

符号与传媒

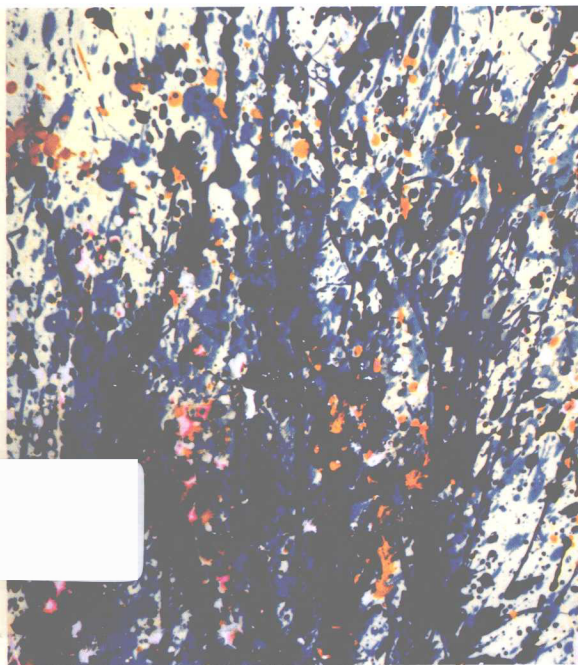
Signs & Media

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编者的话

符号学不断向新领域推进，然而要理清诸多概念却又不得不溯回其伊始。本辑《符号与传媒》中，保罗·科布利（Paul Cobley）、托尼·贾皮（Tony Jappy）及卢德平三位知名学者将我们领回现代符号学的源头，对皮尔斯、索绪尔的理论再次进行辨析。我们尤其要感谢科布利先生，他不仅探讨了罗兰·巴尔特符号学理论的索绪尔源头，更指出了中国学术界面临的问题：如何走出索绪尔式符号学的影子。

事实上，中国的符号学研究一直有自己的语境，这不仅是因为赵元任几乎与索绪尔、皮尔斯同一时期提出了“符号学”这个词语，更是因为中国的先哲们对符号学相关问题早就进行了深入的思考。在本辑“中国古代符号思想研究”专辑中，我们可以看到嵇康《声无哀乐论》与皮尔斯现象学的碰撞，魏晋玄学对语义三角的调和，以及禅宗公案审美表现机制的符号学探索。我们不断推出与中国传统理论相关的研究专辑，正是希望能看清中国瑰丽的符号思想宝藏。

符号学一直是一门理论与应用并进的学科。本辑中，我们可以看到以科学符号学为起点建立普通符号学学科的构想，可以看到对伊托邦文学的分析，可以看到对于竞赛、仪式等宏观文本的符号叙述研究，也能看到对平克·弗洛伊德乐队、陇中剪纸以及芦笙舞蹈这些艺术文本的深入研讨。

延续本集刊的传统，每年的春季号我们提交一份中国符号学年度发展报告，尽可能多地记录中国符号学迅速的发展以及其不断拓展的锋面。我们也将于2015年7月举行第一届文化与传播符号学国际学术研讨会，以新媒体时代为关注重点，把符号学与传播学的研究扩展到当代各个文化领域。

Editor's Note

With the rapid advance of semiotics, there has been growing confusion about some basic concepts, making it necessary to review the foundations of semiotics. In this issue, three distinguished semioticians—Paul Cogley, Tony Jappy and Lu Deping—attempt to define the tenets of Saussurean and Peircean theories. We are particularly grateful to Professor Cogley, as he not only elaborates how Barthes's sign theory was extrapolated from Saussure, but also points out the problem we now all face—how to move beyond the Saussurean paradigm.

China boasts of its own semiotic tradition. In 1926, Chao Yuanren suggested the word “Fu Hao Xue” independently of “semiotics” and “semiology”. Furthermore, it should be noted that millennia ago, Chinese philosophers deeply pondered sign-related issues. In the section of this issue focusing on Chinese Semiotic Heritage, there are essays exploring the union of Peircean phenomenology and *The Absence of Sentiments in Music* by Ji Kang, and of Richards' semantic triangle theory and metaphysics in China in the second century A. D. There is also an essay on the semiotic aesthetics of Zen Koan. Our exploration of Chinese traditional theory will not cease until we have a much better understanding of this treasure.

