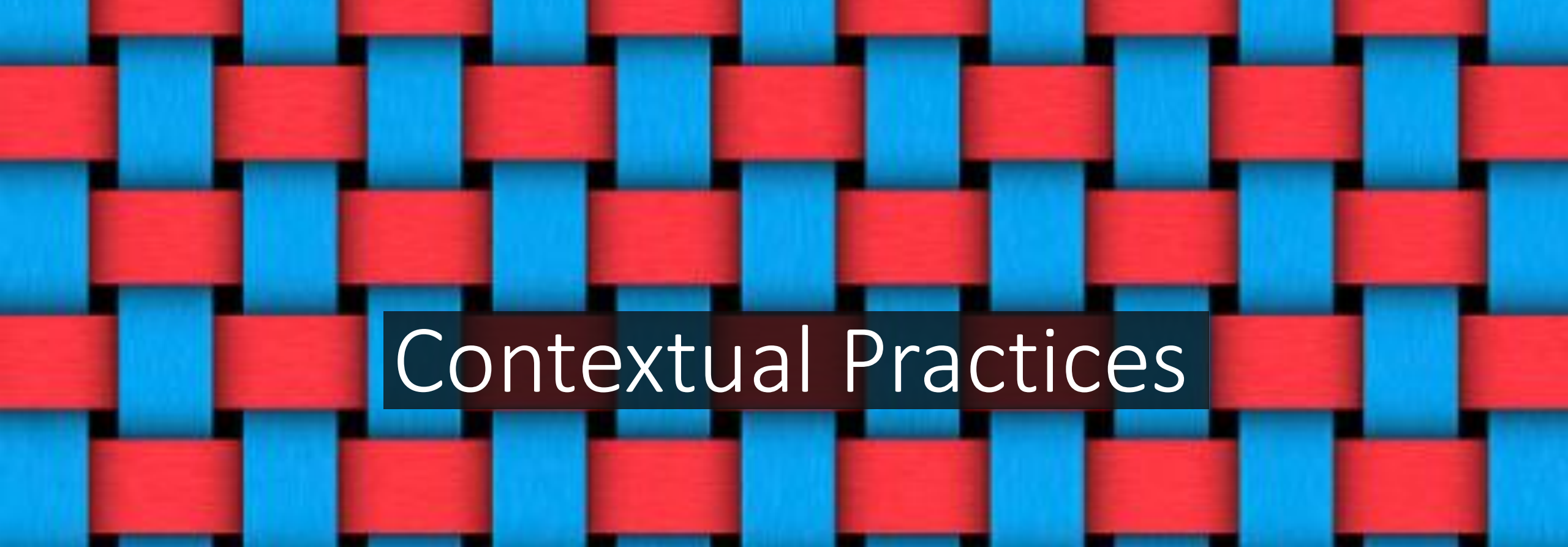




Contextual Practices

TASK 2: Analyse an Image

Lecture 5: A language of Things/ A Language of Relationships

Dr Julia Lockheart

Swansea College of Art, UWTSD

What do you need you to do?

Complete 3 tasks which together make up your *Portfolio of Writing*

Manifesto Writing (declarative)

Observational Writing (deconstruction)

Practice-based writing (according to your discipline)

What do you need you to do?

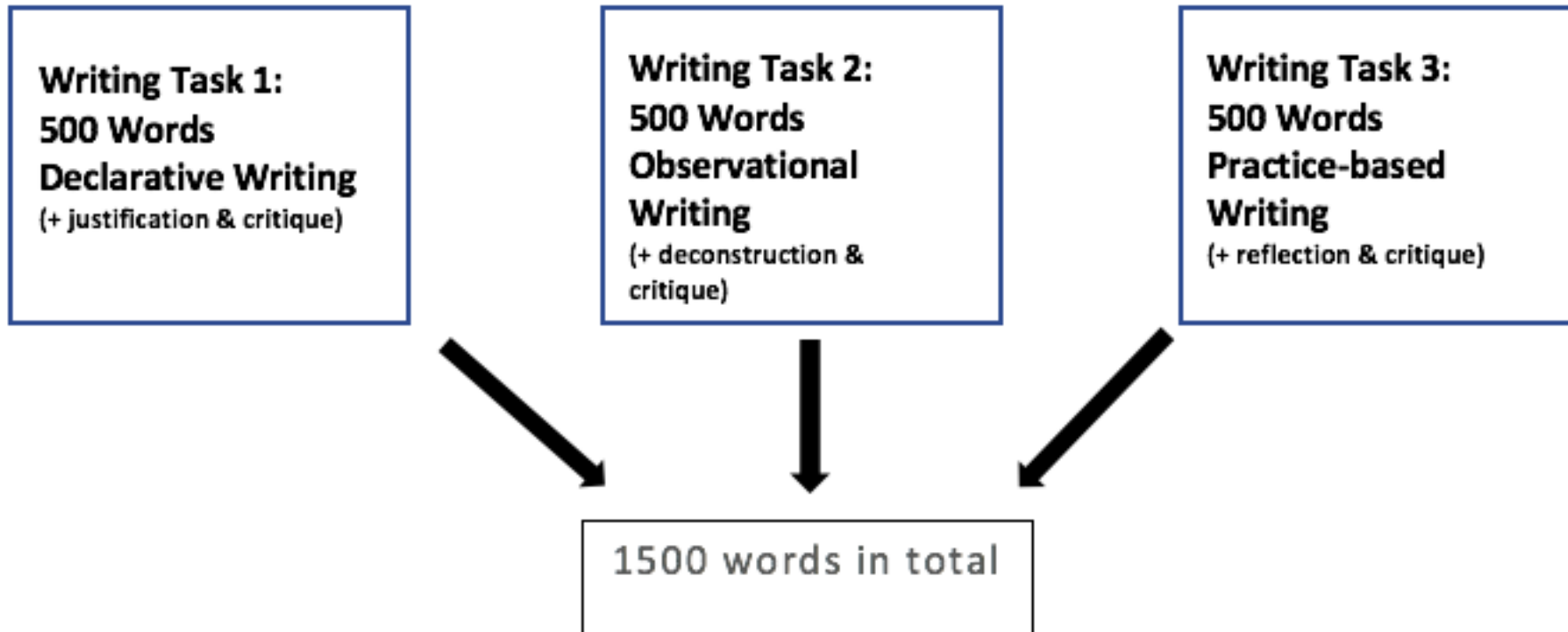
Use a minimum of 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles or online sources.

Outcome: 500 words + map and images. Show your research with a reference list.

Submit this **in the portfolio**.

All three tasks should be combined into one document and submitted in your *Portfolio of Writing* on Monday 6th January 2025. Your portfolio should contain a total of 1500 words (or equivalent).

What do you need you to do?



Advised minimum range of sources: 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles or online sources

Your *Portfolio of Writing*

TASK: Manifesto Writing: Write a *manifesto* of 8 short statements regarding your beliefs, work and practice. Please submit these 8 statements, but **do not** count them in your 500 words.

