesful to the point that the following reflection could be read as an attempt to take position with respect to its "model." It says: "The sounds emitted by the voice are the symbols of states of mind, and written words are the symbols of words emitted by the voice. Just as writing is not the same for all men, neither are spoken words the same, even though the states of mind of which these expressions are the symbols are identical for all, as are also identical the things of which these states are the images." (Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*.)

He admits the difference of the meaningful form from one language to another, but if the phonic meanings refer to state of mind, the graphic meanings refer back to them through the former. "Graphic" symbols are in effect, first of all, the meanings

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of meanings: from which come the privilege of the voice and the depreciation of the written word which characterize Western linguistic thought and which do not fail to cause harsh polemics and opposing propositions (Cf. Derrida, 1967).

Furthermore, in admitting the arbitrariness of sound and not of the "interior" mechanisms which regulate the construction of symbols, Aristotle authorizes a project of a universally valid grammar that reflects, in linguistic laws, the order of thought and the order of reality: a project which would be followed throughout the history of linguistic doctrine from the *modistae* to the *philosophes* of Port-Royal up to certain aspects of Chomsky's thought.

It is impossible here to enlarge upon other aspects which ought, however, to be underlined, such as his arguments against the sceptics who—in proceeding from elementary considerations about the function of language—find in the discourse the guarantee that one says a word to say one thing and one thing only; his research on the proposition; on minimal unities: the *onoma*, the *logos*, the *réma*, the *syndesmoi*, and so on.

STOICISM

Rather we shall speak about Stoicism: a fundamental moment in the history of semiotics and for some authors the "first semiology" in absolute. We shall take up on the one hand, with Julia Kristeva, the nature of its operations and on the other, certain lines of reflection, even current ones, which it has inspired.

A complex doctrine, started by Zinan of Cittium in an epoch of commercialization in the Greek economy, Stoicism makes of *logos*—thanks to the symbol seen as a proposition—a reality in itself recognizable as is the physical world: earthly or astral.

Thus from these beginnings, the semiotic problem is a logical one as well as gnoseological: it necessitates the study of the formal organization of discourse, while leaving open the question of the bond which ties this discourse to the material infinity which it designs, so that Julia Kristeva suggests that semiotic theory, more than the foundation of inductive logic, is no less than the projection: "Having formalized the structure of inductive syllogism, the Stoics projected it outwards, an outwards which they

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thus recuperate at the interior of syllogistic reasoning. The symbol was in fact the 'subterfuge' which could play the rôle of the retrieving agent, in the sense of systemizing, from outside." For the Stoics it is the *lekton* which renders the symbol possible. Complete if supported by a judgement, an axiom; incomplete if supported by a name; unlike the Platonic idea, the *lekton* does not reveal any essence, and does nothing but articulate the object and the sound and translate this articulation to the interior of the discourse, which itself is seen as a system of terms. The symbol of the Stoics thus establishes a relationship between two terms of which the one evokes the other only on condition that those terms are concomitant. The "resemblance" between the sound and the objects is no longer an identity but a concomitance, which means that the symbol removes reasoning from the terrain of immanence (where philosophical idea places it) to that of sequence (which supports logic and, with it, science)" (cf. J. Kristeva, 1970). Further, the Stoics avoid the question that the Sceptics address to them: why is the term X (consequent) the symbol of the term Y (antecedent). They empirically establish that X is the symbol of Y, that the two terms are necessarily bound together and they go on to set up a system.

This behaviour will be found throughout the development of semiotics and will not fail—as we shall see—to bring up, considering new theories of the unconscious and of the social praxis, some radical criticism which will end by opposing a classical semiotics considered as a "metaphysical systematics," a semiotics sensitive to the process of the production of symbols.

On the other hand this systematic whole (in which science can be established with its regularity, its laws and procedure of systematic translation from one language to another) has already had as adversaries the atomist-materialists of antiquity who, from Democritus to Epicurus—they themselves avoiding the philosophical problem of Being, proposed for the matter-language question a solution which would not have recourse to systemized Totality: their substance, composed of an infinity of atoms in transformation, finds its equivalent, through a network of simulacrums, in an infinitely atomized "language."

Another point of the Stoic doctrine, in addition to their fundamental notion, which merits our attention here, is the distinction

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of the types of discourse which it proposes(imperative, enunciative, interrogative, imprecatory, supplicative).

A distinction, that along with the passage of the linguistic symbol into the argument, opened a line of reflection which was to pass through Bacon (who supported the functional character of the discourse in a perspective of communication), Hobbes (who identified four functions of discourse) up till the most recent thought of Jakobson or the theory of speech acts of Austin or Searle.

PUTTING THE LOGICAL DISCOURSE INTO QUESTION

At this point, while recognizing the interest of Christian semiology (Saint Augustine) and scholastic semiology (at the dawn of medieval logic) in the research of the grammarians of the Encyclopaedia and of the Sensualists, we will limit ourselves to a simple anaphoric gesture, with respect to them, to indicate at least their existence. In fact, before passing on to more recent semiotics, it seems to us more interesting to dwell a moment on Leibnitz in order better to introduce the two paths with which modern semiotics was faced at a time when the limitations of semiotics inherited from the Stoics was denounced.

It is not certain that all of Leibnitz is the "Let us calculate!" which positivism has retained of him. Even if he is profoundly semiotic (the elaboration of mathematical formulae and their applications are inseparable; the production of formalism proceeds with the application of this formalism to the various manifestations of meaning), he invents a recurrent and arborescent systematicity of the orders (mathematical, logical, political, moral, poetic) and, using mathematicization, breaks up the framework of syllogism in which the Stoics would enclose semiotics by giving it the hitherto censured field of infinity. All that remains outside Logical Calculus, mathematical semiotics, is found in the other "orders" of the network of his semiotics, a network which resolves the contradiction between the system and infinity.

