From *sémiologie* to postmodernism: A genealogy

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the genealogy of neomodernism, as it starts with the Saussurean linguistic turn and was further elaborated by Russian Formalism and the Prague Circle, as well as by the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen with its leading figure Hjelmslev. Deely points to an actual overlapping between Peircian semiotics and the French tradition (the quest for a general theory of signs), an overlapping that acts as the background for the operations of comparison and replacement he performs. From this common root or summit, the two paradigms split and follow two totally different directions. The strong position of Deely that it is the (discontinuous) tradition starting with Augustine and reemerging with the "high semiotics" of the later "Latin" age that leads to "postmodernity," as well as his view that Peirce (to whom he adds secondarily Heidegger), who takes over from the "Latins," opens the fourth age of human understanding and is the last modern but also the first postmodern philosopher, comes as a surprise, because of the divergence of Deely's genealogy of postmodernism from the actual historical continuities. This divergence becomes even more striking if we take into account the almost total indifference of neomodernism to Peirce's ideas: replacement of the historical with the normative leads to an historical anachronism, because Deely is obliged to recess postmodernism about a century back, with the result of creating a philosophical postmodernism that contradicts historical postmodernism. What should be emphatically stated is that neostructuralism / neomodernism is not a partial theory, as Deely believes, but a global one that, contrary to Deely's view, subsumes natural under cultural signs, thus proposing a different global theory of signs from the Peircian one; this different theory is the only theory inseparably linked to neomodernity as an historical condition.

Keywords: *structuralism; poststructuralism; postmodernism; Peircean semiotica; Maxism; surrealism.*

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1. The political economy of postmodernism: From primitive to flexible accumulation of capital

During the last three decades or so we witnessed the international diffusion and domination of a new way of theorizing, which has been called "postmodern," an approach that has permeated all the social sciences, the humanities, philosophy, and art theory and practice. Of course, this new way of theorizing did not emerge as an independent phenomenon, but is part of the wider sphere to which it belongs and which is none other than culture. Being part of a certain kind of culture, postmodernism as a specific theoretical approach is inescapably tied to the contemporary culture to which it corresponds, namely postmodernism as a cultural formation, as the postmodern culture. In turn, even the most convinced postmodern writer would not deny that a cultural formation is not an independent phenomenon, but corresponds to a certain type of society, which, through the combination of a sociological and an historical criterion, is currently called, in a more general and politically neutral manner, "postmodernity" or "the postmodern era"; in more specifically economic but still politically neutral terms, "postindustrial"; and with a socio-economic and political perspective "(late) capitalism." Note that the above terms seem to create a contradiction at the heart of postmodern theorizing, because they appeal to an external referent, an objective reality, which is usually ostracized by this kind of theorizing. But this observation puts the cart before the horse, since I shall deal later with this issue.

Postmodern culture is not today a universal phenomenon. It emerged in the economically developed societies of our times, in Europe and in the U.S. (cf. Lyotard 1979: 7; Bauman 1992: 187; Hutcheon 1988: 4), as indeed the terms postindustrial and late capitalism suggest. Its location within such a societal framework is also a location in historical time, within a certain historical period, the end of which is not yet known. This is not the case with its beginning, although there is a certain divergence of views on this. The divergence concerns the period from World War II to the 1970s. Thus, certain authors consider that the modern period closed with the end of this War. Others consider that the period from 1945 to 1970 is "late modern," and only from the mid-1970s did a tentative postmodernism make its appearance in culture, following a new spirit in the second half of the sixties that escapes from the assumptions of modernism (cf. Rose 1992: 127–128). In this context, David Harvey believes that postmodernism emerged in the 1970s as a consequence of cultural movements that had appeared starting in the mid-60s (Harvey 1989: 63, 285).

There is finally a third view, in-between the above two, in the context of which a minimum and a maximum historical time for the appearance of postmodernism is defined. According to Jean-François Lyotard, the transition to the postindustrial and postmodern period coincides with the end of the reconstruction in Europe after the damages of the War, thus dating from at least the end of the 1950s (Lyotard 1979: 11). Other authors also locate the early phase of postmodern culture in the 1950s, as, for example, Ihab Hassan, who believes that the early traces of postmodern culture are present already in the mid-50s (Hassan 1987: 214). Similarly, Charles Jencks considers Pop Art theory of the 1950s and the eclecticism to which it led in the 1970s, as well as, for example, Neo-Realism, as postmodern movements, and Andreas Huyssen considers that from the mid-1950s there was a rebellion of a new generation of artists, soon joined by critics, against abstract expressionism, serial music and classical literary modernism, though this did not yet constitute a truly postmodern movement. According to him, postmodernism is a phenomenon which appeared in the late 1950s, when the earlier adversary role of late, high modernism was superseded, as a result of the fact that artists and critics alike had the feeling that they were living in a new situation fundamentally different from the preceding one. A kind of synthesis of these different assessments concerning the 1950s and 1960s and the emergence of postmodernism is offered by Jencks, for whom early postmodernism at that time still remains a diffuse series of trends, to take shape initially as an architectural movement only in the mid-1970s. We may compare this view to Huyssen's observation that the term "postmodernism" appeared in north American literary criticism in the late 1950s (there are some earlier uses of the term — Rose 1992) and was first used emphatically in the 1960s, but was propagated only from the early and mid-1970s in reference, first, to architecture and later to dance, theater, painting, cinema, and music (see Jencks 1992: 23–24, 26; Huyssen 1988: 61, 161, 183–184, 188–189, 190, 195).

The very term postmodern presupposes the modern, which, as is the case with the postmodern, is attached to an historical period, modernity. According to the current view, modernity corresponds to a specific type of society, a type which first appeared in Europe during the seventeenth century (or somewhat earlier according to certain authors). The modern conception of the world, however, was formed in the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries, and in philosophy the mark of its beginning is Descartes. A landmark in the development of modern thought was the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, with its supreme valorization of reason, knowledge, and science, which first appeared in France in the late eighteenth century. After the

integration of the processes shaping modern society, this social formation was widely diffused starting in the mid-nineteenth century (Bauman 1992: 3, 187; Hollinger 1994: 2, 21, 26; Deely 2001: for example, xxxi, 449, 539, 585; Huyssen 1988: 182–183, 216). Michel Foucault, thus, finds that the feeling we have of a continuity of knowledge from the Renaissance on is only due to appearances. The *épistémè* of the period defined above as modernity is, for him, characterized by two major discontinuities: the first opens the classical period around the mid-seventeenth century, while the second marks the beginning of modernity entering the nineteenth century (Foucault 1966: 13–15, 229, 315).

Though I myself would argue that there are continuities in history in respect to the realm of knowledge, nevertheless Foucault's concept of discontinuity warns us against the dangers of linear long-term history. Foucault's *Épistémè* (which was subsequently replaced by the concept of "discursive formation") is an historically delimited, unconscious epistemological system, including its preconditions of knowledge, i.e., the rules of its construction (Foucault 1966: 11–14, 170–171). What this concept reminds us is that, quite apart from possible continuities, the domain of knowledge in each historical period presents a homogeneity as a whole, and is not the sum of some previous and some new knowledge.

Seen in this light, histories of different fields of culture, such as art histories or histories of philosophy, treating their object through the centuries with a "diffusionist" rationale, i.e., based on the idea of influence (for art history, see Preziosi 1989: xiv, 51) are at best partial and structurally unable to grasp a whole in its historicity. Diffusionism is now an obsolete approach in archaeology, as well as in anthropology, where the cultural-historical school once focused on the diffusion of cultural influences and thus on cultural invariants. Linearity in history gets even more troubling when it is paralleled by a metaphysical Hegelian teleology, the conception of a more or less continuous progress of ideas, culminating with a certain school of thought. Progress there may be, in certain cases, but it is not due to the fact that, from the first appearance of an idea, humanity has concentrated on how to improve it. On the contrary, an idea is further elaborated only on condition that it *has meaning* for a *new* historical situation, which actually defines its meaning — a point on which I would agree with the phenomenologists. The history of ideas does not develop between historical periods, i.e., from one *épistémè* to another, on *a priori* grounds, with the implicit or explicit *telos* of further elaboration and sophistication; or, to put it otherwise, ideas do not wait around in history to be developed by coming generations due to some kind of intrinsic value; on the contrary, the history of ideas is founded on our *a posteriori* interest in previous achievements. Thus, postmodernism cannot be

seen as some kind of historical culmination, but as a *new* condition, which deserves our attention for its own sake, without of course excluding the possibility of integrating earlier elements. If postmodernism is or is not a new *épistémè* is an issue I shall discuss below.

What remains unaccounted for by Foucault's approach are the *causes* — and here I distance myself from the reluctance of phenomenology to deal with this factor — of the emergence and disappearance of a specific *épistémè*. This is a serious lack, because, without such an explanation we are left with two options equally unsatisfactory: either the *épistémè* changes "from below," by an unaccountable human caprice, or it is changed "from above" by a superior metaphysical power of some kind. That the realm of ideas is unable by itself to provide an explanation for its development is clear, both in traditional history and in the postmodern accounts of postmodern culture, where a non-tautological relation is established between ideas and historical periods defined in more material terms.

It seems to me that the bibliography on postmodernism, without exception, implicitly or explicitly relates the postmodern in its different aspects to capitalism. On a closer look, the realm of *épistémè* has always been related to material conditions, and not simply that, but it has also in principle been explained by them. Focusing on the Western history from the Renaissance, the turn of ideology towards antiquity coincides with a set of quite new socioeconomic conditions. Feudalism, in its formative stage during the tenth century, reached its apogee from the mid-twelfth century to the beginning of the fourteenth. However, during this and the next century, a general crisis broke out in feudal societies, because the feudal regime was unable to face the new needs for economic development. An early reaction to this crisis was the multitude of technological inventions of the fifteenth century. From this century, even from the end of the previous century, starts the decline of feudalism, which continues up to the end of the eighteenth century — around the middle of which began in England the so-called Industrial Revolution — when the new class of the bourgeoisie brought the previous socioeconomic regime to an end. This period, the first stage of which was formed between about the mid-fifteenth and the mid-sixteenth century, is the era of the primitive accumulation of capital, to be replaced by mercantile capital, a new form that made its appearance during the seventeenth century (Parain 1974: 24–26, 29–30; Vilar 1974: 38–40, 43–46; Godelier 1973: 46–47).

The historical changes discussed above are paralleled by the processes leading to the nation-state. According to Benedict Anderson, the development of print-as-commodity or "print-capitalism," as he calls it, led to the creation of a new kind of commodities, on the basis of which the

nation-states were established. ''Print-capitalism'' saw an explosion in the first half of the sixteenth century. When the market of readers of Latin was saturated, about 150 years after the appearance of printing, the printers turned around the mid-seventeenth century to the vernacular languages. It is during the same century that we witness in Western Europe the beginning of the slow decline of the automatic legitimacy of sacred monarchy. Anderson argues that the articulation of print technology and ''capitalism'' with the vernacular languages led to a new form of imagined community. The print vernacular languages, by contributing to the creation of these communities, were foundational for the emergence of national consciousness and thus the nation-state. The nation-state, the idea of which was in line with the principles of the Enlightenment, was first constituted in the Americas between 1776 and 1838, and this form offered the first model for this new political entity. There followed what Anderson calls ''second generation'' nationalist movements in Europe, in the period between 1815 and 1850. Already in mid-nineteenth-century Europe there is an obvious development in the expenditures of the state and the size of its bureaucracy and military force. Against the background of the industrial capitalism of the twentieth century, immediately after World War I, the nation-state became the legitimate international political norm, to reach its peak after the next War (Anderson 1991: for example, 7, 21, 37–38, 44, 46–47, 76, 113, 115, 194–195). This apogee did not last long. Starting as early as the first half of the 1970s the nation-state passed into a period of crisis — economic crisis, but also crises of power and legitimation — which continues to our days and has led to increasing restrictions on its autonomy, through the ceding of crucial areas of social management and control to a fragmented market (see also Barker 2000: 178–179).

In his scholarly and impressive book on the historical course of sign philosophy, John Deely divides this course into four periods: the preliminaries to the concept of sign formulated by ancient Greek philosophy, which correspond to the period from the pre-Socratics of the sixth century BC to the end of the western Roman Empire in the fifth century AD; the development of this concept during the ''Latin'' period from Augustine in the fourth century to Poinsot in the seventeenth, with a special emphasis on the last three centuries or so of this period starting with Ockham (a period, however, which conflates the Middle Ages with the Renaissance); the oblivion of the concept in modern philosophy from Descartes on; and the recovery and advance of it, opposing the modern approach, pioneered by Charles Sanders Peirce from the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century. Deely observes that these major philosophical changes correspond to major linguistic changes in the West, given

that during the first period Greek was the dominant intellectual language; during the second, Latin was dominant; in the third, from the seventeenth century, the European vernacular languages displaced Latin; and in the fourth these divisions are in the way of being overcome (which seems to me an anachronism if applied to the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century), due to a new global perspective offered by a new epistemological paradigm based especially on the work of Peirce (Deely 2001: xxx–xxxii, 210–211, 694, 738).

If we focus on the seventeenth century, the beginning of modernity in the wide sense, Deely's observation concerning the relation between the rise of vernacular languages and modern philosophy remains unaccounted for, due to the lack of the wider societal framework. On the contrary, Anderson's sociologically oriented account of the emergence of these languages relates this phenomenon both to its social causes, that is, "capitalism" and more specifically "print-capitalism," and to its ideological and institutional (i.e., political) long-term effects, namely national consciousness (part of the realm of ideas) and the creation of the nation-state. Although this view may not be complete, his approach has the merit of anchoring ideas in the social reality that gave birth to them. I believe that this kind of history, the "vertical" anchoring of ideas in their social material foundation, as opposed to the "horizontal," linear account of them, is able to understand the formation of ideas as a product of their times, i.e., as an historical product.

Coming back to the abridged macro-historical diagram I outlined above, we can detect a tight relation between the socioeconomic realities of Western societies, the periodization into eras, political formations and the realm of ideas. After the formative stage of feudalism in the tenth century, this social system suffers a general crisis starting in the fourteenth century, the response to which was a new form of economy, the primitive accumulation of capital. The first stage of this new economic formation extends from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, which is the central part of the Renaissance and the period that saw the explosion of print capitalism. About half a century later, the automatic legitimacy of monarchy starts to decline, mercantile capital makes its appearance, and the modern period opens. The propagation of vernacular languages from the mid-seventeenth century, related to the economy of print technology, coincides with the rise of the modern worldview and Foucault's classical *épistémè*. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, we witness the dawn of the complex of nationalism and the nation-state, to which contributed the legitimization of vernacular languages, the shaping of Enlightenment thought, and the rise to power of the bourgeois class, which brought an end to feudal society. Foucault's modern *épistémè* emerges immediately

after these developments, as we enter the nineteenth century. The diffusion of modernity from the mid-nineteenth century, this time modernity in the strict sense, is a phenomenon parallel to the growing power of the newly formed nation-states and is closely linked to industrial capitalism (on this last point, see Huyssen 1988: 217).

I already noted the divergence of views on the appearance of postmodernism in respect to the period from the end of World War II to the 1970s. This is the period of the peak of the nation-state. During the early 1970s, a general economic crisis broke out in the capitalist countries which resulted in extensive de-industrialization. When Henry Ford started a revolution in industrial production with his new method of the assembly line, he set the mainstream model of capitalist efficiency and productivity, a model based on the standardization of the labor process and of the products or their parts, and aiming at mass production. It is this Fordist regime of capitalism that began to experience problems which came to a peak in the early 1970s, marked by the oil crisis of 1972. In this condition of saturated Western markets and a crisis of overproduction, the capital in the advanced capitalist economies responded with the creation of a new regime, flexible accumulation, which was achieved through more flexible production techniques, presupposing the use of innovative technologies and the reorganization of labor, and the acceleration of the production-consumption turnover time. A relatively small number of transnational corporations is at the heart of this new regime and leads the processes of economic globalization (see also Barker 2000: 158–159, 168–169). These processes are followed by those of cultural globalization, which, together with its cause, late capitalism, lays the substratum for postmodern culture and postmodern theorizing.

According to some authors, postmodernism represents a radically new paradigm. Such a view seems to be supported by Zygmunt Bauman. For Bauman, there is a trend in contemporary sociology for which the society of postmodernity is just another type in a continuing modernity. Bauman, however, feels that postmodern society represents a radical break, so radical that it necessitates the abandonment of the theoretical sociological model of the modern, ''classical'' industrial society of capitalism. Postmodern society is, for him, a systemic transformation of the previous society, and a societal type in its own right and with its own logic, not just modern society in crisis. Bauman refers to the crisis theorists and their view that the continuity between modern and postmodern society is based on the continuity of the primacy of the productive function. According to him, even these theorists find that there is in fact a shrinking of the productive activities, which has a grave impact on society, but they believe that the fact that institutions and patterns previously operative are dys-

or non-functional today results in a crisis which takes the form of disorganized capitalism, that is, a modernity in crisis.

Bauman disagrees with this conceptualization. His position is that postmodern society is no longer organized around the productive function, but is founded on the individuals in the consumer market. After having secured the sphere of production, capitalism has now turned towards the distributive sphere, that of consumption, offering to the consumer the pleasure principle. Thus, postmodern culture is a surface symptom of a much deeper social transformation, which may have been brought about by modern society, but is "in a number of vital respects" discontinuous with it. As we can see, Bauman stresses the, in his view, profound differences between postmodern and modern society, which, he believes, call for a new rational sociology of postmodernity, as opposed to a postmodern sociology in the form of an intellectual genre in harmony with postmodern culture. Nonetheless, he sees postmodernity "as fully developed modernity," a "modernity conscious of its true nature," a view that brings out an ambivalence in his position, or at least that offers a milder formulation than that of radical break (Bauman 1992: 42–53, 64–65, 187–188, 223).

Approaches of this kind are challenged, for example by Fredric Jameson, who, departing from Ernest Mandel (who dates the fourth "long period" of capitalism, "late capitalism," from the 1940s — Mandel 1978 [1972]: 8, 120–121), holds that postmodern society is not a completely new type of social formation, the alleged "postindustrial" society, but just a new, "purer," stage of capitalism. According to Jameson, postmodernism is not an independent cultural formation, but a "cultural dominant," with a function in relation to the economic system of this late capitalism different from the function of modern culture in the previous stage of capitalism. Jameson also argues that, in spite of the postmodern assumption of the autonomization of culture, late capitalism has in fact abolished the previous relative autonomy of culture, with culture now becoming inseparable from all aspects of society. The integration of culture within the new development of capitalism turns postmodern culture into the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson 1984: 55–58, 87).

This position is exemplified by David Harvey, who, as a human geographer, is interested in the spatial behavior of capital. Harvey observes that there have been in capitalism crises due to the overaccumulation of capital and that the first crisis occurred in the mid-nineteenth century — the beginning of modernity in the strict sense. These crises caused a search for new spatial and temporal resolutions, leading to an upset in the organization of social life and a strong sense of time-space compression, that is, the sense of the shrinking of world space and the shortening

of time horizons to the present time, which has been expressed both in philosophy and in cultural and more specifically artistic movements. The last crisis of overaccumulation, which started in the late 1960s and reached a peak in 1972, opened the period of postmodernity, which is an historical-geographical condition of a certain sort inside a continuing capitalism, linked to flexible accumulation and characterized by the emergence of new cultural forms. Postmodern culture is the result of the extension of the market over cultural production as a whole, whence the need for a political economy of cultural production. For Harvey, who once more agrees with Jameson on this point, the understanding of postmodernity as a material historical condition is deflected by postmodern discourse itself, which is trapped in the idea of the autonomization of culture.

On the semiotic level, Harvey argues that "images" — belonging to the realm of cultural signs — have been transformed into commodities, a view close to Jean Baudrillard's view, but he disagrees with the latter's overall position that Marx's analysis of commodity production should be replaced, due to the shift of capitalism from the production of commodities to the production of signs — whence Baudrillard's political economy of signs or theory of symbolic exchange (Baudrillard 1972: for example, 152–153, 172–179). Harvey observes that competition between firms in image-building and the creation of positive connotations for their products is a crucial part of economic competition, this is why investments in ephemeral images, which establish an identity in the market, become of prime importance. In this manner, commodities have become the principal vehicles of cultural codes (Harvey 1989: for example, vii, 62, 239–240, 259, 284–288, 298–299, 305–307, 327–328).

In spite of the divergence of opinions concerning the degree of socio-economic discontinuity between modern and postmodern society, no view goes so far as to suggest any kind of "post-capitalist" society. Authors agree that the common link is capitalism, and the different evaluations concern the degree of novelty in recent society. However, the historical analysis of capitalism shows that the development of capitalism since the nineteenth century proceeded through a series of leaps, representing new organizational forms of it as adaptations to the changing conditions of its environment. Each new phase of it *could be felt* as a totally new situation, but in reality represented, notwithstanding the differences, the evolution of one and the same system. Modernity is extending within postmodernity, which should be considered as a "neo-modernity," and, given the tight relation between periods and their cultural profiles, we should expect that the same penetration holds for postmodern culture and postmodern theorizing, without of course losing sight of the factor of novelty.

Many scholars do recognize this connection, as Margaret Rose (1992: 127) reminds us when she observes that for certain authors postmodernism does not imply a complete break with modernism. As in the case of the relation between modern and postmodern society, however, there are different evaluations concerning the exact nature of the relation between their respective cultural formations, these two kinds of relation being, *mutatis mutandis*, homologous. This issue is discussed in detail by Huyssen and his analysis helps clarify the terms of the controversy. There are views posing a radical break, and at the other extreme views supporting direct continuity (see also Hutcheon 1988: 49–51).

Huyssen questions this black-and-white polarization and opts for the grey in-between zone, a grey, however, tending towards the pole of discontinuity. If Harvey refers to socioeconomic crises, Huyssen addresses a comparable phenomenon on the cultural level. Huyssen concentrates on the contemporary arts, rather than postmodern theorizing. He considers that today's arts do not represent just another stage in the sequence of avant-gardist modernist movements, which for him cover the period from the mid-nineteenth century, when they originated in Paris, into the 1960s; thus, postmodernism is not just the latest form of the successive revolts of modernism against itself, because it differs from both modernism and avant-gardism. Postmodernism operates, for him, within a field of tension between oppositions which were central to the theoretical approach of modernism, such as tradition versus innovation, mass culture versus high art, representation versus abstraction. It is not just the result of another crisis in the cycle of exhaustion and renewal of modernist culture, but follows from a new type of crisis, this time in late capitalism and of the very modernist culture itself and the relation of art to society; a crisis which broke out when the historical limits of modernism became clear in the 1970s, immediately after the end of the tradition of avant-gardism in the 1960s. On the other hand, postmodernism does not invalidate modernism, but only rejects its dogmatic aspects, and, by appropriating many of its aesthetics strategies and techniques, integrates them within new forms (Huyssen 1988: 161, 164, 182–183, 216–218).