With a particular focus on three of your manifesto statements, write a 500 word overview of your beliefs.

Use a minimum of 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles or online sources.

Outcome: 500 words + map and images. Show your research with a reference list. Submit this **in the portfolio**.

Your *Portfolio of Writing*

TASK: Observational Writing: Identify an image and write a semiotic analysis. Choose 3 key aspects of semiotics and use them to simplify and focus your writing. Conclude by assessing how your understanding of the image has changed.

Use a minimum of 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles or online sources.

Outcome: 500 words + map and images. Show your research with a reference list.
Submit this **in the portfolio**.

Your *Portfolio of Writing*

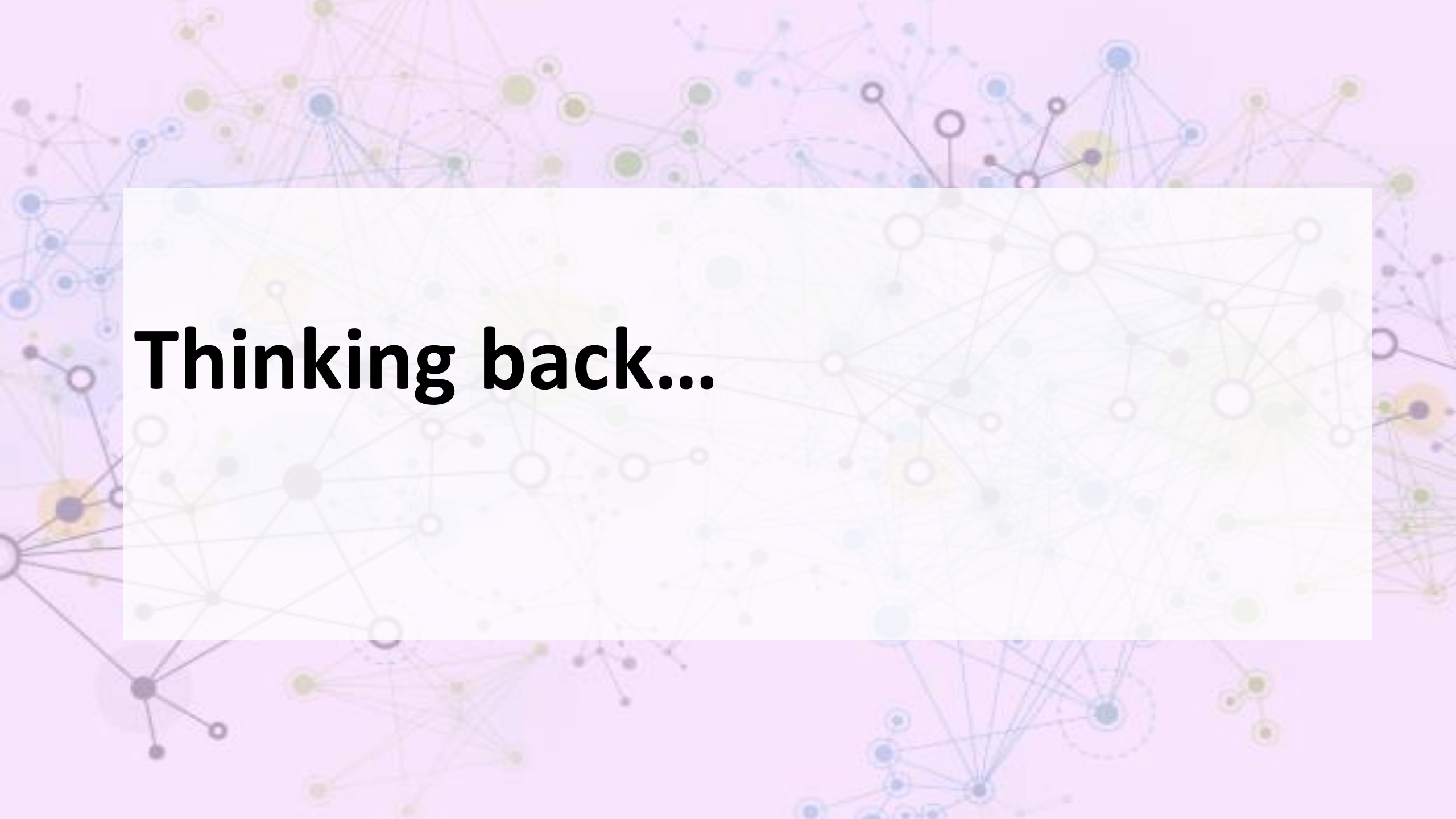
TASK: Practice-based writing: This will be different in each strand. Write about an object or artefact. Explore and discover your thinking through writing. Think reflectively and develop your thinking by pushing your initial reactions through further reading, and individual practice responses around the artefact's theme (for example create personal drawings, designs, or paintings, or sculpture, or music, photography, or other creative practice) and then critically summarise the results of your process through the lens of your work.

Use a minimum of 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles or online sources.

Outcome: 500 words + map and images. Show your research with a reference list. Submit this **in the portfolio**.

What do you need you to do?

All three tasks should be combined into one document and submitted in your *Portfolio of Writing* on Monday 6th January 2025. Your portfolio should contain a total of 1500 words (or equivalent).

The background of the slide is a complex network diagram. It features numerous nodes, represented by circles of various sizes and colors (blue, green, yellow, orange, and grey), interconnected by a dense web of thin, light-colored lines. The overall aesthetic is technical and digital, suggesting themes of connectivity, data, or social networks. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text.

Thinking back...

A background network diagram with a light purple border. The diagram consists of numerous small, semi-transparent circles in shades of blue, yellow, and grey, connected by thin, light grey lines. These lines form a complex web of connections across the entire slide, with some nodes having more connections than others, creating a sense of a large, interconnected system.

Things are interdependent

They are not alone!

