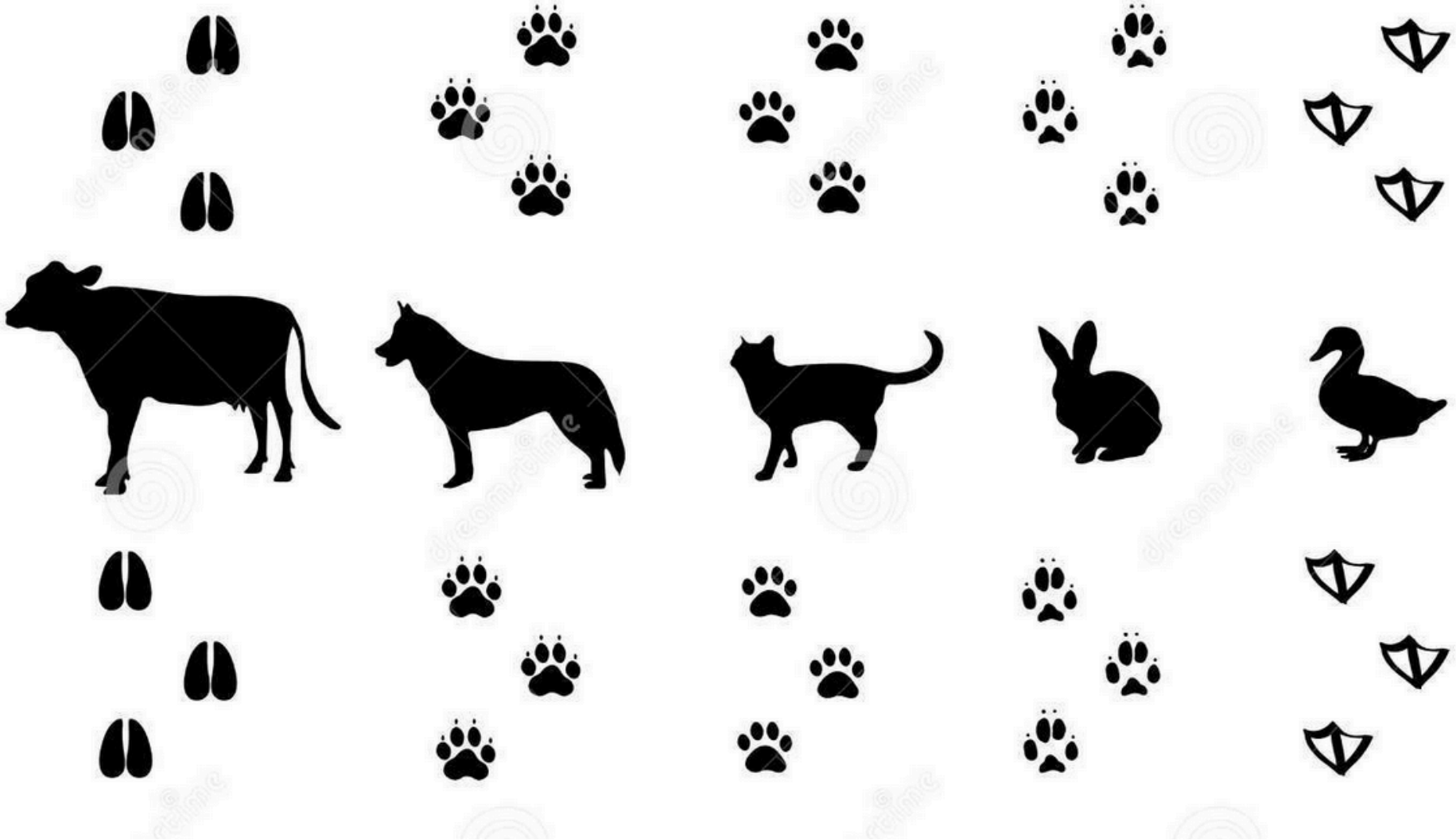
Semiotics for Design



Can you identify the animal from their tracks?



Semiotics for Design



Semiotics for Design

Designers must be well versed in **semiotics** because

"The study of signs is the study of the construction and maintenance of reality. To decline such a study is to leave to others the control of the world of meanings." Chandler (2001) *Semiotics: The Basics*

Theories of language





Jeppe Hein (2007): Chiswick Park Mirror installation

1. Reflective - it mirrors the world of people, objects, events



2. Intentional – it expresses a person's inner world

Frida Khalo (1940) Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird



3. Constructionist – meaning is made in & through language



Ferdinand de Saussure

(1857-1913)

Course in General Linguistics (1906-11)

Semiotics: Saussure

"A science that studies the life of signs within society…I shall call it semiology, from the Greek *semeion* "signs"…".

(Saussure quoted in Hall, 1997: 36)

Semiotics: The study of signs

dog





Signs =

- Words, sounds, images which carry meaning

(Hall, *Representation*, 1997)

Signs : Saussure

Word, image, sound, photo, etc. = SIGNIFIER

Concept in your head = SIGNIFIED

Signs : Saussure

"There is no natural or inevitable link between the signifier and the signified."

(Culler, 1976: 19)

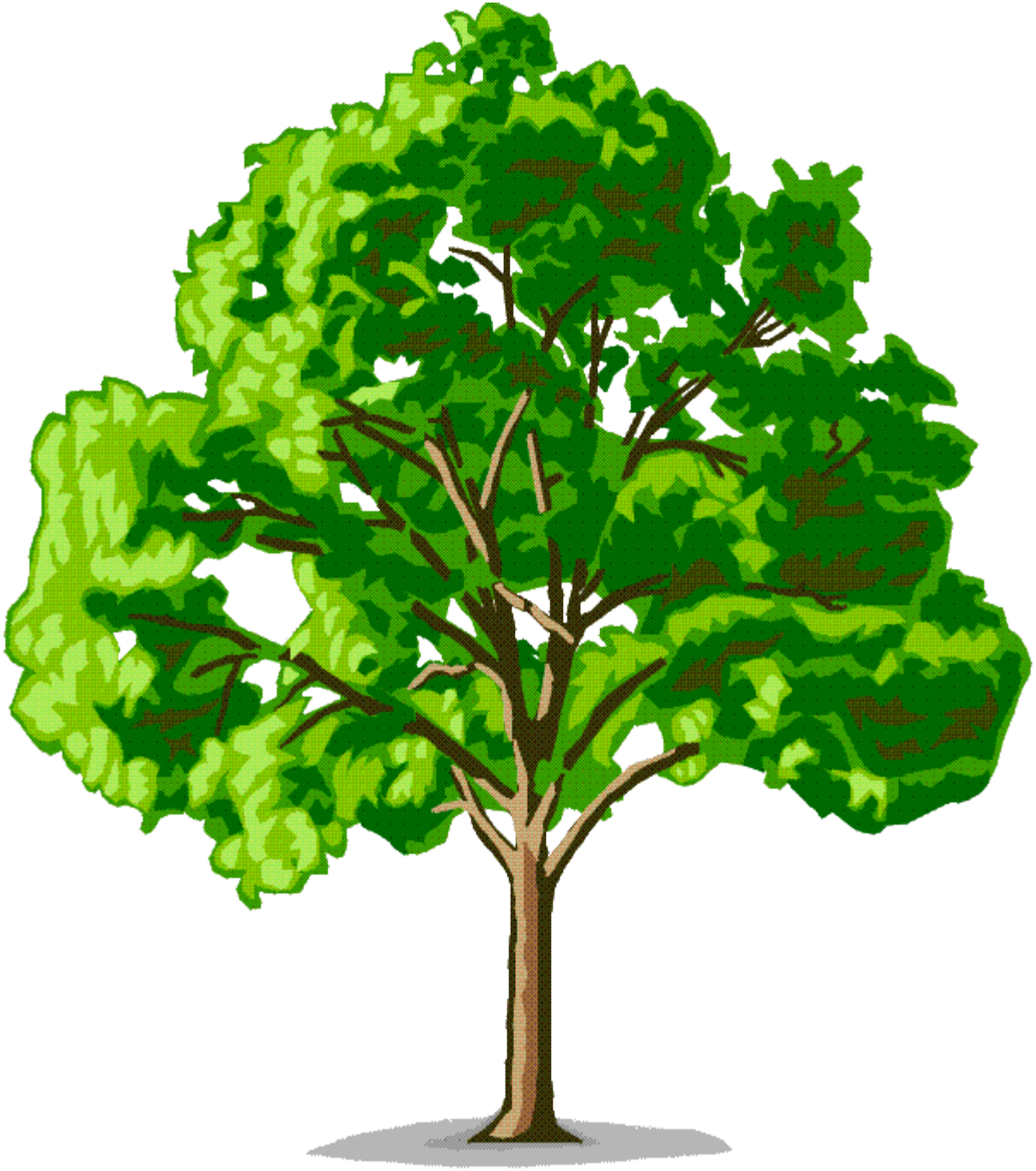
tree

l’arbre

Baum

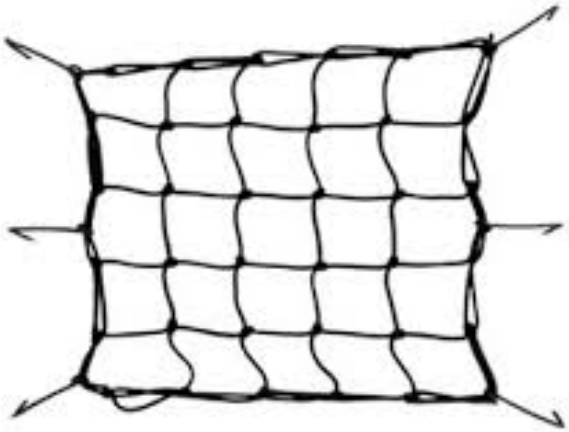
árbol

drzewo





Red: a colour (English)



