

Sociosemiotics: Theories, Explorations, Perspectives

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Summary. This essay will shed light on the theoretical assumptions of contemporary semiotics that lay the foundations of sociosemiotics as a specific current of the theory of signification. It will also provide an overview of the main contributions produced in this field in the last twenty years, beginning with the publication of a key text for the development of sociosemiotics, *Corpi sociali* by Gianfranco Marrone (2001), which will be the subject of in-depth examination. At the end of the essay, a connection between the principles of sociosemiotics and the orientation of Descola's and Latour's anthropologies of collectives will be proposed.

Keywords. Sociosemiotics, text, discourse, meaning, body

Zusammenfassung. In diesem Aufsatz werden die theoretischen Annahmen der zeitgenössischen Semiotik beleuchtet, die das Fundament der Soziosemiotik als spezifische Strömung der Zeichenlehre bilden. Darüber hinaus wird ein Überblick über die wichtigsten Beiträge gegeben, die in den letzten zwanzig Jahren auf diesem Gebiet entstanden sind, beginnend mit der Veröffentlichung eines Schlüsseltextes für die Entwicklung der Soziosemiotik, *Corpi sociali* von Gianfranco Marrone (2001), der Gegenstand einer eingehenden Untersuchung sein wird. Am Ende des Aufsatzes wird eine Verbindung zwischen den Prinzipien der Soziosemiotik und der Ausrichtung der Anthropologien der Kollektive von Descola und Latour vorgeschlagen.

Schlüsselwörter. Soziosemiotik, Text, Diskurs, Bedeutung, Körper

1. Understanding society: a semiotic project

What is *sociosemiotics*? The name might suggest a synthesis between semiotics and sociology, an interdisciplinary approach in which sociology would use the tools of semiotics, or conversely, semiotics might incorporate social research techniques. But this is not the case: as we will seek to show, at least in its Italian incarnation, it is a particular way in which semio-

tics conceives social reality and the set of analyses and studies derived from this perspective. It is indeed possible to identify and define a theoretically and methodologically consistent field – albeit vast and varied – of Italian sociosemiotics. This essay will shed light on the theoretical assumptions of contemporary semiotics that lay the foundations of sociosemiotics as a specific current of the theory of signification. It will also provide an overview of the main contributions produced in this field in the last twenty years, beginning with the publication of a key text for the development of sociosemiotics, *Corpi sociali* by Gianfranco Marrone (2001), which will be the subject of in-depth examination.

In some ways, the term *sociosemiotics* is a *pleonasm* (Latour and Akrich 1992). In the introductory chapter of *Corpi sociali*, Marrone argues that “semiotics is inherently a sociosemiotics insofar as it is the science of signification, and signification is a collective phenomenon” (2001: XIII). The study of social meaning is indeed a semiotic project that dates back to the foundation of the discipline: when positing the need for a new science which he named semiology, Ferdinand de Saussure defined it as “the study of the life of signs within society” (1922). Both Saussure’s and Louis Hjelmslev’s structural linguistics studies (1959, 1961) stress that language is based on the dialectic between subjectivity and sociality, between individuality and collectivity. The individual linguistic act is regulated by collective codes, without which there is no communication; in turn, these social codes are set in motion and transformed by individual speech.

It is precisely on these structural linguistics studies that generative semiotics, later developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas (1966, 1970, 1983) is founded. The sociosemiotics we deal with in this essay indeed belongs to this structural and generative framework.

Despite the shared objectives of sociosemiotics and semiotics, sociosemiotic analyses were not carried out nor openly referred to until the 1990s, first in France with Eric Landowski’s studies (1989, 1997) and then in Italy, where the establishment of communication sciences degree courses lay the ground for academic research on media and social phenomena also through the teaching of semiotics. Advertising, branding, journalism, television, consumption, and new media, among others, became the object of semiotic analysis and reflections.

Before then, in the decade between 1950 and 1960 several scholars conducted social analysis using the tools of semiotics, showing how and to what extent the theoretical apparatus of this discipline is able to contribute to the understanding and critique of social realities. It suffices to think of Roland Barthes, who examined everyday life objects and myths using the methods of semiology. By analysing photographs, national dishes, fashion, advertising or automobiles, Barthes effectively scrutinised and set forth a critique of society, establishing semiology as a social research method (Barthes 1957). From the 1960s onwards, Umberto Eco investigated advertising and the developments of the mass culture, focussing for example on the issue of the decoding of television messages and hypothesising an

“aberrant decoding” phenomenon (1968) and the idea of “semiological guerilla warfare” (1973). For Eco, the issue is not only the passage of information but the way in which the competencies of the communication actors, sender on one side and audience on the other, interact, meet, and eventually collide, right within the communication flow:¹ an inherently socio-cultural problem. In a seminal and foundational essay for the theory of signification published in 1973, Paolo Fabbri uses the term “sociosemiotics” to refer to semiotics as a science of mass communication (Fabbri 2017a [1973]). In his view, sociology and information theory are no longer adequate to analyse the communication flows that come from the press, TV, radio, and advertising; a science of signification is needed that takes into account not only the means (overdetermined by McLuhan 1964) and messages (merely the conveyance of information, according to the information theories of the time) but also the structures of production and reception that interact and define each other through those messages (for example, the public, on one side, and the television broadcaster, on the other). Around the same period, Greimas (1976) develops the notion of a scientific semiotics in order to understand the whole range of the various discourses that make up society (scientific, legal, media, urban, historical, literary ones). The goal is to delineate semiology

as a metalanguage of the human sciences, if such metalanguage is defined as constituted by disciplines of signification, that is, the way in which human beings organize systems and articulate processes of meaning (Fabbri and Perron 1991: 218).

For Fabbri and Perron, who introduced Greimas’s essay in Italy, sociosemiotics would be a ‘missing link’², an intermediate level in general semiotics, that is, a methodology that links the epistemological and textual levels. Indeed, precisely because understanding society requires an incessant work of analysis, semiotics is at once an empirical and philosophical science (Fabbri 1998; Marrone 2001, 2010, 2011). Sociosemiotics, in particular, is understood as

a theoretical gesture aimed at constructing that missing link between the philosophy of language and the analysis of social phenomena (Marrone 2001: XIV).

While semiotics and sociosemiotics share the same goals because, since its origins, semiotics has set itself the objective to study the ways in which social meaning emerges, is structured and circulates through a variety of discourses, sociosemiotics must be thought of as a bridge between the philosophical-linguistic level and the methodological-empirical one of the discipline (Marrone 2001).

