Chapter VII

Pedagogical Possibilities of Mimesis

*Mimesis is useful when administered correctly, dangerous when given indiscriminately.*

- Plato

*Mimesis is never a homogenous term, and if its basic movement is towards similarity it is always open to the opposite.*

- Arne Melberg

The mimetic pedagogy outlined in this chapter has been developed perceiving the need to bring in more dynamism into teaching. Teachers need to feel they are innovating as well as being reflective about their teaching practices, and they need to also develop them within some larger theoretical framework. A large part of the material used in this pedagogy deals with visual media, not only since it has been developed in a communications school but also since it is relevant in the contemporary context. Young people migrate easily towards the visual media and certainly consume good amounts of it, either online through downloads, film, or television. There are several misconceptions that visual media are ‘transparent’ and self-explanatory, even in classroom settings because of their ‘mimetic’ basis, and therefore require no further contextualization. We have thoroughly critiqued this in Chapter V where we also developed new conventions for using film in the classroom as a teaching aid. There is also an underlying belief that critical and creative thinking skills come only through verbal work, and visuals are for simple ‘consumption’ wherein comprehension is dominated by narrative. The only exception to this is when formal analysis of films and film readings as texts is taught to students. As pointed out before, none of these are directed towards cultivating critical thinking skills per se but are important ways to open up the visual texts in the classroom.

So while the educational objectives are to be clear, if broad, we can in general agree that critical and creative thinking skills, based upon the higher order thinking skills outlined in the
original and revised Bloom’s taxonomy as discussed in the previous chapter, are to be fostered in our educated youth.

We have already explained the conceptual framework that we intend to use in Chapter VI., namely the semiotic concepts of denotation, connotation, paradigm, syntagm. We include intertextuality in our conceptual framework since it too depends upon codes for interpretation. We will describe in further detail later in this chapter how precisely we use them in the pedagogy within the analytical framework of an innovative ‘pictorial mimesis’. In this chapter on pedagogical possibilities, we want to use the complex understanding of mimesis to generate a new pedagogy by developing the analytical framework of pictorial mimesis. By bringing in the idea of representation, we also introduce semiotics, the study of signs, as it too has to do with representation, as does modern mimesis. Further, it is a major part of the conceptual framework for the innovative pedagogy developed here.

We use commonly found visual material that are interesting to young people – in fact, some of the material used has been selected and used by students themselves in their MS theses done under the guidance of this author, and appropriately acknowledged and cited. We have used such kind of material to ascertain what young people are interested in visually – advertisements, of course, but also brochures, vinyl record covers, graffiti, book and magazine covers. It is our experience that although young people are more exposed to visual material and also watch a lot more visual media, they are visually unsophisticated and have low visual literacy compared to the exposure they have to this media. This situation is similar to the case of a person who has been taught to read and write as a child, but never had access to much reading material. If such a person is surrounded by printed material in their job as a peon in a library for instance, they can read the headlines of a newspaper, for instance, but do not go any further in their comprehension of the material.

Nowadays, one assumes that young people are visually literate and also sophisticated viewers due to the visuals-perfused environment we live in. But other than grasping the narrative elements of film, we find that they have learned very little about the visual media in terms of their power to make meaning. This is also partially because they have not been taught the components of visual language and their use or manipulation in order to effect meaning. Without having a sense of how these components/ elements combine together, and also can possibly combine together to make meaning, these students have a huge gap in their education. Some
students are able to do this intuitively, as are some people with language. But for most students, appreciating visual composition and making interpretations is something that needs to be taught.\footnote{We are not talking about visual components/elements in the sense that they are taught in a film-making course where they are taught the grammar of film (through camera angle, edits, different lenses, close-ups, flashbacks etc.) or a course on aesthetics of film (where formal elements such the role played by lighting in creating a scene are taught) or even cultural studies (where aspects of culture such as womanhood, nation, etc are constructed).} The larger purpose of this pedagogy is learning to think using visual material, not necessarily making or deconstructing them. Students should however be able to make some indicatory level of drawings.

