

5 SIGNIFICATION

Saussure's theories on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of the sign take us only so far towards understanding how signs work. Saussure was interested primarily in the linguistic system, secondarily in how that system related to the reality to which it referred, and hardly at all in how it related to the reader and his or her socio-cultural position. He was interested in the complex ways in which a sentence can be constructed and in the way its form determines its meaning; he was much less interested in the fact that the same sentence may convey different meanings to different people in different situations.

In other words, he did not really envisage meaning as being a process of negotiation between writer/reader and text. He emphasized the text, not the way in which the signs in the text interact with the cultural and personal experience of the user (and it is *not* important here to distinguish between writer and reader), nor the way that the conventions in the text interact with the conventions experienced and expected by the user. It was Saussure's follower, Roland Barthes, who first set up a systematic model by which this negotiating, interactive idea of meaning could be analysed. At the heart of Barthes's theory is the idea of two *orders of signification*.

Denotation

The first order of signification is the one on which Saussure worked. It describes the relationship between the signifier and signified within the sign, and of the sign with its referent in external reality. Barthes refers to this order as denotation. This refers to the common-sense, obvious

meaning of the sign. A photograph of a street scene denotes that particular street; the word 'street' denotes an urban road lined with buildings. But I can photograph this same street in significantly different ways. I can use a colour film, pick a day of pale sunshine, use a soft focus and make the street appear a happy, warm, humane community for the children playing in it. Or I can use black-and-white film, hard focus, strong contrasts and make this same street appear cold, inhuman, inhospitable, and a destructive environment for the children playing in it. Those two photographs could have been taken at an identical moment with the cameras held with their lenses only centimetres apart. Their denotative meanings would be the same. The difference would be in their connotation.

Connotation

Basic concept

Connotation is the term Barthes uses to describe one of the three ways in which signs work in the second order of signification. It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture. This is when meanings move towards the subjective, or at least the intersubjective: it is when the interpretant is influenced as much by the interpreter as by the object or the sign.

For Barthes, the critical factor in connotation is the signifier in the first order. The first-order signifier is the sign of the connotation. Our imaginary photographs are both of the same street; the difference between them lies in the form, the appearance of the photograph, that is, in the signifier. Barthes (1977) argues that in photography at least, the difference between connotation and denotation is clear. Denotation is the mechanical reproduction on film of the object at which the camera is pointed. Connotation is the human part of the process: it is the selection of what to include in the frame, of focus, aperture, camera angle, quality of film, and so on. Denotation is *what* is photographed; connotation is *how* it is photographed.

Further implications

We can extend this idea further. Our tone of voice, *how* we speak, connotes the feelings or values about *what* we say; in music, the Italian direction *allegro ma non troppo* is the composer's instruction about *how* to play the

notes, about what connotative or emotional values to convey. The choice of words is often a choice of connotation—‘dispute’ or ‘strike’, ‘oiling the wheels of commerce’ or ‘bribery’. These examples show emotional or subjective connotations, although we have to assume that others in our culture share at least a large part of them, that they are intersubjective.

Other connotations may be much more social, less personal. A frequently used example is the signs of a high-ranking officer’s uniform. In a hierarchical society, one that emphasizes distinctions between classes or ranks and that consequently puts a high value on a high social position, these signs of rank are designed to connote high values. They are usually of gold, models of crowns or of laurel wreaths, and the more there are, the higher the rank they denote. In a society that does not value class distinction or hierarchy, officers’ uniforms are rarely distinguished from their men’s by signs that connote the high value of rank. The uniforms of Fidel Castro or Chairman Mao differed hardly at all from those of the men they led. Yet they were denoted as of high rank just as clearly as was a nineteenth-century Prussian officer who could hardly move under his signs of rank.

