A Semiotic Investigation of the Digital: What Lies Beyond the Pixel

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by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main focus work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Martina Müller
Abstract

This dissertation explores the implications of new photographic and computer technologies that offer the transduction of modalities. The fundamental argument, here, is that such technologies ‘change’ the process of sense-making resulting in a new asymmetry that informs the visual language of the creative work.

I argue that the processes of language analysis can assist us in the interpretation of multimodal texts and that a digital illustration can be analysed via the theoretical framework ‘built’ from the first linguistic concepts such as those to be found in the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. A semiotic method applied in the context of digital artwork, and developed from the linguistic-semiotic stand-point, is well suited for an examination of the intermodal relations (the relations between layers in a multi-layered image file). By examining the layered structures of my images I demonstrate the evident similarity between the disconnection of the components of the linguistic sign on the one hand and the visual sign on the other hand. The analysis of a digital image, especially created for this purpose, is expanded by an investigation that offers a partial reading from an insider’s point of view that involves an image being analysed on the conceptual level. This involves the examination of the primary internal relations between the layers of the image, and on the level of expression, the examination of the primary external relations between the layers and the narrative of the image.

In its deployment the semiotic method I use investigates the existence and the conditions of a space in which the individual readings from the perspective of outsider and insider might be conceptualized and presents a partial reading derived from an outsider’s interpretation of the same image. After comparing both readings I arrive at the conclusion that the different texts’ modalities have an impact on the degree of the sign components’ disconnection. My conclusion, then, is that an outsider who cannot view the image in its multimodal form assigns sign components in a higher degree of disconnection than an insider who has access to the intermodal relations of the image file.
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Introduction

There are a number of ways in which a contemporary image can be analyzed. New technologies generated new tools and methods in which a digital photograph or image can be viewed in a novel way. Due to the new digital technologies, which allow the display of a digital image at least in two modal forms, we are no longer restricted to seeing an image exclusively in its production form. The capacity of displaying an artwork in a mode that reveals all the elements the image contains via the file’s layered structure results in an interpretation of the image in a more comprehensive way than when an image is viewed in its monomodal form as merely one layer. From the perspective of semiotics an interpreter who is able to inspect the content of the layers comprising an image is more likely to link the sign’s elements (the signifier and the signified) in a lesser degree of disconnection from its original intentions than an interpreter who can only view the final flattened form of the production itself. There are a number of software programs, for example Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Illustrator, designed to enhance or alter digital photographs. However, the enhancing and altering are only some of the ways of manipulating digital content. The other attribute of Photoshop, and it is of significance for my doctoral project, is the ability to acquire additional digital content in the form of multiple layers. The capacity to do so and to make a copy, or work with the original background layer, is the underlying concept informing what I regard as the ‘transduction’ of the layering technique that directly contributes to the modal transformation from the monomodal to the multimodal form. From the perspective of a digital artist I argue that this transduction of modalities directly affects the process of making-meaning, resulting in a new ‘asymmetry’ of visual language. This new ‘asymmetry’ of visual language can be semiotically analysed via a method employing the early linguistic analytical concepts found in the classical texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. Such methodology founded on selective fundamental texts that are concerned with meaning-making processes can provide a solid base for developing a semiotic method which can assist in the analysis of assigning the different levels of disconnection between the sign elements in the transitional processes associated with transduction. Hence, in order to understand and to articulate the meaning of the newly transitioned multimodal text, there is a need to create a new more ‘fitting’ theoretical framework. I will demonstrate that such framework, which is developed from a linguistic-semiotic stand-point, is well suited for semiotic examination of how multimodal visual signs
convey meaning.

In the case of interpreting a multimodal digital visual text, the triadic model of sign illustrates the sign’s asymmetry in a more comprehensive way is usually employed. There is no doubt about the contribution of triadic model of sign in the process of making-meaning as all the debated authors have high interest in the triadic model of sign.

In contemporary times there have been a number of important debates about what precisely contributes to the determination or choice of a particular approach to new technologies in artistic practices. Mitchell in *The Reconfigured Eye* points out that ‘certain historical moments [such as] the sudden crystallization of a new technology . . . [which] provides the nucleus for new forms of social and cultural practice and marks the beginning of a new of artistic exploration’ (Mitchell, 1994, p. 20). Such a shift can be seen in the new inventions introduced by Daguerre and Fox Talbot at the end of the 1830’s which radically and permanently displaced the cultural and artistic practices of painting. According to Mitchell, the contemporary practices of production and reproduction result in photography being radically and permanently displaced by the end of the 1990’s (Mitchell, 1994, p. 20). It is for this second shift in photographic practices and production that digital photography seeks to be analysed and interpreted in order to be viewed from a more relevant point of view than was its predecessor.

In my research I have become aware of the existence of numerous image making practice theories that are well suited for the examination of contemporary digital photography (Ades, 1986; Darley, 2000; Hansen, 2004; Paul, 2003); however many of the ideas in question meet the requirements for theorizing digital photography rather than for the field of digital illustration which is the one my dissertation focuses upon. On the other hand, due to the changing and shifting of the boundaries that determine the nature of postmodern image production a variety of image making practices can be employed in the analysis of an electronic image. In the very nature of postmodernity is its attempt to avoid classification: consequently, two types of visual image - video and photography - can be seen as a electronic (digital). Victor Burgin in *The Image in Pieces: Digital Photography and the Location of Cultural Experience* suggests that digital photography ‘is emerging in a period of shifting, or disappearing, boundaries’ (Burgin, 1996, p. 30). Burgin also claims that due to the event of the disappearance of boundaries ‘the boundaries between the media are also shifting’ (Burgin, 1996, p. 31). This was not always the case. Print media, photography, film and video were in the late 20th century separated and classified into separate
categories. The contemporary technologies that are employed in image production no longer support such classification. Consequently, this erosion of boundaries has contributed to the foundation of the common ground of digitalization which no longer supports the distinction between photography and video (Burgin, 1996, p. 31). It is because of a lack of substantial grounds for the categorical distinction between photography and video that this project suggests the application of a broader variety of image making practice theories. For this reason I prefer to use a ‘customized’ method to analyse the original digital visual texts in this thesis.

Another reason why there is a need to customize an analytical method suitable for contemporary artistic practices is the different conceptions of montage that are involved in photography and film. Andrew Darley in *The Digital Image* claims that ‘Within modernist art practices . . . montage is associated far more with the combination, re-combination or juxtaposition of diverse or disjunctive elements within the work to form new, surprising, disturbing or shocking images and ideas’ (Darley, 2000, p. 130). This claim is highly relevant to the practices involved in the creation of digital images used in the creative part of this dissertation. One of the new artistic practices emerging in digital art is a layering technique used in the creation of a digital illustration. This layering technique can involve combining together a variety of media and it can indeed be seen as the montage of ‘diverse or disjunctive elements within the work to form new, surprising, disturbing or shocking images and ideas’ that Darley talks about. I argue, here, that it is this new form of artistic practice involved in the creation of an electronic image which is comprised of digital photographs and computer generated images that deserves - and seeks to be - approached through what is in effect an original (customized) analytical enterprise.

Because my gender may be considered significant from a production (base structural) point of view (my subject position is manifestly female) and to counter possible feminist critiques, I agree with Julia Kristeva who claims that: ‘All speaking subjects have within themselves a certain bisexuality which is precisely the possibility to explore all the sources of signification, that which posits a meaning as well as that which multiplies, pulverizes, and finally revives it’ (Kristeva, 1980, p. 165). The reading of contemporary digital art, where interpretation is already problematised by the practices involved in its creation, should not be approached uni-dimensionally. In other words, my intention in this thesis is to talk about the subject of interpreting digital art from a perspective that posits the meaning from the standpoint of a contemporary digital artist. My aim is to challenge the conventions that were previously developed by adapting new ways of understanding the meanings of
contemporary art forms. Kristeva’s point regarding the bisexuality discernible within the (creating/writing) subject offers the possibility of exploring all the sources of signification: a view crucial in the attempt to understand the often encoded meanings of digital art. Unlike linguistic and semiotic theories that offer the interpreter a fluid standpoint, however, I believe feminist theory of the kind to be found in Kristeva’s work, is less suited as a basis for understanding the meanings of digital art, mainly because it does not offer the sexual differentiation of the subject. It is for the sexual differentiation in their layered structures (and subsequent illustrative impact) that the new forms of digital art forms can be analysed and interpreted: the images can be observed from numerous points of view and hence interpreted with signifying elements that are, to some degree, less rigidly connected.

However, the examination of the classical texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke verified that the multimodal sign is disconnected in a manner similar to that of the linguistic one. Recognising the similarities between linguistic and visual signs led me to a conclusion that linguistic concepts used in those texts have the capacity to accommodate the analysis of contemporary art forms.

The components of the linguistic signs are directly responsible for changing the sign’s meaning as well as its asymmetry. The components of the linguistic signs are directly responsible for changing the sign’s meaning as well as its asymmetry. However, within the complexity of the construction of a digital image this similarity becomes much clearer when we compare even a single layer to a monomodal text which does not contain any layers. If we accept this idea, we should agree that a digital text is transformed into a multimodal text via its capacity to acquire extra digital visual material, a process that is described as ‘transduction.’ Further, we can claim that the content of an individual layer has the capacity to articulate different meanings via its relationships to other layers within the file. Such relationships can be described as ‘intermodal relations’.

In chapter two, I investigate the similarity between the disconnection of the elements of the linguistic sign components that are responsible for an asymmetry of language with the intermodal relations of the multimodal text that are directly responsible for altering a sign’s asymmetry resulting in the sign’s meaning being altered. In this chapter, after a careful analysis of monomodal and multimodal text, I conclude that a modality is directly responsible for altering the sign’s meaning via the text’s modality. The structural organization of the intermodal relations and the sign of a
monomodal text is more likely to be interpreted as having sign components disconnected in a higher degree than a sign of a multimodal text.

In the third chapter, I assert that in order to complete the process of sense-making, in a multi-layered (multimodal) image, a signifier needs to be assigned. This can become problematic because the layers within one file can be arranged in different sequences. Those sequences are then accountable for what is hidden and what is revealed once the image is flattened into a single layer. I argue that unless we look at each layer separately to understand its intermodal relationships with other layers we are not able to take the next step in the process of the interpretation of a work of art: the transition from the ‘visual’ to the ‘verbal’ sign system. This process of transition from the one sign to another, from the visual to the verbal mode for instance, is another instance of transduction. Černý and Holeš describe this action of transition as a ‘consecutive semiosis’ that is, one of the three semiotic methods of interpretation. Within the process of interpreting a visual text; in order to ‘leap’ between the modalities of different semiotic systems, we need to look at them independently. The inspection of the individual layers the image is comprised of allows us to see how they relate to each other and also to see the content of the layer with greater clarity than when it is seen as a part of the whole. It is only when we examine the intermodal relations that we are able to determine the degree of a sign’s intended asymmetry. Hence it makes sense to start analyzing a multimodal text by looking at the relationships between layers and the layers’ components. This idea is also supported by Levi-Strauss who claims that in order to understand a text in a more comprehensive way we need to look at the fragments the text is comprised of on a individual level (Levi-Strauss, 1963). Since under normal conditions it is only the creator who has access to a multi-layered file I demonstrate the feasibility of this idea by presenting an extensive analysis of a digital image, Philosophy, from the insider’s point of view in which I emphasize the roles of both categories of primary relations within the process of interpreting; particularly the cognition of a work of art which links with Ingarden’s twofold underlying assumption. From the perspective of a creator of a newly constructed framework, I strongly agree with Ingarden’s conviction in questioning the ‘structure of the object of cognition’ and ‘the procedures involved in acquiring the knowledge of the work’ (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 4).

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1 Professor Dr. Jiří Černý and Dr. Jan Holeš lecture and joint-head of Romanist Philosophy department of Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic (www.upol.cz).

2 The other two semiotic methods are formalization and language analysis (Černý & Holeš, 2004).
The analysis from an insider’s perspective in chapter four is then compared with two independent interpretations of the same image undertaken from the perspectives of outsiders. My aim in this final chapter is to investigate the existence of the conditions in which not only the individual readings of an artwork can be conceptualized, but the conceptualization of an artwork from different perspectives might also be possible. Those conditions then can be thought of as the space *in-between*, a space in which the outsider and the insider can negotiate the conceptualization of an artwork in which all aspects of both perspectives can be accounted for. The function of the space *in-between* is then to allocate the sign’s components in a lesser degree. Here I look into how the relation between the insider’s and the outsider’s perspective shifts and displaces its ‘groundedness’ which is described by Niall Lucy as: ‘the appearance of a certain determined or transcendental difference between inside and outside’ (Lucy, 2004, pp. 52-53). I also examine Derrida’s concept of ‘parergonality’ (Derrida, 1987, p. 73) through which I demonstrate the difference between the contrasting sign’s disconnections from the outsider’s and the creator’s perspective on the level of expression. The investigation of the relation between ‘parergonality’ and ‘groundedness’ suggests that they both have impact on the fluctuation of the transcendental boundaries between *ergon* and *parergon*. After the examination of what separates *ergon* from *parergon* I offer a rationale explaining the extent to which the groundedness in a multimodal and monomodal text is displaced. The final stage of the developed semiotic method includes a comparison of the readings of *Philosophy* from two different perspectives derived from unlike modalities.
Chapter 1
From the correctness of names to an ‘empty signifier’

Almost by definition, every type of semiotic investigation has begun with the following idea: For a sign to mean, it must bear a relation to something else.¹

But what are the consequences if it doesn’t?

Introduction

Nowadays, in the early 21st century, a number of photographers in Western societies have difficulties positioning themselves in the new era of postmodern [post-analogue] photography. With regard to its processes of design, production, and distribution, photography has been understood for some time as a monomodal technology. In the past decade, the development of new technologies, such as digital photography, has changed this understanding and consequently photographers have been compelled to reposition themselves according to the technologies they utilize. I believe those photographers who loyally keep employing the allegedly traditional ‘old-fashioned’ monomodal technology - classic photography - are the remaining authentic photographers of the new digital age. Those who were flexible enough and swiftly learnt the fast expanding new multimodal technology, digital photography, should not, I believe, be classified otherwise than as ‘digital illustrators’.

Fundamentally, the photographers who use the traditional processes of design, production and distribution, and take advantage of ‘altering’ their photographs in Photoshop, or other software designed for digital photography which accommodates a layering technique, produce, design and distribute a multimodal work. Moreover, this digital photographic material can be further altered and manipulated in Photoshop where, for example, its exposure can be easily corrected, but also additional layers with different content can be added to the original ‘digital negative’ that is normally the background layer. Consequently, the ‘transduction’ of the layering technique, the capacity to acquire additional material in the form of digital

¹ (McHoul, 1996 pp. 38-9). Italics in original text.
visual text and to copy the original layer, directly contributes to the transformation from the monomodal to the multimodal visual text. The concept of transduction has been developed and adopted by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in their book *Multimodal Discourse, The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. The two contemporary semioticians define ‘transduction’ as a general principle of semiosis, claiming that ‘every act of realization involves processes of transformation . . . it involves a shift of a modal kind, from a general schema (realized in one mode) to its instantiation in another mode or modes. That process of transduction is itself transformative (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 51). I believe that this theoretical framework can only be plausible if the single ‘background layer’ (the digital negative) is ‘classified’ as a monomodal text. By acquiring an additional layer (or layers) the visual text is transformed into a different mode. Therefore, it can be said that a photograph which was designed, produced and distributed via the monomodal processes of classical photographic technologies, is the only photographic work that in the postmodern area, should be rightly called a traditional photograph. Within this framework, any other work; although produced by digital photographic technologies, and which was designed, produced and distributed via multimodal methodologies, due to the multiplicity of layers, should be called a ‘digital illustration.’

Martina Müller, *Lust*, 2002

This explanation of the two divergent photographic technologies provides a justification for calling the above image entitled, *Lust*, a digital illustration. *Lust* is a section of a large canvas inspired by two paintings: *The Last Judgment* and the tondo *Seven Deadly Sins*, both created in 1480 by the prolific Dutch painter Hieronymus
Bosch who lived between 1450 and 1516. *Lust* is comprised of 266 layers containing digital material from two different sources: computer generated figures and digital photographs. Not only is this digital illustration comprised of a number of different digital photographs that within themselves make up the multimodal text but it also contains numerous layers composed of computer generated figures, with each figure occupying one layer. The mostly controversial reaction of viewers to this image led me to write this thesis.

It was at one of my exhibition openings when a large number of viewers, unquestionably judging from the signifiers which they saw in *Lust*, kept asking me if I was ‘stressed’. Prior to this experience it never occurred to me that my artwork might be interpreted in such a manner. It seems to me that the difficulty in allocating signifieds to a new form of visual texts might force the viewer to assign adverse meanings rather than favorable ones. This is also suggested by Saussure when he discusses oppositional differences in regard to values that correspond to certain concepts. He stresses that ‘it must be understood that the concepts in question are purely differential’ (Saussure, 1983, p. 115). He also claims that:

They are concepts defined not positively, in term of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly in being whatever the others are not. (Saussure, 1983, p. 115)

I believe that one of the implications of new photographic and computer technologies which offer the transduction of modalities is that they change the process of meaning-making, resulting in a new ‘asymmetry’\(^4\) of visual language. I believe that this asymmetry can be semiotically analysed via the first linguistic concepts found in the classical texts of Plato, Aristotle and Augustine, as well as in the texts of John Locke.

In short, by revisiting classical texts, I hope to ‘build’ a framework that might assist me in my analysis of the digital illustration created for the purpose of this dissertation. On this account, I believe that in order to understand and to analyze the meaning of this newly transitioned multimodal visual text there is a need to create a fitting theoretical framework. Thus, in the first chapter, by revisiting four semiotically fundamental texts, I set myself the task of identifying issues common in those selected texts that could help me to form a theoretical framework for my analysis. In order to

\(^4\) Asymmetry in regard to a structure of a sign is a degree in which sign elements (signifier and signified) do not correspond to each other.
do this, I will not follow the well-worn path of established semioticians such as Michael O’Toole\(^5\) or Umberto Eco\(^6\). Instead, I have been informed by the later works of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen\(^7\) whose concepts of multimodality seemed to be more suitable for my semiotic method. I have incorporated their ideas into two aspects of my work: design and production analysis\(^8\). By combining with current theory the very first semiotic conceptions found in classic texts, I hope to develop a theoretical framework for examining the possibly overlooked relationship between the semiotic systems of linguistic and visual signs. By reflecting on intermodal transformations and their interconnections in the ‘layering technique’, I suggest that the framework developed from the linguistic-semiotic stand-point is well suited for an examination of how multimodal visual signs convey meaning.

Given the above ideas, I will now consider the work of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. I have chosen these texts in order to create a methodology that aids me in assigning the different levels of disconnection between sign elements in the transitional processes associated with transduction.

**The texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke**

For over two millennia philosophers and linguists have been concerned with the meaning of individual types of signs. This literary review, which employs ancient texts from Plato, Aristotle and Augustine to John Locke and seeks to present three particular instances that occur in the process of sense-making - the semiosis\(^9\). The three instances of a sign’s asymmetry occur when the correspondence between sign components is partly or fully disconnected; when the:

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\(^5\) Although Michael O’Toole’s linguistic background might suggest his semiotic concepts being well suited for my analysis, after a close examination of his *The Language of Displayed Art*, a text that deals with the visual arts, I came to the conclusion that those concepts that can be applied to a majority of artworks are not suitable for digital visual text that needs to be investigated from a different perspective. Hence, I believe that O’Toole’s analyses that were not created to accommodate the aspects of multimodal text do not meet the requirements to analyse multimodal digital text.

\(^6\) Umberto Eco’s semiotic methods are largely oriented to the possibilities of the opened end. Hence Eco, who claims that the outcome of semiotic analytical methods cannot be predicted, was not suitable for my purposes to demonstrate ‘the opposite’: that the outcome of semiotic method is partly predictable, and in some instances can even be controlled.

\(^7\) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, 2001

\(^8\) According to Kress and van Leeuwen the four domains (stratas) in which meaning is made are: discourse, design, production and distribution.

\(^9\) A term used by Peirce to refer to the process of ‘meaning-making’.
1) signifier does not bear relation to something else; the case of the empty signifier,
2) signifier corresponds to a signified that is vague or highly variable;
   the case of the floating signifier and the
3) signifier has more than one correspondent; the case of polysemy.

These three ‘categories’ of sign asymmetry have the primary objective of
accommodating a language analysis. However, I believe it is also suited to
accommodate analysis of visual signs, in particular those within a digital multimodal
visual text that are presented in the processes of transduction\textsuperscript{10}.

The classic works of Socrates, Aristotle and Augustine and the more recent
work of John Locke provided me with a foundation for my semiotic analysis. I engage
with their texts to illustrate different approaches to the three problematic issues in
semiosis (the different level of disconnection of sign elements), in which the
correspondence between sign components is partly or fully disconnected and where
the meaning of the sign is or might become problematical or even questionable.
Hence, the first part of this chapter does not seek answers regarding how to avoid
such instances, but rather revisits those ancient texts that illustrate particular issues in
language analysis so as to produce an effective semiotic method that employs a triadic
model of sign. I believe that this semiotic method is well-tailored for contemporary
multimodal visual texts, such as the previously noted example of digital illustration,
\textit{Lust}.

\textbf{Plato: On the Correctness of Names}

Plato’s \textit{Cratylus}\textsuperscript{11} is regarded as the first ever attempt at a philosophy of language\textsuperscript{12}. It
is also one of the first known ancient treatises concerned with the meaning of signs

\textsuperscript{10} The application of such analysis will be demonstrated in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Cratylus} (or ‘On the Correctness of Names’) is one of the earlier Socratic dialogues recorded
by the Greek philosopher Plato on the origin of language (c. 385 BC). Socratic dialogues,
written by a number of Socrates’ followers (from which only the writings of Plato and
Xenophon have survived complete), are reconstructions of dialogues between Socrates and a
variety of, mostly historical, characters. This Socratic dialogue, speculating on the origins and
correctness of names, is one of the first known ancient studies of signs. \textit{Cratylus} is regarded as
one of the exceedingly important historical texts and holds crucial importance for any semiotic
investigation. The dialogue \textit{Cratylus} is named after a Greek philosopher of the school of
Heraclitus.
that speculates on the nature and correctness of names. Amongst other observations that can be drawn from this text, Černý and Holeš believe that Cratylus simultaneously suggests and rejects the onomatopoeic theory of the origin of the language (Černý & Holeš, 2004). It also suggests that the form of a word changes with time, and that the older form of a word reveals its origin with greater clarity than the later form (Černý & Holeš, 2004). The central dialogue in Cratylus debates two rival theories of what makes a word for a thing the correct word for it: a convention or ‘a natural appropriateness’.

