

Unravelling semiotics in 2022: A year in review

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Introductory notes

Just as there are life recapitulations, there are also academic reviews whose aim is to chart the accomplishments reached in a given field of study over a limited period. Semiotics, historically regarded as a somewhat “ostracized” discipline (Eco 1987),³ has actively pursued such endeavours, as reviews and synthesis of the field have played a crucial role in identifying roots, predecessors, and research programmes. Such efforts have contributed to establishing semiotics as an independent and autonomous discipline.

Several seminal semiotic works frame the discipline’s development in a chronological narrative, and are now considered masterpieces. Roman Jakobson’s famous “Retrospect” (1981) and “A glance at the development of semiotics” (1985[1975]),⁴ presented at the first international congress of semiotics, as well as Thomas A. Sebeok’s proclivity towards “cataloguing semiotics” (Sebeok 1976),⁵ are examples of a broader effort to look back and quantify what has been achieved. Umberto Eco’s works similarly emphasized the value of reviewing, listing, and cataloguing, including what he called the “vertigo” of infinity in making lists (Eco 2009). Another example is the perhaps lesser-known *The Philip Mills Arnold Semiology Collection* (Russel 1973; Davis 2010). These important works, and many others not listed here due to limitations of space and time, underscore the critical role that reviewing has played in establishing semiotics as a discipline.

This article has a limited scope and depth, as it covers only one year of semiotic

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³ Umberto Eco (1987: 109) refers to the history of semiotics as the “history of an ostracism”.

⁴ See also Jakobson 1979 for the original French-language version.

⁵ In his “A semiotic web: A chronicle of prejudices” Sebeok (1976: 21–25) includes a section entitled “Cataloguing semiotics”.

publications from two international outlets. However, it is systematic in its ethos and approach, and it is part of a larger project that began in 2021 and will continue in the years to come. This ambitious project aims to provide a valuable service to the global academic community of semioticians by summarizing the research in the field. The present essay is the second instalment of this annual review series, jointly initiated by the two oldest semiotics journals in the world, *Sign Systems Studies* (founded in 1964) and *Semiotica* (founded in 1969). This review presents a summary of the output published in 2022 in the two international semiotics journals, while also highlighting the main semiotic trends emerging from the articles.

The present collaborative effort to review the year's work in semiotics in 2022 builds on important precedents that ought to be acknowledged. The first instalment in this series appeared in the aforementioned journals in 2022, in both English as well as French (Nuessel, Puumeister 2022a, 2022b) and provided a thematic summary of the semiotic research conducted in the previous year, 2021. However, it is important to note that any attempt at recapitulation is inherently biased, as it reflects the reviewers' own prejudices, limitations, and selective criteria for grouping articles according to common threads, themes, and theoretical affinities. It is important to keep in mind the vast number of articles published in different languages (English and French) when conducting this type of review. In 2022, *Sign Systems Studies* published four issues [vol. 50(1–4)], two of which were special issues, and a total of 24 articles. During the same year, *Semiotica* published six issues (244–249), one of which was a special issue, with a total of 58 articles. Nonetheless, following in the footsteps of our predecessors, we aim to contribute to the field of semiotics by summarizing the output published in 2022 and identifying key thematic threads that run throughout the corpus.

In this review, we have identified seven thematic threads. To introduce our findings, we will follow a structured approach and present the review in the following order:

- (1) echoes of Juri Lotman: a centenary exploration of semiotic landscapes;
- (2) beyond structuralism: Saussure's semiotic legacy for modern scholars;
- (3) exploring bodily semiotics: a curious look at the *Semiotica* special issue on 'semiotricity';
- (4) the shades of symbolicity, models, and interpretants: a Peircean exploration;
- (5) semiotic shifts: COVID, post-COVID-19 narratives, natural disasters and crises;
- (6) constructing online identities: the power of visual rhetoric in the social media era;
- (7) fluid semiosis: the re-emergence of cognitive visual semiotics.

1. Echoes of Juri Lotman: A centenary exploration of semiotic landscapes

In the year 2022, the centenary of the birth of a towering figure in cultural semiotics, Juri Lotman (1922–1993), was celebrated by the global community of semioticians. The publication of *The Companion to Juri Lotman: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Tamm, Torop 2022) was dedicated to Lotman's intellectual legacy and featured contributions from scholars across Europe, Australia, South and North America. Congresses, conferences, and workshops held in honour of Lotman brought together friends, colleagues, and scholars of the Tartu academic, many of whom were familiar with him primarily through his written works. Since Lotman's legacy is voluminous, encompassing over 800 multifaceted scholarly works, it serves as a rich source of ideas, inspiration, and debate for numerous researchers. In the same year, the special issue of *Lexia* entitled *Re-Thinking Juri Lotman in the Twenty-First Century* (Gherlone, Gramigna, Leone 2021) demonstrated the applicability of Lotman's frameworks in conceptualizing and analysing contemporary issues. Furthermore, the fiftieth volume of *Sign Systems Studies*, a journal founded under Lotman's leadership, was published, bearing the title *Lotmaniana and Semiotic Publications from Tartu*. In a fitting tribute to the jubilee year, it extended an acknowledgment to Lotman, presenting an overview of the journals published by the Department of Semiotics in Tartu. Additionally, it provided a survey of the volumes released in the Tartu Semiotics Library book series (Kull, Salupere, Lepik 2022), a list of Tartu semioticians' doctoral dissertations (Kull 2022), and compiled a list of all articles published in the 50 volumes of *Sign Systems Studies* (Kull, Puumeister 2022).