Red: a net (Spanish)



Red: a communist

THE SYSTEM OF SIGNS

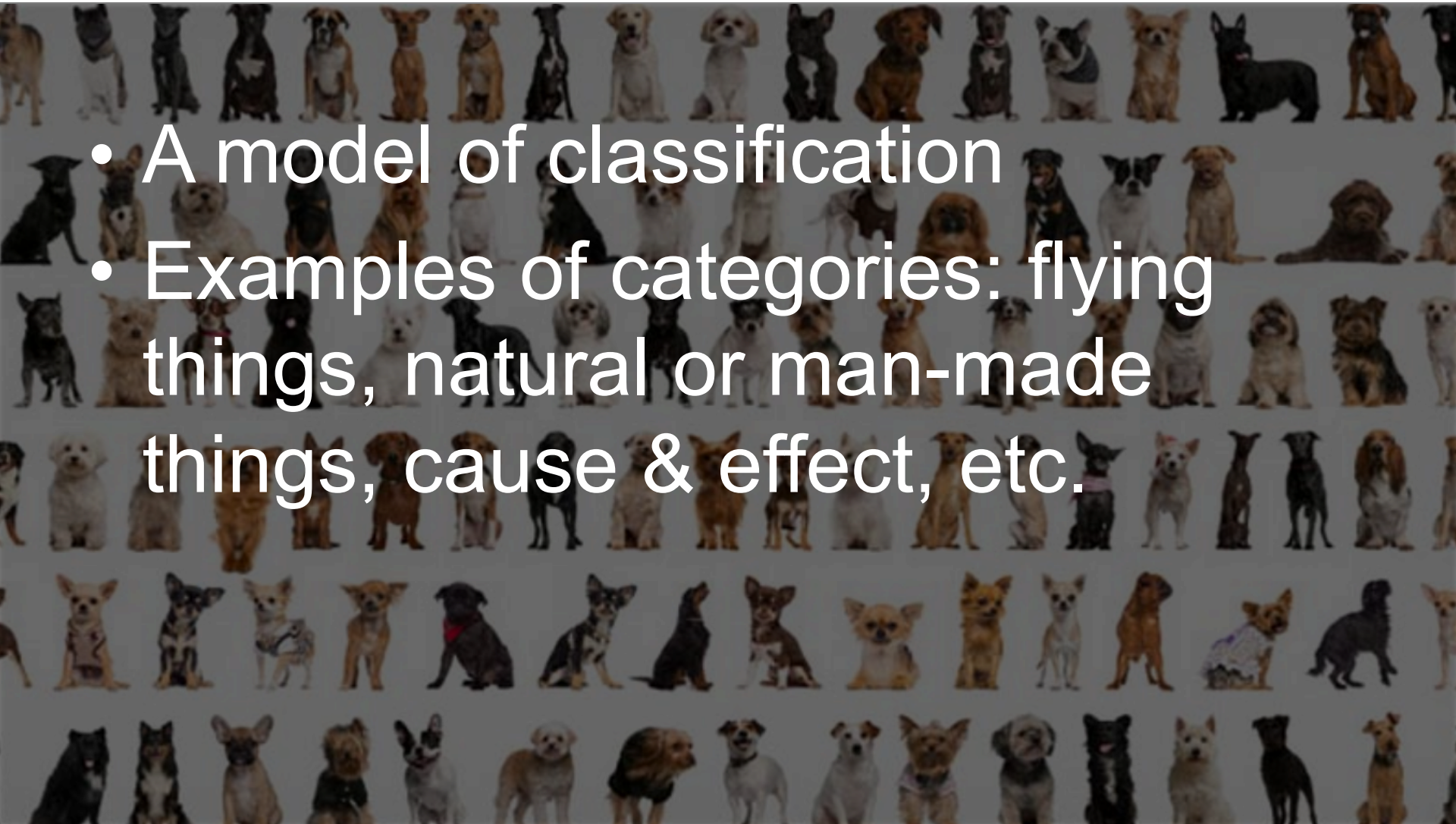
Signs organised into a system =

language.

system



system

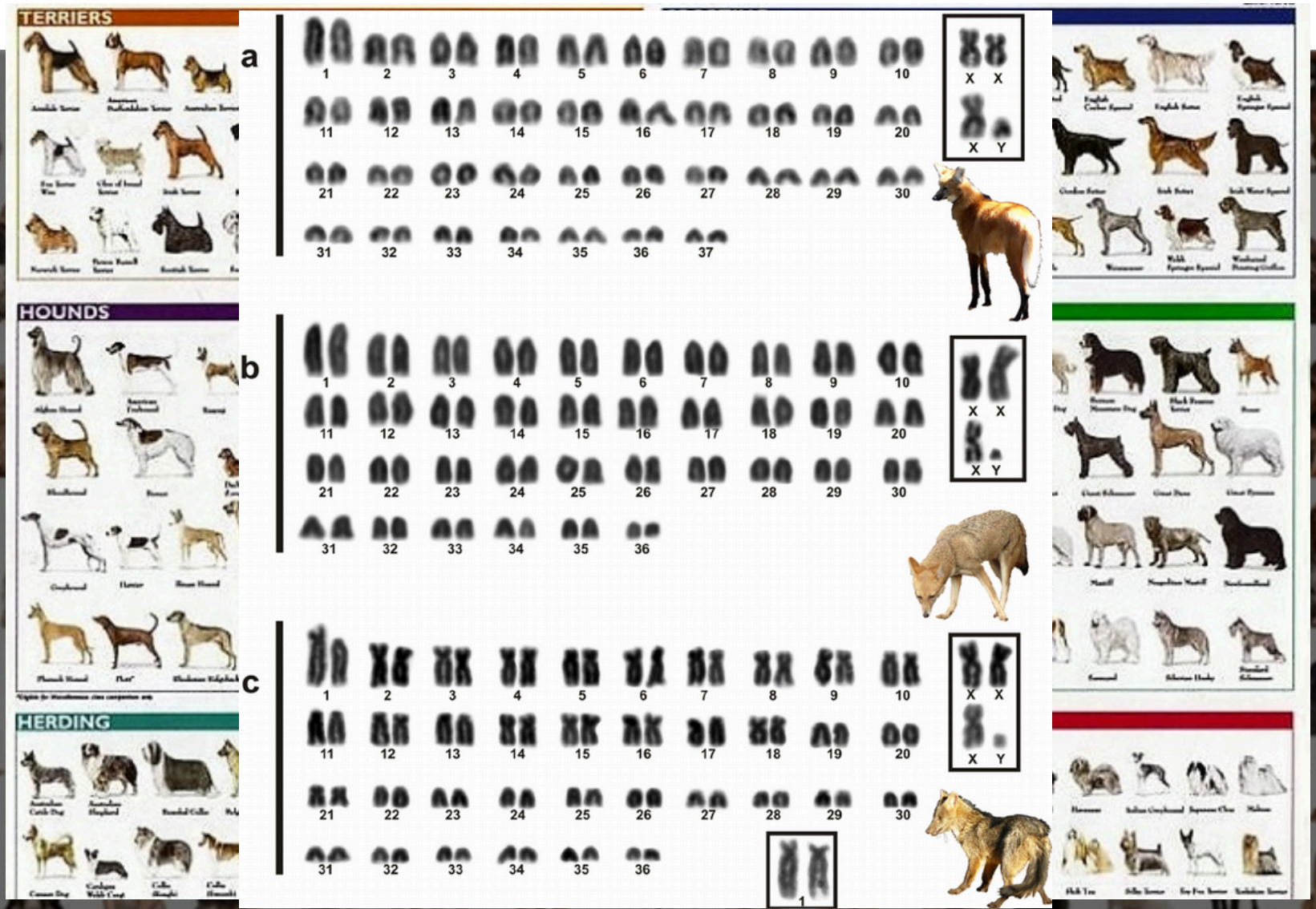


- A model of classification
- Examples of categories: flying things, natural or man-made things, cause & effect, etc.

system


TERRIERS
SPORTING
HOUNDS
NON-SPORTING
WORKING
HERDING
TOYS

system


TERRIERS
HOUNDS
HERDING
a
b
c
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36 37
X X
X Y

Langue [French]

Language as a system or structure as a whole

Signs : Saussure

Signs are defined in relationship to other signs in the system.