In the beginning of the dialogue two characters are introduced, Hermogenes and Cratylus, who are later joined by Socrates who is asked to sort out their dispute. At first Socrates takes Cratylus’ side, explaining to Hermogenes that names are given to things naturally through the character of things. Hermogenes asks Socrates to explain how the natural rightness of names can be decided. He uses Heraclites’ philosophy, proclaiming that all things are in flux to demonstrate the specific role of every vowel and the need to categorize them. Then Socrates opens a discussion with Cratylus in which he criticizes Cratylus’ position, giving evidence of the possibility of naming things incorrectly and the possibility of speaking lies. Socrates uses examples of names that contain vowels, and which do not correspond to what they refer to: nevertheless, people understand the names through convention. While Cratylus admits to Socrates that it is possible to know about things without knowing their names, Socrates arrives at the conclusion that the rightful name-giver is the one who has the skill to name things. In Socrates’ eyes this ‘lawgiver’ has to be something/someone more than human. To justify his theory of ‘natural correctness’ Socrates asserts: ‘For clearly the gods call things by the names that are naturally right’ (Plato, 1996 p. 35). I found this simultaneously amusing as well as intriguing. This statement, while possibly justified in its day, demonstrates that in a particular time we draw upon a personal and socially contextualized schematic reference, such as Socrates’ belief in gods and their powers that is available at that particular time.

There are a few reasons why I believe that some of the implications of this Socratic dialogue suit the foundation of my analytical method. Firstly, it is useful for

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12 Cratylus also engages a number of linguistic questions such as the etymology of specific words, the origin of language and in particular the relationship between word form and its meaning.

13 Plato also suggests that women are better at keeping the traditions of language alive than men are.
its concern about the correctness of names in general and particularly for underlining
the possibility that ‘things named incorrectly’ might result in altering the sign’s
meaning. I believe that some of these implications might be avoided if we start any
analysis from the elemental level by looking at fragments (either words in the case of
Cratylus or layers in the case of my analysis). It is more likely that in this way the
interpreter will link the corresponding sign elements in a diminishing degree of
disconnection than they might do otherwise.

While Plato in *Cratylus* draws upon the origin of language, claiming that all
words in language are by nature appropriate to the things they describe, Aristotle in
*Analytica priora* and *Analytica posteriora* explores the science of reasoning. In *De
interpretatione* he is further concerned with the processes of interpretation. At this
point I would like to build upon the above ideas by considering the three key texts by
Aristotle.

**Aristotle: Defying the symbols of mental experience**

Aristotle’s *Analytica priora* and *Analytica posteriora* are the main treatises that
fundamentally contribute to the study of logic and the theory of epistemology and, as
such, both of those texts immensely enriched semiotic discipline. The two texts
explore the two sciences of reasoning\(^\text{14}\): formal (in *Analytica priora*) and scientific (in
*Analytica posteriora*) on the principle of the syllogism\(^\text{15}\). Aristotle’s study of ‘logic’ also
includes the study of language, meaning and its relationship to non-linguistic
reality\(^\text{16}\). Aristotle also followed up on Plato’s knowledge of the logical-grammatical
structure of judgments. In a question on the reciprocal relationship between language
and thought, Aristotle adopted the same position as Plato. Like Socrates in *Cratylus,*
he agrees that words are created by consensus, and that their meaning is given by
convention and not naturally. Doubravová in *Sémiotika v Teorii a Praxi\(^\text{17}\) cites Aristotle

\(^{14}\) *Analytica priora* offers the first system of deductive formal logic based on the theory of the
syllogism whereas *Analytica posteriora* demonstrates the use of this system to formulate an
account of rigorous scientific knowledge.

\(^{15}\) Syllogism, originally defined by Aristotle as ‘discourse in which certain things are being
posed, something else necessarily follows’, which can be applied to the formulation, ‘All men
are mortal; Greeks are men; therefore Greeks are mortal’.

\(^{16}\) He deals with such topics which might now be assigned to philosophy of language or
philosophical logic in *Categories, De interpretatione, and Topics.*

\(^{17}\) *Semiotics in Theory and Practice*
as saying ‘No name is from nature but according to convention, similarly neither sentence has meaning as (like) a natural tool, but only according to an agreement acted out by people’\(^\text{18}\) (Doubravová, 2002, p. 39; italics in original text). Regarding his contribution to the semiotic field, Aristotle is, according to Doubravová, the first known scholar to ‘classify’ and name two types of relationships between sign elements. For the relationship between the denoted (named) object and the word that denotes it he uses the term sēmion (denotation), and for the relationship between a concept and its verbal expression he uses the term symbolon (sign) (Doubravová, 2002, p. 39; italics in origin). Aristotle acknowledged signs only if they were created by convention. If they were created naturally he classified them as ‘imitations’\(^\text{19}\). Aristotle is also concerned with names that have no meaning (later known as words lacking denotation\(^\text{20}\)), such as tragelafos, which is the Czech word for a creature that is half-goat and half-deer.

In De interpretatione, Aristotle claims in an account of signification that it is commonly understood. For example, the word ‘horse’ signifies a horse by signifying the thought of a horse. He also believes that by using a particular word, using the same example of ‘horse’, we communicate thoughts about a horse. Further, he asserts that when those thoughts about horses that we convey are “true”, we communicated truths about the universal horse; moreover even when our thoughts are not completely “true”, we may still signify a horse\(^\text{21}\). Aristotle’s first priority was to define simple terms in order to understand complex terms. He claimed that:

First we must define the terms ‘noun’ and ‘verb’, then the terms ‘denial’ and ‘affirmation’, then ‘proposition’ and ‘sentence’. (Aristotle, 1928, pp. 16a11-15)

Aristotle’s second priority is to define spoken and written words, to link the signifiers of ‘spoken words’ with their signifieds of ‘written words’. He proposed that ‘Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words’ (Aristotle, 1928 16a1-10).

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\(^{18}\) Czech original: Žádné jméno není od přírody, nýbrž podle dohody a stejně ani žádná věta nemá význam jako přirozený nástroj, nýbrž jen podle dohodz učiněné lidmi.

\(^{19}\) In Czech text the word is mimémata

\(^{20}\) Later Stoics use the term blityri – as examples for words created without meaning.

Like his successor Augustine, Aristotle too proposes a difference between writing, speech and mental experience. But Aristotle goes even further by proposing differences between the mental experiences of individual people:

Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experience are the images. (Aristotle, 1928, pp. 16a15-10)

Although Aristotle presents a number of concerns that are consequential contributions to the semiotic discourse, his recognition of the role of different individual experiences that affect or alter the process of interpretation contributes the most to the foundation of my analytical method. Individual experiences play a crucial part in the process of interpretation. As I have previously mentioned, to lower the degree in which the sign elements of a multimodal text could get disconnected, the fragments (individual layers) ought to be analysed before the whole. This method is also highly apposite when there is a need to compare two or more interpretations. This might include interpretations from ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ points of view (from the interpreter’s and creator’s perspective). Under normal conditions the outsider cannot view the multimodal text in its fragments. This is only possible in its design stage. Although individual experiences will undoubtedly affect the level of sign disconnection, I believe that the level of disconnection can be lessened if the outsider is given an opportunity to see the individual fragments that comprise the whole.

**Augustine: Things and Signs**

While Aristotle is concerned with the science of reasoning and processes of interpretation, Augustine in his *De Doctrina Christiana* lays down the groundwork for a general science of signs from a different perspective: the perspective footprints as signs.

One of his contributions to modern semiotics is the first accepted definition of a sign: ‘A sign is something that makes us think of something else’ (Černý & Holeš, 2004, p. 23). Augustine called signifiers things and signifieds signs. He divided things

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22 His teachings brought together the scattered philosophical knowledge that Aristotle left behind 800 years earlier. Augustine’s ideology is concerned with the philosophy of late antiquity and with Christian revelation.

23 Czech original: Znak je něco, co nás samo o sobě přivádí na myšlenku o něčem jiném.
into two groups: those which ‘are not employed to signify’ and ‘those which are’ (Augustine, 1995, p. 13). Augustine also suggested that there is a difference between groups of readers. For example, he claimed that the reader of scriptures must not only be familiar with the content of the scriptures but must also be able to understand the context. Augustine demonstrated this on a comparison of the two significations of the thing/signifier ‘sheep’:

All teaching is teaching of either things or signs, but things are learnt through signs. What I now call things in the strict sense are things such as logs, stones, sheep, and so on, which are not employed to signify something; but I do not include the log which we read that Moses threw into the bitter waters to make them lose their bitter taste, or the stone which Jacob placed under his head, or the sheep which Abraham sacrificed in place of his son. These are things, but they are at the same time signs of other things. (Augustine, 1995, pp. 13-15)

Augustine’s acceptance of the customary conception that speech ‘signifies’, in the sense of indicating thoughts, also included his concept that speech also ‘signifies’ in the sense of representing the structure of thoughts. Doubravová claims that Augustine was the first who ‘formulated the alternative dyadic and triadic denotation, that is to say denotation via the help of demonstration (demonstrare, exhibere)’ (Doubravová, 2002, p. 40). Although he makes the distinction between the two denotations, he does not present the triadic model of a sign. His theory of sensory perception, in which he claims that it is not perceptual in the sense of making an image or sense-datum of the direct object of perception, is a fundamental contribution to the foundation of the triadic model of signs. Augustine held that in seeing a body we immediately form an image of it in our senses, and he further suggested that we cannot differentiate between the form of the body seen and the form of the image in our sensory perception.

Augustine’s allegation of visualizing an image of an object has played a critical role in the development of my semiotic method. A visualization of the object is crucial

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25 Czech original: Zde je třeba se zmínit, že to byl právě Augustin, kdo formuloval alternativu k diadickému a triadickému označování, totiž označování pomocí ukázání (demonstrare, exhibere).

26 In the same detail as Peirce does much later.

27 A Sense-datum is an element of experience received through the senses or an immediate object of perception which is not a material object.
in the process of interpretation where consecutive semioses are involved and in which more than one sign system is employed in semiotic methods (such as interpretation from visual to verbal or written mode). Moreover, Augustine’s ‘mental vision of the form of the image’ is one of the elements of the revolutionary triadic model of the sign that plays a key role in the interpretation of multimodal texts. As such Augustine’s analytical methods are highly suitable for the framework of my semiotic method.

**John Locke: Men who are fitted to form articulate sound do not have all knowledge based on experience.**

In 1690 the English philosopher John Locke distinguished three kinds of sciences: the philosophy of nature, human activity leading to a particular goal, and the science of signs (of which the most common are words). This analysis plays an important role in the history of semiotics (Černý & Holeš, 2004, p. 24). Through his observation and systematic description of traditional philosophical topics, the nature of the self, the world, God, and the basis of our knowledge of them he laid down the foundation of semiotics which he built on the ideas of his predecessors Thomas Hobbes and Rene Descartes and set the stage for a new phase of philosophy entering the 18th century.

In contrast to his philosophical predecessors who penetrated the essences of things (or names in Plato’s terminology) by super-sensory means, Locke positioned his philosophical theorizing on the foundations of analogies of mental operations. This advancement resulted in a complicating of the understanding of semiosis as it was known prior to his time. Locke rejected the concept of ‘innate ideas’ held by the Cartesians, arguing that all ideas are placed in the mind by experience. The difference between the Cartesians and Locke’s theory of experience as ‘a reflexive awareness of our mental operations’ is that the Cartesians treated our own mental operations as a way of accessing innate/inborn ideas. However, Locke referred to it as an ‘internal sense.’ Locke held that: ‘Nothing is in the mind that wasn’t before in an internal sense’ (Doubravová, 2002, p. 44). He also believed that all ideas come from two

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28 Locke’s treatise *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, together with Newton’s physics, helped gradually cast a shadow on Cartesianism and allowed the redirection of European philosophy. Locke replaced Neoplatonism with a modest, naturalistic conception of our cognitive capacities of natural inquiry. He also reintroduced the use of the word ‘semiotic’, this time not as a part of medical science but as a new branch of the science of signs.

29 Czech original: Nic není v rozumu, co dříve nebylo ve smyslech.
sources: from external experience (sensation) and inner experience (perception). In his treatise, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* published in 1690, he was concerned with exploring the limits of human understanding in respect to God, the self, natural kinds and artifacts, as well as a variety of different kinds of ideas.

Through his observation he tells us in detail what one can legitimately claim to know and what one cannot. Among other assertions, Lock stressed the influence of language on thinking. For him, there were two different kinds of knowledge: a universal knowledge which is the perception of a relationship between abstract ideas; and an immediate knowledge, which is the sensation of ideas caused by awareness of external things. Locke claimed that the awareness of ideas inside us, caused by external things, allows us to use the idea as a sign of its external cause. And this is precisely one of the aspects (steps) of assigning a signifier to a signified or vice versa process that is directly responsible for how and what kind of meaning is made. Here Locke demonstrates our ability to assign two different yet known signifiers in order ‘to imagine’ or ‘to get an idea’ of a not previously known object:

‘A man is white,’ signifies that the thing that has the essence of a man has also in it the essence of whiteness, which is nothing but a power to produce the idea of whiteness in one whose eyes can discover ordinary objects. (Locke & Wilburn, 1947, p. 235)

In other words, we are capable of bridging the gap between reality and ideas by constructing/signifying the unseen object from seen or experienced objects/signifiers. For example, if we know the colour white and we know the appearance of a brown bear we can quite easily imagine a white bear. This conclusion leads to Locke’s famous conceptualist view of classification, an argument holding its validity today, that ‘a person is individuated, not by the present immaterial soul, but by unifying and continuous consciousness’.

In addition to the contributions of Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine, Locke’s contribution to my semiotic method lies in his claim of language’s influence on thinking. Locke’s differentiating between two kinds of knowledge - a universal and an immediate knowledge - is the most beneficial: the development of my semiotic method. His claim about the second type of knowledge; immediate knowledge, the

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30 His other contribution to the field is the discovery of the social and cultural character of signs.

31 Conceptualism is a theory that posits the idea that universals can be said to exist, but only as concepts in the mind.

sensation of the ideas in us which is caused by awareness of external things, is critical for understanding the process of sense-making. This ‘sensation’ is an essential part of semiosis in which triadic model of the sign is applied. The sensation of an idea is negotiated when an idea is applied to a interpretant before a final meaning is assigned to a sign. Within the multimodal text in which the form can be inspected, the ‘sensationalizing’ of ideas is made within the interpretant. Besides having the utmost importance in the process of interpretation, this interpretant’s capacity to sense ideas has no substitute in the process of interpreting a multimodal visual text, and as such affects or alters the end result of any interpretation.

**The key issues in the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke**

Although all four texts\textsuperscript{33} deal with some common aspects of language asymmetry from very different perspectives, the sign structure is discussed and applied repeatedly. *Cratylus’* different approach does not suggest it is less important. On the contrary, two of *Cratylus’* contributions, that names are known through convention and that the form of a word changes with time; claiming that the older form of the word reveals its origin in more clarity than the later form, are equally beneficial for forming my theoretical framework. Socrates’ conclusion that a signs meaning is learned through convention underpins the methods used in both visual or verbal semiotics: so, too, is his second finding that words progressively change their forms are crucial to any historical or language translation. I am convinced that this is also relevant to the analysis of a digital visual text that involves transformation from one mode to another, such as in the written or verbal articulation of a visual text in which although the form changes the content should be preserved.

With regard to a semiotic method, an interpretation of a visual artwork in which the text’s form changes and where the objective is to preserve its meaning, it is critical to allocate a signifier so that in a process of consecutive semiosis the sign’s elements will get disconnected in the least possible degree. Here I claim that the triadic model, with its ‘expansion of a space’ for an objective reality, safeguards and protects the sign’s elements from being disconnected to a greater degree than in the dyadic model; thereby delivering, particularly, a more comprehensive understanding of the artwork.

\textsuperscript{33} Except *Cratylus*, which mainly covers the nature and correctness of names.
Having examined the key issues found in the texts of Plato, Aristotle Augustine and Locke, I will now consider the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce before moving on to my next chapter in which I will apply the newly developed semiotic method on a multimodal text.

The structural differences between the dyadic and the triadic model

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke, Saussure and Peirce, both founding fathers of semiotics, formulated their own model of a sign. First Saussure offered a ‘dyadic’ or two-part model of the sign: SIGNIFIER (signifiant) and SIGNIFIED (signifié), focusing on linguistic signs (as words). In contrast with Saussure, Peirce offered a ‘triadic’ (three-part) model. Although Peirce is credited for this revolutionary idea, part of the credit should go to Augustine who formulated the alternative triadic denotation via the help of demonstration.

According to Saussure the linguistic sign is not the link between a thing and its name but between a concept (signified) and a sound pattern (signifier). For Saussure the sound pattern (image acoustique) is the ‘hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses’. This sound pattern may be called a ‘material’ element only if it is the representation of our sensory impressions’. Saussure says:

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound: for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a ‘material’ element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept. (Saussure, 1983, p. 66)

Saussure explains the linguistic sign as ‘a two-sided psychological entity’ comprising of two elements that are ‘intimately linked and each triggers the other’ (Saussure, 1983, p. 66). Both concept and sound pattern were for Saussure purely ‘psychological’ and both were form rather than substance. Over time this model has become more

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34 The word is literally synonymous with ‘shape’, but philosophers use it in a wider sense. For Plato a form was an eternal transcendent prototype which acted as a pattern for each sort of earthly reality. Aristotle held that forms existed only within things themselves, making them what they are and (in living things) controlling their development. St Augustine adopted the
materialistic than that conceptualized by Saussure himself (Saussure, 1983, p. 15). Today the *signifier* is generally interpreted as the *material* (or physical) *form* of the sign as something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted. Within the contemporary Saussurean model, the *sign* is the whole that results from the association of the signifier (concept) with the signified (sound pattern) and the relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as ‘signification’ (Saussure, 1983, p. 67). Saussure also claimed that, although it is arbitrary (Saussure, 1983, p. 67), a linguistic sign must have ‘both a signifier and signified’ and that ‘there can’t be a totally meaningless signifier and or a completely formless signified’ (Chandler, 2002, p. 18). Interestingly, this implies that the total disconnection of sign elements should never occur. Furthermore he suggested that a sign is a recognizable combination of a signifier with a particular signified. Although for Saussure the signifier and the signified are ‘intimately linked’ in the mind by an ‘associative link’ and he claims that each triggers the other (Saussure, 1983, p. 66), he never incorporates this aspect of the process of semiosis into his model itself. This is because his model was designed for the context of spoken language; where a sign could not consist of sound without sense or of sense without sound, neither pre-existing each other or being wholly independent from each other.

In contrast with Saussure, Peirce has incorporated the signifying aspect of the ‘process of linking’ into his triadic model. The three elements of the Peircean model are: *representamen* (sign vehicle), *interpreter* (sense) and *object* (referent). While the *representamen’s* role is one of *signifier*, the *interpretant’s* role is one of *signified*. However the *interpretant* is itself a *sign* in the mind of the interpreter:

A sign or representamen is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect of capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its objects. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen. (Peirce, 1974, p. 2.228: italics in original text)

Middle Platonic understanding of forms as thoughts of the Divine mind which find expression in created reality.


35 In general, *substantia* was the permanent, underlying reality as contrasted with its changing and perceptible accidents.
While for Saussure the relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as ‘signification’, Peirce refers to the interaction between the *representamen*, the *object* and the *interpretant* as ‘semiosis’. The outcome of the processes of semiosis directly controls the degree of a sign’s asymmetry. Therefore the degree to which a sign’s elements could get disconnected is lessened in a multimodal text if, I suggest, the triadic model of the sign is applied.\(^3^6\)

The above mentioned models of a sign are comparable in two aspects. Peirce’s *representamen* is similar in meaning to Saussure’s *signifier* and the *interpretant* is similar in meaning to the *signified*. However, there is one crucial difference. From the perspective of interpreting a visual text, in Peirce’s model the *interpretant* has a quality unlike that of the *signified* and it is itself a sign in the mind of the interpreter. I would suggest that this ‘sign in the mind of the interpreter’ holds a key role in the process of semiosis when the content of a visual artwork is articulated in written description, in situations where the interpreter in the process of signification needs to make sense of what she/he sees before the visual is articulated verbally or translated into written form.

Peirce describes the triadic model of the sign as:

>A sign, or a *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect of capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen. (Peirce, 1974, p. 2.228)

This importance of the role of an *interpreter* is also maintained by communication and media theorists, who often exclusively use the *interpreter* to highlight the process of semiosis (Chandler, 2002). Peirce, who argued that all experience is mediated by signs, left ‘a space’ for an objective reality in his analysis, but Saussure did not offer this space. The notion of the importance of sense-making (although Peirce does not feature this in his triad) has had a particular appeal for communication and media theorists who stress the importance of the active process of interpretation, and thus reject the equation of ‘content’ and meaning’ (Chandler, 2002 p. 35). Further Chandler insists: ‘Whether a dyadic or triadic model is adopted, the role of the interpreter must be accounted for – either within the formal model of the sign, or as an essential part of the process of semiosis’ (Chandler, 2002 p. 35).

\(^{3^6}\) The application of triadic model of sign will be demonstrated in the next chapter.
The interpretant in a Peircean model, also called a semiotic triangle, thus emphasizes the process of semiosis. This means that the meaning of a sign is not embedded within the sign; on the contrary it emerges through interpretation. Therefore I believe that the triadic model is best suited for a semiotic method of interpretation in visual arts, particularly of digital illustrations where in its translation there is ‘space’ for an objective reality. I also believe that whether a dyadic or triadic model is adopted, the role of the interpreter should be accounted. From a linguistic point of view, the benefits of a triadic model in the semiotic method of interpretation are obvious. This is even more apparent in regard to the analysis and interpretation of a multimodal visual text where the interpretant can be investigated within the fragments of the whole, as long as the interpreter engages the interpretant as the ‘space for objective reality’ in which the interpreter in the process of sense-making can evaluate before assigning a signified.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have claimed that one of the implications of new photographic and computer technologies offers the transduction of modalities causing the process of sense-making to result in a new asymmetry of visual language. Although the semiotic method – language analysis – which is central to this chapter, is mostly used in native languages, I have demonstrated the likelihood in the ‘language of art’, particularly in digital visual texts. I believe that the processes of language analysis can be used in the interpretation of visual digital art to allocate the three categories of different levels of disconnection between sign elements if the three-part model of the sign is exercised. Furthermore, I have suggested that the digital visual text can be semiotically analysed via the theoretical framework ‘built’ from the first linguistic concepts that I located in the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. This theoretical framework which will later help to interpret my own digital illustration is informed by three observations: Firstly, Socrates’ proposition that words progressively change meaning and that a sign’s meanings are learned through convention. This is an essential concept for all three semiotic methods. Secondly, the texts of Aristotle, Augustine and John Locke, although from different perspectives, deal repeatedly with a number of aspects of the triadic model of sign. This information, with regard to interpreting a visual artwork, emphasizes the advantages of utilizing aspects of the triadic theory of the deployed by the observer/reader in interpretation. Lastly, after a comparison of dyadic and triadic structures I came to the conclusion, which is also supported by communication and media theorists, that in
the process of sense-making the role of the *interpretant* in the triadic model of sign is crucial, and if my assumption is correct, it should reduce the degree of disconnection of the sign’s elements.