Connotation is largely arbitrary, specific to one culture, though it frequently has an iconic dimension. The way that a photograph of a child in soft focus connotes nostalgia is partly iconic. The soft focus is a motivated sign of the imprecise nature of memory; it is also a motivated sign for sentiment: soft focus=soft-hearted! But we need the conventional element to decode it in this way, to know that soft focus is a significant choice made by the photographer and not a limitation of the equipment. If all photographs were in soft focus, then it could not connote nostalgia.

Because connotation works on the subjective level, we are frequently not made consciously aware of it. The hard-focus, black-and-white, inhuman view of the street can all too often be read as the denotative meaning: that streets *are* like this. It is often easy to read connotative values as denotative facts. One of the main aims of semiotic analysis is to provide us with the analytical method and the frame of mind to guard against this sort of misreading.

Myth

Basic concept

The second of Barthes’s three ways in which signs work in the second order is through *myth*. I wish Barthes (1973) had not used this term,

because normally it refers to ideas that are false: 'it is a myth that...' or 'the myth that Britain is still a major world power'. This normal use is the unbeliever's use of the word. Barthes uses it as a believer, in its original sense. A myth is a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature. Primitive myths are about life and death, men and gods, good and evil. Our sophisticated myths are about masculinity and femininity, about the family, about success, about the British policeman, about science. A myth, for Barthes, is a culture's way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing or understanding it. Barthes thinks of a myth as a chain of related concepts. Thus the traditional myth of the British policeman includes concepts of friendliness, reassurance, solidity, non-aggressiveness, lack of firearms. The photographic cliché of a corpulent, jolly bobby patting a little girl on the head relies for its second-order meaning on the fact that this *myth* of the police is common in the culture: it exists before the photograph, and the photograph activates the chains of concepts that constitute the myth. If connotation is the second-order meaning of the signifier, myth is the second-order meaning of the signified.

Further implications

Let us return to our example of the street scene with which we illustrated connotation. If I asked a dozen photographers to photograph this scene of children playing in the street I would predict that most would produce the black-and-white, hard-focus, inhuman type of photograph. This is

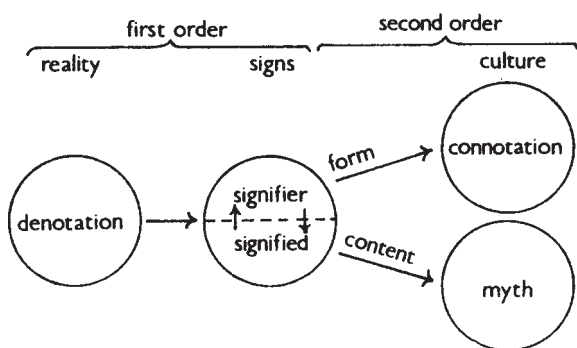


Figure 19 Barthes's two orders of signification. In the second order, the sign system of the first is inserted into the value system of the culture

because these connotations fit better with the commonest myths by which we conceptualize children playing in the street. Our dominant myth of childhood is that it is, or ideally should be, a period of naturalness and freedom. Growing up means adapting to the demands of society, which means losing naturalness and freedom. Towns are normally seen as unnatural, artificial creations that provide a restricted environment for children. There is a widespread belief in our culture that the countryside is the proper place for childhood. We can contrast these myths with those of other periods. For instance, the Elizabethans saw a child as an incomplete adult; the Augustans saw the countryside as uncivilized—the human values were to be found in the civilized cities and the country had to be seen as pastoral, that is made suitable for urban understanding.

Barthes argues that the main way myths work is to naturalize history. This points up the fact that myths are actually the product of a social class that has achieved dominance by a particular history: the meanings that its myths circulate must carry this history with them, but their operation as myths makes them try to deny it and present their meanings as natural, not historical or social. Myths mystify or obscure their origins and thus their political or social dimension. The mythologist reveals the hidden history and thus the socio-political works of myths by ‘demystifying’ them.

