

# Semiotics and Idents

315CR



# What we will cover today

- ▶ Introduction to Semiotics
- ▶ Examples
- ▶ Introduction to Idents
- ▶ Examples



# Semiotics

- ▶ The study of signs. A sign is something that stands for something other than itself.
- ▶ “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Umberto Eco 1976)
- ▶ Can take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects
- ▶ The discipline that studies the capacity of humans to make, disseminate, and understand these signs
- ▶ Involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but also of anything that 'stands for' something else...





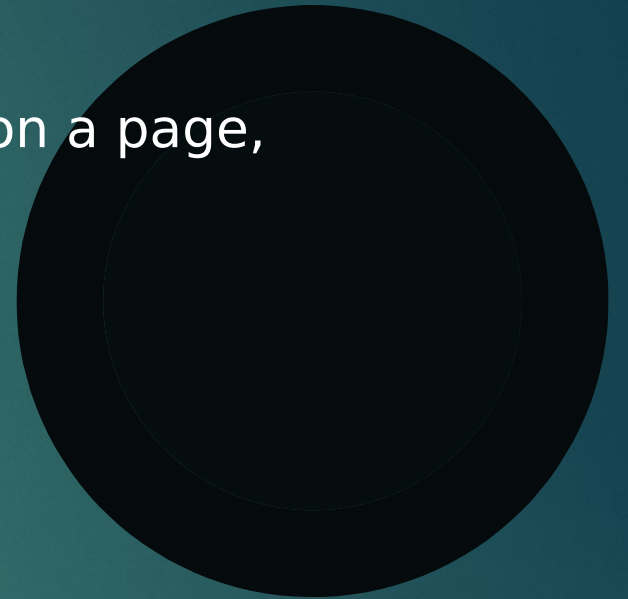
# Example

An open sign hanging in the window of a business.



# Semiotics

- ▶ Signifier: any material thing that signifies, e.g., words on a page, a facial expression, an image.
- ▶ Signified: the concept that a signifier refers to.
- ▶ Tree



# Semiotics

- ▶ **Indexical Signs:** signs where the signifier is caused by the signified, e.g., smoke signifies fire





