effect of a photograph is inversely proportional to its traumatic effect.

Why? No doubt because, like any well-structured signification, photographic connotation is an institutional activity; on the scale of society as a whole, its function is to integrate, in other words to reassure, humanity; every code is both arbitrary and rational; all recourse to a code is therefore a way for humanity to prove itself, to test itself through a rationality and a liberty. In this sense, analyzing codes may permit us to define a society historically—more readily and more certainly than analyzing its signifieds, for the latter can often appear as transhistorical, deriving from an anthropological basis rather than from an authentic history: Hegel defined the ancient Greeks better by sketching the way in which they made Nature signify than by describing the sum of their "feelings and beliefs" on this subject. In the same way we can perhaps do better than to inventory directly the ideological contents of our age; for by trying to reconstitute in its specific structure the connotation-code of a communication as broad as the press photograph, we may hope to recognize in all their complexity the forms our society employs to reassure itself, and thereby grasp the extent, the detours, and the deep function of this effort: a perspective all the more appealing, as we said at the beginning, in that, with regard to the photograph, it develops in the form of a paradox: the paradox which makes an inert object into a language and which transforms the non-culture of a "mechanical" art into the most social of institutions.

1961

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Rhetoric of the Image

According to an ancient etymology, the word *image* should be linked to the root of *imitari*. This immediately takes us to the heart of the most important problem confronting the semiology of images. Can analogical representation (the "copy") produce true sign-systems and no longer merely simply agglutinations of symbols? Is an analogical—and no longer a digital—"code" conceivable? We know that linguistics denies all communication by analogy the status of language, from the "language" of bees to the "language" of gesture, whenever such communications are not doubly articulated, i.e., definitively based on a combinatory system of digital units, as phonemes are. Linguistics is not alone in doubting the linguistic nature of the image; public opinion as well vaguely regards the image as a site of resistance to meaning, in the name of a certain mythical notion of Life: the image is re-presentation, i.e., ultimately resurrection, and we know that the intelligible is reputed antipathetic to the experiential. Thus, from both sides, analogy is perceived as an inferior meaning: some believe that the image is a very

rudimentary system in relation to language, and others that signification cannot exhaust the ineffable wealth of the image. Now, even and especially if the image is somehow the *limit* of meaning, it permits us to return to a veritable ontology of signification. How does meaning come to the image? Where does meaning end? And if it ends, what is there *beyond*? This is the question we should like to raise here, subjecting the image to a spectral analysis of the messages it can contain. We shall start by making matters considerably easier for ourselves: we shall study only advertising images. Why? Because, in advertising, the image's signification is assuredly intentional: it is certain attributes of the product which a priori form the signifieds of the advertising message, and these signifieds must be transmitted as clearly as possible; if the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are replete, formed with a view to the best possible reading: the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic.

The Three Messages

Here is a Panzani ad: pasta in packages, a can, a bag, tomatoes, onions, peppers, a mushroom, everything coming out of a half-open string bag, printed in yellows and greens on a red background.* Let us try to "skim off" the different messages it can contain.

The image immediately yields a first message, whose substance is linguistic; its supports are the (marginal) caption and the labels which are inserted into the natural arrangement of the scene, as though "*en abime*"; the code from which this message

* We give the *description* of the photograph cautiously, for it already constitutes a metalanguage. See reproduction (XVII).

is taken is none other than that of the French language; in order to be deciphered, this message requires no knowledge except the knowledge of writing and of French. To tell the truth, this message itself can be decomposed further, for the sign *Panzani* yields not only the name of the firm but also, by its assonance, a supplementary signified which is, so to speak, "Italianicity"; the linguistic message is therefore double (at least in this image): of denotation and of connotation; nonetheless, since there is here only a single typical sign,* i.e., that of articulated (written) language, we shall count it as only a single message.

