

# Week 3

## Textual analysis

ENVY  
CRAFTED IN ITALY

FOOTWEAR  
COLLECTION / 2014

Woz?



# Key points from Couldry last week

- Need for **method** in cultural studies – to resist dominant or accepted view of culture; to find voices that are not visible; to connect our own experience with others; to deal with connection of culture and power
- This week: working with **texts** using **semiotics** in **textual environments**
- **Motivating intuition:** by analysing texts, we can better understand how meanings, representations and values are shaped in particular ways (hegemonic, dominant, etc).
- But also need to look beyond 'the text' itself to answer this

# Semiotics and discourse analysis as methods

- **Semiotics** – study of signs – how texts make meanings (Barthes); possibly most popular method in media and cultural studies
- Compare **discourse analysis** – analysis of a particular form of language and the institutions linked and shaped by that form of language (Foucault – more on this next week)

# Semiotic analysis

- Often used to reveal ideology and how it is structured by unequal social power relations
- e.g. how an advertisement represents social differences



Leave your  
MORNING  
MOOD  
behind.



# Signs and meaning-making

- **Sign** – key concept of basic unit of all texts
- Sign composed of **signifier** and **signified**, but can be attached to each other in different ways
- Semiotics identifies key signs in a text and analyses their relations

# Relations between signifier and signified

- Various analytical concepts:
  - Pierce – **iconic**, **indexical** and **symbolic** signs
  - **Syntagmatic** vs **paradigmatic**
  - **Denotive** vs **connotive**
  - **Synecdochal** – parts stands in for whole
  - Signs may work in all or some of these ways to **attach**, produce or **transfer** meaning in a text
  - Signs may '**naturalise**' a particular meaning (make it seem obvious and uncontestable)
  - Signs may link to wider systems of meaning (**codes** – Hall; **mythology** - Barthes)



https://www.facebook.com/advertising?  
campaign\_id=214294157440&placement=broad&creative=50677677152&keyword=+online+  
+ads&extra\_1=52fa307e-7315-4929-4a70-000014e7bdbf

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## Overview

### How it works

### Success stories

English Cheesecake  
Company

Sarah P  
Photography

### Top questions

## Step 1: Build your Facebook Page

Everything on Facebook starts with your  
Page. Create a page. It's a simple, free way to  
communicate with customers.

## Step 2: Connect with people

Get people to like your Page. Create several  
adverts target-based on location,  
demographics and interests.

## Step 3: Engage with quality content

Post quality updates and promote your  
posts with adverts to engage your  
customers and their friends. Start now.



### New to advertising on Facebook?

Learn more about how it  
works.



### Get the latest updates and tips.

Like the Facebook Marketing  
Page.







THEY TORE EUROPE TO SHREDS,  
BUT THEY COULDN'T EVEN ASSEMBLE A FORK.

During the Second World War, Czech riders  
dismantled their bikes and hid them  
amongst household objects  
so they wouldn't be confiscated and used  
to continue fueling the Nazi war machine.

These "parted out" bikes became symbols of hope  
that one day freedom would prevail  
and they could be put back together  
to reclaim their rightful home  
- the open road.

.....  
A piece of freedom.  
.....





杨里田 过马路时被违章掉头的车辆碾压致残

YANG LI TIAN Hit while crossing the road by a vehicle making an illegal U-turn

事关人命 遵守交规 | BUICK

SIGNS ARE THERE FOR A REASON

# Exercise: semiotics and sign

- Identify linguistic and visual signs here, and describe their signifieds and signifiers
- Describe some of the relations between signs and how they attach, make or transfer meaning in the text
- Identify some wider systems of meaning (codes, etc.)

# Problems with semiotics

- Tends to treat texts in isolation and assume an 'expert reader' who analyses them
- How to select the texts (Couldry, 68) and explain why they matter?
- Technical vocabulary can be confusing
- Doesn't ask how a text is taken up in particular social, cultural or media settings.

# Using semiotics today

- More effective where meanings are standardised or controlled
  - Fashion
  - Advertising
  - News
  - Certain genres of books, television and films

# Definition of 'the text'

- **Text** = 'complex of interrelated meanings which its readers tend to interpret as a discrete, unified whole' (Couldry, 70-71)
- **Textuality** – 'the different ways in which something can function as a text for its readers' (Couldry, 71)
- Investigate **specific forms** of textuality; e.g. compare the textuality of an episode of a soap opera with a museum
- **Intertextuality** = relation between texts (film + merchandise)
- Notion of 'textual environment' incorporates forms and practices

# Textual environment: text and reader are co-produced

- Examine not just meanings, but flows of texts and readers
- Look at material structures of textual production and distribution
- Processes that order how we read, connect or screen out texts

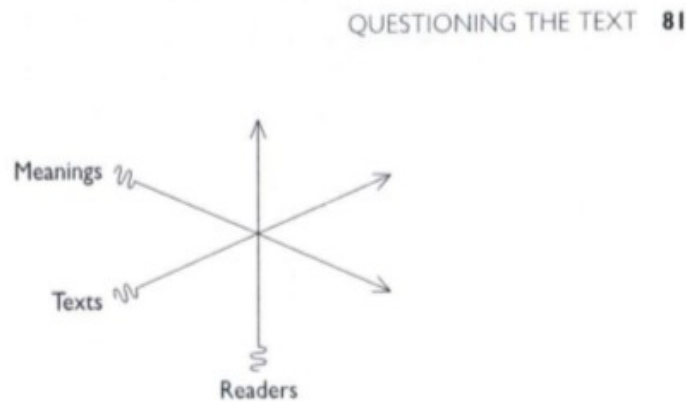


FIGURE 4.1 *The textual environment*

Couldry, 81



# Exercise: the textual environment of your group research topic

- 1) Choose one or two contrasting texts relating to your project and do a **semiotic analysis** of how they make meanings
- 2) Using the same texts, describe the **textuality** of the texts
- 3) Using the same texts, describe some aspects of the textual production and distribution in the **textual environment**
- 4) How does an analysis of the textual environment differ from the semiotic analysis of the text in your examples?
- 5) Document the examples and yours analysis on your group research site

## Part II: The interview

- Anne Cronin and her work on advertising in the city
- Advertisements – classic examples of 'texts' analysed semiotically (e.g. Barthes)

# Exercise: prepare interview questions

- In your research project groups, frame 3 questions about how to study advertisements as:
  - **Texts** – using semiotics or other approaches
  - **Textual environments**
- Remember:
  - You are **not** asking about how ads work
  - You **are asking** questions that help you understand how Anne Cronin did her research on ads
  - You cannot assume that Anne Cronin has read Nick Couldry's work on textual environments, so you might need to frame your questions