This position, moving in the in-between zone and towards the discontinuity pole, is comparable to the position of Bauman concerning the political economy of postmodern society, while Harvey's position moves towards the continuity pole. I believe I have made it clear above that my own view is sympathetic to the latter position. But the central issue of my text is not postmodernity and postmodern culture in general, but postmodern theorizing and its historical genealogy. The beginning of that genealogy is the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, to which I shall now turn.

2. Structuralism and semiotics: The positivist orientation

The lives of the two persons who are considered as the cornerstones of the contemporary theory of signs coincide more or less with the first half-century of modernity: Charles Sanders Peirce lived from 1839 to 1914, and Ferdinand de Saussure between 1857 and 1913. I shall concentrate, to begin with, on the latter, given that — and this will be my argument below — the historical line culminating in postmodern theorizing has him as its starting point. I shall then recall in this section certain major ideas of his heirs, structuralism and French semiotics, which, together with the discussion of Saussure, will hopefully offer the link with the phenomenon known as poststructuralism.

It is well known that the fundamental concept of Saussure's structural linguistics is that of *langue*. Crucial for the definition of this concept is another concept, that of point of view. Saussure observes that other sciences than linguistics operate with a given object, which may then be considered from different points of view. However, in linguistics the object is not given, but rather created by the point of view. According to Saussure, the strategic point of view in respect to linguistic phenomena defines the object of linguistics as *langue*, which may be an abstraction, but is nevertheless the norm for the study of all other linguistic phenomena. In order to determine the field of *langue*, Saussure starts from the circuit of *parole* (the use of *langue*) in its elementary form of a communication between two individuals. It is through this circuit that he locates the concepts which later in his development were called *signified* and *signifier*, as well as the concept corresponding to their indissoluble union, the *sign*. Together with this unit of signification he posits from the beginning one major faculty, manifested beyond the individual sign: the faculty of association and coordination. Words having something in common are associated in memory outside discourse, and thus this relation is *in absentia* (the relation that was later called by Louis Hjelmslev paradigmatic), while in discourse they are gathered, due to the linear character of *parole*, into combinations called syntagms, a relation that is *in praesentia*.

Before and above these relations, there is a "first principle" ruling natural *langue* and indeed any system of signs, and which thus marks all of semiology. This principle is the arbitrariness of the sign, i.e., the arbitrariness, the non-motivation, the conventionality of the relation between signifier and signified. It is implied by Saussure that the same principle holds also for the relation between ideas and things in the world. In fact, he disagrees with the view that *langue* consists of a naming process, because such a view presupposes independent ideas existing before the words, as well as with that of a simple relation between a word and a thing, which

is, for him, anything but true. Thought is amorphous outside its expression in words; equally, the phonic substance is just a plastic substance, destined to supply signifiers to thought. The function of *langue* is to mediate between these two orders in such a manner that by uniting them it constitutes itself; the two orders are indissolubly related in *langue* and the result of their combination is the delimination of its units, the signs.

The arbitrariness of the sign is closely related by Saussure to the concept of *value*. While the signified is positively defined as a content corresponding to a signifier, value is negatively defined as the relations between (each plane of) a sign and the other signs of *langue*. Thus, value is purely differential in nature, a quality which is correlative with arbitrariness, and *langue* consists only of differences. Value is a hierarchically superior concept to that of signified, because signification cannot exist without it. Value, as a relational concept, shows, for Saussure, the solidarity between the terms of *langue*, which is a *system*, indeed a *social* system consisting of signs or, better, of pure values. This system is a state of *langue* existing in synchrony and studied by static or synchronic linguistics, as opposed to diachronic linguistics, which studies relations in time between individual successive terms, of which the one replaces the other (see Mauro 1972 [1967]: for example, 23–33, 97–101, 116–117, 141–143, 154–163, 166, 170–175, 192).

These major linguistic concepts of Saussure can be generalized to all semiotic systems, according to Oswald Ducrot and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (1995: 12). The relation between linguistics and the general theory of signs was conceptualized by Saussure in a specific manner: linguistics would only be a part of the general science-to-be of *sémiologie* (Mauro 1972: 33).

Saussure's structural linguistics was highly influential internationally, though it was not above criticism. For example, it was greeted by both positive and negative reactions in Russia; the negative critique concerned particularly its relation to bourgeois ideology, its formalism, the subjectivism of the concept of *langue*, and the lack of historical perspective in the separation between synchrony and diachrony (Mauro 1972: 370–371).

More recently, Raymond Williams has also been strongly critical of the concept of the linguistic system, which he considers as inscribed within an objectivist, positivist conception (by which he means the objectification or reification of an object of inquiry). For Williams, through the priority of the synchronic over the diachronic dimension, the language system as a system of signs is isolated from the active participation of people in its formation and from history; thus, the system becomes inaccessible, is considered as autonomous, given and stable, and individuals are limited to acting out its laws. The relational and formal aspect of the system must,

according to Williams, acquire a dynamic dimension in the form of the social dynamics of the system. Signification, although it relies on formal signs, is in fact a social creation of meaning, a means of production, and a practical material activity (a view that I personally fully subscribe to — see Lagopoulos 2004b: 29–33). However, in spite of his critical Marxist stance, Williams considers Saussurean linguistics as a profound, productive, and greatly influential theoretical development, and structuralism and semiotics as powerful approaches (Williams 1977: 27–28, 34–44).

Other comparable criticisms of Saussure have come from inside semiotics. Thus, for example, Roman Jakobson shifted his interest from *langue* to communication. He tries to overcome Saussure's dichotomies, first that between *langue* and *parole*, considering these terms as structurally and functionally interdependent, indeed in all semiotic systems; then, between synchrony and diachrony, using the concept of dynamic synchrony; lastly, between internal and external linguistics (to which I shall return below), arguing that anything relevant to a semiotic structure is internal to it. In 1959, Jakobson criticized the principle of arbitrariness as too absolute, but, in my opinion, he did not propose an elaborated theoretical framework in respect to this or to his previous views (for the above, see Rudy and Waugh 1998: 2258, 2260, 2262).

Before he moved to Prague in the early 1920s, Jakobson was involved with Russian Formalism (1914–1934). Russian Formalism evolved through three stages, and the orientation of the last stage is closely related to Jakobson's main themes as presented above. The interest of the Formalists at this stage was focused on the relation of a text to its environment, and this relation was conceived in two ways. The first is the insertion of the text into systems including it: successively, the larger system of genre, and the cultural system as a whole, considered to be the "system of systems." Related to this perspective is the relation of a text with another text, that is, what we call intertextuality. The cultural system as conceived by the Formalists reserves a place for mass literature, and is studied against the general cultural background of a period, namely its taste or the "horizon" of the collective "native" reader. The second kind of relation between text and environment is founded on the communication circuit and focuses on the communication space between author or text and reader. This space includes a wide set of mediations, such as the behavior of economic agencies, literary institutions and circles, and public opinion (Sebeok 1994: "Russian Formalism").

Also critical of the Saussurean concept of the linguistic system are Algirdas Julien Greimas and Joseph Courtés. They consider that this concept is too limited, because it excludes the semiotic process and thus signifying practices. Strict adherence to it constrains semiotics to be a dis-

cipline annexed to linguistics, something which has led to poor results. The importance of the Saussurean approach lies in his general semiotic theory, for which he formulated the fundamental premises. The authors state that French semiotics was shaped by this approach, and more specifically in the form given to it by the work of Hjelmslev (Greimas and Courtés 1979: "Sémiologie").

A philosophical critique of Saussure comes from Deely, who, while acknowledging the importance of his work, disagrees with him on a number of crucial points. Deely considers as unfortunate the restriction of the sign to the domain of the conventional and the arbitrary, in which the linkage between a signified and a signifier is "unmotivated by any natural connection," because he believes, following Peirce that the concept of the sign must also cover, beyond culture, the world of nature, where natural signs are connected to a mind-independent or intrinsic motivation. He also relates Saussure's conception of the linguistic sign to the modern(ist) idealist view that the mind has access only to itself, and he generalizes this attitude to the whole of French *sémiologie*, which he thus classifies as nominalist. Because of this, the knowledge of nature is excluded from the "ultramodern" Saussurean theory of signs, which is thus limited to only a general theory of cultural phenomena, and Saussure failed to orient his deepened understanding of the linguistic system towards a general theory of signs (Deely 2001: see for example, 669–670, 676–678, 683–686, 689).

Though I personally feel that most of the above critiques of Saussure are sound (the non-arbitrariness of the sign excepted, but this is an issue going beyond the scope of this text), they are only partly valid, as also seen from the general acknowledgment of the importance and the tremendous impact of his work. To start with the concept of the *langue*-system, it is not, as we know, isolated, because it is inseparable from its twin concept of *parole*, i.e., the (according to Saussure's too narrow understanding, individual) use of *langue*. Admittedly, Saussure detaches the study of *parole* from that of *langue*, and attributes to the latter a primary position in linguistics, to which *parole* is subordinated. However, he points out that the study of *langue* (i.e., synchronic and diachronic linguistics) and the study of *parole* (i.e., the linguistics of *parole* that Saussure postulated but never elaborated) depend on one another (Roland Barthes, following Saussure, speaks of a genuine dialectical relationship — Barthes 1964b: 94); he also specified that *parole precedes langue* historically, and *causes* its evolution and diachronic change (see Mauro 1972: 25, 30–31, 36–37, 138, 197 note 1). Thus, the decision to foreground *langue* was for Saussure a strategic decision, in my view necessary but partial, taken against a *holistic* background which included process and the dynamic dimension.

Then comes the issue of idealism, on which the critiques in Soviet Russia and that of Deely converge. That Saussure is not *a priori* an idealist is seen empirically from his "external" linguistics (as distinguished from the three "internal" linguistics referred to above), which studies the articulation of *langue* with material social phenomena external to it, such as the history of civilization, political history, and geographical distribution — to which he adds phenomena that are semiotic or have a marked semiotic aspect, such as custom, the Church, the school, and internal policy (see Mauro 1972: 40–41). But let me now come to the theoretical argument. When Saussure defines the function of *langue* as a mediation between amorphous thought (what Hjelmslev called the substance of the content) and the equally amorphous phonic substance (Hjelmslev's substance of the expression), he observes, using the metaphor of the two sides of a sheet of paper, that it is not possible to separate thought and sound, and that this division can only be accomplished abstractly, in which case the result would be to fall into psychology or pure phonology (see phonetics).

It is clear that for Saussure this conception of language aims at defining a scientific object for linguistics, and follows from the adoption of a specific point of view on language as a whole. This epistemological position was further elaborated by Hjelmslev, cofounder of the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen, when he states that a theory must be based only on the premises which are necessary for its object, and that the results of the application of a theory must agree with the empirical data; this requirement of empiricism is satisfied by the "empirical principle," consisting of three conditions which rule scientific description and are, in order of importance, self-consistency (a contradiction-free description), exhaustiveness, and (the greatest possible) simplicity (Hjelmslev 1961 [1943]: 10–11).

Taking this definition by Hjelmslev as their starting point, Greimas and Courtés define the rule of scientific description, the latter term denoting the procedures, that is, the sequence of ordered operations or the activity of creating a descriptive metalanguage, which satisfy the criterion of "scientificity" and aim at exhausting the description of a semiotic object. The rule prescribes that we must take into account, among the different determinations of an object, only those that are necessary and sufficient in order to analyze it in depth. This is the rule of relevance (pertinence); less rigorously, for Greimas and Courtés it is the normative rule adopted by the semiotician according to which the selected object must be described from only one point of view, thus retaining only the traits of interest to the latter, which in the case of semiotics is signification (Greimas and Courtés 1979: "Définition," "Description," "Opération," "Pertinence," "Procédure"). The same rule is adopted by André Martinet, who observes that every description presupposes a selection, because every object

may present an infinite complexity, while a description is necessarily finite, that is, can only address certain traits of the object. The coherency of a description demands the adoption of a specific point of view, on the basis of which the pertinent traits are retained and the non-pertinent rejected (Martinet 1970: 31–32).

It is this same rule of relevance on which the semiotics of Umberto Eco is founded. According to Eco, all social phenomena (that he rather unsuccessfully groups under the term of "culture," instead of the wider term of "society") can and must be studied from a semiotic point of view. This is why semiotics is a general theory of culture and finally a substitute for cultural anthropology. Eco points out that social phenomena as a whole are not reducible to communication, i.e., to the domain of semiotics, and to study them in this manner does not imply that material life can be reduced to spirit and pure mental facts, which would lead to idealism; in fact, this is what happens with semiotic imperialism. He considers it of central importance, however, to approach social phenomena "*sub specie communicationis*," that is, through the adoption of the point of view of meaning (Eco 1972 [1968]: 25–30 and 1976: 6–7, 26–27, 158). Thus, according to Eco's epistemological position, for example, physical anthropology as a scientific field would not fall within the domain of semiotics, as Deely (2001: 714–715) would like, except if seen *sub specie communicationis*.

I believe that we can now better understand the epistemological nature of *langue*. Saussure's concept of *langue* is related to a reaction against the theory of language as a naming process. As we saw, the aim of Saussure was to offer linguistics a scientific object, and he defined the latter using the rule of relevance. In so doing, he delimited a field within the domain of signification, which he attributed to linguistics, without forgetting the existence of material social phenomena, as witnessed from his external linguistics. There is, however, a problem with *langue*, the product of Saussure's legitimate scientific procedure, because it is connected to the concept of the arbitrariness between signs and the world, which is what leads to the suspicion of idealism. I should like to recall here that, for Saussure, arbitrariness is not a monolithic concept. There are different degrees of arbitrariness; the relation between signifier and signified may be absolutely arbitrary, i.e., unmotivated, or relatively arbitrary, i.e., relatively unmotivated; the relative motivation of the sign follows from a certain *natural* bond between signifier and signified (Mauro 1972: 100–102, 180–183). However, we must admit that the problem of the relationship between a system of values and the knowledge of reality remains unanswered by Saussure. This is a philosophical issue beyond and outside Saussure's scientific intentions, but nevertheless, it shows that Saussure's

langue, as defined from a specific point of view that isolates it as if it were an *autonomous* entity, is marked by a *tendency* towards idealism. Of course, pure idealism would be to extrapolate from *langue* to the whole of linguistics, something that Saussure does not do.

A very interesting sociological explanation of the impressive diffusion of Saussure's theory in the West is offered by Roy Harris. Referring to the period after World War I, Harris argues that the concept of *langue* responded well to the post-war anxieties of a socially, politically, and economically unstable West. Saussure's synchronic linguistics was at that time a suitable tool for challenging preexisting values, forgetting the past, and creating contemporary values. Thus, it is reasonable, according to Harris, that Western societies were ready, not only to adopt this concept, but also to extrapolate it from linguistics to all discussion concerning the individual and society (Harris 2001: 194–196, 200, 205).

I have already referred to Jakobson's attempt to overcome the dichotomies of langue versus parole and synchrony versus diachrony. These positions, together with the concept of abstract structure, defined not by elements but relationships, and a special emphasis on the phonological study of *langue* and phonemic oppositions developed by Nikolaj Trubetzkoy, are main issues included in the *Theses* (1929) of the Prague Circle. The interests of the Prague Circle extended to literature, the arts and other semiotic systems. Shortly after World War II, Jan Mukařovský, coauthor of the *Theses*, approached culture as a "system of systems," composed of a dynamic hierarchy between the interrelated systems of the different cultural fields. This view, also held by the Formalists, has been foundational for the semiotics of culture as a complex semiotic system elaborated beginning in 1960 by the Moscow-Tartu School. One of the main contributors to the *Theses* was Jakobson, and the text itself marks the constitution of European structuralism proper (Winner 1998). It is from this tradition and with the mediation of Jakobson himself (in the period 1941–1946) that the approach of Saussure reached Claude Lévi-Strauss. This author, with the inspiration of structural linguistics, conceived of structural anthropology, which was destined to mark all the line of development from semiotics, through so-called poststructuralism, to so-called postmodernism.

Lévi-Strauss's model for his structural anthropology is Jakobson's and Trubetzkoy's structural phonology. For Jakobson, phonemes are defined by the oppositions between them, and the articulatory or acoustical traits by which these oppositions are described constitute their distinctive features. The latter are presented in the form of binary oppositions, are limited in number and are organized according to a universal matrix, from which it is supposed that each existing language borrows the elements of

its phonological system. This model, which may be contrasted to the historically sensitive view that comparable phonemes in different languages do not coincide, with the result that phonological systems differ and phonology cannot be universal (see Ducrot and Schaeffer 1995: 390–391, 394–395), is exactly the model that founds structural anthropology.

Following Jakobson's and Trubetzkoy's views, Lévi-Strauss states that, just as in phonology, anthropology moves from conscious phenomena to their unconscious "infrastructure," focuses not on elements but on their relations, is concerned with structures, and formulates universal laws. Lévi-Strauss finds close parallels between kinship systems and phonological systems, although he believes that caution is needed against too literal a transfer from linguistics to anthropology.

Lévi-Strauss's conception of culture coincides both with the formalist and the structuralist definition of it as a system of systems. For him, society is composed of a set of interrelated planes, which are structured, i.e., are structures. He classifies them into two orders, drawing his inspiration from Marxism. There are "infrastructural," "lived" orders, such as the kinship system and social organization, which belong to an objective reality and can be studied from the outside and controlled experimentally, independently of the manner in which they are conceived by individuals; and there are also mental, "superstructural," "conceived" orders such as mythology, religion, art, and cooking, which do not partake directly of objective reality. The formal properties of the relationships between these planes, which are highly abstract, constitute the "order of orders" of a society (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 39–44, 48–49, 57, 95, 346–348, 363–366).

The concept of communication is present in Lévi-Strauss's work. He detects on this matter three major planes: communication of women between social groups, regulated by the rules of kinship and marriage; communication of goods and services, regulated by economic rules, and communication of messages, regulated by linguistic rules. However, this concept does not draw with it the theoretical apparatus that would transpose the focus from *langue* to *parole*. In so-called primitive societies Lévi-Strauss analyzed various "orders," such as the kinship system in general and more specifically totemism, mythology (in the context of which he worked on an extremely rich material from the Americas), and the culinary system, by using the same general theory and methodology, and having each time the same aim of defining human universals. These societies are for him ideal for the study, in its pure form, of the innate and unconscious primitive universal logic which founds symbolic thought. He is in search of a kind of semantic algebra, which takes the form of an algebraic matrix, including the oppositional pairs, their combinations, the structuring of these and more complex combinations, the transformations

from structure to structure, and finally the general structural laws, which according to him are few (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 28, 95–98, 224–225, 252–253, 326–327; Leach 1970: 35, 38, 50–53, 55–56, 66).

I note on this occasion that in a similar manner Noam Chomsky, who is acquainted with Saussure's theory, concludes that there are certain phonological, syntactic, and semantic "substantive universals," not in the sense that all of them occur in any particular language, but in the sense that every language draws on this preexisting stock. There would also exist "formal universals," that is, general principles determining the form of the rules of grammar and their mode of operation. These universals are determined by the highly specific *language faculty*, which is a biological characteristic of human beings. They constitute an inborn knowledge, related to the structure and function of the human brain. Chomsky believes that his generative grammar is crucial for the investigation of the predisposition and structure of the human mind, and of mental processes, just as Lévi-Strauss thinks to achieve the same aim with his structural anthropology. They provide an individual's intrinsic competence and preside over the structure of human language, the structure of an extended conception of the Saussurean *langue* (Chomsky 1964: 10–11, 23, 66–67; Lyons 1970: 83, 86–87, 99–100, 105–108).

Due to his approach to anthropology discussed above, Lévi-Strauss states that anthropology situates itself definitely on the plane of signification and becomes a *"science séméiologique."* The universal logic on which it is founded was suggested to him, as he confesses, from the convergence between Freudian psychoanalysis, geology and Marxism (to which we should of course add structural phonology), which offer, for him, the framework for the location of ethnography. Their meeting point is that they integrate empirical phenomena into rational thinking and reduce appearances to another (deeper) kind of reality, ending thus in a "super-rationalism." In addition, the first two of these apply a conception of history which projects on time certain given properties, in opposition to the history of historians (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 57–62 and 1958: 399) — an issue to which I shall return below.

Lévi-Strauss's work is the cornerstone of French structuralism. It is from his structuralism that emerged in the late 1950s French *sémiologie*, in the context of which there was an early attempt to overcome the limitations imposed by linguistics (Greimas and Courtés 1979: "Structuralisme"). This is the case with Greimas, the founder of the Paris School of semiotics and direct successor of the Saussure-Hjelmslev line. Hjelmslev's general science of semiotics, glossematics, represents a tight systematization of Saussure's theory with the intention of creating an "algebra of language." Language is seen as a structured system defined by a net-

work of relations. Hjelmslev defines three consecutive approaches to language. According to the most abstract approach, *langue* is a "pure form," a "scheme," and is defined independently from its social realization and material manifestation; its linguistic units are not positive, but "arbitrarily named entities without natural designation," and are of a relational and negative nature. For the second approach, *langue* is a "material form," a "norm," and is defined by a social realization, but independently from the details of its manifestation; in this case, its units acquire positive attributes in addition to besides their oppositional ones. Finally, for the third approach, language is a "set of habits," a "usage," of a society and is defined by the observed manifestations, in which case its units are positive. Because Hjelmslev came to consider norm as artificial, he retained only *scheme* and *usage*, which he substitutes for Saussure's *langue* and *parole* (Hjelmslev 1961 [1943]: 16, 47, 79–80, 96–97, 105 and 1971 [1959]: 80–89).

After Greimas sent Lévi-Strauss a paper strictly adhering to his approach, Lévi-Strauss arranged his appointment as Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. In addition to the influence of Saussure and Hjelmslev, Greimas's work was influenced by the Prague Circle, Vladimir Propp, and Lévi-Strauss. Since the late 1940s, Greimas had maintained close contacts with Roland Barthes, and both belonged to a small circle, also including Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who met regularly for seven years (Hénault 1992: 99–101, 106–108, 111, 114). In the later period of his intellectual life, Barthes is considered a poststructuralist, but initially his semiotics was solidly anchored in structuralism (Culler 1983: 20, 78–90). He, like Greimas, follows the Saussure-Hjelmslev line, as is clear from his *Éléments de sémiologie* (1964a — see also Greimas and Courtés 1979: "Sémiologie"), the first handbook of semiotics, in which, besides the explicit references to Lévi-Strauss, many concepts he uses are identical with those used by the latter. In creating a semiotics of culture by analyzing and interconnecting different cultural (sub-)systems, Lévi-Strauss was admittedly helped by the object of his field, given that anthropology studies society in all its aspects, but such a holistic cultural semiotics was also sought by Barthes (for example, Barthes 1957), Greimas (for example, Greimas and Courtés 1979), and Eco (for example, 1972 [1968] and 1976).

