Semiotics and Visual Communication II

Semiotics and Visual Communication II:

Culture of Seduction

Edited by

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

to Aspasia, Orestis, Raphael, Achilleas
&
all the graphic warriors

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PREFACE

The chapters in this book consist of selected papers that were presented at the 2nd International Conference & Poster Exhibition on Semiotics and Visual Communication at the Cyprus University of Technology in October 2015. The great success of the first conference and the first edition of the publication of its selected proceedings in 2014, encouraged and excited us to establish the practice, presenting an opportunity that at once brings together researchers and designers to explore and share their ideas, and also places Cyprus on the world map of Semiotics, Graphic and Visual Communication.

The current articles investigate the theme of the Conference, *Culture of Seduction [the seduction of culture]* and look at Seduction as in "deception", not sexual enticement, but as a mechanism of attraction and appeal which has often been the case in many communication strategies and approaches of mass and popular culture. In a "seduced" post-economic crisis environment, the Semiotic aspects and power of "seduction" within visual communication that persuade the viewer to act by positive, negative or perhaps manipulated and directed means, open up a space in which extreme strategies become apparent and occasionally pose ethical problems. From the avant-garde era to our contemporary period, there is a spectrum of activity whereby researchers, artists and visual designers are obliged to live and create in a situation of great ambivalence. Seduction has historic and increasing agency in visual communication—the urgency to entice viewers is ever more powerful in difficult economic times, in an increasingly hyper-real world—and designers are led to become exceedingly complicit in its strategies. The articles examine from a semiotic perspective how verbal (text/typography) and non-verbal (images, sound, music) signs work as a synergy to construct "seductive" messages in visual communication, as well as raising questions about who the "seducers" are and who the "seduced" are. The articles cover a range of approaches from current strategies of economic visual communication, political propaganda, translation, public spaces, tourism, advertising, packaging, as well as strategies of visual identity, fashion and graphic communication, around the specific theme from a variety of perspectives.

Speaking from within a wider spectrum of semiotic approaches, the authors offer an insightful look at cultures of seduction in the context of visual communication. **Paul Cobley** critically assesses the semiotics of visual culture and investigates the grounds on which to consider nonverbal communication as the subject of repression, ontogenetically and phylogenetically, asking whether such repression might be responsible for the character of humans' visual culture. **Miltos Frangopoulos** uses specific and pertinent examples under the categories of Text, Image, and Sound to share his thoughts on seduction and persuasion by underpinning one's "communicative messages", expanding, embellishing and adding further layers of "emotive signs", which, however, in the current setting increasingly carry an intimation of violence, more threatening than seductive, perhaps pointing to what may be a collapse of meaningful communication. **Göran Sonesson** explores communication as a kind of collaboration that adopts rhetorical and hermeneutic aspects to all acts of communication and shows that translation is a double act of communication. He also discusses certain rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of the act of communication, and investigates the nature of propaganda as a goal of translation. **Jeff Leak** focuses on the power of projected messages and the way that they affect public spaces to influence and seduce an audience. **Vanessa Price** evaluates qualitative research and develops a theoretical framework through which Semiotics is used to critique the role of graphic design in creating and carrying commodified visual messages in everyday environments. **Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan** analyses the way in which social actors are placed and how they act discursively (strategic positioning) in one of the most important forms of political communication: the final debates of presidential elections in Romania. He shows how a functional analysis of political discourse can be regarded as an instrument that helps diagnose the discursive behavior of social actors during televised debates, the civilisation of dialogue in local political life. **Evangelos Kourdis** and **Loukia Kostopoulou** address cases of translation of French film posters into English and Greek, and look at examples of interlingual translation of film titles that is followed by translation or adaptation of the visual message of the film poster in an effort to become localised and adapted to the local community's perception. **Eirini Papadaki** investigates how postcards in the Greek island of Crete are used as influential destination icons to seduce the tourist gaze, either as a souvenir or as a collection item that transforms the public into private and develops feelings of possession and superiority. **Aspasia Papadima, Evripides Zantides** and **Evangelos Kourdis** explore how the Greek Cypriot dialect is used in the linguistic messages of print

