

Foreword

This is the first 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 pleased, then, to materialize this initiative with José Enrique Finol's master work, *On the Corposphere*. Like Marrone's *Introduction to the Semiotics of Text*, also forthcoming in this initiative, *On the Corposphere* is not a hugely theoretical and difficult tome. It does not feature a formidably technical architectonic which announces itself, grandly, as 'Theory'. Nor does it produce forebodings regarding the austerity of its analyses. Instead, it proceeds from the simple, but compelling, observation that "The body, completely and at all times, even in spite of itself, signifies" (pp. 16).

From this seemingly straightforward, semiotic premise, this book gives an impressive overview of the ways in which the body is implicated in medical, philosophical, artistic, geographical and psychological matters. "A body", writes Finol (pp. 240),

is always located in a space, in a place or in a territory, and thanks to its movements or its rest, lying down or sitting, sleeping or waking, looking and being observed, it constructs cartographic processes that allow it to guide itself in the natural or cultural world. It is in these cartographies, as part of its insertion in the world, where the body is dynamically related to the others and where, effectively, it constantly builds and rebuilds its identities.

In delivering on this wide- and far-ranging vision, Finol's book is that rare specimen in the current pantheon of academic writing: an expansive charting of the territory based on a solid command of the literature, drawing in broad strokes which nevertheless evince the weight of heavy scholarship. This is semiotics in the best of the old style, taking the cream of material culture's offering, along with anthropology, to provide a map of corporeal signification. For the traveller in these territories, it is a map which promotes great confidence, providing also a tool for cartographers to come.

Having said that this volume is not forbidding, despite its range, it should be emphasized that it is still a work of incisive, disciplined analysis. It systematizes its object while retaining a strong sense of its diffuse nature and many permutations. It divides up its object into different forces for our understanding. In the tradition of Greimassian semiotics, it identifies and lays out isotopies that may not otherwise have been identified. Taking the generative-transformational model proposed by Greimas, it nevertheless demonstrates one of the key characteristics of such cultural semiotics: that those who would implement it need to be comprehensive in their intellectual ambitions and embrace the varicoloured complexity and interconnectedness of semiosis. True to this ethos, the proper name ‘Greimas’ does not even get a mention until Chapters 5 and 6; nevertheless, his devotion to scholarship is omnipresent.

As editors of this series, we would like to thank José Enrique Finol for his generous co-operation in the production of this translation and expansion, with the help of translator David Enrique Finol, of his original volume, *La Corpusfera*.

Paul Copley and Kalevi Kull
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