**They are connected to networks
of society and culture**

Things

Things are stable and fixed

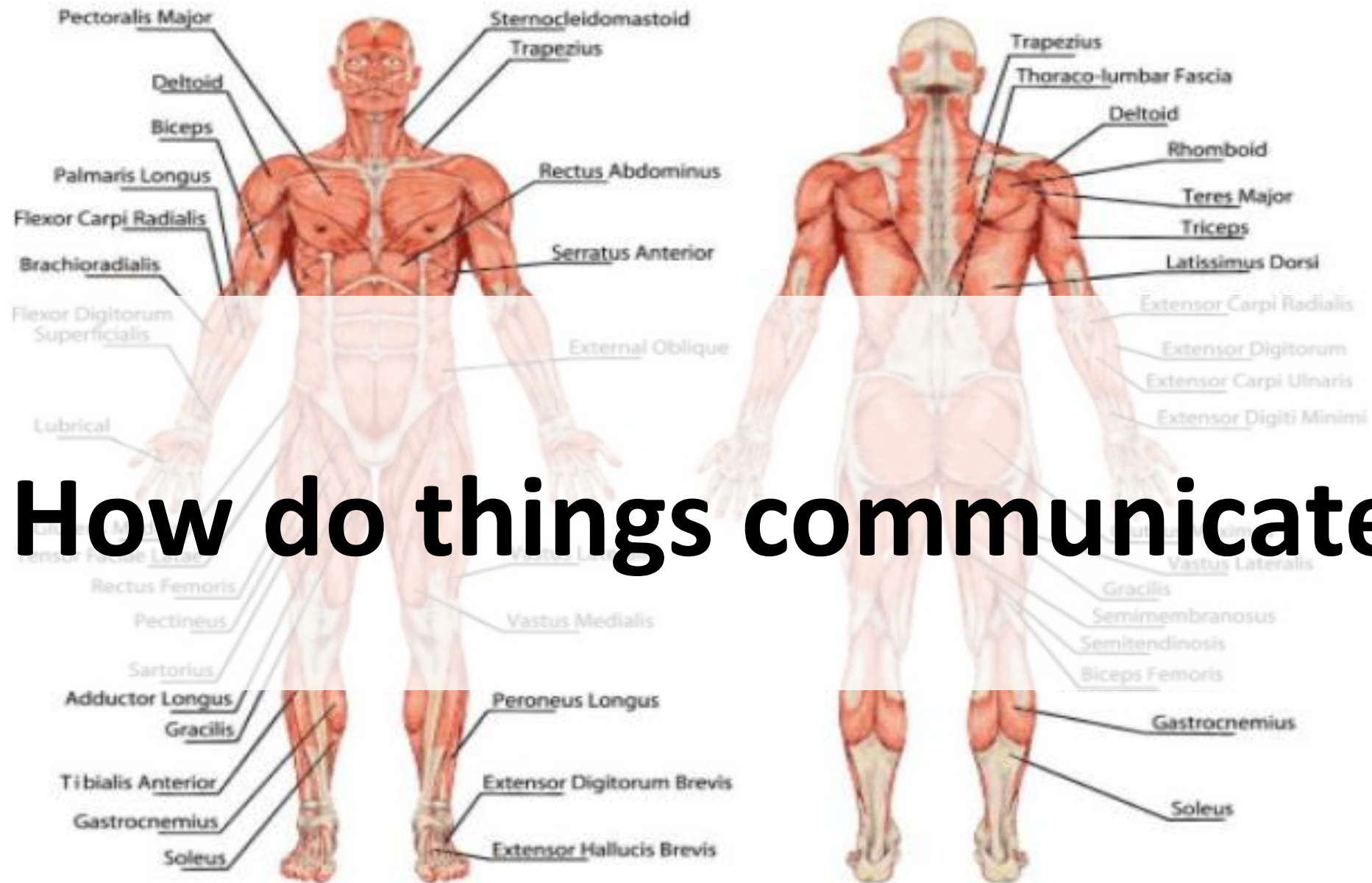
Things attract

Things repulse

Things fall and rise

Things disappear, dry out, get wet, change and
reappear

They rot, decay, erode into sand.



How do things communicate?

[illegible]



A Language of Things
A Language of Relationships

Semiotics: What and why.

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation.

It is important to understand semiotics in order to understand contemporary culture.

As a practitioner it also provides you with the knowledge and ability to communicate effectively.

What are Semiotics?

Semiotics have directed our shared understanding of what we see and how we 'read' any image or artwork. It provides us with meaning and context with the aim of heightening our intellectual encounter with a piece of visual communication and art. Most significantly it effects how we perceive the world and the meanings we acquire and share from the world around us.

For this reason semiotics is the prevailing **structuralist** model persistently used to deconstruct contemporary imagery including advertising and design as well as texts.

Ferdinand De Saussure

1857-1913

Swiss professor of linguistics

Asked the question: How do languages work?

How do they communicate meaning?



Language as a sign-system

- For Saussure, language is a system of signs
- The sign can be split into two components,

The signifier

the sign itself (what you see/hear)

'Cat'

'Cath'

'Chat'

The signified

what it refers to (the thing or concept)

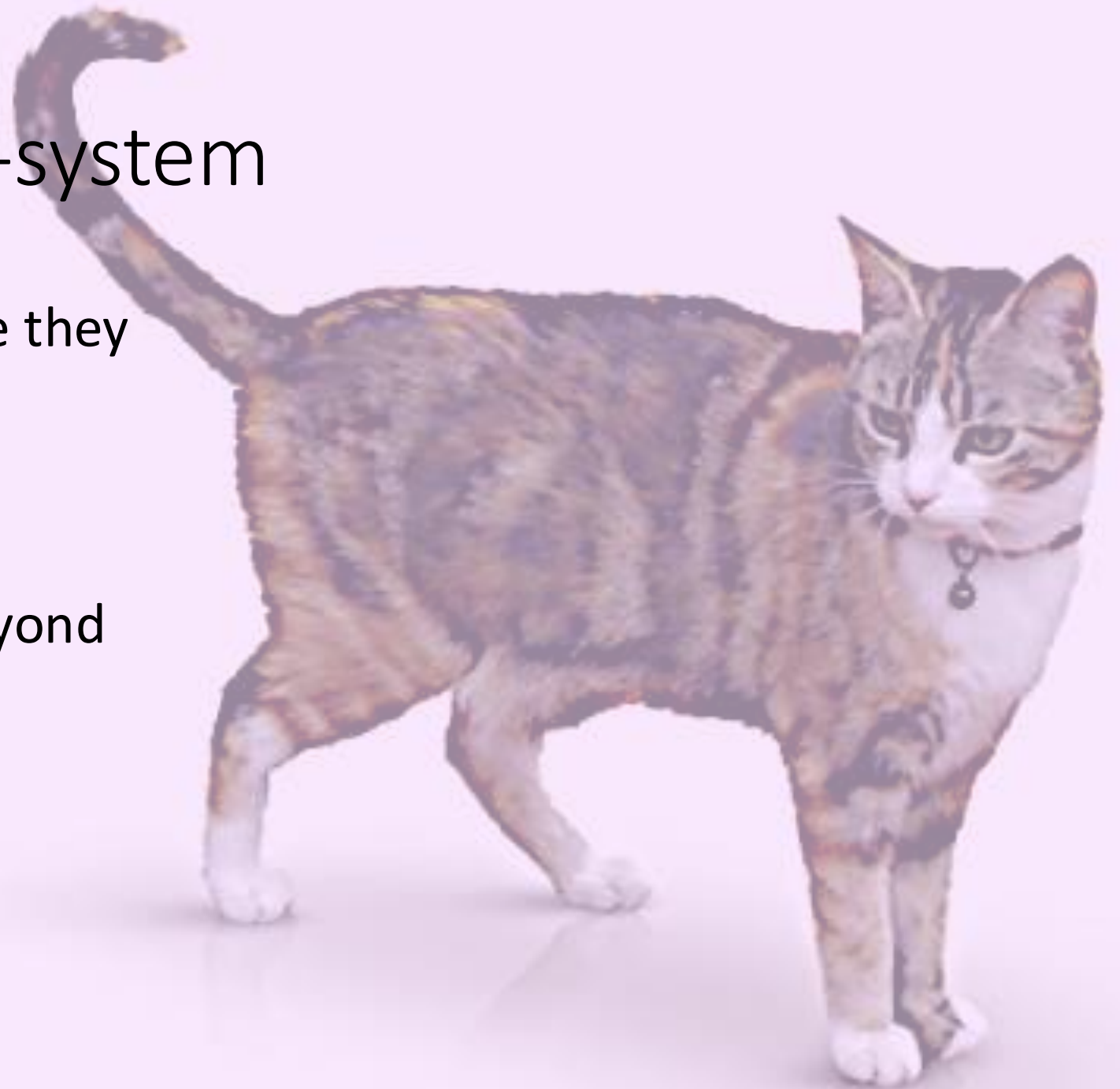
Small, furry animal that says 'miaow'