Self-description is an autocommunicative process that is particularly important in the realization of identity dominants and the creation of inner order, as well as in the setting of future directions (see Madisson 2016). Self-description can be thought of as an idealized self-portrait created within the nucleus of the semiosphere (Lotman 2000: 129), which delineates the centre clearly but paints the periphery with rather broad brush strokes (Lotman 2005: 2015). Scientific journals are undoubtedly a crucial core structure, reflecting the most significant research questions and trends, not to mention the written and unwritten rules of constructing and formatting texts. Peer reviewers and editors act as filters, accepting original, high-level academic articles that meet the criteria established in the nucleus, while leaving aside a multitude of other texts. The latter live their lives in other semiospheres. The 50th issue of *Sign Systems Studies* provides the readers with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the core of Tartu semiotics from a self-descriptive angle and gives voice to the editors of three publications to share their professional experiences and observations.

In the case of *Sign Systems Studies* (founded in 1964), Kalevi Kull and Ott Puumeister mark the journal's rich history and its foundation on the Lotmanian approach which has, from the very beginning, alongside emphasizing the structural description of phenomena, also been an approach that strives towards the understanding of the dynamics and full complexity of human cultural history. With a commitment to exploring both theoretical thought and empirical analyses, the journal uniquely positions itself as a participant in the construction and negotiation of sociocultural processes, enabling the authors to shape actively future developments in semiotics (Kull, Puumeister 2022: 547). The editor of the Estonian Semiotics Association's (ESA) Estonian-language yearbook *Acta Semiotica Estica* (founded in 2001) Silvi Salupere (2022: 517) points out that the primary goals of this publication continue to be to distribute Estonian semiotic research, foster interdisciplinary semiotic discussions, and contribute to the structuring of the reflective thought of Estonian culture in order to influence socio-cultural and national identity discourse. *Acta Semiotica Estica's* mission has been to reflect the diverse life of Estonian semiotics, not only in the form of academic articles but also by providing space for "Notes", meant for recording diverse eye-catching observations and eye-opening reflections in a free form and genre, and "Chronicles", which present an overview of the previous year's events both in Estonia and abroad in which ESA members have participated (Salupere 2022: 518). The student-edited online magazine *Hortus Semioticus* (first published in 2005) perhaps most distinctly embodies the dynamic and youthful vibe of the periphery. It has evolved into a flexible and innovative platform that enables students and young academics to discuss semiotics, share their work, reflect on academic experiences, and explore creative ideas; the addition of the "*Hortus Semioticus* blog section", for instance, has broadened the venue, welcoming various formats such as video recordings, commentary on current work, explanation of complex theories in accessible terms, etc., and thus fostering a novel platform open to semioticians everywhere (Alexandri, Pern 2022: 526–527). In the self-portrait of Tartu semiotics, *Sign Systems Studies*, *Acta Semiotica Estica*, and *Hortus Semioticus* emerge as vibrant strokes of colour, weaving together academic exploration and innovative expression, and shaping a dynamic and multifaceted image of Estonian semiotics that resonates with creativity and interdisciplinary dialogue.

Additionally, the special issue published a paper by Lotman (2022), titled "Literary criticism must be scientific", which had not been previously translated into English. The Russian-language original appeared in the journal *Voprosy Literaturny* in 1967. This article is situated within the heated debate between structuralists and their opponents, a discussion that focused on the validity and heuristic value of structuralist methodology in literary criticism. Notably,

the article stands apart from other writings by Lotman due to its sporadically confrontational tone. It is partly for this reason that the same issue also features an extensive paper by the translator Pietro Restaneo, which delves into the intellectual and ideological context and the evolution of the debate in question and provides a compass for understanding the course of argumentation and objectives in Lotman's text. Restaneo highlights that while Lotman fiercely defended structuralism, he also uniquely interpreted his opponents' ideas, translating them into a structuralist context. This contributed to an enriched structuralist methodology and opened up new interpretative possibilities (Restaneo 2022: 477–480). Restaneo (2022: 480) concludes by emphasizing that Lotman's ultimate goal was harmonization of historicist and formalist methodologies, a cornerstone in his work in cultural semiotics.

Along with this, the Lotmaniana issue includes Daniele Monticelli's paper that gives a critical overview of the history of the translations of Juri Lotman's works into English, spanning a period of nearly 50 years, as well as Anglophone scholarship on Lotman, and provides a nuanced insight into three recent English-language publications exclusively focusing on Lotman's work, edited by Marek Tamm, Peeter Torop, and Andreas Schönle. In his analysis of *Culture, Memory and History: Essays in Cultural Semiotics* (Lotman 2019), Monticelli (2022: 504) praises the selection and contextualization of Juri Lotman's later works by editor Marek Tamm. However, he also hints at potential oversimplifications (Monticelli 2022: 507), such as the suggestion that Lotman's major contribution to semiotics lies in highlighting the mnemonic function of culture, indicating that this might lead to some debatable conclusions. In his analysis of the anthology of Lotman's works *Culture and Communication: Signs in Flux* (Lotman 2020) Monticelli (2022: 507) appreciates editor Andreas Schönle's broad approach in presenting Lotman's contributions. Monticelli (2022: 509) highlights how Schönle's approach offers a critical examination of Lotman's work by not only revealing the potential of Lotman's insights, but also presenting the shortcomings, and includes the perspectives of critical scholars both in the introduction of the volume and in brief prefaces to individual translated essays. Monticelli (2022: 509) draws attention to *The Companion to Juri Lotman: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Tamm, Torop 2022) as perhaps the most significant contribution to the interdisciplinary and international spread of Juri Lotman's thought to date. He points out that the main strengths of the companion include the skilful coordination of the work of the editors Marek Tamm and Peeter Torop and their collective, systematic, and interdisciplinary approach. These aspects reflect the intricate nature of Lotman's scholarship and provide a multifaceted perspective on his intellectual legacy (Monticelli 2022: 510). Additionally, he emphasizes the open framework

of Lotman's research, which permits an infinite number of interpretations, and the transdisciplinary nature of the work, stressing the influence of such concepts as polyglotism, dialogue, and translation across various fields and cultures (Monticelli 2022: 511).

