**Narrative Account**

# Cultural background, professional training, and research experience

The circumstances of my birth and early childhood contributed significantly to the arc of my academic career. I was born in Yokohama in 1939 (the youngest of five sons), spent the war years in Japan, and grew up speaking three languages (Russian, Japanese, and English) in a multilingual family of Russian émigrés who spent twenty-five years in Japan before immigrating to Los Angeles in 1952. For a Slavist who received his university education in the United States, my experience and expertise are, I believe, entirely unique. Exposure to philosophy, general linguistics, and Slavic languages and literatures at UCLA (where I was a philosophy major for two years before switching to Slavic[[1]](#footnote-1)) came through courses taught by scholars of the first rank, including Donald Kalish, Richard Montague, and Robert Stockwell. When I became a student of Roman Jakobson at Harvard in 1961, I thus began graduate study with a good grounding in the preeminent approach to my field of specialization. This orientation also had the effect of preparing me in philology, literary history, and practical criticism––areas of expertise which I then broadened and deepened over the entire span of my scholarly career.

After leaving Harvard and spending a year at UCLA as Acting Instructor in Slavic Languages (1963-64), I went to Japan on a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship and spent 1965-66 at Tokyo University improving my Japanese (one of my three “native” languages) and working in Japanese linguistics under the dean of Japan's general linguists, Shirô Hattori. Since then, from time to time I have returned in my research and publications to Japanese topics, most notably in my 1974 article in *Lingua* on the phonological characterization of Japanese obstruents, which corrected the common mistake of textbooks regarding this point of the Japanese sound system.

I returned to UCLA in 1966 as a beginning Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages, was promoted to full professor eight years later, and served on the faculty there for a total of seventeen years. During this span I taught a broad range of courses in Slavic linguistics, Russian language, and Russian literature. After an initial concentration on the structure and description of contemporary standard Russian, my research broadened ca. 1972 to embrace literature, poetics, semiotics, folklore, and mythology; my teaching also expanded accordingly. Thus I was able consistently to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to my teaching and scholarship, one result in particular being a study comparing the Japanese poetic tradition with the Western. The following characterizes these developments by category.

***linguistics***

In addition to the ideas of European structuralism as implemented in the systematic study of Slavic linguistics and philology, I was introduced as an undergraduate to the then-embryonic concepts and methods of transformational grammar. This interest in general linguistics and English syntax was further nourished by regular attendance at Jakobson's Harvard lectures, as well as those of N. Chomsky and M. Halle at MIT. My first two books were on Russian phonetics and morphology, as were many of my articles, and the courses I taught routinely included some portion of the undergraduate series in Russian linguistics (phonology, morphology, historical commentary), as well as graduate courses and seminars in Slavic linguistics. I also participated in examining candidates for the M.A. and Ph.D. and in directing doctoral dissertations, in both the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures and the Department of Linguistics at UCLA (of which I was an adjunct faculty member). My linguistics offerings were informed by a lively awareness of theoretical issues inside and outside Slavic.

I am proud of my role in pioneering the development of Peircean or semiotic linguistics. My *Sense of Grammar* (1983) and *Sense of Change* (1991) have been called “instant classics” and areregularly cited by scholars in a range of disciplines who undertake to illuminate theirsubject from a semiotic perspective.[[2]](#footnote-2) As evidenced by what is now a triptych of *Sense* books, my work since 1983 turned increasingly toward general linguistics and, more recently, to English and its varieties. As many of my publications will attest, one area of linguistic theory in which I have worked particularly productively is the theory of markedness (initiated during the inter-war period by the Prague Linguistic Circle and continued by its collaborators in Copenhagen). Another is the explication of the patterned relationship between prosody (stress) and morphological structure in language. In this latter field of research my work has been praised as ground-breaking.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Since 1990 I have published seven articles in *American Speech* which deal with language and the value systems it represents as reflected in social change. An article in the March ’98 issue of *Language* provided a completely new analysis of the language of Shakespeare's sonnets.[[4]](#footnote-4) These items, together with a steady series of posts (535 through January2020), are now available on my blog (<http://www.languagelore.net),> which aims at the explanation of social variation in language, otherwise the meaning and motivation of language change in its social aspect. It is directly concerned with the rational explication of linguistic variety as evidenced by spontaneous innovations in present-day American English. For the most part, I examine the ascription of social value to novel linguistic entities, as one of the areas in which the effects of spontaneous innovations are most notable. A special feature of the data is the plethora of examples drawn from media and colloquial language.

***russian language***

From the beginning of my teaching career in 1963, I was intimately and continuously involved in the teaching of Russian, as well as in the conception, administration, and supervision of Russian language programs. I taught language courses at all levels, from elementary through the fifth year (for graduate students), and of all types (conventional, audio-lingual, intensive, conversational, reading, scientific, even sports [“Russian for the Olympics”]) and had extensive experience in directing teaching assistants. My own education gave me a special perspective from which to deal with problems confronting the American student of Russian. Formal training in linguistics and a knowledge of several foreign languages enabled me to contribute effectively to Russian language programs at UCLA, Princeton, and Brown that had a demonstrable record of success in producing students with a solid foundation in spoken and written Russian.

***literature and poetics***

At UCLA I regularly participated in the teaching of Russian literature and in research on poetics, literary theory, and practical criticism. In addition, I was a member of several doctoral committees and regularly examined M. A. candidates in Slavic literature. I taught courses and seminars at all levels (through the postdoctoral), particularly those that dealt with Russian poetry of the classical period. (I have written more on Pushkin than on any other author and have taught Pushkin courses in English and Russian to undergraduate and graduate students at UCLA, Princeton, and Brown.) My Russian literature offerings at UCLA included an undergraduate seminar on Lermontov and graduate courses/seminars on poetic theory, versification, literary analysis, Pushkin, and Lermontov.

