

Project 3-3: Annotation of an artwork to illustrate my thoughts on the following passage by Barthes:

'The meaning is always there to *present* the form; the form is always there to *outdistance* the meaning'. (Barthes, 1999)

Image denotes a young man standing in front of four tanks in what would seem to be a public place. The tanks appear to be stationary.

There is no information in the image to provide context, however we are told from news reporting that the image is of Tiananmen Square in China in 1989 during the student protests (Shin, 2014)

After widespread publication outside China, the image went on to become the symbol of defiance against the brutal crackdown by the Chinese government on student protests against government corruption, lack of transparency and freedom of speech.



Fig. 1. *Tank Man* (1989)

The meaning - signifier in the first semiotic system (language) works on the level of denotation whilst the form - signifier in the second semiotic system (myth) - works on a connotational level.

Here the 'meaning' (denoted - tanks and man) presents the 'form' (the image connotations of rebellion, defiance). By saying that 'the form is always there to outdistance the meaning', Barthes (1999) is telling us that the 'form' in myth takes on an additional meaning beyond the original 'meaning' in language -as well as being a photograph of a man standing in front of a cavalcade of tanks the myth goes beyond this to stand for courage and defiance, a protest against a repressive government and the standing up for democracy.

List of illustrations

Figure 1. Widener, J. (1989) *Tank Man* [Photograph]. At: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tianasquare.jpg> [Accessed on 22 March 2017]

Bibliography

Barthes, R. (1999) Myth Today. In: Evans, J and Hall, S. (eds.) *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London: Sage. pp.51-58

Shin, P. (2014) *Tiananmen Square Tank Man: 25 Years Later, His Memory Lives On* At: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/tiananmen-square-tank-man-25-years-memory-lives/story?id=23965993> (Accessed on 22 March 2017)