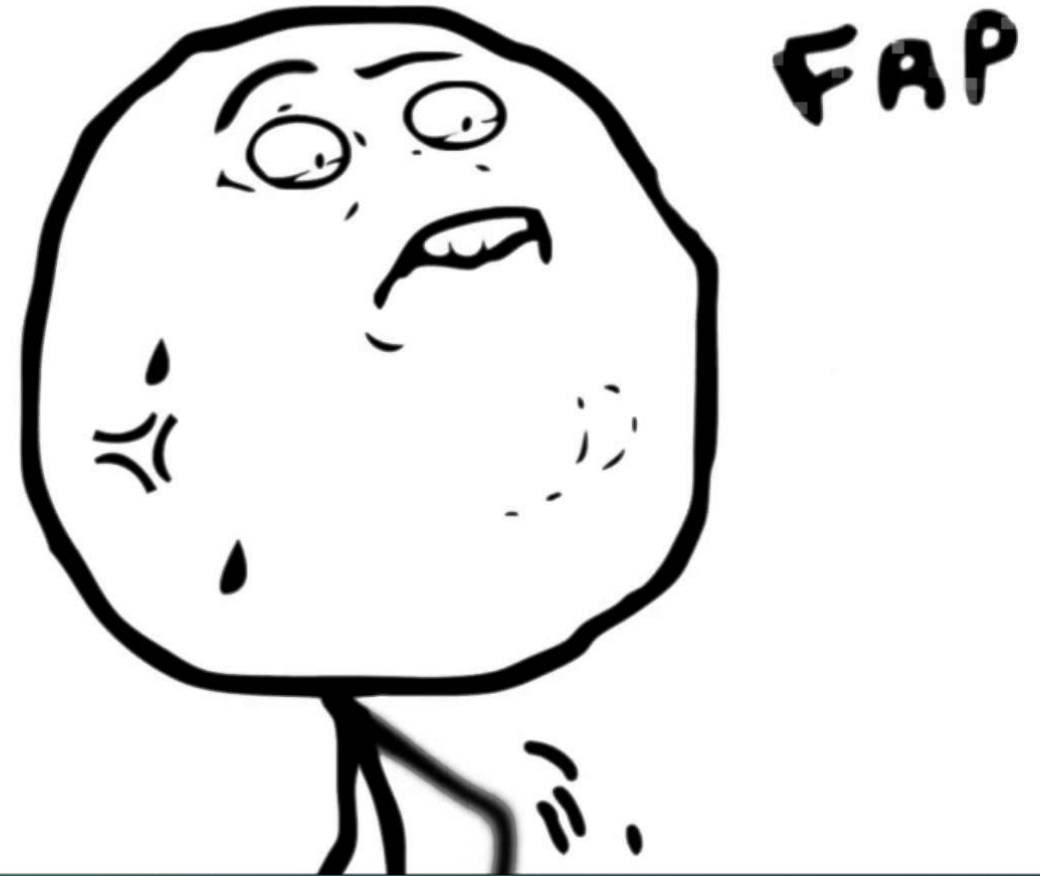
# Semiotics

- ▶ **Denotation:** the most basic or literal meaning of a sign, e.g., the word "rose" signifies a particular kind of flower
- ▶ **Connotation:** the secondary, cultural meanings of signs; or "signifying signs," signs that are used as signifiers for a secondary meaning, e.g., the word "rose" signifies passion.



# Semiotics

- ▶ **Metonymy:** a kind of connotation where in one sign is substituted for another with which it is closely associated,