During my four years at Princeton (1982-86), I taught several upper level and graduate courses in Russian literature and in literary theory, including a course on folk literature and one on Symbolism. I also regularly advised doctoral candidates from departments other than Slavic (which had no graduate program at the time) and directed senior theses in that department. My course on Russian Formalism was attended by graduate students from Comparative Literature, East Asian, Romance, Germanic, and English.

During the fall 1986 semester, I was a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where I taught a graduate course on 18th-century Russian literature and gave a series of public lectures on literary theory and practical criticism.

At Brown, where I replaced Victor Terras upon his retirement, I was responsible for the entire span of Russian prose courses from Gogol through Tolstoy and devised and taught a course for undergraduates and graduates called “Slavic Contributions to Literary Theory,” which resulted in several papers being presented at All-Ivy Graduate Student Conferences. From the 1991-92 academic year on, I also took over courses on Pushkin and Symbolism and regularly taught a newly devised course on “The Russian Novel” that focused on Russian modernist fiction (including Nabokov). Over the last ten years of my service at Brown, I directed and helped direct several senior honors theses and Ph.D. dissertations in Russian literature and Slavic linguistics. During the 1990-92 academic years I was also the Department's Graduate Representative [adviser] and the faculty sponsor of the Slavic Colloquium, a student-run forum for presentation of research in progress.

My publications (over 130 to date) and invited lectures and conference papers (over 100 to date) are listed above. By way of summary, I have written two books and some thirty articles that deal wholly or partly with Russian literature and have lectured on topics in this field at institutions throughout North America, in Britain, and in Scandinavia. About *Figuration in Verbal Art* (co-author, Marianne Shapiro) the reviewer for Princeton University Press, Michael Holquist, said: “In a brilliant synthesis the authors link Jakobson's structuralism with Peirce's theory of signs . . . . . The book is an unusual combination of sophisticated theory with exemplary readings of particular works” (from the jacket blurb). My most recent scholarly book, *The Sense of Form in Literature and Language*, which was also coauthored by my late wife Marianne Shapiro, continues the line of research on poetics and literary theory inaugurated by our *Figuration in Verbal Art* and was published in 1998 by St. Martin's Press.[[5]](#footnote-5) A second, expanded edition (2009) with two new chapters has garnered fresh praise.[[6]](#footnote-6)

***folklore and mythology***

My teaching at UCLA, Princeton, and Brown included an undergraduate course on Russian folk literature, and I was actively engaged in research on Slavic and Indo-European mythology from 1979 on. My special focus was the study of animal deities in the Old Slavic pantheon. During the period from 1982 to my appointment at Brown in 1989, I was a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia, where I gave public lectures and participated in team-taught graduate courses.

I am particularly proud of two of my discoveries in this field: I uncovered the existence of a bird cult––that of the pelican (R *baba*)––in Old Europe and demonstrated its persistence in the Common Slavic––particularly the East Slavic––data. I also showed that Slavic shared in the Indo-European myth of the divine twins (Veles and Volos).

***semiotics***

As a graduate student at Harvard in the early '60s, I became interested in the ideas of the modern founder of the theory of signs, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). It became my aim from that time on to help create a new structuralism based on a thorough understanding of Peirce's whole philosophy.[[7]](#footnote-7) Here, in particular, I consider myself to be not merely a continuator of the teachings of others but also a scholar whose contribution to the study of sign systems bears a special stamp.

In 1979 I directed my first NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers at UCLA entitled “Semiotic Perspectives on Language and Verbal Art,” which attracted participants from a variety of disciplines. The seminar's main goal was demonstrating the potential force of Peircean philosophy in its application to the language-oriented disciplines, the social sciences, fine arts, architecture, film, and the broad spectrum of humanistic studies. In the summer of 1984 I repeated this seminar at Princeton and gave it for the third time in 1990 at Brown.[[8]](#footnote-8) The latter two iterations included a two-day Symposium on Peirce's Semeiotic that was attended by a sizable cross-section of the Princeton and Brown communities, as well as by scholars from several other universities.

I conceived the idea of holding the Peirce Sesquicentennial International Congress, which Harvard sponsored in September 1989.[[9]](#footnote-9) The Congress was attended by more than 400 scholars from all over the world. Besides serving as a member of the Organizing Committee, I delivered one of the plenary papers in the session on “Peirce and Language.” I was elected Vice President of the Charles S. Peirce Society in 1990 and served as its President in 1991––to this day the only linguist (and only the second non-philosopher) to be accorded this honor. In 1992 I was elected President of the Semiotic Society of America for a one-year term. In 2001 I was appointed to the Board of Advisors of the Peirce Edition Project, which is dedicated to the production of a multi-volume chronological edition of the *Writings* of Peirce, and served on it for nine years.

In June 1997 I chaired the International Colloquium on Language and Peircean Sign Theory at Duke University, a highly successful three-day meeting which I conceived and helped organize. The Colloquium, whose proceedings were published under my editorship as volume 4 of *The Peirce Seminar Papers*, brought together twenty-three invited scholars from France, Germany, Finland, Israel, and North America.

My own work in semiotics has concentrated on applying sign theory to language and literature.[[10]](#footnote-10) I have published four books and over seventy papers that deal wholly or partly with the semiotic perspective on language and literature. My book, *The Sense of Change: Language as History*, has been called “the culmination of the century in semiotic linguistics… It will be indispensable in any study of sign systems and their change” (Raimo Anttila, from the jacket blurb).

A series entitled *The Peirce Seminar Papers: Essays in Semiotic Analysis*, of which I was the founder and editor-in-chief, began publication in 1993 and encompassed five volumes. (A December 1993 review of Volume 1 in the *Library Journal* gave it a “highly recommended” rating.)