There is a myth that women are ‘naturally’ more nurturing and caring than men, and thus their natural place is in the home raising the children and looking after the husband, while he, equally ‘naturally’, of course, plays the role of breadwinner. These roles then structure the most ‘natural’ social unit of all—the family. By presenting these meanings as part of nature, myth disguises their historical origin, which universalizes them and makes them appear not only unchangeable but also fair: it makes them appear to serve the interests of men and women equally and thus hides their political effect.

The history that these myths turn into nature tells a very different story. These meanings of masculinity and femininity were developed to serve the interests of bourgeois men in capitalism—they grew to make a particular sense of the social conditions produced by nineteenth-century industrialization. This required working people to leave their traditional rural communities and move to the new cities, where they lived in houses and streets designed to accommodate as many people as cheaply as possible. The extended family and community relationships of the traditional village were left behind and the nuclear family of husband, wife, and children was created. The conditions of factory work meant that children could not accompany their parents, as they could in

agricultural work, and this, coupled with the absence of the extended family, meant that the women had to stay in the home while the men did the 'real' work and earned the money. The chains of concepts that constituted the related myths of masculinity, femininity, and the family proliferated, but not randomly or naturally: they always served the interests of the economic system and the class which it advantaged—middle-class men. This system required the nuclear family to be the 'natural' basic social unit; it required femininity to acquire the 'natural' meanings of nurturing, domesticity, sensitivity, of the need for protection, whereas masculinity was given meanings of strength, assertiveness, independence, and the ability to operate in public. So it seems natural, but is, in fact, historical, that men occupy an enormously disproportionate number of public positions in our society.

Of course, myths can most effectively naturalize meanings by relating them to some aspect of nature itself. So the fact that women give birth is used to naturalize the meanings of nurturing and domesticity (or 'nest-building'!). Similarly, men's larger and more muscular bodies are used to naturalize men's political and social power (which has nothing to do with physical strength).

The changing role of women in society and the changing structure of the family mean that these myths are finding their position of dominance (and therefore their status as natural) under challenge, so advertisers and the producers of the mass media are having to find ways of triggering off new gender myths which have had to develop in order to accommodate the career woman, the single parent, and the 'new' sensitive man. These myths, of course, do not reject the old entirely, but drop some concepts from their chains, and add others: change in myths is evolutionary, not revolutionary.

No myths are universal in a culture. There are dominant myths, but there are also counter-myths. There are subcultures within our society which have myths of the British bobby contradictory to the dominant one outlined above. So, too, there is a myth of the urban street as a self-supporting community, a sort of extended family that provides a very good social environment for children. This would be the sort of myth to fit with the connotations of our alternative photograph of the street.

Science is a good example where the counter-myths are strongly challenging the dominant. We are a science-based culture. The dominant myth of science presents it as humankind's ability to adapt nature to our needs, to improve our security and standard of living, to celebrate our achievement. Science is seen as objective, true, and good. But the counter-myth is also very strong. This sees science as evil, as evidence of our

distance from and lack of understanding of nature. As scientists, we are at our most selfish and short-sighted, in pursuit of our own material ends. It is interesting to note that in popular culture both myths of science are well represented. The factual side of television, news, current affairs, documentaries, tends to show more of the dominant than of the counter-myth; fictional television and cinema, on the other hand, reverse the proportions. There are more evil scientists than good ones, and science causes more problems than it solves.

For example, Gerbner (1973b) shows that scientists portrayed on American fictional television were rated as the most 'deceitful', 'cruel', and 'unfair' of all professional types. He also cites a study in 1963 by Gusfield and Schwartz which again describes the fictional image of the scientist as 'cool', 'tough', 'anti-social', 'irreligious', and 'foreign'. Gerbner also found that scientific research led to murder in nearly half of the twenty-five films which portrayed it. One example was a psychologist who hypnotized gorillas to murder girls who rejected him. A typical plot is an obsessive scientist whose invention gets out of control and kills him, to the obvious relief of the rest of society and the audience.