advertisements as a seductive mechanism for advertisers to promote their products and services in the local market, reflecting on connotations of locality. **Gregory Paschalidis** examines the seduction strategies employed in contemporary nation branding campaigns. Based on the analysis of a diverse corpus of national logos, he demonstrates how nation branding, while drawing from the semiotic resources of national iconography, represents a novel approach to national self-representation coded in terms of an equally conventionalised 'cosmopolitanism of attractions''. **Eleni Sykioti** and **Christina Tsigka** investigate the synergy of the visual and acoustic ways (images, language, music, sound) in electronic advertisement, taking as a case one commercial of the legendary Greek airline company, *Olympic Air* and reveal the conventions on which the narration is built. **Ifigeneia Vamvakidou, Nikos Fotopoulos, Andromachi Solaki, Xanthippi Kapoulitsa** and **Lazaros Papoutzis** offer an intensive study of a corpus of Greek national posters for tourism in the field of historical and cultural studies, and by using hermeneutic and semiotic analysis, reveal cultural representations. **Nicolas Cambridge** examines from both a creative and critical perspective, a number of challenging images of fashion imagery and discusses the inversion of the *Thanatos-Eros binary* as being derived through a semiotic analysis of identified visual narratives. **Jack Post** studies and evaluates, through a semiotic analysis, the design process of the rebranding of Chemelot Campus. He argues that the analysis can only be done fruitfully when the analysis is embedded in a context sensitive and situational (ethnographic) approach. **Vicki Thomas** looks at toy packaging design, and through a historical approach examines the visual language used to extract how and what toys communicate through their design, packaging and presentation.

The interdisciplinary nature of the book provides a platform for further discussion and research, broadens the scope of semiotic, graphic and visual communication thinking, and challenges the boundaries of various disciplines. Hopefully, this thematic series of publications will continue to contribute to research, history, theory and practice in the discourse of Semiotics, Graphic and Visual Communication.

Evripides Zantides
Lemesos, 2017

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Chapter One:

Theoretical Aspects of Seduction in Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Is Visual Culture a By-Product of the Repression of Nonverbal Communication?[*]

Paul Cobley

Semiotics and "visual culture"

There is a common belief that semiotics is a matter of carrying out a micro-analysis of an artifact and then extrapolating from the findings some general observation about the artifact in question or the class of artifacts. There is some veracity in this because, from the early twentieth century, including the spread of interest in Saussure's *Cours*, the benefits of close reading started to be enjoyed across the human sciences. Yet, one of the characteristics of semiotics in its more contemporary guise is not so much micro-analysis, but the act of stepping back to enable a broader view of how signification is organised in terms of media, modes, genres and species-specific semiosis. One manifestation of this contemporary programme has been the semiotic impulse to investigate "the visual", rather than just "visual artifacts". Of course, something of the flavour of this has been offered outside of semiotics in respect of the impetus to identify "visual culture" as a phenomenon characteristic of the contemporary social formation.

Developing in the 1990s, a number of commentators posited a pictorial, rather than "textual", view of the world, where the "world-as-text" was thought to be replaced by the "world-as-picture". In those heady days of the publishing venture known as "postmodernism", many promoting "picture theory" did so because they were identifying the new epoch as one which was dominated by the image (for example, Mirzoeff 1999; Mitchell 1994, *inter alia*). Possibly in an attempt to make this emphasis on the visual seem new, it was married with the masochism of French theory, particularly Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), to

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promote a refreshed version of what Martin Jay (1993) has identified as the "denigration of vision". Fredric Jameson's book, *Signatures of the Visible* (1990: 1-2), is exemplary in this respect: "The visual", he writes,

> is *essentially* pornographic, which is to say it has its end in rapt, mindless fascination; thinking about its attributes becomes an adjunct to that, if it is unwilling to betray its object; while the most austere films necessarily draw their energy from the attempt to repress their own excess (rather from the more thankless effort to discipline the viewer). Pornographic films are thus only the potentiation of films in general, which ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body.