***Summary***

***teaching***

While a semiotic perspective informed much of my teaching and research from the early '70s on, it is my experience in directing postdoctoral students in the three NEH Summer Seminars for College Teachers noted earlier that merits special mention. These seminars had the effect of creating a forum for collaborative research that bound together not only former participants but also a range of other scholars who chose to associate themselves with the group. One tangible long-range result of these summer seminar directorships was a continuing involvement on my part in the research and teaching of former participants, six of whom wrote books based directly on their work with me.[[11]](#footnote-11) Moreover, in the years following the inaugural seminar (UCLA, 1979), I regularly taught a semester-long course ("Interpretation: Theory and Practice") at Princeton, Brown, and latterly at Columbia that adapted the content of the seminar to predoctoral instruction, thereby introducing Peirce's semeiotic to a variety of student audiences.

In my range of coverage and ability to lecture with a broad command of cultural, historical, and linguistic knowledge in both English and Russian, I think it fair to say that I have few peers among Slavists anywhere. My Japanological expertise is, in this respect, a valuable resource despite the cultural distance separating East Asia from the Slavic world. Also, through what was over thirty-five years of extensive collaboration with my wife Marianne Shapiro, who has been acknowledged to be the most accomplished and versatile American Italianist of the 20th century, I expanded my knowledge of European literature significantly beyond the range normally found among Slavists. This had the effect of giving my teaching a broader comparative scope. Although my main appeal was to students with a decided talent for research, I always worked enthusiastically and productively with beginners and non-majors. My lectures were meant to focus on conceptual problems that would further the education of serious students––including non-specialists. I made it a special point to prepare comprehensive course materials and to provide extensive bibliographical and methodological direction of student papers and theses. There is reason to believe that the following published appreciation from one of my former postdoctoral students (Princeton, 1984), Michael Cabot Haley (Professor of English, University of Alaska Anchorage), is shared by others I taught at all levels:

Most of all I am deeply thankful to Michael Shapiro, who brought me to Peirce. He changed my approach to literature and linguistics; he changed my approach to my students of literature and linguistics––by showing me, in his own example, how one can become a great teacher by exhibiting the openness and curiosity of a serious student (*The Semeiosis of Poetic Metaphor* [Indiana University Press, 1988], p. xiv).

Another tribute, also by a former Princeton post-doctoral advisee, Robert S. Hatten (Professor of Music Theory, Butler School of Music, The University of Texas at Austin), appears in the preface to his book, which won the 1997 Berry Publication Award, the highest award of the Society for Music Theory:

In conceiving and developing a model of expressive meaning, I have been profoundly influenced by the work of the Peircean linguist and literary theorist Michael Shapiro of Brown University. Shapiro's groundbreaking work on asymmetry in poetry (1976) was my introduction to the theory of markedness, and *The Sense of Grammar* (1983) was my inspiration for grounding markedness in a Peircean semiotic (*Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* [Indiana UP, 1994], p. xiv).

Beginning with the spring 2013 semester, as a member of the Society of Senior Scholars at Columbia, I have taught a section of the Literature Humanities course of Columbia's Core Curriculum, which I will continue to do when invited in the future.

***scholarship***

I believe that the distinguishing trait of my career is versatility. I have made substantial contributions to and significantly advanced the study of Russian linguistics, Russian literature, Slavic mythology, linguistic theory, literary theory, and semiotics. My work has a long record of international recognition, including invited lectures abroad (for example, my 1993 series of five lectures to a pan-European audience under the aegis of the revived Prague Linguistic Circle at its Vilém Mathesius Research and Teaching Workshop in Linguistics and Semiotics).

***administration***

I have had considerable experience in administering academic programs––including the preparation of detailed budgets––and chairing committees at all levels. My record includes serving on university-wide committees, planning national and international conferences, and extensive service in evaluating teaching programs, government grant applications, and academic candidacies.

***public lectures***

During my career I have given over one hundred public lectures at a range of universities and scholarly meetings in the United States, Canada, Europe, South America, and China. Continuing this activity in 2014, I delivered the keynote address ("Style as a Cognitive Category") on April 11 at a panel on "Semiotic Perspectives on the Arts and Cognition," sponsored by the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Also, as a past president and Fellow of the Charles S. Peirce Society, at the invitation of the Program Committee I gave a paper entitled "Reconceiving Linguistics in the Light of Pragmaticism: Language Analysis as Hermeneutic" at the Charles S. Peirce International Centennial Congress, held at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, July 16-19, 2014. Then, at the invitation of the School of Philosophy of The Catholic University of America, I gave an expanded version of this lecture on October 31, 2014.

Building on my life-long experience as a student of music (I am a clarinetist) and my work in semiotics, I have also extended the scope of my public lectures to music theory, witness the following recent invited presentations: "Musical Meaning in Semeiotic Perspective," (The University of Texas at Austin, November 2012), "On Meaning in Music and the Arts," (Drake University, November 2013), and "A Semiotic Theory of Music: Conceptual Postulates," (Winthrop University, April 2014).

On October 2, 2014, I delivered the keynote address, entitled "Paradox: Word, Symbol, Concept," to the 39th Annual Semiotic Society of America Meeting in Seattle, whose theme was "Paradoxes of Life." In early May 2015 I gave three public lectures at Eastern Washington University at the invitation of the Department of Communications and the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Social Work, which can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCY2_K1B7GbiS48Dy33yrEtg>.[[12]](#footnote-12) On November 10, 2015, I reprised my Winthrop University keynote address ("Style as a Cognitive Category") at SUNY Plattsburgh (repeated on January 27, 2016 at Columbia [sponsored by the Society of Senior Scholars] and at the University of Massachusetts Amherst on March 29, 2017), where I also addressed an introductory linguistics class on the topic of my new book, "The Logic of Language."

On November 25, 2016, at the invitation of the Organizing Committee, I delivered a lecture on "Peirce's Synechism and Its Application to Language" at the Peirce Congress on “Community, Pragmaticism and Truth: The Philosophical Legacy of Charles Sanders Peirce,” which was held atthe Universidad del Valle (Cali, Colombia). A reprise of this lecture (on November 28, 2016) took place at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá.