The other aspect of myths that Barthes stresses is their dynamism. As I said earlier, they change and some can change rapidly in order to meet the changing needs and values of the culture of which they are a part. For instance, the myth of the British bobby to which I referred earlier is now growing old-fashioned and out of date. Its last major fictional presentation on television was in *Dixon of Dock Green*.

Connotation and myth are the main ways in which signs work in the second order of signification, that is the order in which the interaction between the sign and the user/culture is most active.

Symbols

But Barthes (1977) does refer to a third way of signifying in this order. This he terms the *symbolic*. An object becomes a symbol when it acquires through convention and use a meaning that enables it to stand for something else. A Rolls-Royce is a symbol of wealth, and a scene in a play in which a man is forced to sell his Rolls can be symbolic of the failure of his business and the loss of his fortune. Barthes uses the example of the young Tsar in *Ivan the Terrible* being baptized in gold coins as a symbolic scene in which gold is a symbol of wealth, power, and status.

Barthes's ideas of the symbolic are less systematically developed than those of connotation and myth, and are therefore less satisfactory. We might prefer Peirce's terms. The Rolls-Royce is an index of wealth, but

a symbol (Peirce's use, not Barthes's) of the owner's social status. Gold is an index of wealth but a symbol of power. Or we might find it useful to leave the Saussurean tradition of linguistics altogether and turn to two other concepts which are widely used to describe aspects of semiosis. These are metaphor and metonymy. Jakobson (Jakobson and Halle, 1956) believes that these two concepts identify the fundamental ways that messages perform their referential function.

Metaphor

Basic concepts

If we say that a ship *ploughed* through the waves, we are using a metaphor. We are using the action of a ploughshare to stand for that of a ship's bow. What we are doing is expressing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar (the metaphor assumes that the ploughshare's action is familiar, that of the ship's bow is not). The jargon terms are 'vehicle' for the familiar, 'tenor' for the unfamiliar.

One further characteristic we must note is that a metaphor exploits simultaneous similarity and difference. Thus we can say it works paradigmatically, for vehicle and tenor must have enough similarity to place them in the same paradigm, but enough difference for the comparison to have this necessary element of contrast. They are units with distinctive features in a paradigm. Thus the metaphor 'ploughed' is in the paradigm of verbs meaning 'to cleave'. So the metaphor works like this:

Literal:	The ship	<i>moved</i> through the water.
Metaphoric:		<i>ploughed</i>
		<i>sliced</i>
		<i>cut</i>
		<i>chopped</i>
		<i>cleaved</i>
		<i>etc.</i>

paradigmatic choice

What is happening, then, is a process of metaphoric transposition:

Tenor:	The ship	<i>moved</i> through the water.
	↑	↑
Vehicle:	The ploughshare	<i>ploughed</i> through the earth.

- Metaphoric transposition of *ploughed* to *moved*.
 -----→ Associated transposition when other characteristics of the vehicle are transposed by association. Characteristics of the ploughshare, such as its powerful, relentless heaviness are transposed to the ship; similarly, characteristics of the earth are transposed to the water.

Further implications

This is the traditional literary definition of a metaphor. When we transfer our attention from arbitrary signs to iconic signs we encounter a few problems.

Metaphors are rarer in visual languages and we will better understand why after our discussion of metonymy (below). It is sufficient to say here that the visual language that most frequently works metaphorically is that used by advertisers. Often an event or object is set up as a metaphor for a product. Mustangs in the Wild West are a metaphor for Marlboro cigarettes; waterfalls and natural greenery are a metaphor for menthol cigarettes. These are clear, manifest metaphors in which both vehicle (mustangs and waterfalls) and tenor (cigarettes) are visually present. Even here, the *difference* is played down though obvious. But there is currently a style of surrealist advertisements which approximate much more closely to verbal metaphors, in that the difference is exploited as much as the similarity (plate 8, p. 83). This is a visual version of the metaphor 'It is raining cigarettes'.