This somewhat unequivocal assertion might come as a surprise to fans of *A Chump at Oxford* (1940) or *Rashomon* (1950), but it is a statement that is typical of the "ocularcentrism" that Jay sees in French thought and its epigones. Its masochism derives from the fact that it simultaneously delineates the walls of a prison from which there is no escape and nowhere to escape to—much like the narrative of the television series, *The Prisoner* (1967)—while longing for the outside world whose existence beyond its walls it has already denied. It matches the way Foucault's thought is torn between the omnipotence of all-pervading discursive formations and the longing for an anarcho-libertarian domain that the concept of discourse decrees is a figment of the imagination (Eagleton 2003; Levin 1997). The shadow of the *Panopticon* (Bentham 1995; Foucault 1977) is constantly cast over "visual culture" as a reminder of the supposed prison of almost total, controlling surveillance that humans have lived under since the Enlightenment. The "visual" is seen as an implacable technology, its avatars mere versions of Michael in *Peeping Tom* (1960).

Contrast the position of "visual culture", post-structuralism and ocularcentrism with that of the veteran neonate researcher, Daniel Stern. Recalling the birth of his interest in the ontogenesis of human communication, he writes (1998: 4)

> When I was two years old, I was hospitalized for many months for an operation that was complicated by an infection. In those days, antibiotics were not yet very effective and hospital stays could be quite lengthy. In addition, visiting for parents and family were fairly limited. At that age, I spoke only a few words and could understand very little of what was being said. But it was important for me to have a sense of what was happening. Like any child in that situation, I tuned into what people did, how they moved, what was happening on their faces and how they said what they said. In other words, I was paying attention to the music but not the lyrics,

> as these were beyond me. In short, I became a watcher and reader of the nonverbal. A lot depended on it.

Apart from the heart-rending nature of this account, in which the poor child is left to his own resources and proves most resourceful, modestly recalling later in respect of the nonverbal that "A lot depended on it", the quote indicates the first repression of nonverbal communication with which this study is concerned. The school of denigration of vision and its fellow travellers equate the visual predominantly with photographs and electronic media, entertaining the occasional foray into painting and other art-related practices. What they neglect—preposterously—is that visual technologies are just one minuscule portion of the entire sensory channel of sighted creatures. Of course, visual technologies can be argued to be extremely important as a crucial political battleground, particularly if they can be proven to influence or shape the way humans see. Yet, to forget that understanding the visual requires stepping back to examine how it functions for all sighted species effectively amounts to a repression of nonverbal communication. What Stern depicts in this quote is a world dominated by nonverbal communication, one in which vision is essential to survival and, tellingly, vision does the job adequately but by no means omnipotently.

The visual and other channels of communication

Necessarily, "visual culture" and the ideas that go with it—which seem quite old-fashioned now yet which have not vanished—have been set up as a "straw man". Nevertheless, they provide a contrast with a semiotics of vision, by which is not meant an apolitical, text-centred and self-centred hermeneutic, but an assessment of the role of vision in human semiosis. Thus, on the one side, there is a tradition and trajectory of thought in which discourse and the tyranny of vision is posited, along with an anarcho-libertarian hinterland that should not, according to that trajectory, exist. On the other side, there is a fast-developing trajectory in which vision is considered in terms of its embeddedness in an entire field available to the sensory channel of sight, a field that is highly diversified, features related forms and content and, through those widest of relations, offers the opportunity to determine how a species "sees". That field is not characterised by well-honed machines in a functionalist apparition of complementarity and control. Instead, it is riven with the potential for miscommunication and apprehends reality in only a fragmented way. It is a far cry from panopticism.