In the next chapter I will reflect on intermodal transformations and their interconnections in the ‘layering technique’ thus demonstrating why a framework developed from the linguistic-semiotic stand-point is better suited to an examination of how multimodal visual signs convey meaning. I will also demonstrate that in the case of interpreting multimodal digital texts, the triadic sign model illustrates the asymmetry of visual as well as verbal language with greater clarity because of its structural attributes. I will continue to draw upon the findings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke, concluding that, although they approach the issue from different perspectives, all three authors deal with the aspects related the triadic model of the sign. In this chapter, while employing the four chosen texts and some of my digital illustrations, I will advance and apply this theoretical framework to the examination of the possibly overlooked relationship between the semiotic system of linguistic and visual signs. I will demonstrate the evident similarity between the disconnection of the elements of the language and visual signs. Finally, I will claim that the text’s modality is responsible for the sign’s asymmetry.
Chapter 2
From an ‘empty signifier’ to a ‘tailored’ discourse analysis method

Ambiguity in the original language often misleads a translator unfamiliar with the general sense of passage, who may import a meaning which is quite unrelated to the writer’s meaning.\(^37\)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I suggested that the analytical framework developed from the linguistic-semantic stand-point is better suited for a semiotic examination of how multimodal visual signs convey meaning. I also reasoned that in order to understand and to articulate the meaning of the newly transitioned multimodal visual text there is a need to create a new more ‘fitting’ theoretical framework. I proposed that in the case of interpreting a multimodal digital visual text, the triadic model of a sign illustrates the asymmetry of language in a more comprehensible way. This is due to the triadic model’s structural properties, namely the role that is attributed to the interpretant. I drew upon the findings of the foremost linguistic theorists, among them: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and John Locke. From their insights I have concluded that, although each came from a different perspective, with the exception of Plato, all authors are interested in aspects related to the triadic model of sign.

In this chapter, while employing the four chosen theorists and examples of my own personal digital illustrations, I will advance and apply my framework to examine the relationship between the semiotic systems of linguistic and visual signs. In particular I will investigate the evident similarity between the disconnection of the elements of the linguistic sign components that are responsible for an asymmetry of language and the *intermodal relations*\(^38\) of the multimodal text that are directly responsible for altering a sign’s asymmetry resulting in the sign’s meaning being altered. I argue that the *intermodal relations* of multimodal texts are not only directly responsible for a sign’s meaning but also for its asymmetry. The asymmetry of the digital multimodal text can be demonstrated via ‘transduction’, the process of

\(^37\) (Augustine, 1995, p. 75)

\(^38\) The relations between the content and form of a multi-layered image.
transformation that involves a shift of a modal kind. I claim that the different modality is directly responsible for altering the sign’s meaning via the form and the structural organization of the intermodal relations. I assert that a sign of a monomodal text is more likely to be interpreted as having different asymmetry\(^{39}\) than a sign of a multimodal text would.

In the context of the structural organization of the layers within one image file the matter can be problematized even further. It can be argued that the sign’s meaning is also altered according to the sequence of the layers. Each particular organization of layers can hide or reveal different parts of a layer. This inevitably leads to the consequence of seeing different elements of the image according to a specific layer order. An analysis from a ‘layers order’ perspective would ‘mainly’ involve the processes of *production* – the final stratum in which meaning is negotiated of the multimodal text - and not the processes of *discourse* or *design* which I have set out to examine. This should not imply that the ‘sequence of layers’ couldn’t also be a part of a *discourse* or *design* processes. However, in the case of this project, the order of layers is determined. Therefore I will not speculate about how the sign’s meaning might change if the layers’ order changes. Hence, for the purpose of allocating a sign’s asymmetry I presuppose that the ‘sequence of layers’ is not only final but that it is indeed a part of *discourse* and *design*’s processes.

Further, I assert that in the process of sense-making of multilayered images the sign’s asymmetry changes the meaning of a sign. Being able to comprehend a different sign’s asymmetry does not only mean being able to recognize what I call the *sequentiality*\(^{40}\) of the layers the image is comprised of, but also to investigate what I describe as the *constituency*\(^{41}\) of the individual layers. Therefore, *sequentiality* – the order of the layers - and *constituency* – the content of the individual layers - have a control over the degree to which the sign’s components are, or might be, disconnected (the sign’s asymmetry). In the multimodal (multilayered) text, in which an individual

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\(^{39}\) From the linguistic perspective, the way in which the sign elements correspond to each other.

\(^{40}\) The quality of being sequential.

\(^{41}\) A body of constituents.
layer can be seen as a monomodal text, the relationship between the layer order and layer content can be seen as the intermodal relations\(^42\).

This chapter aims to determine the similarity between the degree to which the linguistic and visual sign are disconnected. To do this, I will first examine the three categories of disconnection, employing a language analysis derived from the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and John Locke. Secondly, to demonstrate the similarity between the three disconnections of the linguistic sign and the disconnections of the visual sign I will apply the three concepts that I developed to analyse the intermodal relations of multilayered images.

I believe that it is only when we situate both signs, linguistic and visual, next to each other that we can determine to what degree the sign elements, signifier and signified, are disconnected from each other. In order to investigate the intermodal relations, we need to show how the layers relate to each other and how their organization and content (the sequentiality and constituency) that affect the meaning of the image and what role they play in the sense-making process (semiosis). Hence, in order to display the disconnection of the sign of a layer I will analyze the intermodal relations presented in a multilayered image (comprised of more than one layer). I believe that to determine the degree of disconnection of the sign components in a multilayered image, the elements of one layer need to be seen as the signifier of ‘one’ sign, therefore each layer will be investigated individually.

In short, I argue that digital illustrations that are comprised of more than one layer are best articulated and interpreted by looking at relations between image layers. However, this approach presents a problem. Under normal conditions the interpreter can only access the product of production - the flatted form of the image – which does not display the intermodal relations. This will be presented in chapter four, where I compare the interpretations of a monomodal text - a flattened image - where the interpreter had no access to the intermodal relations with an interpretation of a multimodal text - a multilayered image – where the creator was cognizant of the image’s intermodal relations. It is only under special circumstances, such as in the case

\(^{42}\) I will avoid the discussion of the possibilities of how not-visible layers ‘may’ or ‘may not’ contribute to the alteration of the image’s meaning; for the purposes of this chapter I will only deal with the visible layers. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that such an instance of a ‘making-sense’ of the not-visible, under specific circumstances, where there is a need for a detailed analysis, can be incorporated.
of this study, that the interpreter is exposed to the layered image structure.

**Asymmetry of language: the correspondence between sign components is disconnected**

In order to determine the level of disconnection, first of all I will demonstrate the similarity between the disconnection of the components of the language and the visual sign. For this purpose I selected four texts that I argue have in many ways contributed to the science of signs. One of the notions these works are concerned with is the asymmetry of language. I recognize three different degrees of disconnection and distributed these to three categories accordingly. These categories are:

a) when the signifier does not bear relation to something else,
b) when the signifier corresponds to a vague, highly variable, unspecific-able or non-existent signified,
c) when the signifier or signified have more than one correspondent.

The idea that the level of disconnection of a multimodal sign can be determined through the *intermodal relation* of the image’s layered structure is informed by two unlike concepts. The first of these is the double articulation - having a property of being composed of discrete units at two levels: the level of words and the level of phonological units. I believe that an individual layer can function as a phonological unit and that the layers the image is comprised of can function as a word. The second concept is the concept of ‘mythemes’ that Levi-Strauss framed in his book *Structural Anthropology*. First of all he claims that:

> . . . the constituent units present in language when analyzed on other level—namely, phonemes, morphemes, and sememes—but they, nevertheless, differ from the latter in the same way as the latter differ among themselves: they belong to the higher and more complex order. (Levi-Strauss, 1963, pp. 210-211)

He called them *gross constituent units*. Further he suggested that ‘in order to identify and isolate these gross constituent units [or mythemes] . . . we should look for them on the sentence level’ (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 211) rather than looking at the individual myth as a whole. Hence the ‘constituent units’ can be seen as the total of the layers the image is comprised of, and the analysis carried out at the sentence level can be seen as the analysis carried out at the level of individual layers. The underlying role of both of
those concepts is that in order to have a better understanding or to make better sense of complex units, the fragments of those units should be examined first.

The concept of an ‘empty signifier’

The idea of an ‘empty signifier’ is the most extreme case of total disconnection between signifier and signified. In this state of radical disconnection the signifier means different things to different people, it means whatever the interpreter wants it to mean. This disconnection sabotages any comprehensive connection between the two sign elements. The concept of disconnection can be negotiated in a number of ways such as: an ‘empty signifier’, the ‘zero-sign’ or as the existence of a ‘transcendent signified’. Jonathan Culler suggests that ‘to perceive something as a signifier, albeit an empty one . . . the most radical play of the signifier still requires and works through the positing of signifieds’ (Culler, 1976, p. 115). Roman Jakobson refers to the ‘zero-sign’ in linguistics as the ‘unmarked’ form of word (such as the singular form of words in which the plural involves the addition of the terminal marker –s) (Sebeok, 1994, p. 18) (Chandler, 2002, p. 74). According to Sebeok:

In various systems of signs, notably in language, a sign vehicle can sometimes – when the contextual conditions are appropriate – signify by its very absence, occur, that is, in zero form. Linguists who employ the expression ‘zero sign’ must mean either ‘zero signifier.’ Or, much more rarely, ‘zero signified.’ (Sebeok, 1994, p. 18)

Sebeok’s ‘zero sign vehicles also occur in animal communication systems (Sebeok, 1994, p. 18). In 1957 Roland Barthes was the first theorist to speak about the concept of the ‘empty signifier’ in Myth Today (Barthes, 1972, p. 112). In 1976 Jacques Derrida dismissed the existence of ‘the transcendental signified’ when he debated Heideggerian thought of ‘the instance of logos and of the truth being as premium signatum: “the transcendental” signified implied of all categories or all determined significations, by all lexicons and all syntax, and therefore by all linguistic signifiers’ (Derrida, 1976, p. 20). Later, in 1978 Derrida talked about ‘the indefinite referral of signifier to signifier’ (Derrida, 1978, p. 25). He referred to it as:

Infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite, no rest, but engages it in its own economy so that it always signifies again and differs. (Derrida, 1978, p. 25)

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43 The less radical case of such disconnection is called the ‘floating signifier’.

44 An African elephant’s alarm call is ‘silence’ which was one of such examples.
Although this is hard to imagine, we experience a signifier with no referent in our daily lives more often than we believe we do: for example when we learn a new language or when we visit a foreign country where we are not able to make a sense of signs that can be only learned via convention. Notwithstanding this, the concept of an empty signifier can also be conceptualized from the standpoint of a digital visual artist.

Consequently to distinguish the concept of an empty signifier that is informed by linguists from the concept that is knowledgeable by a practitioner of digital art, I coined a new term ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’. The word tacit originates from early 17th century (in the sense or wordless, noiseless) from Latin tacitus past participle of tacere ‘to be silent.’ Tacit then means to be understood or being implied without being stated. The word ‘taciturn’ means (of a person) reserved or uncommunicative in speech, saying little. ‘Taciturnity’ (noun) originates from the Latin taciturnus, from tacitus similar to ‘tacit.’ I seek this ‘taciturnity’. The very moment that I caught a glimpse of it, would be the end of my thrilling search. It is a sort of personal game of hide and seek. Even if I managed to extract those elements of my taciturnity from my images, I would never be able to communicate them with anyone else since the unspeakable-ness is the main and only attribute of my taciturnity that is part of my ‘idiosyncratic’ semiotic system. And, in this respect, the total disconnection of the sign’s elements in ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ can be seen only in the ‘totality’ of not being able to record one’s feelings.

The intended content of digital illustration is never realized, therefore under those conditions the signifier is always empty. The disconnection is further ‘secured’ by the second conceptual attribute: ‘Idiosyncrasy’ meaning individual or peculiar, originating from Greek sunkratikos meaning ‘mixed together.’ So the meaning of the word to describe this first concept (the concept of taciturnity) is precise; it describes at the same time the individuality and the peculiarity of my sign system. Moreover, the signifying process of my taciturnity reveals itself unexpectedly and on rare occasions in the most inconvenient situations. The very moment I manage to focus on it, it disappears. The only evidence of its short existence is the noticing of its brief passing. Hence, the impossibility of realizing the intended content is further problematised by the subject-to-be-realized being only ‘available’ on rare occasions.
The textual analysis of the concept ‘empty signifier’

I believe that an essential part of any semiotic method is to integrate and analyse text in its original form. Hence to illustrate various examples of an ‘empty signifier’ I incorporate the citations of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke in full paragraphs. I believe that the originality of these texts will lead my investigation of how these semiotic resources can be incorporated and used in a specific context. I believe that those resources will help me establish a discourse method that will assist me in the analyses of the newly emerged multimodal visual text.

The concept of an ‘empty signifier’ can be found in Cratylus where Socrates draws attention to the possibility of assigning a signifier that might not correspond to a particular signified. Socrates arrives at the conclusion that paintings and names can be assigned to the things they imitate with the exception that they cannot be assigned to unlike imitations. Within the context of textual analysis Socrates’ observation can also be illustrated by the degree of a sign’s component disconnection. I believe what he suggests here is that the title of a painting has a higher degree of disconnection (in this case a total disconnection) in the relationship between title and object (the thing) than the relationship between the painting and the object that was the model for that painting. Therefore it could be assumed in this context that the painting is called by the name if the object (thing) pictured would demonstrate the concept of an ‘empty signifier’. In conversation with Cratylus Socrates supports his idea:

SOC. And you agree that the name is an imitation of the thing named?
CRA. Most assuredly.
SOC. And you agree that paintings also are imitations, though in a different way, of things?
CRA. Yes.
SOC. Well then—can both of these imitations, the paintings and the names, be assigned and applied to the things which they imitate, or not?
CRA. They can.
SOC. First, then, consider this question: Can we assign the likeness of the man to the man and that of the woman to the woman, and so forth?
CRA. Certainly.
SOC. And can we conversely attribute that of the man to the woman, and the woman’s to the man?
CRA. That is also possible.
SOC. And are the assignments both correct, or only the former?
CRA. The former.
SOC. The assignment, in short, which attributes to each that which belongs to it and is like it.
CRA. That is my view.
SOC. To put an end to contentious argument between you and me, since we are friends, let me state my position. I call that kind of assignment in the case of both imitation—paintings and names—correct, and in the case of names not only correct, but true; and the other kind, which gives and
applies the unlike imitation, I call incorrect and, in the case of names, false. (Plato, 1996, pp. 157-159)

Another example of the non-existent signified can be found in Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana* in which he referred to a particular text in scriptures. He maintained that words always signify something and that ‘every sign is also a thing’ which he justified by stating that ‘what is not a thing does not exist’. Consequently, what does not exist cannot have a corresponding signified. Augustine was very clear in his proposition that signs are things that are ‘employed to signify’ but at the same time what he was inclined to advocate was the existence of ‘not-things’. I believe, that a conscious knowledge of all the alternatives is crucial in any semiotic enquiry.

In the following extract Augustine states the condition of the total disconnection between a signifier and signified that leaves the signifier to be comprehended as empty:

There are other signs whose whole function consists in signifying. Words, for example: nobody uses words except in order to signify something. From this it may be understood what I mean by signs: those things which are employed to signify something. So every sign is also a thing, since what is not thing does not exist. (Augustine, 1995, p. 15)

Locke, on the other hand, saw the problematic total disconnection between sign elements from a perspective of the same idea being communicated between two people. And although a number of his claims are later found to be faulty by modern critics, I believe his text contains a number of valid implementations. One of these is the one in which he claims that a communication of one idea between two people is impossible without both having the same knowledge of that particular idea. As there is no guarantee that two people have the same knowledge in order to be able to assign the exact signified, this can be seen as yet another instance of an ‘empty signifier’. Locke’s statement justifies this ‘impossibility’: ‘A man cannot make his words the signs either of qualities in things, or of conceptions in the mind of another, whereof he has none in his own’ (Locke & Wilburn, 1947, p. 204). Hence, Locke puts forward a consideration that leads to an observation that without knowledge of a signified there is no knowledge of a corresponding signifier. Therefore the signified cannot be

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45 Written between AD 397 and 426.
communicated without being connected to a signifier or vice versa, ergo the signifier remains empty. Locke affirms:

> Words being voluntary signs, they cannot be voluntary signs imposed by him on things he knows not. That would be to make them signs of nothing, sounds without significations. A man cannot make his words the signs either of qualities in things, or of conceptions in the mind of another, whereof he has none in his own. Till he has some ideas of his own, he cannot suppose them to correspond with the conceptions of another man. (Locke & Wilburn, 1947, p. 204)

Socrates’ concern about a signifier that might not correspond to a particular signified, Augustine’s claim that what does not exist cannot have a corresponding signified and Locke’s assertion that a communication of one idea between two people is impossible without having the same knowledge of that particular idea are aspects of an ‘empty signifier’.

I believe Socrates’ suggestion of assigning a signifier that might not correspond to a particular signified refers to the ‘indefinite referral of signifier to signifier’. Then Augustine’s claim that what does not exist cannot have a corresponding signified is relevant to the ‘zero sign’ in which the corresponding signified does not exist. Finally Locke’s assertion that a communication of one idea between two people is impossible without having the same knowledge of that particular idea can be understood as the signified of a sign that means whatever the interpreter wants then to mean. Therefore those various aspects of the concept of ‘empty signifier’ can, in digital art, be demonstrated through the *intermodal relation* of the multimodal text.

**The visual analysis of the concept ‘empty signifier’**

Although the ideas about the problematic assigning of the signifier to the signified are well recognized and can be comprehensively illustrated in linguistics, to clarify this type of sign’s components disconnection of a visual sign in the same way, I have enriched my semiotic method by employing the concept of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’. This concept will help me demonstrate the total sign disconnection in a different mode than that characterized as the monomodal: the multimodal (digital visual) text. The total disconnection in a digital text can be articulated from two opposite points of view. One is from the insider’s point of view: the articulated knowledge from and within a creator’s perspective that, I believe, can be interpreted via ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ on the one hand for example, and on the other from the ‘oppositional’ point of view articulated from and within the viewer’s (the
outsider’s) perspective. This situation where two parties arrive at differing readings frequently occurs when two or more interpreters analyse one text. Of course, the prospect of involved parties arriving at the same, or even a very similar reading, is exceedingly slim. But this does not always have to be the case.

Although in this chapter my semiotic enquiry is led via an insider’s (creator’s) point of view and does not include analysis from an outsider’s point of view (which is part of chapter three) I believe that in order to make better sense of a text from ‘the outside’ there is a need for additional information from ‘the inside’. Hence I argue that the sign’s disconnection can be read in a lesser degree from the outsider’s point of view if the outsider who normally has no access to other than the monomodal form of text is given the opportunity to inspect the text in the same form as the insider (in its multimodal form). To demonstrate this I will employ concepts that are derived from linguistics to display three different degrees of visual sign disconnection. Furthermore I believe that an outsider to whom such an insight is given, and to whom the insider explains his/her intentions can consequently achieve an interpretation that is more comprehensive.

Based on the findings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke I believe that the concept of an ‘empty signifier’ can be also demonstrated through my image Soldes:

As has been previously taken into account, this total disconnection of sign components can be demonstrated through two semiotic resources: the scholar’s discoveries in regarding the concept of an ‘empty signifier’, and the concept of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’. I selected this image as an example of the concept of ‘my
unspeakable taciturnity’ since the viewer is undoubtedly challenged by the limited information with which he/she is presented while at the same time being restricted to seeing the ‘intermodal relations’ of the image file. I am convinced that this limitation affects the process of semiosis, in which the interpreter assigns a known signified to the unknown signifier. As a consequence the sign might be read as an ‘empty signifier’. In spite of the likelihood of not being able to assign the signifier, this does not have to be the only outcome.

I believe that the file’s layered structure with its intermodal relations offers the ‘missing’ information that enables the content to be articulated more coherently. Moreover, I believe that within the process of semiosis the degree of disconnection can be determined by the extent to which the sign components are subsequently successfully linked with their correspondents. And there is no better way to do this than to treat each layer to an in-depth investigation which in similar fashion was also pursued by the four chosen scholars. To make better sense of the entirety of their claims, I individually investigated each fragment the image is comprised of. To assimilate their methodology means to literally inspect the layer by layer. But before looking at the image layer structure of the image and its intermodal relations in order to see the difference between the monomodal and multimodal text, I will examine the image in the context of its ‘flattened’ form, when the image is contemplated as a monomodal text.

In many cases the visual text itself is not all that can be articulated. One of the image’s properties that we pay first attention to is its title. In some instances the title of an image might play an important role in the process of ‘sense-making’. Although the title might offer some additional information, the viewer should be aware that the role (or the function) of such a verbal expression, might not necessarily articulate its visual content. Judging from my own experience, I believe that some artists name their works using signifiers derived from their own conventions that are unknown by the rest of the society. There are a number of remarkable examples that demonstrate how verbal expressions can be attached to or are embedded within an image, which can problematize the reading of the content of that visual text. For example, there is René Magritte’s famous painting La trahison des images (The Treachery Of Images) painted between 1928 and 1929, which contains a written statement ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’ (This is not the Pipe). Because Magritte never explained the function or role of this verbal expression which he embedded within his image, his statement continues to puzzle art critiques. I will return to the problem of how verbal expressions that are in some way attached to the image in chapter three where I attempt to interpret my own image from an insider’s point of view.
For the purposes of this chapter I will concentrate on the file’s layer structure and its intermodal relations of three original images to show the existence of a ‘transduction’, that is the process of changing a text’s modalities, and the methodology of how to determine the sign’s asymmetry. As suggested earlier, one of the ways in which the disconnection of a sign’s components can be determined is to view the image file in its layered structure. The digital illustration Soldes contains four visible layers that were originally digital photographs. The photograph for the lowest and second layer was taken on Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris in 2005, the other in Prague’s metro the same year. Unless we are familiar with the geographical and cultural aspects of those two places the sign components remain disconnected. Presuming that not many readers of this dissertation speak the Czech language, another piece of information could be the knowledge that the photograph from the Prague metro contains the following text: ‘Join with anyone you want. A free hour of calling daily to any network’. Therefore, if the viewer is familiar with Czech popular culture and language he/she can use such information to advantage. However let us presume that this is not the case, and that the viewer does not speak the language and as a result is denied this additional information. I believe that a multimodality that offers extra information in image form (in this case the multi-layer structure) directly contributes to the way in which the image is interpreted.
The layers of Soldes

What can be seen above is the screen shot of the Adobe Photoshop® program displaying the layer structure of the image Soldes. The individual layers are filled by visual text from frame to frame and the blending modes of each individual layer are also specified. All those details, as well as the sequencing order of those layers are some of the attributes of the intermodal relations of the image. It is precisely this additional information of the intermodal relations that helps to determine and control the degree of the sign’s disconnection. The total of what can be articulated within those layers clearly exceeds the amount of information that can be articulated from a monomodal text.

