The Unbridled Meaning of Unsignified Signifiers from Paraliterature to Cinema

BRUNO SURACE[*]

Abstract

There exist texts, often of a ludic or manifestly artistic nature, that seriously query the univocal relationship between signifier and signified, the epistemology of the expression–content type. They are texts written in "impossible" languages, a–semic alphabets indecipherable by statute, which are however able to emanate enormous amounts of meaning for common readers, sometimes catapulting them into a playful childlike dimension, as well as challenging semioticians and linguists, even making them reconsider the theme of idiolect. This amounts to the opening up of a crisis not in any given language, but in the idea of language itself, and perhaps in the idea of the signs that should constitute it. This occurs, for example, in Luigi Serafini's *Codex Seraphinianus,* in Kunizo Matsumoto's *Art Brut,* and in certain moments in the cinema of Leos Carax. In these cases, marked and obsessive emissions of signifiers do not coincide with precise signifieds, even if, on account of contextual and plastic specificities, they invite decrypting. The act of writing, for these authors, is often first of all the manifestation of an agency, which produces a text leaning heavily towards the phatic side. This happens when the obsession of putting the world into language clashes with parts of the world that refuse to be language–ized. The objective of this essay is to investigate this rich and not very explored context, which challenges some of the inner certainties of semiotics itself.

Keywords: unsignified signifiers, Luigi Serafini, Codex Seraphinianus, Kunizo Matsumoto, Leos Carax.

1. A Definition of Artificial Languages

Languages and parlances are all, in some measure, invented. What is "natural" is rather the drive which sanctions their coming–into–being, the primordial need which makes us political and social animals. As Lotman would say, languages are "natural" because they, as primary modelling systems (1974), allow us to organize our comprehension of the world. Their "naturalness" must not be thought of as a sort of inner quality opposed to

---

[*] Università degli Studi di Torino.

"artificiality", an operation which would be the result of the classic natu-re/culture dichotomy already problematized by Lévi–Strauss (1967), but as the result of processes of spontaneous, collective and continuous negotiation, operated in the relationship between *langue* and *parole*. Now, having ascertained that it is more opportune — and probably more accurate — to treat every language as an invention arising from a compulsion, it may be worth underlining how the term "natural language" remains valid neverthe-less, in the measure in which it defines a system of linguistic rules whose authorship is:

- largely collective, that is, ascribed to vast linguistic catchment areas, which are familiar at different levels with the functioning of language, in other words, its rules for codification and decodification. Such rules are assimilated by the users of a language through learning, which in itself is an automatism that is not necessarily entirely natural;
- decidedly fluid, that is, not assembled at a given moment around a table for the setting out of the rules of the language but developed instead over different spaces and times;
- not always traceable since, as a consequence of what has been sta-ted above, despite the efforts of philology, at times too volatile and ephemeral;
- markedly semantic, that is, tending "naturally" towards the con-struction of languages which convey some meaning, in other words, whose signs are constituted — arbitrarily, and here again appears the germ of invention — by an expression and by one or more contents.

The four points outlined above for the identification of "natural" langua-ges serve to understand what is conversely meant by artificial languages in common parlance. Bearing well in mind these premises, artificial or invented languages will therefore be defined as languages whose authorship:

- is not widespread but is ascribed instead to a very small group of people, or even to just one person, called a "glottoteta", "linguistic inventor";
- is not fluid, that is, the language has been invented in a defined space and time. It has been "planned";
- is essentially traceable, apart from singular cases of anonymity, pseu-donymity and so on;
- is not necessarily semantic, in other words, it is not necessarily provided with signic links which closely define relationships of the expression–content type.

To be clear, Italian is a "natural" language (even if, in some way, invented); Klingon, the language in *Star Trek*, or Volenska, the language of the Icelandic music group Sigur Rós, are artificial languages, that is, definitely planned.