The detailed exploration of Juri Lotman's works and the critical overview of his translations in the jubilee issue offer an intriguing glimpse into the evolution of Tartu semiotics. The collective insight of scholars, the critical examination, and the open framework of Lotman's research emphasize the richness and adaptability of his thought, leading to a self-description of Tartu semiotics that not only resonates within the field of semiotics but has also transcended across various disciplines and cultures.

2. Beyond structuralism: Saussure's semiotic legacy for modern scholars

Ferdinand de Saussure is a renowned figure in the study of semiotics, and alongside Charles Sanders Peirce he is often credited as one of the founding fathers of the field. Saussure's seminal work, *Cours de linguistique générale*, is widely regarded as a precursor to the birth and development of semiotics, or semiology as he termed it. However, despite its wide readership, the text is sometimes misinterpreted and shrouded in myth.

John E. Joseph (2022) has published an in-depth analysis of Saussure's theories of semiotics and structuralist semiotics. This is included in a special issue of *Sign Systems Studies* edited by Ekaterina Velmezova and Emanuele Fadda (2022a) and dedicated to Ferdinand de Saussure's intellectual legacy in contemporary semiotics. The editors aim to present a fresh and non-dogmatic perspective on Saussure's ideas, moving beyond *Cours de linguistique générale* to explore the breadth and depth of his works (Velmezova, Fadda 2022b). Indeed, the articles in this special issue cover a range of topics, from structuralist semiotics to the reception of Saussure's works in the Russian-speaking world. Also, potential dialogues are introduced between Hjelmslev and Barthes, Saussure and Prieto, as well as between Saussure, Hjelmslev and other thinkers. By providing a diverse range of perspectives on Saussure's ideas, this special issue offers a multifaceted exploration of his intellectual legacy and its relevance to contemporary scholarship.

Joseph's article that opens the special issue, explores the Saussurean dichotomies. The article discusses Saussure's tendency to think in binary oppositions or dichotomies, which is a defining characteristic of his thinking. Joseph highlights several of the dichotomies that can be traced in Saussure's work, including those of

linguistic versus non-linguistic sign and internal versus external aspects of linguistic signs. However, the most enduring of these dichotomies, according to Joseph, is the *langue/parole* divide, which persists even after various reformulations and critiques of the structural approach to linguistic semiotics. As Joseph (2022: 33) notes, “Saussure’s *langue – parole* divide continues to be essential to the understanding of linguistic semiotics”. Despite efforts to reformulate Saussure’s linguistic semiotics, such as those made by Hjelmslev, the importance of the *langue/parole* dichotomy remains central to the field. Joseph’s analysis offers a valuable contribution to our understanding of these dichotomies and their ongoing relevance in contemporary semiotics scholarship.

Louis Hjelmslev’s reformulation of Saussurean structuralist semiotics is a central theme explored by Alain Perusset in his article, which focuses on untangling a crucial conceptual misunderstanding – the difference between denotation myth and connotation. Perusset draws on Hjelmslev’s concepts of denotation and connotation, as well as Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* to argue for the confusion between connotation in Hjelmslev’s metalanguage and the concept of myth in Barthes’s work. The author highlights the “false nature” underlying such myths, a key aspect that may have been overlooked in later interpretations of Barthes’s work by Eco, Pezzini, and Zenkine (Perusset 2022: 42).

E. Israel Chávez Barreto offers a unique perspective on Saussure’s *Cours*, examining it through the lens of Luis Prieto. The author explores the connection between Saussure and Prieto, and the influence of Saussure’s thought on Prieto’s work. Chávez Barreto (2022: 61) argues that an understanding of Saussurian linguistic theory is important for comprehending Prieto’s work, and explores the role of Saussurean relations of associativity and comparison in Prieto’s theoretical framework. Ultimately, this study highlights the continuity in Prieto’s work, from his early linguistically-oriented undertakings to his wider-ranging general semiotics.

Whilst Ekaterina Velmezova, Daria Zalesskaya and Patrick Sériot take a different route by unravelling the reception of the work of Saussure in the context of Soviet linguistics, and more generally in the Russian-speaking world (Velmezova 2022; Zalesskaya 2022; Sériot 2022), Emanuele Fadda and Anne-Gaëlle Toutain suggest the need to go beyond Saussure, as it were, in order to chart unexplored territories such as natural sciences, biology, and biosemiotics (Fadda 2022; Toutain 2022).

3. Exploring bodily semiotics: A curious look at the *Semiotica* special issue on semiotricity

In October 2022, a special issue of *Semiotica* dedicated to semiotricity was published, shedding light on the semiosis related to physical activity in various contexts, whether sports, games, or art. Drawing upon Pierre Parlebas (1981: 209), the introduction defines ‘semiotricity’ as a field of study that scrutinizes the meaningful motor situations from the vantage point of their incorporation of sign systems. These systems are intricately connected with the physical actions of the participants, establishing a meaning-making network of communication, strategy, and interaction in the realm of physical activity (Martínez-Santos, Bordes, Nubiola 2022: 1–2). With this special issue the editors Raúl Martínez-Santos, Pascal Bordes, and Jaime Nubiola have undertaken a commendable effort to introduce and elucidate semiotricity systematically and extensively, through diverse conceptual frameworks and examples from around the globe. The issue is bilingual, encompassing five original papers in French,⁶ among which conceptual ambitions set the tone, and eleven in English, which predominantly offer analytical insights rooted in specific empirical studies. This innovative edition inspires us, and likely many others, to explore and interpret their individual and collective experiences, realizing insights from the perspective of bodily/motor semiotics. In the following, we delineate several concepts and thematic overlaps that we noticed in various articles. These served as our touchstones when entering the universe of semiotricity.