PMS 697
PMS 698
PMS 699
PMS 700
PMS 701
PMS 702
PMS 703
PMS 704
PMS 705
PMS 706
PMS 707
PMS 708
PMS 709
PMS 808 -2X
PMS 808
PMS 809 -2X
PMS 809
PMS 810 -2X
PMS 810
PMS 811 -2X
PMS 811
PMS 812 -2X
PMS 812
PMS 813 -2X
PMS 813
PMS 814 -2X
PMS 1645
PMS 1655
PMS 1665
PMS 1675
PMS 1685
PMS 1765
PMS 1767
PMS 1775
PMS 1777
PMS 1785
PMS 1787
PMS 1788 -2X
PMS 1788
PMS 2613
PMS 2617
PMS 2622
PMS 2623
PMS 2627
PMS 2635
PMS 2645
PMS 2655
PMS 2665
PMS 2685
PMS 2695
PMS 2705
PMS 2706
PMS 3025
PMS 3035
PMS 3105
PMS 3115
PMS 3125
PMS 3135
PMS 3145
PMS 3155
PMS 3165
PMS 3242
PMS 3245
PMS 3248
PMS 3252

Periodic Table of the Elements

1 IA 1A	2 IIA 2A	3 IIIB 3B	4 IVB 4B	5 VB 5B	6 VIB 6B	7 VIIB 7B	8	9 VIII 8	10	11 IB 1B	12 IIB 2B	13 IIIA 3A	14 IVA 4A	15 VA 5A	16 VIA 6A	17 VIIA 7A	18 VIIIA 8A
1 H Hydrogen 1.008																	2 He Helium 4.003
3 Li Lithium 6.941	4 Be Beryllium 9.012											5 B Boron 10.811	6 C Carbon 12.011	7 N Nitrogen 14.007	8 O Oxygen 15.999	9 F Fluorine 18.998	10 Ne Neon 20.180
11 Na Sodium 22.990	12 Mg Magnesium 24.305											13 Al Aluminum 26.982	14 Si Silicon 28.086	15 P Phosphorus 30.974	16 S Sulfur 32.066	17 Cl Chlorine 35.453	18 Ar Argon 39.948
19 K Potassium 39.098	20 Ca Calcium 40.078	21 Sc Scandium 44.956	22 Ti Titanium 47.867	23 V Vanadium 50.942	24 Cr Chromium 51.996	25 Mn Manganese 54.938	26 Fe Iron 55.845	27 Co Cobalt 58.933	28 Ni Nickel 58.693	29 Cu Copper 63.546	30 Zn Zinc 65.38	31 Ga Gallium 69.723	32 Ge Germanium 72.631	33 As Arsenic 74.922	34 Se Selenium 78.971	35 Br Bromine 79.904	36 Kr Krypton 84.798
37 Rb Rubidium 84.468	38 Sr Strontium 87.62	39 Y Yttrium 88.906	40 Zr Zirconium 91.224	41 Nb Niobium 92.906	42 Mo Molybdenum 95.95	43 Tc Technetium 98.907	44 Ru Ruthenium 101.07	45 Rh Rhodium 102.906	46 Pd Palladium 106.42	47 Ag Silver 107.868	48 Cd Cadmium 112.411	49 In Indium 114.818	50 Sn Tin 118.711	51 Sb Antimony 121.760	52 Te Tellurium 127.6	53 I Iodine 126.904	54 Xe Xenon 131.294
55 Cs Cesium 132.905	56 Ba Barium 137.328	57-71	72 Hf Hafnium 178.49	73 Ta Tantalum 180.948	74 W Tungsten 183.84	75 Re Rhenium 186.207	76 Os Osmium 190.23	77 Ir Iridium 192.217	78 Pt Platinum 195.085	79 Au Gold 196.967	80 Hg Mercury 200.592	81 Tl Thallium 204.383	82 Pb Lead 207.2	83 Bi Bismuth 208.980	84 Po Polonium [208.982]	85 At Astatine 209.987	86 Rn Radon 222.018
87 Fr Francium 223.020	88 Ra Radium 226.025	89-103	104 Rf Rutherfordium [261]	105 Db Dubnium [262]	106 Sg Seaborgium [266]	107 Bh Bohrium [264]	108 Hs Hassium [269]	109 Mt Meitnerium [268]	110 Ds Darmstadtium [269]	111 Rg Roentgenium [272]	112 Cn Copernicium [277]	113 Uut Ununtrium unknown	114 Fl Flerovium [289]	115 Uup Ununpentium unknown	116 Lv Livermorium [298]	117 Uus Ununseptium unknown	118 Uuo Ununoctium unknown

Atomic Number
Symbol
Name
Atomic Mass

Lanthanide Series	57 La Lanthanum 138.905	58 Ce Cerium 140.116	59 Pr Praseodymium 140.908	60 Nd Neodymium 144.243	61 Pm Promethium 144.913	62 Sm Samarium 150.36	63 Eu Europium 151.964	64 Gd Gadolinium 157.25	65 Tb Terbium 158.925	66 Dy Dysprosium 162.500	67 Ho Holmium 164.930	68 Er Erbium 167.259	69 Tm Thulium 168.934	70 Yb Ytterbium 173.055	71 Lu Lutetium 174.967
Actinide Series	89 Ac Actinium 227.028	90 Th Thorium 232.038	91 Pa Protactinium 231.036	92 U Uranium 238.029	93 Np Neptunium 237.048	94 Pu Plutonium 244.064	95 Am Americium 243.061	96 Cm Curium 247.070	97 Bk Berkelium 247.070	98 Cf Californium 251.080	99 Es Einsteinium [254]	100 Fm Fermium 257.095	101 Md Mendelevium 258.1	102 No Nobelium 259.101	103 Lr Lawrencium [262]

Alkali Metal | Alkaline Earth | Transition Metal | Basic Metal | Semimetal | Nonmetal | Halogen | Noble Gas | Lanthanide | Actinide

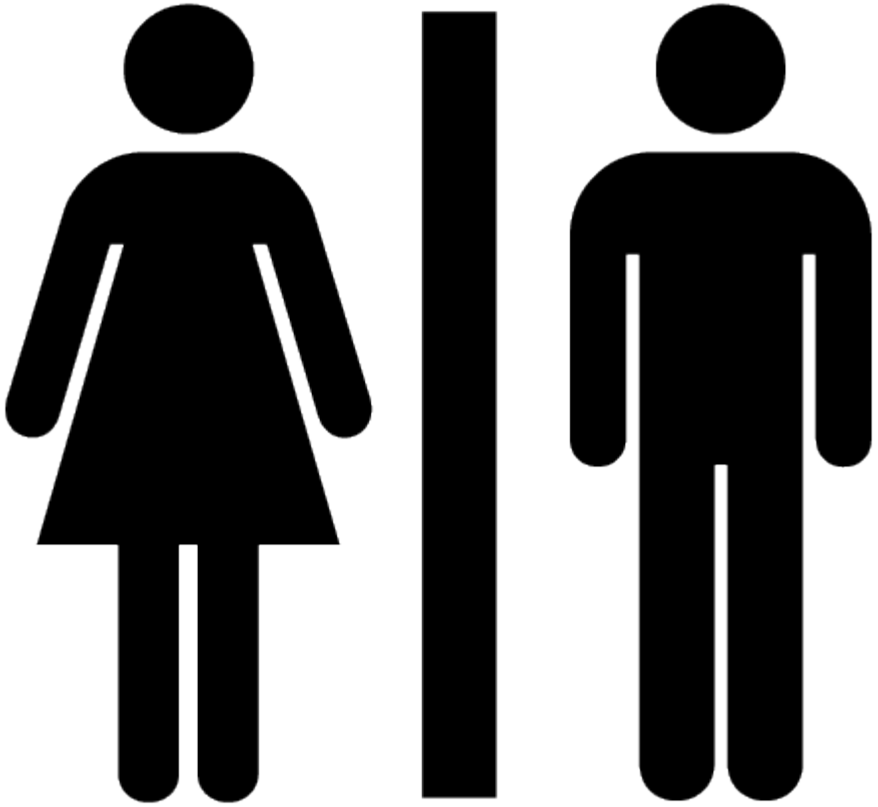
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Signs: Saussure

Signs are defined in relationship to other signs in the system.

The simplest relationship = the difference of binary opposition, BLACK:WHITE.