Setting aside the linguistic message, there remains the pure image (even if the labels participate anecdotally). This image immediately yields a series of discontinuous signs. Here, first of all (this order is a matter of indifference, for these signs are not linear), the notion that the represented scene has something to do with a return from shopping; this signifier itself implies two euphoric values: that of the freshness of the products and that of the purely household preparation for which they are destined; its signifier is the gaping string bag which lets the provisions spill out onto the table, as though "unpacked." In order to read this first sign, all that is required is a knowledge somehow "implanted" in the usages of a very widespread civilization in which "to do one's own shopping" is opposed to the hasty stocking up (canned goods, refrigerators) of a more "mechanical" civilization. A second sign is almost as obvious; its signifier is the congruence of the tomato, the pepper, and the tricolor (yellow, red, green) print of the ad; its signified is Italy, or rather *Italianicity*; this sign is in a relation of redundance with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian assonance of the name Panzani); the knowledge

* The sign of a system will be called a *typical* sign insofar as it is sufficiently defined by its substance: the verbal sign, the iconic sign, the gestural sign are so many typical signs.

mobilized by this sign is already more particular: it is a strictly "French" knowledge (Italians could scarcely perceive the connotation of the proper name, and probably not the Italianicity of the tomato and the pepper), based on a knowledge of certain touristic stereotypes. Continuing to explore the image (which does not mean that it is not entirely clear at first glance), we readily discern in it at least two further signs; in one, the closely packed nature of various objects transmits the idea of a total culinary service, as if, on the one hand, Panzani afforded everything necessary to a complicated dish, and as if, on the other, the concentrate in the can equalled the natural products surrounding it, the scene "bridging" the origin of the products and their final condition; in the other sign, the composition, evoking the memory of so many alimentary paintings, refers to an aesthetic signified: it is the "still life"; here the knowledge necessary is distinctly cultural. We might suggest that a further piece of information is added to these four signs: the one which tells us that we are here concerned with an ad, and which comes both from the image's place in the magazine and from the insistence of the Panzani labels (not to mention the caption); but this last bit of information is coextensive with the scene; it somehow escapes signification, insofar as the advertising nature of the image is essentially functional: to utter something does not necessarily mean *I am talking*, except in deliberately reflexive systems such as literature.

Thus, here are four signs for this image, signs which we shall presume form a coherent whole (for they are all discontinuous), which all require a generally cultural knowledge, and which refer to signifieds each of which is total or inclusive (*Italianicity*, for instance), steeped in euphoric values; here, then, a second message of an iconic nature will be seen after the linguistic message. Is this all? If we subtract all these signs from the image, it still retains a certain informational substance; without any knowledge at all, I continue to "read" the image, to "understand" that it collects in a certain space a certain number of identifiable (namable) objects, and not only shapes and colors. The signifieds of this third message are formed by the real objects of the scene, the signifiers by these same objects photographed, for it is obvious that since in analogical representation the relation of the thing signified and of the signifying image is no longer "arbitrary" (as it is in speech), it is no longer necessary to insert the relay of a third term in the form of the psychic image of the object. What specifies this third message is the fact that the relation of the signified and the signifier is quasi-tautological; doubtless the photograph implies a certain manipulation of the scene (cropping, reducing, flattening), but this transition is not a *transformation* (as a *coding* can be); here there is a loss of the equivalence characteristic of true sign-systems and a positing of a quasi-identity. In other words, the sign of this message is no longer drawn from an institutional stock, it is not coded, and we are faced with the paradox (to which we shall return) of a *message without a code*.* This peculiarity recurs on the level of the knowledge invested in the reading of the message: in order to "read" this last (or this first) level of the image, we need no other knowledge than what is involved in our perception: this knowledge is not nil, for we must know what an image is (children know this only at about the age of four) and what a tomato, a string bag, and a package of pasta are: however, this is virtually anthropological knowledge. This message corresponds in some sense to the letter of the image, and we can agree to call it the literal message, as opposed to the preceding message, which is a "symbolic" message.

