



IDEA 120: Week 4

February 1, 2021:

Media Theory (Part 1)

HOT

COOL

- Take note of the following TERMS:

- media
- rhetoric
- semiotics
- “hot media”
- “cold media”
- denoted messages
- connoted messages
- signified and signifier

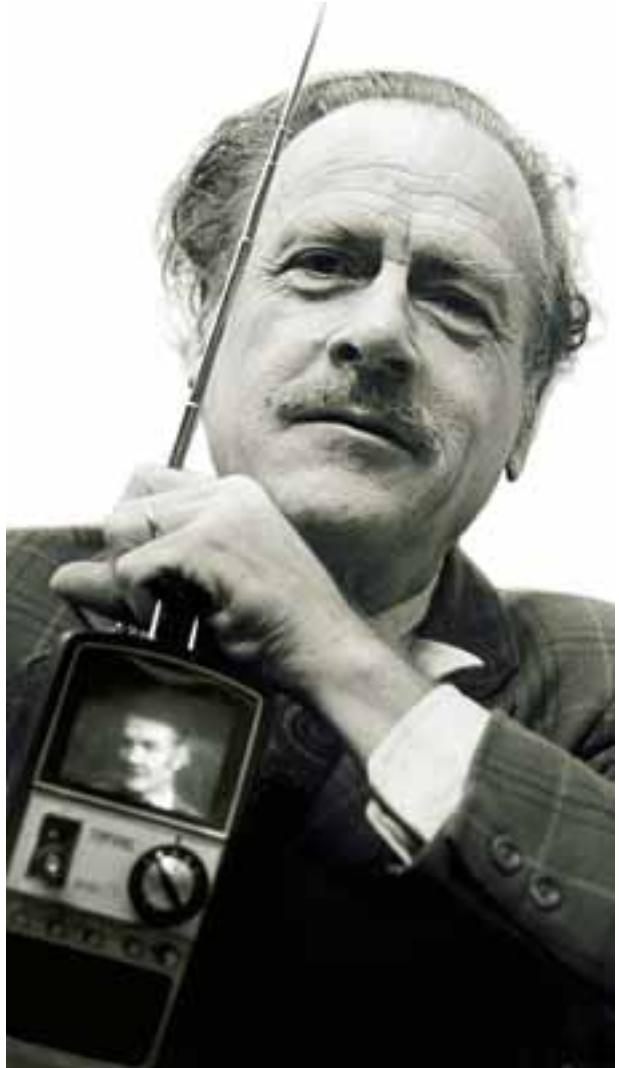
This week's readings:

Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image,” from *Image, Music, Text*:

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Marshall McLuhan (1911 - 1980)

Marshall McLuhan was a Canadian professor and philosopher, and his work is one of the cornerstones of the study of media theory.

McLuhan is known for coining the expression "the medium is the message" and the term "global village," and for predicting the World Wide Web almost 30 years before it was invented.

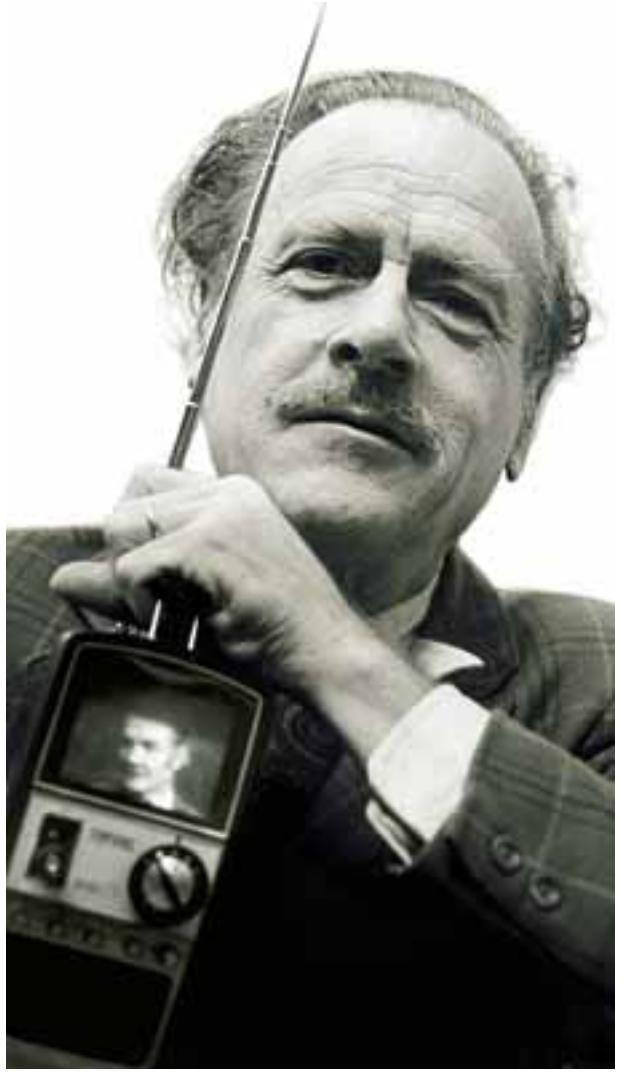
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Marshall McLuhan (1911 - 1980)

“...[I]f a new technology extends one or more of our senses outside us into the social world, then new ratios among all of our senses will occur in that particular culture. It is comparable to what happens when a new note is added to a melody. And when the sense ratios alter in any culture then what had appeared lucid before may suddenly become opaque, and what had been vague or opaque will become translucent.”