This same infinity whose taking in charge has favoured the fact that semiotics found itself, at a certain moment, in particular since Charles Peirce (1939), defender of a logic of relations, confronted with two paths:

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— either to collect in a single framework all the significant systems (science, art, language, etc.) for example by reducing them to a logical discourse (direction which was to dominate with Peirce, Husserl, and logico-positivism up until the linguistic school of Copenhagen and, even if somewhat differently, Greimas);

— or to pose the plurality of significant systems and, without renouncing "axiomatic desire," to try to analyze their "otherness" hoping that semiotics would not be understood as a unification of the sciences (a supreme meta-discourse, semiotics for Morris is "the organ of the sciences, in the same way that Hjeleslev foresees a semiotics of semiotics: metasemiotics, the last stage of this unitary construction of thought) but rather "as a plurality of analytical propositions about modes of meaning" (cf. Julia Kristeva, Bettetini, *et al.*).

SEMIOTICS: SCIENCE OR THEORY

But what is semiotics then? A science? A theory? A discipline? A generalized methodology?

It would be better, before proposing answers, to mention some of the definitions which have been given throughout its history.

"I call semiotics... the doctrine of the essential nature of the fundamental varieties of every possible type of semiosis" (Peirce, 1931-35); "One can thus conceive a science which studies the life of symbols at the centre of social life... we will call it semiology" (Saussure, 1916). "We feel the need for developing a comprehensive doctrine of symbols... We will call it semiotics... The sciences must call upon semiotics for an elaboration of concepts and general principles, assignable to their own problems of analysis of symbols. Semiotics is thus not only one science among others, but indeed the organ or instrument of all sciences." (Morris, 1946); "Semiology is still in search of itself. ... Its object is all the systems of symbols: images, gestures, melodic sounds ... which constitute if not languages at least systems of meaning." (Barthes, 1964); "Semiology can be defined as the study of processes of communication, that is of the means employed to influence others and recognized as such by the one one wants to influence." (Buyssens, 1967); "Semiotics is a discipline which studies all the phenomena of culture as systems

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of symbols... It is a study of social phenomena subject to mutations and restructurations... It is not a 'navigation in which the wash of a boat disappears as soon as the boat has passed,' but 'an exploration over land, where the tracks of vehicles and feet and paths marked out for crossing a forest modify the landscape itself and make it from that moment an integrating part, like codified variations' ... If it is a theory, it must be clear that in our perspective it presents itself as a theory which must permit a continual critical interpretation of the phenomena of semiosis." (Eco, 1975); "Semiology is the science which studies the general principles which uphold the functioning of systems of symbols or codes and which establishes their typology" (Prieto, 1968); "Translinguistics or linguistic criticism: beyond communication of meaning which is the subject of linguistics, semiotics brings to light 'this other scene' which is the production of meaning anterior to meaning ... Semiotics appears as the methodology of human sciences but this methodology does not create, it criticizes. Above all, it does not propose a unitary system, 'a system of systems' or universal language. It is not an instance of control but a place of expansion. It does not unify but multiplies, generates. In it, science itself comes into question as it presents as an ideological conception of science what would have science pure of all ideology. Semiotics is less a science than 'the place where knowledge does not stop'. One understands thus that Roland Barthes was able to say of this place that in it creation is destructive." (Kristeva, 1970); "One cannot speak of semiotics as if there were a meeting between the semiotic-object and semiotic theory which seizes it, informs it and articulates it... Semiotic theory must present itself, straightaway, for what it is, that is as a theory of meaning. Its first care will therefore be to explain, in the form of a conceptual construction, the conditions of the grasping and the production of meaning." (Greimas, 1979); "The semiotics of culture is conceived as the science of functional correspondence among the different systems of symbols" (*Thèse des relations de la IV Ecole d'été sur les systèmes de modélisation secondaire*, Tartu, 1970).

A simple reading of these quotations shows the multiplicity of projects, instances and problems which has characterized semiotics from the beginning, and also indicates how epistemological re-

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flection is active and discussion alive.

Semiotic research, in effect, cannot pass for a science set up in a theoretical system, conclusive and unified, even if one often strives to set up such a system.

On the other hand it is just this constant tension between "norms" and "other norms" (without speaking of anti-normative thought) that produces the multiple nature of scientific research today, in which the solutions of each new scientific programme can also be interpreted as solutions to the problems of other programmes (which comes from a sort of continual translation from one scientific programme to another), in which the manner of treating each problem always and inevitably starts from a conflict with preceding ways or those of other schools and tendencies.

In re-reading the definition of Umberto Eco one sees how semiotics often desires to be considered as a science, in the most correct epistemological sense of the term: a science which without renouncing its theoretical dimension wants to place in it the anti-ideological element of the "*criticità*" or the verification of its own metalanguage (this is the case in Greimas' school). It is thus a science which does not want to be considered as speculative but practical and empirical, and does not want to identify itself with science which, in renouncing its self-criticism, transforms its theoretical character into simple and absolute legality and thus its knowledge—codified to begin with its own paradigms—into simple noumenal objectivities and itself into an ideology.

This last characteristic has been strongly radicalized and generalized from the moment in which, going beyond simply descriptive intentions (often passively analytical) that characterize its beginnings, semiotics has aimed at an enlargement of its frontiers and tried to transform itself from a semiotics of the systems-discipline, aiming at the individuation of modes of meaning, at their syntactic verification in different texts and at the creation of their typology—into the science of the production of meaning (cf. Bettetini) if not always of the "meaning anterior to meaning" (cf. Kristeva).