If our reading is satisfactory, the analyzed photograph thus offers us three messages: a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message. The linguistic message is readily separated from the other two; but since these latter messages have the same (iconic) substance, to what degree are

* Cf. the preceding essay, "The Photographic Message."

we entitled to distinguish them? It is certain that the distinction of the two iconic messages is not made spontaneously on the level of ordinary reading: the spectator of the image receives *at the same time* the perceptual message and the cultural message, and we shall see later on that this confusion in reading corresponds to the function of the mass-culture image (with which we are concerned here). Yet the distinction has an operational validity, analogous to the one which permits distinguishing in the linguistic sign a signifier and a signified, though in fact no one can ever separate the "word" from its meaning, except by resorting to the metalanguage of a definition: if the distinction permits describing the structure of the image in a simple and coherent fashion, and if the description thus arrived at prepares an explanation of the role of the image in society, we shall regard it as justified. Hence we must return to each type of message so as to explore it in its generality, without losing sight of the fact that we are trying to understand the structure of the image as a whole, i.e., the final relation of the three messages among themselves. Nevertheless, since it is no longer a matter of a "naïve" analysis but of a structural description,* we shall somewhat modify the order of the messages, inverting the cultural and the literal messages; of the two iconic messages, the first is somehow imprinted within the second: the literal message appears as the *support* of the "symbolic" message. Now, we know that a system which takes over the signs of another system in order to make them into its signifiers is a system of connotation; hence, we shall say immediately that the literal image is *denoted* and the symbolic system *connoted*. Hence, we shall study in succession the linguistic message, the denoted message, and the connoted message.

* The "naïve" analysis is an enumeration of elements; structural description seeks to apprehend the relation of these elements by virtue of the principle of solidarity among the terms of a structure: if one term changes, the others change as well.

The Linguistic Message

Is the linguistic message constant? Is there always something textual within, beneath, or around the image? In order to discover images without words, we must doubtless go back to partially analphabetic societies, i.e., to a sort of pictographics of the image; actually, since the advent of the book, the link between text and image is frequent; this link seems to have been studied very little from the structural point of view. What is the signifying structure of "illustration"? Does the image duplicate certain items of information in the text, by a phenomenon of redundance, or does the text add a brand-new item of information to the image? The problem might be put historically apropos of the classical period, which had a passion for books with pictures (it was inconceivable in the eighteenth century that La Fontaine's *Fables* would not be illustrated), and during which certain authors like Father Ménestrier explored the relations between the figurative and the discursive.* Today, on the level of mass communication, it appears that the linguistic message is present in all images: as a caption, as a headline, as a press article, as a film dialogue, as a comic-strip balloon; whereby we see that it is not quite accurate to speak of a civilization of the image: we are still and more than ever a civilization of writing,† because writing and speech are still the "full" terms of informational structure. As a matter of fact, only the *presence* of the linguistic message counts, for neither its position nor its length seems pertinent (a long text

* *L'Art des Emblèmes*, 1684.

† The wordless image is no doubt to be met with, but by way of paradox—in certain cartoons, for example; the absence of speech always covers an enigmatic intention.

may comprise only a total signified, thanks to the connotation, and it is this signified that is put in relation with the image). What are the functions of the linguistic message in relation to the (double) iconic message? There seem to be two: *anchoring* and *relaying*.