More recently (October 2017), at the invitation of the Center for the Study of Chinese as a Second Language at the Beijing Language and Culture University, I delivered two lectures there; also one at the Inner Mongolia Technology University in Hohhut (videotape excerpts at <http://www.languagelore.net>).

In October 2018 I delivered a public lecture on “Music as Semiosis: A Synechistic View” at the University of Texas at Austin, followed by a plenary paper on “Language as Semiosis: A Neo-Structuralist Perspective in the Light of Pragmaticism” at the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Semiotic Society of America, held at Berea College (Berea, Kentucky).

In February 2019, at the invitation of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont, I presented a workshop for faculty entitled  "Using Research as a Springboard for Classroom Teaching," which sought to demonstrate how research can be channeled into classroom teaching by exposing the methodological foundations of a concrete scholarly subject and the questions that lie at the center of any interpretation of data. This presentation relied on my treatment in the journal *Language* of Shakespeare's entire corpus of 154 sonnets and its detailed analysis in order to show the organic link between research and pedagogy.

In September 2019, at the invitation of the organizer of the Semiotics Meetup, I presented a talk on my new book, *On Language and Value in American Speech* (Riga: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019) to an audience made up largely of computer developers who meet regularly in New York.

***Perspective***

As a specialist in linguistics and poetics, I have adopted a broad conceptual perspective while staying close to a home base defined roughly by the historical and “culturological” dimensions of a mixed research agenda. My teaching at UCLA, Princeton, UC Berkeley, Brown, Green Mountain College, and Columbia has spanned more than five decades. Beginning with the 2000-2001 academic year and until my retirement in 2005, in recognition of my versatility as a teacher and scholar I was appointed a non-departmental member of the Brown faculty (the only one at the time) under its “University Courses” designation, with my own budget and staff. This unique academic status allowed me to teach courses *ad libitum*, and my title was changed accordingly to Professor of Slavic and Semiotic Studies.

Contacts over many years with specialists in various disciplines have resulted in a significant degree of cross-pollination, so that my ideas about semiosis have increasingly found their way into books and articles on music theory, mythology, and literary theory as well as language. After retiring, I embarked on a book of fiction (modeled on the Japanese medieval classic *The Pillow Book* [*Makura no Sōshi*] by Sei Shōnagon), *My Wife the Metaphysician, or Lady Murasaki's Revenge* (2006),[[13]](#footnote-13) followed by an authorial commentary, *Palimpsest of Consciousness* (2007).[[14]](#footnote-14)A new book, The Speaking Self: Language Lore and English Usage, based on my blog posts, appeared in 2012, of which a second, expanded edition––200 pages longer than the first––was published in March 2017 by Springer (http://[http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319516813 - aboutAuthors](http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319516813#aboutAuthors)).[[15]](#footnote-15)

As the reviews testify, this book represents a completely *sui generis* entry in the long history of English usage manuals.

In 2019 I continued my publications in the field of English linguistics with a book entitled *On Language and Value in American Speech: With a Semeiotic Appendix* [Lambert Academic Publishing].[[16]](#footnote-16)

Currently I am continuing my research in semiotics and linguistic theory, giving public lectures at various universities, and remaining available for teaching in Columbia’s Core Curriculum as an adjunct professor and member of Columbia's Society of Senior Scholars. My new book manuscript––*The Logic of Language: A Semiotic Study of Speech*––which amalgamates two of my earlier books (1983 and 1991), is currently under consideration by Springer and will hopefully be published in 2021.

1. In taking up philosophy first, then philology and linguistics, and finally university teaching, I was carrying on a family tradition. Both my parents were music educators. My mother, Lydia Ita Shapiro (Лидия Абрамовна Шапиро, née Chernetzky [ур. Чернецкая], 1905-1983), was a student of Leonid Kreutzer (1884-1953) at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin in the 1920s and taught piano extensively in Japan between and after the wars, latterly at the American School in Tokyo, and then in Los Angeles. My father, Constantine Shapiro (Константин Исаакович Шапиро, 1896-1992), a direct descendant through his father of the founder of the yeshiva system of Jewish education, Hayyim of Volozhin (the “Volozhiner rebbe” [1749-1821]), was a student of the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) at the University of Freiburg in the 1920s, and of the cello virtuoso and composer Julius Klengel (1859-1933) at the Leipzig Conservatory. He later became professor of cello and composition at the Tôyô Conservatory in Tokyo and continued teaching cello in the USA after the war. His maternal cousins include three eminent Russian-Jewish philologists: the verse theorist and comparatist (and Academician) Viktor Zhirmunsky (Виктор Максимович Жирмунский, 1891-1971), the belletrist and literary critic Yury Tynianov (Юрий Николаевич Тынянов, 1894-1943), and the Romanist Yakov Malkiel (Яков Львович Малкиель, 1914-1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Here are some statements evaluating the impact of these books:

“Foremost among them [“a group of neo-Peirceans”] . . . is undoubtedly Shapiro, whose two instant classics (Shapiro 1983; 1991) are the best treatments of the linguistic facet of Peirce's semiotic thought.” (Henrik Birnbaum, “The Linguistic Sign Reconsidered,” *Elementa: Journal of Slavic Studies and Comparative Cultural Semiotics*, 2:2 [1995], 116).

 “Increasingly characteristic of a major stream in historical linguistic discourse [is]

. . . the neo-Peircean semiotics of [inter alia] . . . Michael Shapiro.” (Roger Lass, *Historical Linguistics and Language Change* [Cambridge UP, 1997], p. xvii).