With the introduction or deepening of new operative concepts (the theory of statement, the discursive practice which puts the

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symbol in crisis, and the order of the systems of meaning which it has at least relativized, etc.), but above all with taking control of the infinity of substantial material which some of the linguistico-structuralist semiologists do not take into consideration (cf. Greimas) and of the problem concerning the adequacy of methods employed in relation to the object to be known; of the "speaking subject" as well as instances of pragmatic order taking account of context, semiotics in the last few years tends to become, in its new currents, a critical science of all languages, scientific and semiotic. They appear on the one hand (as has already been seen in the definition of Julia Kristeva) "as the ideological conception of science which would have science free of all ideology" and, on the other hand, the fact that the semiotic model is not innocent, since it is supported by, and at the same time is, a theory and often an ideology, if the theory is actually foreseen and programmed by formalization as in Leibnitz' Encyclopaedia, formalization needs theory to specify what type of meaning must be systematized.

From these last movements one can easily recognize the matrix in anti-normative thought which, through Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, *et al.*, tends to avoid the bars of "logocentric" rationality (subject, argument, communication) as well as all totalizing systematization.

SEMIOLOGY OR SEMIOTICS?

It will have surely been noticed that in the definition given above these two terms appear: semiology and semiotics.

From the same Greek root (*semeion*: symbol), the former follows a tradition of linguistico-structuralist inspiration founded by Saussure, the latter a tradition of Anglo-Saxon logico-philosophical inspiration which goes back to Peirce and Morris, of whom we will have occasion to speak in the part dedicated to fields of application. There are, in effect, semiologists like Roland Barthes who think that each system of symbols can be brought back to laws of language.

But there are also other authors of opposing opinions who refer rather to the tradition of Peirce and Morris, as well as to the theory of information, to logico-mathematical in-

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struments (Prieto, for example, relies on the algebra of classes to describe the functioning of different systems and the organization of meanings), psychoanalysis, Marxism, *etc.*

At the time of the foundation of the International Association of Semiotics (1969) the term "semiotics" was preferred. Despite this institutionalization, however, the term "semiology", solidly implanted among the disciples of R. Barthes and, in part, those of A. Martinet, continues to be widely used and the opposition between the two terms is still seen as significant by some theoreticians.

We will pause here a moment to consider the terminologies on the one hand of Christian Metz, to introduce the term "semiotics," on the other of Greimas, to give an example of significant opposition.

Christian Metz, speculating on the relationship of the discipline of symbols—which he continues to call semiology and its branches—allows each branch a certain degree of autonomy and proposes to reserve for them the name semiotics (borrowing it from Anglo-Saxon terminology), which he prefers to 'semics' proposed by Buyssens. In his opinion semiotics is to semiology what each language is to general linguistics.

This seems to us to be among the terminologies now most often adopted. As far as Greimas is concerned, he sees the split between semiology and semiotics in their different options on the postulate of reciprocal presuppositions of the meaningful and the meant which, fundamental for semiotics, is in his opinion abandoned by the other which "leaves the things denoted to choose freely their own denoters." He also looks at the metalanguage (its creation: the first task of semiotics is on the contrary neglected by semiology which does not hesitate to make use of natural languages as well as simple paraphrases for the description of meanings of connotation) and furthermore the evaluation of rapports between linguistics and semiology/semiotics. While semiotics is considered as tightly bound to linguistic methods, unlike semiology, it objects to the mediation of natural languages in the process of readings of meanings belonging to non-linguistic semiotics (image, painting, architecture, etc.). For Greimas, "to recognize that there is no language without thought, nor thought without language, does not imply that one must consider

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natural languages as the only containers of "thought": the other semiotics, not linguistic, are equally languages, that is, meaningful forms. The "felt" and the "experienced," terms by which we designate, for example, the impression made on us by architectural forms, are nothing but the meanings of these forms, of which a constructed metalanguage, more or less adequate but arbitrary, is supposed to take account." (Greimas, 1979).

And Semanalysis?

This term was introduced into the field of semiotics by Julia Kristeva to denote a discipline which, by affirming the psychoanalytic "primacy of meaning" in a theory of meaning, strove to give new bases to semiotics. Wanting to construct and render operational a new scientific discourse, materialist and dialectic, but also to reject on the one hand the Cartesian concept of language and on the other the project of total formalization of meaning, Kristeva, in her book Σημειωτική (Research on Semanalysis, 1969) pointed out that the establishing of systems of symbols alone came from a structural study (a taxonomic procedure) but since aim was altogether too "naive," incomplete and metaphysical, the semiotician had to carry the systems which he was studying to their production by a subject ("the split subject") localized where typology was specific. Therefore, instead, of homogenizing the plurality of meaningful systems and of the world in a Meaning and limiting himself to the description of the effects of this Meaning he had to question the Meaning (and consequently the Being) in actualizing its process of production.

A transgressive application, entitled "poetic language" or text—whose status reminds one of Barthes' writing—illustrates the double rupture produced by the speaking subject: a rupture on the one hand with himself in his capacity as the Cartesian subject (*ego-cogito versus* split subject); on the other hand with all the codes of linguistic and social communication. His examples refer us to marginal meaningful processes like the carnival as well as to the texts of Mallarmé and, closer to us, Artaud, Joyce, Bataille, Sollers and now Céline.

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COMMUNICATION, MEANING, PRODUCTION

At this point, before passing on to present some of the fields in which semiotics attempts to exercise its attention according to its own modalities, we should consider for a moment three very precise points which have been, progressively, at the centre of its research (communication, meaning and production).

a) The study of communication deals with the concrete act which permits an exchange of information—through a signal—between an emitter and a receiver. It focuses on the global structure of an "action of speaking."