As we shall see more clearly in a moment, every image is polysemous; it implies, subjacent to its signifiers, a "floating chain" of signifieds of which the reader can select some and ignore the rest. Polysemy questions meaning, and this question always appears as a dysfunction, even if this dysfunction is recuperated by society as a tragic act (a silent God affords no way of choosing between signs) or a poetic one (the panic "shudder of meaning" among the ancient Greeks); even in cinema, traumatic images are linked to an uncertainty (to an anxiety) as to the meaning of objects or attitudes. Hence, in every society a certain number of techniques are developed in order to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds, to combat the terror of uncertain signs: the linguistic message is one of these techniques. On the level of the literal message, language answers, more or less directly, more or less partially, the question *What is it?* Language helps identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself: it is a matter of a denoted description of the image (a description that is often partial), or, in Hjelmslev's terminology, of an *operation* (as opposed to a connotation). The denominative function corresponds nicely to an *anchoring* of every possible (denoted) meaning of the object, by recourse to a nomenclature; in front of a dish of something (in an Amieux ad), I may hesitate to identify the shapes and volumes; the caption ("*Rice and tuna with mushrooms*") helps me choose *the right level of perception*; it allows me to accommodate not only my gaze but also my intellection. On the level of the "symbolic" message, the linguistic message no longer guides the identification but the interpretation; it constitutes a kind of vise which keeps the connoted meanings

from proliferating either toward too individual regions (i.e., it limits the image's projective power) or toward dysphoric values; an ad (d'Arcy preserves) shows a few fruits scattered around a ladder; the caption ("*As if you had picked them in your own garden*") distances a possible signified (parsimony, poor harvest) because it would be an unpleasant one and orients the reading toward a flattering signified (natural and personal character of the fruits of the private garden); the caption here acts as a counter-taboo, it combats the disagreeable myth of the artificial, ordinarily attached to canned goods. Of course, outside of advertising, anchoring can be ideological; this is even, no doubt, its main function; the text *directs* the reader among the various signifieds of the image, causes him to avoid some and to accept others; through an often subtle dispatching, it teleguides him toward a meaning selected in advance. In all these cases of anchoring, language obviously has a function of elucidation, but such elucidation is selective; it is a matter of a metalanguage applied not to the whole of the iconic message but only to certain of its signs; the text is really the creator's (and hence the society's) right-of-inspection of the image: anchoring is a means of control, it bears a responsibility, confronting the projective power of the figures, as to the use of the message; in relation to the freedom of the image's signifieds, the text has a *repressive* value,* and we can see that a society's ideology and morality are principally invested on this level.

*This is evident in the paradoxical case where the image is constructed according to the text, and where consequently the control would seem to be unnecessary. An ad which wants to suggest that in a certain coffee the aroma is "locked in" the powdered form of the product, and therefore will be wholly there when used, shows above the caption a can of coffee with a chain and a lock around it; here the linguistic metaphor ("locked in") is taken literally (a familiar poetic procedure); but as a matter of fact it is the image which is read first, and the text which has generated it ends up being the simple choice of one signified among others: the repression is noted in the circuit as a banalization of the message.

Anchoring is the most frequent function of the linguistic message; we frequently encounter it in press photographs and in advertising. The relaying function is rarer (at least with regard to the fixed image); we find it mainly in cartoons and comic strips. Here language (generally a fragment of dialogue) and image are in a complementary relation; the words are then fragments of a more general syntagm, as are the images, and the message's unity occurs on a higher level: that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis (which confirms that the diegesis must be treated as an autonomous system).* Rare in the fixed image, this word-as-relay becomes very important in cinema, where dialogue does not have a simple elucidative function but actually advances the action by inserting, in the sequence of messages, certain meanings which are not to be found in the image. The two functions of the linguistic message can of course coexist in the same iconic whole, but the dominance of one or the other is certainly not a matter of indifference to the work's general economy; when language has a relaying diegetic value, the information is more "costly," since it requires apprenticeship to a digital code (language); when it has a substitutive value (of anchoring, of control), it is the image which governs the informational charge, and since the image is analogical, the information is in some sense "lazier": in certain comic strips meant to be read rapidly, the diegesis is chiefly entrusted to the words, the image collecting the attributive information of a paradigmatic order (the stereotyped status of the characters): the "costly" message and the discursive message are made to coincide, so as to spare the hurried reader the bother of verbal "descriptions," here entrusted to the image, i.e., to a less "laborious" system.

* Cf. Claude Bremond, "Le Message narratif," *Communications* 4, 1964.