- To communicate clearly, the hearer/reader must know the signifier and the signified



Language as a sign-system

- Signs are important because they mean something other than themselves.
- They point to a meaning beyond the surface.



Saussure's key pronouncements:

- The relationship between a signifier and signified is arbitrary
- Meaning is relational
- Language constitutes our world

The relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary

- There is no 'natural' or 'logical' connection between a word and its referent.
- NB there are a very few exceptions

Cuckoos coo

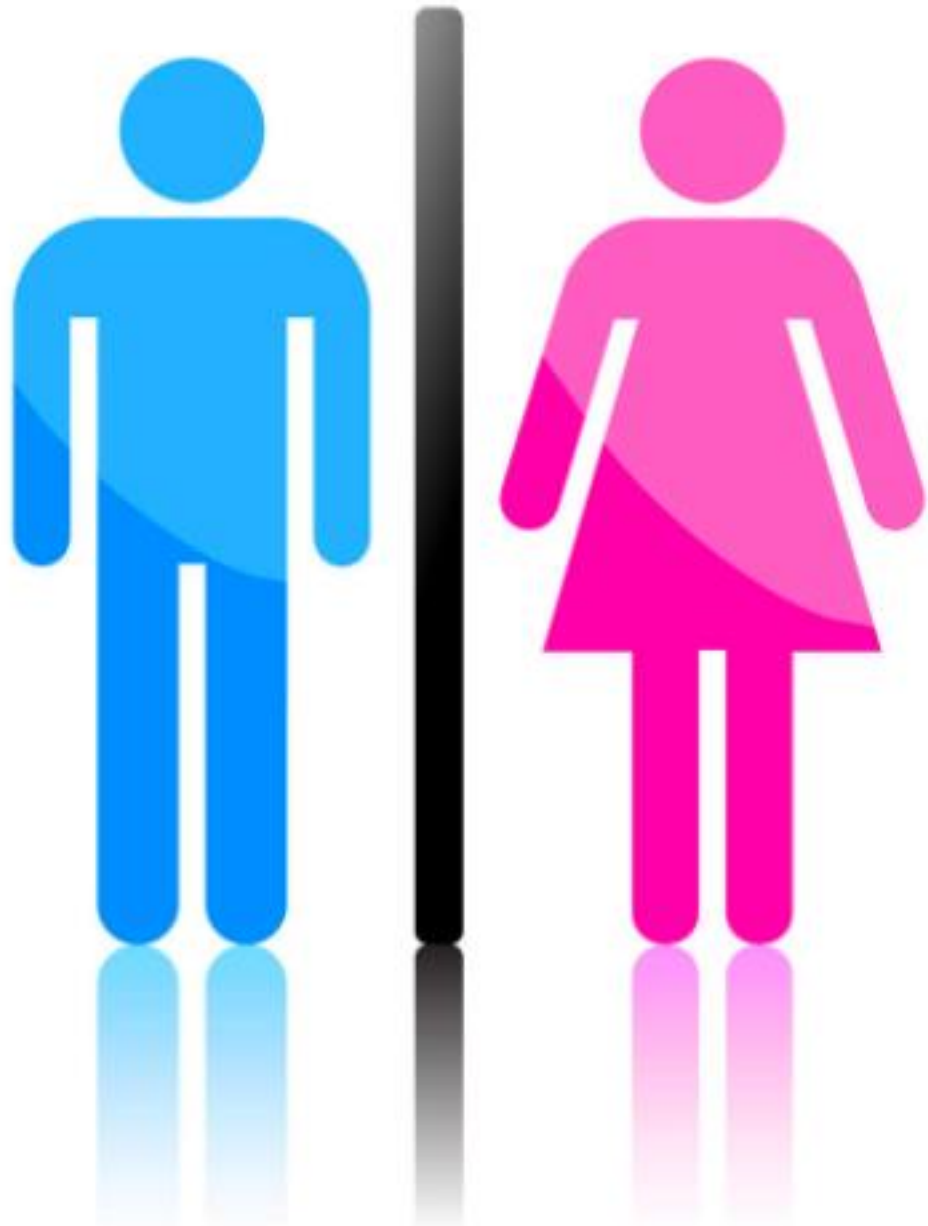
Meaning is relational



Words can only be explained by using other words:

Eg, what does 'mansion' mean in this word chain?