During the last few years this type of research has been retrieved by the pragmatic.

b) The study of meaning—defined by Roland Barthes as "the act which unites a meaning to the thing denoted, the action whose product is the symbol"—deals with the manner in which a symbol is structured (why does a symbol say what it says?) and with the symbol examined in its special relationship with a system.

c) The study of production, on the contrary, deals with the process through which a meaningful object is constructed and with the rôle which this construction plays in the final product. From this comes its interest in the discourse (and/or the discursive practice) rather than in the symbol itself.

Obviously the status of each of these points has been defined, either in terms of complementariness (cf. Prieto, Eco) or in terms of irreducible antagonism (e.g. production versus the meaning of "such and such" a group.

These remarks will, in our opinion, be useful for better understanding the multiplicity of approach which we will encounter in each field of application that we are now going to consider.

ZOOSEMIOTICS

A science the validity of which is still discussed, it studies systems of communication among animals, without excluding (even at the animal level) the existence of systems of meaning which, subsequently verified, could put in question the very notions of culture, society and intelligence. Attentive to the developments

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of paralinguistics and kinetics, which deal with the systems of non-verbal communication of men, zoosemiotics feels more and more the necessity to separate itself from linguistic models. The schema which it tends to adopt in the majority of present research is often analogous to that of Morris (1946) which proposed the subdivisions of semiotics into three orders: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic.

a) At the syntactic level, the identification of signals which manifest themselves in animals mainly when demonstrating ritual behaviour. Naturally it is the context which indicates if a movement is communicative or not. F. Mekinney (1965) analyzed very well the beating of wings in ducks.

b) At the semantic level, the verification of the hypothesis, that in zoosemiotics there is no ritualization that gives displays without functions (cf. John Smith, 1973).

c) At the pragmatic level, the deciphering of the meanings of a signal.

On the other hand, many studies are concerned with the individuation of systems of production of signals important for communication (signals of a chemical nature, often scented organic substances); visual signals (putting on guard, models of distribution in space through aggressive displays or fighting, optical stimuli produced by certain characteristics of the exterior aspect of males and females on sexual behaviour in appropriate circumstances).

Research on the acoustic communication of animals is also absolutely fascinating: among birds, among rabbits and rats which tap the ground with their feet; among owls and storks which rub their beaks, and so on, as well as the echo of solipsist animals (Griffin, 1973) which send out orientation sounds and, by listening to the echo, localize at a distance a large number of objects (bats and different mammals).

THE STUDY OF OLFACTORY SYSTEMS

A great network of communication and information of all kinds (cultural or ideological contribution, recurrent olfactory impressions, vital stimulations) functions according to the natural capacity of man "to smell" the different odours which he discerns,

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to classify them and to attach a particular social, ideological or cultural meaning to them. In fact odours have been culturally classified and we have thus the rejection of excremental odours, of the odour of sweat, milk, etc., and the invention of perfume.

Thus the diversion of the natural network of communication through the sense of smell from its principal function (it is known that for many animal species smell is a sign of recognition between sexes) and the end result in a classification of human odours on the basis of a social (and not vital) apprenticeship of the sense of smell. Odour is tabu as are all the primordial elements of communication: gesturing, touch, smell... Odour is disturbing. In the codes of *savoir vivre* in the 19th century, sniffing was totally banned from worldly relationships. Nasal secretions were even more "repressed" and "censured" than evacuation—the nose itself was considered an obscene organ, a phallic substitute. But even today, though we do not yet have a real semiotic of smell, the rôle which the sense of smell plays in the intersection of symbols (which is called communication) is widely recognized and material is not lacking to inspire research.

Tactile Communication

The precise and thematic statement of tactile communication would merit a book. Kisses, caresses, slaps and embraces have begun nevertheless to be studied, as tactile communication, as social behaviour and often as a communication network proceeding from a strong sexualization of meaning.

The Study of Taste Symbols

When a man eats, he rationalizes and culturalizes his natural impressions, perfects his methods of transformation of nourishment (cooking) and also culturalizes the way in which he nourishes himself (gastronomy); he has done so from the time his prehistoric ancestor could cook his food. The history of gastronomy could very well retrace the history of human evolution. As Claude Lévi-Strauss puts it, from nature to culture, from raw meat to roasted, then boiled, meat, there is an advancement of man towards technological progress. We owe to Lévi-Strauss also

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the definition of the basic meaning of taste unity: the *'gusteme,'* by opposing systems in the classification of information obtained from taste (sweet/salty, raw/cooked, roasted/boiled, etc.).

Apart from these works, no semiotic study of gastronomy has been established up until now.

PARALINGUISTICS

This studies all the facultative variations (tone of voice, pitch, sobs, sighs, murmurs) which are conventionalized. It also includes medical semiotics and the study of "drumbeat" languages (founded on a rhythmic syntax and destitute of a semantic density) and "whistle" languages (based on improvization of intonation) of some African tribes and American Indians.

KINETICS

Gesturing was—and still is—considered as a paralinguistic phenomenon endowed with an auxiliary function within the framework of intersubjective communication. This gesturing of accompaniment which has at times been reduced to the simple rôle of emphasis, has instead seemed definable as "the gesturing framework of statement". The categories which it can articulate are—according to Greimas—abstract categories which take the form either of modal articulations (assertion, negation, doubt and certitude, etc.), or statements of quantification (totalization, division) and of qualification (euphoric and dysphoric states), or above all phatic statements (acceptance and rejection, opening up to the world or closing in on oneself, etc.), which transform communication into an intersubjective communication.

Some have studied gesturing as a language in itself, applying the Saussurian formula of the "system of symbols": the symbols would be recognizable with the aid of tests of communication, the system would serve the ends of communication. Unfortunately the inventory of gestures of the North American Indians have not proved suitable for putting into systems.

Another approach to gesturing consists in starting, no longer from gestures considered symbols, but as gestural texts (dances, ballets, acrobatic feats, pantomime, etc.).