The Denoted Image

We have seen that, in the image proper, the distinction between the literal message and the symbolic message is operational; we never—at least never in advertising—encounter a literal image in the pure state; even if an entirely "naïve" image were to be achieved, it would immediately join the sign of naïveté and be completed by a third, symbolic message. Thus, the characteristics of the literal message cannot be substantial, but only relational; one might say that it is first of all a privative message, constituted by what remains in the image when we (mentally) erase the signs of connotation (it would not be possible to take them away in actuality, for they can impregnate the entire image, as in the case of the "still-life composition"); this privative state naturally corresponds to a plenitude of possibilities: it is a matter of an absence of meaning charged with all meanings; it is next (and this is no contradiction of the foregoing) a sufficient message, for it has at least one meaning on the level of the identification of the represented scene; the literalness of the image corresponds in short to the first degree of intelligibility (below which the reader would perceive only lines, shapes, colors), but this intelligibility remains possible by virtue of its very "poverty," for each of us, as the product of a real society, always possesses a knowledge higher than mere anthropological knowledge and perceives more than the literal; at once private and sufficient, it is understandable that in an aesthetic perspective the denoted message can appear as a kind of Adamic state of the image; utopianly rid of its connotations, the image would become radically objective, i.e., ultimately innocent.

This utopian character of denotation is considerably rein-

forced by the paradox already mentioned, which makes the photograph (in its literal state), by reason of its absolutely analogical nature, seem to constitute a message without a code. Yet the structural analysis of the image must here be specified, for, of all images, only the photograph possesses the power to transmit (literal) information without forming it with the help of discontinuous signs and rules of transformation. Hence, we must set the photograph, a message without code, in opposition to the drawing, which, even denoted, is a coded message. The coded nature of the drawing appears on three levels. First of all, to reproduce an object or a scene by drawing necessitates a set of *regulated* transformations; there is no such thing as a *nature* of the pictorial copy, and the codes of transposition are historical (notably with regard to perspective). Second, the operation of the drawing (the coding) immediately necessitates a certain division between what signifies and what does not: the drawing does not reproduce *everything*, and often very little, though without ceasing to be a powerful message, whereas the photograph, if it can select its subject, its framing, and its angle, cannot intervene within the object (except by trick effects); in other words, the denotation of drawing is less pure than photographic denotation, for there is never a drawing without style. Third, like all codes, drawing requires an apprenticeship (Saussure attributed a great importance to this semiological phenomenon). Does the coding of the denoted message have certain consequences for the connoted message? It is certain that the coding of the literal prepares and facilitates connotation, since it already establishes a certain discontinuity in the image: the "making" of a drawing already constitutes a connotation; but at the same time, insofar as the drawing parades its coding, the relation of the two messages is profoundly modified; it is no longer the relation between a nature and a culture (as in the case of the photograph) but the relation between two cultures: the "morality" of the drawing is not that of the photograph.

In the photograph, in effect—at least on the level of the literal message—the relation between signifieds and signifiers is not one of "transformation" but of "registration," and the absence of a code obviously reinforces the myth of photographic "naturalness": the scene *is there*, registered mechanically, but not humanly (the mechanical is here the warrant of objectivity); the human interventions in the photograph (framing, range, light, focus, speed, etc.) all belong as a matter of fact to the level of connotation; everything happens as if there were at the (even if utopian) outset a raw (frontal and distinct) photograph, upon which man might arrange, thanks to certain techniques, the signs resulting from the cultural code. Only the opposition of the cultural code and the natural non-code can account, it would appear, for the specific character of the photograph and permit us to measure the anthropological revolution which it represents in human history, for the type of consciousness it implies is indeed unprecedented; the photograph institutes, in fact, not a consciousness of the thing's *being-there* (which any copy might provoke), but a consciousness of the thing's *having-been-there*. Hence, we are concerned with a new category of space-time: immediately spatial and anteriorly temporal; in the photograph an illogical conjunction occurs between the *here* and the *then*. Hence, it is on the level of this denoted message or message without a code that we can fully understand the photograph's *real unreality*; its unreality is that of the *here*, for the photograph is never experienced as an illusion, it is in no way a *presence*, and we must deflate the magical character of the photographic image; and its reality is that of *having-been-there*, for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of: *this is how it was*: we then possess, by some precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered. This kind of temporal equilibrium (*having-been-there*) probably diminishes the image's projective power (very few psychological tests resort to photography, many resort to drawings): the *this has been* triumphs over the *this is me*.