hut – cottage – house – mansion – palace



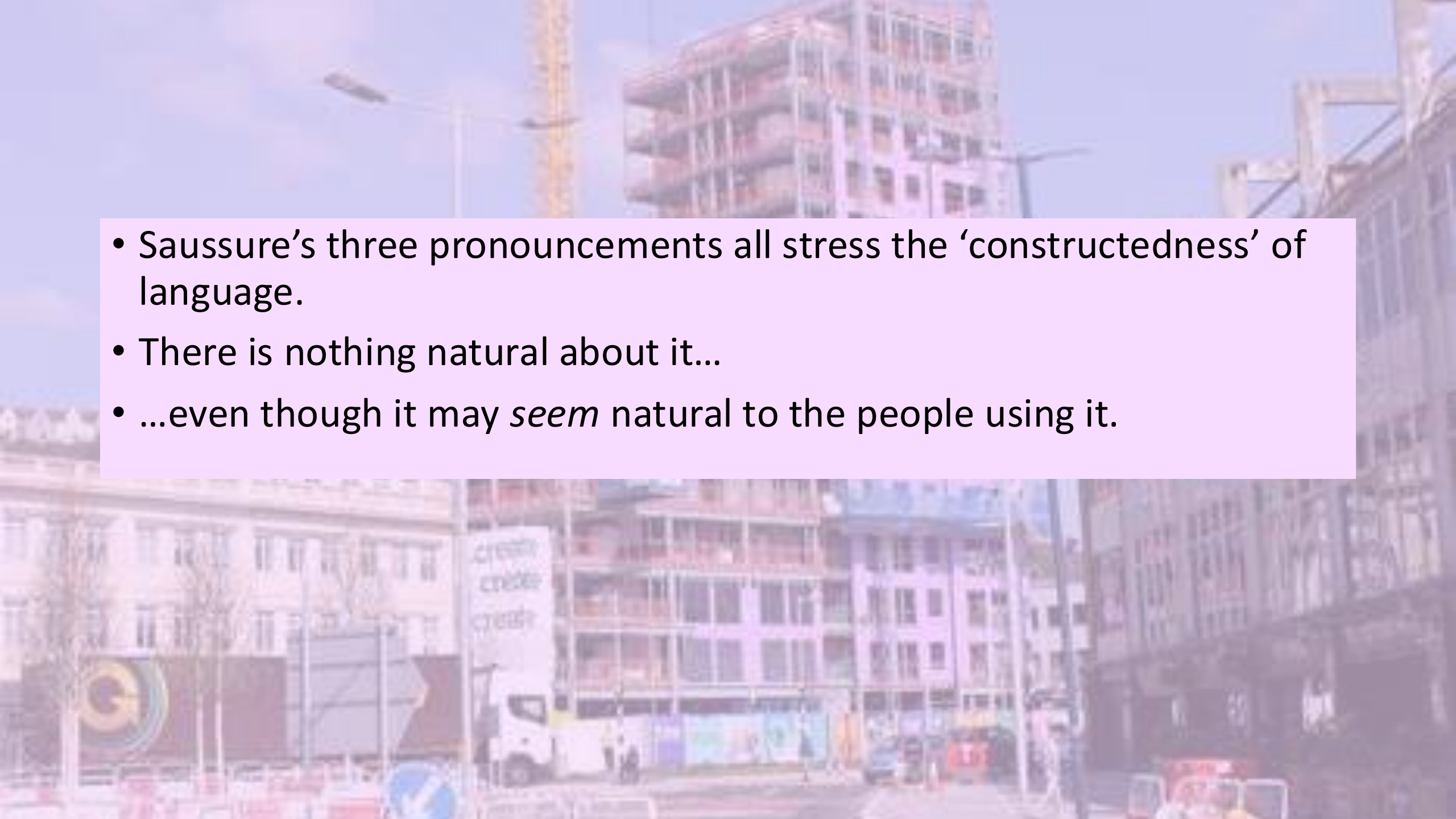
Meaning is relational

Some words gain their meaning in relation to their opposite (binary distinctions)

Eg, What does '**man**' mean?
What does '**day**' mean

Meaning constitutes our world

- Language does not simply reflect 'reality' or the world 'out there'
- It constructs a representation of reality
- If you speak Welsh, think of how your Welsh and English sometimes construct the world differently

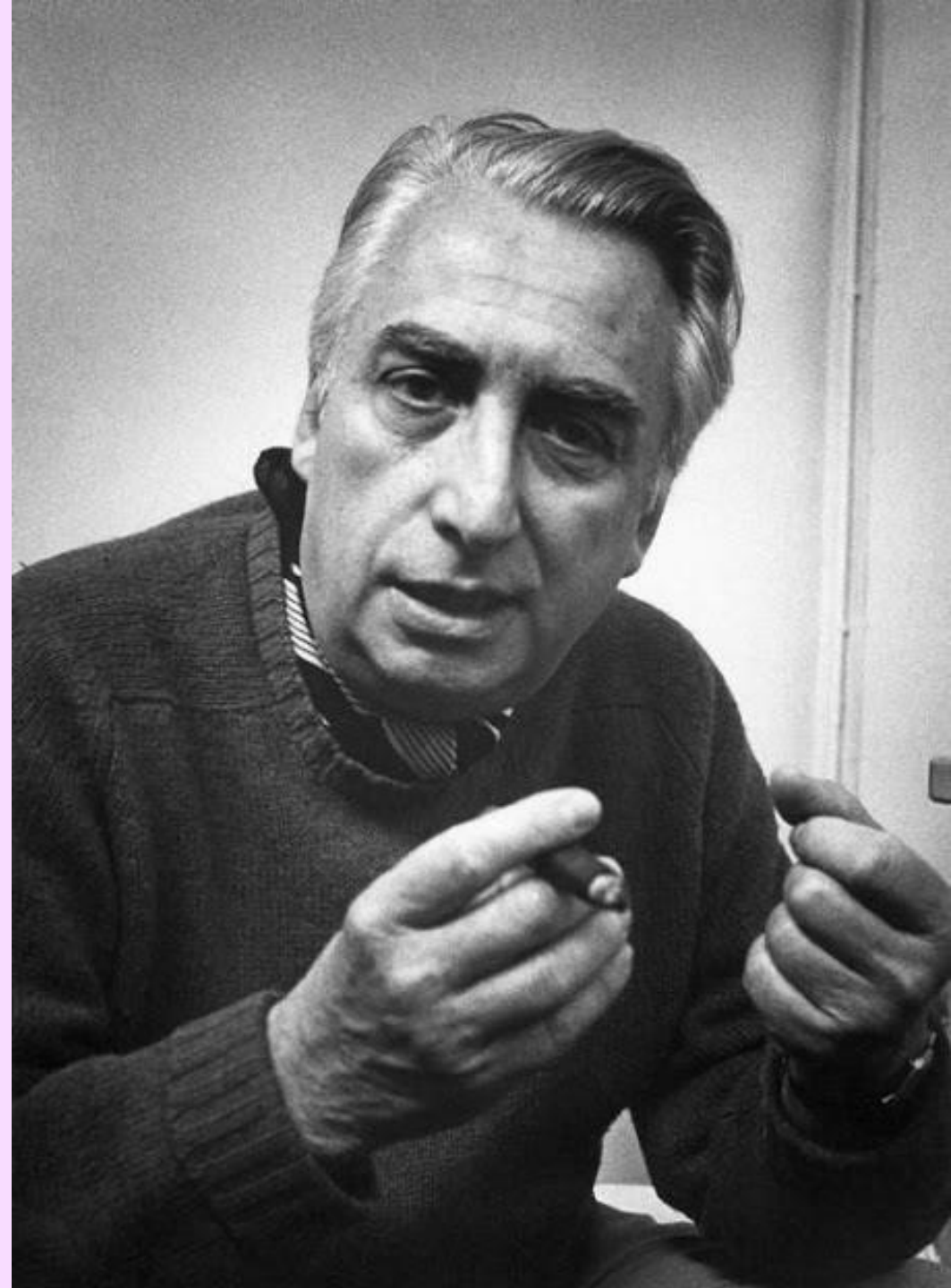
- 
- Saussure's three pronouncements all stress the 'constructedness' of language.
 - There is nothing natural about it...
 - ...even though it may *seem* natural to the people using it.