The field of nonverbal communication has been sufficiently variegated to have garnered some attention and in recent decades, despite the historically and institutionally determined dominance of linguistics and the study of verbal communication, has even managed to fashion a place for itself in the academy (see, for example, Hall and Knapp 2013). In the popular imagination, nonverbal communication occupies a prominent position through the unfortunately designated "body language". The demotic understanding of "body language", promoted since the 1970s in business manuals and popular guides (e.g. Fast 1970), is tacitly based on the notion that bodily communication among humans is highly codified and subject to a kind of "grammar". Sebeok (2001) shows that this assumption is mistaken and argues that, like terminology such as "the language of flowers", "ape language" and so forth, the phrase "body language" is to be avoided. When semioticians refer to nonverbal communication, they are acknowledging the trafficking of signs *within* an organism or *between* two or more organisms (Sebeok 2001). In humans, bodily communication comprises a number of elements. The most commonly recognised is manual communication or gesture (Kendon 2004). Yet there is also 'kinesics' (Birdwhistell 1970), made up of bodily movement and posture. As well, there is 'proxemics' (Hall 1966), focused on the orientation, proximity and distance of bodies as a matter of communication. These key features of human nonverbal communication, combined with general communicative attributes in the field of vision, have given rise to a number of media forms. These include mixed forms, such as theatre, with its combination of speech, nonverbal communication (bodily and in set design/lighting, etc.) and verbal communication. Film, television and, especially opera and other media that also incorporate music are supremely mixed forms (Sebeok 2001). Yet, when making such observations, it is easy to forget that nonverbal communication inheres in the visible—or, as the ocularcentrists forgot, the visible is inherent in nonverbal communication—with respect to these media. The mise-en-scène of a film such as *Alien* (1979), featuring the justly famous interiors created by H. R. Giger, arguably carries out a large proportion of the communication in that narrative. The set design of a television soap opera such as *Eastenders* (1985-) no doubt communicates, visually, much of the vaunted "realism" of that particular televisual form.

Yet, finding this kind of integrated discussion of media, nonverbality and the field of the visual is not easy. To the best of my knowledge, one has to return to the classic, largely forgotten, text by Ruesch and Kees: *Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations* (1956). The authors set out their stall immediately, stating that

> the theoretical and systematic study of communication has serious limitations, inasmuch as scientific thinking and reporting are dependent upon verbal and digital language systems whereas human interaction, in contrast, is much more related to nonverbal systems of codification. Although most people are familiar with the rules that govern verbal communication—logic, syntax and grammar—few are aware of the principles that apply to nonverbal communication. (1956: n. p.)

As they argue, much of the history of nonverbal communication has not been geared to the same kind of striving for representation that is characteristic of verbal and digital systems. As far as the visual arts were concerned, literal representation was hardly on the agenda before the Renaissance. Well into the Enlightenment, it was photography that provided the possibility, for the first time, of disseminating information at length nonverbally. Clearly, for Ruesch and Kees, the development of scientific thought on the back of writing and then printing in the Enlightenment has served to place further emphasis on the verbal/digital incarnation of knowledge, such that scientific knowledge of human communication has remained depressingly scant (1956: 12). Even with the putative increase of nonverbal semiosis in large amounts, from the arrival of the still photograph through moving pictures through Web 3.0, the idea that "culture is becoming more visual" (e.g. Ibrus 2015) would probably cut no ice with Ruesch and Kees. The problem they identify is also connected to the way that disciplines and subject areas develop in the academy.

What is known as "the visual" has had a strange, but not uncommon, institutional predestination. As Machin (2014: 5) notes,

> where a new realm of investigation is 'discovered' it can then herald a new flurry of activity that can, to those outside looking in, appear rather arbitrary. New network leaders will emerge in this new pioneering area of research. New terminologies will appear to account for the very same things already documented decades before in a different field… In my own field of linguistics, the specialism of 'multimodality' has over the last decade seen linguists draw models from their own field to attempt to identify the building blocks of the visual: a visual grammar. But it soon became clear that these scholars were largely ploughing the same furrow as over a century of semiotics, yet still not asking very basic and important questions about the nature of visual signs that had long been standard fare in this long standing tradition.

Elkins (2003; also cited by Machin 2014: 5-6) in particular has been outspoken about the spurious limitations placed on his field, noting the

fixation on a clique of theorists and a constrained set of interests that do not proceed far beyond websites, some aspects of television and still photography. Yet, the shortcomings of the "visual culture moment" in the academy remain a straw man because, as Machin rightly argues, they are actually symptomatic of the way many fields develop in the nexus of universities, publishing and higher education policy. The more serious problem is that the growth of new knowledge is stymied by disciplinary protectionism and the wilful neglect of holism. Machin (2004: 6, 9) adds,

> What really is the justification and use in analysing the visual apart from other modes of communication, from language, sound and materiality? Most of the communication we come across happens in different modes simultaneously... [I]n fact a wider view of visual communication is one which does not disconnect it from other modes of communication and is in fact the very study of human action and culture.

Effectively, what Machin calls for here is an approach and a field with the same disciplinary principles that Ruesch and Kees adumbrate in their classic work. One name for this would be "semiotics of vision" or "visual semiotics" or, at the very least, "semiotics".