Further and more elaborate taxonomies of artificial languages could be constructed, but what has been said up to now is sufficient to take us another step forward. Planned languages can, in fact, be constructed with a certain degree of care, as in the case of Klingon, which has its own phonetics, its own lexicon, some prosodic specificities, and even a regulatory organ like the *Klingon Language Institute*; or, their presence may be a virtual given, as when in a novel it is written that a certain population speaks an unknown language which, however, is not subsequently actually concretized in the text.

In both cases, nevertheless, whether we have access to the planned language or whether it is declared but not concretized, it behaves in principle like a "natural" language, that is, it permits communication among individuals, whatever species they may belong to, allowing them to exchange meaning through apparatuses for codification and decodification. In the imaginary universe in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings,* the elves communicate by means of the Quenya language. In this case we are dealing with a language that is planned and not virtual, because it exists in the novels, and because its author spent over 50 years on its creation, so that nowadays the level of elaboration of this language makes it potentially speakable also beyond fiction, and in fact some people do learn and speak it, as they do Esperanto. Tolkien, however, could have spent only a day on the task; for our purposes this is not particularly relevant. What interests us is to note that we know elves do not exist, that these are characters in a novel, and that they speak a planned language, yet they speak this language exactly as, for instance, Kenyan people speak Swahili: they emit sounds from a phonic apparatus or write on a surface, they codify a message, someone receives the sounds and graphemes through auditive or visual apparatuses, decodifies them and understands the message. Quenya and Klingon, in short, according to Jakobson's outline of the aspects of communication, do not differ substantially from Swahili, English, or Hindi; they are languages in the same way.

This is further demonstrated by the fact that some excellent Quenyan grammar books can be found, like that of Helge K. Fauskanger, extremely accurate and boasting more than 340 pages, and that you can purchase on Amazon a Klingon/English dictionary edited by Marc Okrand, with a fairly good basic grammar.

2. Codex Seraphinianus as a (non)Linguistic Game

There exist, however, certain linguistic entities which elude this symmetry between fiction and reality, and which are characterized by an inventiveness which aims to cut loose from the underlying principle of all languages: the relationship between signifier and signified. These are noteworthy instances, first of all because they prompt us to ask whether they do or do not constitute languages (and also whether this is or is not a useful question), but also because even if they were not languages, they would represent parodies thereof. They are languages spoken by someone, but understood by noone, perhaps not even by their speakers. Furthermore, they open the way to the fruitful hypothesis, nowadays less heretical than it might once have seemed, of the existence of signifiers that are not strictly bound to signifieds, and also lead us to say that if these exist, calling into question the very concept of sign itself, then it would ensue that, paradoxically, they nevertheless have meaning.

The first case concerns Luigi Serafini, an Italian artist and designer who for many decades has been developing cryptic works that are able to fascinate the viewer immediately, but also to form part of theoretical debates like the current one. To him, in fact, we owe a book, the *Codex Seraphinianus,* compiled in the second half of the Seventies. It can be effortlessly consulted whether you are Italian, German or Polynesian, as it is written in what its author has defined an "asemic alphabet", that is, a completely untranslatable set of graphemes, or *unsignified signifiers*. Peter Schwenger describes the *Codex* as glyptolalia: «The word is formed by analogy with oral *glossolalia,* the phenomenon of "speaking in strange tongues" – but it refers to the inscription of imaginary languages in a text, where it is the *glyph* (sign, character) rather than the *glossé* (tongue) that babbles (*lalein*)» (2006, p. 121).

It consists in a sort of encyclopaedia of human knowledge, studded with over a thousand illustrations, which however portray fantastic, absurd images. The written part is supposed, instead, to constitute the descriptions but, from the very beginning, constitutes nothing if not the parody of caption, of description, and in the final analysis of language. The illustrations expose all manner of the author's fantasies and appear to be arranged according to some kind of logical scheme. There is a part dedicated to botany, one to zoology, as well as mineralogy, physics, right through to the section devoted to human activities. All in an absurd, fantastic key. "Readers" can thus feast their eyes on images such as those of a daisy which, stripped of its petals and left only with stem and pistil, can be inflated and become a balloon, or fish whose sides present features like eyes, so that when they are in the middle of the water they give the strange effect of seeming to be looking at the shore, or para–anthropological illustrations of incomprehensible games and dances.