**Developing a New Pedagogy: Theoretical, Conceptual and Analytical Frameworks**

We thus develop the idea of pictorial mimesis to complement the ideas of theatrical mimesis, rhetorical mimesis and visual mimesis that have been studied so far (Potolsky 2006). As we have seen, Aristotelian ideas have been key in the development of theatrical mimesis. Considering mimesis to be misconstrued in its ideas of mirroring the external world, theatrical irrationality, and the mimetic cave of illusions, Aristotle projected theatrical mimesis as rational, independent in nature and complete in itself. Further, his idea of mimesis was constructed between the action and the audience through a recognition of the internal logic of plot.

The chief mode of rhetorical mimesis was *imitatio* which was a strategic imitation of the old to say something anew. Transformation through emulation was achieved through *imitatio* and through reorganization in *copia*. For the Romans, as we have seen, ‘mimesis was important because it enabled *imitatio’* (Potolsky 2006: 64); in fact, it occupied such an important place in the culture of the Latins that it was considered by most rhetoricians as an educational practice (Potolsky 2006: 58). We too use it in the development of one aspect of our pedagogy which will have pictorial mimesis as a basis, but use the ideas of repetition, *imitatio* and *copia* to transform it into a pedagogical tool.

The strength of Platonic ideas of mimesis and truth existing in the world outside has had a strong influence in photography and film as nowhere else. The ability of the camera to ‘capture reality’ had been so dominant that when it was invented, it was generally considered that art was dead. In other words, the place for art as mimesis of reality no longer existed. Yet, both for art as
well as photography and their products, such as advertisements, the idea that art mirrors reality persists, as we saw in the section on visual mimesis in Chapter III.

Attempts have been made to develop other visual theories but they have not been convincing. Scott (1994), for instance, makes an attempt to develop a theory of visual rhetoric against the mimetic theory of visuals by asserting that advertisements ‘are not analogues to visual perception but symbolic artefacts constructed from the conventions of a particular culture’ (Scott 1994: 252). In trying to construe images as a form of visual rhetoric, Scott uses the framework of rhetoricians who use ‘inventio, dispositio and elocutio’ as a framework. However, she ignores the historical basis of this rhetorical framework in the Latin copia, and thus ignorant of its strong mimetic basis, ironically considers it to be a way in which she will break the mimetic tie. Had she understood the Latin concepts of imitatio and/or copia as we have explained before, she would know that it is non-negotiable to retain this mimetic tie in order that the visual rhetoric be creative and imaginiative. In portraying visual elements as a symbolic order, she asserts that her method will be new as it would ‘recast pictures as information in symbolic forms – as messages that must be processed cognitively by means of complex combinations of learned pictorial schemata and that do not necessarily bear an analogy to nature’ (Scott 1994: 253). But it seems as if she is ignoring the history of semiotic readings of advertisements which is sophisticated and relevant to her quest.\(^2\) In addition, by ignoring the basics of semiotics, she fails to understand that the simplest of ‘utterances’ need a huge amount of cognitive processing but only give the appearance of being simple and ‘transparent’, as we have explained in the section on representation and semiotics above.

**Pictorial Mimesis**

All the above problems with Scott’s (1994) rhetorical framework are addressed in our framework, which however, is a pedagogical one, incorporating semiotic concepts into the mimetic framework. We first put forward the idea of ‘pictorial mimesis’ which is a component of the more general ‘visual mimesis’. As we see it, ‘visual mimesis’ includes both still and moving images. The mimesis for moving images (films, TV and commercials) will be substantially different as the latter also includes sound and movement as its constitutive elements and was

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partially used in Chapter III. We restrict ourselves to separating and developing the concept of ‘pictorial mimesis’ which involves only still visuals such as photographs, pictures in newspapers and magazines, brochure and pamphlet covers, vinyl record covers, advertisements, graffiti art, film and other posters, as well as, of course, paintings. There may be some use of minimal text restricted to headlines, copy and the like in these essentially visual domains.