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What seems to us particularly suggestive is Greimas' intro-
duction of the concept of semiotic practices—in which the study
perhaps does not constitute anything but the prolegomenon of a
semiotics of action—which designates the semiotic processes recog-
nizable within the natural world and definable in a way compar-
able to discourses (which are "verbal applications," or rather,
semiotic processes inside natural languages). Semiotic appli-
cations appear as significant sequences of organized somatic be-
haviour whose modes of organization "can be analyzed as (nar-
rative) programmes whose finality is only recognizable *a poste-
riori.* Afterwards, one will use, as much as possible, the methods
and procedures of speech analysis. In this sense, certain conclu-
sions about rituals and ceremonials are quite decisive" (Greimas,
1979).

This concept covers, among others, gestural speech and prox-
emic strategies.

Naturally in this field just as in others there have been authors
who have forcibly contended that the gesture is irreducible to
meaning.

Julia Kristeva, for example, considers that the gesture is
a language only in the sense that it transmits a message within
the framework of a group: "more than the message itself it is
the elaboration of the message, the work which precedes the
constitution of the symbol (of sense) in communication." (1969).
In considering the practical character of gesturing, a semiotics
of the gesture would—in her opinion—as its *raison d'être,*
have to cross the structures code-message-communication and
oppose the pair communication/meaning, the narrow distinc-
tion between a general semiotics on the one hand and the theory
of production and certain postulates of the study of the uncon-
scious (the dislocation of the subject) on the other.

PROXEMICS

This is a project of the semiotic discipline which aims at
analyzing the usage that subjects make of space with a view to
meanings.

At a first glance it seems to be concerned with spatial relation-
ships (of proximity, of remoteness, etc.) which subjects maintain

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among themselves, and to the non-verbalized meanings which they draw from them. As Umberto Eco has stated, gestures and reciprocal position in space "become the elements of a system of meaning which society often institutionalizes to the maximum degree" (Eco, 1975).

"However, when it is no longer a matter of natural semiotics (that is of "real" behaviour in the world), but of artificial or constructed semiotics (theatre, liturgy, ritual, urbanism, etc.) and when one is led to foresee an instance of statement, the dispositions of the objects, quite as much as those of the subjects, become bearers of meaning" (Greimas, 1979). Thus proxemics must envisage both the movements of the subjects and the "displacements"of the objects, which are no less significant because they are spatio-temporal representations of transformations (between states). The consequence is, however, that it overflows the bounds which it traced for itself and is obliged to integrate into its field of analysis gestural languages as well as spatial languages.

Narratology

In a framework of specific reflection, that is narratology, semiotics, once again, has assumed under its own management a branch which was not yet the property of any discipline: the narrative.

What is a narration? What model can adequately represent it? With what methodological means can it be studied? These are the basic questions which have motivated the analysis of the narrative. One could add another question, perhaps relatively more recent: in narration what is the rapport between the narrative model and the discourse.

Narrative, in effect, has a very strange rapport with discourse; on the one hand it is a discursive fact (it goes beyond the sentence: it brings with it specific word acts; it insists on particular pragmatic elements like "once upon a time," etc.). On the other hand its trans-linguisticity (that is the fact that it can manifest itself in different expressions—like comic strips, cinema, and oral tradition—while being recognized as the "same" narrative) leads some authors to make an abstraction of the man-

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ifestation in order to postulate an immanent discursive level for all the texts which can manifest it (a position obviously contested by those who are more interested in the meaning than in that which is meant). This last is a great epistemological problem which we can only mention here.

The analysis of the narrative goes back to the "lessons" of the Russian formalists. We owe to Tomašeskij and to Skoskij the concepts of intrigue or plot, of the motif and *fabula*, just as we owe to Propp those of the function, model and rôle of the character, even if some of these concepts go back to the philologist Vešelowskij (cf. Avalle, 1977). Narrative speech was analyzed by the Russian formalists from an action point of view (the action of the characters and the rôle which they cover), a situational one (analysis of the parental and social ties of the characters) and more strictly linguistic since the classifications we use for the texts are only semantic categories.

The analysis of the sequences of a corpus of Russian fairy tales, collected by Afanasjev, and of the rôles which the characters play in them, leads Propp to define the "function" as "the acts of a character determined by the point of view of his significance for the development of events" (1928).

Thus, the rôle prevails over the character precisely beaause a character can have different functions. When, in the 1960's, Soviet semiotics was specially attached to a more profound knowledge of the internal mechanisms of the functioning of tales (E. Meletinsky and his following) and American and French ethnologists (A. Dundes; D. Paulme) were trying to interpret Propp's schema in view of its application to the oral narratives of Amerindian and African ethnic groups, French semiotics saw it from the beginning as a perfectable model, able to serve as a starting point for understanding the principles of organization of all narrative discourse.

First of all Greimas reduced the number of Propp's functions from 31 to 20 and in going beyond a distribution of functions between the characters, distinguished among them the actors from the actants. This is an operational type of question: "If the actors can be established inside a story-event, the actants, which are classes of actors, can only be so starting from the corpus of all the tales" (Greimas, 1966). Here it is a question of going from the figurative level of manifestation

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(the actors) to a more general and deeper plane: that of syntactic structures (the actants) in which the word itself has been borrowed from Tesnière and his elements of *Syntaxe structurale* (1959). In an earlier period, Greimas proposed a correlative system of 6 terms (addresser/addressee, subject/object, adjuvant/opponent), but today he thinks a reduction to only the first four terms is possible. To the actants are added a certain number of logical operations and modal and/or descriptive verbs (to be able, to want, to know, to have to, to do, to be, to seem, to have). These elements form a semantico-syntactic structure only if one correlates them with the elementary structure of meaning (semiotic square) and to procedures of aspectualization (time, space, actor); this leads to the construction of a generative view of the discourse which, integrated into a narrative schema which can be divided into four big periods, logically linked together (manipulation, competence, performance and sanction) and takes account of the narrative, thus constituting a narrative grammar.