Semiotics is both theoretical and practical. In this issue, we offer works focusing on the foundation of a “general semiotics”, starting with semiotics in science, an analysis of E-topian literature, and semiotic studies of dancing, sports and rituals. In addition, there are essays studying Pink Floyd and paper cuttings from remote areas of the Chinese hinterland.

In every Spring issue of this journal, we offer an annual report on the development of semiotics in China. In the 2014 report, we attempt to

accurately and fully record the trajectory of Chinese semiotics in the previous year. In July of 2015, the Institute of Semiotics and Media Studies (ISMS) will hold the first International Symposium on Cultural and Communication Semiotics at Sichuan University, in a hope to expand Semiotics and Communication into all spheres of contemporary culture.

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理论与应用



The Deaths of Semiology and Mythoclasm: Barthes and Media Studies

Paul Cobley

Abstract: Roland Barthes is one of the most well-known semioticians outside academic circles. That knowledge is sometimes based on misconceptions about his theory of signs, extrapolated from Saussure. This article will offer an outline of Roland Barthes' sign theory, demonstrating the ways that it is derived and adapted from Saussure and how Saussure is refracted through Barthes' readings of other linguists. It will look in particular at Barthes' innovations in sign theory: denotation, connotation and metalanguage, as well as his extension of linguistic thinking to analyse nonverbal modes. It will also discuss Barthes' notion of "myth" and its influence as a concept. The article will consider a number of instances from media and cultural studies where Barthes' interpretations have not only given subsequent uses of sign theory license to speculate beyond Saussure's original linguistic bearing but have also unwittingly contributed to the stagnation of semiotic analysis.

Keywords: Barthes, Saussure, semiology, mythology, semioclasms

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符号学 (semiology) 之死与神话拆解：巴尔特与传媒研究

保罗·科布利

摘要: 罗兰·巴尔特被视为是符号学界之外最知名的符号学家之一，

这种看法常常是因为人们对他从索绪尔处发展出来的那套符号学理论所产生的迷思。本文试图厘清罗兰·巴爾特的符号学框架,论证巴尔特是如何借鉴与改写索绪尔符号学范式的;并且,巴尔特是如何通过阅读其他语言学家的著作从而曲解索绪尔的。为此,本文将着重探究巴尔特符号学的创新点,即直接意指、含蓄意指和元语言,以及他对索绪尔理论的延伸——用语言学思维去分析非语言文本。同时,本文还将探讨巴尔特有关“神话”的思想及其作为“概念”所产生的影响。此外,本文还将通过传媒与文化研究的大量例子说明,巴尔特在这些方面的解读不仅仅使得后来的学者偏离索绪尔原本的语言学模式去运用其符号学理论,并且在无意中造成了符号学研究停滞不前的局面。

关键词: 巴尔特, 索绪尔, 符号学, 神话学, 符号学拆解

Barthes' influence in English-speaking academia is probably most directly traceable to the publication of Annette Lavers' and Colin Smith's 1967a translation into English of *Éléments de sémiologie*. Indeed, scholars whose first language was neither French nor English have testified to the importance of this volume. Yet, from the vantage point of the present and certainly from the point of view of a post-cultural studies academy, the initial circumstances in which this volume was published are worthy of note. The volume was not published by a university press or a large academic publishing house, such as Routledge or Blackwell, as might be expected today. Rather, it appeared in the list of Jonathan Cape, a high profile London-based publisher associated mainly with the publishing of works of fiction. Indeed, *Elements of Semiology* appeared in a Cape series which included a selection of late modernist texts such as Charles Olson's *Mayan Letters*, Alfred Jarry's *The Supremale*, Baudelaire's *Twenty Prose Poems*, the *Selected Poems* of Yves Bonnefoy, as well as *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (by George Charbonnier) and Barthes' own *Writing Degree Zero*, translated in the same year as *Elements*, again by Annette Lavers.

Barthes' prominent writings, then, assumed what seems, in retrospect, a somewhat strange and overdetermined position in English intellectual

circles. They were part of a general importation of French thought to Britain which continues today and generally features the latest Parisian intellectual fads reformulated for sales and public relations purposes. In this case, the translation seemed to bracket *Elements* in a late modernist, post-existentialist Gallic moment. Furthermore, Barthes' work was not simply a matter for academic scrutiny: to be sure, it was difficult and intellectual; but it is probably its interdisciplinary range, its embrace of the quotidian and the popular, as well as its Gallic flourish that made it so apposite for publication to a wider middle-brow audience. Indeed, this has remained the case to this day. There is a famous scene in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1978) which features a pretentious conversation about McLuhan in an arts cinema queue in Manhattan. If one were to recast this to London in the present day, it would not be unlikely that the subject of the conversation is, still, Roland Barthes (among a limited number of other potential candidates).