How would such a "visual semiotics" proceed? Well, the name would only be illustrative because it would seek to restore the connection of the visual to other modes of communication. I would argue that the first step should be backwards, to facilitate a wider view. Thomas A. Sebeok thought in precisely such broad strokes and outlined the channels for signs or the channels in which communication takes place:
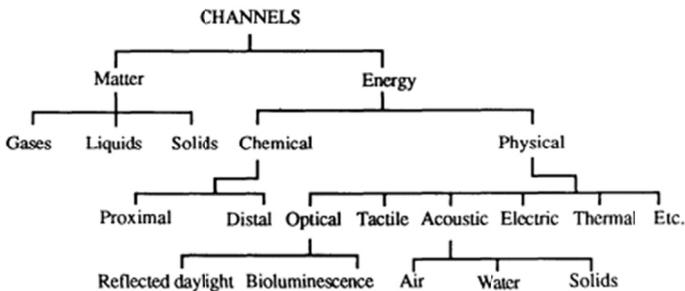
Fig. 1-1: (Sebeok 1991: 27)

The "visual" can be found in the optical channel, a physical manifestation of energy which is facilitated by light. The other channels (tactile, acoustic,

etc.) are facilitated by other phenomena in the universe. A visual semiotics would not only apprehend the location of the optical channel and its relations; it would also be compelled to ask about the Umwelt that was being invoked in the study of vision, acknowledging that humans are not the only sighted creatures and that the commonalities between the vision of humans and non-human animals need to be considered along with the differences. Hence, Sebeok also indicates the sources of signs:
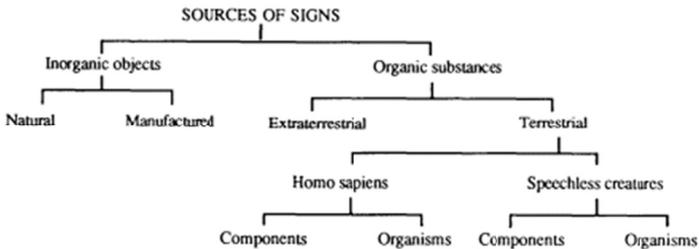
Fig. 1-2: (Sebeok 1991: 26)

The clear division here is, first, between organic substances and inorganic objects; then, second, between the speechless creatures and *Homo sapiens*. What unites the latter two, however, is that they communicate from organism to organism, but also within organisms. Visual semiotics, then, would be concerned with visual artifacts in an ecology of component/organism semiosis. Or, to pitch the matter in a more digestible prose, visual semiotics would look at how visual artifacts operate in association with the range of communication around them, as Machin proposes. This does not mean that the most fruitful work in "pictorial semiotics" (Sonesson 1989) is to be abandoned; however, the *pars pro toto* fallacies of "visual culture" and the like are to be regarded with suspicion.

The repression of nonverbal communication

Now, it is possible to return to the main thesis of this research: that nonverbal communication—which is in the optical channel—is the subject of (a second) repression. This repression takes place both *phylogenetically* and *ontogenetically*. The human *Umwelt* can be understood as being derived from an innate "modelling" device by which humans can differentiate the world. We use our sensorium in a comprehensive fashion

which, *in toto*, far surpasses that of other known forms of life, even though known forms may have individual components of their senses (for example, ability to hear high-pitched noises) that are superior to ours. Sebeok (1988) shows that this species-specific modelling device, evident in humans since *Homo habilis* circa three million years ago, preceded and is the basis of the verbal encoding and decoding that developed with *Homo sapiens* (around 300,000 years ago). In the previous millennia, communication had been carried out among humans by exclusively nonverbal communication; verbal communication, speech and writing—syntax-based linear communication or externalised verbal communication—were exapted (Gould and Vrba 1982). That is, rather than being *adapted* because they offered an evolutionary advantage, linear communication and speech came into use haphazardly, probably out of convenience and experimentation.