It is evident that the model proposed by Greimas (even if it is *sui generis* is of a generative type and is opposed to numerous other taxonomic models which have been given for narrativity (e.g. that of Todorov). It has had remarkable success due to its forceful application to the most diverse discursive phenomena and not only in the field of texts in natural languages. It is enough, for example, to recall the application Michel de Certeau made of it lately in cartography.

At this point, in making our excuses to all those authors who cannot be quoted, before leaving this fundamental field of semiotics we would like to consider for a moment the research of Umberto Eco.

In his *Lector in fabula* (1979), in regarding the text as a multivalent *ipersegno* which may be analyzed on multiple levels, he is at the cross-roads of different sectors of research. In effect, he considers the narrative text as an ensemble of semantic, linguistic, pragmatic and rhetorical blocks which have to be analyzed with the instruments of corresponding disciplines and above all (this is the central point of his argument) he thinks that collaboration and cooperation are necessary on the part of the reader.

Thus, on the one hand, this position opens out onto the

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controversial question of interdisciplinarity in the semiotic field, and on the other onto a tendency of a pragmatic nature which is beginning to appear above all (but not only) in research in the sector of the plastic arts.

THE SEMIOTICS OF PASSIONS

Since 1978 semioticians from Greimas' school have attacked a domain hitherto—deliberately or not—kept to one side: that of feelings, of states of mind or of passions. An enterprise which, at least from the point of view of the promotors, "does not arise from either caprice or a foolish pretention, but is firmly located in the logic of a whole project, from which it draws at the same time its possibility and its justification" (Landowsky, 1979).

As Greimas reminds us, in retrospectively evoking the context in which the first elements of narrative grammar were put in place, the exclusion of the level of passion seemed at the outset indispensable on the one hand to found the project (as he understands it) on rigorous bases, on the other hand to escape from the surrounding literary impressionism and above all from the invading "psychology of characters" which dominates both "the discourse of the school on the texts" (*Littérature*, 7, 1972) and a large part of the criticism.

Today the situation has changed. And the interest from which the feelings and the "states of mind" of the subjects benefit (whether they be individual or collective is not important), as well as the reappearance of a vocabulary which arises from the domain of emotion (passionate rôles, emotions, passions,— "*pathemes*" as P. Fabbri proposed) do not mark a regression in semiotic theory with respect to what it wanted to be, but rather a new stage, completely foreseeable in the cadre of a work, which, having for a long time given privilege to "doing" in relation to "being" (to the point that one has very often longed for the creation of a semiotics of action), has finally called for a rebalancing.

The theoretical perfection presented by Greimas ("De la modalisation de l'être" in *Bulletin* n. 9. June, 1979 of the Research Group in Semiolinguistics of the Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales, Paris), as well as his introduction: "Pour

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un sèmiotique des passions" in *Bulletin*, n. 6 (June, 1978) show, in effect, how this problem grafts itself onto previous acquisitions and primarily onto preceding research consecrated to the modal component of actantial structures.

Finally the actants of the narrative—until then conceived as functional elements ("bundles of relationships") by definition "lacking an interior"—are seen dressed up in something which resembles a spirit. The being demands more and more attention from the semiotician who tries to describe the passions as "effects of sense".

It is easy to understand the plurality of the fields of virtual application of this theory of passions which is on the way to forming itself. The "passionate subject" which it is a question of rendering is not only the individual, solitary and unique, of the romantics or mystics; it is also the collective actant, subjected to economic "needs," to the great "fears" and "hopes" of politics, to the intermittences of a history made up of "glory" and "humiliation," of "revengeful passions and treaties of friend-ship," etc.

Let us underline, however, that the "passionate subject" here is not intended as either the transcendental subject or the split subject (of which Julia Kristeva speaks when she deals with the "speaking subject") but rather and always the syntactic subject singled out in a text which is in the process of being analyzed.

Having noted the fact that the field of "passions," far from being virgin ground, has for a long time been the occasion for a vast work of reflection, the semioticians of Greimas' school, in the first place, confronted several essentially philosophical approaches (from Plato to Freud, from St. Thomas Aquinas to Locke, etc.), to find, in this pre-existing knowledge, some means of testing, and if possible enriching, a small number of previously defined hypotheses.

Thus, little by little, the problems to be resolved have been determined: that of aspectualization for example (the relationship of the observer placed within the text to time, space, and to the actors), or another which seems tied to the former, of the intensity of "affects."

With the systemization of modal existence beside the concept of modal competence, the methodology is enriched, while involv-

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ing all the levels of the articulation of the theory of narrativity (of which I have already spoken): not only so-called semio-narrative structures (the passions-events being identifiable with modal and actantial purvenances which subtend them), not only the discursive structures (aspectualization, actodialization, seman-tization of the underlying syntagms), but also abstract structures at a profound level.

Let us remember in passing that no. 21 of the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*, is entirely devoted to passion, even if the contrib-utions are often more of an analytical than of a strictly semiotic nature.

THE SEMIOTICS OF CULTURE AND ITS TYPOLOGY

Particularly interesting in this sector is the current research of the Tartu School.

Soviet semioticians were among the first to theorize the study of all the different semiotic systems of language which, at various levels, constitute social modalities to give a form to the world: "secondary modalizing systems."

A recognized pioneer in the field of the typology of culture, Jurij Lotman, while remaining faithful to the Saussurian and formalist matrix, gives his attention to relationships with cyber-netics and the statistical studies of the mathematician Kalmagorov, as well as to the anticipatory thought of Backtine and to the re-search of Lévi-Strauss, Benvenist and Foucault.