- from *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962)

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Media Hot and Cold:

Different media invite different degrees of participation. Film and lectures are hot, television and workshops are cool. ‘Hot’ is high in participation. ‘Cool’ media needs more effort to determine meaning, because they are based on one single sense and/or provide little (visual) information.

Thus a...

lecture is hot and makes for less participation than a workshop;

movie is hot and makes for less participation than a cartoon;

book is hot and makes for less participation than a dialogue.

Hot vs Cold

Hot and cold are temperatures of different media. Each media encourages different degrees of participation from the viewer.

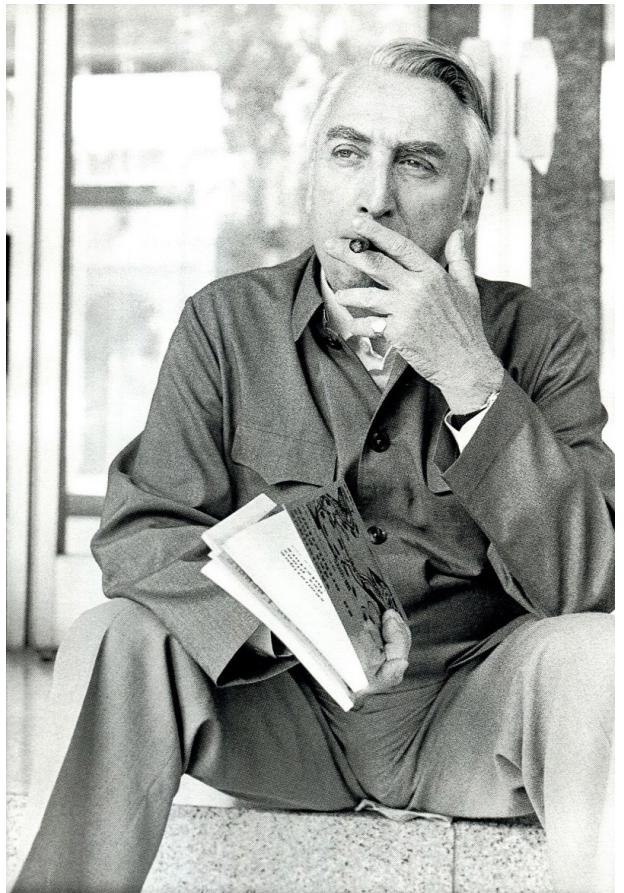
HOT

Hot media is well filled with data from high quality sources. It is considered high definition and intensely engages a single sense. Hot media presents complete information and does not leave much to be filled in or completed by the audience.

COLD

Cold media provides less data for the viewer. It is considered low definition and loosely engages multiple senses. Cold media presents little information and invites high levels of participation and completion by the audience.

Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980)



- How do images hold and convey meaning?
- How do we understand them?
- What are they trying to say?
- How do they persuade and influence us?

Roland Barthes deconstructed a Panzani advertising image and extracted the types of messages contained within it in order to illustrate the ‘rhetoric’ of the image. Though advertisements have a deliberate ‘signification’ or meaning generated in order to sell a product, Barthes’ analyses can be used to understand how messages are conveyed in other types of images.

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The Panzani Example: How do we Decode an Image?

When looking at this image, the reader understands from its composition and its placement in a magazine that it is an advertisement. However, beyond this, the Panzini advert sends three types of messages: the **linguistic** (or language-based) message and two types of **iconic** (or visual/iconic) message.

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Linguistic Messages: The Text or Captions



Within the linguistic message, which is the caption, the copy, or the title, are two types of messages at work:

a) The **denoted** message, which is the literal meaning of the labels on the produce — in this case the name of the company, Panzani.

b) The **connote**d message, which is the sociocultural and ‘personal’ associations drawn from the label or text. For example, the word ‘Panzani’ in the illustration connotes Italianicity.

The linguistic message is that this advertisement is for an Italian food company.

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Iconic Non-coded Messages: The Literal Image or Denoted Message

When the viewer looks at the advertisement, the visible items (**the signifiers**) represent what they are signifying in reality. In other words, a photo of a tomato represents a tomato.

However, because this is an advertisement, its message is a bit more complicated, because it is designed by advertisers to effectively communicate a positive message...

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Coded Iconic Messages: The Symbolic or Connoted Message

Barthes points out, when you analyze the pure image, you can distinguish four main signs that work together to create a coherent message:

1. Because of the visual composition, the scene represents the idea of a return from the market. **These are 'signified' items** — the items in packaging and the grocery bag. The return from the market further signifies product freshness and home-made food.

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2. What signifies the return from the market? We arrive at this connotation **by the way the signifiers are arranged** — the half open shopping bag with the contents spilling out. However, in order to ‘read’ this sign, we have to understand what the shopping bag represents and the culture around ‘local shopping,’ opposed to the bulk supermarket buys.

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3. The colors red, green, and white signify Italy (like the Italian flag). They work to enforce the **linguistic connotation** of the sign Panzini.

4. The **close proximity** of the items suggests or signifies that Panzini provides a total culinary service and is your solution to a quick, fresh, home-made meal.

The viewer reads the message from the visual connotations or suggestions provided by the chosen objects, their arrangement, their signifiers, and what they signify. From the coded message we receive the idea that Panzini provides fresh, home-made, authentic Italian meals.

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Some useful videos about McLuhan and Barthes:

Lecture on Hot Media, Cool Semiotics:

<https://vimeo.com/456042103/5ec7e1ceeb>

But Wait: Are You Hot, Or Is Your Media?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNcy24WD4yk>



PATES - SAUCE - PARMESAN
À L'ITALIENNE DE LUXE