Roland Barthes

1915-1980

In the 1950s, Barthes borrowed Saussure's ideas from linguistics and used them to analyse everyday culture

His essays were brought together in his book *Mythologies* (1957)



Roland Barthes

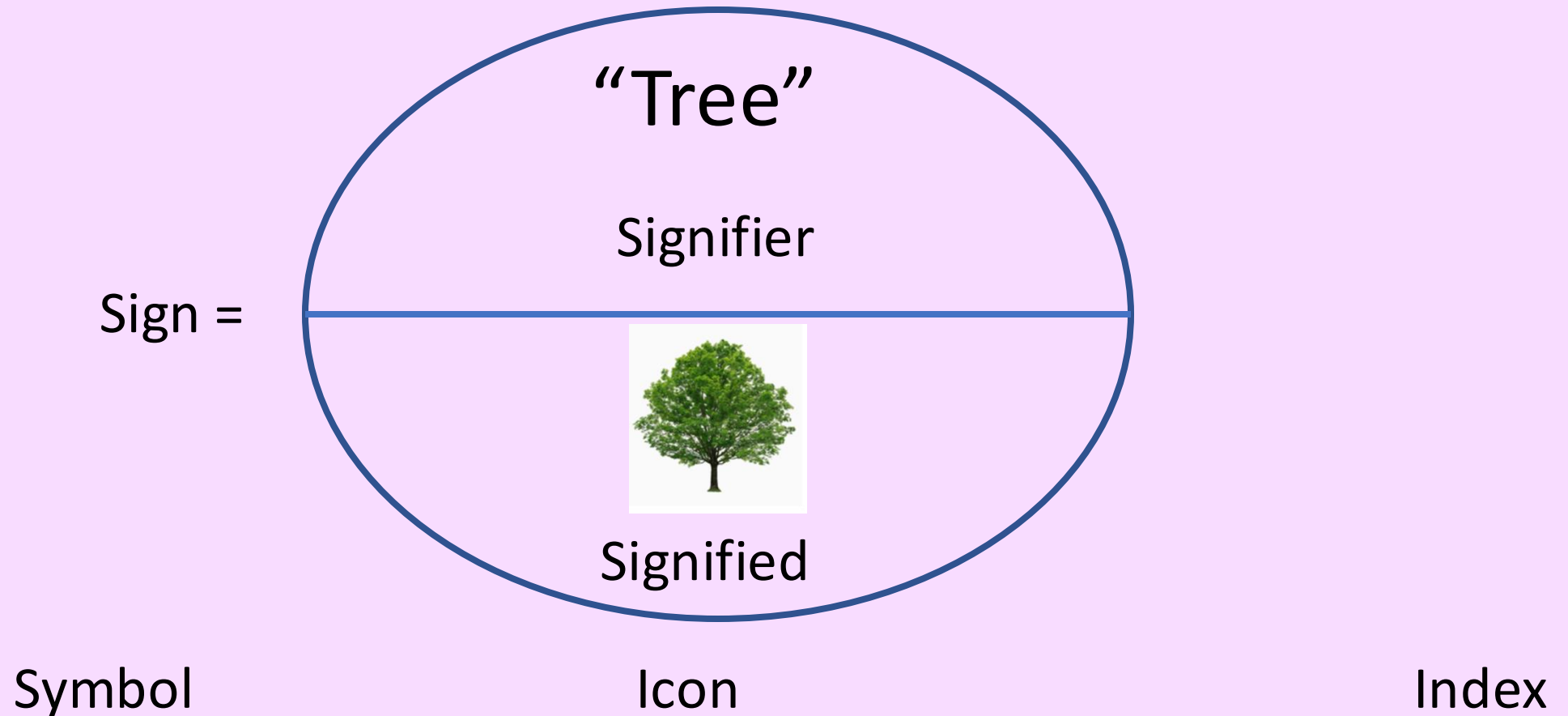
- Barthes developed the concept of signifier and signified:

The signifier

The signified

Roland Barthes

- Barthes developed the concept of signifier and signified:



Roland Barthes



Symbol



Icon

Nature
Forest
Deforestation
Earth Lungs

Index

Roland Barthes

- Barthes developed the concept of signifier and signified:

The signifier

The signified could be divided into
Denotation (the literal, surface meaning)
Connotation (the secondary, deeper meaning)

The connotations of a signifier are also arbitrary, and culturally based.

- What are the connotations of 'red' in your culture?
- What are the connotations of 'leather jacket' in Western popular culture?

Roland Barthes and 'myth'

- Barthes shows how the connotations of images can come together to create 'myth' –the stories that we believe about ourselves and our culture
- Myths are often created by those in power to support their own values and re-enforce their hold on society
- Myths claim to be 'natural', but Barthes method reveals their constructedness

Barthes' essay on a Paris match magazine cover

What can you see on the cover?

What might be the deeper
connotations for France in the
1950s?

What then, is the underlying myth?