We may understand from the above the impact of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism on the semiotic tradition to follow. Let me now pass to certain major themes of this structuralism that played a crucial role for the constitution of poststructuralist thought. Most of them are closely related to the concept of the universal matrix, and they are the following

(a similar discussion is found in Boklund-Lagopoulou et al. 2003: XXVI–XXVII):

a. I discussed briefly above the three major planes of communication according to Lévi-Strauss. He explicitly relates the communication of women to sociology, since it is a matter that concerns social structure, and the communication of goods and services to economics. He also postulates that there are differences between these three modes of communication, but they show similarities, because all three obey the same methodology, whence his conclusion that social anthropology, economics, and linguistics should be united in the future into a single science, that of communication. This science is manifestly no other than the one from which follows the scientific nature of anthropology, the *science séméiologique*.

   On many occasions in *Anthropologie structurale* (1958), Lévi-Strauss makes reference to Marxism or defines himself as a Marxist. But, contrary to the rigorous approach of the Bakhtin group(s), instead of explaining the semiotic through its anchoring in the material, he inversely integrates the material within the semiotic, since society and economy are turned into wholly semiotic phenomena. In this manner, he simultaneously reduces material phenomena to semiotic, leading to a "pansemiotism" (that is, Eco's semiotic imperialism), and presages Baudrillard's *Pour une critique de l' économie politique du signe* (1972), for whom also meaning as a system of communication presides over all social exchanges. It is from such a view that Eco keeps his distances with his *sub specie communicationis*, while also using in this latter context a Marxist prototype. Eco is not a Marxist, but a major approach to semiotics he proposes is inspired or at least influenced by Marxism. More specifically, Eco's "general semiotic theory" is divided into a "theory of codes," which is a semiotics of signification, and a "theory of sign production," which is a semiotics of communication. This second semiotics — which is partially approved by Deely (2001: 722) — is related to the Marxist semiotics of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1983 [1968]: for example, 35–36, 51, 53), since it is founded on the concept of semiotic labor; this concept leads Eco to the concept of the modes of sign production, leading in turn to the replacement of the typology of signs with a typology of the modes of sign production (Eco 1976: 3, 151–158). From Lévi-Strauss on, a reinterpretation of Marxism became a marked, explicit or implicit, feature of structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. We only have to think of Barthes's critique of bourgeois ideology, of "the bourgeois Norm," which is for him "the capital

enemy'' (Barthes 1957: 7, 9, 236–244; see also Harris 2001: 136–137, 144, 145–146).

What was a tendency towards idealism with Saussure's *langue*, with Lévi-Strauss's *séméiologie* and universal matrix of the unconscious seems to have become pure idealism — an idealism combined with positivism and logical positivism. Scientifically it is indeed idealist, but philosophically Lévi-Strauss attempts to escape idealism and disagrees explicitly with the neo-Kantians. For him, nature has an objective existence and knowledge of its laws is possible, and the same is true of society. This view seems awkward, given that he also believes that the knowledge of reality is the result of its reorganization in the human mind, because it is structured through the human senses and these messages are integrated by the brain. But, against the background of his preferred triad of psychoanalysis, geology and Marxism, he concludes that thought is also an object of the real world: ''Étant ''de ce monde,'' elle participe de la même nature que lui,'' implying a structural isomorphism between the mental and the natural (and social) world, whence the possibility of knowing the latter by knowing the former (Lévi-Strauss 1967 [1947]: 520 and 1955: 58; Leach 1970: 25–26, 92–93). It does not, then, come as a surprise that Jean-Paul Sartre considers Lévi-Strauss's theory as ''transcendental materialism'' (see Lévi-Strauss 1962a: 326). Lévi-Strauss's argument concerning knowledge of the natural world could perhaps be considered valid if the structures of thought were innate and biologically regulated; but this is not the case, because they are the products of history. The fact is that poststructuralism, which from the Lévi-Straussian triad embraced mainly the couple of psychoanalysis and Marxism (the latter reduced to semiotic reinterpretations), turned away from the attempt to create any kind of bridge between knowledge and reality (one of Deely's major concerns) and enclosed itself within the mental and the semiotic.

b. Lévi-Strauss's universal unconscious matrix led him to a notion that became central among poststructuralists, the death of the subject. This is in certain respects comparable to the equally anti-humanist view of Louis Althusser that there is an apparatus, a structure, a system of theoretical production, which absolutely determines any individual knowledge — surely a view that also dissolves the subject — but the crucial difference with Lévi-Strauss is that this apparatus, composed of material and ideational factors, is entirely social and historical (Althusser and Balibar 1968: 47–48). Lévi-Strauss states that the aim of the social sciences is the dissolution of man, not in order to destroy the constituent parts of the phenomena under study,

but to study in greater depth their properties. We understand that this dissolution is due to a double regression, the first from the "I" of an individual to the "us" of humanity, and the second from "us" to biology/nature. This regression is parallel to the regression from each specific culture to the "us-matrix" and from the latter to nature. This continuous regression, which aims also to cover animal psychology, ends, for Lévi-Strauss, with the integration of life within its physico-chemical origins. It is a view that corresponds to the second part of the assessment of Paul Ricoeur that Lévi-Strauss is a "Kantian without a transcendental subject," an assessment with which Lévi-Strauss agreed (Lévi-Strauss 1962a: 326–328; Fages 1972: 103, 110).

c. According to Lévi-Strauss, the individual structures constitute a group of transformations, that is, a group of structures related to each other through a set of rules of transformation. Such a group is ruled by a structural law, which is also a structure. The synchronic order of orders of a society is a function of the groupings of structures. There is also a diachronic change of structures due to their conflict with chance events, which themselves are not structural, but diachronic change is structural and follows a rule of transformation. Exactly the same rules apply to diachronic change in time, and synchronic change in geographical space observed in the case of synchronic comparisons, with as a result that the synchronic structures are replicated by the diachronic structures. This view concerning the close interrelationship between synchronic and diachronic structures is in a way comparable to Jakobson's position against the dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony, a position that Lévi-Strauss explicitly endorses. At this point, Lévi-Strauss goes well beyond Saussure: while for the latter diachronic change concerns only isolated elements, Lévi-Strauss relates synchrony and diachrony on the systemic level, by using the idea of structural transformation. It seems to me clear, however, that in this manner, historical change loses its historicity, because history is frozen within an *a priori*, which is the a-temporal, an-historical, super-synchronic unconscious matrix (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 102–103, 240–241, 252–253, 306, 342; see also Leach 1970: 93–94; Fages 1972: 55).

Due to the fact that chance events may upset structures, there is, according to Lévi-Strauss, a constant struggle between history and system. For him, the study of these two conflicting domains is bridged with the non-arbitrary diachronic construction. That is, he believes that with the help of the latter we are in a position to make true, objective history. This history of the anthropologist refers, ac-

cording to him, to a "mechanical" time, which is reversible and non-cumulative, while the historian refers to a "statistical" time, which is not reversible and has a determinate orientation, the specificity of history consisting in the understanding of the relation between before and after.

According to Lévi-Strauss, this history of the historians is not objective. Process is not an analytical object and cannot be studied together with structure. It is simply the manner in which temporality is experienced by a subject belonging to a specific social group, and these experiences are the object of history. The historical fact is not given, it is constituted by abstraction, and this is equally true for its selection. This way of operating is used both by the historian and the historical agent, who face the danger of infinite regression by making this abstraction, and have to segment and choose. History is made possible because a certain group of events in a given period acquires approximately the same signification for a specific group. There are different experiences of process in respect to the French Revolution by different social groups and the corresponding histories are all equally true. A totalizing synthesis of them is impossible, while an acceptance of their equal validity would lead to the conclusion that the French Revolution as we know it did not take place. We have here a kind of forerunner of Baudrillard's view on the non-reality of the Gulf War and the comparable view concerning the Holocaust. And Lévi-Strauss concludes: "L'histoire n'est donc jamais l'histoire, mais l'histoire-pour," a position to which I shall return immediately below (Lévi-Strauss 1962a: 207, 212, 339–342, 1958: 314, and 1962b: 44–45).

d. Lévi-Strauss strongly opposes the idea of primitive thought. According to him, at bottom, the logic of mythical thought and that of Western positive thought are little different. There is a difference, however, which does not really lie in the quality of mental operations, but in the nature of the object to which these operations are applied. Thus, there are two opposed modes of scientific thought, which are a function of the two strategic levels from which the physical world is approached: the one approach, utterly concrete, adjusted to perception and imagination and very close to intuition, is focused on sensible qualities, while the other, utterly abstract and not so close to intuition, is focused on formal properties. The two modes of thought are not due to unequal stages of the development of the human mind and knowledge; they are equally valid, and the "savage" thought is logical and its logic is of the same nature with our own. Given this position, we understand why Lévi-Strauss believes that the idea of

progress cannot be considered as a universal category of human development, but only as a category of our own society when it reflects upon itself. Of course there has been, for Lévi-Strauss, progress in humanity's products (not in thought), which, however, has not been continuous and presents changes in its orientation, but ultimately the very concept of progress presupposes the focus on a specific kind of progress in a direction subjectively predetermined. As we may see, opposition to this major notion of the Enlightenment is not the privilege of postmodernism.

According to Lévi-Strauss, these are conclusions to be drawn from the true history made by the anthropologist. He believes that the other type of history, the historian's history, is by definition unable to conceive of the equality between Western culture and other cultures. His point of departure is the quotation cited above on the subjectivity of history and its nature as history-for, which is an answer to Sartre. Lévi-Strauss does not agree that the replacement of a history-for-me by a history-for-us solves the problem of historical objectivity, because "us" is just an extended "me." He believes that the result of such a history is to attribute to the Papuans the metaphysical function of the Other, a perspective satisfying a philosophical appetite that turns into an intellectual cannibalism worse than the actual one. Ethnocentrism cannot accept as natural the diversity of cultures, but considers it as a monstrosity (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 254–255, 368, 1962a: 24, 32–33, 341, 355–357, and 1961: 19, 36, 38, 68). This same Other is the one who, according to Barthes (1957: 239–240), the petty-bourgeoisie is incapable of imagining or accepting in his/her own right.

3. Neostructuralism: The interpretative orientation

The connection between poststructuralism and (classical, orthodox) *sémiologie* is of such a nature, that we should replace the suffix "post" with "neo." In order to substantiate this observation, it is useful to discuss briefly certain historical data, as well as the epistemological nature of this new current. The discussion follows closely the views of Manfred Frank. As we shall see, poststructuralism represents the rebel twin, the *enfant terrible*, of French structuralism and semiotics. The two currents were almost contemporaneous and geographically coincident, both originating in France and more specifically Paris. Poststructuralism is a term attributed *a posteriori* to the new current and it has, I believe, the ideological connotation of "beyond" and "maturity." Frank criticizes the term

on another basis, because for him the prefix "post" does not imply any historically necessary connection to the other part of the term, which he believes is misleading. This is why he opts for "neostructuralism," though with some reservations, because this other prefix implies a direct continuity of a theory or a resumption, not necessarily linear, of a theory after a period of interruption or sclerosis. This is not literally the case; however, according to Frank, although there may be no direct continuity, there is a direct and internal relation between neostructuralism and "classical" structuralism. It is in this sense that I would agree with Jonathan Culler's (1983: 78) remark that: "Much of what was heralded as "poststructuralist" was in fact already conscpicuous in structuralist writings."

There is a slight historical discrepancy between the two currents. Neostructuralism took shape about twenty years after Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, some time before the events of May 1968, and, for Frank, this historical reference shows that neostructuralism was formed as an opposition to mainstream philosophy and literature. According to Frank, the approach of the *nouveaux Français*, or, as he prefers to call them, the *nouveaux Parisiens*, comes from the joining together of classical structuralism (the continuity) and a reinterpretation of German philosophy (the discontinuity), which became an instrument for the subversion of structuralism. The list of German philosophers is not short and preeminent on it are Nietzsche and his anti-positivism and Heidegger with his phenomenology, himself connected to both Nietzsche and the idealism of Hegel, another major figure on the list. Frank also expands the list in two other directions, embraced already by Lévi-Strauss. The first is psychoanalysis, with its roots in Freud. The second is Marxism, mainly the idealistically tinged Frankfurt School, to which I would add the Marxist ambiance in intellectual Paris, the emergence of structuralist Marxism, and the fact that not a few among the neostructuralists were in sympathy or associated with the political Left. These influences on neostructuralism need some further comments, which I shall make at the end of this section.

Neostructuralism and (somewhat later) postmodernism revive, according to Frank, the old German anti-modernism and anti-Enlightenment romanticism (see also Hollinger 1994: 31). Neostructuralism resumes the German critique of metaphysics from romanticism to Heidegger, and proclaims the death of metaphysics and of any supreme and legitimating value, seeing this as part of the postmodern condition. Both neostructuralism and postmodernism exhibit this linking of German phenomenology and French linguistically based structuralism. I think that we may call this contradictory mixture "structuralizing linguistic hermeneutics," structuralizing in the sense that, starting from the context of structural

thinking and without abandoning it, they nonetheless end up annulling it. I believe, then, that Frank is right when he sees neostructuralism as simultaneously radicalizing structuralism and philosophically subverting it. He also rightly concludes that neostructuralism is more of a philosophical movement than an approach to the human sciences — however, and at first sight amazingly, postmodernism came to invade this domain, and not only. It is interesting to note that this distinction was already made by Jeanne Parain-Vial as early as 1969, when she differentiated between a scientific and an ideological structuralism (1969: 139–195). A year earlier, Jean Piaget (1968: 108–115) had criticized Michel Foucault's structuralism as a "structuralism without structures," which replaced scientific methodology by speculative improvisations. All these views converge to show the opposition, within their continuity, between structuralism and neostructuralism as an opposition between a scientific, and positivist, orientation and a philosophical and interpretative orientation (for the above discussion concerning neostructuralism, see Frank 1989 [1984]: 7–30).

I shall discuss below the main views of the key neostructuralist authors, starting with the ambiguous case of Jacques Lacan; ambiguous, because he is mainly a structuralist (cf. Roudinesco 1990 [1984]: 361–362). I made reference earlier to the personal contact between Lacan and Lévi-Strauss. To this should be added that, on the occasion of a 1946 lecture by Lacan, we learn that he had just read Saussure, to whom he was introduced by Lévi-Strauss (Roudinesco 1990 [1984]: 144 — see also 175). Lacan started writing so early, is so closely akin to Lévi-Strauss and in a sense the Saussurean tradition, and is so fundamentally based on the concept of structure, that it is from a certain point of view difficult to understand his assimilation to the group of the neostructuralists. However, there are three factors, in my opinion, that underpin this association.

First, there is the fact that, although the *Écrits* include many earlier writings going back as far as 1936, Lacan acquired an international reputation only after their publication in 1966 (Lodge and Wood 2000 [1988]: 61), the same year as Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* and one year before Jacques Derrida's *L'écriture et la différence* and *De la grammatologie*. Thus it does not come as a surprise that, due to the historical conjuncture and the affinity of ideas of the *Écrits* with the other works mentioned, Lacan was considered as a neostructuralist. Of course, part of this affinity is due to what we also see in Lévi-Strauss, namely that the *Écrits* show the virtual existence of neostructuralism within structuralism itself.

Second, the book is enriched with a sophisticated literary style, current in neostructuralist and postmodern writings. As Pamela Tytell (1974: 79) observes: *"Le style lacanien est d'une difficulté légendaire: 'elliptique,' 'al-*

lusif,' 'oraculaire,' 'du gongorisme.''' This style is not the result of a superficial choice. For Lacan, the analyst is the practitioner of the language of the unconscious, a language of wordplay and poetry, in which the content is indissociable from the manner in which it is phrased, that is, style. So, too, Lacan's interpretations are incorporated into a discourse that is of a similar nature. This aesthetic approach to psychoanalysis is a more general characteristic of French psychoanalysis. Lacan's style of writing presents affinities with the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (Turkle 1992: 50, 54, 99). This last point reminds us of the relationship of Lacan with the Surrealists, an issue that points to their general affinity with neostructuralism and to which I shall return at the end of this section.

The third factor is the most important. Lacan made a French reading of Freud, and the French Freudian school was politicized after May 1968, when the politics of individuality was combined with social politics. Its ideas were widely diffused in French society, leading to a kind of ''Freud's French revolution,'' which was mainly due to May 1968. In this situation, psychoanalysts turned to radical social criticism and adhered to the Left, psychoanalysis acquired a central position in the Left, and Lacan, the key person for introducing psychoanalysis in France and who had not previously inclined notably to the Left, came to be seen, perhaps with some help on his part, as a radical. He became the leading figure of this new French ''revolution,'' by preaching the primacy of desire (Turkle 1992: 6, 8, 10–11, 47, 49, 65, 68, 84–85). So, the post-May 1968 Lacan was the Lacan of desire, not structure.

Lacan's Saussurean interpretation of Freud rests on a capital distortion of a major point of Saussure's theory, the inseparable tie between the two aspects of the sign (see also Parain-Vial 1969: 149–150). The postwar Lacan adopts linguistics as a pilot science — as opposed, for him, to a semiology hypothetically generalized — and he starts from the concepts of the signifier (S) and the signified (*s*). Only he rejects the major concept of their inextricable unison, the sign, because he presents their relation as an ''algorithm,'' with the form S/*s*, and this concept of algorithm implies a *process by steps*, that is, S → *s*. The signifier is ''over'' the signified, and this ''over'' is consistent with the ''bar separating the two stages of the algorithm,'' which in his view resists signification. The signifier is the ''superior'' term and the signified the ''inferior.'' None of all this is to be found in Saussure, for whom, as we saw, the signifier and the signified are indissolubly related (we recall that in an illustration of Saussure's book — Mauro 1972: 155–156 — the ideas occupy the upper part of the diagram and the sounds the lower) and the sign is an unbreakable unit. According to Lacan, this capital distinction — let me call it the Lacanian arbitrariness *on* the sign — is much more important than the arbitrariness *of* the

sign and distances us from the illusion that the function of the signifier is to represent the signified, that is, that the *raison d'être* of the signifier is to be related to any signification whatsoever. With a couple of dead-end examples, Lacan tries to show that a signifier has signification, only now he calls it "meaning," not signified. The "over" of the signifier goes, for him, together with the fact that the algorithm is "a pure function of the signifier" and the signifier "enters" into the signified, a signifier that sends forth its light into the darkness of unfinished significations. The bar makes possible the study of the relations between the signifiers themselves (Lacan 1966: 496–501). These relations correspond to the Saussurean concept of value, which is not mentioned by Lacan.

But one misunderstanding leads to another. On the basis of the above unimaginable separation, Lacan differentiates between two different networks. The first is the network of the signifiers, which is a synchronic structure, where each element is differentiated from the other elements. This is the principle ruling the elements of *langue* in its different levels. The second is the network of the signifieds, which consists of diachronic concrete discourses. The structure of the first network rules the second and the second one acts historically on the first. The network of the signifiers is structured, that is, its unities, from wherever we start to find their interrelationships and increasing integration, are differential elements brought together according to the laws of a closed order. Dominant in the second network is the unity of signification, which never indicates purely reality, but always refers to another signification — an endless referral of signification that we find later in Derrida. The coherence of this network comes from the signifiers, and thus there is an overdetermination of the signifier, both in synchrony and diachrony (Lacan 1966: for example, 46–47, 413–415, 498, 501–502, 594; see also Fages 1971: 20, 57–58). We recognize in this division Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, only that in Lacan, they no longer both operate with signs, but *langue* consists only of signifiers and *parole* only of signifieds. Jean-Baptiste Fages (1971: 57–58) indicates how Lacan has regrouped the oppositional pairs used by Saussure — signifier versus signified, *langue versus parole*, synchrony versus diachrony, and possibly paradigm versus syntagm — so that, on the one hand, the first terms of each opposition, and on the other, the second terms, correspond to each other: signifier–*langue*–synchrony–paradigm versus signified–*parole*–diachrony–syntagm. Fages tries to excuse Lacan by arguing that, since he is not interested in linguistics as such but only in its use in psychoanalysis, he overcharges the signifier with all the strong categories of Saussurean linguistics and leaves to the signified the weaker ones; Fages also admits that the supremacy of the signifier has no operational value in linguistics.

Thus, for Lacan, only signifiers are structured. Their structure results from their combinations; due to these relations, signifiers have meaning, and the relations between signifiers are ruled by immanent laws. Leaving aside, momentarily, the obvious objection that we never actually encounter pure signifiers, but only *signification*, we might note at this point that it is in fact possible to attribute a meaning to a relation, through a metalinguistic operation. This is what Lacan is doing when he deals with abstract mathematical operations, of which he believes that they show the overdetermination of the signifier which the individual encounters when entering into the order of language, an overdetermination that he finds in the Freudian view of the symbolic function (Lacan 1966: 47–52, 60, 229, 649; Fages 1971: 57; Parain-Vial 1969: 149).

Let me briefly present the steps Lacan takes in order to give a mathematical expression to what he considers to be the relationships between signifiers. He starts with a pair of binary oppositions $+/-$, which corresponds, for him, to the fundamental alternative between presence and absence. Next, in function of these mathematical notations he constructs triadic groups, these first two operations being taken explicitly from Lévi-Strauss. The groups arrived at by Lacan represent all possible combinations between the initial notations. Lacan classifies these groups according to their formal characteristics into three classes, (1), (2), and (3). He applies these classes to a random series composed of the initial notations. He then proceeds to a superior level of classes on the basis of a combination by twos of the previous classes, which he names α, β, γ, and δ. Finally, he turns to the combinations of the latter classes and observes that the syntax of their succession determines different combinational possibilities for two of these classes compared to the other two. Lacan believes that this *chaîne signifiante* approximates a topological background (Lacan 1966: 47–50, 501–502).