Everyday metaphors

But metaphors are not just literary devices: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have shown that they have a much more fundamental, everyday function. They are part of the way in which we make sense of our everyday experience. Let us take two examples.

When we talk about 'high' morals, 'falling' asleep, or the 'lower' classes we are talking metaphorically and using the same metaphor each time: in this the spatial difference between UP and DOWN is made to act as the vehicle for a variety of social experiences. It is a concrete, physical difference that is used to make sense of a number of more abstract, social experiences. This difference, though natural, is not neutral: we humans think that one of our key distinctions from other animals is that we have 'risen up' on our hind legs as part of the 'upward' evolutionary process. So UP always has positive values attached to it.

The differences between social classes, for example, could be thought of horizontally, from left to right, but is actually thought of vertically, from higher to lower. So, too, artistic taste is called 'high' or 'low' brow, and the 'higher' brows go with the 'higher' classes (and vice versa), as do 'higher' earnings and a 'higher' social profile. UP is also associated with consciousness and health (we wake 'up', but 'fall' asleep or ill) and with the dominant system of morality—'high' morals. When we add to this the realization that the gods are 'up' in heaven, the devils 'down', and that life itself is 'up' (Christ 'rose' from the dead) and death 'down', we can begin to understand how fundamentally such an everyday metaphor influences the way we think.

We use the single metaphor of UP:DOWN to make sense of a wide range of diverse social abstractions such as god, life, health, morals, social position, earnings, and artistic taste, and in linking them together it works ideologically (see chapter 9). There is nothing *natural* that links high social position, high earnings, and high morals, but making sense of them through the same metaphor is one way in which the dominant values are spread throughout society.

The second example is that of using money as a metaphor for time. When we talk of 'saving' or 'wasting' time, or of 'investing' time in a project, we are thinking of it as money. Of course, time is very different from money—it cannot be saved, one person cannot collect more of it than another, and it cannot be invested to produce more of itself. Using money as a metaphor for time is typical of the social values that we call 'the Protestant work ethic': the metaphor implies that any time that is not related to working productively (which includes 'earned' leisure) is 'misspent'—particularly time 'spent' doing nothing or in indulging our pleasures. The metaphor is a way of disciplining our thinking in a way that is appropriate to, and part of, the ideology of a work-centred, capitalist society.

Both these metaphors are examples of what Lévi-Strauss calls 'the logic of the concrete' (see chapter 7). He claims that all societies make sense of abstractions that are important to them by metaphorically embodying them in concrete experience. These concrete metaphors, such as *up* or *money*, then become 'tools to think with': they form and shape our understanding of those abstractions and thus enable us to handle them conceptually in our everyday lives.

Such everyday metaphors differ from literary metaphors in a number of ways. They do not draw attention to themselves as metaphors, and thus do not invite us to decode them consciously. They are thus more insidious, and the sense that they make becomes more easily part of our society's 'common sense'; that is, it becomes part of the uninspected, taken-

for-granted assumptions that are widespread throughout society. Such common sense appears to be natural, but it never is: it is always arbitrary, always socially produced. It is, then, finally, ideological: the power of the dominant classes is maintained partly to the extent that their ideas can be made into the *common* sense of all classes. It is ideological common sense, for example, that leads blue-collar workers to see their social position as 'lower' than that of managers; it is ideological common sense that makes us think of having fun as wasting time. Everyday metaphors are more ideological and covert than literary ones, and so we need to be all the more alert to them and the 'common' sense they are making.

Metonymy

Basic concepts

If metaphor works by transposing qualities from one plane of reality to another, metonymy works by associating meanings within the same plane. Its basic definition is making a part stand for the whole. If we talk of the 'crowned heads of Europe' we are using a metonym. For Jakobson, metonyms are the predominant mode of the novel, while metaphors are that of poetry. The representation of reality inevitably involves a metonym: we choose a part of 'reality' to stand for the whole. The urban settings of television crime serials are metonyms—a photographed street is not meant to stand for the street itself, but as a metonym of a particular type of city life—inner-city squalor, suburban respectability, or city-centre sophistication.

