Roland Barthes (1915-1980)

STRUCTURALISM

SEMIIOLOGY/ SEMIOTICS
(Ferdinand de Saussure)
Sign:
1. Signifier- Word
2. Signified- Meaning
3. Referent- Example
Langue- Language System
Parole- Utterance
Denotation- Literal Meaning
(reliant on cultural conventions)
Connotation- Personal Meaning

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

DECONSTRUCTION
(Jacques Derrida)
Differance- Combines “differ” and “defer.” We determine the meanings of signs by analyzing their contexts. These contexts are made up of signs. We determine the meanings of these signs by their contexts. Meaning is always deferred. It cannot be contained. Denotation is another level of connotation.

BINARY OPPOSITIONS
(Claude Levi-Strauss)
The meaning of an idea depends on what it is not:
Hot/cold, man/woman, light/darkness

PRIVILEGING OF THE BINARY
(Derrida)
One side is “culturally marked” as positive, making the other negative.

WRITING DEGREE ZERO, 1953
MYTHOLOGIES (ESSAY COLLECTION), 1957
“THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MESSAGE” (I-M-T), 1961
“RHETORIC OF THE IMAGE” (I-M-T), 1964
“AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES” (I-M-T), 1966
THE FASHION SYSTEM, 1967

“THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR” (I-M-T), 1968
EMPIRE OF SIGNS, 1970
S/Z, 1970
THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT, 1975
ROLAND BARThES BY ROLAND BARThES, 1975
A LOVER’S DISCOURSE: FRAGMENTS, 1977
CAMERA LUCIDA, 1980
**Image-Music-Text**

**“The Photographic Message” (1961)**
- The press photo is the “perfect analagon” to reality.
- Denotative.
- A message without a code.
- Connotation happens at production and reception of the image.
- Adding text further connotes, just as adding images to text would create a more denotative (objective) message.
- Photo **connotations** are cultural and historical.
- There are no universal **denotations**.

**“Rhetoric of the Image” (1964)**
- The advertising photo: signification of the image is intentional.
- First message: linguistic (caption, labels)—**anchorage**.
- Second message: denotative (message without a code).
- Spatial immediacy + temporal anteriority (having-been-there).
- Photo as pseudo-truth functions to **naturalize** the **myth**.
- Third message: symbolic (coded)- Connotations, **Italianicity**.

**Sign**
- **Signifier**
- **Signified**
- (Denotation)

**Signifier**
- **Signified**
- (Connotation)

**Signifier**
- **Signified**
- (Connotation)

**Orders of signification**

**“The Death of the Author” (1968)**
- Preliterate societies had a mediator or performer who presented narratives.
- Modern text – the author is absent.
- “To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text... to close it.”
- **Polysemy**: “A text is made up of multiple writings [none original], drawn from many cultures... one place where this multiplicity is focused: the reader.”
- “In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be **disentangled**, nothing **deciphered**.”

- Rejection of binary structures.
- Technology promotes myth, hides connotation (better special effects).
- Text anchors images.
- Agency of the Reader vs. Author.
- Plurality of connotations as cultural awareness expands.
- Polysemous structure of narrative.
“Sarrasine” by Honore de Balzac (1830)
Parisian artist Sarrasine travels to Rome and falls in love with opera diva La Zambinella, who is actually a castrato. S. sees Z. as the image of the perfect woman and sculpts a statue in her honor. Upon discovering Z.’s identity, S attempts to kill him in a rage claiming that he himself has now been castrated.

http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1826

Readerly Text- Traditional literary work. Reader is passive “receiver of a fixed, pre-determined reading,” the consumer of a commodity. Does not “locate the reader as a site of the production of meaning.”

Writerly Text- Cannot exist physically (without being described, encoded, changed). Not representative, but productive. It is “ourselves writing.” It is “a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds.” It has no structure or logic because it is infinite.

Polysemy- “The more plural the text, the less it is written before I read it.” (Not binary.)

Difference- “Reading does not consist in stopping the chain of systems, in establishing a truth, a legality of the text, and consequently in leading its reader into ‘errors.'”

Reversibility- Rereading “draws the text out of its internal chronology.”

The Five Codes

Hermeneutic (HER)- Enigmas, questions, elements that build suspense.

Proairetic (ACT)- Indicates actions of the characters that imply further actions.

Cultural (REF)- References to a science or a body of knowledge. Gnomic/ cliche.

Semic (SEM)- Words whose connotations support or develop a theme.

Symbolic (SYM)- Details in the story that are interpreted on a figurative level. Antithesis.

Lexias

Sarrasine (HER- What is Sarrasine, a noun? A Name? A man? A woman?) (SEM- French pronunciation connotes femininity.) I was deep in one of those daydreams. (SYM- daydream=antithesis. Description follows of garden/salon, life/death, cold/heat.)... when I was roused by a conversation. (ACT- characters speaking; narrator is roused.) The Dance of the Dead (REF- Medieval art & poetry).

- Hypertext- infinite structure of lexias, can be entered anywhere
- “Interactive” agency of reader
- Disappearance of Author
- Multiple meanings
- Network systems
ACTIVITY:

"The Appointment in Samarra"
(as retold by W. Somerset Maugham [1933])

The speaker is Death

There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture, now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

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“‘Sarrasine’ by Honore de Balzac.” Project Gutenberg. 9 February 2009. 
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