What Lacan wants to show with this mathematical exercise — a product of the new, postwar, hardcore positivism — is that a succession of random phenomena is ruled by strict symbolic determinations, in order to conclude that the theory and practice of free association in psychoanalysis is meaningful due to the autonomy of the symbolic, and the power of psychoanalysis is to have recourse to this symbolic determination and its laws. These are the laws of the unconscious, a discursive unconscious, the laws of what is above the bar, and "the unconscious has the radical structure of language," i.e., the laws of the unconscious are the same as those of the natural languages — laws of the unconscious that for Lacan, just as for Lévi-Strauss, are universal (Lacan 1966: for example, 47, 52, 59–61, 285, 594; Parain-Vial 1969: 145, 146, 149). To this claim, Parain-Vial counterargues that from its very start Lacan's procedure is

ambiguous, since the relation to experience of the initial elements, to which the mathematical notations are applied, is not established according to explicit criteria; that these elements are not easily comparable to linguistic units; and that the coincidence of Lacan's structures with linguistic structures is not proven by the author (Parain-Vial 1969: 148–149).

Lacan's above treatment of the random series is much more than a simple example to him, as indicated by the incorporation of Lévi-Strauss's anthropological structures, as well as by the observation he makes at some point of his procedure that he has formulated the elementary formalization of exchange and that this has an anthropological interest (Lacan 1966: 49, 276–277; see also Parain-Vial 1969: 147). It is a tool with which Lacan attempts to formulate a universal matrix *à la* Lévi-Strauss. As to his "*topologerie*," it does not deal with the formal aspect of the mathematical objects to which it refers, nor with strict mathematical concepts, and lacks any mathematical coherency. The topological object is in Lacan a "revelation," a kind of model that "imagines" a psychological object and its properties, that is, it is a metaphor. Lacan has no illusion on that matter, using topological objects as a heuristic device because of their structural coherence (Dor 1996). However, the claims of the mathematical treatment of the random series opposes the views generalizing his metaphorical attitude towards his "topologery" to his psychoanalysis in general — and this is a factual observation that does not automatically classify me among the "detractors and dogmatists" concerning Lacan's work (Dor 1996: 118).

The structure of the signifiers is not, according to Lacan, a simple theoretical model, because its syntax produces effects within experience and is constitutive of the subject. Lacan relates this conclusion to structuralism in general, on the grounds that the latter conceives of experience as the field where "it speaks" — an observation at once Levistraussian and neostructuralist. This is why in "I speak," what is important is not the first, but the second term. Language is not a superstructure, but deeply experiential. Still according to Lacan, the constitution of the subject comes after the third and final step of the Mirror Stage, which is also the first of the Oedipus complex. During this step of the Mirror Stage, the stage of imaginary relation, the infant identifies with its proper image and also with the other, who is the desired mother, and the desire of the mother is the Phallus. This is the step of "primary identification." Previous to his constitution as a subject, the infant is just an "ideal-I." Then, the function of the subject is given by the social institution that is language, and thus the nature of the subject is discursive. The order of language, the Symbolic order, is the locus of the displacement of *parole*, the network of the signifieds; it is the *Autre* with a capital A, not as the sum

of interlocutors, but as an order. In this Other, and because of the Other, desire unfolds, the desire for recognition by the others, the desire to be desired by the others, the desire of the Other. Language implants desire in the object, which comes from the process of filtering need along the chain of signifiers. Desire thus understood is a dialectics of the consciousness of the self, which is a Hegelian use of Freud (Lacan 1966: for example, 30, 50, 94, 98, 268, 413–414, 628, 649, 655–656; Fages 1971: 16, 19, 32–33, 35; Parain-Vial 1969: 145).

When, after the Mirror Stage and within the Oedipus stage, the infant enters into the symbolic order, s/he as a subject is ruled by the Law of the Father, but in this context s/he is unable to conceive of the ultimate signifier of his/her desire, which is the Phallus, from which derives the whole of the symbolic order — the Phallus is not reducible to the biological "penis," but is a paternal metaphor. The subject passes through a series of confusions and alienations, due to imaginary identifications. It is at this point that clinical psychoanalysis intervenes. The patient is subject to a false and alienated language, due to a primordial alienation, while there is a true and liberated language, conscious of the primary signifier, the Phallus. The cure consists in locating, through the collaboration of the patient with the analyst, this primary signifier (Lacan 1966: for example, 94, 278; Fages 1971: 15, 18–19, 35–36).

The setting of clinical psychoanalysis poses, for Lacan, the patient as a speaker and in a situation of interlocution. In the course of this intersubjective discourse, the history of the patient unfolds. The analyst is a witness, who listens, translates, and guarantees the discourse addressed to him. He brings the patient into contact with language, thus functioning as a mediator. His "anchoring points" in the history of the patient are to be found in the following: the "monuments," that is, the patient's body, locus of the hysterical nucleus of the neurosis, where the hysterical symptom has the structure of a language and can be deciphered like an inscription; the "archival documents," that is, the memories from childhood; the "semantic evolution," that is, specific traits of personality, such as lifestyle, character, and vocabulary; "traditions," that is, personal myths; and "traces," that is, those elements that, in a distorted form, lead to what is hidden behind them (Lacan 1966: 235, 257–258; Fages 1971: 21–22). Note that, in this terminology, Lacan uses a series of metaphors from historical research.

In the process of psychoanalysis, the "anchoring points" are the elements corresponding to the consecutive steps of the patient's desire, which constitute the chain of the unconscious signifiers, the unconscious "thoughts" of the subject. Through this chain, the analyst provokes the regression of the patient back to the unconscious primary signifier of

his/her desire, the Phallus, thus ending the previous movement. In this manner the unconscious, previously censured, empty, and replaced by a lie, is conquered, and truth, individual reality, the Real (cf. the objectivity of Lévi-Strauss's matrix), is found. At this moment, the moment of *"tu es cela,"* the cure is effected, the analyst is in a position to show to the patient retrospectively the web that s/he has woven starting from the primary signifier, and thus the subject is integrated without cracks into the symbolic order, having now the ability to speak consciously about this web (Lacan 1966: for example, 235, 258–259, 537; Fages 1971: 23–24; Parain-Vial 1969: 146).

I shall end this discussion of Lacan's partly Saussurean, partly Levistraussian, and, as I shall argue at the end of this section, partly surrealist reformulation of the Freudian analysis of the unconscious, with two points that follow from it. First, there is a close resemblance between Lacan's programmatic statement, which, with its historical metaphors, aims to show that it is possible, starting from individual micro-history, to find the laws of the unconscious, and the ideas that we find thirteen years later in Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* on the level of macro-history. Following his route from the unconscious to language, Lacan concludes that: "C'est le monde des mots qui crée le monde des choses" (Lacan 1966: 276), a statement echoed in Foucault's title and *épistémè* as the rules of the construction of subjects, objects, and concepts (see also Gros 1996: 38–39). According to Lacan these metaphors are substantial, because the historical method can serve as a model for psychoanalysis. The reason is that the ideal in history is the "identification of the subjectivity of the historian with the constituting subjectivity of the primary historization in which the event is humanized" (Lacan 1966: 287), a view that makes a bridge between Lévi-Strauss and Foucault. Second, the advent of the cure coincides with the revelation of truth. It is the truth for the patient, it is the truth for the analyst who was able to detect it through his scientific method, and this truth is to be found in the structure as reality, just as for Althusser. Since truth comes from the formal structure of the signifiers, which partakes of the universal, and is extracted, as in Hegel, through rational discourse, no experience can disprove it, and even the cure of the patient is not necessary (Parain-Vial 1969: 145–146); there is thus no possibility of verifiability or, to put it in Popperian terms, falsifiability. Truth is a closed circle, as is the case with the mythological analyses of Lévi-Strauss.

The concept of structure did not meet the same fate in general neostructuralist thought. I mentioned earlier that Harris attributes the prewar success of the synchronic *langue* — and I would add of a robust structure — to the need for leaving behind a past of crisis and building a new pres-

ent. Harris also argues that the diffusion of Saussurean ideas was even wider after World War II, with as a result that the structuralist explanation of culture occupied once more the center of scientific interest, but this time it came to be seen with scepticism, because the new war had erased the hope invested in synchronic constructions, and became the target of the critique of the poststructuralists (Harris 2001: 205–206).

Harris offers here a negative explanation for the above reaction against the core of structuralism, but I think that there is also a positive, and strong, explanation of this reaction. We saw in the first section of this text that postmodernism resulted from the economic and cultural globalization of the 1970s. In the context of globalization, the central cultural phenomenon is the interaction between the cultural traits accompanying globalization and the local cultures, with as a result the transformation of the latter. In a fast-moving world, the structure recedes in empirical reality — which, however, by no means implies that it disappears — and what stands out is rapid change.

The concept of structure is emphatically contested by Derrida. The critique of that concept, and, on a general level, of structuralism, but also pansemiotism, and thus idealism, mark Derrida's deconstruction. Derrida argues that "structure" is inherently a metaphorical concept, is derived from space and construction. Structuralism approaches meaning as form, and form is spatial. The preoccupation with form makes structuralism formalist and "ultrastructuralist." Structure is something completed, built; it may presuppose content, but it finally neutralizes it. Structuralism is also teleological, because the location of an organized totality presupposes the anticipation of an end, that is, it believes that meaning exists exclusively within the totality, and this is revealed not to be the case if the totality was not animated by such an anticipation. Further, structuralism is essentialist and metaphysical, because it considers structure as real, as being in the object, and thus as presence, a view Derrida calls "structural realism." Thus, according to Derrida, structure presupposes a present "center," a fixed origin. It is this center that renders the centered structure stable. It is this center that in the Western history of metaphysics has been given a variety of definitions (such as God, consciousness, substance, matter, history, class struggle, politics, economy, truth), which all determine being as presence (Derrida 1967a: for example, 11–14, 27–29, 35, 36, 41–44, 409–411; Frank 1989 [1984]: 62–63, 64–65).

For Derrida, on the other hand, meaning cannot be restricted to the simultaneity of form. The content attached to structure overflows it, because it is (related to) movement within language, (related to) the living energy of meaning; this energy is (leads to) meaning itself, and it is linked to instability. Any center that pretends to stabilize meaning is not a

reality, is not a ''being-present.'' Due to the absence of a center, an origin, a structure, i.e., of a referent or a signified outside language, all languages, including those of the human sciences, are just discourse: ''Il n'y a pas de hors-texte'' (Derrida: 1967a: for example, 13, 35–36, 1967b: 90, 227, and 1972: for example, 125–126).

The lack of a center is the cornerstone of Derrida's philosophy. But every cornerstone can be stabilized only when there is a ground underneath it. And this ground is Saussure and his concept of value, which Saussure relates to the arbitrariness of the sign. Value shows that the nature of linguistic entities is relational and differential. Derrida finds that the thesis of the arbitrariness of the sign, for which he prefers the term *non-motivation*, is fundamental. He opts, however, for the correlative thesis of difference as the source of value. For Derrida, the center is a necessary function, which aims at organizing a structure and limiting its freeplay (the result of the Saussurean concept of value). But the center neutralizes the structurality of structure (the structurality that is the condition for value — Derrida: 1967b: for example, 65–77 and 1967a: for example 409).

Any assumed ''central'' signified, which would be considered as original, positive, and transcendental, is just part of the system of differences, and the fact of its absence extends *ad infinitum* the freeplay of the substitutions of signification, through the referral from signifier to signifier, within the system as a finite whole. Thus, any signification process is a game of differences, without which there is neither signification nor structure. Given that the linguistic entities are interrelated, each one of them is constituted by the ''traces'' in it of the other entities of the system. No entity is in reality present as such, but relates to other entities, which are equally not present. The same conception is applied by Derrida at the macro-level of whole texts. Texts are produced by their interconnections with other texts and every text is a transformation of other texts. We encounter here the older concept of intertextuality, introduced by Bakhtin (Greimas and Courtés 1979: ''Intertextualité'') and used by Julia Kristeva (1969: see 316), in a Levistraussian form. Due to this dynamics, there is no positive signification in a text, because the text is different from itself before it even exists (Derrida 1967a: for example, 42, 423, 1967b: for example, 73, and 1972: for example, 16–18, 37–38, 45–46, 78; Frank 1989: 74–75).

Thus, Derrida points out the ''horizontal'' relationship between texts, while on the other hand he does not accept their ''vertical'' relationship. Since the center, the referent, i.e., what is considered to be outside the semiotic, is part of the semiotic and only an effect of the reference of discourse, no text can transcend, ''explain'' another text, that is, there can

be no metalanguage (science included); such a hierarchy would presuppose an actual reference to an external referent. It is the reality of decentering that is attached to the structurality of structure. Following Nietzsche, who is a major influence on his work, Derrida conceives of science as a truth-seeking discourse marked by the repressive ideology of reason. In spite of his rejection of metalanguage, however, he states that he does not intend his discourse to be a discourse against the *value* of truth and against science, and he rejects relativistic empiricism (Derrida 1967b: for example, 227, 1972: for example, 117, 79–80 note 23, and 1967a: for example 411; Norris 1982: 59–60). Because philosophy, for Derrida, cannot overcome the presence of language and its rhetorical devices, it — and indeed any other kind of discourse — must be subject to the same modes of rhetorical analysis with which literature is approached. Derrida makes explicit this connection between philosophy and literature in his own writings, so that they "seem more akin to literary criticism than philosophy" (Norris 1982: 18–19, 21 and 1990: 152), an interest in style that we already encountered in Lacan and that is also manifest in Lévi-Strauss, for example, in *Tristes tropiques* (1955).

According to Derrida, the differential effects in the semiotic systems are the "product" of the structurality of structures, the latter being the "root," the "origin" of the former. Derrida insists on these quotation marks, because he thinks that without these marks, the description would fall back into the language of metaphysics. While structurality is, for him, the background of meaning, he states that it itself has no absolute origin, no positive existence, and cannot take the form of a presence, be described by any metaphysical concept, or be the object of a science (Derrida 1972: for example, 16–18, 38–39, 78 note 22 and 1967a: 83, 90–92, 95). If this structurality, *différance*, was coextensive with differences, Derrida would avoid both the terms in quotation marks and the quotation marks themselves. We must, then, conclude that, while differences generate meaning and thus represent the process of semiosis, *différance* belongs to a superior level and generates the presuppositions for meaning, corresponding to semiosis itself as a process. Derrida manifestly has to see this process as internal to the sphere of semiosis and avoid the appeal to a center and to any kind of metaphysics (cf. Frank 1989: 60–61, 62). However, the center strikes back with terms like "product," and the only way out of this *reductio ad absurdum* is to locate the origin of the process of semiosis outside the semiotic system itself and in the sphere of the extrasemiotic. Using a different paradigm from my own, Deely reaches a comparable conclusion. Based on the Peircian triadic relation in a sign and the concept of natural sign, he considers *différance* as an "object signified" (which is, for him, closely connected to an external referent) and

argues that thus indefinite referral, which is possible only in the realm of the sign (as opposed to the object signified), is immobilized (Deely 2001: 679, 681–684).

The structurality of structure is a structured movement / energy of meaning, the formation of the form, leading to the internal geneticism of structures. Derrida uses different terms to denote this dynamics of meaning: *différance*, force, archi-writing, *gramme*, (pure, originating) trace. As we saw, decentering is attached to *différance*, as is also the freeplay of signification. Due to the movement of freeplay, the absent center is filled, but with a signified that is a floating addition to it, a supplement, so that this movement is one of endless supplementarity. The reality of freeplay disrupts presence and being, generally all ''centers'' of Western thought. The lack of a center allows Derrida's deconstruction to proceed to a radical critique of what he considers as Western metaphysics and, with it, of the major modern philosophical concept of the subject. Not unexpectedly, the subject is derived from the semiotic movement of *différance* and there is no presence of the subject in itself outside and before that movement. It is thus not true, for Derrida, that the semiotic codes emanate from the subject, but on the contrary the subject is constructed through the semiotic system. *Différance* and freeplay exclude the search for truth and lead us beyond the subject, man, and humanism (Derrida 1967a: for example, 26, 423, 426, 1967b: for example, 37, 88, 91–92, 95, and 1972: for example, 27, 39–41, 48; Frank 1989: 303).

Derrida's deconstruction has been extremely influential and two major ideas with a tremendous impact in practice are the byproducts of *différance*, namely the freeplay of signification, and the leveling of all kinds of texts, which, by implying their fictional quality, brings them within the field of literature. Norris believes that the casual use of these two ideas completely betrays Derrida's deconstruction, and he strongly criticizes this ''ultra-textualist thesis'' adopted by a circle of literary critics in the U.S., an issue to which I shall come back in the fourth section of this text. Of course, Norris contends, Derrida identifies the linguistic factors, such as metaphors, which make indirect the transition from ''what the text manifestly *means to say* to what it actually says.'' Norris assimilates this search for covert meaning to the essential freeplay and thus he is absolutely critical of slogans such as ''all reading is misreading'' or ''all interpretation is misinterpretation.'' Norris accepts that Derrida argues for a limitless play in the end of ''Structure, sign, and play'' (see Derrida 1967b: ch. 10), but he believes that Derrida does so after a deconstructive reading and rigorous critique of Lévi-Strauss, structural anthropology, and certain classic binary oppositions, operations which are opposed to a limitless freeplay. So, Norris considers this contradiction as apparent

and argues that the meaning of freeplay is that "at the limit" there is no *de jure* (i.e., theoretical) principle able to restrict freeplay in a text and that meaning is by its nature indeterminate (which is why texts are continuously open to new interpretations), but this does not imply that there is not a *de facto* (i.e., empirical) possibility of interpretation in philosophy, literary criticism, or everyday conversation. Derrida himself, argues Norris, uses a coherent argumentation and it is this latter that leads him to his apparently anti-philosophical theses, which reveal the limits of systematic thought.

Concerning the leveling of philosophy and literature, Norris argues that Derrida does not want to eliminate their difference, but intends to show that these distinctions are founded on unstable oppositions, such as literal-figural; however, the latter are necessary as the starting point of any philosophical discourse that aims at overcoming them. According to Norris, Derrida is opposed to what could be labeled the "vulgar deconstructionist position," that is, that philosophy is no more than a "kind of writing."

Of course, the pendant of the ideas of freeplay and the leveling of texts is the status given to the referent by Derrida, and Norris has to come to terms with "il n'y a pas de hors-texte." He emphatically does not believe that Derrida's view coincides with its interpretation by postmodernism, which sees truth and reality as the products of an unending freeplay. According to Norris, this kind of interpretation rules out any *Ideologiekritik*, which is not the case with the work of Derrida, and the latter's work does not share in the postmodern counter-Enlightenment orientation (for the above, see Norris 1990: 38, 52, 147–154, 158, 206).

I think that Norris is right in defending Derrida as a systematic philosopher and in redressing, as far as this can be done, the concepts of freeplay and of the leveling of texts. However, two important issues seem to escape from his considerations. The first is that Derrida provides no theory for the relation between the *de facto* possibility of interpretation — let me call it theory in practice — and the *de jure* lack of a principle restricting freeplay, that is, theory in theory; this allows him to act out at will two different Derridas, to paraphrase the French expression *"Jacques qui rit et Jacques qui pleure,"* the wild freeplaying critic and the anti-essentialist philosopher (see also the fourth section of this text). What, then, are the criteria for the *de facto* limitation of freeplay? The second issue concerns the status of truth for Derrida. Norris, as we just saw, defends Derrida on the grounds that he protects truth and reality from their involvement with freeplay. Here Norris seems to be willing to protect the referent, but how is it possible to do so, since for Derrida there is no accessibility to it or truth? Elsewhere, Norris (1990: 148, 154) refers to the

value of truth, and this is in fact the point made by Derrida, but the value of truth, which is an endo-textual issue in philosophy for Derrida, is utterly different from truth as tested against (the banished) external reality.

The relation of Derrida to Saussure is extremely close, but he goes well beyond the Saussure's delimitations, as he himself phrases it: not "to 'surpass' the teaching of the master, but to continue and extend it"; while his relation to Lévi-Strauss is one of combined attraction and distancing. On the whole, Derrida, just as Greimas and Barthes, follows the Saussure-Hjelmslev-Lévi-Strauss line, to which Nietzsche and Kant should be added, though he is also critical of its links (Derrida 1967a: for example, 74, 81, 86, 88; Norris 1982: 1–2, 30–31, 48, 54, 79–80 and 1990: 205–206). This is the same attitude that he adopts in respect to Marx. Derrida combines a reverence for Marx's thought with a determined attack on the discourse — which he rightly considers as tending to become dominant on the geopolitical stage and aiming at imposing a world hegemony — which celebrates the death of Marx and Marxism and extols capitalism, neoliberalism, the economy of the market, and liberal democracy. He also rightly mentions the existence of different "spirits" of Marxism and he states that he adopts one among them, not Marxist orthodoxy, but radical thinking. We note that here, strangely Derrida adopts an undoubtedly referential viewpoint, when he refers to "hors-texte" phenomena, such as geopolitics, capitalism, and the market, which can scarcely be understood as semiotic (Derrida 1993: for example, 36, 90, 95–96, 142, 148–150).

According to Derrida, Marxism is necessary, but needs to be radically changed, something which for him is in agreement with the Marxist spirit. For Derrida, who wants to be a "good Marxist" (his quotation marks), deconstruction would be impossible without Marxism, which should not be judged as illusory, and is faithful to Marxism as a radical critique, a stance that is a heritage from the Enlightenment, but is also a radicalization of Marxism, a critical discourse on the critique and ontology of Marxism, without sacrificing its emancipatory promise (Derrida 1993: for example, 101–102, 145, 151–153, 269). This strikes me as too abstract a relation between deconstruction and Marxism, which is why I believe it wiser to stay with the conclusion of Christopher Norris that "it is difficult to square deconstruction in this radical, Nietzschean guise with any workable Marxist account of text and ideology. Such attempted fusions in the name of a Marxian post-structuralist theory are fated … to an endlessly proliferating discourse of abstraction" (Norris 1982: 80, 83–85).

Derrida's semiotic theory, grammatology, makes the final step towards the isolation within the semiotic and idealism (although Derrida would, of course, deny it). What with Saussure was an epistemological decision,

a relevancy, with a tendency towards idealism, and with Lévi-Strauss scientific idealism but philosophical positivism, becomes with Derrida pure philosophical idealism (see also Deely 2001: 611, 681). Derrida builds a totalizing philosophical understanding (Norris on the one hand subscribes to this view — Norris (1990: 139) — and on the other states the opposite — Norris (1982: 1), but he does not seem to understand that it is the output of an initial decision to adopt a specific relevancy, which then is denied as a metalanguage by his own system, and that the adoption of a different relevancy would lead to different philosophical conclusions. In this manner, while Saussure did not even extrapolate from *langue* to the whole of linguistics, Derrida extrapolates from *langue* to the whole of semiotics and further to the whole of philosophy.