His research proceeds through concentric spheres (e.g.: from the analysis of the mechanisms of artistic language to that of the culture which comprises it, in order to arrive at the general theoretical problem of the mechanism of semiotic systems.

At the centre of these spheres there is always "the picture of the world that men have had in different historical epoques," the world that men have had in different historical epochs," surrounds them," or as one sees in his studies on poetry, the mechanisms worked out for knowledge of himself and reality and to orient himself within it.

From this comes the fact that he has turned aside from his primary interest in the study of one of its particular languages (poetry) towards that of culture, understood as functional cor-

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respondence among the different systems of symbols given that all systems of symbols (myth, art, religion, folklore, etc.) function by supporting each other. However, since "*Le problème du signe et du système ségnique dans la typologie de la culture Russe avant le XX siècle,*" as he himself says, he does not pretend to explain "the whole organism of culture as such," but, more simply, he proposes to translate into semiotic language "the self-description of Russian culture in the different stages of its existence."

In effect "one of the most constant cultural traits which may be considered as a universal of human culture is given"—in his opinion—"by the exigency of autodescription" and the texts of "metacultural level" which are referred to may be viewed as grammars through which cultures describe themselves. At the time he was accused of eschatology—for having affirmed that with the end of the 19th century a new cycle of the formation of cultural models begins, characterized, even though with particular differentiations, by a "semiotic community"—he brought up a constant of the 20th century in "the tendency to replacement of self-descriptions of culture by descriptions of descriptions," that is by metatexts which do not have culture as their object but rather the mechanism itself of description.

Let us point out, to conclude, how, sensitive to the problems of contradiction between the synchronic and diachronic, static and dynamic, for a long time at the centre of the international debate on the possibilities of applying the methods of the exact sciences to the human sciences, Lotman constantly poses himself the problem of extrasystematic elements (contextual), of the necessity of describing them and of the possibility of doing it scientifically.

HISTORICAL SEMIOTICS

In France, today, this is represented by the research of Todorov who, in analyzing tevts on the discovery of America (by Christopher Columbus, Cortez, Diaz del Castillo, Las Casas, de Sahgùn, and Leon-Portilla), studies the encounter between two civilizations through the emission and reception of signs, thus aiming at the creation of a typology of relationships with others.

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SEMIOTICS OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS

In an age in which mass communications seems like the manifestation of a "domination" which deals with the social control of messages, semiotics, in one of its most revolutionary aspects, which Eco has justly called "semiotic guerrilla warfare," has offered and still offers the possibility of a tactic of decoding which permits the receiver, by putting into crisis the ideology whose relativity it shows, to rediscover their own liberty of response while not indicating it.

From the popular novel to the comic strip, from songs to the press, semiotics has found, in effect, an ideal field in this sector, where research on each message has often been able to coincide with the general one on codes, thanks to their extreme standardization and, thus, redundance and lack of originality (it is evident that this last easily cedes its place to adhesion to the rules and conventions largely accepted by everyone).

SEMIOTICS OF PAINTING

One of its classical problems is surely that of iconism in regard to which one finds two principal positions: the first, conventionalist, founded on the refusal an extentional semantics (cf. Eco, 1975; Sebeok, 1976), puts into discussion Peirce's definitions —which treat the "icon" as similar to its own object of reference —and the more "vulgarized" version by Morris. The second, materialist, defends Peirce's position both from a logical point of view and from a technico-scientific point of view.

During the last few years studies on the theory of perception have proposed greater prudence with regard to the polemics of the past.

Recently E.S. Reed (basing himself on Gibson) has suggested the existence of two types of denotation, one "natural" (e.g. that of land maps and maritime maps), and one "conventional," which is not legitimate except in deriving from a transformation of the former. Some authors have suggested that the ambiguity about the concept of resemblance comes from a metaphorical use of a term which, on its first acceptance, was derived from Euclidian geometry, but which has become the equivalent of "resemblance of form."

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For his part, Gibson has demonstrated that perception is not founded on form but rather on the recognition of invariables without form (Reed, 1978).

Leon G. Shiman arrives at similar conclusions. He has formalized a law of perceptive stability valid as much for static images as for those in movement and capable of explaining in natural terms even optical illusions (Shiman, 1978).

A greater prudence in definition is thus born also among the most passionate conventionalists. Gombrich himself seem to reconsider some of his statements on the conventionalism of visual representation in citing different aspects of perception as founders in representation (e.g. that of the map).

Let us remember in passing how this author, in referring us to Xenophon (from which he cites a passage of the *Memorabiles* which finds Socrates engaged in a dialogue with the painter Parrhasios and the sculptor Cliton: "How can one imitate that which has neither form nor colour... and which is not always visible?" asks Parrhasios. The answer: "Nobility and dignity, cowardice and servility, prudence and intelligence, insolence and vulgarity are reflected on the face and in the attitudes of the body, be it at rest or in motion") suggests a methodology which starting from Panovsky's iconology, proposes to study figurative art using the codes elaborated by kinetics for nonverbale communication.

One of the most important tendencies in the history of the semiotics of art is that of linguistico-structuralist Saussurian inspiration, lately rendered less naive and thus more sophisticated thanks to the introduction of the theory of statement and of discourse on the one hand and of the narratological theories of Benveniste and Greimas on the other (cf. Louis Marin).

—Is there in painting something which may correspond to the principle of double articulation?

—Can one apply Saussure's distinction between language and word to it?

—Is an application of the concepts of syntagmatics and paradigmatics possible?

—Can one consider a picture as "a bound and chained totality?"