If these remarks have any accuracy, we must therefore link photography to a pure spectatorial consciousness and not to the more projective, more "magical" fictional consciousness on which cinema by and large depends; hence, we should be justified in seeing, between cinema and the photograph, no longer a simple difference of degree but a radical opposition: the cinema is not an animated photograph; in it the *having-been-there* vanishes, giving way to a *being-there* of the thing; this would explain how there can be a history of the cinema, without a real break with the previous arts of fiction, whereas photography somehow escapes history (despite the development of the techniques and ambitions of photographic art) and represents a "matte" anthropological phenomenon, at once absolutely new and never to be transcended; for the first time in its history, humanity knows *messages without a code*. Hence the photograph is not the last (improved) term of the great family of images, but corresponds to a crucial mutation of the economies of information.

In any case, the denoted image, insofar as it implies no code (this is the case of the advertising photograph), assumes in the general structure of the iconic message a particular role which we can begin to specify (we shall return to this question once we have discussed the third message): the denoted image naturalizes the symbolic message, it makes "innocent" the very dense (especially in advertising) semantic artifice of connotation; although the Panzani poster is full of "symbols," there nonetheless remains in the photograph a kind of natural *being-there* of objects, insofar as the literal message is sufficient: nature seems to produce the represented scene quite spontaneously; the simple validity of openly semantic systems gives way surreptitiously to a pseudo-truth; the absence of a code de-intellectualizes the message because it seems to institute in nature the signs of culture. This is doubtless an important historical paradox: the more technology develops the circulation of information (and notably of images), the more means it provides of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning.

Rhetoric of the Image

We have seen that the signs of the third message ("symbolic" message, cultural or connoted) were discontinuous; even when the signifier seems to extend to the entire image, it is nonetheless a sign separated from the rest; "composition" carries an aesthetic signified, somewhat the way intonation, though suprasegmental, is a signifier isolated from language; hence, we are here dealing with a normal system whose signs are drawn from a cultural code (even if the linkage of the sign's elements appears more or less analogical). What constitutes the originality of this system is that the number of readings of the same lexia (of the same image) varies according to individuals: in the Panzani ad here analyzed, we have located four signs of connotation; there are probably others (the string bag, for example, can signify the miraculous draught of fishes, plenty, etc.). Yet the variation in readings is not anarchic, it depends on the different kinds of knowledge invested in the image (practical, national, cultural, aesthetic knowledge), and these kinds of knowledge can be classified, can join a typology; everything occurs as if the image presented itself to several people who might very well coexist in a single individual: *the same lexia mobilizes different lexicons*. What is a lexicon? It is a portion of the symbolic level (of language) which corresponds to a body of practices and techniques;* this is certainly the case

* Cf. A. J. Greimas, "Les problèmes de la description mécanographique," in *Cahiers de lexicologie* (Besançon) 1, 1959.

for the different readings of the image: each sign corresponds to a body of "attitudes": tourism, housekeeping, knowledge of art, some of which can obviously be missing on the level of any one individual. There is a plurality and a coexistence of lexicons in the same person; the number and identity of these lexicons form in a sense each person's *idiolect*. The image, in its connotation, would thus be constituted by an architecture of signs drawn from a variable depth of lexicons (of idiolects), each lexicon, however "deep," remaining coded, if, as we now think, the *psyche* itself is articulated like a language; better still: the further we "descend" into an individual's psychic depth, the more the signs are rarefied and the more classifiable they become: what is more systematic than the readings of Rorschach tests? The variability of readings therefore need not threaten the image's "language," if we grant that this language is composed of idiolects, lexicons, or sub-codes: the image is crisscrossed by the system of meaning, exactly as man is articulated to his very depths in distinct languages. The language of the image is not merely the entirety of utterances emitted (for example, on the level of the combiner of signs or the creator of the message), it is also the entirety of the utterances received;* such language must include the "surprises" of meaning.