The hold that is exerted by Parisian intellectuals over middle-brow discourse in contemporary Britain should not be underestimated. The presentation of Barthes' other prominent translated works underlines this. *Mythologies* was published in English translation (by Annette Lavers, once more) in 1972, again by Cape, but launched in 1973a as a popular paperback published by Paladin. The book's credentials beyond academic debate, reaching into the world of the mass market paperback, are evident from its cover:

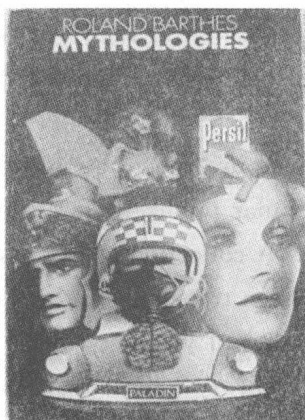


Fig. 1 *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1972)

The back cover quotes the conservative literary critic (and champion of Bob Dylan's writing), Christopher Ricks, to the effect that "Barthes is the McLuhan of signs". John Weightman's comments for *The Observer*, are also recorded: significantly, he suggests that "Barthes is an intellectual star, one of the very small group of *maîtres à penser*, such as Sartre, Lévi-Strauss and Foucault". In the present, *après* post-structuralism, it is unusual to see Barthes' name mentioned in the company of Sartre in this way; but Weightman's appraisal is further evidence of the point made above about *Elements of Semiology*: that it was received as one more contribution to the pantheon of French celebrity moderns or *maîtres à penser*.

Just as significant as the critics' puffs, perhaps, is the cataloguing category on the back cover of the book: "Modern Society". Barthes is no longer presented as a literary critic (as in *Writing Degree Zero*, for example), particularly as there is no literary criticism in *Mythologies*. Rather, he is more of a "cultural critic", corresponding with the origins of the essays collected in the book. The essay on "Myth Today", which is like an appendix to the mythologies analysed in the volume, serves as a theoretical coda, unraveling the new science of signs (semiology) for those readers who were just becoming aware of the phenomenon called "structuralism" — another French "ism" to supersede "existentialism". Anthologies such as those of Macksey and Donato and of deGeorge and DeGeorge had given structuralism (and, partly, semiology) a profile in English-speaking academic circles; but, with the exception of the 1972 Wolfson Lectures (see Robey, 1973), there was no account of the new French thought for a wider audience before "Myth Today".

Barthes' range of interests in "modern society" also created the demand for a further, influential popular publication, although there remained some ties to literary study in this. A collection of essays, *Image-Music-Text*, was published in 1977a, having been translated and edited by Stephen Heath.

Heath was one of a number of younger British scholars operating within the co-ordinates of literary theory, film analysis and French thought in general, a mix that was considered at the time to be quite heady and exciting by academics and middle-brow spectators alike. *Image-Music-Text* brought

together a number of essays of literary and visual analysis in a popular Fontana paperback (the front cover picture, above, carries the logo of Flamingo, Collins' successor to Fontana as a paperback imprint; the cover design remained the same, however). Importantly, the volume spread the news from the horse's mouth about such pressing topics for those with a literary interest as "The death of the author", "An introduction to the structural analysis of narratives" and how structuralism moved "From work to text". In addition, it contained essays beyond the literary, continuing Barthes' commitment to nonverbal communication ("The rhetoric of the image", "The photographic message", "The grain of the voice", etc.).