Thus, in the last twenty years the socio-semiotic gaze has been exercised on various forms of textuality and different concrete manifestations in the fields of media and branding, politics and spatiality, design and technologies, fashion and gastronomy. It did so by holding firm a precise epis-

temological perspective, in which the semiotic methodology, that will be illustrated in its basic concepts in the following pages, has been anchored, with different and at times more or less successful results. Indeed, to understand society it is necessary to turn one's gaze to the heterogeneous communication products and socio-cultural phenomena that construct it, cross it and transform it; however, it must be done using a specific theoretical apparatus and drawing upon the same way of conceiving the emergence of the social.

2. The social as an effect of meaning

This common perspective is what distinguishes semiotics from other social sciences: the different epistemological level that places semiotics at a "meta" level and which leads to a different approach in the construction of the object of analysis.

Eric Landowski (1989, 1997, 1998a; Landowski and Fiorin 1997), whose reflections have been an important inspiration for Italian sociosemiotics, writes:

The empirical object of sociosemiotics is defined as the set of discourses and practices that intervene in the constitution and / or transformation of the conditions of interaction between subjects (individual and collective) (Greimas and Courtés eds. 1979: *ad vocem*).³

This means that sociosemiotics is not an applied semiotics, a sort of toolbox to be used when necessity arises and then possibly discarded (Marrone 2001), but a different perspective on the social, because it has a different conception of it: not as a fact, but as a set of procedures for which something is presented as a sociality and, at the same time, as obvious and natural. Semiotics is tasked with investigating such procedures of naturalisation and institution of the social, which are procedures of signification. It is, in clearly Kantian terms:

a discipline that does not directly study the social but its conditions of possibility. Semiotically, in fact, the social is not a simple empirical datum whose more or less hidden laws are to be revealed, but an effect of meaning of which we must identify the procedures that brought it into being (Marrone 2001: XVII).

Society is not intended as a pre-existing object whose languages and discourses must be examined (for example, advertising, fashion or design) but as a temporary and situated product of these same discourses. Socio-semiotics deals with understanding the ways and forms with which advertising, fashion or design speak of society and contribute to founding it, defining it, and transforming it. For the sociosemiotic gaze, in fact, society is the result of a set of processes: the outcome of the ways in which it regards

itself and is reflected in texts, discourses and stories (Landowski 1989, Marrone 2001).

Understanding the social as an effect of meaning does not imply that there is a reality, on one side, and an image of it, more or less truthful, on the other: the problem, for example, is not whether the media project a false, misleading idea of society or if they are the perfect mirror of it. This type of question is not relevant to the sociosemiotic gaze. In fact, what is relevant is how media discourse produces, on the one hand, a certain image of the community and of its values by appropriating and re-proposing them in the form of media products (TV programs, advertising, social content, journalism, etc.); on the other, how it is effective and acts on the subjects, influencing them, defining them, transforming them. For instance, the question is not whether advertising gives a distorted version of reality or whether news broadcasts tell the truth about the facts of the world, but how, in both discourses, society itself defines the world of brands, with its economic, commercial, cultural values, and the journalistic universe, with its information, truth and objectivity values. In this perspective, advertising and journalistic discourses are not predetermined worlds but products of meaning. The semiotic analysis has to reconstruct their underlying meaning processes.

How does society define and produce itself in its own discourses? And how do the latter, in turn, create a certain idea of society? In the world of politics, for example, the figure of public opinion has been questioned by Landowski (1989) who has exposed its constructed character in newspaper news and, through narrative analysis, revealed the sometimes contradictory actantial roles with which this media figure has been invested. Thus, he has shown the manipulative use by the media and political subjects, on the one hand, and the potential impact on the orientation of the public, on the other.

By studying photography (Mangano 2018) and in general the images circulating in a given community (Pezzini 2008; Pozzato 2012), sociosemiotic analysis shows how through them we can trace the ways in which a culture and a community perceives itself: photographs of animals, for example, give us an idea of the notion that humans have of pets and therefore also, more generally, of what is, in a certain community and at a certain historical moment, the dominant idea of the relationship between humans and animals (Mangano 2019; Bertrand and Marrone eds. 2019). In the field of food trends, the increasing popularity of food free of something (gluten-free, sugar-free, lactose-free, etc.) from a sociosemiotic point of view is both the realisation of a general pre-existing dietetic trend in society and one of the factors that drives this same trend: it is precisely because consumers are assailed by advertising campaigns and packaging loudly proclaiming that they are “without something” that the perception of dietary food as preferable to other types of food is reinforced (Ventura Bordenca 2020).

Essentially, for semiotics there is no reality on one side and its representations on the other, no society as something separable from the lan-

guages that circulate within it, nor a context that could be separated from the texts: the world is already a semiotics (Greimas and Courtés eds. 1979) and texts and discourses act on the society (Fabbri 2017b). This conception of the relationship between reality and signs clearly distinguishes semiotics from other disciplines of language, including linguistics: for semiotics, in fact, there is no extra-linguistic, there is no assumed concrete and non-linguistic reality on one side and signs on the other as an *a posteriori* addition. Languages are real because they are able to act and be effective, and on the other hand, the real is itself significant.

3. A seminal text

Sociosemiotics is rooted in the history of semiotics. However, as we have stated above, sociosemiotics entered the debate as a methodology of the human sciences only after Paolo Fabbri's seminal text of 1973, *Le comunicazioni di massa in Italia: sguardo semiotico e malocchio della sociologia* [Mass communications in Italy: semiotic gaze and the evil eye of sociology] (Fabbri 2017a [1973]), followed by the afterword to Greimas's *Semiotics and social sciences* (Fabbri and Perron 1991). In France it was with Eric Landowski (1989, 1997) that the sociosemiotic project took hold and gave rise to numerous surveys on contemporaneity. Also in the 1990s, the French semiologist and advertising consultant Jean-Marie Floch published two fundamental texts, *Semiotics, Marketing and Communication* (1990) and *Visual Identities* (1995) in which detailed and fruitful analyses on brand campaigns and daily life objects⁴ demonstrated how the tools of semiotics can be used to analyse heterogeneous phenomena (logos, advertising, spaces, knives, fashion looks) and, through them, understand the value systems of a given society. In those same years, again in France, Andrea Semprini published *L'objet comme procès et comme action* (1995), later translated into Italian, in which he put forward the idea of a sociosemiotics of everyday objects: things which in themselves do not make sense but acquire it in the relation they bear with the subjects; in which one can find the reflection of social signification and of the values of the collective imagination. "The object is constituted, defined and offered for use only and exclusively within an authentic intersubjective relationship" (Semprini 1995: 99). Semiologists look wherever they see human and social meaning.

If sociosemiotics and, in general, a semiotics exploring consumer society made headway in the panorama of French studies, in Italy it was not until 2001 that a key text was published which introduced a systematic perspective on sociosemiotic methodology and a series of applicative analyses attesting its heuristic fruitfulness: this is the book *Corpi sociali. Semiotica del testo e processi comunicativi*, by Gianfranco Marrone.