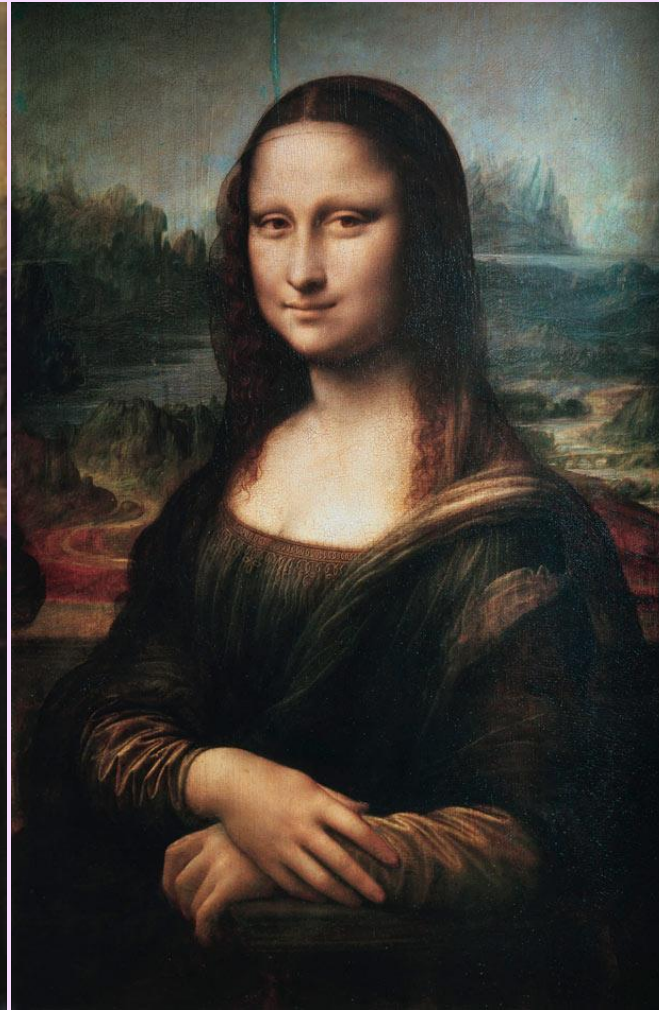
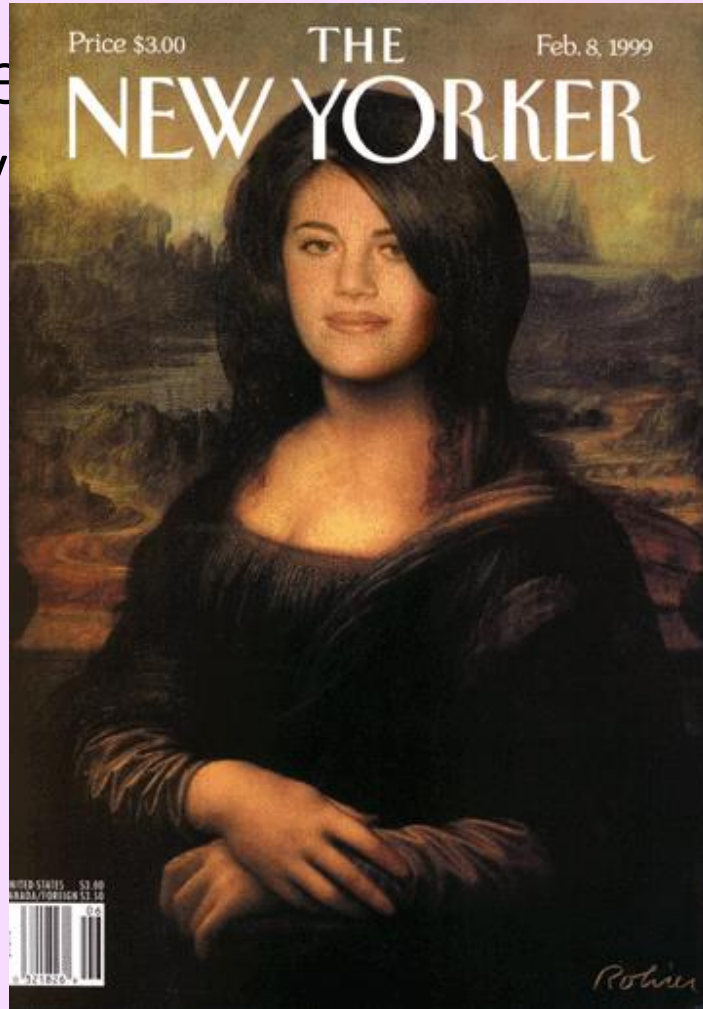


What is the myth here?

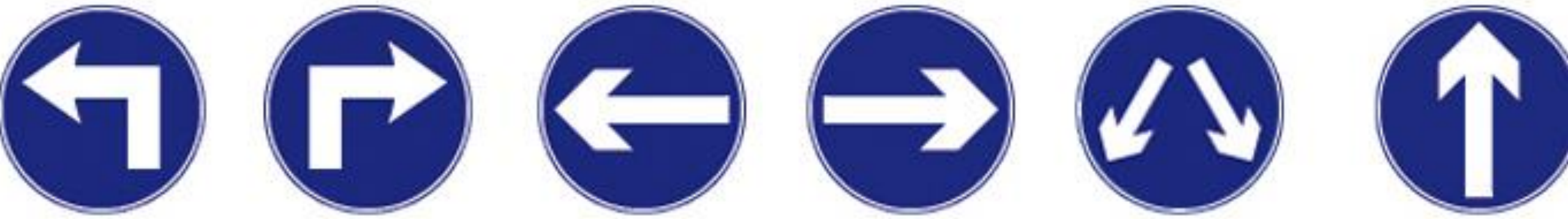


- The apple represents fruit from the tree of knowledge. Eve is tempted to take it by Satan.
 - The apple means temptation, but only because there is a well established connection in our minds between the appearance of the apple and the idea of temptation. It is this connection that makes the picture successful in terms of communication.
 - The apple is the 'signifier' and the temptation is the 'signified.'
- One is the sign and the other is the meaning behind that sign = Semiotics

Conte
Every



Signs and Symbols are dependent for their meaning on the contexts in which they are read and understood vital for the understanding of art and design. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4>



Semiotics, or the understanding of the use of signs and symbols, is about the tools, processes and contexts we have for creating, interpreting and understanding meaning in a variety of ways.

Seeing and Knowledge.

‘the postmodern is a visual culture’

Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998, p.4),

For a cultural overview of semiotics see Gillian Rose, **Visual Methodologies (2022)**

Judith Williamson

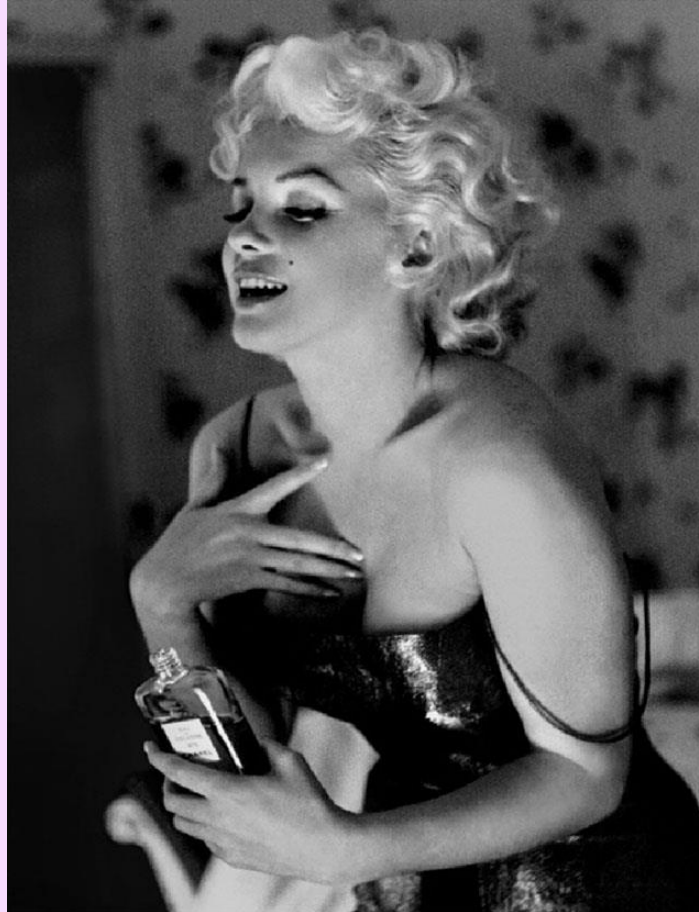
Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising (2010)

“A sign is simply a thing – whether object, word, or picture – which has a particular meaning to a person or group of people. It is neither the thing nor the meaning alone, but the two together. A sign consists of the Signifier, the material object, and the signified, which is its meaning. These are only divided for analytical purposes: in practice a sign is always thing-plus-meaning.”