Derrida is close to structuralism, but his approach uncouples two concepts that are almost identical in structuralism, system and structure. He adopts the concept of system, but rejects structure. He believes that ultrastructuralism, where Lévi-Strauss is included, despite its merits, by focusing on structure rejects the most valuable and original intention of structuralism. This intention is served, as he states, by the concept of *différance*. The structure of ultrastructuralism is static, but there is also another kind of structure, produced by *différance*, which is ruled by systematic transformations related to differences (Derrida 1967a: for example, 27–28, 43–44 and 1972: for example, 39). Just like Foucault, Derrida proposes a structuralism without structures (see also Frank 1989: 64–65, 69, 73). Since the structures of structuralism are not, for Derrida, wrong, but the product of the ossification of meaning, we may deduce that what he proposes is a completely open transformational matrix. While the Levistraussian matrix is anchored in a ''center'' (the laws of the unconscious, the functioning of the brain), Derrida wants his own matrix to have no origin.

The rejection of a stabilizing center is also the hallmark of Lyotard's view of the only legitimate type of knowledge and science in the postmodern condition. The use by Lyotard of the term ''postmodern'' is of major importance. As we saw in the first section, the term was rather current in the U.S. during the 1970s, and, when Lyotard uses it in his *La condition postmoderne* (Lyotard 1979: 11 note 1, 63 note 121), he refers to sources from that country and an article by the German Michael Koehler in the journal *Amerikastudien*. Lyotard's encounter with this term is pointed out by Huyssen, who observes that it came to Europe via Kristeva and Lyotard in Paris and Jürgen Habermas in Frankfurt (Huyssen 1988: 184). Lyotard's book came to legitimize the bond of postmodernism with neostructuralism (see also Storey 1993: 159).

I remember Lyotard, during a 1975 summer school at the Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e Linguistica of the Università di Urbino,

declaring repeatedly "Je n'ai pas de point de vue," meaning that he did not subscribe to any theory offering a center, a fixed referent through which to objectivize knowledge. According to the same rationale, in *La condition postmoderne*, the legitimating "grand narratives" of modernism, such as the Hegelian dialectics of the Spirit and the Marxist emancipation of humanity, cannot validate postmodern scientific discourse. By a curious sidestepping, Lyotard avoids any reference in the very rich bibliographical notes of his book to the then still present Derrida, and instead has recourse to the by then absent Wittgenstein and his language games. Science in postmodernity plays its own game, and cannot legitimize or speak legitimately about other games, because it cannot in the first place legitimize itself. Each game has its own rules and the games are "heteromorphic" compared to each other. Thus, scientific knowledge is just one type of discourse and there is no metadiscourse of knowledge, no universal metalanguage, there are no common meta-prescriptions either for the sciences or generally (Lyotard 1979: 11, 32, 63, 66–68, 98, 104–107).

In dismissing meta-prescriptions, Lyotard makes a furious attack against social systems theory, the "ideology of the 'system'," and its performance criterion. He identifies this ideology with technocracy as a totalizing tendency, cynicism, and terror, the terror that attempt to impose "isomorphy" on the language games. I believe that in this position are joined together two parallel components of Lyotard's thought, a philosophical and a political one. Politically, Lyotard was affiliated with the *Partie Communiste Français* (PCF) — and strongly criticized by its partisans when he left it — and was a member, as he confesses, of the group *Socialisme ou barbarie*, the ideas of which are close to those of the critical Frankfurt School. His stance towards the system reflects the views of the European Left of the time on the bourgeois state apparatus — which find their pendant in the hippie movement and in American films such as Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974). Scientifically, Lyotard opts for the antimodel of the stable system, which corresponds, for him, to the actual pragmatics of science. It is an "open system," where a "differentiating" (*différenciante*) activity is at work according to which a metaprescriptive discourse generates new discourses and rules of games. This concept is of course inspired by the Derridean *différance* and Lyotard, once more like Derrida, rejects structure, but not the system (of differences), to which, as a social system, he states no pure alternative can be found (Lyotard 1979: 25–27, 28 note 46, 29, 99, 103–105, 107). Contrary to the grand narratives, postmodern science operates with local "small narratives." It is easy to understand that Lyotard considers these as open, dynamic and innovative. This is Lyotard's grand narrative of small narratives.

The lack of grand narratives, as well as the small narratives and the language games and their game of continuous differentiation, all point towards the typical neostructuralist enclosure within the semiotic. However, at the same time Lyotard, like all neostructuralists, contradicts himself by himself referring to extrasemiotic phenomena: capitalism, the market, and funding are very concrete extrasemiotic referents. The play of differences also excludes causality, which Lyotard should thus avoid; and he does try to argue against the causal interpretation of the decline of grand narratives as due to technological development or a new development of capitalism. But he nonetheless accepts the impact of these factors on knowledge, which seems to me to be both a grand narrative and a contradiction (Lyotard 1979: 8, 12, 63, 75–78, 104, 107). Such "double-coding" may function in architecture, but not in epistemology.

The extrasemiotic surfaces once more in Lyotard's view of postmodern art, or "transavantgardist" art, as he also calls it. He argues that this art is eclectic and kitsch, and its "anything goes" character corresponds to the confusion of artists, critics, and public. It is certainly ironic that one of the pillars of American postmodernism, who with his small narratives offered the theoretical justification for eclecticism on every level, is so straightforward in dismissing it; but he is not alone among French neostructuralists to adopt such a perspective against postmodernism. As to the extrasemiotic, Lyotard states that when aesthetic criteria are replaced by the view that "anything goes," realism is at work, only that it is the realism of the assessment of art according to the profit it offers. Thus, this kind of realism functions like capital, which accommodates everything considered as need, and in both cases the aim is profit (Lyotard 1992: 145).

This appeal to extrasemiotic referents is in contradiction with the quotation marks that Lyotard uses for the term "reality," quotation marks which, however, are consistent with his main views. Lyotard argues that the referent ("reality") is linked to the process of proof, that the application of a proof is the ascertainment of a fact. Technology has today penetrated the management of proof, but it is a game whose aim is not truth, but performativity and efficiency. Ultimately, capitalism controls research through power, and power through technology controls "reality." This conception of reality encloses knowledge within the semiotic and connects it to (the extrasemiotic factor of) power (Lyotard 1979: 72–78) — a major issue for the Foucault of the 1970s, whom Lyotard strangely does not mention anywhere in his book.

As I noted above, the language games point to the same enclosure within the semiotic. In fact, Lyotard connects them to communication circuits. Social relations are established between individuals and each

individual is a node of communication circuits. Lyotard adds that he does not want to identify *all* social relations with communication, which is a concession to the existence of extrasemiotic, material social relations; he also adds that this will remain an open question. But this question is actually answered later, when he states that the social bond is linguistic. In this manner, society as a whole becomes communication, just as for Lévi-Strauss. However, Lyotard, like Derrida, is opposed to structuralism, which he considers a Newtonian anthropology and to which he contrasts the language games. Instead, he opts for a critical, reflexive, and hermeneutic approach to knowledge. There is, according to Lyotard, a dissemination of language games, this is why he is opposed to Habermas's idea of universal consensus. Due to this dissemination, writes Lyotard, the social subject seems to be dissolved, another overlapping with Lévi-Strauss, with the difference that this dissolution is no longer due to a universal matrix (Lyotard 1979: 8, 29, 31–32, 66, 106–107).

Lyotard conceives of the inaccessibility of the referent in aesthetic terms. He states that capitalism, modernity, and science necessarily discover the un-reality of reality and invent new realities. In the domain of art and literature, according to Lyotard, this discovery is made by the avant-gardes, which are founded on the aesthetics of what is known as the Kantian sublime. The sublime here results from the impossibility of making visible the domain of concepts, which does not offer any knowledge of reality and should be considered as unpresentable. Following Kant, Lyotard considers that the feeling of the sublime offers pleasure derived from pain. He defines avant-garde art as postmodern, because it alludes to the reality of the unpresentable, and this by means of a visible presentation denying representation and reality. For him, the postmodern artist and philosopher are in the same position, one in which they produce works not obeying pre-established rules. There can be no reconciliation between the concept and the sensible, between language games, no possibility of achieving a totality. The illusion of totality, "the realization of the fantasy to seize reality," lead in history to terror (Lyotard 1992: 145–149). These views bring to the foreground the aestheticization of philosophy that marks neomodernism.

While Lyotard avoids the Levistraussian matrix, the latter is the model used by Foucault; not, however, in its mathematical and universal form, but in a qualitative and historically relative form, historicizing the "order of orders." In fact, Foucault, in the first formulation of his history — or "archaeology" — of the sciences and of knowledge in general, uses as his central concept *épistémè*. He defines *épistémè* as an unconscious epistemological "order," a "grid," a system of rules, historically defined, i.e., corresponding to a specific historical period, which includes the precondi-

tions of knowledge in this period. These preconditions delimit within experience a certain domain of knowledge and set the context in which may evolve a discourse considered as true, that is, they define for the subjects of knowledge a certain general mode of positioning, impose a mode of being for the objects of knowledge constituting the above domain, and offer a mode of organization for the concepts used. The systems of *épistémè* are subject to sudden historical transformations and are thus discontinuous, with as a result the exclusion of any continuous progress in the knowledge of what is considered as truth at any particular time (Foucault 1966: 11–14, 170–171, 384–385; Gros 1996: 38–40, 49; Merquior 1985: 35–39, 56). Piaget is strongly critical of this archaeology of reason, because it concludes "that reason is transformed without reason" (Piaget 1968: 109, 111–112, 114; see also Frank 1989 [1984]: 90–93).

It is evident that there is a close connection between the concept of *épistémè* and the matrix of Lévi-Strauss, and also the laws of the unconscious of Lacan (see also Parain-Vial 1969: 192; there are also other bonds of Foucault with Lévi-Strauss that I shall indicate below). According to Foucault, then, an unconscious "grid," culture-specific, presides over human thought. This grid conditions historical thought, a view historicizing the Levistraussian matrix. A similar idea can also be found in Lévi-Strauss, who, setting aside the quasi-identification he posits between mythical and Western thought, indicates their two different modes of approaching and apprehending the world. *Épistémè* in *Les mots et les choses* (1966) even simplifies Lévi-Strauss's order of orders, by posing a high degree of isomorphism between the areas of knowledge studied (natural history and biology, economics, grammar and philology) — Merquior (1985: 36). As is the case with the matrix of Lévi-Strauss, *épistémè* eliminates the subject. One more similarity with Lévi-Strauss is the lack of progress in respect to thought systems (see also Gros 1996: 37–38, 40–41, 47, 93; Merquior 1985: 52). These latter views illustrate the anti-modernity project of Foucault (also Merquior 1985: 16–17, 151). After *Les mots et les choses*, he came to be seen as a structuralist. What comes as a surprise is that himself denied any such relationship; indeed, Frédéric Gros, who is a connoisseur of Foucault's work, believes that, with the exception of the elimination of the subject, Foucault has no other ties to structuralism but is instead founded on Nietzsche (Gros 1996: 38, 48, 93; see also Merquior 1985: 15, 77, 143). An opposed view comes from J. G. Merquior, who considers *Les mots et les choses* as the heyday of structuralism and the "poststructuralism" of Foucault and Derrida as having a "love-hate relationship" to structuralism (Merquior 1985: 13, 14).

So far, I have mentioned the ideas of the early Foucault. From the end of the 1960s he retreated one more step from the Levistraussian matrix,

though without losing contact with it. There is now no longer one general system of knowledge in each historical period, but a plurality of discourses of knowledge. These discourses are given a processual character, because Foucault considers them as practices, which is a Marxist concept (see also Merquior 1985: 79–80). As with *épistémè*, the discourses-practices are subject to internal rules, the "rules of formation" of the discourse or "practice." In respect to the referent of these discourses, Foucault once more follows Lévi-Strauss and also Lacan in insisting on the subjectivity of the historical fact. Just as for Lévi-Strauss, the positivist objective "fact" is replaced by Foucault with a semiotic entity, the "discursive event," with the rationale that discourse absorbs reality. The discursive events of each discourse constitute an aleatory series, and discourses are discontinuous with each other (just as the sequence of successive *épistémè*); actually the discursive event follows from the relationships between these series, but without losing its origin in the material world — a Kantian view which Foucault calls a "materialism of the noncorporeal." We may conclude that any kind of history turns out to be a semiotic history of ideas. It is a history of a whole made up of discontinuous discourses, the relationships between which lead Foucault to two major conclusions. First, the subject, being the node of these discourses, explodes in a plurality of positions; and second, there is the need to elaborate, outside the philosophies of the subject, a theory of "discontinuous systematicities," which, I believe, we may consider as a new form of the *épistémè*, but much broader and close to Lacan's *chaîne signifiante*. Now, the "order of orders" takes the form of the "series of series" ruling the discursive formations (see Foucault 1971: 54–62; see also Gros 1996: 51–52; Frank 1989: [1984] 94–95, 126–128, 133–135).

Still according to this second Foucault, a major role in the structuring of the discourses of knowledge is played by power (cf. Lyotard), a concept inspired by Marxism (see also Merquior 1985: 110). In the "disciplinary societies," the Western societies that emerged during the seventeenth century to take full from in the next century, power, at the microscale of "microphysics," becomes discipline, which is a political technique aimed at the submission of the body and at creating functional individuals. Power has an impact on knowledge, and more specifically on the human sciences, and constitutes subjectivities in a technico-political manner (Foucault 1971: 12; Gros 1996: 66–70, 84, 94).

With his microphysics of power Foucault does not intend to contest the importance of the state apparatus, but to bring to the surface complementary and finer relations of power which, while they are not part of it, "often sustain the State more effectively than its own institutions" and extend and intensify state power. Thus, he considers it a limitation to iden-

tify power with the state apparatus and to consider state power as the only form of power of a dominant class, a simplification he states is not found in Marx. This small-scale, diffused type of power is labeled by Foucault the "panoptic apparatus," after Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. He uses it as the model of the small-scale power apparatuses or power machines which are the anonymous mechanics of power: the prison, the military base, the hospital, the school, the factory. The apparatus controls and disciplines the body, a discipline that is a political technique of the body. A major factor of the discipline of the body is the distribution of individuals in space, and space is central in the Panopticon, where from a central tower, the anonymous observer's gaze penetrates completely the cells of the observed located in the surrounding architectural ring (Foucault 1980: 71–73; Gros 1996: 66–67, 73–74).

At this point, the problematics of power encounters spatial organization. Foucault is not generally interested in matters of geography, although he confesses in an interview that his genealogy of knowledge is tied to the techniques and strategies of power, which are deployed through the distribution, delimitation, and control of territories and the organization of domains, leading to a kind of geopolitics; and concludes that "Geography must indeed necessarily lie at the heart of my concerns" (Foucault 1980: 70–71, 77). Nevertheless, the idea of the centrality of space in the contemporary conception of the world is found early in his thought. The nineteenth century was obsessed with time; ever since, space has been devalued. Space has been considered as immobile and undialectical, while time as living and dialectical. But today is the era of space and simultaneity, and the world is understood as a network uniting points; time itself is seen as a distribution between elements located in space (most of these views were formulated in 1967 — Foucault 1994: 752–754 and 1980: 70).

A third Foucault may be detected from the end of the 1970s. During this new stage of Foucault, his nuclear concept of power is replaced by "governmentality." During the previous phase, power was the central factor for the organization of the discourses of knowledge, the definition of truth, and, through them, the constitution of the subject. Governmentality, on the other hand, represents the articulation between three independent factors: forms of knowledge, power relations, and processes of "subjectivation" (processes concerning subjectivity as a relation to one's self). While in the previous phase there was a relation between these dimensions, with power as the nodal point, in this new phase they are irreducible to each other. Foucault further evolved this idea in a fourth stage of his work in the 1980s, in which his object becomes historical experience as the domain of articulation of the three factors above, and the subject,

as an historical subject, auto-constituted through practices installing a relation to itself including the body (an experience that in the realm of sexuality was structured by the mastering of pleasure in ancient Greece) is now given the central position (Gros 1996: 83–84, 90–97).

On the whole, then, Foucault's cultural theory passed through four different stages. In the first stage, culture is regulated by a unified *épistémè*; in the second, culture loses its unity by becoming multifocal and is ultimately regulated by power; in the third, a multifocal culture is regulated by a triad of incommensurable factors; and in the fourth, among these factors predominates a human subject brought back to life. These stages of Foucault's work, as is the case with Derrida and Lyotard, set a strong agenda for postmodernism, which was destined to have a tremendous impact and centers on a set of issues including the semiotic nature of all historical or sociological phenomena, the function of power in the semiotic domain, the creation of subjectivity and identity, and the semiotics of the body. The integration of space within Foucault's theory of power probably contributed to the central position space has acquired recently in the social and human sciences, in conjunction with the structuralist and neostructuralist hostility to time/history, as well as to Henri Lefebvre's (1974) and David Harvey's (1989) Marxist analyses of space, linked to political economy and semiotics.

Evolving from the first to the next stages, Foucault acquired a greater originality of his own. Foucault studies culture as a semiotic phenomenon, but he also refers marginally to extrasemiotic phenomena, without, however, any theory to relate these two orders of phenomena. Thus, he accepts the existence of "real space" as referent, but his spatial analysis is an amalgam between a mainly semiotic view on space and disparate observations on material space (Foucault 1994). Foucault also has recourse to the major referent of capitalism — as did Derrida and Lyotard — and states that power is based on the new mechanisms of capitalist production, though it cannot simply be reduced to them. With this kind of statement he tries to avoid a contradiction (of the kind into which Lyotard falls) which consists, on the one hand in the adoption of an interpretative scope, dominant also in phenomenology, which wants to avoid causality, and on the other in the acknowledgment of an external referent, capitalism, which brings to the fore the issue of causality, a contradiction that cannot be solved within his interpretative framework. (A similar case appears endosemiotically, concerning the impact of power on knowledge, since, for Foucault, the latter is not the simple ideological reflection of the former.) Coming back to the extrasemiotic, discourses as practices are articulated on (material) social practices, but they are not reducible to them — thus being relatively autonomous. Foucault states explicitly

that this formulation differentiates the concept of discourse from that of ideology in Marxism. Foucault is conscious of the inevitability of having recourse to causality and I believe that he attempts to formulate a kind of "interpretative causality," which he then had to distinguish from the non-interpretative causality of Marxism. In order to do that, he relates Marxism to a causality different from his own, and chooses to make it a strawman, the causality of Stalinist reflection theory (see Gros 1996: 51–54, 70, 75–76, 78, 94).

Foucault is not uninformed on Marxism. Since his youth, he oscillated between a Marxism along the lines of Georg Lukács and phenomenology, until, as he stated late in his career, he was able to trace his own course. Under the influence of Althusser, he became at the age of 24 a member of the PCF, but he left the Party after about two years. Nevertheless, until the end of his life he remained a left-wing militant (Gros 1996: 4, 7, 9; Merquior 1985: 20, 99, 101, 116). Foucault's recourse to reflection theory is only a strawman, because the type of causality he argues for, in a vague and interpretative way, was formulated lucidly in Marxist terms by Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev and Mikhail Bakhtin (1978 [1928]: 18) when they state that the "ideological environment" is a "refracted reflection of real (i.e., socioeconomic) existence" and (for example) literature reflects only the ideological environment; and by Althusser and Balibar (1968: 120–125), who uses the concept of "structural causality" to indicate that the economic structure determines "in the last instance" the rest of the social structures: the latter derives from the former, but the derivation is multiply mediated, with as a result that, for example, ideology is "relatively autonomous." The unexplained discontinuities of Foucault's initial concept of *épistémè* are exactly the product of the lack of causality (for Foucault [1971: 58], continuity and causality are interrelated concepts), which alone would anchor the discursive in the material social processes.

According to Foucault, not only is that which is considered as an historical fact a discursive event and any history a history of ideas, but also any knowledge, just as the original discursive event, obeys semiotic factors. It follows that history, being a field of knowledge, is subject to the semiotic and it is thus subjective, a strong statement anticipated by Lévi-Strauss. The fact of the non-existence of facts, that is, the fact that the original discursive events cannot be anchored in any referential reality, as well as the fact that the historian is also bound by the discursive apparatus, destabilize any kind of objectivity of history. For Foucault, history no longer tries to understand by using a causality conceived as operating within the framework of some major external becoming (that is, as a function of a "grand narrative") — Foucault 1971: 54–55, 58, 61. Of

course, if history has no objectivity, the same conclusion holds equally for the work of Foucault himself (see also Frank 1989: 98, 124, 138; Merquior 1985: 147). And this observation is of general application to all neostructuralism (see also Merquior 1985: 159). Foucault adopts an *ex cathedra* position in his own work, but he asserts simultaneously in an interview that "Je n'ai jamais écrit que des fictions," a statement that Gros interprets as a rejection of the philosophical metaphysics of origins and ultimate truths in favor of political fictions (Gros 1996: 124–125). Robert Wicks, on the other hand, points to Foucault's defense of truth that follows this statement, and concludes that Foucault means that in his work, truth is expressed in the form of fictional discourse (Wicks 2003: 234). I would like to suggest that Foucault as a concrete person believed that he was uncovering historical truths, but his theoretical positions contradict this belief, whence the juxtaposition of fiction and truth in his interview. Thus, I tend to agree with Gros on this point. If, in accordance with the Nietzschean absence of any philosophical foundation of truth, we are ready to believe in the liberating powers of quasi-mythical narratives, i.e., in the power of credible fictions, then we should subscribe to this position. On the other hand, the narratives of bourgeois society are also mythical — how shall we judge who is the better storyteller?

The disappearance of any reference to a referent as reality in our new cultural condition is also central to Baudrillard's views. According to Baudrillard's early approach, the functional nature of objects is an illusion and their existence is a cultural myth. The separation between signs and reality is science fiction. The nature of objects is not to be the products of needs, is not pragmatic, is not to have a use value and then to be given a sign value, but inversely the reality referred to by the sign is only an effect of signification. The real object, the referent of the sign, is just part of lived experience, and objectivity is only a matter of consensus between subjects. Thus, denotative meaning does not refer to any reality, but is in fact the most subtle and ideological form of connotation, a fundamental point that Baudrillard takes directly from the later Barthes (1970: 16). Objects are strictly symbolic and their constitution as commodities is due to signs. Social exchanges obey a largely unconscious meaning attached to a system of communication, a system that has formal autonomy — the Levistraussian approach, as I have already indicated. This system, which actually produces subjectivity, is regulated today by the logic of commodity as exchange value and signifier (signifying use value). The new conditions of consumption define commodity as sign and signs, that is culture, as commodities. Baudrillard's political economy of the sign aims to be the theory of symbolic exchanges (Baudrillard 1972: for example, 7–8, 60, 112–113, 173–174, 177–178, 185–186, 188, 192–194).