Binary dualism



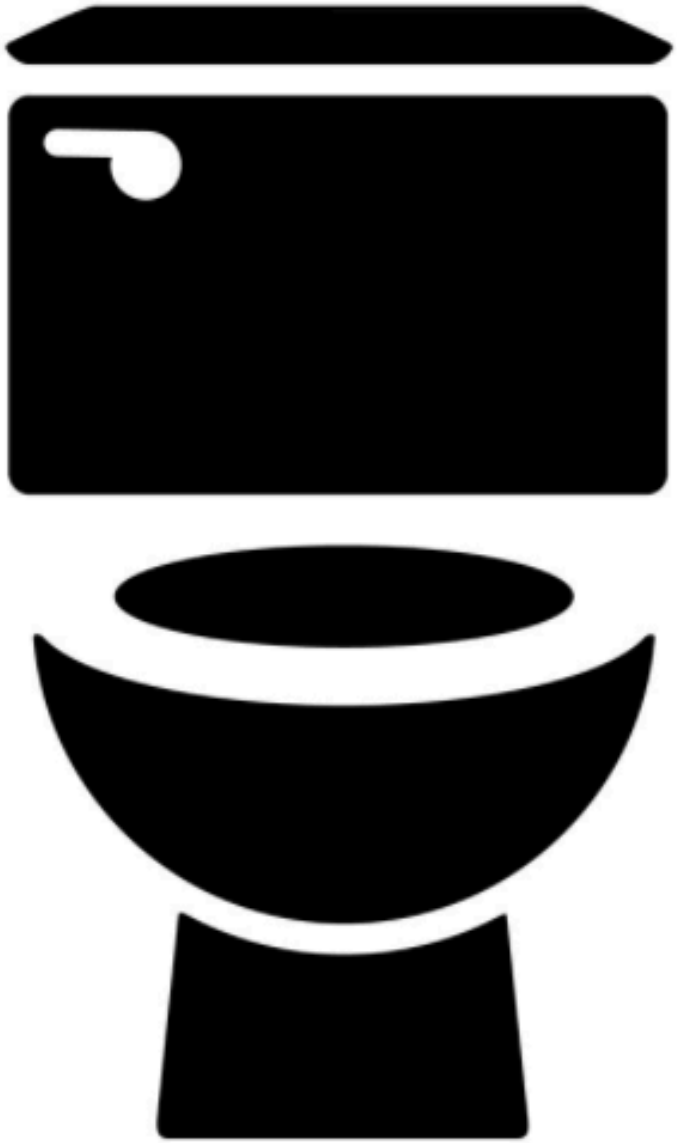
‘In a language there are only differences, without fixed terms.’

Ferdinand de Saussure





Signs are never neutral.



THE SYSTEM IS SOCIAL

Signs are social

- Language is a social fact

- It is not a transparent medium between things & meaning

‘We are born into a language, its codes and its meanings. Language is therefore a social phenomenon. It cannot be an individual matter because we cannot make up the rules of language individually, for ourselves.’

Stuart Hall, *Representation* (1997)

Signs are social

- Language has underlying codes, rules, classifications, etc.

- The **deep structure** of language = STRUCTURALIST

Review

STRUCTURALISM is concerned with structures;

SEMIOTICS is concerned with signs

CONSTRUCTIVIST

- There are no fixed signs
- Language has a public, social character

Language constitutes the world

Examples:

- Geo-political orientation
- The natural world
- Language and culture

Signs: Saussure

- Relational
- Arbitrary: social & historical
- Language constitutes the world

SEMIOTICS:
ALL CULTURE DEPENDS ON SIGNS

Signs organised into a system =

language

things that are

‘like a language’

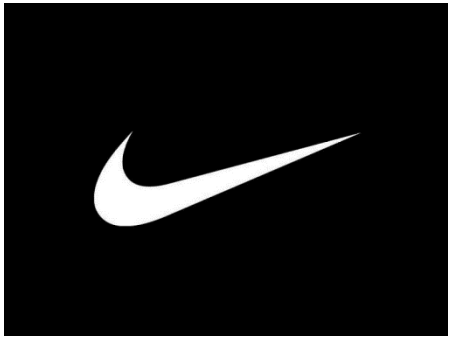
e.g. body language, the language of love, sports colours,…

Things+ concepts+ signs = meaning

1. set of correspondences matching things & concepts in our mind
2. set of correspondences between our conceptual maps & a set of signs
    - » LANGUAGE







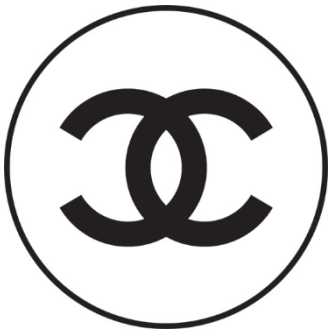




dog 3









1. conceptual map
2. language system



Kosuth (1961) *One and Three Chairs*



This is not a pipe.

Magritte (1929) *The Treachery of Images*

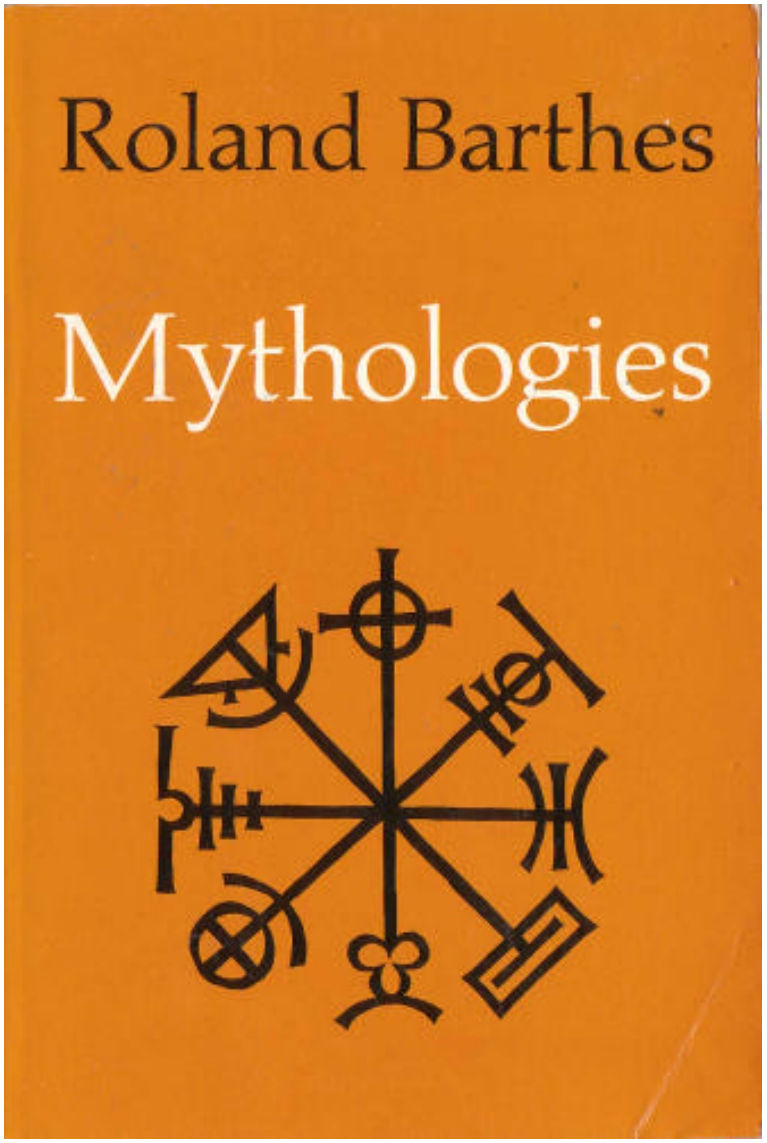
STRUCTURALISM AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

The process of representation

things + concepts + signs = meaning

Representation

Representation connects language & meaning to culture



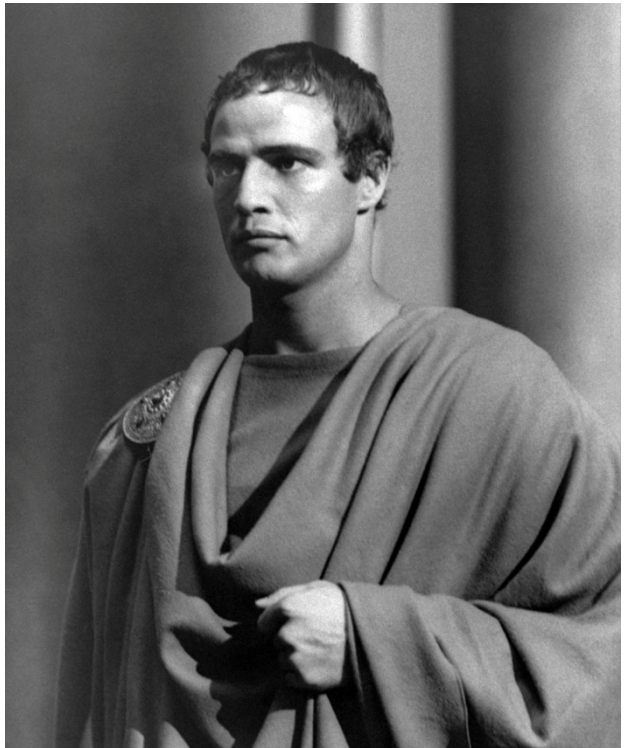
Mythologies (1957)