Birnbaum was Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures at UCLA and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Lass, Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cape Town (South Africa), is a prominent Anglist and theoretician of historical linguistics. See also a much-expanded assessment of the relevant portion of my work stretching back to 1969 (in the context of Jakobson's semiotic ideas) in Birnbaum's *Sketches of Slavic Scholars* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 1998), ch. 10, pp. 171-208. A volume of essays published in Finland––a country with a long and illustrious tradition of linguistic scholarship––is studded with direct and indirect references to my work and ideas. See *Kirjoituksia muoto- ja merkitysopista* [*Writings on Morphology and Semantics*], ed. by Urho Määttä and Klaus Laalo, Folia Fennistica & Linguistica 21 (Univ. of Tampere, 1998), esp. pp. 117-141, “Merkityksen evoluutiomallista” [“About the Evolution Model of Meaning”] by Tommi Nieminen [Information received courtesy of Raimo Anttila, Professor Emeritus of General and Indo-European Linguistics, UCLA]. According to Anttila (letter to me of 11/30/98), referring to Nieminen's piece,

“as the title tells you, this is pure Shapiro (i. e., your *Sense* books), as well as your Peirce Seminar impact, and it is rightly given as the only way in cognitive linguistics (and otherwise). There is indeed reason, because Helsinki is in the fetters of the Lakoff and Langacker fashion. Anyway, combined with the Finnish tradition in general, your work gives a nice step of progress here, and it is very gratifying to see your famous diagram [from my *Asymmetry*] there, with Finnish labels (p. 138).”

Anttila goes on to mention that

“there was also an interuniversity colloquium on expressive vocabulary at Åbo Akademie, the Swedish-language university in Turku, in August [1998], with participants from five universities. I was an invited commentator on all of it. What came out was that it was your work that makes this kind of stuff theoretically salonfähig. There has been a ban on it in Finland, and it is now being lifted, thanks to your ideas.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. the following (uncharacteristic) concession of priority to a living scholar (referring to my 1969 book, *Aspects of Russian Morphology*) by a linguist who has himself made major contributions to the study of morphology: “Patterns . . . where one morphophonemic alternation mirrors another so that they together form what may be called an automorphic structure in the paradigm, were first described explicitly by Shapiro, who gives several examples of existing or emerging patterns of this kind from contemporary Russian.” (H. Andersen, “Morphological Change: Towards a Typology,” in J. Fisiak [ed.], *Recent Developments in Historical Morphology*, 1-50, The Hague: Mouton, 1980, p. 34.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A recent survey conducted by the Linguistic Society of America shows that this item is among the 25 most-viewed/-downloaded articles in JSTOR covering volumes of the journal *Language* from 1925 to 2000 (according to <http://ideophone.org/language-anthology-citations/>). It has also been downloaded over 200 times/mo. from my blog, <http://www.languagelore.net>, which typically has ca. 30,000 visits/mo. (according to Webalizer) and over 200 subscribers (RSS feeds and e-mails). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Its possible impact in the new century can perhaps be gauged by the endorsements of two prominent literary scholars on the book's back cover:

“Shapiro is in many ways a unique figure on the American scholarly scene, a powerful reader as much at home in technical linguistics as he is in the intricacies of formal poetics. I believe we are on the cusp of a move from externally oriented criticism to more internally organized reading; Shapiro's book might well come to be regarded as a canary in the mineshaft of literary scholarship. Anyone seriously interested in theoretical discussions of the relation between linguistics and literature will be drawn to the book. – Michael Holquist, Chair, Department of Comparative Literature, Yale University”

“Time and again, Shapiro achieves a synthesis of the particular and the universal, as careful analysis of detail, gathered from a dazzling, truly global array of sources, dovetails effortlessly into a judicious deduction of the principle that applies in each of the literary works he analyzes. – Victor Terras, Professor Emeritus, Brown University”

Cf. the following encomium from a reviewer:

“Michael Shapiro's book demonstrates the enormous scope of scholarly activities to which a Peircian [sic] approach can give rise. It is also a testament to the author's prodigious learning and expertise. To write essays on subjects ranging from 'Wimp English' to 'Dostoevsky's Modes of Signifying' is a feat in itself and one that will stretch the limits of most readers, this reviewer included.” – Andrew Barratt, *University of Otago, New Zealand* (in *Slavic Review*, 59 [2000], 932) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. the following blurbs from the back cover and a reader’s review on Amazon.com:

“These colorful essays by Michael and Marianne Shapiro bring hidden forms in works of art to light. They increase our enjoyment of the art object and help us understand the combinatorial possibilities of human intelligence. The studies exhibit philosophical insight and wide-ranging knowledge of Russian literature, along with a sense of the complexities of ordinary speech and a structural understanding of Shakespeare's sonnets. They make the miracle of language more vividly present to us. – Robert Sokolowski, Elizabeth Breckenridge Caldwell Professor of Philosophy, *The Catholic University of America*”

“It is impossible, for me at least, to identify two inquirers who bring to the question of the relationship between form and meaning a more unique combination of literary sensitivity and linguistic erudition, a more relevant set of interpretative skills and theoretical expertise, than Marianne and Michael Shapiro do in this book. *The Sense of Form* moves deftly from detailed analyses of specific literary works to an encompassing account of our most basic linguistic competencies––and back again. –Vincent Colapietro, Liberal Arts Research Professor, *The Pennsylvania State University*”

“*The Sense of Form in Literature and Language* is a masterful application of structuralist theory and Peirce’s semeiotic to an impressive range of literary genres, authors, and periods. Michael and Marianne Shapiro argue convincingly for an iconic relation between sound and meaning. The second, expanded edition allows us to see more clearly the important contributions of Marianne Shapiro to this work. - James J. Liszka, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Philosophy, *University of Alaska Anchorage*”