Now, over and beyond the surprising beauty of the images, what interests us here are the "written" texts, because they raise issues on various levels. First of all, they appear as script, but in fact their agency seems to remain firmly anchored to the iconic level. They are "images of writing", rather than writing in themselves, and indeed it is possible to appreciate what in a real language would be the phemic and, maybe, suprasegmental features transliterated in the graphemes. The beautiful cursive calligraphy, the way in which the serifs curl, and so on. We could even hypothesize that some parts, those which occupy specific para–textual areas such as the space for headings, are in capital letters, while others are in small letters. And, should we so wish, we could also attempt a decryption, as the few but vigorous little groups of *Codex* exegetes have done and continue to do, despite the author's having declared that there is no hidden code, and that the *Codex* and its parts constitute an exercise that is an end in itself.

In semiotics, "an end in itself" means: a sign which does not refer to anything else. A sign which exhausts itself in its happening. Perhaps an "aesthetic sign": «Even though the complexity of the total icon is so very great that no *denotatum* (other than the aesthetic sign vehicle itself) can in actuality be found, the work of art can still be considered a sign— for there can be designation without denotation» (Morris, 1939, p. 140). In fact, the aesthetic sign manifests itself precisely because it is self–reflexive, as Pietro Montani also suggests in *Il debito del linguaggio* (1985), which contains an in–depth reflection on the difficulties of semiotics in their approach to art, especially when it is figurative (and in the cases we are handling there is always a fluid relationship between the verbal and the figurative), since its semiosis tends towards an "elliptical implication". In other words, while classical unlimited semiosis entails a manifestation of the sign towards the outside, in art — and particularly in the kind of art we are dealing with — it entails instead a constant, frustrating recirculation of the sign on itself:

> The poetic message "says" something, there is no doubt, otherwise it would not mean anything but, at the same time, it retains within itself that of which it talks, "opens" a context and at the same time "becomes" its own context, it is a discourse and at the same time the object of that discourse: in a word, «that of which the message talks is, at the same time, the "thing" that it is». This means that the «truly linguistic self–reference» [...] obliges us to rethink the relationship between the sign and things in all its paradoxicality (Montani, 1985, p. 102).

The signs in the *Codex* designate but do not denote, they point towards a content which does not exist. That is, in some way, they are a signifier without signified. And yet, this lack of signified is not a lack of meaning. Rather, it corresponds to a semiosic or hermeneutic displacement whereby, as happens with all subtractive art, the power of interpretation is playfully

in the hands of the reader. Just as a painting by Kandinskij lends itself more easily to interpretative use and abuse than does a Canaletto, so the Seraphinian "neo–language", useless except for expressing itself, aims at short–circuiting this procedure, desiring to say all and nothing. In other words: wanting to astound. It is Serafini himself who declares:

> Having stormed a convent, and satisfied their primary needs for food and plunder, some Hun or other barbarian ignorant of alphabets will certainly have penetrated to the Library, and will have leafed with wonder through an illuminated code. I would like the reader to leaf through the *Codex Seraphinianus* like that warrior; or like a child who has not yet learnt to read, but who is delighted by the dreams and fantasies suggested by the images (Ricci, 2013, p. 22).[1]

The book is moreover supplied with a little manual, called the *Decodex,* and written in Italian, where the author does not fulfil the promise of the title to provide a kind of Rosetta Stone for deciphering the *Codex,* but rather persists in the game he has created, explaining how the idea of the *Codex* was born and what the principal *intentio operis* is that it incarnates, and that is, to take the reader back to a childlike state in which, browsing through an illustrated text, one can feel wonder at seeing the writing that accompanies the images even without knowing how to read. This assertion, and the subsequent reception of the *Codex* written — or drawn — in a language which is a non–language, tells us something extremely significant, namely, that the *Codex* intercepts a different impulse to that of «putting the world into language» (language–izing the world), which manifests itself precisely where there is no clear language.