Although the word *sociosemiotic* does not appear in the title, the book is an exercise in method and opens with a paragraph entitled "the socio-semiotic field". Marrone's message is clear: sociosemiotics can only be a

semiotics of the text. The set task of understanding the communication processes that govern and articulate our society indeed requires a precise theory and a rigorous methodology. The book is divided into six chapters dealing with “some of the main topics in sociology of communication and culture from a semiotic point of view” (Marrone 2001: XXXVI), namely fashion, television, information, advertising, politics and spatiality. In the extensive introduction, Marrone clarifies the tenets of semiotics that act as a compass for the analysis. Marrone’s idea is that of a continuous interchange between analytical practice and theoretical reflection, thus accepting Landowski’s (1997) invitation to “speak semiotics”. If on the one hand sociosemiotics is the empirical crux of semiotics, in that it consists in the analysis of social experiences, on the other, its practice is also a way to exercise a philosophical-critical perspective as regards so-called social concreteness. According to Marrone, it is precisely the ‘meta’ role of sociosemiotics that makes us understand the constructed character of such concreteness. Which models does sociosemiotics use to question the sense of obviousness and naturalness of social reality, which in fact needs to be retraced? The book lists three of them, which represent the key notions underlying Marrone’s theoretical reflection and related analytical practice: *text*, *discourse* and the *body*.

3.1 Textuality

The text is defined as any sociocultural construct that can be articulated in a plane of expression and a plane of content, and that produces some form of social meaning. Marrone (2001, 2017a) draws on Fabbri’s reflections (2017a [1973]) on mass communications: to *content analysis*, which considers messages as composed of lexical units each capable of producing meaning in isolation, Fabbri opposes a *semiotics of the text* that brings together the units in broader relationships and syntagms. It is in the overall cultural framework that the meaning of a communication product is understood, and its underlying semantic structures are identified. Adopting the notion of text as a *transphrastic* unit not only in verbal language but in other languages such as the audiovisual for instance has multiple advantages for the study of media: it links the signifying plane to that of the signified; it broadens the field of inquiry to all possible expressive languages besides the verbal one; it goes beyond an analysis of signs taken individually and also that of the text as a closed and isolated block of data that would pass from a source to a receiver.

As a matter of fact, the notion of text that stemmed from Fabbri’s considerations on mass media undermines two fundamental assumptions underpinning media studies up to the 1970s:

- a. The opposition between codes and the message, since texts do not simply repeat pre-existing codes but retell, transform, and re-propose them;

- b. Source and receiver are not pure technological agents who exchange data, but social subjects in all respects, whose identities can be described through the analysis of the texts that they circulate.

For instance, when Marrone analyses journalistic discourse (1998, 2001), he shows how each newspaper does not merely transfer neutral information by reproducing pre-existing journalistic codes, but rather appropriates it, in order to tell the same story differently. In doing so, each creates an image of the journal itself (sender) and of its audience (recipient).

What exactly is *text* in semiotics? The text is not an ontological reality, it is not an object, but it is “a formal model for the explanation of all human and social, cultural and historical phenomena” (Marrone 2010: 6). And, more importantly, it is “constructed according to the socio-cultural reality in which one intends to operate” (Marrone 2001: XXII). In fact, the science of signification has progressively expanded the notion of text from the traditional idea of a work by an identifiable author, mostly in verbal language and created with the intention of transmitting a message, to the concept of text as a *methodological model*. Thus the definition of text may encompass novels, films, paintings, ballets, TV programmes, commercials, objects, but also phenomena with more blurry confines like television schedules, advertising campaigns, entire cities, oral conversations, and so on (Marrone 2010, 2011). Therefore, thanks to this model Marrone (2001) shows how the underlying narrative arguments of a weather report or the value system at a given moment in the history of technology (the late 1990s) implicit in a phone company ad can be revealed by analysing them as texts. In a broader perspective, the notion of text as a tool in the analyst’s hands can be used to study larger portions of the sociocultural universe: an advertising campaign, a newspaper, a clash between political parties or the spatial articulation of a university faculty. The issue of the boundaries of the text is central to sociosemiotic analysis.⁵ In the chapter of *Corpi sociali* about fashion, Marrone draws upon Barthes’s studies (1998) on the significance of dress as a kind of endless text whose significant units have to be limited. The idea is that a garment is not endowed with meaning because it is in itself a sign, but acquires its meanings in a structure within which it maintains syntagmatic relationships (the length of a skirt with a certain blouse and décolleté shoes) and paradigmatic ones (all the skirts or sweaters or shoes that might be part of that same look).⁶ Marrone looks at Barthes because the French critic questioned the idea of a clothing lexicon: it is not the single garment that counts but its relationship with all the other pertinent elements. The garment is thus constructed by fashion and by the analyst, just like the text.

From this point of view the difference between the textual and the real is no longer pertinent since, according to Landowski (1989), for socio-semiotics ‘the real’ as an object of study are the socially constructed conditions of discourses and actions to signify. That means, for the French semiologist, nothing but another form of textuality. The so-called context is already something sensible that can be analysed as a text, while the text itself carries with it the social meanings tied to the context (it is in this sense that Greimas said that “outside the text there is no salvation”).

This notion of the relationship between text and context marks a further difference between semiotics and the other social sciences, sociology *in primis*: if the context, that is, the socio-cultural values and the subjects involved, is already inherent to the text – intended as a model of analysis through which such values and subjects can be identified – it follows that the context is not that which is around and outside the text (as if they were two distinct ontological entities). From the point of view of semiotic methodology, context is all that is not relevant to the analysis. In other words, anything that analysts decide should not be considered within the boundaries of their own textual model, a decision taken on a case-by-case basis depending on research needs and other factors (Marrone 2011, 2017b).

3.2 Discursivity

The abandonment of the opposition between text and context leads us to the second theoretical model presented in *Corpi sociali*, that of *discourse*. To clarify the concept of discursivity in semiotics we must refer to Benveniste (1971) and to his notion of enunciation. For Benveniste, enunciation is “the putting of language into discourse” whereby the former loses the fixity of its rules to be realised in the speakers that make it work: by producing discourse, language constitutes the subjectivity of the protagonists of the communication process and therefore is intrinsically an intersubjective phenomenon. By placing the categories of subject, space and time, in fact, the enunciation establishes the communicative relationship between the speakers, of which it produces the respective images: the enunciator and the enunciatee. Thus, the rules for its production and those for its reception lie within the text itself. The social, cultural, situational context is already within the text. Furthermore, the model of discursivity enables us to keep together and observe the way in which the relations between the rules of language and their implementation unfold:

from a different perspective, discourse is also the set of socio-cultural constraints which, so to speak, act on language, permeate it and reconstitute it, with all the weight of the entities consolidated by shared and repeated semiotic uses, of those stereotypes that reshape linguistic codes by limiting the expressive freedom of the single individual (Marrone 2001: XXV).

