

Foreword

This is the second of a number of books in the *Semiotics, Communication and Cognition* series which feature translations of important work in semiotics that are, as yet, little known in the world of Anglophone academia. Supported in a unique funding collaboration between de Gruyter and the International Association for Semiotic Studies (IASS), ostensibly these translations focus on work from the Greimassian tradition. Hugely influential, the works from this tradition have not been well served, in terms of numbers, by translations. This initiative, in addition to earlier translations in this series of books by Lotman, Sériot and Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, is designed to ameliorate that situation, to make available key works in English translation, to encourage cross-fertilization in semiotics and to promote further dialogue, learning and intellectual semiosis.

We are delighted to present Gianfranco Marrone's *Introduction to the Semiotics of Text*, to accompany José Enrique Finol's master work, *On the Corposphere*, published by de Gruyter Mouton earlier as part of this initiative. The question may arise, however, regarding why an 'introduction' should appear in a series such as *SCC*, dedicated to publishing books on high-level semiotic research. Moreover, the question might be asked why there is a need for a book on the idea of the 'text'. Not only is the idea of the 'text' almost naturalized in semiotics and beyond, but we also have in English the supreme tracking of the trajectory of that idea in Marrone's own summation, the magisterial volume entitled *The Invention of the Text* (Mimesis, 2014).

The answer to these questions is that the current book by Marrone is one of those rare phenomena in publishing: the 'introduction' which does not oversimplify but, at every instance, opens the door to new arguments, new theories and new perspectives on both the familiar and the unusual. From the very first sentence of the first chapter, where the reader finds themselves in the emotional homeliness of the Summer holidays, there is also an interruption in the manner of the best classical semiotics, defamiliarizing the entire situation. "Why not use an example that is more serious, institutional, socially recognised", asks Marrone in discussing the rationale for this opening, such as "a poem for instance, or a novel, a film, an advert, a legal text, a newspaper article, a comic, or even (as we will do later) a painting?" (p. 1). It is clear that this volume, in the manner of Barthes' rarely fulfilled 1970 call for 'semioclasm', sees no area beyond the reach of semiotics. Gianfranco Marrone is one of the most productive analysts, even among Italian semioticians, with books on the semiotics of the city, of food, of branding, of laziness, of newspapers, etc., and with only his aforementioned 2014 book on the text, alongside the volume co-edited with Dario Mangano, *Semiotics of Animals in Culture: Zoosemiotics 2.0* (Springer, 2018), as yet translated

into English. The semioclasms in the current book is marked by a commitment to critique which constantly overturns not only the mainstream views of signification in society as evidenced in ideology and bland conformity but also in the limitations of unambitious forms of semiotics

Integral to this commitment is “a very general theoretical model known as the *generative path of meaning*” (p. 22). As Marrone puts it,

According to this theoretical model, the meaning of any text is articulated through signification according to levels of pertinence placed at various depths, in order of complexity and tangibility. As such, the most profound levels are abstract and simple, whilst the superficial ones are instead more tangible and complex (p. 22).

The most profound level of signification is to be found in *narrative structures*, with their anthropomorphic and fundamental layers. However, there are also structures at the level of enunciation which are to be negotiated: *discursivity* and *textualization*. Upon these are built the “great basic semantic oppositions such as life/death, culture/nature, euphoria/dysphoria, and so on” (p. 25).

This complex model is intimately related to the much-vaunted work of Greimas and his associates which is regrettably so seldom available to Anglophone scholars. So, no doubt readers will wish to rush forward to Chapter 3 of this volume where they can find a coruscating discussion of Greimas’ ‘semiotic square’. However, we would discourage this. In order to follow the developing logic of Marrone’s implementation of “a dialectic of the implicit and the explicit in generative terms” (p. 58) we would, instead, encourage readers to take this volume at a measured pace, paying due attention to the way in which the effortful sedimentation of layers of meaning might be uncovered bit by bit. The book certainly does not seek to close down analysis by presenting the Greimas model as an ‘application’ to be used in interrogating the ‘semiosphere’; rather, it opens to a future to be apprehended by way of the generative path, Greimassian sociosemiotics and Lotmanian distinctions on the relation of texts to what is putatively ‘non-text’.

Like all great introductions, this book facilitates further exploration by its readers, principally in the form of ‘further reading’ at the end of each chapter. Semiosis begets semiosis; but any reader of this volume will be aware that it is not unfocused and directionless. We are confident that readers will go away with a new appreciation and awareness of textuality and the role of the generative path in bringing about that appreciation and awareness.

As editors of this series, we would like to thank Gianfranco Marrone for his generous co-operation in the production of his own translation and expansion of his original volume, *Introduzione alla semiotica del testo*.

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