The key concept that Baudrillard came to use later, *simulacrum*, is still attached to his negation of the existence of external referents. Until recently, according to Baudrillard, the object was a sign heavily loaded with signification by people, but today people no longer project themselves psychologically and mentally into objects. Today is the era of the simulacrum, in which simulation does not refer to a (supposed) referent, but generates a reality through models of reality, which thus is transformed into the hyperreal. Baudrillard opposes the concept of simulation to representation. Representation is founded on the principle of the equivalence of the sign with the real, while for simulation this principle is a utopia, as is reference itself. Ultimately, the very concept of representation is a simulacrum. In the era of the simulacrum, then, reality is dissolved and artificially contained within the sign systems, the signs of the real substituting for the (supposed) real. Like the referent, truth and causality no longer have any meaning. With the simulacrum, metaphysics collapses. For Baudrillard, there is an historical change, which he considers as decisive, from the era of representation to that of the simulacrum. In the era of representation, signs are connected to something considered as existing, while in the era of the simulacrum they are not connected to anything. Now, ''production and consumption gives way to the ''proteinic'' era of networks,'' and this new era is the ''hyperrealism of simulation,'' with television being its key instrument. What was previously experienced as metaphor is now projected on reality, without being felt as metaphorical, and replaces reality with a simulation of it. In this manner everything becomes communication, the analysis of which necessitates an extension of Marxism (Baudrillard 1981: for example, 10–12, 13, 16–17 and 1992: 151–153, 155).

Just as Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault, Baudrillard has frequent recourse to capitalism. According to him, capital historically was accompanied by the destruction of reference, reality, human goals, truth and the good, in order to replace them by the power of exchange. The new simulation and hyperreality are void of any principle and goals, and this void goes against the power of capital (Baudrillard 1981: 40). I will pass over this last optimistic, but wholly utopian, view, in order to concentrate on the contradiction that we also find in Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault: Baudrillard tries to dispense with denotation, reality, and causality, but capital is an extrasemiotic reality; the logic of commodity cannot generate itself, but must *be due* to something else, and the same holds for the passage from representation to simulacrum.

As we saw, when Baudrillard dismisses denotation he refers to the Barthes of S/Z (1970), where the latter does a detailed textual analysis of Honoré de Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*. This work is a nodal point of

two Barthes: the structuralist Barthes of the 1960s and the neostructuralist of the 1970s (see also Culler 1983: 83–84, 86, 88). On the one hand, Barthes uses a scientific structuralist methodology, with which he aims to analyze and understand how meaning is created in the novel with the use of codes. On the other, in the very beginning of the book, Barthes (1970: 9–10) takes the position that the quest for structure is undesirable, the matching of text and structure is forced, and the scientific treatment of a text is in-different. He counterproposes the quality of a text to generate differences, which goes against its uniqueness and closed nature. Far from looking for the uniqueness of the text, we must place it within the network of differences that constitute it. At this point, Barthes meets the Derridian freeplay of the text and turns his back on the classical structuralist project.

The early Barthes, the structuralist, has a conception of the relation between *sémiologie* and linguistics that is different from that of Saussure. For Saussure, as we saw, linguistics is part of the future science of *sémiologie*, while Barthes's *sémiologie* is a "*trans-linguistique*," because, for him, language supports all systems of signs of a certain range and with an actual sociological depth. This semiotic language does not coincide, for Barthes, with the linguists' language, because it is a second language, the units of which are discursive and larger than the linguistic units. Barthes is explicit that Saussure's thesis must be reversed and it is *sémiologie* that is part of linguistics. While Lévi-Strauss cautioned against the identification of anthropological with linguistic structures, Barthes believes that his *trans-linguistique* will be able to unify research in anthropology, sociology, stylistics, and psychoanalysis, leading to a general knowledge of what is intelligible for humans (Barthes 1964a and 1964b: 92; Harris 2001: 133–136; Culler 1983: 70–71).

We should note here that on the matter of psychoanalysis Barthes agrees with the view expressed more than ten years earlier by Lacan. Indeed, on the occasion of his discussion of the unconscious nature of *langue*, he makes reference to both Lacan and Lévi-Strauss concerning their idea of the unconscious as structured by forms, not contents; an idea that he understands not in a Levistraussian, but in a Lacanian manner, as indicating that the unconscious must be described "par ses signifiants plus que par ses signifiés" (1964b: 98), a view that will be characteristic of the later Barthes. On the point of the relationship between *sémiologie* and linguistics, Barthes's program is thus not Saussurean, but instead it has a close predecessor in Lacan and a more distant one in Hjelmslev. In fact, the latter's "general science of semiotics" has the goal of unifying all semiotic and monoplanar systems, from literature, art, and music to the sciences and to logic and mathematics, under an umbrella

which would be, in the broad sense, linguistic (Hjelmslev 1961 [1943]: 20, 78, 101–109).

The later Barthes departed radically from the conception of *sémiologie* as a science. Jonathan Culler is right in pointing out that the later Barthes, contrary to his earlier statement, considers semiotics as the undoing of linguistics, in the sense that it studies the phenomena of signification that linguistics leaves out (cf. Kristeva 1975: 48–49). Culler also notes that Barthes sees this semiotics as a perspective that questions the established disciplines, and, since semiotics had become such a discipline, Barthes's semiotics moved away from the orthodoxy of "a science of signs to an activity on its margins." Indeed, it is not only marginal, according to Culler, but also inimical to the semiotics of the early Barthes. Already in 1971, Barthes, as the same author reminds us, referred dismissively to his own early work, confessing that all he had was just "a euphoric dream of scientificity," and rejecting the possibility of a scientific semiotics on the grounds of the priority of signifying over a defined signification (cf. Kristeva 1975: 52). The focus of this later Barthes is, for Culler, the phenomena of meaning that resist the scientific approach. In respect to Barthes's public image, this apparent demystification of his previous work contributed, for Culler, to a remystification and led to the creation of a Barthesian myth. Independently of that, he believes that Barthes was energetically involved in enterprises that may be incompatible, but are nonetheless valuable (Culler 1983: 15–16, 70–72, 76–77).

In *S/Z*, the scientific Barthes locates five codes, which are, for him, the major codes of the novella, but also the only codes that integrate the whole text. He observes that they are delivered by the text from its very beginning, in its title and first sentence, and although he refers to this as a chance event, he also questions the chance factor (Barthes 1970: 23–27). I believe that Barthes is absolutely right in this questioning. In a study of spatial, more specifically regional, oral discourses of a sample of 144 interviews with inhabitants of Northern Greece, Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou and I observed that there is generally a very significant statistical correlation (in half of the cases the level of significance was .0000) between the frequency with which a particular code is used by a speaker (whence the dominant codes of discourse) and its order of appearance in his/her discourse. As we write: "[T]his discursive regularity is so insistent and multifaceted that it presents itself as a national — we dare say universal — rule. The issues that a speaker first addresses are also the issues to which he or she tends to return most often in the course of developing his/her micro-discourse, and vice versa" (Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou 1992: 225–227). The feeling of Barthes, based on one case study of a (written) literary text and a qualitative methodology,

is corroborated statistically in our study of the oral discourses of a wide sample of individuals.

In a manner reminiscent of the above rule, Barthes exposes the key ideas of his neostructuralist project in the first two pages of *S/Z*. As I mentioned above, he starts with the concept of difference and he opposes it to the uniqueness of a text. Then he passes to the issue of the value and evaluation of a text. He states that evaluation cannot come from science, which is descriptive — we recall that structuralism is strictly against any kind of evaluation — nor from the ideological value of a text, because ideology is a value of representation (merely incorporated in the text) that does not follow from a practice of productive writing. By this latter concept Barthes means that good literature today, literature as labor, transforms the reader from a simple consumer to an active producer of the text. This kind of text becomes "writerly" (*scriptible*), as opposed to the passive "readerly" (*lisible*) text of classical literature. The readerly text condemns the reader to passivity and seriousness, and prevents him from playing (a playing which is a writing as linguistic labor — Barthes 1970: 17) personally with the text and having full access to the magic of the signifier — the Lacanian thread which unwinds from the early Barthes.

Evaluation versus scientific analysis, elimination of the original meaning of the text and "death of the author," that is, the emptying out of the meaning of the text and its transformation into signifiers that may be filled by the reader, differential qualities of the text, apotheosis of the reading practice, of the consumption of the text, and pleasure: this is Barthes's neostructuralist project. In the next few pages, Barthes further extends on this project, without, however, losing touch with structuralism. The writerly text follows a productive, not a representational model, it is a constellation of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds, this is why it cannot be subject to any kind of criticism, which simply multiplies it (cf. Derrida's negation of metalanguage). This kind of text, liberated from whatever is external to it and from any demand for totality, is a production, not a product as is the readerly text. In his rejection of the factors external to the text, causal explanation of it included, and his demand for immanent reading, we recognize Barthes's structuralist self (see also Barthes 1966: 54–55; Culler 1983: 62–63, 68). Barthes adds that even readerly texts can be approached and interpreted in the Nietzschean sense, that is, without ascribing to them a specific meaning, but by showing their polysemy. A modest instrument for approaching polysemy would be Hjelmslev's connotation, without forgetting that the hierarchy posed between denotation and connotation is questioned by (Barthes's) semiology, because such a hierarchy would anchor the meaning of a text in the center

that is denotation as truth, following the centralized nature of Western discourse (once again, Barthes encounters Derrida).

On the author, Barthes adopts both a sociological and a semiotic point of view. In the context of the first, he argues that in literature the author as individuality is a correlative of positivism, the latter representing the culmination of capitalist ideology. From the semiotic viewpoint, the existence of the author provides a final signified (Derrida's center) that limits the text and closes writing. But the identity of the author (as authority and Father — Barthes 1970: 217) is destroyed by the practice of writing; by this practice the author disappears as the origin of the text and finds his/her own death. Barthes believes that linguistically the author is just an instance of writing and substitutes language for the author as source of the text. Once the author is removed, the modern literary text is transformed (and becomes writerly), and its "scriptor" appears only as a function of the text, not as a producer antecedent to the text. The modern scriptor marks with his/her hand, not voice, and his/her practice is one of tracing, not expressing. S/he ought to know that so-called expression implies an infinite regression through words, and s/he only uses an immense dictionary, without having any impressions and feelings.

Barthes sees the text as a non-original intertextual space mixing different borrowings, as a tissue of "signs," and a pretension of imitation, which, however, is infinitely deferred. Structures may be located in the text, but they are not anchored anywhere (once more Derrida). Thus, "writing," a term with which Barthes wants to replace "literature," does not seek any ultimate meaning of the text or of "the world as text" (cf. objectivity and subjectivity "sont des imaginaires" — Barthes 1970: 17) — but, then, how is it possible to hold a sociological viewpoint on the author and on positivism as the *products* of capitalism? — a viewpoint that Barthes declares anti-theological and revolutionary, because "to refuse to fix meanings is ... to refuse God and his hypostases — reason, science, law." The focus of the text seen in this way is the reader, not the author, a reader who is not a specific person but an instance, just as the author is (for the above, see Barthes 1988).

The move from a meaningless text to the reader is not new for Barthes, because he held a similar position in his structuralist phase, but in this continuity there are two major discontinuities: now the text is continually deferred, then it was constituted by abstract structures; now the reader is an abstract instance, then a range of meanings was attributed to the structures (this is why Barthes considered the literary work as an "open work," also referring on this point to Eco) by the cultural reading conventions of reader*s* belonging to different social groups and epochs (cf. Barthes 1966: 49–56, 61; Culler 1983: 68).

As we saw above, the play with a text is, for Barthes, effected with the intermediary of the signifiers. The materiality of the signifiers liberates (the inexhaustible) *signifiance*, indicating "meaning in its potential voluptuousness" (Barthes 1977: 184), which is identified with pleasure (*jouissance*), a pleasure that is not addressed to the mind, but to the body; also, pleasure is created by the encounter of the text with the body (cf. Kristeva 1975: 51). Thus, to "analyze" a text goes back to the body. Barthes (1977: 181, 182) identifies *signifiance* — a concept that Kristeva (1969: 10–11) uses as central in her "semanalysis" to indicate the linguistic work producing "the *seeds* of what will *signify* in the presence of language" — with another concept proposed by Kristeva, the geno-text, which is for her, as for Barthes, the signifying productivity generating the pheno-text (a biological metaphor, as is the geno-text), which she sees as a signifying structure (Kristeva 1969: 182–183 and 1975: 50). Culler observes that with this view Barthes attempts to give a materialist account of reading, trying to avoid the Cartesian *cogito*, the mind. In fact, for Barthes, the body is not the bearer of a subjectivity, a consciousness — remember the structuralist death of the subject — but an historically constituted "individual," and becomes an enjoying body with its own experience (Culler 1983: 92–96).

The bodily pleasure due to a literary text may be also produced, according to Barthes, by another body as such. Culler (1983: 94–95) reminds us of Barthes's listening to a Russian cantor (see Barthes 1977: 181–182): "something is there, manifest and stubborn ... *beyond (or before) the meaning of the words* ... something which is *directly the cantor's body*, brought into your ears ... from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages, and from deep down in the Slavonic language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings" (my italics). So, a meaningless climactic bodily pleasure (cf. the later Foucault) is created, independently from the communication circuit and through an "erotic" relation (Barthes 1977: 182, 188), by a meaningless, but nevertheless signifying as a pure "signifier," material body. The body does not act as a linguistic source, at least in the Saussurean sense, and we understand that what Barthes calls the materiality of the signifier in a literary text, which does not participate in the domain of signs, is of a different, "bodily," nature. Barthes's theory of *trans-linguistique* was transformed to a theory of *"trans-signifiant,"* and this theory amounts in the last instance to a dangerously biologizing theory of the *"trans-corporel."*

Culler (1983: 96–97) justifiably observes that this appeal to the body has limited explanatory power and is accompanied by the danger of mystification. Nevertheless, the interest shown in the body by Barthes, as well

as by Foucault and Kristeva, had a remarkable impact on postmodern theorizing. Kristeva is more cautious on the matter of the subject, because she does not reject it, and conceives of the "speaking subject" as divided into an unconscious and a conscious part. The first part includes bio-physiological processes, namely the Freudian drives, and the second the meaning systems and the (identity of the) historical subject, which is constrained by socio-historical factors (a view based on Marxism — Kristeva 1975: 50, 54–55).

In my opinion, when mystification is already present, there is not just a danger of mystification. Culler is understandably sympathetic to Barthes and generous in trying to value the work of the later Barthes. But, if we adopt an objective stance, it is difficult to agree with him on this matter, even more so because Barthes himself gives the reference point of his new self. He states that he is in line with the "prehistory of modernity," and he agrees with the views on language of Mallarmé, and the downgrading of the author and the centrality of automatic writing of the Surrealists (Barthes 1988: 147–148); he identifies the pleasure of a text with "drifting" (*dérive* — Barthes 1973: 32–33), which is a situationist term indicating a psycho-geographical wandering in urban space; he relates the avant-garde with a writing coming from the body and not ideology (see Culler 1983: 96). We know that the later Barthes rejected science, now we see that he is in fact just waving the flag of a new modernist avant-garde artistic movement (cf. Kristeva 1975: 52), adopting an interpretative, but logically inconsistent and philosophically incoherent discourse which Norris (1982: 112) describes as "flights of strange but meticulously argued fantasy." Something positive, nevertheless, remains: the quest for a semiotics of feelings, of passions earlier posed by Kristeva (1975: 48, 51, 52) and also later pursued by Greimas the structuralist, who in his late phase shook the binarism of structuralism. But feelings are *signs* and they are *communicated*.

The theoretical connection of Barthes to surrealism is far from being superficial. Another striking example of this relation is Lacan, who was in close contact with surrealism from before the War. His emphasis on language, phantasy, paranoia, and the formal character of symptoms is deeply in harmony with the nucleus of surrealist interests (Turkle 1992: 102). To take another example, Baudrillard's contemporary hyperrealism of the simulacrum is a description of a culture matching the surrealist credo (Wicks 2003: 15). In order to show that these connections of neo-structuralism to surrealism are not impressionistic, a closer look at surrealism seems necessary.

The history of surrealism is related to the Dada movement, which was founded in Zurich, Switzerland, at the end of 1915. Its forerunner was a

French artist, Marcel Duchamp, and the movement in turn influenced France. Reacting against World War I, the Dadaists conceived of European culture as supported by rationality, science, and technology, aiming at order and systematicity, and leading to war and alienation; they, thus, believed that European values were not worth retaining. The Dadaists rejected rationality and ultimate truths, fought any positive thesis, were self-contradictory, even denied their dadaism, and did all this with a playful skepticism. Their poetry was nonsensical, and they staged performances conveying an image of chaos, fragmentation, and pastiche. While the first manifestos of the Dadaists were against Freud, they later considered psychoanalysis as subversive, because it professed a wild, chaotic, non-rational creativity of the unconscious (Wicks 2003: 9–13).

André Breton, the major figure of surrealism, retained the principal ideas of Dadaism although after 1922 he distanced himself from the movement. For Breton also, the unconscious, free from social constraints and moral norms, was a revolutionary force against established values. He saw in Freud's view of dreams and the psychoanalytic technique of free association a foundation for artistic expression, and thus automatic writing, which was considered to be attached to psychic automatism, became central for the Surrealists. In addition to the quest for artistic originality, Breton's vision of the world aimed at a "surreality," at surpassing the oppositions reality versus phantasy, rational versus irrational, life versus art. During its first stage, surrealism thus revolved around psychoanalysis, but by the end of the 1930s Marxism came forcefully into play. In Russia, there were two opposed camps concerning psychoanalysis. In addition to the anti-Freudians, there existed a Freudo-Marxist camp, which attempted to reconcile with the materialist Pavlovian psychology a Freudianism that it wanted purged of idealism. The French Surrealists are comparable to the Russian Freudo-Marxists, in spite of their marked differences, in that both created a similar Marxist-Freudian movement. Revolution through language, sexual revolution, and social revolution became for surrealism inseparable principles. During World War II, surrealist activity was transplanted to the U.S., where it later had an impact on certain forms of pop art (Wicks 2003: 13–14; Roudinesco 1990 [1984]: 38–41, 54).

A kindred movement to surrealism was that of the Situationist International, the major figure of which, Guy-Ernest Debord, was nourished in his youth on surrealist ideas. Debord was initially a follower of Jean-Isidore Isou, the young and ambitious founder of the Lettrist Group. Later, he left this group and co-founded the Lettrist International, which was followed by the Situationist International (1957–1972). In the first manifesto of the Situationist International, written by Debord, he is sym-

pathetic to but also critical of dadaism and surrealism; he attacks the capitalist system and calls for individual freedom and creative expression. Following Sartrean existentialism, the main aim of the Situationists is the conquest of everyday life through the experience of special situations, an experience that they link, on the one hand, to architecture, and on the other, to the city and its streets, with as a result the idea of the actual recuperation of the city. The means for this experience of the city is, according to them, drifting. The Situationists were against the division between high and low architecture and argued for the free mixing of architectural forms.

Now the active forces in the streets of Paris in May 1968 were surrealism and the Situationists. Sherry Turkle observes that May 1968 was full of Lacan and that many of the slogans and graffiti of the time were surrealist with a psychoanalytic content, expressing the desire to surpass the divisions reality-phantasy and rational-irrational, and to live experientially. As Turkle writes: ''To many observers, May seemed to be a kind of surrealism-in-political action.'' She also notes that from May 1968 on, Lacanian psychoanalysis and surrealism were strongly connected in France (Turkle 1992: 65, 68, 84, 86). May 1968 contributed with this sort of cultural and political ambiance to the rising neostructuralism.

As I was finishing this text, I came upon the penetrating book on modern French philosophy by Robert Wicks and discovered a significant convergence of our views on the matter of the formative influences on neostructuralism. Wicks goes further back in time from May 1968. According to him, dadaism and surrealism had a strong impact, still underappreciated, on French philosophy and the whole of French thought of the twentieth century. He points out the influence of the anti-establishment attitude of the Dadaists on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, on Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault; and of the Surrealists on the three latter concerning the artificiality, fragility, and changeability of norms in society. To these two sources of influence on neostructuralism, Wicks adds a third one, existentialism, which he sees as being transformed by its contact with Saussurean linguistics. According to him, existentialism is behind the views on the multi-dimensionality of language and the endless deployment of meaning held by Lacan, Derrida, Barthes, and Lyotard; in fact, he finds the influence of existentialism on them so strong that he calls them ''linguo-existentialists'' (Wicks 2003: ix–x, 11, 14–16, 295–296, 298).

Although neostructuralism actually emerged shortly before 1968, May 1968 played a catalytic role in its formation, through the ideas that were circulating in the amphitheaters and the streets and their political implications; a fact acknowledged, for example, by Lyotard, who considers that

this period eroded the grand narratives seeking truth in history (see Norris 1990: 28). This is why we find its decisive imprint on neostructuralism, the process of engendering of which had already started. We can now, on the basis of the above discussion, complete Frank's influences on neostructuralism by a closer look at Marxism and Freudianism. Frank refers to the Frankfurt School of Marxism, but we have just located both a surrealist Marxism and the Sartrean existentialist Marxism (which starts from the phenomenology of Husserl, the main inspiration of Heidegger). In both cases, there was an integration of Freudian ideas, and the first case represents a clear Marxist-Freudian amalgam. With May 1968, Lacanism, the French version of Freudianism, became the kind of psychoanalysis that dominated the neostructuralist scene. Frank mainly concentrates on the first-hand German influences on the latter and on the German tradition. But, if we make abstraction of their first foundations in German-speaking authorities, both surrealism and Lacanism "Gallicized" their sources of inspiration. Thus, we may add this Gallicized line of thought to the German line.

4. Theoretical "postmodernism": The neostructuralism of the U.S.

The review of the key neostructuralist authors I attempted above had a double aim: to show the continuities and discontinuities between neostructuralism on the one hand, and structuralism and the Saussurean tradition on the other, as well as to present the convergences between, but also personal orientations of, these authors. I hope that I was thus able to present the main axes structuring the theoretico-philosophical formation of neostructuralism and to clarify in this manner its main agenda. I hope that it will become clear that this agenda and this alone was fully replicated by postmodernism in the U.S. (see also Hollinger 1994: 80), but also adapted and to a certain degree reinterpreted in the context of local cultural phenomena and habits of thought. This fact, and that of the continuity between structuralism and neostructuralism, lead me to replace the term "postmodernism" by *neomodernism*, a theoretical position moreover in line with my corresponding conclusion in the first section. Although, as I stated in this same section, my central concern is postmodern theorizing and not postmodern culture as a whole, I shall start here with a discussion of the latter, because the theoretical need to understand its new and provocative aspects has been a crucial factor in the adoption of neostructuralism in the U.S.