Structuralism and Semiotics






OMO adds Brightness to whiteness
– adds Brightness to coloureds too!
OMO






May 1968, Paris

Post-structuralism

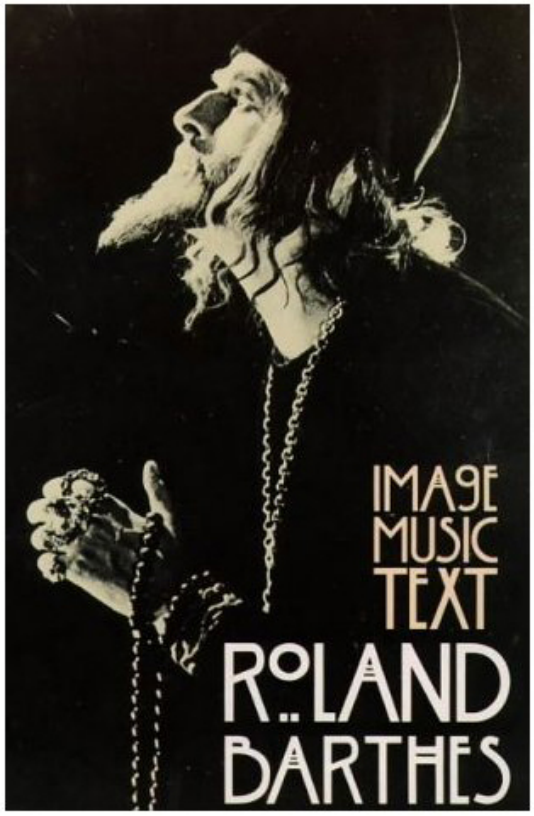


Image Music Text (1977)

Language can become *unfixed* from meaning, creating an uncertain relationship between signifier and signified.

This opens meaning to constant ‘play’ or ‘slippage’; to the production of new meanings and new interpretations.

Post-structuralism

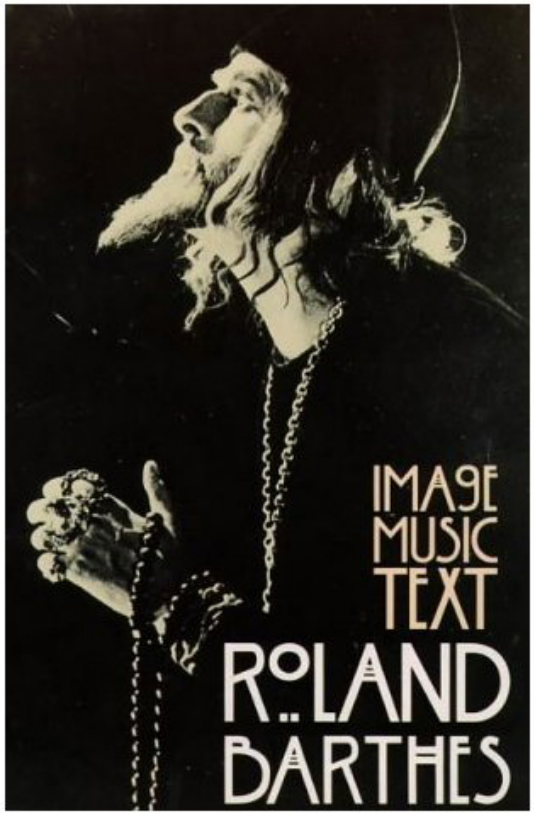


Image Music Text (1977)

The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes (1968)

Post-structuralism

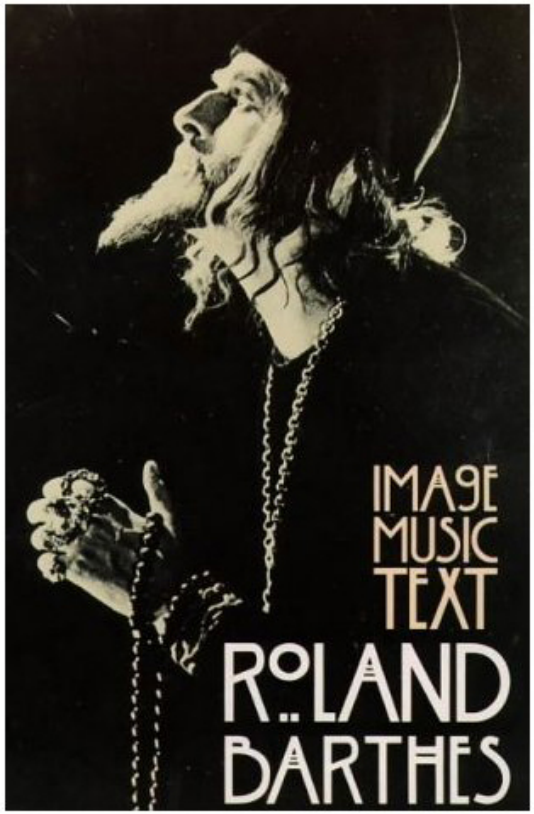


Image Music Text (1977)

= The death of authorial authority and authorised meaning

= A repudiation of the intentional fallacy

A text may "betray" itself

‘We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.’

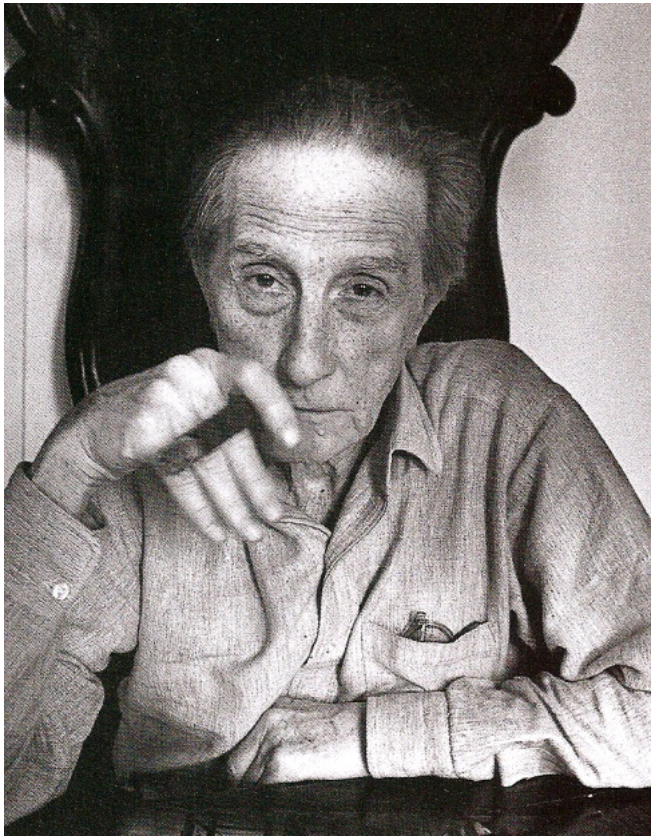
Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (1968)

The author as the maker of meaning, the critic as mediator or communicator of meaning, and the reader as consumer of meaning is radically overturned.

The Death of the Author = The Birth of the Reader

‘In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered.’

Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (1968)



‘No work of art is finished until completed by the spectator.’