Human modelling as such is unique among the modelling of all the animals, not simply because it has the syntax which underpins the language faculty, but because it features both nonverbal and verbal communication (Sebeok 1988). As Terrence W. Deacon (1997: 5) puts it, we are "apes plus language". Early humans' possession of a mute verbal modelling device featuring a basic capacity for syntax allowed humans to assemble standardised tools. It is this, strictly, that defines language rather than the chatter that emanates from humans or the attempt to transfer messages. For much of hominid history, circumstances had not yet arisen whereby it was expeditious, or humans were in agreement, to encode communication in articulate linear speech. Thus, for Sebeok (1988), there are sign systems (nonverbal communication) which, in terms of evolution, are antecedent to, and give rise to, externalised linguistic sign systems. Nonverbal communication is recognised by Sebeok as an adaptive communicational capacity possessed by all living beings. It is, in fact, only hominids across the whole animal kingdom that possess two mutually sustaining repertoires of signs: the zoosemiotic nonverbal and the anthroposemiotic verbal.

Yet, in the development of this modelling, something must be lost with the movement to one mode from another. In the theory of natural selection, it is clear that what gets lost are the species, or species members, who do not adapt fit features to the evolving environmental imperatives. Biosemiotics, on the other hand, has been critical of the ruthless mechanism of the theory of natural selection. Contra neo-Darwinism, it posits "semiotic freedom". For example, Hoffmeyer, refers to experiments where scientists placed artificial sweeteners rather than glucose in the environment of a chemotactic bacteria cell. He writes (2010: 164),

In such cases, it seems appropriate to say that the cell misinterprets the chemical signs of its environment. Such misinterpretations are dangerous, and natural selection will favor any solution that helps the organism to better interpret the situations it meets. Indeed, selection would be expected to favor the evolution of more sophisticated forms of 'semiotic freedom' in the sense of an increased capacity for responding to a variety of signs through the formation of (locally) 'meaningful' interpretants. Semiotic freedom (or interpretance) allows a system to 'read' many sorts of 'cues' in the surroundings, and this would normally have beneficial effects on fitness. Thus, from the modest beginnings we saw in chemotactic bacteria the semiotic freedom of organic systems would have tended to increase, and although it has not been easy to prove that any systematic increase in complexity, as this concept has traditionally been defined, has in fact accompanied the evolutionary process, it is quite obvious that semiotic complexity or freedom has indeed attained higher levels in later stages, advanced species of birds and mammals in general being semiotically much more sophisticated than less advanced species.

This semiotic freedom characterises the scaffolding process in evolution, where the organism "builds" on its relation to the environment. The term "scaffolding" was originally developed in relation to young children's building on already mastered skills in the process of learning. In biosemiotics, Hoffmeyer further developed the concept, generalising it to cover the network of semiotic interactions connecting an organism with its Umwelt, facilitating its processes of perception and action: The scaffold is not taken down when the building behind it is finished; rather, the scaffold *becomes*, over time, part of the building itself. Many organisms do not simply exist in an unchanging, neutral environment; rather, *their* activity to some degree shapes and changes their Umwelt so that its affordances more easily allow the organism to enact its activities. Such scaffolding invariably has semiotic aspects: the piecing together of parts of scaffolding produces particular reproducible "meaning" for an organism as it takes part in the functional cycle of *receiving* signs appropriate to the sensorium and *producing/circulating* sensorium-appropriate signs. As Hoffmeyer (2010: 164) explains, the process of scaffolding, traversed by semiotic freedom, contains something akin to a "goal":

Allowing for semiotic freedom in the organic world significantly changes the task of explaining emergent evolution, because semiotic freedom has a self-amplifying dynamic. Communicative patterns in assemblies of cells or individuals may often have first appeared as a simple result of the trial-and-error process of normal interaction, and may then endure for considerable periods of time. If such patterns are advantageous to the populations (cells or organisms), they may eventually become scaffolded

> by later mutational events. Through this 'semi-Baldwinian' mechanism, the evolutionary process will enter a formerly forbidden area of goal-directedness.

Thus, the semiotic freedom of organisms is responsible for its survival, for its evolution and contributes to changes in its environment.