These are the main questions that maintained, at the start, a methodology of that nature and which are still found today,

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even if in a more articulated manner, in the followers of Greimas, who are also the heirs of Saussure and Hjelmslev.

They aim at a visual semiotics (in as much as it is a semiotics of a text to be constructed) which is in opposition to the semiology of the image of R. Barthes and the 1960's both because of a preoccupation about the consequence with the postulates of a general semiotics (understood as the science which subsumes all the specific semiotics by their object), and the verification that it reaffirms the pertinence of the referent in order to define the nature of iconics. Having recognized that the image is as arbitrary as the linguistic statement, for them, "to say that an image is "abstract" of "figurative" is the interpretative performance of the one who looks at the picture, the image in as much as it is a statement presupposes an instance of statement which can be represented in an axis communication in which the sender, the maker of the statement, causes the receiver-listener to believe something, or more exactly makes him think that he can recognize such and such a figure from the natural world" (Jean-Marie Floch, *Bulletin* 56, 1977). Such a position in research has the advantage of putting the problem of resemblance within a more general on of the establishment of an "enunciative contract" (in the sense which A.J. Greimas intends). If to "cause one to believe that he can recognize something" is persuasive behaviour, it may be considered, "as one of the forms of cognitive behaviour, that is that, contrary to pragmatic behaviour (which manipulates objects of value), it exerts itself on knowledge relative to these objects" (*ibid.*).

Resemblance can be represented as a square.

Furthermore, given that a semiotic analysis postulates a system of building, it resorts to a hypothetic-deductive work based on the idea of the immanent existence of final unities (definable in categories equivalent to "phemic" or "semic" categories in linguistic semiotics) and on that of the existence of the elementary structures of the production of meaning. Thus the unities which semiotics must look for and construct systematically are not visual unities like lines, surfaces or colours but rather constructed and not manifested unities. The study is not concerned, for example, with the colours themselves, but with the "qualities" of these colours in the picture, which often constitute, in a way,

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a code of chromatic expression starting with which (logically and technically) the work was accomplished.

This methodology has not failed, naturally, to be the object of severe criticism even on the part of semioticians.

Particularly suggestive to our mind is the methodology of Jean Petitot for the propositions it succeeds in making on catastrophic models (cf. J. Petitot, *Saint Georges. Remarques sur l'espace pictural*, 1977).

On the other hand, today, there are two fixed points in semiotic pictorial research: the almost complete abandonment (because of failure) of research of the "specific" (which also characterized the cinematographic research of the 1960's) and the doubt that painting could be taken into consideration as a system.

The principal tendency of the moment is, in effect, a translation into a semiotic key of methods coming from the most disparate disciplines.

From this comes iconological semiotics, which has reference to Panofsky (cf. Shapiro); the, at first, psychoanalytical and today rather pragmatic semiotics of Jean-François Lyotard: he has passed from painting as a "libidinous apparatus" to seek the plastic activities of visual arts, which in making use of the theory of *jeux de langage* of Wittgenstein, make of the work a dismantled apparatus whose efficacy one can understand through pragmatism.

And further: a logical semiotics with Goodman, Black, Petitot (who—as has already been seen—takes up again the theory of catastrophe), Eco (and the theory of possible worlds); a historical and philological semiotics: this is the case with Lotman and Uspenskij who place the analysis of Russian icons within the project of a typological definition of Russian culture in the Middle Ages, just as with Segre, who analyzes the work of Leonardo starting with his *Treatise on painting* and his contracts with the commissioners of his work; a semiotics of pragmatic inspiration: this is the case of Umberto Eco of which we spoke concerning his position with regard to the narrative text.

After having examined the errors committed by xisual semiotics (the illusion of being able to treat visual phenomeno as if they were analyzable in symbols; the ingenuous and dogmatic application of the linguistic model, and finally confidence in a language already constituted and in use) he proposes, basing

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himself on the theory of the modes of production of the sign (cf. Eco, 1975) to examine each pictorial work as a text, which organizes the semantic universe in a different way each time, starting with an "Encyclopaedia," that is of the ways of systematizing knowledge at a given moment. He affirms that "the text is a semantic-pragmatic machine which demands actualization in an interpretative process, whose generative rules coincide with its own rules of interpretation. In a text, the author constructs semiotic artifices in anticipating the behaviour of the listener, in advancing them, in placing them within the tissue itself of their textual apparatus, in postulating them as a condition of the success (or of good fortune as one habitually says today) of his own act of communication" (cf. Eco, 1979).

Finally it is possible also to glimpse a semiotics which takes, (or has taken) account of certain of Julie Kristeva's methodological propositions such as: the concepts of semiotics (the pulsions and their articulation as well as the primary processes: displacement, condensation, rejection, etc) and symbolic process (both design modalities of the same process of meaning which constitutes the language); the refusal of the Norm, of the Model, of the Code; the concept of "text" seen as a production, a structuration rather than a structure, as a translinguistic apparatus in which different codes intersect; of the *"geno-text"* and *"pheno-text;"* of intertextuality; as "speaking subject," as the plurality of systems, of meaning etc. (cf. Schefer, Petitot, Damisch, etc.).

So as not to Conclude

It is evident that semiotics is not limited to the areas we have just introduced. We have not spoken of poetics, rhetoric, or semiotics of formal languages, of cryptology, of the semiotics of ideology, of cinema, or of architecture, etc.

Basically this is pust a small sample which seemed to us significant and indispensable to give an idea of the problems approached and of the metalanguages elaborated by this science, which, in full development, does not neglect—as we have seen—the epistemological debate.

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Silvana Paruolo
(*Salerno*)

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The present bibliography does not aim to list all works which have appeared to date on the subject of semiotics. We have recorded a certain number of works by the most quoted authors as well as works on general linguistics which we consider indispensable for a methodological approach to semiotics.

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