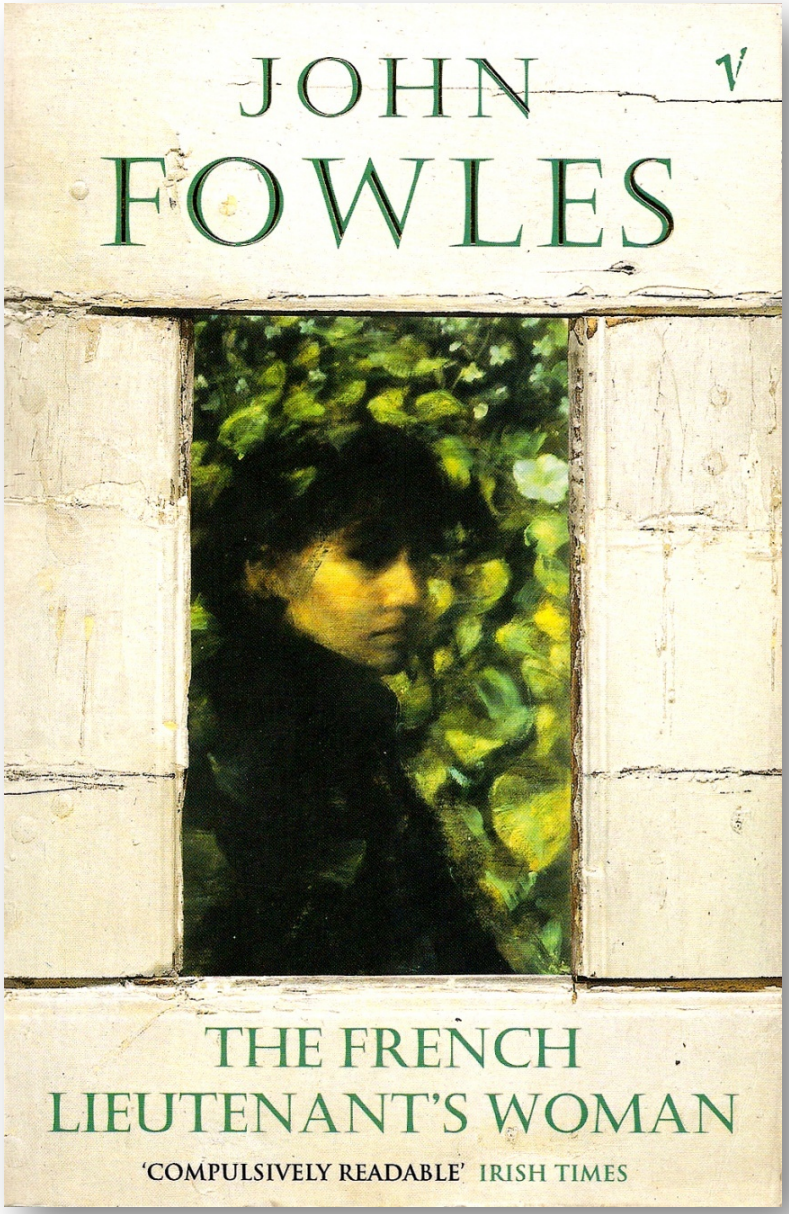
Marcel Duchamp

‘Works of art have a kind of “unconscious” which is not under the control of their producers. We have come to understand that one of those producers is the reader, viewer or listener – the recipient of a work of art is a co-creator of it.’

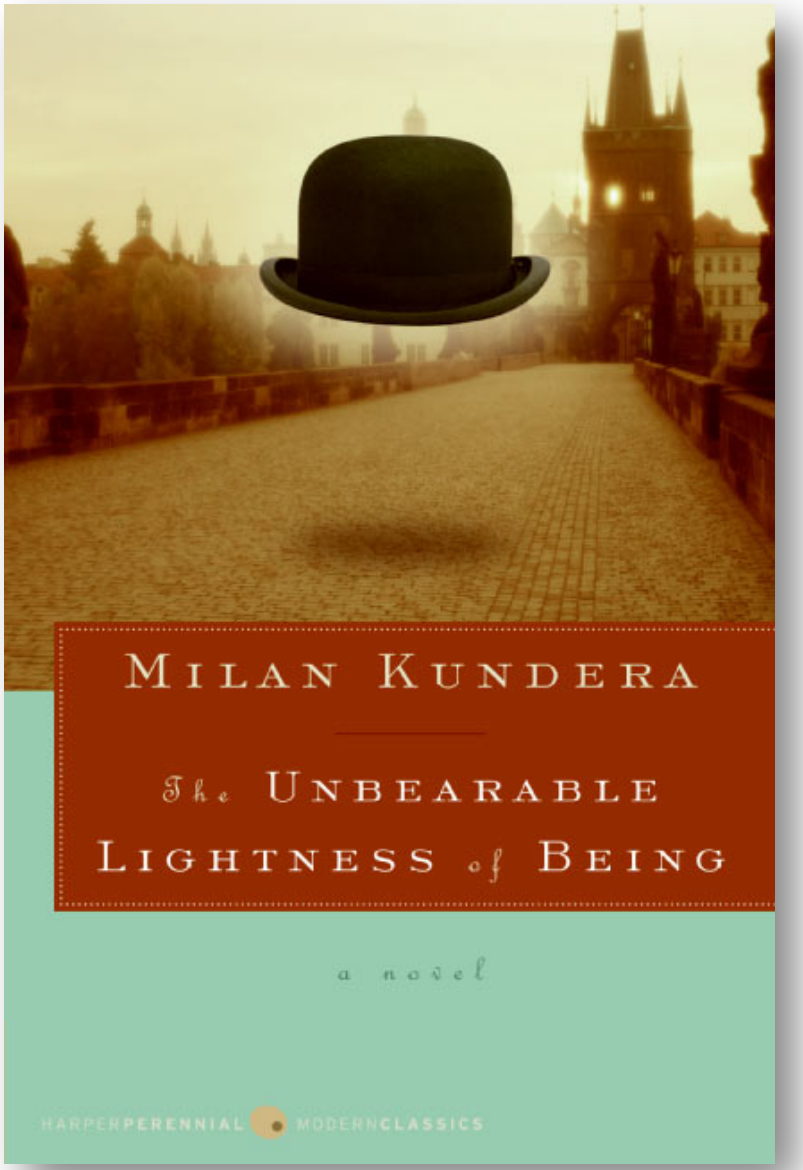
Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (2003)

The author as the reader of their own text

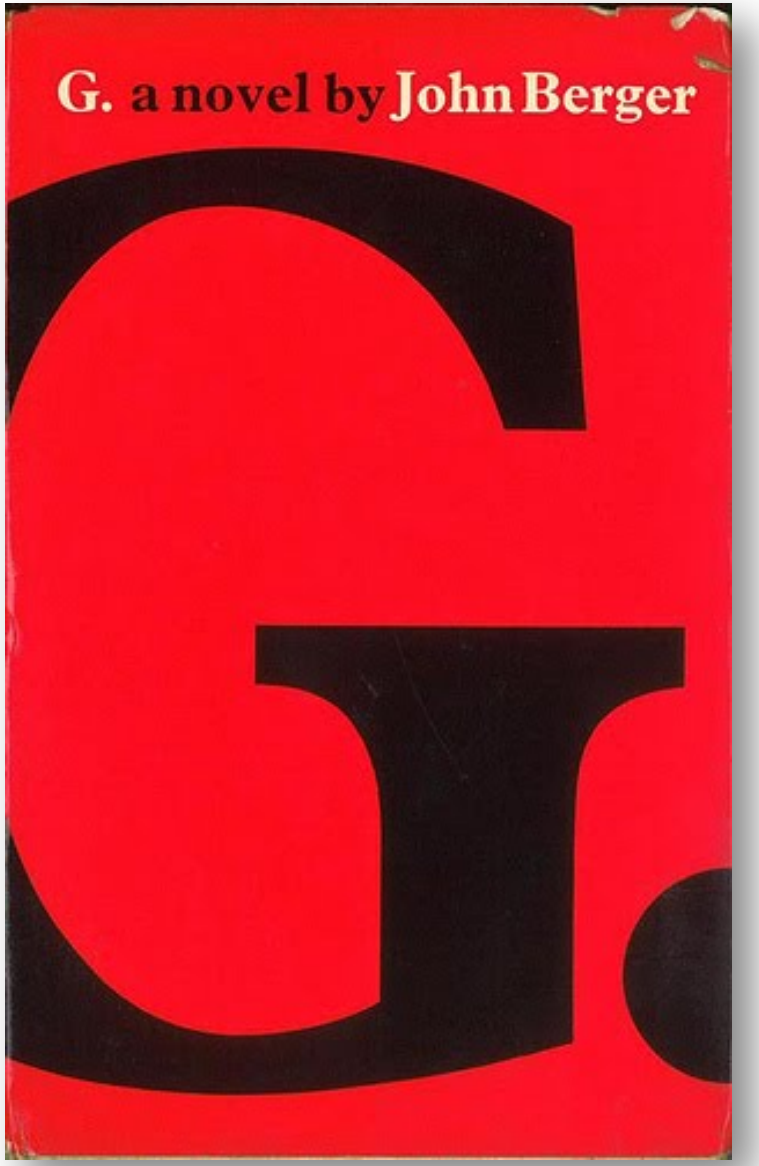
John Fowles,
The French Lieutenant's Woman
(1969)