A unique collection of essays by Michael Shapiro, one of the world foremost semioticians and Slavicists, in collaboration with his [late] wife, Marianne, one of the most prominent authorities on Dante. A formidable work of scholarship, spanning a very wide range of literatures and analytic approaches. Each chapter in itself a chef d’œuvre. A “must” read for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of literature – particularly Russian – and of its underlying structures. Masterfully written, these essays will captivate readers not only in academia but among the educated public at large. - Claude Carey, *Brown University* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The success of this enterprise can perhaps be judged by the following assessment: “In this regard [i. e., establishment of a semiotic linguistics], the work of Michael Shapiro, a first-rate Peirce scholar as well as theoretical linguist, is unsurpassed by anyone else in his field” (Vincent Colapietro, “Robust Realism and Real Externality: The Complex Commitments of a Convinced Pragmaticist,” *Semiotica*, 130 [2000], 322). Colapietro is Chair of the Advisory Board of the Peirce Edition Project. Cf. an earlier assessment by the late dean of modern Peirce studies, Max H. Fisch: “Among still younger linguists, one of the most productive and influential is Michael Shapiro.” (“The Range of Peirce's Relevance,” in *The Relevance of Charles Peirce*, ed. E. Freeman [La Salle, Ill.: Monist Library of Philosophy, 1983], p. 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “The Charles S. Peirce Sesquicentennial International Congress … opened at Harvard University on September fifth, 1989, and concluded on the tenth, the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Peirce's birthday. The Congress had been convened by the Charles S. Peirce Society, based on an idea of Michael Shapiro.” (Kenneth Laine Ketner, “Preface,” *Peirce and Contemporary Thought: Philosophical Inquiries*, ed. K. L. Ketner [New York: Fordham University Press], 1995, p. xiii). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. As early as the mid- and late 1980s, this work was already being highly evaluated by leading Peirce scholars. Cf. the Preface to David Savan's *An Introduction to C. S. Peirce's Full System of Semeiotic* (Toronto, 1987-88): "What is new in this revised edition owes much to the work of Michael and Marianne Shapiro. In a series of brilliant papers and books in literature and linguistics, they have shown how fruitful and invigorating Peirce's ideas are." [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “I am especially indebted [inter alia] to . . . Michael Shapiro, whose teaching and research were a source of regeneration and inspiration” (James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* [Indiana UP, 1996], p. xi). Liszka was my postdoctoral student at UCLA in 1979 and is now Professor of Philosophy at SUNY Plattsburgh. Cf. also the acknowledgments of my determinative teaching, written guidance, and published scholarship by Edwin Battistella (a participant in my 1984 Princeton seminar and currently Professor of English and Writing at Southern Oregon University) in his two books, *Markedness: The Evaluative Superstructure of Language* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990) and *The Logic of Markedness* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996). These two student reactions are only a sample of the published acknowledgments of my help/instruction over the years by a wide variety of scholars. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. My week also included a live hour-long radio interview on the relationship between language and education with the chairman of the Department of Communication Studies at EWU, Prof. Gary Krug, for his weekly show "Long Waves" on KYRS Spokane. The link is at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re-OCgh2RA0>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re-OCgh2RA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re-OCgh2RA0%3Ehttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re-OCgh2RA0). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Here are several reviews, starting with one on the book’s Amazon page by a novelist herself:

 Michael Shapiro's series of interrelated vignettes, "My Wife the Metaphysician or Lady Murasaki's Revenge," is an erudite literary history and an eloquent ode to love. With verbal puns and an entertaining style rivaling Nabokov's "Lolita," this is no traditional work of fiction. The narrative jumps from period to period; travels all over the world, and engages in debates reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's discourses. But, ultimately, this book is no postmodern pastiche but an intellectual tour de force. The book offers an intertextual discussion of gender roles in literature, alluding (among others) to The Divinie Comedy, Provençal poetry, and novels by Dostoievsky and Nabokov. Last but not least, although "My Wife the Metaphysician" is clearly a work of fiction, there's no denying that the heroine is partly inspired by the author's late wife, Marianne Shapiro, a woman of incredible character and rare kindness and erudition. In more than one sense, this work of fiction is therefore also an expression of love. – Claudia Moscovici, author of *The Seducer: A Novel*

"Moving and enormously edifying" - Paul Friedrich, author of *The Meaning of Aphrodite*

"A literary monument to one's beloved that justifies one's whole life and is something rare in history" - Savely Senderovich, author of *Aletheia*

*"* When academics or intellectuals turn their hand to fiction or even narrative forms such as memoirs or histories, all too often character, scene, and drama are sacrificed to abstract ideas and theoretical positions long defended in some disciplinary context. Characters tend to be thin illustrations (often utterly eviscerated examples) of preconceived theories, scenes artificially staged confrontations in which human drama is more or less absent. Michael Shapiro has, in marked contrast to this, proven himself to have a storyteller’s ear and a novelist’s eye for the seemingly insignificant, yet ultimately fateful detail. One has the sense, when confronted with his portrayal of persons, of being in the presence of singular, complex, and indeed palpable beings whose lives are dramatically intertwined. For this imaginative and erudite scholar and theorist to be as well such a keen observer of character and adept narrator of events seems hardly fair. Should one person possess, at this level of mastery, such diverse and demanding talents? *-*Vincent Colapietro, Pennsylvania State University [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In this connection, I also compiled and edited what can only be regarded as a truly unique volume dedicated to my wife’s life and work entitled *Marianne Shapiro: A Catalogue Raisonné of Her Publications*. This effort garnered the following encomia:

“I am awed at the accomplishments of this truly great scholar, indeed the greatest American Italianist of the 20th century. It is a very beautiful book, very elegantly done … [It] gave me some truly memorable moments of reading and contemplation.”

 – Enikö Bollobás (Associate Professor and Chair, Department of American Studies, [Eötvös Loránd University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E%C3%B6tv%C3%B6s_Lor%C3%A1nd_University), [Budapest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budapest), [Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungary))

“A splendid tribute to the memory of a scholar I admired very much for her originality and finesse of interpretations."