Another difficulty attached to the analysis of connotation is that no particular analytic language corresponds to the particularity of its signifieds; how to name the signifieds of connotation? For one of them, we have ventured the term *Italianicity*, but the others can only be designated by forms from the usual language (*culinary preparation, still life, plenty*); the metalanguage which must take them over at the moment of analysis is not particularized. Here is an obstacle, for such signifieds

* In the Saussurian perspective, speech is above all what is emitted, drawn from language (and constituting it in return). Today we must enlarge the notion of language, especially from the semantic point of view: language is "the totalizing abstraction" of the messages emitted *and received*.

have a particular semantic nature; as a *seme* of connotation, "plenty" does not exactly coincide with "plenty" in its denoted meaning; the signifier of connotation (here the profusion and condensation of the products) is a kind of essential cipher of all possible plenties, or better still of the purest idea of plenty; the denoted word never refers to an essence, for it is always caught up in a contingent speech, a continuous syntagm (that of verbal discourse), oriented toward a certain practical transitivity of language; the seme "plenty," on the contrary, is a concept in the pure state, cut off from any syntagm, deprived of any context; it corresponds to a kind of theatrical state of meaning, or better still (since we are dealing with a sign without syntagm) to an *exposed* meaning. In order to render these semes of connotation, then, we must resort to a particular metalanguage; we have ventured *Italianicity*; it is barbarisms of this sort which might best account for signifieds of connotation, for the suffix-*icity* served to produce an abstract substantive from the adjective: *Italianicity* is not Italy; it is the condensed essence of all that can be Italian, from spaghetti to painting. By agreeing to govern artificially—and if need be quite barbarously—the naming of the semes of connotation, we might facilitate the analysis of their form;* these semes are obviously organized in associative fields, in paradigmatic articulations, perhaps even in oppositions, according to certain paths, or as Greimas says, according to certain semic axes:† Italianicity belongs to a certain axis of nationalities, alongside Francicity, Germanicity, or Hispanicity. The reconstitution of these axes—which, moreover, can subsequently be in opposition to each other—will obviously be possible only when we have proceeded to a massive inventory of connotation systems, not only that of the image but also those of other substances,

* *Form*, in the specific meaning Hjelmslev gives it, as the functional organization of the signifieds among themselves.

† Greimas, *Cours de sémantique*, 1964, notes mimeographed by the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud.

for if connotation has typical signifiers according to the substances used (image, language, objects, behavior), it puts all its signifieds in common: they are the same signifieds that we will recognize in the printed word, the image, or the actor's gesture (which is why semiology is conceivable only in a context that would be, so to speak, total); this common realm of the signifieds of connotation is that of *ideology*, which cannot help being one and the same for a given history and society, whatever the signifiers of connotation to which it resorts.

To the general ideology, then, correspond signifiers of connotation which are specified according to the substance chosen. We shall call these signifiers *connotators* and the totality of the connotators a *rhetoric*: thus, rhetoric appears as the signifying aspect of ideology. Rhetorics inevitably vary by their substance (here articulated sound, there image, gesture, etc.), but not necessarily by their form; it is even probable that there exists a single rhetorical *form*, common, for example, to the dream, to literature, and to the image.* Thus, the rhetoric of the image (i.e., the classification of its connotators) is specific insofar as it is subject to the physical constraints of vision (different from phonatory constraints, for instance), but general insofar as the "figures" are never anything but formal relations of elements. This rhetoric could only be constituted on the basis of a very broad inventory, but we can foresee even now that in it will be found several of the figures formerly identified by the Ancients and the Classics;† thus, the tomato signifies Italianicity by metonymy; elsewhere, the sequence of three