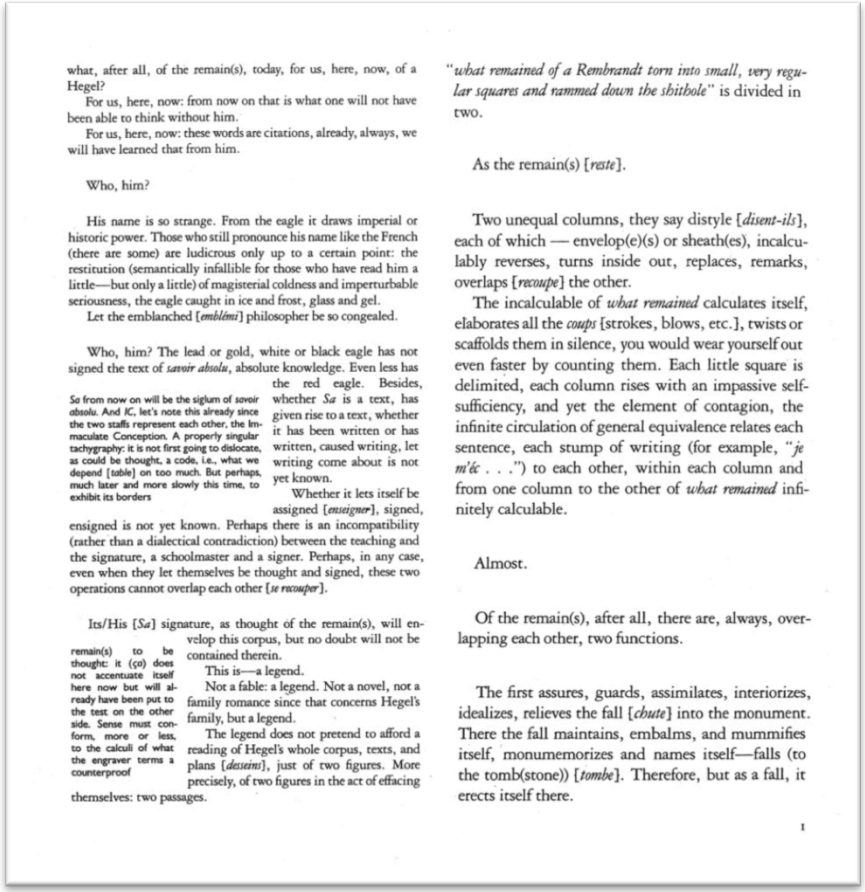
Milan Kundera,
The Unbearable Lightness of Being
(1984)



John Berger, *G* (1972)



The impossible passivity of the reader



what, after all, of the remain(s), today, for us, here, now, of a Hegel?

For us, here, now: from now on that is what one will not have been able to think without him.

For us, here, now: these words are citations, already, always, we will have learned that from him.

Who, him?

His name is so strange. From the eagle it draws imperial or historic power. Those who still pronounce his name like the French (there are some) are ludicrous only up to a certain point: the restitution (semantically infallible for those who have read him a little—but only a little) of magisterial coldness and imperturbable seriousness, the eagle caught in ice and frost, glass and gel.

Let the emblanched [*emblêmi*] philosopher be so congealed.

Who, him? The lead or gold, white or black eagle has not signed the text of *savoir absolu*, absolute knowledge. Even less has the red eagle. Besides, whether *Sa* is a text, has given rise to a text, whether it has been written or has written, caused writing, let writing come about is not yet known.

Sa from now on will be the siglum of *savoir absolu*. And *IC*, let's note this already since the two staffs represent each other, the Immaculate Conception. A properly singular tachygraphy: it is not first going to dislocate, as could be thought, a code, i.e., what we depend [*table*] on too much. But perhaps, much later and more slowly this time, to exhibit its borders

Whether it lets itself be assigned [*enseigner*], signed, ensigned is not yet known. Perhaps there is an incompatibility (rather than a dialectical contradiction) between the teaching and the signature, a schoolmaster and a signer. Perhaps, in any case, even when they let themselves be thought and signed, these two operations cannot overlap each other [*se recouper*].

Its/His [*Sa*] signature, as thought of the remain(s), will envelop this corpus, but no doubt will not be contained therein.

remain(s) to be thought: it (ça) does not accentuate itself here now but will already have been put to the test on the other side. Sense must conform, more or less, to the calculi of what the engraver terms a counterproof

This is—a legend.

Not a fable: a legend. Not a novel, not a family romance since that concerns Hegel's family, but a legend.

The legend does not pretend to afford a reading of Hegel's whole corpus, texts, and plans [*desseins*], just of two figures. More precisely, of two figures in the act of effacing themselves: two passages.

"*what remained of a Rembrandt torn into small, very regular squares and rammed down the shithole*" is divided in two.

As the remain(s) [*reste*].

Two unequal columns, they say distyle [*disent-ils*], each of which — envelop(e)(s) or sheath(es), incalculably reverses, turns inside out, replaces, remarks, overlaps [*recoupe*] the other.

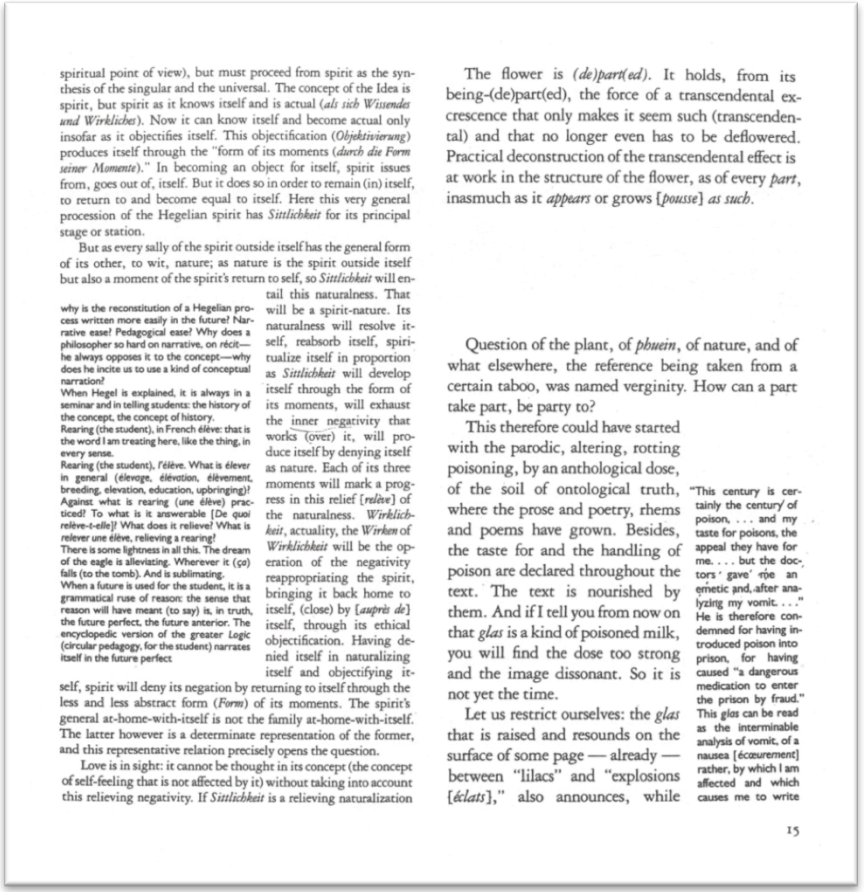
The incalculable of *what remained* calculates itself, elaborates all the *coups* [strokes, blows, etc.], twists or scaffolds them in silence, you would wear yourself out even faster by counting them. Each little square is delimited, each column rises with an impassive self-sufficiency, and yet the element of contagion, the infinite circulation of general equivalence relates each sentence, each stump of writing (for example, "*je m'ék . . .*") to each other, within each column and from one column to the other of *what remained* infinitely calculable.

Almost.

Of the remain(s), after all, there are, always, overlapping each other, two functions.

The first assures, guards, assimilates, interiorizes, idealizes, relieves the fall [*chute*] into the monument. There the fall maintains, embalms, and mummifies itself, monumemorizes and names itself—falls (to the tomb(stone)) [*tombe*]. Therefore, but as a fall, it erects itself there.

1



spiritual point of view), but must proceed from spirit as the synthesis of the singular and the universal. The concept of the Idea is spirit, but spirit as it knows itself and is actual (*als sich Wissendes und Wirkliches*). Now it can know itself and become actual only insofar as it objectifies itself. This objectification (*Objektivierung*) produces itself through the "form of its moments (*durch die Form seiner Momente*)." In becoming an object for itself, spirit issues from, goes out of, itself. But it does so in order to remain (in) itself, to return to and become equal to itself. Here this very general procession of the Hegelian spirit has *Sittlichkeit* for its principal stage or station.