 – Paolo Cherchi (Professor Emeritus of Italian and Spanish Literatures,

 University of Chicago)

“A wonderful list and tribute. Especially I liked the love story, and this book as one new chapter in the story.”

 –Donald Wesling (Professor Emeritus of English Literature, University of California, San Diego)

“It is nice to see a catalogue that takes account not only of the scholarly production of a writer but also the physical form in which each publication appeared. … A service to book history and Dante studies both.”

 – Paul F. Gehl (Custodian of the John M. Wing Foundation on the History of Printing, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois)

“The *Catalogue* is an important and beautiful publication.”

 – Marylène Altieri (Curator of Printed Books, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

“A lovely, loving and worthy tribute.”

####  – H. Wayne Storey (Professor of Italian, Director of the Medieval Studies Institute,

 Indiana University, Bloomington)

“Here we have glimpses of depth and width—real rubrics of texts to be cherished in full elsewhere. It is so unexpected to have such beauty and elegance in the genre.”

 – Raimo Anttila (Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and Indo-European Studies, University of California, Los Angeles)

“The photograph of Marianne is a gem: it captures both her beauty and her poignant earnestness as a survivor of a personal history that was marked by repeated injustices which tested her morale but did not overcome her will to find and express the highest meanings that poetry can attain. . . . She was like a virtuoso musician who has mastered her instrument as a medium of artistic interpretation. . . . Marianne left us a wonderful legacy of poetic truth for which we can all be grateful.”
 - Eugene Vance (**Emeritus Professor of French, Comparative Literature and Comparative Religion**, University of Washington)

“Very moving and beautifully conceived tribute to Marianne and her achievements. This is much, much more than a catalogue raisonné; it is an intelligently documented testimonial. It is also a document that sings of a couple.”
 - Victor Brombert (Henry Putnam University Professor of Romance and Comparative Literatures, Princeton University)

"The *Catalogue Raisonné* is a piece of art, and so skillfully edited, with unending love.

I am grateful to have learned more about Michael's charming wife Marianne, who clearly was a modern day Renaissance Woman. In addition to being a brilliant scholar, talented writer and well-liked teacher, she could have made her career as a musician, if her parents had allowed her to make her own choice. Michael Shapiro's effort to compile this *Catalogue* was a significant tribute, as it will give also future generations a chance to come to know Marianne Shapiro and her extraordinary scholarly works. It was inspiring and touching to peruse the *Catalogue* and visit the virtual exhibition on the web site."
 - Anna-Maija Raanamo, (former Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, Department of International Relations, Finnish Ministry of Education) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Here are the two blurbs from the back cover of the second edition, followed by a sampling of the readers’ reviews of the first edition from the book's Amazon.com page:

"Michael Shapiro is one of the great thinkers in the realm of linguistics and language use, and his integrated understanding of language and speech in its semantic and pragmatic structure, grammatical and historical grounding, and colloquial to literary stylistic variants is perhaps unmatched today. Who might be interested in this book? Certainly linguists, language scholars, literary theorists, novelists, poets, essayists, journalists--but also those who find the dictionary entertaining reading (there are surprisingly many of us), or simply those whose fascination with the inner workings of language knows no bounds. This book is a treasure to be shared." - Robert S. Hatten, The University of Texas at Austin

"Jewel of a book. . . . a gift to us all from Michael Shapiro. Like a Medieval Chapbook it can be a kind of companion whose vignettes on language use can be randomly and profitably consulted at any moment. Some may consider these vignettes opinionated. That would be to ignore how deeply anchored each vignette is in Shapiro's long and rare polyglot experience with language. It could well serve as a night table book, taken up each night to read and reflect upon ––to ponder––both in the twilight mind and in the deeper reaches of associative somnolence. There is nothing else like it that I know of." –James W. Fernandez, The University of Chicago

"I was overwhelmed by [the book's] richness and diversity. Besides its great general value for linguistic theory (and its popularization), it would obviously deserve to constitute an important part also of the orthoepic discussion that should be going on in the US. This is no doubt an extraordinary achievement which reflects a rare mastery of the most various aspects of language and language usage. The outspokenly pedagogical approach, witnessed by the clear English prose and the introductory glossaries, should make the book accessible to a broad American-English public of readers interested in their mother tongue and its fate. It's an eminent oeuvre which hopefully will receive all the attention it deserves!"- Nils B. Thelin, Universities of Uppsala and Oldenburg

"Michael Shapiro's work is truly singular in numerous respects, but no one is more characteristic than the manner in which he brings into deepest harmony a theoretical sophistication and the unblinkingly attentive concern with fine-grained detail (detail as salient as subtle). He combines the approach of a tough-minded linguist for whom evidence - and evidence alone - is decisive and the fluid sensitivity of the poet. This makes these reflections a joy to read. Even in the case of the casual reader, one's own ear and eye will become more finely attuned to important features of our linguistic practices. These reflections add up to nothing less than a vividly realized portrait of speaking selves in all their complexity." - Vincent Colapietro, The Pennsylvania State University

 "*The Speaking Self* is full of surprises and discoveries. It is an impressive collection of observations about language use, original interpretations, linguistic wisdom."

 – Donka Minkova Stockwell, UCLA

"Michael Shapiro's new book takes an Internet genre - a corpus of weblog posts - and revitalises the conventional `Introduction to Linguistics' by means of a microscopic analysis of a multitude of linguistic blemishes that characterise Anglo-Saxon culture today. *The Speaking Self* should be on every linguist's bookshelf, should figure in the bibliographies of linguistics courses, and should be mandatory reading for TV presenters, sports commentators and the subeditors of our national newspapers. A very fine achievement."