3.1. Parlebas’s theory as a key to understanding meaning making related to bodily experiences

Pierre Parlebas is a renowned French sociologist and theorist of contemporary physical education and sports. Over his remarkable career, he has elaborated a unique and unified approach to physical education and developed various frameworks and tools for the modelling and analysis of sports and games. Pierre Parlebas stands as a seminal figure in the study of semiotricity, frequently cited in nearly all articles within this special issue, encompassing his works on the meaning of movement published over more than six decades. Hence, it is perhaps understandable that our review captures only a fraction of the frameworks and observations deriving from him and reflected in this special edition. In the opening article of the special issue *Semiotricity*, Parlebas delves into how

⁶ We utilized the assistance of ChatGPT-4 for the translation of French-language articles (R. G., M.-L. M.).

individuals interpret their environment via bodily movements. Drawing upon Saussurean semiotics Parlebas introduces three principal categories of praxic communication: *ecoseme*, *gesteme*, and *praxeme*. The ‘*ecoseme*’ pertains to a player’s perception and interpretation of their material environment in sports contexts. Rather than a mere reflection of the surroundings, it is an anticipatory decision-making process based on perceived cues. For instance, a rock climber might identify certain handholds on a cliff face not just by their obviousness but by their strategic relevance to the ascent (Parlebas 2022: 19–21). ‘*Gesteme*’ relates to non-verbal communication in socio-motor activities, grounded on interactions between participants. Examples of such *gestemic* communication in sport can be seen when a player uses hand movements to indicate a space for their teammate to occupy or when an arm is raised as a signal for a pass. These non-verbal cues, whether spontaneous or conventional, aim to influence the ongoing action, conveying tactical requests or even expressing emotional and aesthetic reactions (Parlebas 2022: 22–26). ‘*Praxeme*’ denotes observable motor behaviours that are subject to varied and sometimes even contradictory interpretations, serving as pivotal components of praxic communication within sports and games. These behaviours can be read as signs in which the observable action represents the signifier, and the underlying tactical intent as perceived is the signified. For instance, in sports, deceptive actions such as feints in dribbling or shooting, or misleading an opponent by making them move in the wrong direction, are examples of *praxemes*. These *praxemes*, embodying both the physical movement and the strategic intention behind it, underscore the intricate relationship of tactics and communication inherent in gameplay (Parlebas 2022: 27–33). Through his comprehensive exploration of semioticity, Parlebas not only deepens our understanding of praxic communication in sports and games but also underscores the intricate interplay between physical actions and their underlying tactical, emotional, and communicative significance.

The differentiation of basic categories in praxic communication provided inspiration for several articles in this special issue. Alexandre Oboeuf, Luc Collard, and Josephine Buffet delved into the nuances of *gestemes* and *praxemes* in team sports, with particular emphasis on football and handball, as well as in traditional games like “Seated ball” and “Three camps”. *Gestemes*, auxiliary motor actions, often convey broader emotional or communicative intents and were observed universally across all games, exemplified by actions such as raising an arm to indicate breaking away. On the other hand, *praxemes* represent fundamental motor actions with a strategic intent and are critical of the very fabric of sports such as football, serving as essential building blocks for gameplay and strategy. The paper underscores the intricate semiotic dynamics at play in

sports interactions, where both *gestemes* and *praxemes* play pivotal roles (Oboeuf, Alexandre, Buffet 2022).

Pascal Bordes (2022) takes a dive into the realm of *praxemes*, focusing specifically on the dribble in sports like football. Rather than examining the dribble as a mere motoric maneuver, Bordes construes it as a dynamic conduit of intentional social significations. Within this frame, the dribble emerges as an epitome of relations and interactions. Instead of representing an external event or narrative, the dribble in itself becomes an action intimately tied to the objectives it is aiming to achieve. Its significance is deeply rooted in the shared rules of the game. These insights shed light on the semiotic intricacies inherent in sports manoeuvres, asserting that the dribble, as a *praxeme*, is not just a functional motor task but also a rich communicative action with multi-layered meanings.

Pierre Parlebas's exploration of semiotricity offers a profound understanding of the language of movement within sports and games. His insights, as reflected in this special issue, take us beyond the mere mechanics of the game, unveiling the deeper communicative layers of even the most fleeting of gestures. Indeed, sports arenas are more than venues of athletic endeavour; they are stages where *praxic* communication fuses strategy, foresight, and semiotic resonance.

3.2. Insights from Peircean semiotics and the interplay of motor actions

Drawing upon the works of Parlebas, Martínez-Santos and Nubiola (2022) contend that traditional movement sciences cannot fully account for the emergence of both individual and collective actions in sports. They highlight the pivotal role of *semiosis* in deciphering the interaction and communication between individual *sociomotor* intelligences, thereby fostering their development. Martínez-Santos and Nubiola emphasize the distinction between 'signs of action' and 'signs in action', advocating for a dynamic comprehension of the domain of physical education and motor actions. By synthesizing Parlebas's (1976, 1977, 2006) frameworks with pragmatic semiotics of Peirce they advocate for a nuanced investigation into motor actions as complex semiotic processes (Martínez-Santos, Nubiola 2022).