But as every sally of the spirit outside itself has the general form of its other, to wit, nature; as nature is the spirit outside itself but also a moment of the spirit's return to self, so *Sittlichkeit* will entail this naturalness. That will be a spirit-nature. Its naturalness will resolve itself, reabsorb itself, spiritualize itself in proportion as *Sittlichkeit* will develop itself through the form of its moments, will exhaust the inner negativity that works (over) it, will produce itself by denying itself as nature. Each of its three moments will mark a progress in this relief [*relève*] of the naturalness. *Wirklichkeit*, actuality, the *Wirken* of *Wirklichkeit* will be the operation of the negativity reappropriating the spirit, bringing it back home to itself, (close) by [*auprès de*] itself, through its ethical objectification. Having denied itself in naturalizing itself and objectifying itself, spirit will deny its negation by returning to itself through the less and less abstract form (*Form*) of its moments. The spirit's general at-home-with-itself is not the family at-home-with-itself. The latter however is a determinate representation of the former, and this representative relation precisely opens the question.

why is the reconstitution of a Hegelian process written more easily in the future? Narrative ease? Pedagogical ease? Why does a philosopher so hard on narrative, on *récit*—he always opposes it to the concept—why does he incite us to use a kind of conceptual narration?
When Hegel is explained, it is always in a seminar and in telling students: the history of the concept, the concept of history.
Rearing (the student), in French *élève*: that is the word I am treating here, like the thing, in every sense.
Rearing (the student), *l'élève*. What is *élever* in general (*élevage, élévation, élèvement*, breeding, elevation, education, upbringing)? Against what is rearing (*une élève*) practiced? To what is it answerable [*De quoi relève-t-elle*]? What does it relieve? What is *relever une élève*, relieving a rearing?
There is some lightness in all this. The dream of the eagle is alleviating. Wherever it (ça) falls (to the tomb). And is sublimating.
When a future is used for the student, it is a grammatical ruse of reason: the sense that reason will have meant (to say) is, in truth, the future perfect, the future anterior. The encyclopedic version of the greater Logic (circular pedagogy, for the student) narrates itself in the future perfect

Love is in sight: it cannot be thought in its concept (the concept of self-feeling that is not affected by it) without taking into account this relieving negativity. If *Sittlichkeit* is a relieving naturalization

The flower is *(de)part(ed)*. It holds, from its being-(de)part(ed), the force of a transcendental excrescence that only makes it seem such (transcendental) and that no longer even has to be deflowered. Practical deconstruction of the transcendental effect is at work in the structure of the flower, as of every *part*, inasmuch as it *appears* or grows [*pousse*] *as such*.

Question of the plant, of *phuein*, of nature, and of what elsewhere, the reference being taken from a certain taboo, was named verginity. How can a part take part, be party to?

This therefore could have started with the parodic, altering, rotting poisoning, by an anthological dose, of the soil of ontological truth, where the prose and poetry, rhems and poems have grown. Besides, the taste for and the handling of poison are declared throughout the text. The text is nourished by them. And if I tell you from now on that *glas* is a kind of poisoned milk, you will find the dose too strong and the image dissonant. So it is not yet the time.

"This century is certainly the century of poison, . . . and my taste for poisons, the appeal they have for me. . . . but the doctors gave me an emetic and, after analyzing my vomit. . . ." He is therefore condemned for having introduced poison into prison, for having caused "a dangerous medication to enter the prison by fraud." This *glas* can be read as the interminable analysis of vomit, of a nausea [*écœurement*] rather, by which I am affected and which causes me to write

Let us restrict ourselves: the *glas* that is raised and resounds on the surface of some page — already — between "lilacs" and "explosions [*éclats*]," also announces, while

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Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (1986)

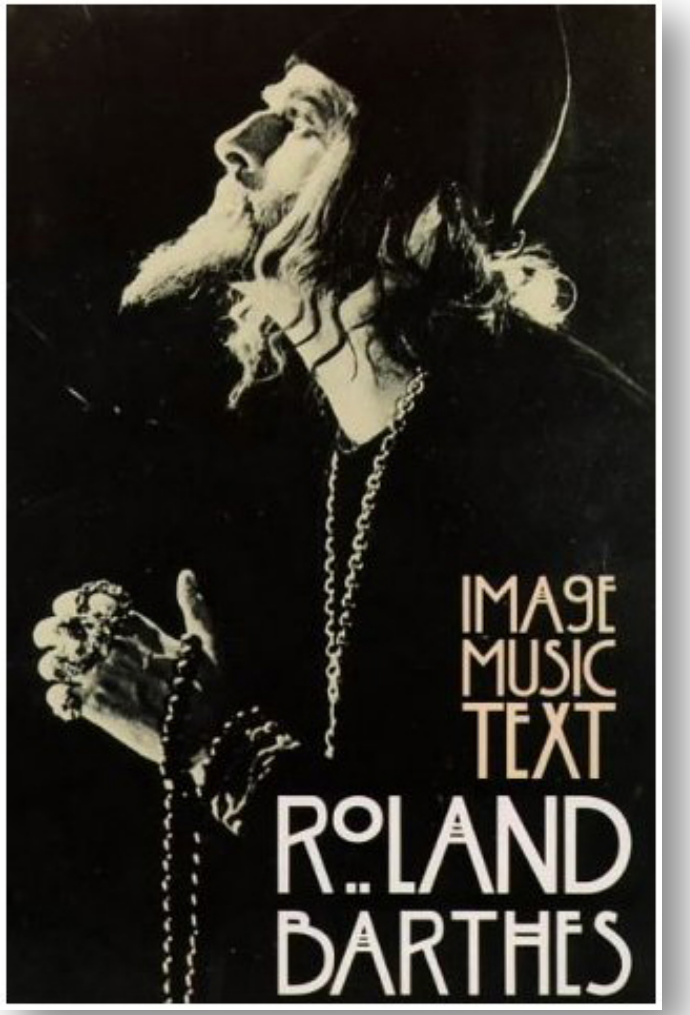
Mutually contradictory versions of the same story

Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* (1950)



From Work to Text

Roland Barthes (1968)



Textile, Texture:

Text as a weave or cloth

From *textus*: texture; *texere*: to compose or weave

Context

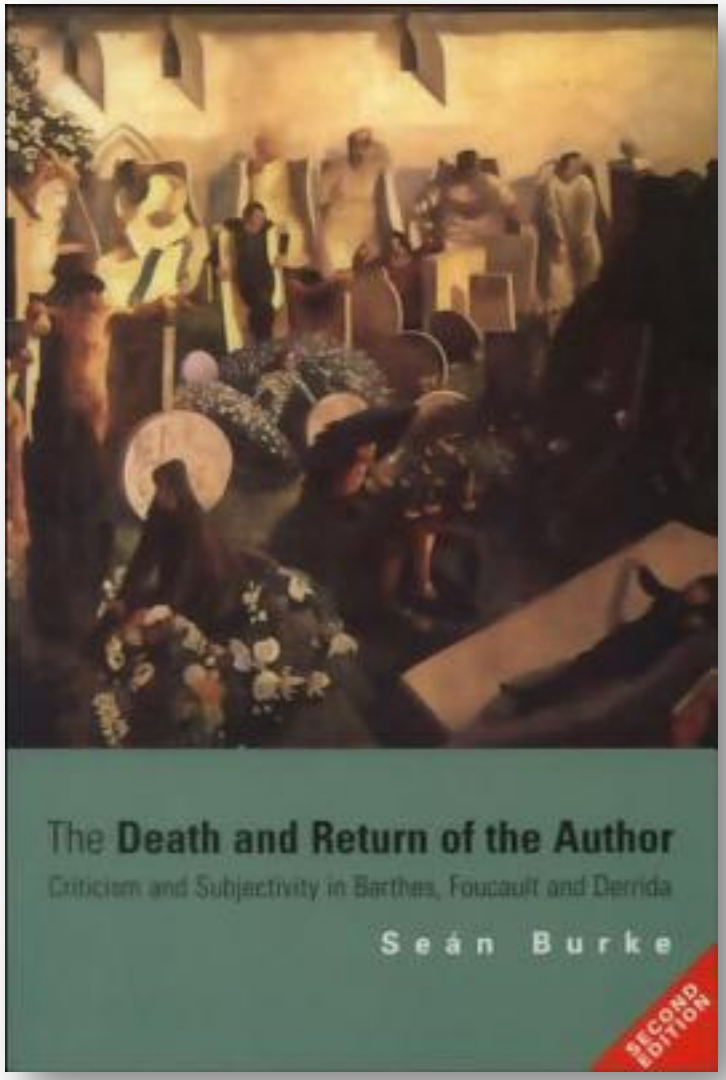
Text in its relation to a particular environment

From *contexere, com* + *texere*: to weave together

- The work is an object; the text is discursive
- The work has an authorised meaning; the text has no assured meaning
- The work is singular; the text is plural

- The work begins with the author, the text begins with the reader

- The work establishes a hierarchy of quality, the text a quality of reading



Criticisms of Barthes' argument

Semiotics for Design



- Cultural objects convey meaning
- Cultural practises depend on meaning, therefore they must make use of signs.

Semiotics for Design



- For Designers, Semiotics can be used as
  - a tool for naming and analysing complex signs.
  - to rework existing signs and construct new ones.

Advertising Semiotics