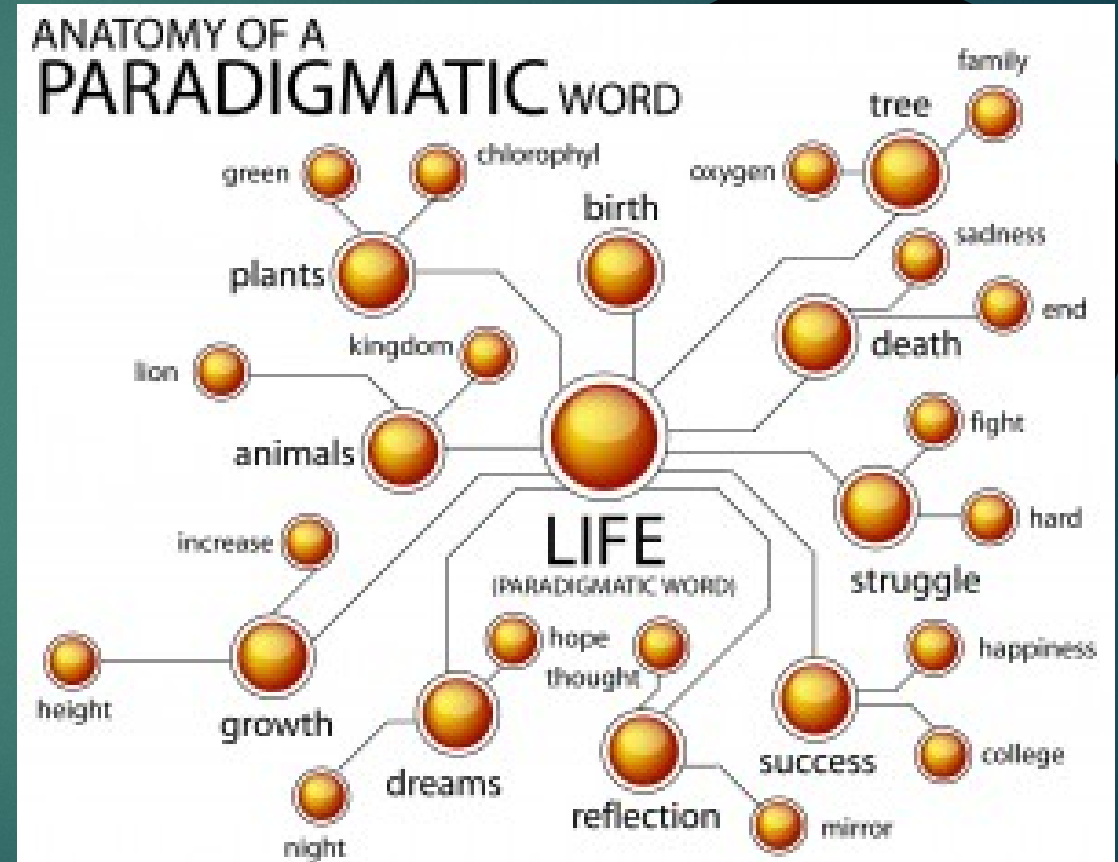
# Semiotics

- ▶ **Synecdoche:** a kind of connotation in which a part is used for the whole
- ▶ "Check out my new set of wheels"



# Semiotics

- **Paradigmatic relations:** where signs get meaning from their association with other signs



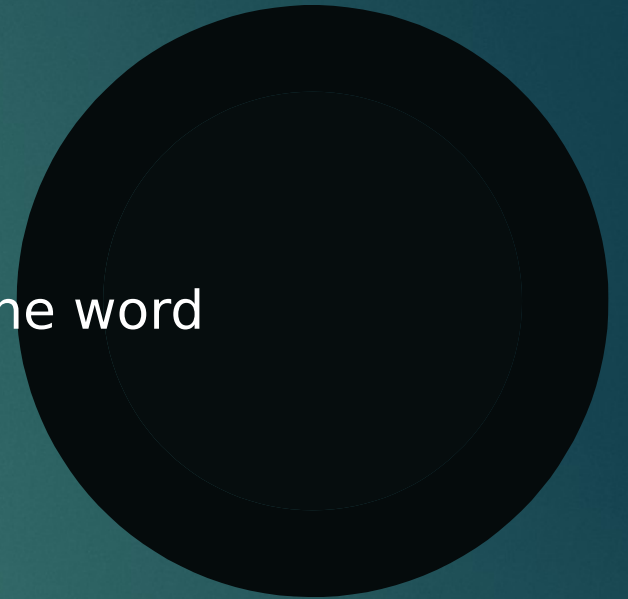
# Ferdinand de Saussure 1857-1913





# Saussure

- Signs are purely psychological.
- Signs only make sense in a formal abstract system. A one word language is an impossibility.
- A sign refers to what it is not.



# Saussure

- ▶ Saussure believed that signs do not represent reality but construct it.
- ▶
  - We come to know the world through language.
  - Signs reflect the system they are found in.
  - The relationship between the sign/signifier is not a matter of personal choice. “It is because the sign is arbitrary that it knows no law other than tradition.”



# Roland Barthes 1915 - 1980





# Barthes

- ▶ Denotation: Refers to the common sense meaning of a sign. A photograph of a dog denotes a dog.
- ▶
- ▶ Connotation: Describes the interaction that occurs between the subjective user and their culture. The photograph of the dog is taken in a way to appear sad.
- ▶
- ▶ Myth: It is the dominate ideology of our time. It is when connotations become “naturalized” Hollywood cinema. The myth of the hero (destiny dependent on individuals) Happy Endings.