Therefore, compared to that of text the concept of discourse allows us to make progress in defining the differences between semiotics and other social sciences with respect to the notion of context: if the text is in fact a product, discourse can be seen as the set of rules and procedures for its production.

Thus, if a newspaper article is a text, the journalistic discourse is the set of themes, enunciative procedures, genres, and modes of relationship between the enunciator and the enunciatee that are specific to it and that

distinguish it from other discourses – political, religious, scientific, and so on. In fact,

while the text must be considered in its double plane of expression and content, for discourse the plane of expression is relatively indifferent (ivi: XXIV).

Discursivity is an eminently semantic notion as a unit based on a set of texts of different expressive substances. Hence, Barthes (1977) speaks of a *discourse of love* as made up of words, gestures, behaviours, rhetoric, amorous *topoi* of various kinds; Landowski (1989) discusses *political discourse* taking into account the totality of strategic moves by political exponents that manifest themselves in various expressive substances, such as rallies, interviews, declarations, strikes, parliamentary speeches, and so on; Marrone (2007) speaks of *brand discourse* referring to the set of manifestations produced by brands, understood as enunciative instances that offer value proposals to consumers, coherently conveyed at an expressive level by a heterogeneous set of texts (logos, products, packaging, shops, websites, social accounts, brand extensions etc.). *Food discourse*, therefore, includes not only food but also objects, kitchen tools, practices, behaviours, recipes, the media that talk about it, books, websites⁷ (Mangano 2014a, 2014b; Marrone 2014a, ed. 2014b, 2016; Giannitrapani and Puca 2020). It is thus also possible to define a *design discourse* (Mangano 2009; Mangano and Mattozzi eds. 2009) as the set of technologies, projects, objects, spaces, fashions, magazines, events, which together construe a shared universe.

The basic idea underlying every sociosemiotic study is *the irrelevance of the concept of representation*:⁸ the text is not intended as a representation of cultural and social phenomena that it simply reproduces; it in fact contains them and puts them into practice since, in a more or less conscious way, it was built upon their foundation. Moreover, the text acts in society as a social force. The distancing from representation explains why, in sociosemiotics, concrete practices and texts that speak of them, subjects and the media that reproduce them can be analysed on equal terms. Therefore, studying how we talk about nutrition and cooking on TV, for example, means discovering in what ways a culture promotes food and gastronomic practice (Giannitrapani 2014). Studying how slimming diets are advertised, analysing recipe books and manuals, investigating the dynamics between prohibited foods and permitted foods, examining the types of dishes proposed, allows us to identify how a particular society views the body, its forms of control, food science, and the role of experts (Ventura Bordenca 2020, 2021a). There are no virtual representations, on one side, nor a concrete reality understood, on the other, conceived as separate monads, but social discourses made up of the relationship of one to the other. Accordingly, a given social reality and its representations are not pre-existing conditions but the result of the “meaning effect of discourse”.

3.3 Corporeity

The third pivotal theoretical notion in Marrone's book is that of the body, whose relevance for sociosemiotics may not be immediately apparent: why deal with corporeality in order to investigate social signification? But above all, how does semiotics conceive the corporeal dimension? Semiotic theory considers signification as articulated in different dimensions: cognitive, pragmatic, passionate and somatic. Among these, the somatic dimension is fundamental as it is the sensorial substrate on which meaning rests: even before perceiving and grasping articulated meanings, even before meaning unfolds rationally and the subject understands it fully, we experience flashes or hints belonging to the realm of aesthetics. The aesthetic dimension, in fact, is not limited to the enjoyment of art, but as Greimas argues in *De l'imperfection* (1987), can be found in everyday life experiences. Moreover, it is intersubjective: even before rational subjects form a relationship with each other, bodies that are immersed in a network of other bodies interact. Think of the phenomena of contagion (Landowski 1998b) in which collective reactions result from transmitted sensations between subjects who are first and foremost bodies. "Just as the subject is primarily a body, intersubjectivity is primarily intercorporeity" (Marrone 2001: XXIX). Consequently, in order to understand collective phenomena such as advertising, politics, fashion, and others, we must consider sensory dynamics, which are only apparently unrelated to the rationality of the social contract.

The body in which sociosemiotics is interested is not the natural body as pure physical substrate, but rather the social body – hence the title of the book, demonstrating the centrality of both the somatic dynamics in the functioning of the community and the sensory dimension for semiotics in general. With this oxymoron (the body, the most personal and private possession, is at the same time social, exposed, shared with everyone) on the one hand, Marrone draws on Merleau-Ponty's reflections in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) on the ambiguity of the human body, which is, at one and the same time, part of the world and a viewpoint on the world: the subject simultaneously experiences the paradoxical condition of intimacy and exteriority, nature and culture, of being one's own body and having a body. On the other hand, Marrone posits a fundamental homology between the logics of the somatic and of the social: just as signification emerges as the articulation and organisation of meaning, which is its unutterable and pervasive corporeal precondition, the social, with its rules and institutions, is based on a deeper, more intimate and collective regime of the body.

Finally, it should be clarified that the social body is not an empirical reality, but is a model: semiotics is concerned with the logics of the body, that is, the set of human, cultural, and social meanings that are activated through sensory and somatic manipulation and stimulation.

In particular, Marrone highlights the relevance of this model for the interpretation of phenomena concerning politics and spatiality. By way of example, in the chapter on political discourse he draws on and expands

Landowski's (1998a) analysis of the death of Diana Spencer, whose impact on the British monarchy, the population and the media cannot be explained unless we surpass the rationality of politics and acknowledge the existence of a "real collective sensoriality and affectivity" (Marrone 2001: 272). It is in fact the latter that underpinned "a social aesthetic experience" (*ivi*: 273) of the events that surrounded the death of the princess. In the same way, to explain social phenomena such as vandalism, in the chapter on spatiality (not surprisingly entitled "The spatial action") Marrone analyses the meanings generated by vandalised places. Places that first and foremost are containers of bodies, produce sensory stimuli, act effectively through a series of expressive categories (open/closed, central/peripheral, high/low, etc.), and as such behave as many forms of subjectivity.⁹ Human bodies and spatial bodies interact in configurations of meaning that are analysed on all levels: pragmatic, cognitive but also somatic and passionate.¹⁰

4. Some field of analysis

If in the first chapters of *Corpi sociali* (Barthes and fashion, Eco and television) Marrone presents studies that combine sociology and nascent semiology, whilst the following chapters (information, advertising, politics, spatiality) consist of semiotic analyses based on an already mature and established discipline conducted on traditionally sociological fields.