I believe that the digital illustration Soldes is most likely to be articulated, in the form of a monomodal text, as a sign with an ‘empty signifier’ because the additional information that is needed to allocate the foundations of the signifieds intended by the creator are missing. In contrast, the accessibility or availability of the additional information about the file’s layer structure and its intermodal relations that are directly responsible for the correlation of the sign’s component is directly responsible for the sign’s components being disconnected to a lesser degree. Therefore, the sign’s components are disconnected to a lesser degree than in its monomodal form because the complexity of the material used can be better articulated if displayed in its layered structure. Consequently, while this image in its monomodal form is classified as a sign with an ‘empty signifier’, if presented in the multimodal form, its sign’s components are disconnected to a lesser degree and it can be classified as a sign with a ‘floating signifier’.

Not only can the degree of the sign’s components’ disconnection be demonstrated via the intermodal relations, but the multimodal text also has the capacity to
accommodate the demonstration of the three different attributes that Socrates, Augustine and Locke presented. For example let us consider Socrates’ debate, which is what I believe to be a special case of an ‘empty signifier’. I believe what he suggests is that the title for the viewer of a painting has a higher degree of disconnection (in this case a total disconnection) in the relationship between title and object (the thing) than is the relationship between painting and the object that was a model for that painting.

In a similar fashion, based on the same analytical principles, it could be proposed that the relationships between title-painting-object are similar to the relationships between object-monomodal text-multimodal text. Where in the first instance the sign’s component disconnection between title and painting is higher than between title and object. In the second instance the sign’s component disconnection between object and monomodal text is higher than between object and multimodal text.

Augustine’s conscious knowledge of all the possible alternatives, which included his observation that ‘what does not exist cannot signify’, should be part of any investigation keeping in mind what is hidden within a monomodal text and what the multimodal text reveals. Yet again, the advantage of articulating a multimodal text in comparison with a monomodal text supports my argument; only what is ‘readable’ can be articulated.

If we were to consider Locke’s point of view, similarly two people cannot communicate the same ideas, the creator cannot ‘clone’ the same signifieds to implant them into the viewer’s mind. Hence, the separation that in many cases results in an ‘empty signifier’, of the creator from the viewer is inevitable.

The concept of ‘floating signifieds’

The less radical case of a disconnection between sign components is called a ‘floating signifier’, a term coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Levi-Strauss, 1973). Such a disconnection is variously defined by semioticians as a signifier with a vague, highly variable, unspecifiable or non-existent signified (Chandler, 2002, p. 74). Roland Barthes in *Image-Music-Text* referred to non-linguistic signs specifically as being so open to interpretation that they constituted a ‘floating chain of signifieds’ (Barthes, 1977b, p. 39) whereas, according to Chandler, Saussure on the other hand ‘saw the signifier and the signified (however arbitrary their relationship) as being as
inseparable as the two sides of a piece of paper, poststructuralists rejected the apparently stable and predictable relationship embedded in his model’ (Chandler, 2002, p. 75).

Traditionally, the most radical approach is led by Jacques Derrida, who referred in 1960 to the ‘play’ (or ‘freeplay’) of signifiers which are not fixed to their signifieds but point beyond themselves to other signifiers in an ‘indefinite referral of signifier to signified’. Derrida’s interrogation of the signified as ‘fixed’ is raised in the extract below where he questions the relationship of signifier to signified:

And that the meaning of meaning (in the general sense of meaning and not in the sense of signalization) is infinite implication, the indefinite referral of signifier to signifier? And that its force is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite, no rest, but engages it in its own economy so that it always signifies again and differs? (Derrida, 1978, p. 25 author’s emphases)

According to Chandler ‘freeplay’ has become the dominant English rendering of Derrida’s use of the term jeu (Chandler, 2002, p. 75). He also claims that Derrida ‘championed the “deconstruction” of Western semiotic system, denying that there were any ultimate determinable meanings’ (Chandler, 2002, p. 75). Derrida elaborated on Saussure’s claims that the meaning of signs derives from how they differ from each other and he coined the term différence to indicate the way in which meaning is endlessly deferred (Chandler, 2002, p. 75). Hence he claimed that there is no ‘transcendental’ signified:

“transcendental” signified (“transcendental” in a certain sense, as in Middle Ages the transcendental—ens, unum, verum, bonum—was said to be the “primum cognitum” implied by all categories or all determined significations, by all lexicons and all syntax, and therefore by all linguistic signifiers, though not to be identified simply with any of those signifiers allowing itself to be precomprehended through each of them . . . (Derrida, 1976, p. 20 author’s emphases)

For the purposes of the analysis of digital art, the linguistic concept of a ‘floating signifier’ can be conceptualized from a different perspective, one more suitable to digital art. The phrase ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ presents just that.

My digital illustrations might either express ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ or ‘the surreptitiousness of others’. In the latter I have no interest to attempt the impossible task of capturing feelings that are experienced by other people. I am not interested in capturing feelings that people experience, but rather, I am interested to express, what I call, the ‘surreptitiousness of others’; other people’s feelings the way I experience
them. I believe that all representation is formed on such an impulse and that one’s own expression is one’s own subjective articulation of a broader impulse within creative communications and therefore should probably be located as such.

The word ‘surreptitiousness’ means to ‘keep secret because it would be not approved’. It originates from late Middle English (in the sense obtained by suppression of the truth) from Latin surreptitious (from the verb surripere, from sub- ‘secretly’ + rapere ‘seize’) + -ous. The name of the concept introduces a mystery; something needs to be hidden and this need prompts a creation of secret signs whose meaning only its creator can know. In an instance where an outsider’s interpretation is not required, there is no need to ensure that the link between signifiers and signifieds is conventionalized; consequently their correlation is purposely discontinued and the viewer is ruthlessly left wondering about the image’s content. In order to hide the meaning of an image the sign’s components are artificially disconnected.

The artificial disconnection of the sign’s elements further increases when the image is being interpreted from an outsider’s point of view. The sign’s asymmetry also becomes an issue if the convention, according to which the signs are interpreted, is familiar solely to the creator who assigns meaning to unconventional signifiers. Hence, this artificial disconnecting of sign components modifies or alters the arbitrariness of the conventional signs. The three concepts that I have deployed: ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and ‘the conjoint duplet’ are the arbitrary markers. Their function is to reveal or hide the image content to a greater or lesser degree. In other words, their function is to deliberately control the degree to which the sign components are disconnected.

The textual analysis of the concept ‘floating signifier’

The issue concerning the ‘second’ degree of the disconnection of the sign’s components, a ‘floating signifier’, can, among other concerns, be found in Plato’s Cratylus where Socrates draws attention to the issues of a ‘floating signifier’. He placed emphasis on the importance of knowing the correct meaning of names claiming that in order to explain the later form of a name one needs to know its earlier form perfectly. Socrates claimed ‘. . . it is clear that anyone who claims to have scientific knowledge of names must be able first of all to explain the earliest names perfectly, or he can be sure that what he says about the later will be nonsense’ (Plato,
SOC. How we assert that they gave names or were lawgivers with knowledge, before any name whatsoever had been given, and before they knew any names, if things cannot be learned except through their name?
CRA. I think the truest theory of the matter, Socrates, is that the power which gave the first names to things is more than human, and therefore the names must be necessarily correct. (Plato, 1996, p. 183)

The link between the concept of a ‘floating signifier’ and Socrates’ concerns about the correct naming of things will become apparent if we look at this sign disconnection from a different angle. If, as I claim, the degree of disconnection between a sign’s components is determined by how well the sign’s components are linked, the missing knowledge of the original meaning of a particular word can be directly responsible for increasing the degree to which the components are, or might, be disconnected. For example, presuming that we have knowledge of a particular word, if we are not informed about its origins, this lack of knowledge could in some cases lead to misinterpretations of the intended meaning. However, with regards to employing linguistic concepts for the purposes of visual analysis, I believe that there is a difference between the ‘intended meaning’ in linguistics and the ‘intended meaning’ in a visual semiotic system and that this difference is generated by the semiotic system in which those intended meanings are employed.

Hence Socrates rightly reasoned with his opponent Cratylus that to explain the later names one must have scientific knowledge of primary names, and that the correctness of letters within the names is also crucially important. Socrates went on to question Cratylus about the function of names:

SOC. . . . What is the function of names, and what good do they accomplish?
CRA. I think, Socrates, their function is to instruct, and this is the simple truth, that he who knows the names knows also the things named.
SOC. I suppose, Cratylus, you mean that when anyone knows the nature of the name—and its nature is that of the thing—he will know the thing also, since it is like the name, and the science of all things which are like each other is one and the same. It is, I fancy, on this ground that you say whoever knows names will know things also. (Plato, 1996, p. 175)

After Socrates justified the crucial importance of knowing origins as well as functions of names, he advanced his position further, warning Cratylus about the deception of incorrect conception of names:
SOC. . . . Do you not see that he who in his inquiry after things follows names and examines into the meaning of each one runs great risk of being deceived?
CRA. How so?
SOC. Clearly he who first gave names, gave such names as agreed with this conception of the nature of things. That is our view, is it not?
CRA. Yes.
SOC. Then if his conception was incorrect, and he gave the names according to his conception, what do you suppose will happen to us who follow him? Can we help being deceived? (Plato, 1996 p. 177)

Augustine did not seem to be as concerned with the ‘incorrect conception of names’ as Socrates was. He, on the other hand, conveniently claimed that the ability to comprehend the understanding and interpretation of scriptures lies within God:

There are two things on which all interpretation of scripture depends: the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we learnt. . . . This is a great and arduous task, difficult to sustain and also, I fear, a rash one to undertake; or so it would be if I were trusting in my own resources. But since in fact my hope of completing the work is based on God, from whom I already have much relevant material through meditation, I have no need to worry that he will fail to supply the remainder when I begin to share what has been given to me (Augustine, 1995 p. 57).

From this extract it can be assumed that Augustine was indeed aware of the existence of a ‘floating signifier’, as he presumed that God would correct him if he made a mistake. While in this particular passage Augustine was not troubled by the possibility of sign components being disconnected, he also supported Socrates and Aristotle in their stressing of the importance of determining the signified to make the connection between sign elements knowing the signifier in order to assign a signified. Thus Augustine said:

It often happens that by thoughtlessly asserting something that the author did not mean an interpreter runs up against other things which cannot be reconciled with that original idea. If he agrees that these things are true and certain, his original interpretation could not possibly be true, and by cherishing his own idea he comes in some strange way to be more displeased with scripture than with himself. If he encourages this evil to spread it will be his downfall. ‘For we walk by faith, not by sight’, and faith will falter if the authority of holy scripture is shaken; and if faith falters, love itself decays. (Augustine, 1995, p. 51)

Both Socrates’ claim that in order to explain the later form of a name one needs to know its earlier form perfectly and Augustine’s awareness of the problems associated with the process of linking sign components contribute largely to the understanding of the aspects of the ‘floating signifier.’
I believe, in some particular cases the sign components can get disconnected in higher degrees if the origin of the word is not known. This can indeed result in a ‘freeplay’ of signifiers that are not fixed to their signifieds because the meaning of the correlating signifier is not known through a convention. I also believe, as Augustine suggested, that to keep asserting something that the author did not mean is to read the sign as constituting a ‘floating chain of signifiers’, that is in order to understand the meaning of the sign to match numerous signifieds to a signifier.

The different aspects of the concept ‘floating signifier’ can also be demonstrated in digital arts via the intermodal relations of the multimodal text.

The visual analysis of the concept ‘floating signifieds’

The instance of the ‘floating signifier’ can be also demonstrated within the realms of digital visual arts by employing the concept of ‘surreptitiousness of others’. To do that I have incorporated Socrates’ and Augustine’s conscious awareness of how the sign’s components can be disconnected into the analysis of my digital illustration Gates.

Martina Muller, Gates, 2005

The reasons why I have selected this image, after a brief investigation of its monomodal form (shown above), should be clear. At first sight two layers blended together are visible: one layer resembles a fairly familiar architectural structure of the Parisian landscape, the Arc de Triomphe, but the other layer depicting a ceiling painting of Prague’s Town Hall is not so clear. To articulate such an image cannot result otherwise than with the degree of disconnection of a ‘floating signifier’ where
the signifier can correlate with a highly variable, non-specific, or even non-existent signified.

The image Gates is comprised of two digital photographs with three visible layers. What follows are the three images of the three layers that comprise the digital illustration Gates in a sequence from the lowest layer to the top one. The first and third layer contain a photograph of a ceiling of Prague’s Town Hall and the lowest layer contains a photograph of the Arc de Triomphe.

The two photographs (above) of the image’s layers give an impression of being in a ‘normal’ blending mode, but that is not how they appear in their layer form. As previously mentioned, the image’s meaning is determined via sequentiality – the order

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46 Blending modes of Photoshop layers are the different ways in which the layer is blended within rest of the layers. The normal blending mode has no transparency and the lower layers cannot be seen.
of the layers - and constituency – the content of the individual layers and both have control over the degree in which the sign’s components are disconnected. Hence, the image’s meaning is also determined by the layer’s blending mode, an attribute that belongs to constituency which is part of the intermodal relations. This attribute plays a significant role in the process of interpretation, thus it is crucial to take in account the way in which the layers are blended together. It should be obvious now, that the different blending modes of individual layers, which play a significant role within intermodal relations, can be only recognized within a multimodal text in which the layered structure can be inspected.

The structure of the layer in Gates

The layers’ blueprint (above) shows to what extent the four layers, that the image is comprised of, occupy an area of each individual layer. The blending mode of the two top layers was changed to a ‘soft light’, a mode that enables the image plane to be transparent resulting in the layer in a normal mode below being visible. Once again, it is only when the layers’ structure is revealed that the reader can acquire sufficient information to assign the sign components in a lesser degree of disconnection than if the reader cannot see the file structure. Although the photograph of Paris’ Arc de Triomphe, being a popular landmark, can be easily identified, the top two layers containing an unfamiliar representation would most likely not to be recognised by an outsider. It is because of this that I claim that the digital illustration Gate, in its monomodal form, where the viewer cannot see the layers the image is comprised of, is an example of an ‘empty signifier’. However, if viewed in its layered structure (in multimodal form) the viewer is more likely to correlate the sign’s component in a lesser degree of disconnection than he/she would
correlate in monodal form. In that respect the image *Gate* as multimodal text is an example of a ‘floating signifier’.

As mentioned previously, not only can the degree of the sign’s components’ disconnection be demonstrated via *intermodal relations*, but also the multimodal text has the capacity to accommodate the demonstration of the three categories that Socrates and Augustine presented. I believe that these three discourses discussed above display three issues of consequence to the notion of a ‘floating signifier’: an incorrect conception of names; the importance of knowing the origins and the function of these names, and lastly the concern to name things correctly. I believe that, in order to demonstrate the impact for an understanding of the visual illustration, and to analyse a digital illustration in a multimodal form in a more comprehensive way, a semiotic triangle should be incorporated into the process of semiosis. Such analysis could surface the degree to which, as previously argued, the sign is disconnected. The space of ‘sense-making’, the function of the interpretant, lessens the degree of disconnection with which the sign is read. Therefore, within an effective analysis the exposé of the intermodal relations can be compared and be equivalent to the ‘expansion of a space’ for an objective reality that is occupied by the interpretant in the process of semiosis.

In short, Socrates’ and Augustine’s awareness of the possibility of increasing the sign’s component disconnection is crucial in a process of semiosis, and I believe that this awareness directly contributes to articulating a text with greater clarity.

**The concept of ‘polysemy’**

Polysemy is another degree of sign components disconnection. From the linguistic perspective ‘polysemy’ is the association of one word with a number of meanings. If these meanings are quite distinct the words are homonyms\(^{47}\), but frequently there is a range of analogical\(^{48}\) uses (plain prose, plain sailing) suggesting that it is wrong simply to distinguish distinct senses\(^{49}\). One of the frequent predicaments in semiosis

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\(^{47}\) Words having the same sound or shape, but different meaning.

\(^{48}\) A respect in which one thing is similar to another.

is the corresponding number of either signifiers to signifieds or vice versa; the multiple signifieds standing for one signifier is one such case. Saussure claimed that the meaning of signs derives from how they differ from each other. Such notions were particularly foreseen by Charles Sanders Peirce. In his account of ‘unlimited semiosis’ Peirce emphasized that in practice this potentially endless process of assigning a chain of signifieds is inevitably cut short by the practical constrains of everyday life. Jacques Lacan, for example, drew attention to the ‘incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier’:

> From which we can say that it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning ‘insists’ but that none of its elements ‘consists’ in the signification of which it is at the moment capable.

We are forced, then, to accept the notion of a incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier – which Ferdinand de Saussure illustrates with an image resembling the wavy lines of the upper and lower waters in miniatures from manuscripts of Genesis. (Lacan, 1977, pp. 153-154, author’s emphases)

To the contrary modern theories grant no access to any reality outside signification (Chandler, 2002, p. 75). Derrida clearly, in his own radical way, states that ‘there is nothing outside the text’ (il n’y a rien hors du texte) (Derrida, 1976, p. 158). For materialist Marxists and realists, postmodern idealism is intolerable hence they claim that: ‘Signs cannot be permitted to swallow up their referents in a never-ending chain of signification, in which one sign always points on to another, and the circle is never broken by the intrusion of that to which the sign refers’ (Lovell, 1980, p. 16). Lovell further suggests that Marxism ‘cannot not rest upon a conventionalist theory of language’ (Lovell, 1980, p. 16). I believe that the concept of ‘polysemy’ is encompassed by controversy because of its uncertain outcome. However this does not always have to be the case. If we can understand the processes involved in semiosis, the attitude towards the uncertain outcome of ‘polysemy’ can be changed. This is also applicable to interpreting a multimodal text which can be better understood if read from within its multilayered structure. Hence, ‘polysemy’ is not the only aspect of a linguistic sign. This aspect is also present in a visual sign and it can be determined by examining the intermodal relations, namely the constituency of the file structure.

Hence, from the perspective of a digital artist, I believe, that the aspects of the concept of ‘polysemy’ in digital illustrations can be displayed through the third concept ‘the conjoint duplet’. This third concept is an instance of conjoining the two previously implemented concepts of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ and ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ that I developed to demonstrate a lower and higher degree of sign’s disconnections. Before presenting the visual analysis of the concept
‘polysemy’ I offer textual analysis employing the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine
and Locke that, I believe, are concerned with the concept of ‘polysemy’.

The textual analysis of the concept ‘polysemy’

In *Cratylus* Socrates used three examples from Homer’s *Iliad* to illustrate instances of a
signifier that corresponds to more than one signified. Socrates observes a particular
‘prating bird’ being called by two different names according to ‘who’ was naming the
bird noting that: ‘. . . whom all the Deities call Chalcis, but men Cymindis name’
(Homer, 1903, p. 186). As a second and third example Socrates used another part of
Homer’s text in which the author talks about Hephaestus⁵⁰ being called by two
different names:

SOC. Do you not know that he says about the river in Troyland which had
the single combat with Hephaestus, “whom the gods call Xanthus, but men
call Scamander”?
HER. Oh yes.
SOC. Well, do you not think this is a grand thing to know, that the name of
that river is rightly Xanthus, rather than Scamander? . . . Or to learn that
the hill men at Batieia is called by the Gods Myrina’s tomb, and many other
such statements by Homer and the other poets? But perhaps these matters
are too high for us to understand; it is, I think, more within human power
to investigate the names Scamandrius and Astyanax, and understand what
kind of correctness he ascribes to these, . . . (Plato, 1996, p. 35).

All three examples clearly illustrate an instance in which one signifier corresponds to
more than one signified, in this particular case to the signifier correspondents to two
unlike signifieds.

The next illustration of polysemy is from *De Trinity* where Augustine agreed
with Aristotle that ‘symbols of mental experience’ are thoughts projected in the mind
and that each unit of a thought being itself a word ‘that we say in the heart’ and not in
any language.

Augustine wrote:

For when we utter something true, that is when we utter what we know, a
word is necessarily born from the knowledge which we hold in the
memory, a word which is absolutely the same kind of thing as the
knowledge it is born from. It is the thought formed from the thing we know

⁵⁰ Hephaestus (Roman name Vulcan) was the lame god of fire and crafts or the two together,
hence of blacksmiths.
that is the word which we utter in the heart, a word that is neither Greek nor Latin nor any other language; but when it is necessary, to convey the knowledge in the language of those we are speaking to, some sign is adopted to signify this word. (Augustine, 1990, p. 409)

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke not only describes the complex process of correlating a signifier to its signified but he also debates the possibility of assigning different signifieds to one signifier when he talks about ‘a secret reference to two other things’. Here Locke stated two existential conditions under which the coexistence of many potential meanings for a word is possible:

But through their words, as they are used by men, can properly and immediately signify nothing but the ideas that are in the mind of the speaker; yet they in their thoughts give them a secret reference to two other things.

First, *They suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men, with whom they communicate*: for else they should talk in vain, and could not be understood, if the sounds they applied to one idea were such as by the hearer were applied to another, which is to speak two languages. Secondly, *Because men would not be thought to talk barely of their own imagination, but of things as really they are; therefore they often suppose the words to stand also for the reality of things*. (Locke & Wilburn, 1947, pp. 205, author’s emphases)

Socrates’ illustration of three different signifieds corresponding with one signifier as well as Augustine’s and Aristotle’s concern regarding ‘inner words’ are acceptable examples of dealing with aspects of ‘polysemy’. I believe, that the process of assigning the inner words – ‘the symbols of mental experience’ - is the foundation for assigning conventionally agreed signifieds. It is in this ‘place or inner words’ in which the assigning of conventionally agreed signifieds is most likely to fail. The incapacity to assign signifieds that are understood via convention can be seen as an excellent opportunity to get trapped in a never-ending loop of the ‘polysemic chain’. Furthermore, Locke’s concern ‘a secret reference to two other things’ is another excellent example of the concept of ‘polysemy’. I believe what Locke has in mind here is the issue of assigning additional signifieds in order to gain better understanding of the signifier. However this practice might as well result in being trapped in the ‘polysemic chain’ of signifieds.