- ▶ Denotative level: a photograph of the movie star
- ▶
- ▶ Connotative level: associations with glamour, sexuality, beauty or depression or drug-taking and untimely death
- ▶
- ▶ Myth: the dream factory can produce glamour, but also can crush it





# Stuart Hall Encoding/Decoding model

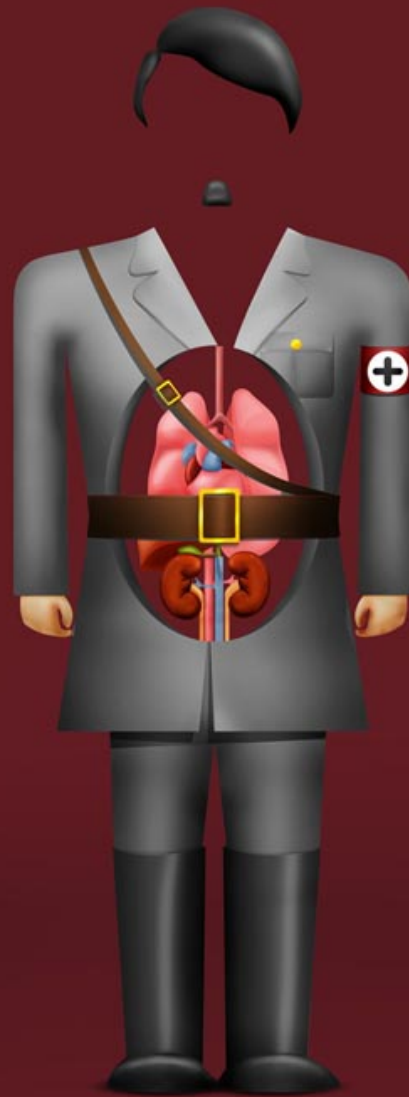
- ▶ A message is encoded with one meaning but may be decoded as another.
- ▶
- ▶ This draws from Gramsci's theory of Hegemony. The reading of a text may be read (decoded) in three different ways: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional





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# Idents

- ▶ Idents first started in the early 1950's. BBC was the first channel to start displaying a logo in between programmes to identify it's channel.
- ▶ The theme of the globe was used throughout all the idents produced by the BBC up until idents used for the BBC today.
- ▶ today a lot of channels have a complete set of idents based on a theme or branding element, mostly building the base for the rest of the channels appearance.





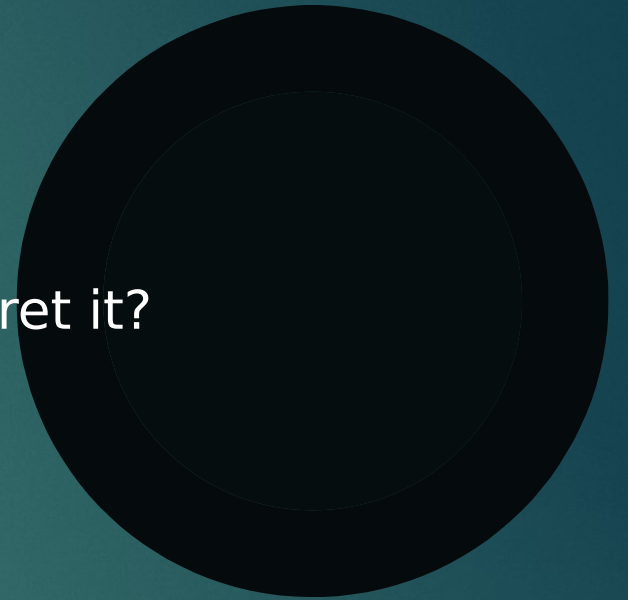
# Purpose of an Ident

- ▶ Identity of the channel
- ▶ Break up Schedule
- ▶ Branding
- ▶ Marketing
- ▶ Rebranding



# Ident Design

- ▶ Setting – Where is it?
- ▶ Tempo – Speed
- ▶ Audience interaction – How should the audience interpret it?
- ▶ Branding



# History of BBC idents





# Idents

- ▶ <http://mvsm.com/>
- ▶ <http://www.creativebloq.com/search?term=idents>
- ▶ [http://theident.gallery/menu\\_section\\_bbc.php](http://theident.gallery/menu_section_bbc.php)
- ▶



# Reference

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- ▶ <http://www.signsalad.com/>
- ▶ <http://www.signosemio.com/elements-of-semiotics.asp>
- ▶ <https://jessiemay93.wordpress.com/2009/12/08/brief-history-of-idents/>
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