The chapter on fashion retraces through Barthes the affirmation of semiology as a social research methodology starting from the assumption that both clothing and language are systems of signification. In examining Barthes's work prior to the publication of *Système de la mode* (1967) Marrone illustrates the French semiologist's quest for a method that distinguished the sociological study of fashion from a study of fashion as a cultural object and phenomenon of signification. At first, Barthes borrows the methodological instruments of Saussure's linguistics (*langue/parole; diachronicity synchronicity; signifier/signified*) and then he proposes the development of semiotics as indispensable to the sociologist. Even before explaining how something works, semiotics indeed shows that the sign is precisely there where society tends to hide it and to naturalise the semantic dimension of things. This seminal work revealing meaning in fashion established Barthes as a leading figure in the advancement of the project of a contemporary sociosemiotics.

The chapter on television focuses on Umberto Eco's research on a socially relevant theme, the development of the television medium. Eco's studies on television, writes Marrone, are a way to observe the progress of semiotics as a separate discipline in the study of mass communication. Indeed, if the development of sociosemiotics was propelled by the emergence of new phenomena and especially by the media, the birth of television was particularly important. Marrone discusses some central themes in Eco's early work on the media¹¹, such as the issues of reception of codes

and sub-codes and that of the aesthetic values of television. In the 1960s, Eco and other semiologists including Fabbri sought to adopt a new disciplinary perspective to deal with the evolving problems and stakes posed by the television medium (Eco 1965). The need for a semiological study aimed at analysing television messages stems from the fact that in the presence of a varied audience with different skills, “aberrant decoding” becomes the norm, Eco argues in firm opposition to information theory and McLuhan’s hypotheses. In fact, an advertising or informative text can be composed of a plethora of codes and sub-codes that make its reception complex and divide the audience. These issues equally occupied emerging semiotics and the sociology of communication. It was in the 1970s that Eco, in a shift from a semiotics of codes to textual semiotics, proposed for the study of television “that perfected form of sociology that is the semiotics of culture” (1977: 274). The Vaduz experiment¹² (1976) was one of the first studies to show how “the interpretation of the text depends above all on the way in which the text predisposes the public” (Marrone 2001: 52): it is the television enunciator,

not the empirical spectator that consumer sociology and ethnography seek to capture, but its simulacrum constructed within the television enunciation, that semiotics can therefore reconstruct (*ibidem*).

A simulacrum which from a semiotic and more specifically a media social semiotic perspective is not purely an image without effects, but on the contrary a highly effective actant of communication.

The third chapter of *Corpi sociali* is devoted to the procedures governing the creation and circulation of journalistic discourse. Marrone notes that, up to the time of his writings, information has been the subject of two types of inquiry, namely general studies on journalism and analyses of specific cases. What is lacking, Marrone argues,

is the elaboration of formal theoretical models that are general enough to reconstruct the overall characteristics of the current journalistic discourse and at the same time specific enough to analyze local or temporary information processes. It is here that sociosemiotics of information comes into play (*ivi*: 66).

Such a sociosemiotics does not limit itself to an analysis of the language used by newspapers (considered at times obscure and impenetrable, or full of linguistic stereotypes) but aims at an overall analysis of the newspaper-text. In fact, the media channel as such (a newspaper, a radio or a television news broadcast, etc.) can be understood as text: the meanings of a piece of news do not lie in the piece of news itself, but in the way in which it is presented – in terms of image, title, captions, article, etc. – and in the relation to the other elements on the same page – for instance what news appear alongside, come before or after the one analysed, the size of the headlines, and so on.¹³

However, the most important aspects of the sociosemiotic approach to information are at least three:

- the idea that journalistic objectivity is not an indisputable reality, but a meaning effect that can be reconstructed starting from the analysis of the enunciative strategies used¹⁴, so that each newspaper defines its own identity in the dynamics between objectifying style or subjectivating style¹⁵;
- the idea of news as a translation of the world: if reality is already a semiotic (Greimas 1970), then the journalistic narrative can only be a form of translation of the world's discourses;
- among the dimensions of meaning involved in journalistic discourse, there is not only the cognitive (the transfer of knowledge between newspaper and reader)¹⁶ and pragmatic (the way in which, for example, news influence the audience's behaviour), but also the *pathemic*.¹⁷ News is full of emotions, encapsulated both in the subject of the journalistic story (e.g. fear of vaccines or of a flood warning in a weather report) and in the delivery of the news itself (anxious, reassuring, emphatic, monotonous etc.).

[Thus] the resulting notions of communication and language are very different from the traditional ones: the criterion of truth of an enunciate is not given by its relation of correspondence to external reality, but by the relationship between enunciator and enunciatee that lies within the enunciate itself (Marrone 2001: 109).

The idea that 'truth' is the outcome of an intersubjective relationship is exactly the type of sociosemiotic reasoning on media communication. The fact that it is necessary to consider intersubjective pacts rather than values does not imply that the latter are less strong and effective; on the contrary, they are even more effective because they are within a certain belief system: I believe in something because I have faith in the enunciator of that message.

This issue is fundamental in the chapter on advertising, in which Marrone presents models for the analysis of the advertising text that are no longer eminently linguistic and rhetorical but logical-narrative: the aim is not to study the "rhetoric" of advertising language, nor the image taken in isolation, but to identify the "textual structures that lie beneath signs and make their existence and functioning possible" (2001: 156), whether they concern a single text (an ad, a commercial, etc.) or a broader configuration of meaning (an advertising campaign, a brand). On that account, sociosemiotics applied to advertising uses a narrative approach: just as in the theory of narrativity the object of value is only such for a subject, products have no value in themselves but acquire it through a semantic investment effected by the brand and/or the community. Among the models that reflect this approach in sociosemiotics of advertising is Jean-Marie Floch's axiology of consumption values (1990, 1995), which has a narrative mould and focusses on valorisation processes rather than on single values

(for example, environmentalism is a value that can set up a utopian valorisation, therefore existential for some, but also a critical valorisation, and therefore one of convenience, for others).¹⁸

Concerning political discourse, Marrone notes that despite the fundamental semioticity of politics¹⁹, very few systematic semiotic studies on this topic have appeared since Eric Landowski's pioneering research (1989, 1997), some themes of which (the theatre metaphor, the issue of contagion, the strategic use of political discourse) are discussed in *Corpi sociali*. As with journalism and advertising, semiotics must not deal with verbal language taken in isolation (the so-called "politicalesse") but with political communication in a broad sense. In order to incorporate reflections on other languages such as that of politicians' gestures, photographs, or clothing, "we must adopt the perspective of the study of discourse and semiotically reflect on the entire sphere of politics" (Marrone 2001: 225). Most studies centring on political communication are largely based on the premise that political activity and its communication are in fact separate. Conversely, the notion underpinning political sociosemiotics is that communication is just as pragmatic, effective, and transformative as political practice (namely, decisions, pacts, alliances, expulsions, etc.), and that the latter is already significant and communicative in itself. Public opinion, for example, is not merely an image of the people manufactured by the media but a political subject in its own right: as a spokesperson, it conveys the demands of citizens and politicians and plays a different actantial role each time.²⁰ We should therefore speak of

a political discourse as a structured flow of strategic moves, some of which take on a linguistic-communicative form, others the form of somatic actions, others an intermediate form (Marrone 2001: 226).