I believe that in digital art the aspects of ‘polysemy’ can be identified through the *intermodal relations* of the image layered structure.
The visual analysis of the concept ‘polysemy’

For my purposes I present the concept of ‘polysemy’, a case in which the signifier or signified has more than one correspondent, that can be used to analyse a multimodal digital illustration to determine the degree in which the sign’s components are disconnected.

The above image, titled Bridges, due to its complexity is a fitting example of ‘polysemy’. This image does not only contain two photographs but it also contains an image of two human figures. The figures were generated by a software called Poser® that is able to render scenes in three dimensions. What you see below are two photographs, one shot in Paris (the second and fifth layer) and the other in Prague (the first and fourth layer). Both photographs depict well-known landmarks: Prague’s Charles Bridge and the Parisian Pont Alexandre-III. The third layer is a computer-generated image displaying a couple rendered in glass.
Bridges top (fifth) layer: Pont Alexandre-III

Bridges fourth layer: Charles Bridge

Bridges third layer: computer generated figure
Unlike the previous digital illustrations that contained only digital photographs, this image is comprised of a layer that does not originate from the world around us. It is highly possible that some people might not be familiar with its content and this inability to read such signs prepares the ground ideally for a presentation of the concept of a ‘polysemy’ in which multiple meanings can be attributed to a single signifier. To demonstrate the concept of ‘polysemy’ in multimodal texts I employ the concept of ‘conjoint duplet’ that displays the same degree of a sign’s component disconnection.

In contrast with the previously used examples the individual layers of this image do not occupy the whole area. In all layers the image does not stretch from frame to frame but occupies only a portion of the layer frame.
The blueprint of the layer structure (above) reveals the intermodal relations within its image file that directly contribute to how the image is interpreted. As I mentioned previously, this multimodal illustration is comprised of five layers one of which is not a photograph but a computer-generated image (CGI). Three bottom layers are in a ‘normal’ blending mode while the top two are in a blending mode called ‘difference’. The latter mode alters the layer colours by literally reversing the colours to mainly dark tones. In the instance of Bridges none of the layers occupies the layer’s frame fully. The grey part of the layers show the areas that are not occupied by an image, consequently the areas are transparent and empty at the same time. Each bridge is combined from two layers, where the second layer is a mirror image of the original image. Not only does the presence of the CGI image complicate the reading of the whole, also the incorporated ‘horizontally-flipped’ images do everything other than to simplify the image’s reading of the intermodal relations.

Nevertheless, in contrast with monomodal text, I clearly demonstrated that the multimodal structure offers additional information, which in the form of the file’s structure, assists the multilayered image to be articulated with the sign’s components disconnected in a lesser degree than in its monomodal form, in which the image, due to its complexity, most likely is to be understood as a polysemic sign; that is, as a sign with many possible meanings.

While the degree to which the sign’s components are disconnected can be seen on the intermodal relations, the multimodal text has also a capacity to accommodate the demonstration of the attributes of ‘polysemic’ signs that Aristotle, Augustine and Locke discussed. For example, Aristotle and Augustine described ‘thoughts projected
in mind’ as the ‘symbols of mental experience’ that could be, from an analytical perspective of a digital multimodal text, compared with the actual process of ‘sense-making’ while examining the image structure. While the former is claimed to be carried out in the mind, the latter is carried out when the triadic model of signs is employed in the process of a sense-making, while the viewer is inspecting the intermodal relations of a multimodal digital text. Therefore, within the context of semiosis it could be implied that similarly as the ‘symbols of mental experience’ engender the thoughts projected in mind, the ‘intermodal relations’ engender ‘the degree of disconnection’ of a sign’s components.

Conclusion

While in the first chapter, I presented the observations that informed my theoretical framework, in this chapter I have progressed, advanced and applied a theoretical framework that I have designed for the analysis of digital multimodal text especially ‘tailored’ for an effective discourse analysis method. The implications of the method in practice also successfully assisted me in an examination of the possibly overlooked relation between the semiotic system of linguistic and visual signs. In particular, the evident similarity between the disconnection of the components of the language signs that are responsible for the degree of signs’ asymmetry, and the intermodal transformation of a multimodal text that is directly responsible for changing sign’s meaning and consequently for its asymmetry. I have also demonstrated that the intermodal relations (sequentiality and constituency of the image layered structure) that are the aspects exclusively of multimodal texts, and are not only directly responsible for changing sign’s meaning but also for its asymmetry. I have demonstrated the three similar ways in which the components of the linguistic and the visual signs are disconnected. This sign asymmetry in multimodal text can be demonstrated via transduction, the process of changing text’s modalities via acquiring new modality of in which the text is realized. Further, I have argued that when this transformation of a modal kind, that is normally not detectable by an interpreter and that is consequently responsible for changing the image’s meaning, becomes available to the interpreter, the interpreter is most likely to assign correlating sign components in lesser degrees.

I led my analysis through the examinations of the three different degrees of disconnection of signs’ components from two different points of view: from a perspective of linguistics and the perspective of the digital artist. I examined selected texts: Plato’s Cratylus, Aristotle’s De Interpretatione, Augustine’s De Trinitate and De
Doctrine Christiana as well as Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* to allocate and present three different degrees and distributed them in three categories according to the degree of disconnection. The three categories were the concepts of an ‘empty signifier’, the ‘floating signifieds’ and a ‘polysemy’.

I negotiated an existence between the similar ways in which the linguistic and visual sign are disconnected by illustrating the aspects of a linguistic model of sign and incorporating them into visual analysis, thus framing the ‘tailored’ discourse analysis method suitable for multimodal visual text. By employing the concepts of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’, and ‘the conjoint duplet’ I have respectively illustrated each category on three of my digital illustrations. By employing the concepts of different degree of disconnection suitable for multimodal texts, I have established that the sign asymmetry of each category is lessened if the image is viewed in its multi-layered structure. Further I argued, from the outsider’s perspective, in order to articulate the meaning of an image in a more comprehensive way, the interpreter should have access to the *intermodal relations* of the multimodal text.

In short, in this chapter I argued that the multimodal digital visual text, if examined via its *intermodal relations*, is most likely interpreted with the sign’s components disconnected in a lesser degree than it is in a case of a monomodal text. To demonstrate this, I examined the possible similarity in which the linguistic and visual sign’s components are disconnected. While the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Locke provided me with examples of the three different categories of sign’s asymmetry from a linguistic perspective, to illustrate the three different degree of disconnection in digital visual text I have employed three concepts designed for this purpose. The rationale behind my decision to employ concepts especially developed for the analysis of a multimodal digital text was the structure of the multimodal text that has capacity to accommodate the image’s attributes in a better way than the linguistic concepts offer. In regard of the process involved in semiosis I continue to maintain the idea supported by Levi-Strauss that in order to understand a text in better clarity we need to identify and isolate the fragments the text is comprised of. In the last chapter the ideas behind the processes of double articulation will lend me ground to further accelerate the ideas similar to those formed by Levi-Strauss.

Consequently, from the ‘tailored’ discourse analysis method engaged in this chapter I have successfully demonstrated that the multimodal digital visual text, if
viewed through its multi-layered structure, is articulated with the sign’s component disconnected in a lesser degree than a monomodal that is articulated through its mono-layered structure.
Chapter 3
Within and beyond the articulation of a layer

... it is the design in the first case and the composition in the second that constitute the proper object of a pure judgment of taste; that the purity of the colors and of the tones, or for that matter their variety and contrast, seem to contribute to the beauty, does not mean that, because they themselves are agreeable, they furnish us, as it were, with a supplement to, and one of the same kind as, our liking for the form.\textsuperscript{51}

Introduction

In the previous chapter I suggested that the way to articulate a multimodal text with a sign’s components disconnected in lesser degree is to examine its intermodal relations. To demonstrate the different degrees of a sign’s asymmetry I used three categories ranging from a partial to a full disconnection of the sign’s components. I suggested that the components of linguistic and visual signs are disconnected in a similar fashion. To uncover this similarity I developed a ‘tailored’ discourse analysis that integrated the ideas found in the texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. I combined these with the ideas that inform a digital artist’s perspective to form three concepts that helped me to present the different categories of the sign’s disconnection in a multimodal text. Those three concepts of the visual sign’s asymmetry were: ‘an empty signifier, ‘the floating signifieds’ and ‘a polysemy’.

In this chapter I maintain the idea supported by Levi-Strauss that in order to understand a text in a more comprehensive way we need to look at the fragments the text is comprised of on an individual level. Hence once again I put the previously developed discourse method into practice by presenting the analysis of my image Philosophy from the insider’s point of view via its multi-layered structure. This will be followed by the allocations of the degree of disconnection of the fragments that Philosophy is comprised of. The digital illustration Philosophy that was especially created for the purposes of this exercise, is comprised of a large number of layers and therefore its layout is suitable for investigation of its intermodal relations that, as we

\textsuperscript{51} (Kant, 1987 p. 72, author’s emphases)
have seen, are composed of two structural layered aspects: the *sequentiality* and the *constituency*.

I believe, while the analysis of a monomodal text can be executed only on an expressional level (the flatted form of the image), the multimodal text has the capacity also to be analysed on the conceptual level (the multi-layered structure). Under normal conditions the outsider, who has no access to the file in its layered structure, can only analyse the image in its *monomodal form* on the level of expression. As previously argued, this inability to access the *intermodal relations* can result in the sign’s elements being articulated with a higher degree of disconnections than if they are articulated within its multi-layered structure. While the readings of *Philosophy* approached from the outsider’s and insider’s points of view will be explored and juxtaposed in the following chapter; this chapter examines the *intermodal relations* between sign components of the image, *Philosophy*. Since the relations between sign components can be investigated on two levels, my task is to analyse those relations on the level of the *primary internal relations* and also on the level of *primary external relations*.

In brief, in this chapter I examine the *intermodal relations* between sign components of a multimodal text. I present an analysis on the conceptual level, that will be defined in the next part of this chapter, by looking into the *primary internal relations* between the layers of the image. This will be followed by analysis on the level of expression which involves an exploration of the *primary external relations* between the layers and the narrative of the image. Lastly, I will emphasize the roles of both kinds of *primary relations* in the ‘cognition of the work of art’ (Ingarden, 1973 A) and I will also address the complex issues of ‘intentionality’ (Ingarden, 1973 B)

) which, I believe, should be accounted for in any interpretation that is part of the processes of signification.

**The intermodal relations between sign components in a multimodal text**

The way in which Barthes talks about sign-components relations gives a better idea of how the *intermodal relations* of multimodal text function in regards to a sign’s
asymmetry. In *Elements of Semiology* Barthes defines a sign’s components in the
case of linguistics within the realm of form and substance as follows:

The sign is therefore a compound of a signifier and signified. The plane of
the signifiers constitutes the *plane of expression* and that of the signifieds the
*plane of content*. (Barthes, 1977a, p. 39)

Barthes further refines those two planes:

The *form* is what can be described exhaustively simply and coherently
(epistemological criteria) by linguistics without resorting to any
extralinguistic premise; the *substance* is the whole set of aspects of linguistic
phenomena which cannot be described without resorting to extralinguistic
premises. Since both strata exist on the plane of expression and the plane of
content, we therefore have:

i) a substance of expression: for instance the phonic, articulatory, non-
functional substance which is the field of phonetics, not phonology;

ii) a form of expression, made of the paradigmatic and syntactic rules (let
us note that the same form can have two different substances, on phonic,
the other graphic);

iii) a substance of content: this includes, for instance, the emotional,
ideological, or simply notional aspects of the signified, its ‘positive’
meaning;

iv) a form of content: it is the formal organization of the signified among
themselves through the absence or presence of a semantic mark. (Barthes,
1977a, p. 40)

Although this is true in regard to a linguistic sign, it needs to be kept in mind that all
four attributes of the two strata, due to the structural differences of the visual sign, are
not efficiently equipped for the interpretation of a digital illustration.

Notwithstanding that, drawing upon the *intermodal relations* of a multimodal text, I
believe that all four attributes stated by Barthes can be incorporated into the analysis
of multimodal text. The distribution would be as follows:

A) The conceptual level – the level of signifieds (hidden to the outsider)
The plane of content contains *substance* and *form* of the content.

B) The expressional level – the level of signifiers (available to the outsider)
The plane of expression contains *substance* and *form* of the expression.

This possibility might also be seen in the relation of a ‘semiological’ with a linguistic
sign model. According to Barthes:

The semiological sign is also, like its model, compounded of a signifier and
the signified ... but it differs from it at the level of its substances. Many
semiological systems (objects, gestures, pictorial images) have a substance
of expression whose essence is not to signify; often, they are objects of
everyday use, used by society in a derivative way, to signify something:
clothes are used for protection and food for nourishment even if they are also used as signs. We propose to call these semiological signs, whose origin is utilitarian and functional, *sign-functions*. (Barthes, 1977a, p. 41)

However, Barthes differentiates both types of sign only at the level of substances. He claims that ‘a substance of expression whose essence is “not to signify”; often . . . are objects of everyday use, used by society in a derivative way’. This is precisely the situation in the process of articulating monomodal visual text from the outsider’s point of view (when the substance of expression cannot signify because the viewer has no access to intermodal relations). In contrast, the creator who is also the interpreter, who is granted access to the substance on the plane of content as well as on the plane of expression should be able to successfully assign signifieds on both levels. Hence the monomodal text offers analysis of its form and only on the level of expression, while multimodal text offers analysis not only of its form on the level of expression, but also of its content on the conceptual level.

From the perspective of the insider, this potentiality accommodates the engagement of a semiotic method carried out via the traditional dyadic model of a sign on the expressional level, and also an analysis which can be accomplished on the conceptual carried out via the triadic sign model. Furthermore, such analysis can be executed from two different perspectives of the sign’s components relations: from the primary internal and primary external perspective, where the primary internal relation is the relation between layers articulated from the insider’s perspective and the primary external relation is the relation of those intermodal relations articulated from both perspectives.

To determine the primary internal and the primary external relationships we need to look at the sign’s asymmetry on both levels. To achieve this, the structure of the visual sign needs to be looked at from within its fragments and from within its structure as a whole. The first step can be done by looking at the sign in its fragments on the ‘conceptual level’ and the second step involves looking at those fragments as a whole on the ‘expressional level’.

It has been demonstrated in chapter two that a multimodal text is composed of a number of layers. The relationship between those layers, which I call intermodal relations, can be represented on two levels. These levels are represented by: the primary internal relations – the relation between sign components where the layer acts as a sign, and the primary external relation - the relation between the sign’s components where the image as a whole acts as a sign. I argue that, in order to articulate the sign’s
components of a multimodal text in a lower degree of disconnection, both primary relations - the internal as well as the external - should be investigated.

The primary relations in Philosophy

The primary internal relations between sign components of the multimodal text (within the intermodal relations) are the relations between signifier and signified on the level of a layer, while the primary external relations can be seen as the relations between those layers and the descriptive narrative of the whole text. I suggest that multimodal text due to its complexity requires to be investigated on two levels. This is possible because of the multimodal sign's components versatility. Paul Willemen claims that ‘what is signifier or signified depends entirely on the level on which the analysis operates: a signified on one level can become a signifier on another level’ (Willemen, 1994, p. 105). For instance, in the case of a film, our articulation of an individual shot depends on paradigmatic (comparing it with the use of alternative kinds of shots) as well as on syntagmatic analysis (comparing it with preceding and following shots).

I believe that layers in multimodal text can be approached in the same manner. In the multimodal text the primary internal relations alone can be investigated on the conceptual and expressional level, where the two levels are the content of the layers and the expression of the whole image. Consequently the articulation of the multimodal sign occurs on two levels: On the level of an individual layer in its layered structure, and on the level of the sum of all layers in its flattened form. Subsequently, the signified of the individual layer becomes signifier on the level of the sum of all layers of the image. I also believe that the sign’s articulations on both levels are essential in order to interpret the multimodal text in a more comprehensive way, that is: with the signs’ elements disconnected in lesser degree.
The creation of my image *Philosophy* was inspired by Gustav Klimt’s drawing (with the same title) *Philosophy (study)*\(^{52}\). Klimt’s *Philosophy* is one of the three paintings commissioned in 1892 to decorate the Great Hall of the University in Vienna by the Austria’s Ministry of Culture and Education. However, contemporary critics and the general public were offended by the contents of the three paintings *Philosophy, Jurisprudence* and *Medicine* and sadly the Austrian Congress found Klimt guilty of ‘pornography and excessive perversion’.

**The primary internal relations in Philosophy**

I believe the processes on the conceptual as well as the expressional level can be best described from the insider’s point of view. As previously set out, in a multilayered digital illustration the *form* is articulated through the expressional level via a

\(^{52}\) This pencil drawing titled *Philosophy (study)* can be see at: http://cgfa.sunsite.dk/klimt/p-klimt15.htm
‘descriptive narrative’, while the content is articulated through the conceptual level via the intermodal relations of layers the image is comprised of. The primary internal relations of the sign’s components are the relations between signifier and signified on the level of an individual layer.

Although the intermodal relations of the individual layers can be seen from the above representation comprised of 39 layers (the white layer named Background is not accounted for) that Philosophy is comprised of this layout does present the layers in the chronological order in which the image was built.
To investigate the *intermodal relations* between layers, I believe, is to conduct the analyses from the perspective of diachrony\(^\text{53}\); that means to describe the chronological order of the layers in which the content was constructed. In regard to the four domains in which the meaning is made (discourse, design, production and distribution), I am not going to talk about the conceptual part of the strata of design. In other words, I will not comment on the ideas that informed this image because it is extremely hard to describe the artist’s intentions. Later in this chapter I will discuss some of the ideas brought up by Roman Ingarden\(^\text{54}\) of how the object of cognition is structured and what the procedure which leads to knowledge of the artwork (Ingarden, 1973 A) is. In order to understand the image I will show the architectural steps of the artwork’s design process from the perspective of its diachrony via the chronological order in which the image was created.

I could go further and present the additional textual information regarding this image; such as the images of rendered figures before they have become one of the layers of which *Philosophy* (below) is comprised. However this information is not available via the layers of the multimodal text. These Photoshop files, depicted below, can only be viewed in the Adobe Photoshop CS\(^\text{55}\) browser.

![Image of rendered figures]

The renderings of ‘Philosophy’ in file browser

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53 Diachronic analysis studies change in a phenomenon (such as a code) over time (in contrast to synchronic analysis). Saussure, for example, saw the development of language in terms of synchronic states.


55 Adobe Photoshop CS browser has different layout than the new version of Adobe Photoshop CS3. Those renders can be saved as Photoshop file and imported to Photoshop as 2D format.
The infrastructure and the starting point of the image was the cube that occupies layer no. 25. Similarly as all figures of this image, the cube was computer-generated in Poser 5, software designed for movie animation. Five sides of the cube are partially covered by digital photographs depicting white azalea flowers. The whole cube (except the two lilies of death on its sides) is built from 9 layers: 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 22, 23, 29 and 31.

‘The cube’

The next step was the creation and embedding of the largest figure called ‘the Philosophy’.

Layers no. 7 and 36 in ‘Philosophy’

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56 Poser is a 3D rendering and animation software program optimized for models that depict the human figure (as well as some animal models) in three-dimensional form.
'Philosophy' occupies two layers 7 and 36 of which the latter depicts only the lower part of her body. ‘The intimate couple’ occupying layer no. 34 is positioned at the lower centre was the next element to be embedded. The left side of the image below portrays the couple’s positioning within the cube, the right side presents this element in detail.

layer no. 34: ‘The intimate couple’

After ‘the intimate couple’ the layer no. 24 containing ‘the lamenting male’ with ‘the comforting horse II’ was inserted in the center of the plane of the image.

layer no. 24: ‘The lamenting male and ‘the comforting horse II’

The next embedded element was the ‘The couple in transformation’ positioned in the lower central part, occupying layers no. 26 and 28.
Layers no. 26 & 28: ‘The couple in transformation’

‘The boxing woman’ occupying layer no. 17 followed. She colonizes the space just below Philosophy’s left hand.

Layer no. 17: ‘The boxing woman’

In the left bottom corner is depicted ‘The pushing man’. This figure occupies layer no. 16.

Layer no. 16 ‘The pushing man’
On layers no. 15 and 27 are seen male and female figures that are respectively recognized as ‘He and she thinker’.

‘The four quarters’, a group of two female figures and two skeleton figures that are mirror images of the female figures, can be seen on the image in middle left. The seclusion resides on layers: a skeleton on layer no. 14 mirroring a female form on layer no. 4, and a skeleton on layer no. 20 mirroring a female form on layer no. 21.

On layer no. 33 ‘The wretched sleeper’ is resting on the petal of the flower of death.
Layer no. 33 ‘The wretched sleeper’

The second largest figure, ‘The dead-self’, that occupies layer no. 3, hides behind the right corner of the cube.

Layer no. 3: ‘The dead-self’

On the bottom right corner, occupying layers no. 30 and 35 respectively, are two male figures. The one spatially situated further reaching the cube edge is ‘The climbing man’, the other situated closer running for his life is hence called ‘The runner’.
‘The leaving woman’ and ‘The frail’ were the last human figures to be inserted. Both are positioned in the lower right part occupying layers no. 38 and 32.

Apart from human figures the image also contains five horses. Except for ‘The comforting horse’ and ‘The comforting horse II’, the remaining horse figures were embedded in the final stage of the image’s creation.
The other three horse figures are ‘The gracefully balancing horse’ on layer no. 37 and ‘The mustangs’ on layers no. 8 and 9.

Finally the background that occupies layers no. 1 and 2 is composed of background fill and a photograph of Nephrolepis cordifolia (fishbone fern). The digital photograph has been manipulated by using filter ‘motion blur’ that caused the layer fill to appear as patches of different tones of green, brown and white blended together.
After introducing the chronological order of layers in which the image was built I would like to demonstrate how replacing one single layer can change the acquired understanding of the intermodal relations of this image.

I would argue that the replacement of the background photograph with the abstract fill has inevitably changed the understanding of the image as a whole.

In this part I have analysed the intermodal relations from the insider’s point of view. As previously set out, the image’s content is articulated through the conceptual level via the layers the image is comprised of, while the form is articulated through the expressional level via a ‘descriptive narrative’. I have investigated the primary internal relations of the sign’s components between signifier and signified on the level of an individual layer. The primary internal relation, in particular the content of the individual layers and their chronological order, play a crucial role in the interpretation of a multi-layered visual text. However, in order to connect the sign
elements in a lesser degree of disconnection, the contribution of the primary external relations that consists of the relations between the layers and the image as a whole, should not be overlooked.