A very informative account of so-called postmodern culture, which we have already referred to repeatedly but which deserves to be presented

more fully, is that given by Huyssen (1988). Huyssen differentiates between a postmodernism of the 1960s and even 1970s, and another of the 1970s and early 1980s. The first period witnessed a reaction against the austere codification of high modernism, not against modernism as such, and the emergence of a specifically American movement (around "the Duchamp-Cage-Warhol axis"), which tried to revitalize the tradition of the European avant-garde and make a rupture with the past. This movement presented two aspects, one that felt the evanescence of the previous virility, centainties, and values as a loss, and the other that celebrated the liberation of consciousness and instinct — the same messianic vision of today's neomodernism. According to Huyssen, in spite of the relationship of this movement to the European avant-garde, it could not emerge in Europe, because of its specifically American character. This movement succeeded in fundamentally altering the conception of modernist culture itself. Huyssen locates four major traits of the movement: the feeling of crisis and conflict, and of the future and new frontiers; the faith in a new technological aesthetics, based on television, video, and computers; an iconoclastic attack against art institutions and high art, which is typical of the European avant-garde; and the counterposing of mass and popular culture to high art (I recall here that for structuralism all texts, "high" or "low," are equally texts), accompanied by ideas — such as a "post-white," "post-male," and "post-humanist" world — tied to the critique of Eurocentrism, the very same critique we encountered in Lévi-Strauss. The synthesis between mass or popular culture and high art is, according to Huyssen, one of the major differences between high modernism and the art and literature of postmodernism, both in the U.S. and Europe.

The postmodernism of the second period is, for Huyssen, of a different nature. Already in the 1970s we encounter "a genuinely post-modern and post-avantgarde culture." The provocative artistic forms were exhausted, deprived of their avant-garde character through commercialization, and technological optimism gave way to critical assessment. Artistic eclecticism, borrowings from any kind of culture — modern, high modern, mass culture or popular culture, pre-modern or non-modern — become the letter of the day and the cultural domain is utterly fragmented. In the late 1970s, the artistic migration from Europe to the U.S. is reversed and the term "postmodern," popularized by the Americans, passes to Europe (Huyssen 1988: 184, 188–197).

We find again and again the description of the same traits in all accounts of neomodern culture. Such an account is given by Chris Barker on the occasion of his comprehensive discussion of cultural studies, a domain which today occupies a major position within social theory. I would detect two main axes in his account. The first is reflexivity, understood

as the participation in a range of discourses and the further construction of discourses relative to them. We should relate reflexivity to the neostructuralist position stressed by Barker, with reference to Foucault and Lyotard, that there is no possibility of knowing the world independently from language, whence he emphasizes the lack of universal standards for thought, truth, and action. Reflexivity leads, for Barker, to three other traits of postmodern culture: irony, because of the reflexive exploration of the conditions and limitations of our own culture and knowing, which expresses the feeling that nothing new can be invented but we can only play with what already exists; the playful self-construction of multiple identities; and the recognition of the rights of any kind of "other."

Barker's second axis concerns three different, but related, kinds of mixing concerning literature and the arts: mixing of high and low culture, indeed the surpassing of this opposition altogether; an historical mixing, central to postmodernism, through "bricolage" involving the rearrangement and juxtaposition / montage of signs that were historically unconnected in order to produce new meanings; and a mixing of texts, genres, and styles, as the result of self-conscious intertextuality. It is obvious that the paradox and ambiguity that he refers to are the products of these operations. According to Barker, the collapse of the boundaries between high and low culture, in combination with the preponderance of the visual in postmodernism, have resulted in an aestheticization of everyday life (Barker 2000: 199–203, 207–211, 214).

Architecture played a pioneering role, according to Huyssen (1988: 184–185), in the second period of postmodernism. He thus agrees with Jencks, who gives priority to architecture as the first definite manifestation of artistic postmodernism that he dates to 1975, adding that by 1980 the movement was already widely accepted. The views of Jencks, an architect, on postmodernism in general and postmodern architecture in particular are practically identical. He poses as the foundational concept of postmodernism, which he considers as a continuation but also a transcendence of modernism, the concept of pluralism, understood as opposition to the traditional and modernist totalizations of a single world view, the acceptance of difference, and the valuing of the local and the particular. But, for him, because the suffix "modern" is attached to "international," the tension between pluralism and the universal leads to something "hybrid, mixed, ambiguous," which he calls "doubly-coded" (cf. intertextuality). Postmodernism is not oriented towards the resolution of contraries, but endorses pluralism and eclecticism. In postmodern architecture, Jencks sees a combination of high and low culture and the appearance of an historicist dimension (we recognize here two aspects, pluralism and intertextuality, the second serving among other things as a vehicle for

identity). He also refers to its orientation towards meaning (the unifying factor of postmodern architecture, which is also the neostructuralist platform). The postmodern opposition to unifying theoretical schemes has led postmodern art and architecture, according to Jencks, to dissolve traditional harmony and fracture beauty, thus producing "disharmonious harmony," "dissonant beauty" and a fragmented work (Jencks 1992: 11, 12–15, 24–29).

The description of the main traits of neomodernism and neomodern architecture by Jencks shows a strong convergence with the views of Fredrick Jameson. However, there is also a marked divergence in evaluation: Jencks exalts neomodern architecture, while Jameson criticizes it. While Jencks uses pluralism as a key word, the main concept of Jameson's analysis is depthlessness, simulacrum. Jameson argues that depthlessness marks both postmodern theoretical insights and a totally new culture of the image, of the simulacrum. In this new condition, consumer demand is oriented not towards reality but towards images of reality. Consumers demand "spectacles," a situationist term. As we saw above, the concept of "situation" originated in Sartrean existentialism; Debord pleads for the construction of situations, each one being a totality of impressions that determine quality in a moment of time.

According to Jameson, a consequence of this new depthlessness, flatness, or superficiality is the weakening of historicity. In the arts and architecture, the high-modernist ideology of style having collapsed, postmodernism turned to the historical styles, but in a historicist mode; the result is "the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion." Postmodern architecture for Jameson exhibits eclecticism, pastiche, and a peculiar kind of nostalgia (for an opposite view, with which I do not agree, see Hutcheon 1988: 93–94, 203), out of touch with the past as "referent" (his quotation marks) and without genuine historicity. Today, the work of art is no longer unified or organic, but is heterogeneous and discontinuous, the product of an operation of collage (cf. grand narrative versus small narratives). In spite, however, of this negative critical approach, Jameson accepts the reality of postmodernism, conceives of a mutation of built space into a hyperspace, sees postmodern architecture as an attempt to express the latter, observes the inability of our perceptual equipment to deal with it, and urges us to deal with the postmodern condition (Jameson 1984: 58, 60, 65–66, 75, 80, 83, 88, 91–92).

The oppositional character of neomodernism to modernism cannot pass unnoticed. Hassan (1987: 91–92) presents a list of the oppositions between the two, though he moderates it by adding that the oppositions are insecure and there are many exceptions on both sides, they may shift,

be inverted, even collapse. Jencks radically disagrees with the traits attributed by Hassan to postmodernism, pointing out their near-total antithesis to the developments in postmodern architecture, and he considers that they were inverted by John Barth and Umberto Eco. He proposes a two-column list, taking care to point out that the columns do not represent binary oppositions, but the postmodern is the complexification, hybridization, and rejection of (which is an opposition to) the modern (Jencks 1992: 21, 33–35). A comparable view is held by Linda Hutcheon, who states that she accepts simultaneously the oppositional approach and the continuity approach, and believes that postmodernism questions both oppositional terms of the former approach by using, abusing, and subverting them. For Hutcheon, postmodernism does not aim at a kind of a superior dialectical synthesis, but is content to remain with the management of contradictions, a conception that she finds both close to and distant from Marxism. In this manner, it does not offer answers and should not, because it is animated by an anti-totalizing ideology (Hutcheon 1988: 21, 49–52, 209, 213–214, 231). I would put it somewhat differently: for me, neomodernism is a totalizing ideology of anti-totalization, and its refusal to offer answers is an avoidance of political responsibility.

We see that for Hutcheon, just as for Jencks, the foundation of neomodernism is to be found in contradictions or oppositions, respectively, within a continuity-discontinuity context. This rationale is open to two remarks, both stressing the continuity between modernism and neomodernism. Lyotard identifies this continuity in his discussion of art: he considers artistic postmodernism as just one aspect of modernism. He argues that every new trend in art in the context of modernism springs from a reaction to a previous trend; thus, each trend has the character of the postmodern. Because of this, postmodernism is not the end of modernism but modernism itself in a new emerging state; the quality of modernism presupposes that of postmodernism (Lyotard 1992: 147).

It should already be clear that, for me, the continuities between modernism and neomodernism are far more important than the discontinuities. My first argument in support of continuity follows from the observation that the transitional period to neomodernism has been historically too short for a radical paradigm shift to occur. Even if the end result of the present changes is destined to be a total break, it would only be possible to refer today to a *tendency* towards a rejection of modernism, which of course at such an early stage of transformation would not be free from modernism itself. Besides, the very fact of opposition imprisons the opposing term within the general logic of the term to which it is opposed. Second, in the context of a real paradigm shift, the set of phenomena which is rejected cannot be replaced by a systematically corresponding

set, that is, by phenomena corresponding one-to-one to the previous phenomena, because the logic of the new system has changed. The transcendence of modernism is an abstract and/or rhetorical idea; opposition is closer to the actual situation. And an opposition of neomodernism to modernism implies, as I just argued, an indissoluble connection, despite their differences, of the former with the latter and the lack of any paradigm shift. This, however, is not the only element of continuity between neomodernism and modernism. There is also another kind of continuity, which I shall now discuss, based on the analysis of the historian of ideas Françoise Choay.

In her analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts (up to 1964) concerning the city, Choay concludes that these texts can be grouped according to two major models traversing both centuries, a ''progressivist'' and a ''culturalist'' model. The progressivist model, by far the most frequently applied in urban practice, was founded during the twentieth century on the idea of modernity. From its beginning, it rested on faith in rationalism, science, and technology, was oriented towards the future, and was dominated by the idea of progress. It organizes urban space by segregating its functions (something which later took the form of functionalist zoning), with the goal of efficiency (transposing to the urban space of the twentieth century the Fordist model of factory organization); thus, the progressivist model professes an instrumental city. It is open: the city is not given precise limits and spreads into the countryside; it integrates open and green spaces, due to the primary importance attributed to the health factor. In the twentieth century this model promoted a geometrical and rational aesthetics, based on orthogonality and rejecting the curve. Revolving around the idea of the universal man, it privileges standardized housing.

The culturalist model, on the other hand, turns nostalgically towards the past. It draws its inspiration from the ''organic'' city of the past, the ancient and mainly the medieval city as a human group. It is anti-industrialist and emphasizes the cultural dimension of the city and, in the twentieth century, interpersonal relations. It prescribes for the city a moderate size and precise limits, and contrasts it to nature, as the cultural phenomenon that it is, aiming at creating an atmosphere of urbanity. It rejects rigid geometry and calls for irregularity and asymmetry. It emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual and privileges community and cultural buildings (Choay 1965: 15–44).

Choay, comparing these two models, points out their systematic opposition. It is possible to rediscover this opposition on a higher level, if we identify the affiliations of these models to broader cultural (sub-)formations of the Western world. In fact, it is evident that the

progressivist model is just one of the aspects of the project of the Enlightenment, while the culturalist model is a byproduct of Romanticism. By mere abstract reasoning, we arrive at the conclusion that, since neomodernism is more or less opposed to modernism, both in general and in the field of architecture more particularly, and the romantic urban culturalist model is opposed to the modernist progressivist model, then architectural neomodernism must be somehow connected to Romanticism. On a more concrete level, the major traits of the culturalist model — the past, nostalgia, culture, identity, free form — are also major traits of neomodernism. Thus, not only is spatial neomodernism tied to modernity by its very antithesis to modernism, but it is also attached to modernity by showing a close affinity with the rival of modernism *in* the modern era, romanticism. Spatial neomodernism, then, is not only neo-modernism, but also a kind of neo-romanticism, admittedly with its own specific historical character. This conclusion does not come as a surprise, since as we saw in the third section above, Franck holds a similar view for theoretical neostructuralism and neomodernism.

Let me now pass from culture to cultural theory and start with the transmission of neostructuralism in the U.S., which started after the mid-1960s. Huyssen observes that in the U.S., in the late 1970s, a theoretical discussion began concerning the interface between the local tradition of postmodernism and French poststructuralism as understood in the U.S.; he points out that it was frequently based on the assumption that the avant-garde in theory must in some way be close to the literary and artistic avant-garde. Huyssen also observes that poststructuralism during the 1970s had a profound impact on the arts, both in Europe and the U.S. He does not assess this impact as really postmodern, because he considers that poststructuralism is in reality modernist, a theory of modernism and modernity (as in my view poststructuralism is in reality neostructuralism). According to Huyssen, poststructuralism is marked by the very modernist aestheticism that in the U.S. it is considered to have transcended; despite its more political wing, this characteristic, autonomizing the text and detaching it from history and society, in combination with institutional pressures has removed in the U.S. whatever political dimension could be found in French poststructuralism. Finally, poststructuralism is not informed about postmodern art and thus it cannot be related to postmodernism. However, Huyssen locates the postmodern within poststructuralism in the reinterpretation of modernism in the context of contemporary discourse, a discourse which is aware of the limitations and political failures of modernism (Huyssen 1988: 169, 171, 175, 207–209, 214–216, 218).

The incompatibility between poststructuralism and "real" postmodernism can be compared to the argument of Bauman, discussed in the first

section, according to which the differences between postmodern and modern societies, reflected in postmodern culture, are so profound that they necessitate a new sociology of postmodernity, as opposed to a postmodern sociology integrated into postmodern culture. The difference between Bauman and Huyssen is that Baumann conceives of a close connection between existing postmodern sociology, which as we shall see is neostructuralist, and postmodern culture, while Huyssen believes that there is no correspondence between the two. Huyssen is not explicit about the character of what he considers as the really postmodern arts; when he turns to the description of the constitutive factors of postmodern culture, he refers to the challenges to imperialism, the women's movement, ecological sensibility, and the awareness of non-Western cultures and otherness of any sort (Huyssen 1988: 171–172, 219–221), but these factors do not illuminate the presumed other nature of the really postmodern arts, which "will have to be," for him, a "postmodernism of resistance." We see then that in reality the artistic forms and the theory Huyssen seeks for are still waiting to be realized, and his views are normative rather than descriptive.

The fact is that the close analogies between French neostructuralist theory and American neomodern culture led to neomodern theorizing, which is nothing but the Americanized form of French neostructuralism. I will give one example, drawn from the field of literature, of this incorporation of neostructuralism into neomodern theorizing, as well as of the proximity of the latter with neomodern culture, by referring once more to the theoretical views of Linda Hutcheon. According to Hutcheon, postmodernism is in accord with Lyotard in questioning centralized, totalized, hierarchized, and closed theoretical systems, but it does not intend to destroy them, a position that seems to represent a recession from Lyotard's strong position. In the context of such recessions from neostructuralism, Hutcheon seems not to deny the possibility of historical knowledge, with the reservation that she believes such knowledge is provisional. In respect to history, postmodernism need not show any radical relativism or subjectivism. Nevertheless, her argumentation revolves around the strong neostructuralist position, to the extent that she speaks about the indeterminacy of historical knowledge and equates it with fiction on the grounds that both are discourses. The rationale for this equation is the (accurate) observation that past events do not have meaning in themselves, but they acquire it through systems of thought (cf. Foucault). Since systems of thought are, for Hutcheon, human constructs, theory gives way to intertextual play. Thus, history is a discursive reality and reality itself is a human construct.

Concerning the field of literature, Hutcheon argues that what she calls historiographic metafiction shows that language refers to something that

is a textualized and contextualized referent, and reveals itself as a construction by stressing the context in which it is produced. Together with the emphasis on the reader (cf. Barthes), historiographic metafiction contextualizes the whole of the communication situation of the production and reception of the text, extending to wider social, historical, ideological, aesthetic, and intertextual contexts. Contextualization is critical by nature, due to its ironic relation to past and present. This kind of postmodern novel rightly refuses, for Hutcheon, the separation between fictional reference to and scientific description of the past. Referent and reality are not given but are mediated by language. At this point she comes to the support of Derrida concerning his "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," using the contradictory argument that Derrida does not deny the real world, reference, or the access to an extratextual reality, but points out that meaning is derived solely from within texts through deferral, *différance*. Hutcheon argues that historiographic metafiction does not negate the existence of past reality, but asks questions about our knowledge of it, and is aware of the textual nature of this knowledge; for her, this kind of questioning simultaneously opposes and rejoins Marxism. Historiographic metafiction does not devalue the referential function, but renders problematic both the assertion and the denial of reference.

According to Hutcheon, postmodernism in general — as is the case with historiographic metafiction — would not "liquidate referentials," but puts into doubt the traditional realist transparency, as well as the Baudrillardian reduction of reality to simulacrum, i.e., the radical substitution of signs for reality. Postmodernism in general, and postmodern art more particularly, suggests that we only know reality and give meaning to it through signs and this is not a wholesale substitution. Hutcheon's argument that Derrida offers a possibility of having access to extratextual reality, and her agreement with historiographic metafiction concerning the assertion of reference, could be interpreted as an avoidance of the strong position of an absolute enclosure within the semiotic. But, as also in the case of the grand narratives, in reality she inclines to the strong position, something also demonstrated by her observation that "perhaps by definition, the referent is a discursive entity"; the same observation holds for the fragmented subject. In conclusion, Hutcheon defines the major issues defining the "poetics of postmodernism" as follows: "historical knowledge, subjectivity, narrativity, reference, textuality, discursive context" (Hutcheon 1988: for example, 24, 40–41, 43, 70, 75, 83–90, 100, 112, 119, 141–149, 213, 223–225, 229–231). We may easily detect, first, that the common axis uniting these issues is their enclosure within the semiotic, and second that this project is solidly anchored in neostructuralism.

The traits of neomodernism so far discussed give us, I believe, a fair idea of this cultural formation. We may round out this idea with the presentation of the views of Hassan (1987: 167–173), who identifies what he calls a tentative set of traits of postmodern culture, postmodern theorizing and art included. For Hassan, as for Jencks, the overarching trait is a "critical pluralism," which is expressed in the following:

a. Indeterminacy. Indeterminacy includes ambiguities, ruptures, and displacements, "constitute our world," and occur in science, literary theory, and art (in this context, Hassan refers to Bakhtin and Barthes's writerly text).
b. Fragmentation. It is one of the traits that lead to indeterminacy and is opposed to any kind of totalization or synthesis in respect to science, society, or the poetic domain. It is related to paradox and the operations of montage and collage (there is reference here to Lyotard).
c. Decanonization. This goes against all conventions of authority and languages of power, and decanonizes culture. Thus, it denies grand narratives, adopting instead small narratives, espouses the idea of a series of deaths (of God, the Father, the author), and supports subverting tendencies, such as minority movements and the feminization of culture (once more, reference to Lyotard).
d. Selflessness/depthlessness. This concerns the death of the subject, the latter being considered by poststructuralists, as Hassan reminds us, as a totalizing principle. The subject is lost in the differences that make up the play of language and this loss appears in depthless styles refusing interpretation (reference to Nietzsche).
e. The unpresentable/unrepresentable. This is the negation of representation. Postmodern art is non-realist and literature contests its own modes of representation (reference to Kristeva).

The above are, according to Hassan, the deconstructive traits of postmodernism, and he continues with the following traits, which he considers as reconstructive:

a. Irony. Due to the absence of a grand narrative, the search for truth is continually postponed, and the result is play and an ironic self-reflexivity, which assumes indeterminacy. This trait can be seen in literary criticism, philosophy, history (reference to Bakhtin and Derrida).
b. Hybridization. This is the adoption of genres and styles in a transformed manner, and their mixing, leading to new relations between historical elements, or the mixing of high and low culture. It is

accompanied by parody, pastiche, and kitsch, and it appears in literature, literary criticism, cinema, architecture (reference to Heidegger).

c. Carnivalization. According to Hassan, this concept, borrowed from Bakhtin, addresses all the traits above (with the exception of the unpresentable) and implies performance (see i), polyphony, absurdity and the comic.
d. Performance/participation, which results from the indeterminacy of the postmodern text, verbal or nonverbal, theoretical or artistic, and is the active participation of the addressee.
e. Constructionism. Due to its non-realistic nature, postmodernism constructs reality in fictions, a phenomenon traversing social relations, postmodern theory, science, high technologies, and art (reference to poststructuralism).
f. Immanence. This refers to the projection of language and signs, more specifically signifiers, into nature, ''turning nature into culture, and culture into an immanent semiotic system,'' and thus, for example, the hard sciences depend on the latter. This movement of immanence is the source of a reflexive irony, but in a consumer society it can lead to emptiness (reference to Baudrillard).

It was to be expected that in the transition from neostructuralist to neomodernist theory a transformation would appear, given the radically incompatible cultures and frames of thought between France, on the one hand, and the U.S. and generally the Anglo-Saxon world, on the other. The Cartesian and deductive theoretical thinking of France has nothing in common with the empiricist and inductive Anglo-Saxon tradition. The issue of the difficulty of understanding French thought in the U.S. is raised by Pamela Tytell when she observes with reference to Lacanian psychoanalysis that, with few exceptions, it is ''the dominant ideology [in the U.S.] which blocks a real reading of Lacan''; she continues by contrasting the different scientific points of reference in the two countries: Freud versus Skinner, Adler, Reich, and Fromm; Lévi-Strauss versus Mead and Goudenough (Tytell 1974: 80–81).

An illuminating account of this transformation as it applies to Derridean deconstruction is given by Norris. Norris detects two different tendencies among American deconstructionists. The one is exemplified by the literary critic Paul de Man, of European origin, who is meticulous in the use of concepts and has recourse to systematic argumentation, not wanting deconstruction to lose its quality of close reading. Indeed, for Norris, de Man, while a consistent deconstructionist, invites us to go beyond the skepticism of deconstruction and states that the continuous regress of further and further deconstructions must finally arrive at a stabi-

lizing point. This measured approach is far from being accepted on the part of the second tendency, deconstruction "on the wild side," represented by Geoffrey Hartman (of European origin) and J. Hillis Miller, also literary critics, who push deconstruction to the limit of interpretative freedom.