The sociosemiotic gaze does not set out to describe what is political and what is not, but to identify the criteria that in a given society define as political a certain action, a certain phenomenon or a certain group.

It is a matter of reconstructing the general criteria by which a given society, reflecting itself in its own discourses (political and metapolitical), considers a certain activity as strictly political and another as unpolitical (*ivi*: 234).

Returning to the example of Diana Spencer's death, although at first glance it does not seem a traditionally political event, if we consider the affective and somatic dimension of meaning it proves part of the British political machine and of the transformation dynamics that affected the monarchy in those days.

The last chapter of *Corpi sociali* focusses on spatiality. After explaining why space is a language and a pertinent object of social analysis²¹, Marrone examines a case of vandalism of a university faculty by students. It emerges that the spatial organisation of the faculty establishes a relation-

ship with the people who experience it in such a way, as to build a deceptive pact with the students. A pact that does not stand up from a narrative viewpoint but unleashes *passions* (in particular, anger) that turn into violence on the space itself by specific groups of students. To explain this phenomenon, Marrone draws upon Lévi-Strauss's notion of "symbolic efficacy" (1958) attributing to signs the ability to transform subjects starting from a bodily response.

The sociosemiotic idea underpinning this analysis is that unlike disciplines such as psychology or sociology – which would have surveyed only human social actors perhaps through interviews, and kept spatiality in the background as a surrounding but substantially mute environment – the semiotologist questions space as a signifying text. In other words, the semiotologist does not stop at the level of voluntary *communication* (interviewing people, asking about motives, preparing awareness campaigns) but deals with the broader level of *signification*, which may be involuntary, unconscious but above all is detached from human actuation: spaces and people together generate meaning. Places hold meanings for the people who pass through them and who are then able to re-semantise them, to activate some paths of meaning and narcotise others.

Drawing his analysis to conclusion, the sociosemiotologist argues that rather than a communication campaign aimed at encouraging students' responsibility, preventive action may be taken by reconstructing the chain of processes and actors that have led to a certain destructive situation originated by passions and precisely by the spaces themselves:

The best way to act on socially negative behaviour is to identify the semiotic systems and procedures that have brought it into being as an effective process: reasons that in our case are addressed to a micro-society in which things, spaces, entrances, doors, gates, corridors act for and more than man. Working on them would transform their meaning, and consequently also their effects (Marrone 2001: 368).

5. Sociosemiotic surveys

What happened in the twenty years following the publication of *Corpi sociali*? Subsequent contributions dedicated to sociosemiotics will illustrate its developments in the fields of advertising, media, spatiality, fashion, design, and gastronomy. Some of these fields are addressed in *Corpi sociali*. New ones have emerged precisely out of the mission that sociosemiotics has set for itself, to respond to the pressures of new social forces such as "food-mania" and the rise of new media, for instance. A mission that is not simply a desire to chase the latest fad, but to observe the change from within a theoretical paradigm and articulate it in some way, in order to make it more understandable.

Below we shall attempt a survey of the contributions that constitute a sort of "sociosemiotics of contemporaneity". It is not an exhaustive list –

neither from the point of view of the fields of study nor from the point of view of the contributions, which may well be much more numerous considering all the semiotic analyses that are not explicitly presented as such, but in fact adopt the principles of sociosemiotics.

Published soon after Marrone's volume, *Lo sguardo sociosemiotico* [The sociosemiotic gaze] (Semprini ed. 2003) edited by Semprini gathers contributions on brand (Landowski, on beers), news (Marrone, on spatiality on TV), political communication (Pezzini, on electoral posters), advertising (Codeluppi, on Ferrero Rocher ads and Ferraro, on Adidas commercials). In 2006 *Scene del consumo* [Consumption scenarios], edited by Pezzini and Cervelli (eds. 2006), was published, in which the link between spatiality and consumption practices is discussed mainly by probing the transformations that have affected two types of consumption: the commerce, through the analysis of flagship stores, and the arts, through the analysis of new museums.²² In 2007, Marrone's *Il discorso di Marca* [Brand discourse] analysed the phenomenon of branding, identifying brand communication as an enunciative meta-instance that absorbs and re-stages social themes and values by appropriating and transforming them for its own commercial purposes. There is no principled opposition between commercial discourse and other social discourses – political, artistic, medical and so on; on the contrary, branding is considered one of the many discourses with which society constructs itself and views itself as such. The theme of consumption is intertwined with that of hedonistic pleasure, lifestyles and aesthetic forms, but also with the counterpart of bodily excesses, diseases, toxic addictions. These are the topics explored in Marrone's books *Il discorso della salute (verso una sociosemiotica medica)* [Health discourse, towards a sociosemiotics of medicine] and *La cura Ludovico* and *Sensi alterati* which all appeared in 2005.

A field deeply explored by sociosemiotics is that of the visual. Drawing on considerations on perception by Eco (1997b) and Greimas (1984), Pezzini (2008) emphasises the cultural dimension and the conventional – and thereby social – status of images, both in terms of production and circulation as well as reception. For the visual field, semiotics “hypothesizes a culturally acquired reading grid and therefore subject to variability and reformulation” (Pezzini 2008: 16). Pezzini shows the connections between socio-semiotics and semiotics of culture²³ by putting the concept of semiosphere (Lotman 1985) in relation to that of discursivity, and highlighting the intrinsic intertextuality of the visual. According to Pezzini, the texts of a culture are *syncretic* made up of different expressive substances (verbal, visual, sound, etc.) and are the product of *intersemiotic translations* (Jakobson 1987), whose underlying structures (on the level of content) semiotics seeks to reconstruct.

As regards film and the audiovisual field in general, studies were conducted on television and seriality (Pozzato and Grignaffini 2008; Dusi ed. 2019; Giannitrapani and Marrone 2020), and on the various audiovisual formats (Pezzini ed. 2002; Peverini 2004; Pezzini and Rutelli eds. 2005; Dusi and Spaziente eds. 2006; Santangelo 2013). The musical and artistic brand-

ing discourses have attracted much scholarship (Calefato et al. eds. 2007; Spaziente 2007; Pozzato and Spaziente eds. 2009; Marino 2020). The issue of political strategies has also been reviewed especially with regard to the war (Montanari 2004) and terrorism discourse, which gained a hold around the 2000s (Fabbri 2001).