The selection of the metonym is clearly crucial, for from it we construct the unknown remainder of reality. On a recent television programme, *The Editors*, two shots of picket lines were shown. One was of an orderly group of men standing outside a works while two of them spoke to a lorry driver; another was of a group of workers violently struggling with the police. The point is that both shots were of the same picket line on the same day. The second, of course, was the one shown on the news that night. The selection of metonym determines the rest of the picture of the event that we construct, and trade unions frequently protest that the metonyms given in the news lead the viewer to construct a very one-sided and incomplete picture of their activities.

James Monaco (1977) shows how metonyms are used in film. For instance, a shot of a weeping woman's head beside a pile of banknotes on a pillow is a metonym of prostitution: he sees a gesture or pose as a metonym of the emotion it expresses.

Further implications

Metonyms are powerful conveyors of reality because they work indexically. They are part of that for which they stand. Where they differ from the 'natural' indexes, like smoke for fire, is that a highly arbitrary selection is involved. The arbitrariness of this selection is often disguised or at least ignored, and the metonym is made to appear a natural index and thus is given the status of the 'real', the 'not to be questioned'. But all news films are metonyms and all involve this arbitrary selection. Only one of the two shots of the picket line was transmitted on the news and the choice of which was to be transmitted was made on two sets of criteria. The first are those of news values. Galtung and Ruge (1973) have shown that the dominant news values in this country are such that an event is more likely to be reported if:

- (a) it concerns élite personalities;
- (b) it is negative;
- (c) it is recent;
- (d) it is surprising.

The second are those of cultural values, or *myths*. Our dominant myth of the trade unions is that they are disruptive, aggressive, hostile to the wider good of the nation, and are generally negative organizations. Clearly the second shot 'fitted' the dominant myth, and the news values. It had to be the one selected.

Metonyms, myths, and indexes

Fiske and Hartley (1978) have shown in detail how myths operate in news broadcasts. Myths work metonymically in that one sign (for example of the jolly British bobby) stimulates us to construct the rest of the chain of concepts that constitute a myth, just as a metonym stimulates us to construct the whole of which it is a part. Both are powerful modes of communication because they are unobtrusive or disguised indexes. They exploit the 'truth factor' of a natural index and build on it by disguising its indexical nature. We are aware that smoke is *not* fire, or that black clouds are *not* a thunderstorm; but we are not aware in the same way that a shot of a picket line is not *the* picket line, or a shot of a bobby is not *the* police force. The disguising extends also to the arbitrariness of the selection of the sign. Other signs of a policeman or a picket line would activate other myths; other metonyms would give other pictures of reality. The main aim of semiotic analysis is to strip off this disguise.

Metonyms, myths, and indexes all work in similar ways in that the signs and their referents are all on the same plane: they work by contiguity. There is no transposition involved as with metaphors nor any explicit arbitrariness as with symbols. Hawkes (1977) suggests that metonyms work syntagmatically. We can add myths and indexes to this in so far as all three require the reader to construct the rest of the syntagm from the part given by the sign.

Metaphors and paradigms

Jakobson argues that metaphor is the normal mode for poetry, whereas metonymy is the normal mode for the realistic novel. The previous section has discussed why 'realism' is necessarily a metonymic mode of communication and has thus provided reasons for the comparative rarity of metaphors in representational art or photography, both of which are realistic. Metaphor is not essentially realistic, but imaginative; it is not bound by the principle of *contiguity* on the same plane of meaning; instead it demands, by the principle of *association*, that we seek similarities between manifestly different planes. It requires imagination to associate a ploughshare with a ship's bow.