Channel No. 5

Judith Williamson
**Decoding Advertisements:
Ideology and Meaning in
Advertising (2010)**

[The Iconic Sign](#)





N°5



N°5



[The Myth](#)

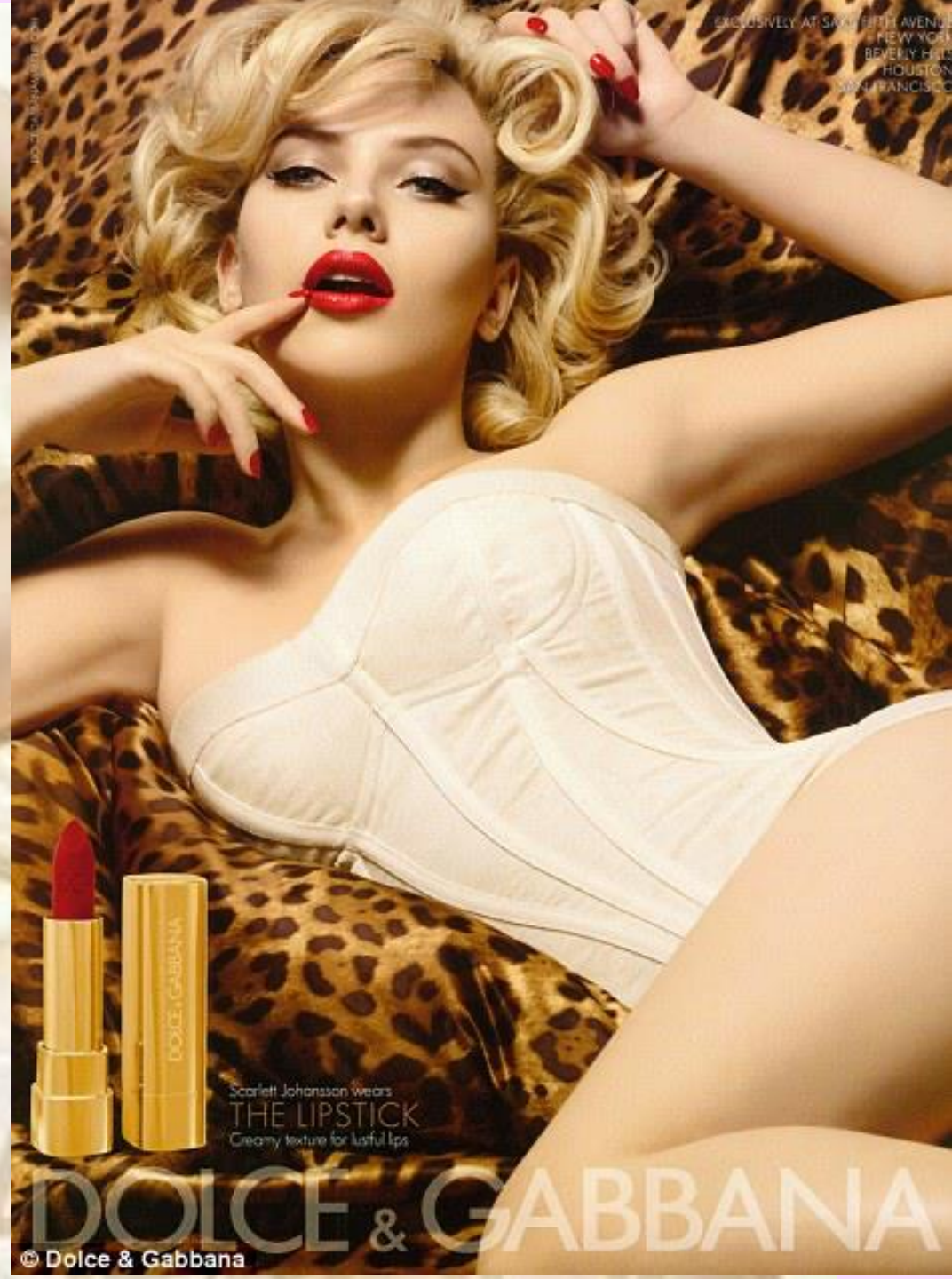
Judith Williamson

**Decoding Advertisements:
Ideology and Meaning in
Advertising (2010)**

The system of signs from which the product draws its image is a *referent system* in that the sign lifted out of it and placed in the ad (in this case, Catherine Deneuve's face) *refers back to it*. It is not enough simply to know who Catherine Deneuve is: this will not help you to understand the ad. Someone from another culture who knew that Catherine Deneuve was a model and film star would still not understand the significance of her image here, because they would not have access to the referent system as a whole. And it is only by referring back to this system as a system of *differences* that the sign can function: it is hollow of meaning in itself, its signified is only a distinction rather than a 'content'. Only the form and structure of the referent system are appropriated by the advertisement system; it is the relationship and distinction between parts, rather than the parts themselves, that make an already-structured external system so valuable to advertising. The links made between elements from a referent system and products arise from the *place* these elements have in the whole system rather than from their inherent qualities. Thus Catherine Deneuve has significance only in that she is not, for example, Margaux Hemingway.



Charlotte Johansson Dolce & Gabbana Lipstick Campaign, 2013







OSCAR WYATT
Saddam Hussein's Texan Connection, by Marie Brenner
THE NEW POWER AT CNN by Peter J. Boyer
THE NINE LIVES OF 'FAT CAT' NICHOLS by Fredric Dannen



What is your 1st impression of the ad?

What is the Denotative level (describe what you actually see...)

- How does it grab your attention?
- What colours does it use?
- What typeface is used?
- Is there a message in the text?



What is your 1st impression of the ad?

What is the Connotative level (describe what is being communicated through these aspects of the image...)

- Who is the Iconic Sign?
- What is she wearing?
- What does this suggest?
- What do the colours suggest?



- What is communicated through the typeface (different cases)?
- What is the underlying myth?
- What does the composition suggest?
- If we buy this perfume what will we become?



Bring next week:

- Choose an image and think about how you could analyse it using semiotics.

Think about ...

- Denotation (what is there and obvious)
- Connotation (what is being communicated)
- The Iconic Sign
- The underlying myth
- Context
- Colour
- Any other factors you notice...

Have a look at

Decoding Advertising, Judith Williamson (online)

[https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WH
ELF_UWTSD/11c0l68/alma991298702421](https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WH
ELF_UWTSD/11c0l68/alma991298702421)

Visual Methodologies, Gillian Rose (2023 or 2016,
2012) -

[https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WH
ELF_UWTSD/1pbrh66/alma99100479000902421](https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WH
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Module Evaluation