 - Anthony Jappy, University of Perpignan

"Reading this book is like having a conversation with an expert in linguistics. . . . I found each of the entries comparable to a New Yorker cartoon. Each episode is interesting and a lot of them are funny, but the amusement is the beginning of an understanding. Because they describe what we see and hear all around us, they make the ordinary become remarkable. We see how language is at work in us and how we declare ourselves in the most common things we say. – Robert Sokolowski, The Catholic University of America

"I've read miscellanies on the lore and usage of language before, but never one that shows all at once such a fine ear, such love for language, and such theoretical depth glimmering in brief dips and deeper dives alike. This is the kind of book that has value far outweighing any disagreement about particulars. If you enjoy and value the lore and study of language, then read *The Speaking Self* because Michael Shapiro is a master." – Ben Udell, The Peirce Blog

*"The Speaking Self* is a book that is at once erudite, provocative, informative, and amusing. I recommend dipping in anywhere to enjoy Michael Shapiro's wide-ranging examples followed by his insightful commentary. . . . Dr. Shapiro has both an ear and a mind for language, and the result is a highly enjoyable and unusually thoughtful book. **–** J. Norris Frederick, Queens University of Charlotte

Michael Shapiro, one of the world's foremost linguists, has written a book on English language usage and lore which is as informative as it is fun to read. You can 'drop into' the book at any place––its unique structure allowing you to virtually open it at random and find something of interest––and read a short, well written essay (or two or three or many) on topics you may have considered before, or some you've perhaps never thought about. You come away from each essay positively delighted in knowing something more than you knew before. - Gary J. Richmond, LaGuardia College of the City University of New York

"Shapiro serves us vignettes with living vine leading to soothing wine, up to tiny festive bubbles. He provides a modern Neostructuralist touch informed by the semiotics of C. S. Peirce. . . Shapiro puts his "synchronic philology" into the living contemporary usage, from phonetics to wider semantics and cultural contexts, based on his own observation and compilation. Shapiro picks up raw, rough rocks and polishes them into gems . . . His book informs and entertains with precision and charm." – Raimo Anttila, University of California, Los Angeles

"Anyone who loves words will love this book. The proper use of language, the mispronunciation of words, why it happens and what it means—all this and more may be found in Professor Shapiro’s engaging, thought-provoking analysis of contemporary English—a page-turner I couldn’t put down, and gladly return to again and again. In a word, not only is *The Speaking Self* thoroughly engaging, at the same time it is authoritative, informative, and full of surprises about the language we all take for granted, but clearly don’t understand as well as we should. Thanks to Michael Shapiro, this book goes a long way in making up for what we don’t know but can now better understand and appreciate thanks to the erudite and often humorous explanations he provides. This book is a must for anyone with an interest in language in general and words in particular. – Joseph W. Dauben, Lehman College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York

“It is a splendid piece, immensely learned, written with clarity and rigor . . . and I have learned a great deal from it. I think of it as a f*east* for those drawn to dictionaries, cultural history and to the ever fascinating, and for me as yet unsolved, issue of the origin of Language.” – Stephen Werner, University of California, Los Angeles

 "It is a fantastic book, immensely interesting and extraordinarily well written, and I am totally amazed at [its] learning and erudition. . . . delightful and rewarding!

 – Stig Eliasson, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

“Michael Shapiro's *The Speaking Self* is a joyous celebration of the complexity, endless variety, and uniquely human elements of our linguistic lives, thoughts, and actions.  The book can be picked up and read from any page and one will find something interesting to expand our understanding of language.  Anyone who might be prone to think that human language is just another, perhaps higher,  form of computer language or math will be instantly convinced of the contrary. Human language is infinitely adaptable and here we have a book that is up to the infinite task of demonstrating that fact.” - John Nassivera, Columbia University Society of Fellows in the Humanities [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Here are two recent assessments on the book’s Amazon page:
“Professor Shapiro’s *On Language and Value in American Speech* is an enchanting book, an erudite and entertaining excursus across the foibles of American English as it is currently spoken. Exquisitely written and a joy to read, it displays profound scholarship and penetrating insight. It will captivate a wide group of readers, not only academics, with its elegant prose in illustrating how spoken, colloquial language is conditioned by social trends. It is a truly educational experience for native speakers in understanding how certain common expressions came into being. There are abundant examples of usage that elucidate the various topics being addressed and make it easy for the general reader to grasp the essence of the argument. The book’s extensive appendix provides a memorable complement to the main body of the text. It is a superb follow-up to his previous book, *The Speaking Self*. Professor Shapiro is one of today’s most prominent sociolinguists and this book can only confirm this status. A must read!” - Claude Carey, Brown University

“Cultural observation at its best, a delight to read. This is what you need to know about this latest book by Michael Shapiro—a preeminent linguist and philosopher. Cultural practice is always tempered by social preference and Shapiro is a keen observer when it comes to the value choices reflected in the everyday speech of Americans. The book is a study that can be read at different levels of insight. At one level, there are nine essays that cover the full spectrum of social practice that a general reader needs in order to appreciate the twists and turns of persons trying to describe (with the language tools available to them) their perception of the world. The best sampler here is the essay “Wimp English” (Chapter 1). A second level is the linguistic (Roman Jakobson) and philosophical theory (Charles S. Peirce) that explicates how Shapiro comes to the the nine descriptive chapters; this level consists of four appendix essays. The best sampler here is the essay on Markedness (Appendix 3) where the qualitative nature of semiotics informs both language and logic. The four appendices are readable explanations for the beginner and yet, insightful analyses for the seasoned professional as well. In either case, just in case you do not get the analytic moves being made in this book, there is the last essay (Appendix 4) that gently explains that you have been progressing all along through a metanalysis where social and cultural values are, indeed, the shifting Boundaries of language (the record of what we thought we meant) and speaking (the record of what we feel we mean). For beginners, this is a must read book that delights in education by familiar example. For professionals, this is a must study book that teaches insight by sound analysis of sound.” - Richard L. Lanigan, Laureate Fellow, International Communicology Institute, Washington, DC, USA [↑](#footnote-ref-16)