More artistic, obscure metaphors require more imaginative effort from the reader. 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons' requires considerable imagination from the reader to associate characteristics of coffee spoons with means of measuring time: coffee spoons (metonyms for 'drinking coffee' as a social, superficial 'tinkling' act) take on associations of regularity and repetition, together with a sense of being the most significant event in one's life. Associating cigarettes with rain involves the same work of imagination.

This principle of association involves transposing values of properties from one plane of reality or meaning to another. This transposition takes place between units in a paradigm (for example, the ship ploughs, cuts, slices, etc., or I have measured out my life with birthdays, winters, times I've lost my job, coffee spoons, etc.) and metaphor therefore works paradigmatically. It is from this that metaphor derives its imaginative, poetic effect, because normal paradigms can, by imagination, be extended to include the new, the surprising, the 'creative'. Thus the normal paradigm of 'ways of measuring time/life' can be extended to include 'coffee spoons'. Or we can imaginatively create a special paradigm that includes 'cigarettes' and 'raindrops': one of long, thin, round objects normally seen in quantity. Other possible units in the paradigm could be 'matchsticks' (too close to cigarettes to exploit the quality of difference

needed for this sort of original metaphor), ‘trimmed logs awaiting transport from the forest’, or ‘bundles of drainage pipes on a building site’. Both those last are possible imaginative paradigmatic choices for metaphors for cigarettes.

So metonyms work syntagmatically for realistic effect, and metaphors work paradigmatically for imaginative or surrealistic effect. It is in this sense that connotation can be said to work in a metaphoric mode. Reading soft focus as sentiment involves an imaginative transposition of properties from the plane of feelings to the plane of construction of the signifier. Soft focus is a metaphor for sentiment. A dissolve is a metaphor for the act of memory. Gold buttons in the form of crowns and gold braid are metaphors for the high social status of a general’s rank. But these connotations are constructed rather than true metaphors, in that although they involve the imaginative transposition of properties from one plane to another, they stress the similarity between the planes and minimize the difference.

Suggestions for further work

1. Changing the type-face of a word is a good example of changing the signifier. So type-faces should all have connotations. Collect examples of various type-faces and discuss their connotations.

Produce words or phrases in different type-faces, and try to control or predict their connotations (use Letraset if your graphic ability is limited), see chapter 8 and question 4 for the use of the semantic differential—you can use this to check the accuracy of your predictions.

2. There are a number of myths of the British police, as indicated by the variety of terms used to refer to them—bobbies, cops, the fuzz, pigs, filth. Try to identify for each term both its associated myth and the subculture for which it would be valid. Return to plates 1a and 1b and analyse them in terms of myth and connotation.

How does this exercise help you understand the way in which a myth is validated from two directions—its truth to reality, and the extent to which it meets the needs of its user culture? See Barthes (1973), pp. 114–21, and Hartley (1982), chapter 2.

3. Analyse the advertisement in plate 9. Discuss the metaphoric transpositions in it. What are the devices by which it makes the snake and the drink members of the same paradigm? (Note that in the original the drink in the glass and the snake are the same shade of yellow.) You should compare the Barthesian and the more



Plate 9 *'The Snake in the Glass'*

traditional meanings of the term myth—and how it relates to symbols. Why do you think the advertisers have tried to convey their meaning metaphorically rather than literally? What other second-order meanings are activated? See Williamson (1978), pp. 17–24.

4. The edition of *The Editors* mentioned in this chapter also showed shots of musicians picketing the BBC during a musicians' union strike. There was not a policeman in sight; the strikers were good-humoured, and played to a crowd that quickly collected; they were supported by scantily-clad dancing girls; their spokesman was

cultured, articulate, and middle-class. The whole piece had a jokey tune. Discuss this in terms of myth, metonym, and news values. How does it relate to more 'normal' portrayals of (a) picket lines, (b) musicians? How far does our understanding of the piece rely on the defeat of our expectations of normality?

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