The *Codex* is thus the shadow of a language, its evocation, which in the still illiterate child opens up fantastic gateways of sense, especially in relation to the colourful, fanciful images in the book, all requiring discovery and interpretation. In the adult this impulse endures, and translates the appeal exerted by the *Codex* from the dimension of wonder to that of secret, of mystery, of conspiracy, which at bottom share a playful character. This explains the repeated attempts to translate the *Codex,* to unveil the mysteries it conceals, to dissect the signs in search of patterns, to make the few biographical traces contained in the *Decodex,* or certain meta–images in the book, correspond with specific pages, in order to elaborate a mapping that discloses the true nature of the work as Dan Brown's *Cryptex* is disclosed. The author's assertion that his language has no meaning does nothing but sharpen the intrinsic lucidity of the text, the linguistic obsession which it intercepts, namely, that whereby "everything" has to signify and, what's more, in a strictly signic manner.

---

1. My translation.

3. Kunizo Matsumoto's Para–signs

The tremendous semiotic irreverence of the *Codex,* which was of great interest to (among others) Roland Barthes and Italo Calvino, the latter defining it as a sort of "pulverized writing" (1981)[2], links up with the second author we are going to deal with here, Kunizo Matsumoto, whom we defined in 2016 a "compulsive scribbler". Kunizo Matsumoto is a man from Osaka whose works are on exhibition in many parts of the world. Our first approach to his work was through viewing a collection of Art Brut in Switzerland. The peculiarity of his work is the following: he covers calendars or other surfaces with scribbles from top to bottom, utilizing what would seem to be an ideographic script of the kanji type, but which actually "limits itself" to imitating the plastic specificities of kanji by means of invented graphemes, which in reality are not signs for anything. In our paper, where for the first time we spoke of a «signifier for its own sake», we tried to propose a plastic analysis of Matsumoto's work, treating his writings precisely — a bit like we suggested for Serafini — as if they were images. In this way we highlighted some recurring patterns, such as a certain respect for the surface on which he is writing, so that the pages do not appear totally covered in signs, but in some way complemented with regard to the printing already contained on them. Chromatically, too, as in the dialectic between the accumulation of signs in some areas of the writing surface and their thinning out in others, a certain projectuality may perhaps be made out. It is an enormous work and always *in fieri,* to which Matsumoto, affected by a mental pathology and busy washing dishes in the family restaurant during the day, devotes all his evenings with graphomanic compulsion.

The issue we explored, and would here like to extend beyond the semiotics of image, concerns the overcoming of the idea of idiolect, of the individual language, in the case of Matsumoto who expresses his art from a mixture of choice and physiology, being in some way influenced by his pathological condition. The idea, that is, that he can actually get his scribbles to match a precise meaning at least for himself is not demonstrable, and therefore the hypothesis of idiolect, which both Jakobson and Barthes tend to dismiss, does not turn out to be particularly fruitful. On the contrary, however, the quantity of signifier that he produces implies a need, perhaps amplified by a form of aphasia, which is — albeit on different existential levels — very similar to that of Serafini.

Matsumoto's art is not to be deciphered as if it were writing, but as if it were the exaltation of the compulsion to write. An act of writing which

2. Cf. also Bonometto (2015).

speaks solely of itself, which exhausts itself in its happening. On a more mediological level, Matsumoto's work channels all the noise produced by millennia of languages and scripts which, superimposed one upon the other, assume a Babelic flavour, where the desire to say everything does not mean anything. This is where the compulsion takes on an almost social exegetic value, a reflection in itself not entirely on the capacities of language, but its incapacities, its intrinsic limitations.