Therefore, the next task of this chapter is to present a synchronic analysis of the image Philosophy in the form of a ‘descriptive-narrative’ from the creator’s (insider’s) perspective. This will be followed by allocating the sign’s asymmetry of the fragments that Philosophy is comprised of by distributing my concepts of: ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and ‘the conjoint duplet’. Finally, I position the roles of the primary relations within Ingarden’s notions of the cognition of the work of art.

The primary external relations in Philosophy

While the diachronic analysis of a multimodal text includes looking at the intermodal relations, namely looking into the primary internal relations between the sign’s components, the synchronic analysis, which includes the primary external relations between the sign’s components, concentrate on the relation between the content of the image’s layers and the narrative that describes the content of an image.

Traditionally the viewer who has no access to the multimodal text is restricted to interpreting the text in its monomodal form from a synchronic perspective, as if frozen in time. This approach can encompass a number of obstacles in the process of interpreting an artwork. Unlike the multi-layered structure of the multimodal image file that has the capacity to reveal the content of each individual layer, the mono-layered structure of the monomodal image does not have the capacity of viewing the whole content of each layer which in flatted form might be hidden by overlapping layers within the same file. It is the aspect of layering that allow the content of the top layer to hide the content of the layers positioned below. As a result, in regard to Philosophy, the outsider cannot see what is beyond the side of the cube as the fill of this panel partially overlaps the background.

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57 Synchronic analysis studies a phenomenon (such as a code) as if it were frozen at one time. Structuralist semiotics focuses on synchronous rather than diachronic analysis and is criticized for ignoring historicity.
Although from the creator’s perspective, the multimodal image offers to display all the individual layers in a chronological order. Hence the layers’ content can be seen individually: to minimize the degree of sign elements disconnection, the analysis of a multimodal image should not only include the diachronistic analysis, but also the synchronistic analysis. I believe that it is only when we employ both analyses that the signs of a multimodal text are most likely to be read in a lesser degree of disconnection. The prospect of the ‘descriptive-narrative’ unveiling the story depicted in *Philosophy* being different from the insider’s point of view in contrast with from outsider’s point of view will be discussed in the next chapter.

From the perspective on analyzing a multimodal text, the difference between the two analyses mentioned above is that the diachronic analyses are usually carried out on a conceptual level and the synchronic analyses are carried out on the expression level. However, as the creator of this image I have access to the *intermodal relations* of the multi-layered form, hence the analysis that I present are carried out from the diachronic and synchronistic perspectives. What follows bellow with the presentation of the ‘narrative-description’ of *Philosophy*. The story advances in the order in which the elements were created:

‘The cube’ is the central element of the image. The space within the cube symbolizes our inner world; our imaginary, our intrinsic knowledge, our feelings etc. The transparent material of the cube symbolizes the impossibility to penetrate someone’s mind or the impossibility of one’s thought being understood by someone else.

‘The philosophy’, the proportionally largest and most dominant figure, is positioned between and simultaneously belongs to the inside as well as to the outside world. The middle part of her body is pierced by the cube’s wall to show the delicate balance between the inside and outside world. The two worlds neither of which can exist without the other, are like the two perspectives from which the image should be interpreted in order to arrive at a balanced comprehension.

‘The intimate couple’ occupying the lower central part is rendered in an intimate moment. The woman arches back in pleasure at being penetrated by the male who is leaning over her holding up his upper body on his arms. They are busy to paying attention to the outside world which seems to be artificial to them. The space outside their own is not of their concern. Although for an outsider the pose in which the couple is depicted might suggests a sexual activity, the insider assigns a different signified. For the creator, the couple’s pose is the form and not the content. This couple celebrates the liberation of any potential restrictions of their freedom. The male
from ‘the intimate couple’ moves to the upper central part of the cube and becomes ‘The lamenting male’ that is accompanied by

‘The comforting horse I’. What made the male move up and why does he desire the company of a horse? He has moved up perhaps because he has acknowledged being trapped inside the cube, inside his own mind. The horse is gently touching his back, trying to calm him down. The horse symbolizes the strength that the male needs to escape from his uncertainties. When I tell you that I love horses; will this knowledge help you to work out the motivation for its presence? The male stops lamenting and becomes the male in

‘The couple in transformation’. She comes to him but he fails to notice her because he is busy admitting the presence of the cube and suddenly he remembers its content – his memories - and he makes an unsuccessful and final attempt to revisit them. She gets frustrated by his ignorance and begins hitting ‘Philosophy’s’ breast as

‘The boxing woman’. Unfortunately, her action gains her nothing. The male stops pondering and transfers into

‘The pushing man’ on the bottom left corner of the cube where he tries without any luck to push the cube’s wall forward, to break free. Once again, his limited powers do not allow him to cross the boundary between the inside and outside worlds. Nevertheless he keeps trying to understand that there will be no other result of his action than an acknowledgement of his failure to cross the boundary between the two worlds. Exhausted he walks to the right bottom part of the cube and leans against the wall in resignation and becomes

‘The thinker’. And perhaps as ‘the thinker’ he might be able to resolve his situation by meditating. She has also arrived at the conclusion that repeating her own mistakes will resolve nothing and she emerges through the skeleton of the seclusion called

‘The four quarters’ in the left corner of the outside world as she has left her inner world behind and now she is able to step back to deal with her inner world from outside. This ‘manifestation’ robs her of all her memories, now she only knows that there is no way back without him while he, in order to join her, has to step out by himself, on his own terms. To contemplate that he becomes

‘The wretched sleeper’, who is comforted by

‘The comforting horse II’

He than wakes up and finds himself alone, walks around the cube from behind and in a final act of madness, in which he wishes to be dead, he is able to see himself in the moment of his death becoming

‘The dead-self’ awakes him from his despair and as

‘The climber’ he begins to climb the cube, but soon he gives up and becomes

‘The runner’ who tries to run away from his image in the mirror. He acknowledges
the string of his actions and decides to become
‘The frail’ weeping on the side of the cube. Another lesson is learned, or is it? She sees him in tears but is unable to help him and she becomes
‘The leaving woman’ who leaves everything behind in search of new, fresh beginnings.

There is one two-part element which I have not articulated yet:
‘The gracefully balancing horse’ on the upper edge of the cube and
‘The mustangs’ on the outer rear wall are both the symbols of a freedom which is reached by sacrificing what one enjoys the most.

The next step is to allocate the degree of disconnection of the individual phases that make up the story and which can only be seen in a multimodal text within its \textit{intermodal relations}. The sign’s asymmetry of those individual elements can be allocated by using the three previously employed concepts: ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and ‘the conjoint duplet’. These are the main elements the image \textit{Philosophy} is comprised of:

The central female figure ‘The philosophy’ through her invoking hand gesture demonstrates my inability to display my feelings with this gesture, and for this reason the element of ‘the philosophy’ is an instance of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’.

‘The cube’, which is constructed from see-through glass that represents the undetermined boundary between inside and outside worlds, illustrates an idea of ‘the conjoint duplet’.

‘The couple in transformation’, may be interpreted individually: the male represents ‘the surreptitiousness of others’, while the female represents ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ and the whole phase (the total of the two elements) is the instance of ‘conjoint duplet’.

‘The intimate couple’ is an instance of a ‘conjoint duplet.’ Not only have I tried to express my ‘unspeakable taciturnity’ but also I have expressed the feelings of the other person as they impacted upon me and I strove understand them.

‘The four quarters’ is again an example of ‘the conjoint duplet’ as her actions are underlined by his actions.

‘The dead-self’ is an instance of interpreting the feelings of other people, therefore this is a case of ‘the surreptitiousness of others’.

‘The comforting horse I’ and ‘The comforting horse II’ represent ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’. The reason why I have chosen this particular kind of animal is because horses to me although silent, are the most faithful and understanding of all my friends and as such we share a lot of unspeakable silences.
For the same reasons ‘The horse gracefully balancing’ is also an instance of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’.

However ‘The mustangs’ which display my feelings as well as of other people represent the idea of ‘the conjoint duplet’.

I believe that this information about the asymmetry of the elements that Philosophy is made up of the insider’s point of view contributes meaningfully to the understanding of the intermodal relations of the form. As previously set out, the image’s content is articulated through the conceptual level via the layers the image is comprised of, while the form is articulated through the expressional level via a ‘descriptive narrative’. As indicated, my project in this part of the exegesis was to present a synchronic analysis in the form of a ‘descriptive-narrative’ of the image Philosophy from the perspective of the creator (the insider) followed by determination of the sign’s asymmetry of the fragments that Philosophy is comprised of by allocating my concepts of: ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and ‘the conjoint duplet’. In short, I investigated the primary internal relations of the sign’s components between signifier and signified on the level of an individual layer. I discussed the primary internal relation, in particular the content of the individual layers and their chronological order, showing how they play a crucial role in the interpretation of a multi-layered visual text as the primary external relations that consist of the relations between the layers and the image as a whole. In order to connect the sign elements in a lesser degree of disconnection, the contribution of both primary relations should not be overlooked.

In the next part of this chapter, I emphasize the roles of the primary relations in the cognition of a work of art from the perspective of an insider. I will consider the roles of both kinds of primary relations in the ‘cognition of the work of art’, which is discussed by Roman Ingarden in The Cognition of the Literary Art of Work, and the complex issues of ‘intentionality / truth’ debated in his earlier book The Literary Work of Art. I believe that especially the latter should be accounted for in any interpretation that is part of the processes of signification.

58 Synchronic analysis studies a phenomenon (such as a code) as if it were frozen at one time. Structuralist semiotics focuses on synchronic rather than diachronic analysis and is criticized for ignoring historicity.
The cognition of multimodal work of art; intentionality/truth

Although I have already presented the analysis of my image Philosophy from the insider’s point of view, I have not yet specified what the underlying assumptions of this project were. The fundamental claim is that in the case of a multimodal text, the sign components in the process of interpretation might be disconnected in a lesser degree of disconnection if the intermodal relations are accessible to the interpreter, who can than examine both primary levels of the sign’s elements disconnection.

This analytical method, which includes the twofold underlying assumptions, should be redefined before engaging in it. I believe that this method presents the position of two questions in the beginning of any semiotic investigation. According to Roman Ingarden those two crucial questions are:

1. How is the object of cognition structured?
2. What is the procedure which will lead to knowledge of the work?
   (How does the cognition of the work of art come about and to what or can it lead?) (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 4)

Whilst Ingarden’s inquiries are predominately focused on literary works of art, his ideas can potentially become crucially important in designing a semiotic method. I believe if those ideas were introduced into the reading of a contemporary text, for instance a multimodal text, such a semiotic method could interpret this text in a more comprehensive way than other methods can offer.

Ingarden claims that ‘only after having answered these two questions can one meaningfully ask how the literary work of art should be cognized in order to achieve satisfactory results’ (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 4). His first concern with the structure of the object clearly suggests the importance of the role of the structure in the process of ‘cognition’, while his second concern lies in the purpose of the ‘cognition’ which indicates the significance of being familiar with the reasons behind the cognition of an artwork. And this is precisely what has been integrated and frequently positioned throughout my line of argument in which I claim that the reading of the image becomes more comprehensive if, firstly, the text is investigated in its multimodal form, and secondly, the semiotic method used to analyse the text is designed to accommodate the form and content of the text. This also contributes to my hypothesis, also maintained by Levi-Strauss, that a complex text should be investigated from within its fragments.
Ingarden also talks about ‘the structural elements and interconnections among the cooperating functions’. He asserts:

Thus when we describe the cognitive processes involved in reading a text in their unfolding and their specific character and judge whether they are positively effective—that is, whether they can lead to objectively valid knowledge of the literary work—we presuppose neither the validity of the results of an individual reading nor the effectiveness of the cognitive functions involved in it. We must distinguish here between two different procedures: first the reading of a specific literary work, or the cognition of that work which takes place during such reading, and, second, that cognitive attitude which leads to an apprehension of the essential structure and peculiar character of the literary work of art such. These are two different modes of cognition and yield two quite different kinds of knowledge. (Ingarden, 1973 A, pp. 9-10)

Hence, to render his claims in the terms of a semiotic method that is developed to analyse a multimodal text, if the ‘cognitive processes involved in reading a text in their unfolding’ can be thought as the process of semiosis in which a signified is attached to a signifier on the level of an individual layer deriving from the structural knowledge of the text, then the second of the different procedures of an individual reading, the ‘cognition of that work which takes place during such reading’ would be the procedure of writing an individual interpretation, such as knowledge of the reader’s perspective.

The ‘cognitive attitude which leads to an apprehension of the essential structure and peculiar character’ (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 10) would be the different procedures that are involved in reading texts of different modalities, such as the dissimilarities between the readings of a multimodal and monomodal texts. Both of those aspects of the reading procedures are incorporated into my semiotic method. Ingarden also suggests that:

The second kind of cognition differs from an individual reading to such an extent that, even if we completely described the course and functions of an individual reading in our investigation, we would still be merely at the threshold of the difficult problem: What constitute the general nature of the literary work of art? (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 10)

Although Ingarden sees the realization of what constitutes the nature of the literary work of art as a difficult problem, I believe that ‘the general nature’ or, in the instance of a multimodal text, the phenomena of the physical structure – of which the artwork offers to be realized - plays a crucial role in the process of semiosis especially by looking into the intermodal relations and in case of multimodal text.
Ingarden also tells us that ‘the individual readings only give us a supply of phenomena which can be apprehended in their essential content’ (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 11). It is one of the multimodal text’s aspects of being approachable not only from within its ‘essential content’ – the monomodal form– but also being accessible from within its fragments that the multimodal text is comprised of, hence the applicability of his theory to the digital artwork. The structural phenomena of multimodal text can indeed, as demonstrated previously, be apprehended in an increasingly comprehensive way.

The answer to Ingarden’s fundamental question: ‘How is the object of cognition structured?’ in the case of multimodal text is clear: its multi-layered structure is made up from two or more layers. The answer to the second question: ‘What is the procedure which will lead to knowledge of the work? (How does the cognition of the work of art come about and to what or can it lead?)’ in this particular case of study is also clear. The readings of two different perspectives, from the perspective of an insider and an outsider seeking the similarity within those readings, makes intelligible the text’s content and form not only on the level on expression but also conceptually.

Furthermore, Ingarden’s concept of the ‘intentionality of the content’ is no less important for the processes of a semiosis. This consideration includes an idea that says that:

The total content of the object intended as identical in many acts “transcends” the content of the object belonging to an isolated intentional act. (Ingarden, 1973 B, p. 125)

For Ingarden those individual acts are not isolated because they stand ‘in a determinate spot in a temporally extended plurality of acts as their member’ (Ingarden, 1973 B, p. 125). If we think of these ‘individual acts’ as the individual layers, we can see the similarity between the literary work of art and multimodal text where the mode in which the image is interpreted also has its ‘temporally extended plurality’ (Ingarden, 1973 B, p. 125).
if the image is displayed in its multimodal form. It can be concluded from this that the ‘total content of the object intended’ changes according to the mode in which the image is perceived.

Conclusion

In this chapter I maintain Levi-Strauss’s claim suggesting that in order to understand a text in a more comprehensive way we need to look at the fragments the text is comprised of independently. I employed again here the previously developed discourse method by presenting the analysis of the multi-layered structure from the insider’s point of view. Those analyses included the investigation of the chronological order in which the image Philosophy was created, followed by the analysis of the degree of disconnection of the fragments that Philosophy is comprised of. The digital illustration Philosophy is comprised of a large number of layers and therefore its layout is fitting for an investigation of intermodal relations. I also claimed that in a multilayered digital illustration the form is articulated through the expressional level via a ‘descriptive narrative’, while the content is articulated through the conceptual level via the intermodal relations of layers the image is comprised of. Further I argued that the primary internal relations of the sign’s components are the relations between signifier and signified on the level of an individual layer.

While the diachronic analysis of a multimodal text includes looking at the intermodal relations, namely looking into the primary internal relations between the sign components, the synchronic analysis, which includes the primary external relations between the sign components, concentrate on the relation between the content of the image’s layers and the narrative that describes the content of an image. Since the relations between sign components can be investigated on two levels, my task was to analyse those relations on the level of the primary internal relations and on the level of primary external relations.

Therefore I proceeded to claim that while the analysis of a monomodal text can be executed only on an expressional level (the flatted form of the image), the multimodal text has the capacity to also be analysed on the conceptual level (the multi-layered structure).
As previously argued, the inability to access the intermodal relations in the process of semiosis might result in the sign’s elements disconnected in a higher degree than if they were articulated within its multi-layered structure. This assertion will be supported in the following chapter in which I will compare and juxtapose the readings from two perspectives: those of an insider and of an outsider.

In brief, in this chapter I examined the sign components of a multimodal text. I presented an analysis executed on the conceptual level in which I looked into the primary internal relations between the layers of the image. Those analyses were followed by an investigation executed on the level of expression in which I explored the primary external relations between the layers and the narrative of the image. Lastly, I emphasized the roles of both kinds of primary relations in the cognition of a work of art in which I debated Ingarden’s twofold underlying assumption that questions the ‘structure of the object of cognition’ and ‘the procedures involved in acquiring the knowledge of the work’. I believe both questions should be answered before any semiotic method has been designed.
Chapter 4
The meeting ground: the parergonality of a layer

But this here, this place is announced as a place deprived of place. It runs the risk, in taking place, of not having its own domain. But this does not deprive it, for all that, of jurisdiction and foundation: what has no domain or field of its own, no “fields of objects” defining its “domain,” can have a “territory” and a “ground” possessing a “proper legality”.

Introduction

In chapter three I focused on developing a semiotic method suitable for articulating newly emerged multimodal digital text from an insider’s point of view. This included an examination of the intermodal relations between the sign components of a multimodal text of the digital image Philosophy, which was followed by an analysis on the conceptual level in which I looked into the primary internal relations between the layers of the image and an exploration of the primary external relations between the layers and the narrative of the image. Finally I emphasized the roles of both categories of primary relations within the process of interpreting, particularly the cognition of a work of art which links with the Ingarden’s previously debated twofold underlying assumption; the questions of the ‘structure of the object of cognition’ and ‘the procedures involved in acquiring the knowledge of the work’ (Ingarden, 1973 A, p. 4).

In this chapter I extend my analysis of the outsider’s interpretation of the same image. My aim is to investigate the existence and the conditions in which not only the individual readings of an artwork could be conceptualized, but also that the conceptualization of an artwork from different perspectives would also be possible. Those conditions then could be thought of as the space in-between as I believe the reading is positioned somewhere between the insider’s and outsider’s articulations. It is a space that could act as a ‘meeting ground’ in which both parties can come face to face to negotiate the conceptualization of an artwork, and in which all aspects from the both perspectives could be accounted for and negotiated in order to arrive at a reading which is informed by the outsider’s and the insider’s interpretation in which

59 (Derrida, 1987 p. 38, author’s emphases)
I believe, the sign elements would be disconnected to a lesser degree. Hence I would like to know, under what conditions can both parties ‘meet’, and what is the method of getting the space *in-between* inhabited in the process of interpreting, in particular interpreting the text of a multimodal digital image that, because of its structural aspects, offers to be articulated in non-traditional ways that, for instance, might include the investigation of the *intermodal relations* on a conceptual as well as on an expressional level. The digital multimodal text is not the only one whose structure and attributes offer themselves to interpretation in non-traditional ways. For example the production of multi-media theatre performances, in which we can investigate the *intermodal relations* between the modal attributes of the play’s structural components, could be interpreted on a number of different levels; the projection of still or moving images, to name a few possible aspects that might be considered.

Hence I want to look into how the relation between the insider’s and outsider’s readings shifts and displaces its ‘groundedness’\(^60\), which Niall Lucy describes as: ‘the appearance of a certain determined or transcendental difference between inside and outside… It can be shown that, as a ground, the nature of this difference takes the form of complex and shifting relations, thereby displacing its groundedness’ (Lucy, 2004, pp. 52-53). For my purposes, to demonstrate the inevitable shift between oppositional readings of one artwork, the concept of ‘groundedness’, if successfully linked to Derrida’s concept of ‘parergonality’ (Derrida, 1987, p. 73), could lend me enough substratum to demonstrate the difference between the contrasting sign’s disconnections between the outsider’s and the creator’s perspective on the level of expression.

In short, the aim of the first part of this chapter is to investigate the relation between ‘parergonality’ and ‘groundedness’ and to make a suggestion that they have an impact on the fluctuation of the transcendental boundaries between *ergon* and *parergon*. I assert that in the case of a multimodal text, due to its structural aspects, those boundaries are less transparent than they are in a monomodal text. Firstly I examine the repositioning of *ergon* and *parergon*, in which I attempt to define those two aspects of the discourse on the frame. The positioning of the ‘work of the frame’ (the framing work) (Lucy, 2004, p. 53) in which I will outline what separates *ergon*
from perergon will follow. Finally, I offer a rationale which explains the extent to which the groundedness in a multimodal and monomodal text is displaced.

In the second part of this chapter I will put the final stage of the semiotic method that I have developed throughout my thesis into practice by comparing the readings of Philosophy from two different perspectives that are derived from different modalities.

**The repositioning of the ergon and parergon**

I start my investigation of the repositioning of the ergon and parergon by looking at a paragraph from Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Judgment in which Kant, in regard to a parergon, talks about the theory of aesthetics and where he talks about charm, design, composition and how they contribute to the beauty:

Their variety and contrast, seem to contribute to the beauty, does not mean that, because they themselves are agreeable, they furnish us, as it were, with a supplement to, and one of the same kind as, our liking for them. For all they do is to make the form intuitable more precisely, determinately, and completely, with they also enliven the presentation by means of their charm, by arousing and sustaining the attention we direct toward the object itself. (Kant, 1987, p. 226)

Kant, who is interested in the requirements of the work in order to distinguish between the outside and the inside of any art object, uses the examples of ornaments that are consequentially framed to separate the parts that are inherently set to work against each other. Kant continues:

Even what we call ornaments (parerga), i.e., what does not belong to the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent, but [is] only an extrinsic addition, does indeed increase our taste’s liking, and yet it too does so only by its form, as in case of picture frame . . . (Kant, 1987 p. 226)

Although here Kant does not directly considers ‘parergonality’ (the work of the frame) as such, he provokes the presence of it by positioning art’s attributes such as: charm, design, composition.

In the ‘discourse on the frame’ to distinguish the inside from the outside, the terms ergon and parergon are used. While the Classical Greek term ergon means ‘work’, the term parergon means ‘outside the work’. But Derrida, commenting on Kant’s take on parerga (Kant’s term for parergon, which for him means ‘what does not belong to
the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent’), shows that the meaning of the latter is not so straightforward as it seems at first.