As sociosemiotics broadened its gaze and produced a variety of studies, the need to take stock in terms of theory and method emerged.²⁴ Pozzato's *Foto di matrimoni e altri saggi* [Wedding photos and other essays] (2012) is a collection of essays on subjects ranging from customs (on wedding photos, on cooking in men's magazines, on fitness and dietetics), to consumption (shopping at supermarkets, packaging), television (on series and prize programs) and architecture (the refurbishment of three churches in Modena). The volume puts forward the sociosemiotic method as a "reasoned bricolage" between different disciplines (the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss and Geertz, the historiography of Carlo Ginzburg, among others) which share "the same purpose of discovering meaningful relationships rather than actuality ontologically intended" (Pozzato 2012: 7). This means reiterating the irrelevance, for semiotic studies of the social, of the opposition between 'high' and 'low' culture: for the purpose of understanding the "swarm of human interactions" (*ibidem*), it may be interesting to examine photographs of spouses over time to reveal, behind the changing poses and aesthetics, different representations of society and of the family; to study the branding phenomenon it may be useful to survey supermarket shopping patterns or the communication of detergent labels²⁵; to determine the idea of the body held by a given society it may be good practice to visit gyms, and/or research how fitness is talked about in men's magazines.²⁶ It is the anthropological density of a phenomenon, argues Pozzato, that attracts the sociosemiotic gaze.

Mangano (2019), in *Ikea e altre semiosfere* [Ikea and other semiospheres] analyses food design, photography, advertising, with a special focus on Ikea, posing the important methodological question of corpus in sociosemiotics. Unlike sociology, which is based on the principle of statistical representativeness, in semiotics, where "we do not analyze opinions or individuals but texts, trying to reconstruct the way they generate meaning" (Mangano 2019: 22), the representativeness of texts or exhaustivity of the samples are not relevant criteria *a priori*; however they acquire relevance when the semiologist has identified, like the linguist or anthropologist, the transformation rule that underlies the variability of a phenomenon. For example, to study food advertising, in consideration of the vast array of possible examples, the corpus will be built gradually identifying the underlying rules, the recurring semantic forms, taking as a starting point the use of models that are thus subjected to verification. This will be done following a criterion consisting in the "exhaustion of the model" (Greimas and Courtés eds. 1979, entry "corpus").

6. Revivals and perspectives: from sociosemiotics to semiotics of collectives

In the 1990s the anthropologist of the contemporary and philosopher of science and techniques Bruno Latour proposed a redefinition of the social through the inclusion of non-human entities: Latour and his colleagues of the “actor-network theory”²⁷, believe that the opposition we are accustomed to between humans – endowed with conscience and culture – and non-humans – mute representatives of reality and nature (objects, spaces, means of transport, writing instruments, small and large technologies but also trees, meteorological forces, microbes, viruses, nanoparticles, enzymes, and other invisible entities such as spirits and supernatural beings) – is the result of a typically modern thought, and not the only possible ontology.²⁸ His idea of the social world may be profitable for contemporary sociosemiotics, above all because it takes into consideration forms of agency that are not necessarily human but are equally effective in building social networks. Perhaps even more effective because they are usually considered simple tools, trivial objects, mute things. Latour shares with the anthropologist Philippe Descola (2005) the notion that the “great divide” between culture and nature to which we are accustomed is just one of the many ways in which existence is articulated and that it is the result of a process of continuous hybridisation and subsequent concealment of this hybridisation. Culture and social rules, in order to exist, lead humans to make constant use of non-humans and it is to them that they delegate many social and moral tasks, forming hybrids: an artificial road bump (Latour 1992), an automatic door closer, or a special key (Latour 1993), for example. For Latour the social is not made up of relationships between human subjects alone, but of collectives, assemblages of humans and non-humans on which the action is differently distributed. More than one human culture opposing one nature of things, societies are made up of different natures-cultures compositions. The same idea is reflected in Descola’s four ontologies (2005) and the ways in which the collectives in each ontology are made up. Let us review them.

The ontology which Descola defines naturalism, according to which there is a common physiological basis between humans and non-humans to which correspond differences in subjectivity, culture, and language (physical continuity and discontinuity of interiority), is the typical paradigm of Western and modern cultures: collectives are only human, are divided into languages and customs (cultures) and exclude everything that exists independently of them (nature). As Descola argues, different ontologies dominate in other cultures, that is, different ways of articulating the differences between nature and culture. There is animism (continuity of interiority and physical discontinuity), according to which humans and non-humans (animals, plants, divinities) have a common soul beyond the differences in physical manifestation: everything that exists has a social life regardless of its appearance, and humans and non-humans form relationships of affinity. Analogism (physical discontinuity and discontinuity of interiority) is the ontology according to which the world is

a set of differences and singularities which, however, form relations with each other through vague similarities based on the most disparate criteria. Therefore, a thing is similar to another because they are both hot, or because they share the trait of femininity, or because they somehow influence our personality and behaviour (as in astrology): here the collectives of humans and non-humans, according to Descola, are distributed in a single collective (the world) organised in hierarchical segments (e.g. lineages). Totemism (continuity of interiority and physical continuity), on the other hand, presupposes a similarity in terms of soul and, equally, of exterior appearance between things, human beings, animals, divinities: in a totemic group all beings, living and not, share a certain characteristic (temperament, a physical trait, a substance, etc.). In this case the collective is the manifestation of a pre-existing totemic class.

What do Latour's theories on hybrids and Descola's on ontologies have to do with sociosemiotics? Both perspectives broaden the reflection on the social domain by reasoning about collectives whose actualisation, human or non-human, is not the main point of interest. Over the past twenty years, Italian sociosemiotics has evolved to incorporate non-human actors into the study of the social, such as objects, technologies, and animals. In the same years that saw the emergence of sociosemiotics, the project of a "society of objects" was put forward by Landowski and Marrone (eds. 2002) as a further and fruitful field of analysis in the study of society:

the semiotics of objects fits into a more general sociosemiotic inquiry, where the observation of the internal structures of the object is tied with that of its external relations with the subject (Landowski and Marrone eds. 2002: 30).

The semiotics of design (Mangano and Marrone 2002; Deni 2002; Mangano and Mattozzi eds. 2009; Mangano 2009, 2010, 2019) has shown how social and human meaning is articulated and circulates within and through objects, not as an addition to their technical functions but on the contrary as a product of their design, their insertion in society and their use. As regards the animal world, by studying how animals are viewed in a certain culture, zoosemiotic studies²⁹ have shed light on the way in which that same culture perceives itself. Research in this regard has focussed on representations of animals in advertising and television (Mangano 2019; Marrone 2019), animalist campaigns (Giannitrapani 2018; Ventura Bordenca 2018), cartoons (Mangiapane 2020), abstinence from meat (Ventura Bordenca 2019).