No need to state therefore that, as for the Codex, so also for Matsumoto's calendars it is possible to elaborate a Rosetta Stone which in some way guides the translation. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it may be fun to do, it would be a violation of the intention which here is more in the work than in the author: the intention, as we wrote in 2016, of «breaking free from the code», returning to what Jacques Lacan has called the *Master–Signifier.* The semiotics of Matsumoto's opera must be read in the *actio,* in the production of the signifier. Here there is the *Brut*alisation of the writing, generated in «a signifier available without its signified, or "before" it» (Lyotard, 2011, p. 80). The linear manifestation of the text is thus the fulcrum of Matsumoto's aesthetics in that it represents the execution *in praesentia* of a pre–narrative — if not altogether pre–semiotic — agency, actualized in the para–writing of the sheet of paper or calendar. Dagostino states that «for the traditional graphomaniac deturpation has aesthetic valence» (Dagostino, 2006, p. 72) and, indeed, this resides in the externalization of one's very being as a semiotic animal, in leaving a sign which is a sign of oneself.

> The sign thus becomes a modality for contact between Matsumoto's mind and the external world, as happens for every other individual, but acquires an artistic dimension when it becomes the expression of a semiosic diversity, precisely due to its serial nature which distinguishes it from the improvised doodle that everyone will produce during a moment of boredom (Surace, 2016, p. 50).

4. Bonjour Mr. Merde

In our analysis we can add the work of another author who leads us to a further medial passage. If Serafini's was in some way image disguised as writing, and Matsumoto's something similar, Leos Carax's work projects us into the cinematographic dimension and that of invented language which passes from the written level to the spoken one. The work of this French director is rather varied, but here we will concentrate on the episode directed by him in the collective film *Tokyo!* (2008), which also features episodes by Michel Gondry and Bong Joon–ho. Here, Carax directs the central episode, entitled *Merde.* Mr. Merde is a grotesque individual interpreted by Denis Lavant, who will take on the same role in the director's latest film, *Holy*

Motors (2012). He lives in the sewers of Tokyo, has a thick red beard, a glass eye, is dressed in green, barefoot and dirty, and behaves in an incomprehensible fashion. Occasionally he emerges from a manhole and disseminates panic among the crowds as he walks in their midst. A compulsive smoker, he steals cigarettes from the passers–by, and gobbles down exclusively flowers, which have also been stolen. One day, while wandering around in subterranean Tokyo, he finds an abandoned arsenal, and begins to use the hand–grenades to attack the crowds on the surface, thus changing from a freak into a dangerous person, something like a terrorist. He does this with no premeditation whatsoever, inserting the action into the ritual patterns which define him. He seems to experience no satisfaction and, indeed, feels no emotion, not even when he is captured by the police and subjected to trial. What interests us most here is that he speaks a language that nobody can understand, made up of haphazard verses and a strong component of mimicry and gesture, which includes convulsive movements and drumming on his teeth with his nails.

When Mr. Merde is caught, lawyer Maître Voland arrives from France to defend him, one of the three people in the world who can speak his language. He, too, has red hair and beard worn in the same way as Mr. Merde, and a glassy eye. In the scene where the two characters meet, they (probably) engage in a conversation. As the film progresses, we can presume that Voland really does speak Mr. Merde's language, because we can identify in his gesturing certain traits that are similar to those of the protagonist. We are not, however, able to understand the meaning of the exchange between the two, and even the signals which might tell us something about the emotional import of their communication, which appears to be very heartfelt, are neutralized by the fact that Merde has always expressed himself in this way, and that therefore he may always have been angry, or perhaps his language may naturally contain a certain prosody. Essentially, in the absence of any indication, it is not possible for us to maintain with certainty whether or not their conversation, if translated, would appear as a reasonable conversation between a lawyer and his client. It will subsequently be the absurd trial scene, which sees Merde condemned to capital punishment, that tells us that theirs is in fact a language, since the lawyer translates the protagonist's testimony into French. Nevertheless, some less than convincing aspects remain, at least as regards the following points:

— if that spoken by Merde and his lawyer were a language, why does no one else in the world know it or has ever heard of it?;
— how come Merde and his lawyer share such marked features and behaviours, even though one is a being from the sewers, relegated to the *substratum* and emerging only to spew forth his malevolent

essence into the world, while the other is fully integrated in French professional life?;

— why is this language made up of disagreeable sounds and gestures, as well as a series of masochistic features (like slapping oneself), and why does it seem patently to contradict the principles of economy and *brevitas* which languages usually tend to have in common?

All these questions lead us to affirm that rather than a language, in which the signifiers imply signifieds, the language utilized by Merde and his lawyer is the degenerate, sclerotic form of a language which goes beyond its own incommunicability. And, in fact, it manifests itself with an enormous quantity of signifier, to which no logical signified corresponds. Merde's replies to the prosecuting lawyer are lacking in reasonableness; from them can be drawn only insults, homicidal and sexual impulses, the absence of remorse, and an appeal to "other", incomprehensible logics. It is ultimately a language that is semantically predisposed for the conveyance of all that signified which exists in all "natural" languages, but which is outside of the linguistic comfort zone, banished to the margins of the semiosphere, in the deplorable crannies of the swearword, the unspeakable, the bestial, the taboo. Merde's language is a language that cannot be spoken not because it means nothing, but because it means everything which society would prefer to leave "unsignified". It is the overflowing counterpoint of a character whose name disgusts, who — *nomen omen* — lives in the midst of faeces, who walks barefoot around a megalopolis, eats the inedible, smokes and, in the ultimate catharsis, kills whoever happens to be within range. His language conveys all this foulness and, in fact, is a language which despite being incomprehensible, kindles unease, both on account of its prosody and because it "puts into language" everything that we generally think should not become linguistic. The elimination from language of anything dirty or faecal means relegating it to the margins of existence, yet it does exist, even if frequently it is deformed or formless. Merde's signifier serves as a counterpart to this intangible «epiphany of the formless, which» to quote a recent book by Alberto Castoldi (2018), «has always besieged our imaginary».

5. From Guizzo to Simulation

We can conclude this trans–textual journey by mentioning two concepts which skilfully encase the languages/non–languages mentioned so far, and which are not the only ones in existence. The first is the concept of the *guizzo* (wriggle), introduced by Greimas — who uses the Italian word — in *De l'imperfection* (1987), the semiologist's last work where a certain obsession for putting the world into language makes way for an airier aperture towards what is linguistically ineffable, when the text is placed in relation to the "aesthetic grip". He quotes a passage from *Palomar,* a 1983 novel by Italo Calvino. Mr. Palomar is strolling on a deserted sandy beach, when he sees a young woman who is «sunbathing with a bare breast». Thus, like a true philosopher of the day–to–day, he wonders about the best way to approach such a sight. Among the various hypotheses made by Palomar for looking at this female breast there is that of "lightly brushing with equanimous uniformity" against the different elements in one's visual field so that "the breast is completely absorbed into the landscape". This procedure, however, does not seem very functional, simply because the immediate perception of the breast gives rise to the guizzo, thus described by Greimas:

> The *guizzo* [...] has been explained as a term which designates the wriggle of a little fish jumping on the water, like a shiny silver flash, which combines in an instant image the sparkle of light and the wetness of the water. The suddenness of the event, the elegance of this quivering gestuality, the play of light on the surface of the water, here we have, not perfectly subdivided, certain elements of an aesthetic grip rendered in a figurative synthesis (2004, p. 36).[3]

The *guizzo* is thus a form of the imperfect, a manifestation of the real which refuses to be put into language because it is too rapid, sudden, difficult to pin down linguistically since it instinctively involves the visual but also all the other perceptive apparatuses. For the most part, it is possible to affirm that the works of Serafini and Matsumoto, and Carax's character, are each in their way textual extensions of the *guizzo,* attempts to translate it from its instantaneity to something fixed and textual, through pure signifier, given its essential resistance to translation into a "complete" sign.