Yet, such descriptions, in presenting a functional process, often run the risk of overlooking possible impediments or by-products of forward-looking mechanics. What about those occasions when one choice is made over another? Something has to be lost or left behind. Repression has to be considered in biosemiotics, it seems to me, because it is part of agentive action. Semiotic freedom necessarily involves choice of one course rather than another (Cobley 2010, 2012). In studying such freedom, there is often a need to investigate the choices that get rejected (and why), particularly as they may later become choices once more or there may be opportunities for the organism to revisit or relive the moment of choice. In the case of the phylogenetic development of communication, it is clear that the "choice"—exaptation—of linear speech for human communication was significant. By no means did it eclipse nonverbal communication; nor did it demote nonverbal communication to a subsidiary role in real terms; but it did ensure a bias against the nonverbal and a disregard for it that effectively banished much nonverbal communication to a realm that is not conscious in the way that it was for our earlier hominid ancestors.

A related fate can be seen with respect to ontogenetic repression of human nonverbality. In infancy, the child is almost solely reliant on nonverbal signs. Its Umwelt is attuned to verbal signs and such signs will certainly circulate there; but those same kinds of signs will not yet emanate from the child her/himself. For the infant, as Stern (above) suggests, a lot depends on nonverbal communication. Around 18 months, however, the child with an expected development rate will start to use speech and syntax in an elementary fashion. It is for this reason that children's development is usually tested at that time: in Europe, this principally takes place through the public health system. The results of such tests may enable a decision to make an early intervention in those cases where the child is not developing as expected, indicating, through this symptom, auditory or cognitive problems. In my experience, the tests administered at 18 months in the UK are geared to literacy, grammar and syntax. The child's powers of concentration are observed, while the main focus is on the child's ability to understand words and, above all, link them in sentences. Yet, the following are *not* tested or observed: skills in drawing, gesturing, singing, sense of body space, rhythm, powers of mimicry, etc. The unpredictable nature of young children's behavior and

attention will mean that at least one of these skills will invariably manifest itself even in the controlled circumstances of the test. Yet, such skills are not the focus of the test or taken as indicative of cognitive potential.

That infant innate powers of nonverbal communication do not simply disappear from 18 months onwards is powerfully affirmed by the work of stage magicians. In sleight-of-hand, *legerdemain* and *prestidigitazione*, they pull off tricks that, by virtue of their seemingly occult mechanisms, amaze onlookers. Yet, such tricks are almost totally dominated by mastery on the part of the magician, and forgetting on the part of the audience, of "lost" nonverbal arts. Lions can therefore be tamed by the re-learning of the niceties of proxemics. A coin can be surreptitiously pocketed at the moment a seemingly insignificant gesture distracts the onlooker. The magician can predict the answers of an audience member, simply by "muscle reading" their kinesics. The audience could have developed all of these skills possessed by the magician; but, without the magician's dedication and focus on the task, it would have taken a lifetime.

Conclusion

Humans do suffer a failure of vision. Where "visual culture" harbours an ocularcentric belief in the dominating power of surveillance, "semiotics of vision" reveals that the field of sight in the human is partial and subject to impediment. Far from panoptic, the visual is part of a mixed-mode Umwelt that only ever captures that part of existence which is amenable to the species' sensorium. The visual is, effectively, maloptic to the extent that it will not be ameliorated by ever-increasing forms of "efficient" technology. At a certain stage in phylogenesis, it is reasonable to assume, the field of human sight was more attuned to the nonverbal communication which took place in the human's environment. With the advent of linear speech, humans became creatures unique in their possession of verbal and nonverbal modes. Machin's lamentation, above, regarding the separation of modes for the purposes of academic study is therefore entirely apposite in this light. Fixation on the visual apparatus of some technologies alone is not only unhelpful, it is also impractical since so many "technologies of vision" are already verbal-audio-visual. Furthermore, such fixation also represses the fact that the field of the visual is irrevocably embedded in the encompassing field of nonverbal communication in general (which also has an ineffable number of transactions currently invisible to the human eye). Moreover, there is a predicament that subtends all of these matters: that is, the problems inherent in the phylogenetic and ontogenetic repression of nonverbal

communication. That there has ever been an impetus to isolate the "visual" and to treat it as a realm of (semi-) autonomous functioning—or, worse, dictated by linguistic principles rather than associated to them by dint of a common modelling ancestor—is symptomatic of a grave error. It is precisely that error which has given rise to the idea of "visual culture" and the want of sobriety in the assertion that culture is becoming more visual.

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