The ‘outside the work’ [hors d’oeuvre\(^{61}\)] does not stand simply outside the work’ but ‘also acting alongside, right up against the work (ergon)’ and it ‘is what the principal subject must not become, by being separated from itself. (Derrida, 1987 p. 54, author’s emphases)

Lucy comments on ‘the work of the frame’: ‘The essential originality and integrity of the ergon depends therefore on the essential secondariness of the parergon, or depends on its supplementarity’ (Lucy, 2004, p. 53), explaining that ‘the relations between parergonality and supplementarity are, in word, supplementary’ (Lucy, 2004 p. 53). He clarifies the idea of supplementarity:

The very idea of the work itself is constituted only in the work of supplementarity, so that the difference between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the work is rendered undecidedly. (Lucy, 2004, p. 137)

If the place of the frame belongs neither to the ergon nor the parergon, where, in this relation, is the space of ‘the frame’ situated? Although Derrida proclaims that: ‘There is a frame, but the frame does not exist’ (Derrida, 1987, p. 81), viewing the image in specific modality might change this view.

Derrida’s comment on the assumption of aesthetic judgment might bear a validity to my claim. He states:

The whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic. Aesthetic judgment must properly bear upon intrinsic beauty, not on finery and surrounds. Hence one must know-this is a fundamental presupposition, presupposing what is fundamental-how to determine the intrinsic-what is framed-and know what one is excluding as frame and outside-the-frame. (Derrida, 1987 p. 63)

In regard to the discourse on the frame, from the perspective of an outsider, I believe that the highest challenge the interpreter is faced with is the recognition of what belongs where within a frame. It is the outsider who under the normal conditions, is presented with less information about the intermodal relations of the multi-layered file, and who therefore finds the positioning of the ergon and parergon more challenging than an insider does. As debated and demonstrated earlier, only the insider, generally the creator, can view the content of the layers the image file is comprised of. Therefore

\(^{61}\) French translation of ‘outside the work.’
the insider, who is aware of the discourse and design processes (through the creation of the files), and who has access to the multi-layered structure of the file, has an adequate understanding of the intermodal relations. Hence the associations within a frame are more likely to be determined by an insider.

Furthermore that the boundaries between ergon and parergon fluctuate according to the amount of information of the intermodal relations and hence according to the mode in which the image is presented. In the case of a multimodal text, in which each layer can be individually inspected, the boundaries between ergon and parergon are more transparent and less transcendental than in a monomodal text. 62

Derrida continues the negotiation by attempting to draw a line between the two components. He objects to Kant's Third Critique 63 by stating that:

. . . one has already located its frame and the limit of its field. But nothing seems more difficult to determine. The Critique presents itself as a work (ergon) with several sides, and as such it ought to allow itself to be centered and framed, to have its ground delimited by being marked out, with a frame, against a general background. (Derrida, 1987, p. 63)

Derrida also comments that it is difficult to locate the frame in the Critique as he does not know what is ‘essential and what is accessory in a work’. He studies Kant’s reply to the question: “What is a frame”?

It’s a parergon, a hybrid of outside and inside, but a hybrid which is not a mixture or a half-measure, an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside’. (Derrida, 1987, p. 63)

Kant also gives us an example of the parergon that he positions ‘alongside the frame’ using examples of clothing and column, to which Derrida rightfully objects that ‘the choice of examples, and their association, is not self-evident’ (Derrida, 1987 p. 64).

From a perspective that involves interpreting a multimodal text, I believe that what the frame is made of are the differences between what is ‘essential and what is

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62 This situation could be also demonstrated on the life and post-production experience of a multi-media theatre production. An audience who has access to the intermodal relations during the production is more likely to determine what within a frame belongs where than spectators who watch the recording of the production which, for technical reasons, could not possibly ‘record’ everything that was happening on and around the stage, and could only select one of many moments in time and space.

accessory in a work’ in the process of assigning signifiers to the signifieds. In this case the ‘essential’ would be the limited access to the intermodal relations, and the ‘accessory’ would be the total information about the intermodal relations. Hence the amount of information of intermodal relations directly contributes to allocating the frame and therefore allocating what belongs where within the frame.

I believe that a multimodal text, due to the structural aspects of the mode, displays the boundary of what belongs where as more transparent than the monomodal text does. Furthermore, I believe that the boundary is a predicament that has to be solely negotiated by a viewer who allocates the frame by determining the degree of the sign’s asymmetry. This then causes the boundaries, which are repositioned within each individual reading, to fluctuate. Therefore, the boundaries’ fluctuation between ergon and parergon is directly influenced by the sign’s asymmetry. This conclusion can be supported not only by Lucy’s statement: ‘While the necessity of a seemingly transcendental difference between inside and outside is a “permanent requirement” of a thought in general . . . it reveals itself especially in all understandings of art’ (Lucy, 2004, p. 53), but also by Derrida who states:

This permanent requirement—to distinguish between the internal or proper sense and the circumstance of the object being talked about—organizes all philosophical discourse on art and meanings as such, from Plato to Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. This requirement presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and outside of the art object, here a discourse on the frame. (Derrida, 1987, p. 45)

Moreover, if Derrida’s presupposition of the knowledge of ‘what is essential and what is accessory in the work’ is what is needed to allocate ergon and parergon within a frame, then as previously suggested by Lucy, the understanding of the boundaries that reveals itself especially in all understandings of art, lies also in the understanding of the art’s modality.

**Outlining ‘the work of the frame’**

The ‘work of the frame’, or the parergonality can only be observed if the position of the ergon and the parergon within the work of art can be outlined. According to Lucy, Kant did not see that the essential originality and integrity of the inside of the work ‘is given to it by the work of the frame’ (Lucy, 2004 p. 53). However Lucy claims that ‘for Derrida it is a framing work that separates ergon and parergon; the ergon is produced by the work of the frame. To be constituted as a work in itself (full of an essential
originality and integrity) the ergon must be set off against a background, and this is what the frame works to achieve’ (Lucy, 2004 pp. 53-4). According to Kant, then, the parergonality, or the framing work, should be seen outside of the work (the outside at work on the inside, as it were), the parergon, and the ergon is an effect of the latter. The debate of exactly where outside of the work of the parergonality is offers no conclusion.

However, Kant talks about ergon, in order to be constituted as the work in itself, as being set off against a background. In regard to the background, if a physical work of art is not constituted of physical dimensions, what is it constituted of? From the multimodal text’s perspective the answer could become surprisingly undermining. Provided that we can define ‘what’ in a multimodal text separates the ergon from parergon, then we should be able to determine ‘what’ the parergonality achieves.

For Derrida, as we have seen, what separates ergon from parergon is the framing work, and what it achieves is its parergonality. Lucy claims: ‘Parergonality is outside-work: the ergon is an effect of the parergon’ (Lucy, 2004, p. 54). Hence from a multimodal text perspective I believe that what is to be achieved by the frame work, under specific conditions, can act as the space in-between (the meeting ground) where aspects of oppositional perspectives could be accounted for, and that is to be inhabited to negotiate the dissimilar conceptualizations of an artwork perceived in different modalities. Derrida in the Truth in Painting discusses how the concepts of art are produced:

No “theory,” no “practice,” no “theoretical practice” can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame, which is the decisive structure of what is at stake, at the visible limit to (between) the interiority of meaning (put under shelter by the whole hermeneuticist, semioticist, phenomenologicalist, and formalist tradition) and (to) all the empiricisms of the extrinsic which, incapable of either seeing or reading, miss the question completely (Derrida, 1987, pp. 61, author’s emphasis)

The ‘field’, Derrida talks about here, is the field in which the concepts of art are produced. Effectively the work of the frame accommodates this space in which the art is conceptualized.

I believe that a multimodal text offers a space, that I call ‘the meeting ground’, in which an art work can be conceptualized. Its existence is preconditioned by the knowledge of the discourse and design processes that have a direct impact on how the artwork is articulated. I also believe that the ‘meeting ground’ does not only
accommodate the conceptualization of the art work from one perspective but that it also offers a space in which the articulations from different perspectives, such as the articulations from an insider and outsider perspective, can be negotiated.

**Modality’s influence on the fluctuation of groundedness**

In order to see how the different modalities influence the shift of the groundedness, we need to position the ‘permanent requirement’ of distinguishing between the internal and external. Derrida continues insisting that: ‘One must know—how to determine the intrinsic—what is framed—and know what one is excluding as frame and outside-the-frame’ (Derrida, 1987, p. 63). I believe this prior requirement, that has become an essential part of philosophical discourse from the time of Plato to contemporary philosophers can, in the instance of digital art and as a consequence its media, be realized.

Among others, one of the Naill Lucy’s concerns is to examine the idea of ‘inside-outside’. For Lucy, the concept ‘inside-outside’ can be demonstrated by determining what is outside and inside of a glass of water. In this respect he talks about the shifting relations as a result of displacing its groundedness (Lucy, 2004, pp. 52-53), although according to Lucy ‘the appearance of a certain determined or transcendental difference between inside and outside is essential to the thought of metaphysics. However, it can be shown that, as a ground, the nature of this difference takes the form of complex and shifting relations, thereby displacing its groundedness’ (Lucy, 2004, pp. 52-53). I believe that ‘the appearance of a certain determined or transcendental difference between inside and outside is essential’ in the process of interpreting multimodal text as in multimodal text the groundedness is shifted by interpretations of different modes.

Lucy comments on Derrida’s perspective:

While the necessity of a seemingly transcendental difference between inside and outside is a “permanent requirement” of thought in general, Derrida argues that it reveals itself especially in all understanding of art’. (Lucy, 2004, p. 53)
I believe that this idea of the ‘understanding of art’ also includes the understanding of the artwork’s structure. Lucy continues on the work of the frame stating: ‘this activity, this work, is what frames perform, which may seem obvious in the case of paintings but is no less effective in regard to other aesthetic objects’ (Lucy, 2004, p. 53). According to Lucy the work of the frame ‘meets the permanent requirement of making it seem that the difference between inside and outside is transcendental – not made, but natural (Lucy, 2004, p. 53). It is this ‘seemingly natural’ difference between the inside and outside that makes me believe that the ‘meeting ground’ could be furnished by the ‘discourse on the frame’, by what has been accessory and essential between the insider’s and outsider’s allocation of the ergon and parergon, that will be indicated in the second part of this chapter in which I present readings from two different perspectives.

However, my research leads me to an insight that every individual interpretation, whether from the insider’s or the outsider’s perspective, shifts the ‘framing work’. This causes the groundedness of a ‘framing work’ to shift and as a consequence this created space can accommodate the negotiation of the two or more conceptualizations of an artwork.

Although these processes involved in the conceptualization of an artwork can be in some degree accessed by both parties; by the insider and also by the outsider, the space which accommodates these processes inevitably shifts with each individual interpretation. In order to negotiate more than one conceptualization of one artwork, the space needs both to fluctuate and to shift at the same time. As Lucy has already demonstrated, there is no rigid edge between ergon and parergon. As a matter of fact, from the ‘meeting ground’ perspective, I claim that those edges are directly affected by the interpretations from both perspectives (outsider’s and insider’s perspective), and that the groundedness is shifted as a result of accommodating the oppositional perspectives.

Hence it can be said that it is the ‘framing work’ that fluctuates and shifts according to the degree in which the sign’s elements are disconnected. And although the framing work inevitably separates ergon and parergon, the process of the separation enables the fluctuation of parergonality which results in shifting the parergonality’s groundedness. In conclusion, I believe that the artwork’s modality, that is also responsible for a sign to be articulated in different asymmetries, is directly accountable for the shift of the groundedness by repositioning the ergon and parergon within the frame.
In the following, I will compare the readings of *Philosophy* undertaken from the insider’s and outsider’s point of view. This final stage of my semiotic method supports my argument claiming that indeed the disconnection of sign components varies according to the perspective from which the image is articulated and also the modality in which the artwork is expressed. Moreover, I will demonstrate that to allocate the conventionally transcendental edges of *ergon* and *parergon* is, in multimodal text, less challenging than in monomodal text.

**The initiation of a ‘meeting ground’**

In chapter three using a designed semiotic method that included the inspection of a multimodal text I have presented an interpretation of an image from an insider’s perspective. This included analysing the content of the image on the conceptual level via the *intermodal relations* of the multimodal text, which was followed by analysing the form on the level of expression via ‘descriptive-narrative’.

At this point my project seeks to integrate analyses done on the level of expression executed from three individual perspectives. It is from this that I hope to verify my theory that an image articulated from two different perspectives (from the outsider’s and insider’s perspective) not only must inevitably vary in the degree of a sign’s components disconnection, as is done by different individuals who bring to the activity different knowledges; but also because the outsider’s perspective lacks the knowledge of the *intermodal relations* of the layers the image is comprised of. As I have already demonstrated, the knowledge of the *intermodal relations* plays a crucial role in the process of semiosis. Hence, I believe that the creator, who articulates the image from the insider’s point of view and who is familiar with the discourse and design processes will articulate the text in a more comprehensive way than a viewer who does not have such knowledge. Therefore in order to define *parergonality* both perspectives of interpreting multimodal image should be incorporated. Although the ‘death of The Author’ has been debated by many contemporaries, I believe in the case of analysing a multimodal text, the author (creator) has still much to say and contribute to the interpretation of his/her own artwork, especially if that means presenting information which under normal conditions is hidden to the outsider.

In *Image, Music, Text* Barthes claims: ‘the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter that ones with the others, in such way as never to rest on any one of them’ (Barthes, 1977b,
p. 146). I agree that an author cannot communicate ideas in their originality; however, from the perspective of an author of a multimodal text who participates in the analysis of her own art the ‘removal of the Author’ generates problems for making meaning(s). Only the author is familiar with the intermodal relations of the digital artwork’s construction. Barthes confirms:

Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing . . . then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is ‘explained’. (Barthes, 1977b, p. 147)

Barthes describes the reader as:

. . . the space on which all the quotations that make up the writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origins but its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply someone who hold together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (Barthes, 1977b, p. 148)

In the case of interpreting a multimodal text, although some critics might proclaim the death of Author, I believe an interpretation of a multimodal text will only benefit from being analysed and interpreted from two perspectives: that of the insider’s and the outsider’s point of view.

The shift and displacement of parergonality; the meeting of a two perspectives

The first reading of my image Philosophy was done by Dr. Alex Main64, Associate Professor at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia and by Michael O’Toole, Emeritus Professor of the same university65.

64 Dr. Main is currently active in counseling and advocacy for traumatized refugees, and in art therapy. He is the author of twenty one books, monographs and major public reports on police training, counseling, teacher education, art therapy and radio drama. His reading was informed by professional research that includes areas of study such as: cross-cultural psychology, intercultural communication, the psychology of religion, policing and crime, the evaluation of education, and art therapy to name a few.

65 Michael O’Toole’s early career as a teacher of Russian language and literature at the Universities of Liverpool and Essex put him in contact with some of the most challenging and original theories on art and literature and other semiotic systems explored by Russian Formalist and the Prague School of Thinkers. He works closely with linguists of the Australian
While Michael O’Toole approached the matter from the perspective of an experienced semiotician, Alex Main arrived at his interpretations from the perspective of an adept counselor. Neither analysts had not seen the image prior to the analysis and both had only limited time to supply me with their readings. Neither was given the title of the image, nor the story behind it. While Michael O’Toole has not previously seen any of my artworks, Alex Main is familiar with my work, although he did not see *Philosophy* beforehand.

As there is neither need, nor space within this study to present or deal with the analyses in full, the texts of the two analyses are appended. Instead of working with the whole text, I selected individual scenes to demonstrate the outcome of identical signs being interpreted from three individual perspectives.

![Image of a praying mantis]

‘The philosophy’

The most prominent element of the whole picture is the female figure that I call ‘The philosophy’. For the creator this element represents the dilemma of being in-between. She is neither outside, nor inside the cube. She personifies the ultimate dilemma of a positioning. Her hand gesture calls for attention and for me as the author can be only interpreted via the concept of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ (an

‘discourse analysis’ school led by Michael Halliday in fields of literary stylistics, general semiotics, art and aesthetics. Inevitably a selection of such analysts has brought together two very different and indeed extremely challenging readings.
idea which describes my intention of seeking a ‘taciturnity’ without having the desire ever to find it). O’Toole notices a number of details on this figure. He describes her ankles and feet being depicted in a dancing position and her gesture being ambiguous: welcoming but also being threatened by her outstretched fingers. He sees her as drawing the viewer with the direct gaze, eyes and arms into the world(s) of the work. He comments on her arms and breasts as being youthful and beautiful; her eyelids, lips and ears as being naturalistically textured.

For Main ‘Philosophy’ represent a number of cross-examinations of the image’s content. He describes her arms directed at him and her eyes looking at him. He questions her gesture asking if she wants to embrace, grab or accost him. He believes, similarly to O’Toole, that she knows about the presence of other figures but she does not pay attention to them; he wants to know if she abandoned them. He considers the possibility of her dropping the cube resulting in letting go of the figures and at the same time abandoning their symbolic value to her.

In this first example it is interesting to see how the individual interpretations differ. O’Toole interprets ‘Philosophy’ s’ gesture as threatening but I had no intention of depicting ‘Philosophy’ with a gesture that might threaten the viewer. Main interpreted this gesture in a similar way. For reasons stated previously I cannot offer an explanation for this in written form but only via the ideas which I use to describe my intentionality such as ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ or ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and which were articulated in full in chapter two. Nevertheless I had no intention to threaten the viewer. Perhaps for me the gesture promises something that I do not want to find out.

‘The lamenting man’, ‘The wretched sleeper’ and ‘The pushing man’

The next element I selected for this comparative study is ‘The pushing man’. Michael O’Toole describes this male figure with an erect penis and with outstretched
hands, gaping mouth and staring eyes that express shock. For Alex Main this figure illustrates a consideration of having to try to break out of the cube, assuming that the figure clearly signals a strong passion of some sort. But the viewer is not sure that this feeling is fully symbolized for him and he defines it as a feeling without name. For the creator this figure, which tries to break free, has limited powers that do not allow him to cross the boundary between the inside and the outside world and it is a representation of the concept of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’.

It is becoming evident now that while the author predominately ‘plays’ with the intrinsic attributes of the image, both analysts, not having the opportunity to inspect the intermodal relations, mostly interpret the ‘determinable’ extrinsic attributes of the image. Michael O’Toole interprets exclusively the extrinsic attributes of the scene ‘pushing man’, while Alex Main chooses to describe the intrinsic attributes but nevertheless struggles to assign the signifieds which would be closer to my interpretation.

Michael O’Toole sees ‘The wretched sleeper’ as one of the most challenging elements of the image. He describes this scene as a new born child enclosed in a placenta, while Alex Main perceives it as a figure lying on a petal of lily - pointing out that the lily is a symbol of death - almost as if damaged, injured or neglected. He thinks that the figure might be a ‘broken male’ that marks the death of love or the death of something pure. For the author this scene is a symbolization of a resignation as the act of resignation triggers in many instances tiredness.

As in the previous scene, here both interpreters drawn upon the extrinsic attributes by describing what they see. However, I believe that if they had access to the intermodal relations their understanding would be different as they could clearly see the content of individual layers and hence might assign signifieds with meanings similar to those assigned by the author. They would clearly have more information to inform their analysis.

This scene can also be interpreted through the idea of a ‘conjoint duplet’: an idea an idea that conjoins the two previously implemented concepts: ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’ and ‘the surreptitiousness of others’, in which the first is seeking something without desiring to find it and the other is describing other people’s feelings the way I experience them.
Michael O’Toole sees ‘The intimate couple’ as a crouching figure of indeterminate sex, with the crouching pose suggesting either birth or insemination. Alex Main arrives at the same conclusion that what is seen is a crouching figure and he questions if the figure crouches out of fear or indecision. He further speculates that the pose signifies a readiness to pounce, and that if he is ready to escape, then from what is he escaping? For him this is an ambiguous figure, neither male or female.

The creator’s intention in this scene is to accentuate the intensity of a co-being of two entities in an intimate moment. For the creator the couple is concerned only with their own inner worlds. This is also an example of a ‘conjoint duplet’. Although ‘The intimate couple’ is one of the most challenging scenes, as the layers that comprised the elements that depict this scene are numerous and sometime they depict the element only partially; both interpreters arrived at similar conclusions derived from their understanding of the extrinsic attributes: the intrinsic attributes, because they are interpreting a monomodal text, stayed hidden to them.
Michael O’Toole comments on the next element, ‘The dead-self’, as a figure, glossy but non-transparent, vaguely discerned in the red background, being either child or an old man who may represent Death. He is alarmed that the figure appears to be looking at and gesturing towards us. Alex Main describes this figure as a dark male who represents another symbol of an emotional ambiguity suggesting that his hands might be reaching out for an escape, or they may belong to someone else who is about to lay hold on him and prevent him from leaving. For the creator this scene represents an awakening from despair and in some instances a departure from the one’s own despair means to become acclimatized with one’s own death. This is an instance of ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’. Interestingly Michael O’Toole’s interpretation is closer to mine while Alex Main saw the figure differently.

‘The couple in transformation’

‘The couple in transformation’ is one of the more prominent components of the image. The creator sees this couple rather as two individuals, the female figure as acknowledging the presence of the cube and the male figure as recalling the content of his memories. This scene is an example of a ‘conjoint duplet’ as the author tries to depict her own and also someone else’s desires. However, Michael O’Toole interprets the extrinsic attributes rather than attempting to interpret the intrinsic ones and he comments on the woman standing in front of a man as having hands in a rather anxious pose and her labia as appearing slightly apart. In this instance, perhaps due to the intimacy of the content, Alex Main makes no observation of this couple. It is probable that if Alex Main had an opportunity to inspect the content of the individual layers that are part of this scene, he would most likely assign signifieds similar to those of the author.

The outcome of the examination of the readings presented above, that includes the views from the insider’s and outsider’s perspectives, confirms my hypothesis that the
viewer’s perspective directly contributes to the level of degree in which the sign’s components are connected and also that the text’s modality directly contributes to the sign’s asymmetry. It can be concluded that the sign’s components disconnections vary according to the perspective from which the image is articulated, and the modality in which the artwork is presented to the viewer also plays a crucial role. I also suggest that, due to the structural aspects of the multimodal text, the otherwise conventionally transcendental ‘edges’ of ergon and parergon are more clearly discerned here than in monomodal text. This is evident when we access the readings from the outsider’s perspective, where the viewer was not able to access the multi-layered structure of the image file and arrived into their interpretations by ‘reading’ the extrinsic attributes rather than the intrinsic ones. It can be also concluded that the objectivity or subjectivity of the interpretation depends on the accessibility of the layers the file (or scene) is comprised of.

Now I would like to take my analysis one step further by making a claim, that the sign components disconnection can be preserved if the interpretation of a visual image is carried out in the same semiotic system as that in which the artwork is depicted. I attempt to prevent the analysts’ interpretation from the sign’s further disconnection by creating a visual response to their verbal interpretations. I believe that if an analysis that is traditionally offered in verbal form is carried out in the same sign system as the artwork itself the image’s comprehension should be clearer than if it is carried out in the other sign system.