Their languages/non–languages are thus, and this brings us to the second concept, *simulations* of language, as the word is defined by Paolo Bertetto (2007, pp. 60–63), in the wake of Deleuze, specifically in cinema. Deleuze maintains that «cinema makes a *momie*, a mummy, not of that which is, or which endures over time, but of that which is not, that which exists for an instant and then dissolves. Cinema mummifies the inexistent» (Bertetto,

---

3. My translation.

2007, p. 61)[4]. This is the heart of filmic simulation, which is obviously that of Carax, but also in some way the linguistic simulation of Serafini and Matsumoto. Since the *guizzo* is pure temporality, an instantaneous manifestation of what language cannot capture, the artists we have dealt with can do nothing else but *simulate* languages which capture it, linguistic mummies, and stage or enact languages. Bettetini writes that «Simulating means imitating, representing, reproducing; but it also means pretending, deceiving, lying» (Bettetini, 1991, p. 4). And it is this deception, as Bertetto calls it, that we have been dealing with, and which in the forms that we have analyzed presents itself in radical form, but which is definitively present in every semiotic act because, to paraphrase Umberto Eco at the beginning of the *Trattato di semiotica generale*, every semiotic act contains the seed of falsehood, perhaps the universal key to any form of communication or at any rate to artistic communication, which by nature is given to universality.

Bibliographical references

Bertetto P. (2007), *Lo specchio e il simulacro. Il cinema nel mondo diventato favola*, Bompiani, Milan.

Bettetini G. (1991), *La simulazione visiva. Inganno, finzione, poesia, computer graphics*, Bompiani, Milan.

Bonometto V. (2015), *Abbecedario della rappresentazione. Ovvero come perdersi tra le immagini saltando le parole*, Gangemi, Rome.

Calvino I. (1981), *Orbis Pictus, prefazione al Codex Seraphinianus*, Franco Maria Ricci edizioni, Parma.

——— (1983), *Palomar*, Einaudi, Turin.

Castoldi A. (2018), *Epifanie dell'informe*, Quodlibet, Macerata.

Contini G. (1970), *Letteratura Italiana delle Origini*, Sansoni, Florence.

Dagostino M.R. (2006), *Cito dunque creo. Forme e strategie della citazione visiva*, Meltemi, Rome.

Eco U. (1975), *Trattato di semiotica generale*, Bompiani, Milan.

Greimas A.J. (2004), *Dell'imperfezione*, Sellerio, Palermo.

Lévi–Strauss C. (1967), *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, La Haye, Mouton, Paris.

Lotman J.M. (1974), *Primary and secondary communication–modelling systems*, in *Materials of the All Union Symposium on Secondary Modelling Systems*, vol. I, no. 5, pp. 224–228.

4. My translation.

Lyotard J.F. (2011), *Discourse, Figure*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London.

Montani P. (1985), *Il debito del linguaggio. Il problema dell'autoriflessività estetico nel segno, nel testo e nel discorso*, Marsilio, Venice.

Morris C.W. (1939), *Esthetics and the Theory of Signs*, The Journal of Unified Sciences (Erkenntnis), 8(1): pp. 131–150.

Ricci F.M. (2013), *L'editore al lettore, Decodex allegato al Codex Seraphinianus*, Rizzoli, Milano.

Schwenger P. (2006), *The Tears of Thins. Melancholy and Physical Objects*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London.

Surace B. (2016), *Compulsive Scribblers. A Semiotic Challenge Based on the Works of Kunizo Matsumoto*, "Punctum", 2(1): pp. 47–59.

Filmography

Holy Motors (Carax Leos 2012),

Tokyo! (Joon–ho Bong, Carax Leos, Gondry Michel 2008)