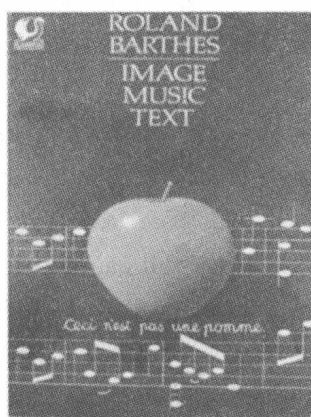


Fig. 2 *Image-Music-Text* (Barthes, 1977)

The above, semiological publications of Barthes are the pre-eminent ones in Britain; the latter two remain in print in popular editions to this day. But it is worth remembering that many academics believe that, intellectually speaking, there is more than the one Barthes represented in these books. Frequently, it is assumed that there is the early, semiological, Barthes and the later, poststructuralist Barthes. Sometimes, the very early, "modern writing" Barthes precedes the other two. Leonard Jackson (1991, pp. 124–168) cogently argues that the situation is slightly more complicated than this and that Barthes' early interest in, and promotion of, modern writers such as Brecht and Robbe-Grillet continued through his semiological/ "scientific" phase and was transformed into "textual mysticism". In the later period,

Barthes became pre-occupied with “writing” and saw his work not in an expository light, but as part of the avant-garde literature of which he had originally been a champion. Jackson suggests that Barthes came to view with misgivings his influence as a semiologist or sign scientist, although, as we will see, this was not necessarily a simple adjunct of his metamorphosis into a poststructuralist guru on the pleasure of the text. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized now that although the work of the “later” Barthes continued to have great influence in literary theory circles and, briefly, in film theory, it is the Barthes of semiological theory that has thrived through communications, media and cultural studies. Sign theory effectively became synonymous with Barthes’ work by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, pp. 5–22), who offer alternative approaches to signs in visual texts, acknowledge this fact in their references to “the Paris School”, by which they mean, above all, Barthes. The *teaching* of the work of “the Paris School” in Britain, is seen by Kress and van Leeuwen to have been carried out by a number of textbooks which are referenced in the current article. Barthes’ semiological work was at the forefront of these as semiotics strived to gain a toehold in British universities.

There are a number of reasons why semiotics has struggled in Britain during recent years. One of them is that much of the serious semiotics that is practiced and promoted in university faculties devoted to the study of language and multimodality, is actually “social semiotics”, an outgrowth of Hallidayan work, tinged with poststructuralism, which mistakenly takes itself to be the whole of contemporary semiotics. Kress and van Leeuwen’s work is repeatedly referenced, here. The other major reasons are indirectly to do with Barthes. The first is that, with the help of Barthes, semiotics (in fact, glottocentric semiology), became fashionable in the mid-1970s. As such, it was always vulnerable to falling out of fashion and being blamed for all sorts of ills of textual and cultural analysis of which semiotics as a whole was not actually guilty (for example, bracketing audiences and reception). The second is that semiotics, in a slightly less serious form than that carried out by the language/discourse/multimodality semioticians in Britain (and Australia, especially), lived on. To this day, first year undergraduate students of communications, media and cultural studies in Britain sit

introductory courses on the key methods and approaches in their subject area. Usually, this will entail a week or two's teaching, by a junior member of staff, on sign theory, sandwiched with sessions on quantitative and qualitative method, plus other topics such as "how to do ideology critiques" (see, for example, Fiske, 1990, which, though dated, remains the standard textbook in the field at this level). The putatively more substantial and theoretical material which is believed to interest students (and, even to politicize them—poststructuralism is a case in point), is generally left until the second year of degree studies. As a result, few students get the chance to engage with the breadth of semiotics and, certainly, most postgraduates in the subject area, if they are interested in theory, tend to pursue studies related to themes introduced by Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva and the like. And the semiotics that is taught to first years usually revolves around Barthes, especially *Mythologies* (see, for example, Deacon et al., 1999).

Yet, if Barthes' fate in Anglophone communication, media and cultural studies is to be consigned primarily to the role of sign theorist, it is worth considering of what that sign theory consists, particularly in relation to semiotics as a whole. Let us therefore consider the chief components of Barthes' influential theory of the sign: how it has been taken as synonymous with Saussure and "structuralism"; how it departs from Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916); and how it has been used in communications, media and cultural studies. The sign theory of Roland Barthes is distributed across a large number of works in literary theory and communications, from his early analysis of "*écriture blanche*" in the work of Albert Camus, to the pinnacle of his poststructuralist achievements in books such as *S/Z* (1970), *Le plaisir du texte* (1973b) and *La chambre claire* (1980). It is explicit in theoretical essays from the 1960s such as his analysis of an advertisement—and, by association, much advertising imagery—in "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1977a) and implicit in essays which function more like manifestoes than sign analyses: for example, "The Death of the Author" (1977c). However, *Elements of Semiology* undoubtedly contains Barthes most focused comments on sign theory, although it was the culmination of a growing preoccupation for Barthes.