Previously I explained the intermodal relations and their role in the process of semiosis from the insider’s point of view. I also compared the reading from different perspectives comparing the creator’s interpretation with the interpretation of the outsider. However, this method which involves working within two different sign systems, the visual and the verbal, leaves a number of opportunities for assigning the sign components in higher degree of disconnection than it was assigned by the creator.

One of the underlying assumptions of this thesis is that the processes of ‘sense-making’ that are involved in the interpretation of a visual artwork force us, in order to describe the content of the visual, to make a transition from ‘visual’ to ‘verbal’ sign system, and that this inescapable modality’s transduction further increases the possibility of assigning the sign components in higher degree of disconnection than in the mode the artwork is created in. I suggest that not only is the sign’s disconnection preserved if the image is interpreted from within its multimodal form but also that
the sign’s components resist further disconnection if the analysis is undertaken and presented in the same sign system as that in which the artwork is created.

I have, therefore, visually reinterpreted the verbal analyses of some of the scenes in *Philosophy* from the outsider’s perspective according to my visual understanding.

Alex Main comments on the central figure, ‘Philosophy’, as:

The large female figure outside the cube. Is she reaching out to embrace me? Is she grabbing or accosting me? Whatever she is doing it is to me, the viewer: she looks at me and her arms are directed to me, not to any of the figures around her. I get the strange feeling that she knows they are there, but she is not paying attention to them. Has she abandoned them? Maybe she has dropped the cube, letting go of the figures inside the cube and at the same time abandoning their symbolic value to her.

Below is my re-conceptualized image taking into account Main’s extrinsic analysis.

Michael O’Toole describes the figure of ‘The wretched sleeper’ which:

. . . appears to be a new-born (perhaps still-born?) child enclosed in the placenta, which has descended down the birth canal from the glass bubble of the womb above it.

Below is my re-conceptualized image taking into account O’Toole’s extrinsic analysis.
The creator’s visual understanding of ‘The wretched sleeper’ according to Michael’s O’Toole analysis

Alex Main interprets the figure of ‘The dead-self’ as:

. . . the dark male figure at the right background of the image is another symbol of this emotional ambiguity: the hands may be his, reaching out for an escape.

Below is my re-conceptualized image taking into account Main’s extrinsic analysis.

And finally there is ‘The couple in transformation’ commented on by Michael O’Toole:

The major figures in the centre foreground are larger than the other minor human figures, but still only a quarter of the size of the top figure. They
share with her the transparency, offset by red and white reflections, but also the eyes with gazing pupils and the textured lips. Their ankles and feet extend beyond the picture’s edge. Their pose and musculature suggest a woman standing in front of a man. The woman’s hands are nearly touching in a rather anxious pose. The labia of the woman’s vulva appear to be slightly apart.

Below is my re-conceptualized image taking into account O’Toole’s extrinsic analysis.

The creator’s visual understanding of ‘The couple in transformation’ according to Michael’s O’Toole analysis

I believe, first of all, that such a presentation of how one image is interpreted outside the ‘native’ sign system (in which the artwork was created) clearly demonstrates the relation between the insider’s and the outsider’s perspectives that shift and displace the artwork’s groundedness. Secondly, I believe that, and this has been demonstrated in this last part of the thesis, the sign’s disconnection can be preserved when the image is interpreted from its multimodal form but also that the sign’s components resist further disconnection if the analyses are undergone and presented in the same sign system as that in which the artwork is created, which in this instance is a visual sign system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter I extended my semiotic method by including the interpretations offered by of the outsiders’ analyses and which were then compared with the creator’s articulation of the same image. The aim of this chapter was to investigate the existence and the conditions of a space in which the individual readings of one artwork could be conceptualized, a space that offers a reading of one artwork from different perspectives and that is presented in different modalities. I
suggested that the space, which I called *in-between*, is inhabited in the processes of interpretation, in particular in the interpretation of a multimodal text that offers, due to its structural aspects, articulation in non-traditional ways.

I explained the way in which the relation between an insider’s and outsider’s articulations shift and displace the artwork’s ‘groundedness’. I presented and supported the idea that the ‘groundedness’ shifts and fluctuates according to the mode in which the artwork is interpreted. Derrida’s idea of ‘parergonality’ helped me to demonstrate the difference between the contrasting sign’s disconnections between the outsider’s and the creator’s perspective on the level of expression. Because the relation between ‘parergonality’ and ‘groundedness’ has an impact on the fluctuation of the boundaries between *ergon* and *parergon* in multimodal text, due to its structural aspects, the boundaries between the two are less transparent. In a multimodal text this can be seen from a repositioning of the *ergon* and *parergon*.

The final twofold stage of the semiotic method included the verbal comparison of the readings of the image *Philosophy* from the insider’s and the outsider’s perspective. The claim of the relation between the insider’s and the outsider’s perspectives being shifted and displaced by the artwork’s *groundedness* was supported by the demonstration of how the artwork is articulated outside the original sign system. Secondly, on the level of *expression*, if the modality of that expression is articulated via a different sign system then the articulation results with a sign’s components disconnected in a higher degree. The presentation of how one image is articulated outside the ‘native’ sign system (in which the artwork was created) clearly demonstrates the relation between the insider’s and the outsider’s perspectives that is responsible for shifting and displacing the artwork’s *groundedness*. Secondly the understanding of a visual artwork on the level of *expression* is articulated in a less comprehensible way if the modality of that expression is articulated in a different sign system than from which the artwork was created.
Conclusion

My underlying argument that contemporary digital technologies enable us to inspect a digital photograph or a digital illustration in a different mode resulting in assigning a sign’s components with a lesser degree of disconnection is supported by an analysis of an artwork undertaken from different perspectives.

I have proposed that one of the implications of new photographic and computer technologies that enable the ‘transduction’ of modalities is that those technologies alter the process involved in sense-making and that this alteration results in a new asymmetry of visual language. I made an assumption that a language analysis, such as that conventionally used in linguistics, might be well-suited for developing a semiotic method to analyse multimodal visual text. Such a method would not only be suitable for the allocation of the three categories of different levels of disconnection between sign elements but would in particular be apposite if the three-part model of the interpretation of a sign is exercised. Therefore I ‘built’ a theoretical framework from the early linguistic concepts that are located in texts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke. This theoretical framework is informed by three observations: Firstly, Socrate’s propositions that words progressively change meaning and that a sign’s meanings are learned through convention. As has been demonstrated by later theorists (from Saussure to Peirce) and in my own research, both of those remarks are the essential ideas for not only linguistic analysis but can be easily incorporated in to a semiotic method aiming to analyse multimodal text. Secondly, the texts of Aristotle, Augustine and Locke, although they approach the theoretical terrain from different perspectives, are repeatedly concerned with the aspects of the triadic model of sign. With regard to the processes of an interpretation of an artwork, the advantages of utilizing aspects of the triadic model are obvious. Lastly, after comparing the dyadic and triadic structures I came to the conclusion that the implication of exercising the triadic model of sign is crucial in the sense that the interpretant reduces the degree of disconnection of the sign’s elements.

While in the first chapter, I outlined some of the observations that informed my theoretical framework, in the second chapter I applied this developed method, which effectively assisted me in the examination of three multimodal texts to which I have allocated three different degrees of a sign’s elements disconnections. I have also
demonstrated that the intermodal relations (the sequentiality and constintuency of the image layered structure) that are exclusively aspects of a multimodal text are not only directly responsible for changing a sign’s meaning but also for its asymmetry. The newly developed semiotic method determined the similarity of the three ways in which the components of a linguist and visual sign are disconnected. From the perspective of linguistics the categories that described the three different degrees of a sign’s asymmetry were the concepts of an ‘empty signifier’, the ‘floating signifier’ and its ‘polysemy’. From the perspective of myself as a visual artist those three concepts describing the above sign’s asymmetry were ‘my unspeakable taciturnity’, ‘the surreptitiousness of others’ and ‘the conjoint duplet’ respectively. I came to the conclusion that indeed the transformation of a modal kind, which is only detectable in multimodal form, is directly responsible for changing the image’s meaning, and if the interpreter has access to the layers the image is comprised of he/she is mostly likely to assign correlating sign components in lesser degree of derivation.

In chapter three I maintained Levis-Strauss’s claim suggesting that in order to understand a text in a more comprehensive way we need to look at the fragments the text is comprised of independently (Levi-Strauss, 1963). Building on this claim the analysis of the multi-layered image from the insider’s point of view included the investigation of not only the chronological order in which the image Philosophy was created but also analysis of the degree of disconnection of the fragments (the layers) that the image is comprised of. I claimed that in a multi-layered digital illustration the form is articulated through the expressional level via a ‘descriptive narrative’, while the content is articulated through the conceptual level via intermodal relations between the layers. Further I suggested that the primary internal relations of the sign’s components are the relations between signifier and the signified on the level of an individual layer. While the diachronic analysis of a multimodal text primarily includes investigating the primary internal relations between the sign components, the synchronic analysis includes an investigation of the primary external relations between the sign components. Hence the synchronic analyses concentrate on the relation between the content of the image’s layer and the narrative that describes the content of the image. This implies that the relations between the sign components can be investigated on two levels. The aim of this chapter was to investigate the intermodal relations not only on the level of the primary internal relations, which was the aim of the previous chapter, but also to investigate them on the level of the primary external relations. In this respect I emphasized the roles of both primary relations in the cognition of a work of art in which I debated Ingarden’s twofold underlying assumption that questions the ‘structure of the object of cognition’ and ‘the
procedures involved in acquiring the knowledge of the work’ (Ingarden, 1973 A). I validated Ingarden’s assumption and suggested that those questions, in order to develop an effective semiotic method, should be answered initially.

In my last chapter I broadened the developed semiotic method by including the interpretations from the outsider’s point of view which were then compared with the creator’s interpretation. The aim of this chapter was to examine the conditions of a space in which the reading of two different modalities could be conceptualized. I suggested that this space called *in-between* is inhabited in the process of interpretation and that the inhabitation of such space is possible due to structural aspects of the multimodal text which offers to be analyzed in non-traditional ways. Firstly I explained how the relation between an outsider and insider shifts and displaces the artwork’s ‘groundedness’. I incorporated Derrida’s concept of ‘parergonality’ through which I demonstrated the different degrees of the sign’s components disconnection between the outsider’s and the insider’s perspective on the level of expression. I observed that the relation between ‘parergonality’ and the ‘groundedness’ has an impact on the fluctuation of the boundaries between *ergon* and *parergon* in multimodal text, due to its structural aspects: the boundaries between the two are less transparent.

The final twofold stage of the developed semiotic method involved the verbal comparison of the interpretations of the image *Philosophy* from the perspectives of creator and the outsiders. The claim of the relation between the two perspectives being shifted and displaced by the artwork’s groundedness’ was supported by displaying how the artwork is articulated outside the original sign system. Furthermore I demonstrated that the understanding of a visual artwork on the level of *expression* is articulated with a higher degree of sign’s components disconnection if the modality of that expression is articulated via a different sign system. I came to the conclusion that the understanding of a visual artwork on the level of *expression* is articulated in a less comprehensible way if the modality of that expression is articulated in a different sign system that from in which the artwork was created.

Lastly, I have confirmed the assumption made at the beginning of this thesis that the new digital technologies enable the transduction of a digital visual text from monomodal to multimodal form. The structural aspects of multimodal text, if observed and understood in their semiotic fullness, allow for a more comprehensive, nuanced reading than is possible with monomodal text.
Appendices

Martina Muller’s Artwork: Alex Main’s Reading

I think I started off with a basic framework through which to look at your image. You sent this image to me when I was in hospital last year, and you told me in a note that it was inspired by Klimt’s philosophy. As a result, I had already looked at it with Klimt’s own words in mind:

*I have neither the gift of the spoken word or the written word, especially if I have something to say about myself or my work. Whoever wants to know something about me - as an artist, the only notable thing – ought to look carefully at my pictures and try to see in them what I am and what I want to do.*

And so, I became conscious as I began to write down my perceptions, that we had spoken and written together about the ‘insider’ and the ‘outsider’ in a piece of art; and I remembered you saying that, no matter how much of an insider I became in your images, I would not be able to totally decode you, nor understand all the codes.

This made me nervous about attempting to do for you what Klimt said of himself

*Whoever wants to know something about me must observe my paintings carefully and see in them what I am.*

I am happy about observing your Philosophy image, but am not sure if I can really know what you are. I also did not want to look at your image through the filter of what I already know about you, your experiences and your emotions from our conversations over many months.

Therefore I will let my observations and my reactions to my own observations speak for themselves: I hope they will be spontaneous and not ‘scripted’ by other knowings I have of you.

There are two immediate focal points for me in this image
The male figure in the upper part of the cube. Is he trying to break out of the cube? He is clearly signaling a strong passion of some sort, but I am not sure that feeling is fully symbolized for him. It is like a feeling without a name.

The large female figure outside the cube. Is she reaching out to embrace me? Is she grabbing or accosting me? Whatever she is doing it is to me, the viewer: she looks at me and her arms are directed to me, not to any of the figures around her. I get the strange feeling that she knows they are there, but she is not paying attention to them. Has she abandoned them? Maybe she has dropped the cube, letting go of the figures inside the cube and at the same time abandoning their symbolic value to her.

The cube captures my attention. Its edges are not always precise, and indeed the right vertical edge is not convincingly there. As a result, I had to observe carefully which figures are in, and which are outside the cube.

The emotionally ‘lost’ man is inside, and I see him as beginning to want to escape from it.

The woman and the horse are also inside. I can see her trying to exert some power over the animal. Is she trying to tame him? Is she attempting to catch him in order to bridle him? She is certainly not communicating any secrets to him, nor eliciting anything from him: her posture is so unlike the intimate stance of the horse-whisperers. Maybe she is chastising him? (I realize that I have assumed it is a stallion and not a mare, but that seems to be a decision I have made at a subconscious level)

The crouching figure near the bottom of the cube is also inside. Is that a crouch out of fear or indecision? Or is it one that signifies a readiness to pounce? On what? Ready to escape? From what? This is an ambiguous figure, neither male nor female. Would its gender help me decide the feelings or the intentions of the figure? I don’t know.

Maybe the other figure in the cube, the man in the bottom left who is more blended with his background than any other, reinforces a collective symbol of strong emotion and a desire to escape within that whole space.

Most of the other figures are outside the cube. Both male and female. Those on the right are active-reaching, stretching, maybe throwing. But the male in the front is curled up, inactive. Maybe reflecting, maybe evading, but certainly not
acknowledging the cube – unlike the one who reaches up to it on the right, or the female who almost embraces it on the left.

The figures outside seem to be either indifferent to the cube or reaching out towards it, while many of those inside can be seen to strive to get out of it. The cube is not neutral: it seems to represent strongly at one and the same time the desired and the undesired. There is a tension between these two states: one attracts while the other encompasses, enslaves.

There are two exceptions to this:

1. The two figures in the front are the only ones which are together: all the others are solitary. This pair are together, but they are not in an embrace. The man is not holding the woman’s breast – she is. Their position in the front of the image should have given them prominence, but it does not, for the dominant female figure at the back does this by reaching out to the viewer. The couple are not addressing the viewer; indeed, they are not addressing each other. They each, in their own way, gaze unfocussed into some space outside of themselves and each other.

There is, too, the figure lying almost as if damaged, injured, neglected on the left. Lying on the curled up petal of a lily. For me, the lily has always been a symbol of death, so much so that, in my childhood community, they were not grown in gardens, and were never brought into the house. For others whom I know, the flower is a symbol of purity and love. Perhaps the broken (male?) figure marks the death of love or the death of something pure?

One other figure begins to make me focus on other aspects of this image: the female on the right gazes into the cube at a male who has turned away from her. As I look at him from a distance, I begin to see his head and his hand in a skeletal form, and it is only then that I notice several other bones inside the cube. A whole spinal cord stands up inside the cube. Does this represent someone who has become spineless? Someone lacking in the courage or determination either to flee the cube or enter it? I can’t see any figure whom that might be: but if I look at the image not as a snapshot in time, but like some mediaeval paintings of the life of Christ – where different stages of his life appear in different parts of the same space – then these bones may come from people who are portrayed intact in other parts of the image. Space and time may be fused.
And what of the symbolism of the bones? The cube itself seems to be resting in a pelvis-like structure. Held up by the bone so symbolic of life, birth and sexuality. My friends used to refer to any couple who were deeply involved in a passionate relationship as ‘joined at the hip’. Is this pelvis guarding a cube that signifies ambiguous passion? Desire to enter or escape from the force and consequences of passion? Maybe the dark( male? ) figure at the right background of the image is another symbol of this emotional ambiguity: the hands may be his, reaching out for an escape, or they may belong to another who is about to lay hold on him and prevent him going.

There are many symbols of ambiguity for me in this image. As I stand back and look at it as a whole, I cannot be sure if the figures are rich, resplendent bodies encased in shining silver, or they are made of fragile glass that reflects.

You asked three questions:

**What do you see?** I have tried to express that as fully as I can

**What is it about?** I am still trying to get beyond ideas like ambiguity, emotional energy, relationship, gender. Maybe we need to talk more about this. A few questions from you might release more of the psychodynamic that is lurking, unexpressed.

**How do you know?** That is the most difficult question.

**Do I know?**

If I do, then much of it is implicit, not explicit knowledge, and I cannot answer your question – because I am not fully informed of my implicit pre-conscious or unconscious ‘knowledge’.
Martina Muller’s Artwork: Michael O’Toole’s Reading

What I see are a variety of naked human figures apparently made out of glass, with a smooth and brittle outline, yet gracefully plastic in posture and movement.

Although they are almost entirely transparent, there are streaks of red in or on some areas of flesh which could be blood or muscles, but which appear, fairly consistently, to be reflections of a red glow (Fire?) from beyond the right-hand side of the work. Some white or cream lines and patches in the glass figures could represent bones or skin, and these become more fully realised in the foreground figures. The white light creating these appears to come from our left, between the viewer and the depicted scenes.

The grouping and different scales of the figures makes it hard not to read the painting in “episodes”. This has implications for both the Representational and Modal functions. The largest and most dominant episode is the female nude at the top centre-left. Her head is cut off above the eyes by the edge of the picture and her lower torso below the breasts is masked by, or confused with other episodes. However, her head, arms and breasts are youthful and beautiful. Her eyelids, lips and ears are naturalistically textured, but her nipples, for some reason, are not. Modally, she draws the viewer into the world(s) of the work with the direct gaze of her eyes and the arms and hands which stretch out towards us; however, the gesture is ambiguous: her reach seems to be welcoming, the outspread fingers – threatening.

Just below her breasts is an episode – apparently projected on a separate plane – involving a nude female figure and a horse. The woman by her pose and right-hand gesture seems to be taming the horse, though the horse (about a quarter of the scale of the woman) appears restive or resistant to her power. The mythical symbolism of a horse as representing male sexuality is underscored by its left ear and eyes which are pointing directly at the pubic area of the woman.

The dominant woman’s legs are vaguely visible among various images of flower parts, though we can discern their bone structure at the knees. Her ankles and feet –
in a dancing pose – are clearly visible, although the toes on her right foot extend beyond the picture’s edge.

There is a fully realised human skeleton in a floating/dancing posture in the left-centre, which appears to be a mirror image of the floating female figure to the left above it. Their matching but opposed postures suggest the possibility of a simultaneous orgasm (Love as a small Death).

Below this group is a male figure with erect penis and hands outstretched. The hands, gaping mouth and staring eyes express shock. The object of this stare appears to be a new-born (perhaps still-born?) child enclosed in the placenta, which has descended down the birth canal from the glass bubble of the womb above it. The womb and child are roughly of the same scale as the major woman figure. To the right of the staring man is a crouching figure of indeterminate sex leaning forward towards us. The crouching pose with legs widespread suggests either birth or insemination: a phallic stamen of the lily flower (still to be discussed) points directly at what appears to be the vulva of the crouching figure.

The major figures in the centre foreground are larger than the other minor human figures, but still only a quarter of the size of the top figure. They share with her the transparency, offset by red and white reflections, but also the eyes with gazing pupils and the textured lips. Their ankles and feet extend beyond the picture’s edge. Their pose and musculature suggest a woman standing in front of a man. The woman’s hands are nearly touching in a rather anxious pose. The labia of the woman’s vulva appear to be slightly apart.

A smaller male figure, half their scale, appears to emerge from the lily’s mouth just above them, his head and arms uplifted in a gesture of defiance or despair, his half-erect penis mingling with the phallic lily stamens. A slumped seated figure to the couple’s left appears to be despondent but has a fully erect penis visible through his glassy limbs. Around this figure four figures of both sexes are engaged in various dance or sporting actions. Their bodies and arms create a rhythm which carries our eyes to the right-hand side of the picture where a dancing (to jazz?) female figure, viewed mainly from behind, seems to be leaving the picture scene. Above her a glassy but non-transparent figure is vaguely discerned in the red background. Either a child or an old man, he may represent Death. Alarmingly, he appears to looking and gesturing towards us.
One reason why the organs of procreation are so evident on the glassy bodies we have described so far is that none of the bodies carry hair. The eye and naturalistically hairy muzzle of a brown and white cow or horse at centre right therefore comes as a visual shock. Its meaning seems to be mainly Compositional, intruding between the dark “Death” figure and the despairing man, yet apparently in the same plane of light as the woman with the glassy horse.

The other recurrent element that I have barely alluded to is the white arum lily flower which recurs across the bottom half of the picture. It is most fully realised with textured white petal and orange pistil below the “Birth” scene at bottom left. A magnified image of the petal, torn around the edges, but with vividly realised transparent drops of dew forms a linking backcloth to the floating skeleton and the shocked male figure gazing at the “Birth” scene, while its phallic stamens burst from the gaping hole in the flower to “ravish” the crouching woman. More stamens appear at the point where the vulva of the dominant woman would be. Another set of stamens bursts from another lily below the cow’s head to envelope the despairing man. In all these episodes there is a strong link between the stamens and female and male sex organs respectively. The fourth occurrence of the lily flower reverts to the smooth white texture of the petal and the upward thrust of the pistil providing a virtual support for the seated and dancing figure in the lower right corner.

As I have indicated, the image seems to be a complex visual argument about physical beauty, sexual love, birth and death. Virtually all the figures are active in their gestures and body rhythms. The contrasts in texture and colour make the flower forms and cow’s face significant. The lilies with dominant phallic pistils and stamens seem to match the youthful life force of the human figures, though in some cultures white lilies are flowers of death. I can’t account for the cow’s face, but it remains a potent cryptic element in the composition. If pressed for a title, I would call the image “Joie de vivre”.
Reference List


Bibliography


Ingarden, R. (1973 B)