Their article elucidates how Peirce's trichotomy of interpretants provides a nuanced framework for comprehending the communicative intricacies inherent in sports games and other physical activities. Their analysis reveals that the *intentional interpretant* represents an athlete's purposeful communication via a specific action. In contrast, the 'effectual interpretant' encompasses the immediate interpretation and comprehension of that action by observers. The 'communicational interpretant' bridges a collective understanding among participants, smoothly integrating

intention with interpretation. Building on this conceptual framework, every action in sports goes beyond mere physical movement; it transforms into a component of a multifaceted semiotic process, resonating with deep-seated habits and shared interpretive efforts (Martínez-Santos, Nubiola 2022: 96–97). Drawing on the example of the Olympic swimmer (de Waal 2013), Martínez-Santos and Nubiola demonstrate that the process of semiosis can be both finite and infinite. Bodily experiences, like a swimmer's sensation of muscle strain or resistance from water, function as signs that refine performance. When actions become deeply ingrained habits, they reach an ultimate interpretant, no longer serving as a sign. However, this can re-emerge as a dynamic interpretant when someone scrutinizes the technique. In sports like football, players grapple with immediate objects and dynamic interpretants, with truth framed by rules and scores – while semiosis has the potential to be infinite, the confines of the sport can curtail this process (Martínez-Santos, Nubiola 2022: 99).

Several other authors in this volume have showcased the explanatory power of Peirce's conceptual framework in unpacking the notion of semiotricity. Sally Ann Ness (2022) draws upon Peirce's distinctions between the immediate dynamic interpretant and the habituated normal interpretant to shed light on the intentionally risk-taking behaviours of the Stonemaster climbers at Joshua Tree during free soloing. She posits that their free soloing endeavours are not mere impulsive acts, but rather are anchored in deliberative reasoning aiming at self-mastery, and are influenced by both immediate reactions and historically established practices in navigating the distinctive challenges of the Joshua Tree landscape (Ness 2022: 220–221). Similarly, Katja Pettinen harnesses Peirce's notion of firstness to elucidate the manner in which martial artists, over prolonged skill development, begin to grasp movements not only through sight but also in a tactile manner, thereby transforming their foundational sensory-semiotic comprehension. Pettinen asserts that through sustained immersion and training, practitioners can augment their sensorial cognizance and interaction with their environment, transcending mere linguistic delineations (Pettinen 2022: 246–247).

3.3. Semiotricity in physical education

The concept of semiotricity in physical education, rooted in Parlebas's pioneering ideas, revolves around the symbolic and interpretative dimensions of motor actions. This framework seeks to understand how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to cues within physical and sportive environments. Various researchers have built upon Parlebas's notions, applying and testing them across diverse contexts and games. Miguel Pic and Vicente Navarro-Adelantado's (2022)

study highlights the role of motor communication networks – patterns that dictate player interactions and relationships in games – in physical education. Emphasizing their impact on meaning-making, the research advocates for educators to use these insights for a more transformative and culturally reflective approach to teaching (Pic, Navarro-Adelantado 2022). Pere Lavega-Burgués, Aaron Rillo-Albert, Carlos Mallén-Lacambra and Unai Sáez de Ocáriz's study delves into the meaning-making processes of the Marro game, drawing inspiration from Parlebas's notion that each game comprises both strategic and affective-relational semantics. In Marro, players engage in an exchange of relational and affective signs, illustrating diverse interpretations of conflict and the varied meanings in motor behaviours during the game (Lavega-Burgués *et al.* 2022). Ahmed Torki, Pascal Bordes, Iman Nefil, Astrid Aracama and Raúl Martínez-Santos's research sheds light on the symbolic registers of motor action, particularly how students in physical education discern and respond to significant cues in their physical environment. Their comparative analysis across physical education programmes in Algeria, France, and Spain highlights the underrepresentation and lack of explicit teaching of semiotricity, advocating for an educational shift towards a deeper integration of the interpretative aspects of motor actions (Torki *et al.* 2022). In sum, these studies indicate that the evolving discourse on semiotricity underscores its pivotal role in reshaping our understanding and pedagogy of physical education.

3.4. Navigating identity and marking borders in sports games

The special issue on semiotricity adeptly demonstrates the intricate identification processes within the realm of sports. The studies within the volume explore this complex relationship, examining subjects like football pitch dynamics, urban parkour, and basketball, each offering a unique perspective on the evolving boundaries and identities in these arenas. Specifically, Ruggero Ragonese's work investigates the liminal spaces in sports, placing emphasis on the oft-neglected areas surrounding the playing field. Iconic moments, such as Zidane's exit in the 2006 FIFA World Cup final and Cantona's kick, are brought to the fore to underline the delicate boundary between players and spectators. These moments become focal points for dense semantic interpretation, reshaping our perceptions of identity, behaviour, and cultural values both within and outside of the sports framework (Ragonese 2022). Ivan Islas and Sergio Varela delve into urban parkour, portraying it not merely as recreation but as a socio-semiotic event pivotal to identity formation among urban youth in Mexico City. By fluidly connecting physical urban terrains with virtual spaces, their work

emphasizes parkour's transcendence beyond pure physicality, evolving into a political statement within public spaces, intertwined with themes of masculinity, risk, and performance ideals (Islas, Varela 2022). Yair Tamayo shifts the focus to basketball, elucidating how specific rules, such as the three-point line, reshape player corporeity and influence the NBA athletes' identities. Tamayo's argument places emphasis on the intertwining of athletic bodies with cultural dynamics and semiotic borders, pointing out how such borders actively mould athletes' developing sense of self and on-court performance (Tamayo 2022). These studies weave a detailed mosaic of semiotic nuances, portraying sports as not just physical activities but dynamic arenas of evolving identities and shifting borders.