Still according to Norris, Hartman's project is a specifically American deconstruction, one that melds criticism with literature, which resulted in pushing the critic to the extremes of self-indulgence. Hartman does not follow the rigorous aspect of deconstruction and merges impressionistically and rhetorically different philosophical traditions. For Miller also, the rhetoric of textuality professed by deconstruction allows the overcoming of the discrimination between criticism and literature. For him, due to the unending proliferation of meaning, the critic has no responsibility to limit the freeplay of imagination and language — this is the "everything goes" variant of deconstruction. As Norris notes, this kind of American reception of deconstruction had a direct impact on Derrida himself. Contrary to his rigorous vein, the rhetoric he uses in his rejoinder to John R. Searle is far from reasoned. This aspect of deconstruction follows the "uncanny" or "vertiginous mode," which is not without continuity with its rigorous aspect, but is nevertheless more indirect and circumstantial. It is an aspect both provoked by the American deconstructionists and mainly addressed to them. Here, the freeplay of textual dissemination is the order of the day (Norris 1982: 15, 92–93, 97–99, 105–106, 113–115, 127 and 1990: 158, 159).

I hope that by now the genealogy promised in the title of this text, which I believe corresponds to the common feeling of semioticians, has been sufficiently documented. If so, then the strong position of Deely that it is the (discontinuous) tradition starting with Augustine and reemerging with the "high semiotics" of the later "Latin" age that leads to "postmodernity," as well as his view that Peirce (to whom he adds secondarily Heidegger), who takes over from the "Latins," opens the fourth age of human understanding and is the last modern but also the first postmodern philosopher, certainly comes as a surprise. Deely's general argument supporting this conclusion is that Peirce formulated a general doctrine of signs and that the general notion of sign or *signum* is the central element of postmodern philosophy. This is not the place for an extended discussion of Deely's argument, but let me remind the reader that it revolves around the unification of the ancient Greek natural signs with formal signs, with the aim of unifying scientific knowledge and the experience of nature and culture, and the view that signification (signs as other-representative) cannot be reduced to representation (objects in experience inclusive of the physical environment as self-representative,

which are not signs) — Deely 2001: for example, xxx, xxxi, 61, 117, 155–157, 224, 443, 508, 585, 588, 667, 680–681, 695.

The divergence of Deely's genealogy of postmodernism from the actual historical continuities becomes even more striking if we take into account the almost total indifference of neomodernism to Peirce's ideas. Although Peirce has a certain presence among a few structuralists, notably Jakobson and Eco, he is practically invisible in neostructuralism. There are some extremely rare instances in which some reference to him appears; one such instance is Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (1967b: 70–73), in which he refers to logic as semiotics and infinite semiosis, and another is Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* (1979: 21 note 28), where there is a reference to Charles Morris, who is related by Lyotard to the semiotics of "Ch. A. Peirce" [*sic*]. Peirce is also invisible in the vast domain of cultural studies, which attempts to bring together structuralism, neostructuralism, and neomodernism on the one hand, and the Anglo-American cultural approaches, Marxism, postcolonialism, etc. on the other. Taking two examples from this domain, in both John Storey's (1993) *An introductory guide to cultural theory and popular culture* and Chris Barker's (2000) voluminous textbook *Cultural studies: Theory and practice* there is not a single mention of Peirce.

Of course, Deely does not live in a vacuum and has a very good grasp of semiotics as a whole. Since, then, his account of neomodernism is not historical and descriptive, it must necessarily be subjective and normative. Deely is willing to impose Peirce as *the* postmodern philosopher, while at most he could historically and logically be the ancestor of postmodernism (which is still not the case). He makes certain concessions to French semiology and credits Saussure with the attempt at a general science of signs, but he does not tie it to neomodernism, but to modernism and idealism, to which he opposes Peircian semiotics. He believes that Saussure failed to formulate a general theory of signs, which is "a historical failure"; that "the Saussurean or, more generally, the semiological notion of sign ... is hopelessly deficient"; for postmodern semiotics "Saussure's proved an abortive proposal"; in order to be integrated in the "postmodern development," semiologists "need only to jettison the pretension of their paradigm to a completeness and governing role from which it is excluded ... by the doctrine of signs itself"; "Derrida seems to be saying something new and profound but in reality is crying out the inadequacy of the Saussurean notion of sign," his view of *différance* "comes crashing down" due to "the semiotic character of sensation," he has a "narcissistic purpose" or a "nihilistic purpose," and he is tied to "cancerous forms of semiosis"; and — in a final, if grudging, concession to history — "the first decades of postmodernity were filled with a kind of dust of semiological analysis,"

while today "the ultramodern protagonists [the neostructuralists] of the adequacy of the semiological sign thus found themselves gazing all the while, with often visible envy, at those already walking the way of signs" (Deely 2001: 679, 682–688).

Sometimes, then, Deely's style is that of a semiotic manifesto, aiming to downgrade the semiological tradition and impose Peirce at the expense of Saussure and semiology. Of course, apart from this occasional style, Deely's enterprise is quite legitimate, since he undoubtedly has the philosophical right to defend his own position, but a crucial problem is that he does so against the historical data. In fact, Deely follows the very dubious method of extracting contemporary neomodernism from its historical situation, in order to use this concept for the achievement of his normative purpose. This strategy is revealed in statements such as: "By postmodernism, ... I do not mean that collection of quintessentially idealist writings which revel in deconstruction and Hermetic drift. I mean ...," statements which then lead directly to Peircian semiotics (Deely 2001: 691–692). Apart from the obvious collision of his philosophical views with *sémiologie* and neostructuralism, the rhetorical devices Deely uses to downgrade them function as an implicit encouragement to adopt the semiotic model proposed by him. The replacement of the historical with the normative leads to an historical anachronism, because Deely is obliged to recess postmodernism about a century back, with the result of creating a philosophical postmodernism that contradicts historical postmodernism.

However, putting aside this blurring of history, Deely points to an actual overlapping between Peircian semiotics and the French tradition, the quest for a general theory of signs, an overlapping that acts as the background for the operations of comparison and replacement he performs. From this common root or summit, the two paradigms split and follow two totally different directions. What should be emphatically stated is that neostructuralism / neomodernism is *not* a partial theory, as Deely believes, but a *global* one that, contrary to Deely's view, *subsumes* natural under cultural signs, thus proposing a *different* global theory of signs from the Peircian one; this different theory is the only theory inseparably linked to neomodernity as an *historical* condition — a fact that does not of course imply that we or I need endorse it. On the other hand, if we look for an alternative theory, as Bauman does (and as I myself do, though disagreeing with Baumann as to its form), it cannot but be a theory corresponding to the urgent contemporary issues posed by this *new* historical neomodernity we are living in, and not a theory proposed on the basis of an ahistorical normativity. A normativity underlined by the very frequent use in Deely's book of the expression "postmodern development" in conjunction with Peircian semiotics and the association of

the latter with the future and the twenty-first century (Deely 2001: for example, xxx, 10, 211, 668, 685, 687–689, 699–700, 738, 742). Normativity replaces historical neomodernism (which he labels "would-be postmodernism") by a fictive one and creates the movement, in Deely's text, from the anachronism of attributing postmodernism to Peircian semiotics to a vision of its future.

Let us now leave this abstract hypothesis concerning logical semiotics and turn to the concrete impact of the "linguistic turn" (see, for example, Barker 2000: ch. 4), which dominated the sphere of the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, by following more specifically the diffusion of actual, historical, theoretical neomodernism. In his book on postmodernism and the social sciences, Robert Hollinger considers the issues that postmodern theory raises as relevant to history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and economics. His main focus in this context is what he considers to be the relevance of poststructuralist thought for the current interests of the social sciences (Hollinger 1994: xi–xii). Below, I shall give some examples of the tremendous impact of neostructuralism / neomodernism on the social sciences with reference to three different social sciences, namely social anthropology, human geography, and archaeology.

In social anthropology, neomodernism gave to the field a new orientation, which, however, is akin to the older interpretative anthropology, a branch of anthropology that was shaped in the U.S. from the sixties. As is to be expected, the problematics of meaning, i.e., the semiotic, is at the core of this "new," "interpretative," "literary," "self-reflexive," "experimental" anthropology. Meaning is at its core in a triple sense. First, as the object of inquiry, since what is looked for is meaning as conceived by the "other," the native's point of view on his/her society and on him/herself. Second, as the communicational, dialogic context, within which the encounter between the anthropologist and the other takes place, aiming at achieving the object of inquiry. Third, as the product of the anthropological work, since the anthropological account itself following from this encounter is seen through a literary perspective as a text shaped by a literary genre (Marcus and Cushman 1982: 25–27, 29, 59, 61; Marcus and Fischer 1986: 16, 23, 43; Strathern 1987a: 288–289 and 1987b: 269; Mascia-Lees et al. 1989: 9, 30; Spencer 1989: 145, 158). This literary anthropology, fond of the freeplay of meaning, is hostile to the "grand narratives" and indeed to the scientific enterprise itself. It represents a strong trend in social anthropology today, though critical voices are not lacking.

Exactly the same neostructuralist principles are reflected in human geography. There is a precedent of neomodern geography in the Anglo-Saxon world, represented by the "humanistic" geography, of phenomenological inspiration, which emerged in the mid-1970s, and it is possible to recede much further in time with "geosophy," an approach advocated since 1925 by John K. Wright, the object of which is the study of all kinds of subjective views (including those of geographers) in respect to geographical space. In the context of neomodern geography, some of the main theses that Lester B. Rowntree formulates as guidelines for the new cultural geography, which is the dominant trend in human geography today, are the following: there is a relationship between, on the one hand, culture as a constructed system of communication, meaning, and symbols, and, on the other, landscape and place; the landscape is a constructed textual system; it is not a passive receptacle of culture, but it contributes to the reproduction of culture and the social structure; a primary role is played by ideology, which tends to naturalize landscape; the geographical knowledge of cultural geographers themselves is constructed (Rowntree 1988: 583). A dimension of the material aspect of society, namely social structure, is preserved in this proposal. This is comparable to the case of Denis Cosgrove, who attempts to preserve Marxist political economy in his interpretative approach while emphasizing the recent turn of human geography towards the symbolic qualities of the landscape, which is for him a text, a cultural formation of signs and symbols (Cosgrove 1987: 96).

Like Rowntree, James and Nancy Duncan advance a program for the new cultural geography, the main axes of which are the study of the manner of the construction of the landscape through oral or written texts; the manner of reading of the landscape; and the influence of the landscape on behavior. According to the Duncans, dominant ideologies take a concrete form in landscape, are reinforced by its readings, and contribute to its preservation (Duncan and Duncan 1988: 120–121, 124, 125). The neomodern rejection of the knowledge of reality was also diffused in human geography. For example, neomodernism is viewed as insisting on "a radical heterogeneity of incommensurable differences" and accepting the existence of many truths (Pile and Rose 1992: 133), or disrupting the modern and rejecting any kind of truth (Doel 1992: 171–172, 175).

A position similar to the latter, which is one of the most purist in neomodern geography, is taken by J. Brian Harley in his study of historical cartography. Harley believes that we must deconstruct the pretension of traditional historical cartography that there is an historical reality (i.e., historical referent) and that the map can represent it. The representations of historical cartography are imaginary and not objective, they

are just a text, a discourse, which tries to convince by using rhetoric. For Harley, this cartography does not relate to precision, but to semiotics, whence the need to approach it through the viewpoint of textuality, which also accounts for the issue of power. He concludes that historical cartography must find a new mode of representation that manifests, instead of hiding, its rhetorical nature. This can be accomplished, he suggests, by transmitting the feeling of a place, through the use of narrative form, new themes such as minorities and women, as well as iconography, including views of past cities, landscapes with people and artifacts, and architectural and archaeological drawings (Harley 1989). In this manner, the historical map becomes the product of a play of imagination, and its playfulness — which if we were Barthes we would consider as the source of *jouissance* — is directly comparable to that of neomodern architecture.

My last example is drawn from current developments in archaeology, and I shall present the views of two leading figures of neomodern or post-processual archaeology, Christopher Tilley (1993) and Ian Hodder (I am referring here to a text he coauthored with Michael Shanks in 1995). Both authors state that post-processual archaeology is grounded in poststructuralism and hermeneutics. The archaeological interpretation of material culture as a significant system or practice is a semiotics of material culture, an interpretive archaeology focused on meaning, an archaeological poetics. The linguistic turn marks post-processual archaeology. According to Hodder, this new approach in archaeology emerged toward the end of the 1970s as a reaction to processual archaeology, and moved from the relation between society and the environment to issues of symbolism and ritual. The act of archaeological interpretation consists in a dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted material past, in which the archaeologist becomes a translator; this act demands self-reflexivity and aims at understanding, not causal explanation. Still according to Hodder, post-processual archaeology opposes the aspirations of earlier archaeology to a value-free positive explanation. The search for an objective scientific practice in archaeology led to an underestimation of the expressive, aesthetic, and emotive aspects of the archaeological project and practice, an affective dimension that is directly related to politics. Simultaneously, pleasure (or displeasure) is at stake, a pleasure following from the serious and imaginative involvement with the past and the archaeological activities.

The problematization of scientific objectivity inescapably poses the issue of accessibility to the archaeological referent. Hodder holds a mild position in respect to this point. Adopting "epistemic relativism," he does not want to dispense with reality, but only rejects the absolute objec-

tivity claimed by "totalizing" systems with the pretense of a final validity. He argues for the search for specific realities, identified through the resistance of the archaeological object to specific tests, and proposes the same procedure in the case of competing views, whence his position that not all forms of archaeological knowledge are equivalent. On the other hand, Tilley takes a strong position concerning the referent, that is, material culture. Archaeological reality is not a final referent, but is "written," just as the archaeological text, and is *only* "a link in a chain of semiosis involving signification through objects and words" (Tilley 1993: 12), "a differential network or fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to the social world" (Tilley 1993: 7). The shift from validation to signification leads to a plurality of equally meaningful interpretations, thus casting into doubt any stable referent. Such an archaeology functions as a means of communication and dialogue. Tilley even considers as positive this proliferation of interpretations, believing that this field by itself constitutes an object of knowledge.

For both authors, objectivity and facts are constructed in discourse. The act of the interpretation of material culture, beyond the physical object, also mobilizes the archaeologist, implying the archaeological "intertext," i.e., the system presiding over archaeological works, related to the power networks in the field, and the archaeologist's own identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.), as well as more broadly culture as a whole: interpretation is a process of contextualization. Thus, the material culture of the past, the "other" for the archaeologist, acquires meaning only within a cultural context — whence the term "contextual archaeology" — and is constructed in discourse as text, as a cultural production.

The written archaeological text does not re-present the past, but has a metaphorical relation to it, and is a collage and montage of images of the past derived, on the one hand from the artifacts, and on the other from concepts and experiences produced in present times. It is a system of signification, a narrative structure, written by the narrator archaeologist and addressed to readers. It has a plot and characters, and uses rhetorical tropes. Thus, the archaeological text is a literary form and shares common conventions with literature. Earlier use of third-person discourse was an attempt to give the impression that events narrate themselves, but the consciousness of the discursive character of the text, the "other" of scientific archaeology, blurs, both in archaeology and history, the distinction between them and literature.

We already encountered the phenomenon of the aestheticization of everyday life in the neomodern period. The above current neomodern view concerning the identification of the social sciences with literature, as well as more generally the extremely close connection between

neomodern theorizing and neomodern culture, have resulted in a comparable aestheticization of the works produced in the social sciences and generally of neomodern theoretical works, as well as of the conception of the processes involved in them. Hence metaphors such as "excavation is invention / discovery or sculpture where archaeologists craft remains of the past into forms which are meaningful" (Shanks and Hodder 1995: 12). Neomodern theorizing amounts to an aesthetic philosophy, because it is inseparable from the logic of art and literature, and is enclosed in its peculiar manner within the sphere of imaginary representations (see also Norris 1990: 23–24). This character is exemplified by Lyotard, with his conjunction between the rejection of the referent, on the one hand, and the sublime on the other.

Tilley is extremely enthusiastic with the above neomodern perspective in archaeology. He believes that, by using past artifacts as a starting point, we acquire weapons for understanding our present situation, weapons that can be used "for socialism and emancipation from structures of exploitation and domination." Post-processual archaeology becomes a politics of the past. The study of the past is only the survey of today's conflicting networks of power and desire; it is an experimentation, and in performing it we should "in a self-reflexive moment, disown a will to power through knowledge" (Tilley 1993: 25). The problem with such a view, of course, is that politics *is* about power!

There may be a confusion between neomodern theories and theories that, although circulating in the neomodern period, are not neomodern. On this point, Hutcheon, for example, after observing that there is a close theoretical connection between postmodernism and poststructuralism — something which according to Barker (2000: 19) is not a "straight forward equation" — as well as an obligatory association between them, states that there is a need to surpass this association, and there are also close connections between postmodernism and other contemporary theories, such as "discourse analysis; feminist, black, ethnic, gay, postcolonial (the politics of difference, according to Barker 2000: 11), and other ex-centric theories; psychoanalysis; historiographic theory; and even analytic philosophy" (Hutcheon 1988: 226). The fact that Hutcheon considers all these theories (to which we can also add others, such as Marxism) as related to postmodernism reminds us, then, of the existence of theories other than the neomodern ones that are not identified with neomodernism, but nevertheless belong to neomodernity. The presence of these other theories could possibly put into question my position concerning the dominance of neomodern theorizing. I believe, however, that this dominance is the common experience of all those working in the social sciences, humanities, and the arts. Moreover, we should take notice

of the impact of neomodernism on these other theories, an issue I should like to address briefly, based on Barker.

In the vast and heterogeneous domain of cultural studies, which covers both neomodernism and most of the other theories referred to above, a dominant concept is that of "anti-essentialism." It results from the neostructuralist view that words and ideas do not refer to any external referent, in which case they would indicate a certain essential quality of it, but that meaning is created by the relation between signs. As a consequence, any assumed category is only a semiotic construction culturally bounded. Major social or cultural entities and cultural traits are now defined on the basis of this anti-essentialist position. Thus, race is replaced by "racialization," a term indicating that race does not exist outside of representation; youth subcultures are considered not to exist as external realities, but as the creation of subculture theorists and the media; in spite of the existence of a different view, a widely diffused idea is that femininity and masculinity are simply cultural constructs (and this with reference not only to gender, but also sex), on the grounds that there can be no access to any biological referent; cultural identity is not attached to some external social situation, but is considered as a fragmentary and incessantly changing discursive position (Barker 2000: 19, 221, 228, 230–233, 243, 248, 288–289, 378, 391, 409, 435).

Postcolonial theory moves within the above context. It emphasizes the hybridization of language, literature, and cultural identities; it considers national or ethnic concepts (like "American" or "American Indian") as having an unclear and unstable meaning. Unambiguously, postcolonial theory, one of today's theories that is not identified with neomodern theorizing, is imbued with the latter. The same is the case with feminism. There are different varieties of feminism: poststructuralist / postmodern feminism, difference feminism, postcolonial feminism, socialist feminism, liberal feminism, black feminism, postfeminism. The first of them, as we can see, is part of neomodernism, while others are influenced by it. Needless to recall that for neostructuralist / neomodern feminism gender and sex cannot be explained in terms of capitalist social relations or biology respectively. Not only are femininity and masculinity discursive positions, but there is also a field of possible femininities and masculinities. There is a constant political struggle in respect to these identities, which is a struggle over meaning. Due to its concern with language and power, this variety of feminism holds a dominant position, both within feminism and generally in cultural studies (Barker 2000: 276–277, 280–283).

The strongest (though unfortunately not strong enough, due to the cultural and scientific hegemony of neomodernism) voice against neostructuralism / neomodernism comes from the Marxist camp, arguing

for a political economy of culture. But even this perspective is frequently transformed by neomodern ideas (see also Barker 2000: 244, 417–424). The fact is that there are undoubtedly valuable comprehensive theories articulating culture and the semiotic with political economy, all of them founded on Marxism, and I would like to recall in this context Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev and Mikhail Bakhtin's (1978 [1928]) Marxist sociological poetics, Althusser and Balibar's (1968) structural causality, Pierre Bourdieu's (1980) *habitus*, Raymond Williams's cultural materialism (1977), and Anthony Gidden's theory of structuration (1981).

These theories, which offer a way out from the idealist dead-ends of neomodern theorizing, are unfortunately beyond the scope of the present paper. I would only like to point out here that it is to be regretted that the interchange between Marxism and French structuralism / semiotics has not been given the place it deserves in the histories of semiotics, as we may observe from major reference works in the field. Thus, in Thomas A. Sebeok *Encyclopedic dictionary* (1994) this subject is censured (and French semiotics very weakly represented), with as main exception one entry on Marx, presented in isolation from his profound influence on French semiotics. Comparable is the situation with Roland Posner's *Handbook* on semiotics (Posner et al. 1997–2004), strongly oriented outside cultural semiotics, though the chapter on sociosemiotics by Thomas Alkemeyer (2003) is one of the few exceptions presenting fairly the Marxist trend (as part of a much wider context). Several entries on the Marxist trend (and French semioticians) are also to be found in Paul Bouissac's *Encyclopedia* (1998), but the issue is given its full dimension only in the anthology *Semiotics* (Gottdiener et al. 2003), where one of the nine sections of this four-volume work is dedicated to the subject of semiotics and Marxism.

The purpose of this paper, however, was the genealogy of neomodernism. As we saw, this genealogy starts with the Saussurean linguistic turn. Saussurean theory was further elaborated by the Russian Formalism, ancestor of the Moscow-Tartu School, and the Prague Circle, with Jakobson in both cases as the preeminent figure, as well as by the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen with its leading figure Hjelmslev. Already from the period of Formalism, Marxism came into contact with Saussurean theory, both as a strong critical stance towards it and as a unified sociocultural approach assimilating this theory. After his encounter with Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss laid the foundation for contemporary French *sémiologie* with his anthropological structuralism, which was colored with Lévi-Strauss's Marxism (on the above, see also Lagopoulos 2004a).

The transformation of structuralism into neostructuralism, decisively influenced by the ambience of May 1968, was due to the combination, as

Frank rightly points out, of a continuity, structuralism / semiotics, with a discontinuity, the German critique of metaphysics from the old German Romanticism to Heidegger. But what escapes Frank is that it was also due, and very importantly, to French surrealism, a Marxist-Freudian amalgam; to the existentialist Marxism of Sartre, and to the French version of psychoanalysis, Lacanism: together, these add up to a strong "Gallic" line. Finally, neostructuralism passed the Atlantic, as a response to local cultural phenomena in the U.S. A new transformation took place, from neostructuralism to neomodernism, which dominates today's theoretical discussions in the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts. And the future will be "written" (my gallant concession to neomodernism) by history.

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