* Cf. E. Benveniste, "Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne," in *La Psychanalyse* 1, 1956; reprinted in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

† Classical rhetoric needs to be rethought in structural terms (the object of a work in progress), and it will then perhaps be possible to establish a general rhetoric or linguistics of the signifiers of connotation, valid for articulated sound, image, gesture, etc. [See, subsequently, *L'Ancienne rhétorique* (*Aide-mémoire*), in *Communications* 16, 1970.—Ed.]

scenes (coffee in the bean, powdered coffee, coffee sipped) reveals by simple juxtaposition a certain logical relation in the same manner as an asyndeton. It is probable, as a matter of fact, that among the metabolas (or figures of substitution of one signifier for another),* it is metonymy which furnishes the image with the greatest number of its connotators; and that among the parataxes (or syntagmatic figures), it is the asyndeton which predominates.

Yet the most important thing—at least for the moment—is not to inventory the connotators but to understand that they constitute within the total image *discontinuous features* or, better still, *erratic features*. The connotators do not fill the entire lexia; reading them does not exhaust it. In other words (and this would be a proposition valid for semiology in general), all the elements of the lexia cannot be transformed into connotators; there still remains in discourse a certain denotation without which, in fact, discourse would not be possible. This brings us back to the second message, or denoted image. In the Panzani ad, the Mediterranean vegetables, the color, the composition, the very profusion appear as erratic blocks, at once isolated and set in a general scene which has its own space and, as we have seen, its "meaning": they are "caught" in a syntagm *which is not theirs and which is that of denotation.* This is an important proposition, for it allows us to establish (retroactively) the structural distinction between the second or literal message and the third or symbolic message, and to specify the naturalizing function of denotation in relation to connotation; we now know that *it is specifically the syntagm of the denoted message which "naturalizes" the system of the connoted message.* Or again: connotation is only system, it

* We prefer to avoid here Jakobson's opposition between metaphor and metonymy, for if metonymy is a figure of contiguity by its origin, it nonetheless functions ultimately as a substitute for the signifier, i.e., as a metaphor.

cannot be defined except in paradigmatic terms; iconic denotation is only syntagm, it associates elements without any system; the discontinuous connotators are linked, actualized, "spoken" through the syntagm of denotation: the discontinuous world of symbols plunges into the narrative of the denoted scene as into a lustral bath of innocence.

Whereby we see that in the total system of the image the structural functions are polarized; on one hand there is a sort of paradigmatic condensation on the level of the connotators (i.e., by and large, of the "symbols"), which are strong, erratic, and one might say "reified" signs; and on the other there is a syntagmatic "flow" on the level of denotation; it will not be forgotten that the syntagm is always very close to speech, and it is indeed the iconic "discourse" which naturalizes its symbols. Without seeking to infer too quickly from the image to semiology in general, we can nonetheless venture that the world of total meaning is torn internally (structurally) between the system as culture and the syntagm as nature: the works of mass communication all conjugate, through diverse and diversely successful dialectics, the fascination of a nature, that of narrative, of diegesis, of syntagm, and the intelligibility of a culture, sequestered in a few discontinuous symbols which men "decline" in the shelter of their living speech.

1964

The Third Meaning

RESEARCH NOTES ON SEVERAL EISENSTEIN STILLS

I

Here is an image from *Ivan the Terrible* (I): two courtiers, confederates, or supernumeraries (it doesn't matter whether or not I recall the story's details exactly) are showering the young tsar's head with gold. I believe I can distinguish three levels of meaning in this scene:

1. An informational level: everything I can learn from the setting, the costumes, the characters, their relationships, their insertion in an anecdote familiar to me (however vaguely). This level is that of *communication*. If I had to find a mode of analysis for it, I should resort to a primary semiotics (that of