3.5. The peculiarities and boundaries of meaning making in boxing and ballet

The investigation of borders is a focal point in several contributions to this special issue. Articles by Göran Sonesson, as well as those by Christian Meyer and Ulrich von Wedelstaedt, elucidate the distinctive meaning-making processes associated with classical ballet and boxing, respectively, with a particular focus on delineating their unique boundaries. Sonesson posits that ballet and dance are best appreciated from afar, with iconic features, proxemic distance, and the narrative being pivotal for interpretation; in contrast, sports focus on achieving a winning goal, where suspense is central to the spectator's experience. While both domains involve bodily movement, their specificity arises from their organization: dance prioritizes the plasticity and aesthetics of movement, whereas sports are organized around the goal of victory, although elements like plasticity or style can still be of significance (Sonesson 2022).

In delineating the semiotic and asemiotic dimensions of boxing, Meyer and Wedelstaedt (2022) underscore that semiotic practices encapsulate the communicative, tactical, and ritualistic elements imbued with specific significations, exemplified by orchestrated interactions between coach and boxer or the strategic act of feinting. Conversely, asemiotic practices pertain to actions that exert a direct influence on an adversary, hindering interpretation or reaction as evidenced by forceful strikes that enfeeble or disorient the opponent. Asemiotic actions exploit the materiality of the boxer's body, capitalizing on elements such as weight, momentum, and vulnerability. These actions can disrupt the semiotic flow, shifting the focus from strategic interplay to raw physical impact. The friction between these practices uncovers the intricacy of strategy, communication, and physical prowess in boxing (Meyer, Wedelstaedt 2022).

3.6. Affective resonances in embodied experiences

In the realm of embodied interactions and performances, affect emerges as a pivotal undercurrent, driving nuanced interpretations and experiences. Ana Koncul's exploration of fencing for the blind and visually impaired underscores the profound role of affect in shaping meaning-making processes. Through an autoethnographic lens, she delves into the affective states and embodied sensations experienced by participants. Koncul illuminates how affect, described as a pre-conscious bodily potential, deeply permeates their interactions while shaping the dynamic exchange of sensory experiences with their environment and others. This continuous interplay culminates in unique interpretations grounded in affective exchanges (Koncul 2022). In a parallel vein, Sergei Kruk delineates the affective intricacies embedded in the viewers' reception of ballet performances. He emphasizes the anterior insular cortex's cardinal role in integrating our visceral, affective experiences with those of the dancers. Our brains are naturally attuned to the subtleties of bodily motions, using affect as a foundational lens through which movements' profound meanings are discerned (Kruk 2022). Collectively, these perspectives underscore affect's centrality in our engagement, interpretation, and resonance with embodied expressions.

We hope that our reviewing remarks illustrate that the special issue on semiotricity provides a comprehensive exploration of the realm of physical activity, seamlessly blending it with the nuances of semiotics. Venturing through diverse arenas – from sport to dance to education – the issue shines a light on the intricate relationships between bodily movement, intention, and meaning. As readers embark on this journey through the universe of semiotricity, they are invited to engage in a profound reflection in the course of which physical actions become more than mere motion and reverberate with deep-seated sign systems, showcasing the complexities of communication, strategy, and identity.

4. The shades of symbolicity, models, and interpretants: A Peircean exploration

This section brings together semiotic research that has leaned on the work of Charles S. Peirce, either as a theoretical foundation, so that his concepts are utilized to advance semiotic theory, or as an inspiration for applied works and analysis.

Steven Skaggs's article leverages Charles S. Peirce's semiotics to analyse visual design. To establish his model of "the visual gamut" (Skaggs 2022: 2) he utilizes Peirce's second trichotomy, which identifies the differences between icon, index, and symbol. The primary objective of Skaggs's model is to bridge the gap

between semiotic theory and practice. The visual gamut is a semantic conceptual interaction field and a map of varied territories where symbolic, indexical, and iconic elements interact. Instead of being exclusive and distinct categories of reference, icon, index, and symbol might create a semantic conceptual triangular plane with multiple combinations (Skaggs 2022: 9).

Ana Fernandes and João Queiroz (2022) have applied Peirce's pragmatic theory of signs to develop a general semiotic model that describes the photography-poetry relation. In their study, the authors present some preliminary results of their analysis of *Quarenta Clics em Curitiba*, a photobook by Paulo Leminski and Jack Pires. This model is derived from Peirce's theory, and it is found to be useful in understanding the irreducible relationship between photography and poetry.

Joel West (2022) examines models as signs from a Peircean perspective. West defines a model as an abstract representation of an idealized object, be it concrete or abstract. According to West, models may not necessarily resemble their objects in visual form, but they do conceptually reflect some aspect of their "ground". To illustrate this point, the author offers several examples of non-iconic models (West 2022: 73).

Lars Elleström's article focuses on the concept of symbolicity (Elleström 2022). While symbols have traditionally been associated with language, the author argues that the study of symbols should not be limited to only understanding linguistic symbols. Rather, Elleström asserts that it is crucial to develop a broader perspective on the role of symbolicity in human communication, as different forms of symbolic communication often intersect and overlap with one another. One key problem that the study addresses is the absence of a clear method for conceptualizing the vast and important role of symbolicity in human communication. Taking insights from Peirce's work, Elleström suggests that there are acquired habits and relationships between symbols and their objects, and that these habits and relationships often grow and expand in a complex manner. Elleström also suggests that symbolicity extends beyond organized systems, arguing that there are "free floating symbols" that are not necessarily part of any specific system (Elleström 2022: 9). To categorize symbols and explore their different functions in human communication, the study employs a two-dimensional framework that categorizes symbols based on their widespread use and their place within systems. Overall, the study offers a nuanced analysis of the complex and multi-faceted role of symbolicity in human communication, demonstrating the need for a broader understanding of symbols beyond traditional linguistic contexts.