Italian sociosemiotics, as it has been practiced in recent years, can be considered a semiotics of collectives, insofar as it aims at identifying meaning that is generated, disseminated and reflected in multiple discourses produced by humans and non-humans: people, media, objects, animals. A search for meaning conducted in the spirit of a marked semiotics, with which Fabbri (2021) referred to a specific project for the construction and establishment of semiotics as a human science: a project that has "tactical value in relation to other genuine or purported semiotic theories", these being heterogeneous and epistemologically approximate theories that constitute the

unmarked semiotics (pop philosophy, cultural studies, philosophy of language, the revival of referentialism, the reaffirmation of naturalism and ontology) [a project that has an additional] strategic value with respect to the project of a semiotics ‘with a scientific vocation’ that is the legacy of the best structuralism (linguistic, anthropological, philosophical, sociological) and falls into the science of signification developed by A. J. Greimas and from his school (Marrone 2021: 387).

Notes

- 1 Umberto Eco’s interest in television and its ideologies has consistently informed his theoretical and journalistic work (see Eco 2018).
- 2 On the levels of semiotics cf. Greimas (1966); on the idea of “missing links” in semiotic theory and practice see Fabbri (1998, 2021), Marrone (2011, 2021).
- 3 “Sociosemiotics” entry in Greimas and Courtés (eds. 1979).
- 4 For an analysis on advertising and sociosemiotics see Boero’s chapter in this volume (153–170).
- 5 Marrone will take up this issue again and establish a number of basic criteria underlying textuality (2010, 2011), among them that of the negotiation of the boundaries of the text as the object of analysis.
- 6 For a sociosemiotics of fashion see the chapter by Terracciano in this volume (171–194).
- 7 See the chapter on gastronomy in this volume (133–152).
- 8 On this topic, see among others Marrone’s article (2017b).
- 9 For an overview of the sociosemiotics of space, cf. chapter by Giannitrapani in this volume (195–224).
- 10 Semiotics has developed an apparatus of models to explain passionate phenomena. The semiotic perspective conceives passions as meaning effects of discourse, whose conditions of existence and generation can be investigated through textual analysis. Unlike psychology and other human sciences, semiotics of passions does not conceive the affective side as opposed to the cognitive one, nor does it consider it as an entirely individual phenomenon, but connects it to cultural codes and identifies rules of functioning and deployment. The main contributions in this field are: Fabbri and Sbisà (1985); Fabbri and Pezzini (eds. 1987); Greimas and Fontanille (1991); Pezzini (ed. 1991); Fontanille (1993).
- 11 On this topic see Eco (2018).
- 12 This experimental inquiry carried out by RAI in 1974, based on a concept by Eco, was an important example of verification of the textual model: three different versions of an invented but plausible piece of news on political-religious clashes in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, were reported to communities of viewers, each time giving a different interpretation of the facts. The experiment aimed at verifying how each text-news predisposed the recipient’s reception.
- 13 Marrone delves into the thematizing procedures (see Livolsi ed. 1984; Calabrese and Violi 1984; Eco 1997a; Marrone 1998), with which a certain theme is created, more or less voluntarily, by combining news concerning similar events: for example, when several news reports about young people who died from drugs are

featured on the same page, the theme 'drugs lead to death among young people' will be created, even if it is not explicitly written anywhere. Sociosemiotic analysis is not so much interested in understanding the way in which the drug problem is reported in newspapers, as in understanding how the media contribute to building the social issue recognised as 'the drug problem among young people'.

- 14 There are more objectifying newspapers, which tend to use an impersonal style, and others more subjectivating, which instead explicitly express their point of view on the facts of the world (Landowski 1998a): objectivity or subjectivity become values that are to the reader's liking, or not.
- 15 "Just as there is no such thing as a faithful or unfaithful translation of a text, but only a good or bad translation depending on the communication purposes that have been preliminarily set, there is no journalistic objectivity but rather a good or bad 'move' in the world depending on the communication purposes" (Marrone 2001: 91). From this point of view, "the distinction between 'news' and 'comment' also falls away: it is not a question of keeping information and opinion separate but of thinking of a different meaning effect that (...) the newspaper's discourse can sometimes produce" (*ivi*: 91).
- 16 On governing knowledge flows, see Fontanille (1987).
- 17 See Calabrese and Volli (1995); Marrone (1998) on passions in journalistic discourse.
- 18 For an explanation of this model, see Boero's chapter on advertising in this volume (153–170).
- 19 For studies in political semiotics, see Fabbri and Marcarino (1985); Pozzato (1997); Pezzini (2001).
- 20 Landowski (1989) reconstructs the profound logic of political narrative by identifying the actantial role of the Sender towards the rulers in public opinion. The Sender is the actant who establishes the system of values directing action (Greimas and Courtés eds. 1979; Greimas 1983). From an analysis of French newspapers, however, a more complex combination emerges: depending on how the relationship between rulers and public opinion is constructed in the news, the latter can take on the role of Sender ('the political class follows public opinion') or its opposite, anti-Sender ('the political class disappoints public opinion'), as well as non-Sender ('the political class faces public opinion') or non-anti-Sender ('the political class challenges public opinion').
- 21 On spatiality cf. Giannitrapani's chapter in this volume (195–224).
- 22 On new museums, see Pezzini (2011).
- 23 On semiotics of culture, see Sorrentino in this volume (15–47).
- 24 Ferraro (2012) proposes a "neoclassical" sociosemiotics, that is a semiotics that does not seek new models but draws on the tenets of classical semiotics. In Fabbri (2017b) there are important clarifications on some central sociosemiotic issues: belief, effectiveness, translation.
- 25 On the semiotics of packaging see also Ventura Bordenca (2014).
- 26 On sociosemiotics of dietetics, see Mangano and Marrone (eds. 2013) and Ventura Bordenca (2020).

- 27 For further study on the relationship between Latour and semiotics see Landowski and Marrone (eds. 2002); Mattozzi (ed. 2006); Mangano (2009); Peverini (2019); Mangano (2021); Latour (2021); Ventura Bordenca (2021b).
- 28 Latour (1991, 1999, 2005, 2013).
- 29 On the issue of animality, see the recent semiotic bibliography: Martinelli (ed. 2010); Marrone (ed. 2017c); Marrone and Mangano (eds. 2018); Giannitrapani and Man-
giapane (eds. 2018); Bertrand and Marrone (eds. 2019).

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