Abdelhamid Elewa's (2022) paper is an applied study that delves into the semiotic values of colours in Arabic and English, two seemingly unrelated

languages. By examining the colours mentioned in the Qur'an through Peirce's semiotic framework, the study illuminates how socio-cultural differences shape the interpretation and translation of colour symbols in these languages. Through a corpus-based analysis, Elewa shows that colours in the Qur'an, as well as in Arabic more broadly, are intricately tied to the natural environment and cultural milieu of the early Muslim community who received the Qur'an directly from the Prophet.

Both Fee Haase (2022) and Giovanni Maddalena (2022) have approached the work of Peirce from a rhetorical perspective. Haase's analysis is focused on identifying and examining the rhetorical elements present in Peirce's philosophy and positioning his semiotics as a significant contribution to the broader discourse on rhetoric, particularly in relation to Aristotle. Maddalena, on the other hand, takes an interest in Peirce's gestures, namely, not only in how they function as a form of communication and facilitate the exchange of meaning between individuals, but also considering them as logical tools for synthetic reasoning.

As it is often claimed, Peircean semiotics is essentially triadic – semiotics in which a sign acts as a mediator between the object that determines it and the interpretant it determines. Peirce subsequently maintained that each sign has two objects and three interpretants, with consistent terms for the immediate and dynamical objects, but varying language for the interpretants. The most prevalent terminologies have been 'immediate/dynamical/final' and 'emotional/energetic/logical', with scholars engaging in extensive debates regarding their interconnectivity. Jon Alan Schmidt's article (2022) aims to re-contextualize this discussion by examining Peirce's drafts, wherein he developed the latter terminology while striving to introduce his pragmatism to a more accessible audience. Additionally, it assesses another set of interpretants, 'intentional/effectual/communicational', highlighting that instead of contradicting or replicating one another, these three trichotomies can complement one another.

5. Semiotic shifts: COVID, post-COVID-19 narratives, natural disasters and crisis

The year 2022 marks the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the globe, resulting in a plethora of scholarly works that analysed the associated issues and post-COVID narratives. Alongside topics related to COVID-19, we have also included the subject of natural disasters and "semiotic shifts" in the same group. We consider these matters to be significant as they offer semiotic insights into the present state of affairs worldwide, given the current milieu in which we reside.

The article “Masked COVID life: A socio-semiotic investigation” (Matulewska, Wagner, Marusek 2022) provides an examination of the semiotics of mask-wearing, along with a comparative analysis of discourse types and attitudes related to masks in three different countries: Poland, France, and the USA.

Social distancing as a dynamic cognitive attribute of acceptance among different groups in various contexts has been reinterpreted during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been legalized globally to alleviate the strain on healthcare systems and prevent fatalities. As a result, brand designers have encouraged the brand community to use products and services safely by minimizing in-person contact and maintaining social distance. The research conducted by Haghbin, Nambusubramaniam and Monfared (2022) explores the process of the “re-semioticization” of social distancing and how it creates value for brands post-COVID-19. Their research aligns with the area of marketing semiotics. A sample of 124 brands from 2019 to 2021 was investigated using qualitative and quantitative methods in a functional perspective. However, despite the creative efforts of brand designers in “re-semioticizing” social distancing to increase brand value, some semiotic layers of brand discourse were overlooked. Therefore, the authors propose a new perspective of marketing semiotics to evaluate consumer investments in light of a socio-cultural setting.

In Muzayin Nazaruddin’s article, the entanglement between natural disasters and cultural changes from an ecosemiotic perspective is explored (Nazaruddin 2022). The case study of Mt Merapi’s periodic eruptions in Indonesia and the natives’ interpretation of these natural hazards were selected as the focal point of the study. This research suggests that societies which are prone to disasters develop unique sign systems that bind cultural and natural processes to adapt to the constant natural hazards in their environment. In conclusion, the study indicates that natural disasters, intertwined with ongoing social transformations, may act as triggers of semiotic change in a community. This change can modify the interpretation of the natural disaster itself and shift the way people perceive and interact with their environment (Nazaruddin 2022).

6. Constructing online identities: The power of visual rhetoric in the social media era

The widespread diffusion of images in today’s society has undoubtedly hit an all-time high, to the extent that it can be described as an “avalanche” of images (Fontcuberta 2016: 53). As a result, managing the spread and creation of online images has become critical. This aspect has not gone unnoticed by semioticians, who recognize the multifaceted problem of visual semiotics in this area.

In his work, Enzo D'Armenio (2022) tackles the issue of managing and constructing one's image through images created and shared on social media. His approach encompasses both theoretical and practical perspectives. At a theoretical level, D'Armenio aims to propose an epistemology and methodology for understanding identity-related images on social networks, taking into account the various dimensions involved in their meaning (D'Armenio 2022: 90). To accomplish this, the author draws upon the theories of Paul Ricoeur to offer a fresh interpretation of identity theory. D'Armenio then applies and tests his methodology on a specific collection of online identity images, analysing the Instagram profile of the Canadian influencer Rupi Kaur. Ultimately, his hypothesis states that "identity images always express a negotiation between experiential pressure – manifested through the widespread distribution of body-related images and instinctive actions like liking, following, and sharing – and algorithmic pressure, embodied in the way social network software becomes the guardian of our long-term behavioral identity maintenance" (D'Armenio 2022: 113).

Ayşenur Benevento (2022) has conducted a study that employs a visual semiotic framework to analyse visual data on social media platforms such as Instagram, with a focus on studying the values of digital cultures related to childhood. Using the method of dynamic narrative enquiry, the study incorporates an analysis of 500 photographs of children shared by their parents on Instagram. This approach allowed for the exploration of the ways in which children's pictures are used on Instagram to reveal the underlying cultural values of childhood. In particular, the study asks whether there are specific ways to share posts regarding childhood. In 2016, the study's scope was limited to two cultures identified by the hashtags "fashionkids" and "letthekids" and data collection was restricted to this period.

7. From the fixity of signs to the fluidity of semiosis: The re-emergence of visual cognitive semiotics

This section highlights a shift in semiotic understanding from the notion of signs as static entities to the recognition of semiosis as a continuous, flexible, and "fluid" process. This signifies the resurgence of visual cognitive semiotics and its growing significance in contemporary research and communication studies.

In his article "Getting Fra Angelico's splotch out: Rehabilitating visual cognitive semiotics" Ian Verstegen (2022: 1) asserts that semiotics is currently considered a *persona non grata* and "defunct as a research methodology in visual studies". Therefore, his objective is to revive and strengthen the field of visual cognitive semiotics. The author contends that semiotic analysis has been excluded from the

tool chest of art history and visual study. Versteegen examines the stagnation and decline of a particular semiotic theory, which he then critiques from a cognitive semiotics perspective developed by Göran Sonesson. Versteegen highlights the shortcomings of the “code theory”, which has become the dominant trend in semiotics adopted by Art History and Visual Studies, yet has certain limitations – for example, it emphasizes message and digital transmission via a code. Additionally, the author identifies a flaw referred to as “the problem of baptism” (Versteegen 2022: 3) which has hindered semiotics: namely the presumption that once meaning has been established, it remains static, which “has resulted in non-dynamic interpretations” (Versteegen 2022: 3). Therefore, a cognitive semiotics based in phenomenology suggests that meanings are best viewed as “canalized”, shifting as we take different approaches and focus on various aspects (Versteegen 2022: 3). Versteegen suggests overcoming the fixity of signs and proposes an understanding of meaning in a “fluid” way. His proposal is supported by an analysis of Didi-Huberman’s discussion of Fra Angelico. Versteegen employs this discussion as a case study, illustrating how a sequence of underarticulated shapes, such as flowers and marble, portrayed as blotches and thrown paint, does not avoid representation but shifts iconicity towards indexical indication.

Several other publications focused on visual semiotics by presenting applied studies. Guirong Kou and Yuan Liang (2022) compare food advertisement in China and in the U.S. from the perspective of multimodal metaphors, while Eyo Mensah and Benjamin Nyong (2022) explore the phenomenon of automobile graffiti on trucks and lorries in Calabar metropolis, located in the south-eastern region of Cross River State, Nigeria. In their study, Naimah Ahmed Al-Ghamdi *et al.* (2022) utilize Kress and Van Leeuwen’s semiotic multimodal approach to examine how female and male caricaturists represent the challenging issues faced by Saudi women through both linguistic and semiotic means.

8. Exploring the future of semiotics: Navigating the challenges ahead

These conclusive remarks capture the idea of anticipating and understanding the evolving role of semiotics in the ever-changing landscape of communication and media while acknowledging the possible obstacles and complexities that lie ahead.

We trust that our overview, while not exhaustive, has offered the reader an illustrative snapshot of the subjects that preoccupied semioticians in the year 2022. As we find ourselves in the waning quarter of 2023 at the time of this writing, we have turned our gaze forward, projecting seven thematic nodes that

we predict may shape the landscape of semiotic scholarship in the years 2024 or 2025. Recognizing the inherent challenges of forecasting, we requested the help of artificial intelligence for this endeavour. The widespread adoption of chatbots in 2023, a notable transformation in the realms of information retrieval, processing and social meaning-making, led us to consult ChatGPT-4. We aimed to predict the near-future thematic focal points of semiotics, considering the seven directions outlined in our current article and ongoing societal and cultural developments. These predictions serve as intriguing signposts for future exploration, and it is up to the semiotic community to either corroborate or refute these projections through their academic effort.

1. *Semiotics of conflicts and peacemaking*. This field scrutinizes the role of signs in conflict and peacemaking, assessing how narratives and symbols can be recalibrated to support peace initiatives and understanding in contexts of war and nationalism.
2. *Digital semiotics and AI interpretation*. This theme probes the intricacies of AI in semiotics, focusing on how AI decodes and produces signs and the semiotic implications of AI-driven communication and sign interpretation.
3. *Edusemiotics and AI challenges in academic integrity*. Addressing the impact of AI on education, this theme delves into the semiotic challenges posed by AI to academic integrity, evaluating the shifts in sign systems in education as AI becomes increasingly embedded in pedagogy.
4. *Ecosemiotics and climate change*. Concentrating on sign systems in environmental discourse, this theme examines how ecosemiotic approaches can enhance our understanding of climate change narratives and ecological activism.
5. *Greimas' semiotics in social networks analysis*. This area applies Algirdas Julien Greimas' semiotic theories to social media, exploring how narrative structures on networking platforms contribute to the construction of meaning and identity.
6. *Semiotics of virtual reality and augmented reality experiences*. Investigating how virtual and augmented realities use signs to create immersive experiences, this theme explores user interaction and interpretation within these simulated contexts.
7. *Barthesian semiotics and cancel culture*. Examining how Roland Barthes's semiotic theories intersect with the phenomena of cancel culture, this theme considers the construction and deconstruction of public personas in digital arenas and how Barthes's ideas can be applied to contemporary discourses of reputation.

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