In our formulation, ‘pictorial mimesis’ is the imitation of a situation that is framed (bounded) and depends upon the arrangement of pictorial elements, colors, shades, direction, foreground/background and sometimes even a few words (like a sentence, no more) within the frame. Like its precursors in theatrical mimesis which drew from Aristotle, pictorial mimesis also has a logic of its own and is complete in itself. Although it appears that it should draw upon Platonic concept of mimesis, dependent as it is upon ‘reality’ for its mimetic effect, pictorial mimesis in fact does not do so. It has the capacity to create its own reality which has elements constitutive of the real world but may give rise to different meanings. This is reminiscent of the way mimesis functioned as *imitatio* in the Latin tradition, giving rise to genres of parody, satire and the like where one could repeat the ‘same’ thing said by another but mean something quite different. Pictorial mimesis too depends upon the conventions of viewing for its effect. Its logic involves a strategic/deliberate ordering of elements for persuasive or rhetorical effect. However, the way in which we make interpretations of it depend upon much more than symbolic meanings. It draws upon far simpler ideas of denotation, connotation and intertextuality. ‘Pictorial mimesis’ could also involve using the same elements in a different ways by re-ordering them or using ornamentation so as to construct a different reality. This latter is based upon mimesis-as-*copia* and is used in teaching creative thinking.

Pictorial interpretation is based upon the logical arrangement of its elements such that mimetic aspects are captured by two levels of meaning – denotative meaning and connotative meaning. We will explain these two a bit later but for now, merely indicate that unlike denotative meaning which is more evidently mimetic, connotative meaning appears to be non mimetic at first glance. On closer examination, we find that it is negotiated and constrained by mimetic conventions. Colors are the simplest example. The color red can connote love or danger, in many parts of India for instance, but not sadness. ³

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³ Some colors are deeply cultural in their connotative meanings as, for instance, white which is the
**Repetition and Substitution**

When teaching critical and creative thinking, we use the mimetic impulse of repetition in the vernacular form of mimesis. Repetition itself can be construed in various ways. In our pedagogy, we firstly use the mimetic impulse of repetition and make it dynamic through substitution. We use the analytical framework of ‘pictorial mimesis’ in order to constitute a pedagogy. We expand upon the idea of pictorial mimesis mentioned briefly above. For instance, repeating through the substitution of content or context, leads to changes in connotative meaning, as well as opens the possibility of a new intertextual meaning. Repeating with substitution of direction, position, color amounts to changes in pattern. Repeating with substitution of size or spatial relations results in changes in impact. Repeating with substitutions in ways of framing, including physical frame, also leads to changes in meaning. We will illustrate some of these ideas with the aid of visuals below.

So we look at repetition through substitution as a strategy towards teaching higher levels of thinking by providing appropriate visual material in a graduated manner of complexity. The benefit of using visual material as ‘data’ for students to interpret rather than verbal texts is that it is more attractive, conducive to the imagination and more open-ended in terms of meaning, allowing space for interpretations. It is easier for students to mentally rearrange visual components and thereby give rise to a number of interpretations, rather than physically manipulating the images through photoshop, which is efficacious but does nothing to cultivate the imagination. As mentioned before, it is also surprisingly rare that students copy and paste visuals off the internet suggesting that they are interested in playing with and composing visuals themselves. Repetition is used as a pedagogical device in conjunction with substitution and the resulting method falls within the constructivist theory of teaching-learning.

We also use the semiotic ideas of denotation and connotation, intertextuality, paradigm and syntagm in our methodology to teach young people the link between composition and interpretation in what are essentially mimetic representations. We find the Latin concepts of mimesis as *imitatio* and *copia* to be particularly well-suited for adaptation to classroom teaching. While the methods we use can be employed as is, placing them within the framework of colour of mourning in many parts of India. Married women wear red in most parts of India and it is considered an auspicious color; but among the Gowd Saraswat Brahmin community of South Kanara, maroon is the colour worn by widows.
historical mimesis gives them a conceptual as well as theoretical robustness. Using them without the framework reduces them to techniques of teaching and thus they run into the danger of being used for training, rather than retaining within them the flexibility to transform and create. Thus it is critical that the theoretical, analytical and conceptual frameworks on which they are based are clearly understood by teachers. We refer to Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, as described briefly in the previous chapter, to guide our understanding of critical and creative thinking. As pointed out in the previous chapter, our methodology aims at achieving categories 4 through 6 in the original Bloom’s taxonomy namely, analytic, synthetic, evaluative, which we loosely call ‘critical thinking’ as it is difficult to separate higher order thinking from each other. They are also broken down into separate components as we had pointed out in the previous chapter. We had also been influenced by the revised Bloom’s taxonomy to see creative thinking as ‘putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; re-organizing elements into a new pattern or structure’.

The pedagogical strategies described increase the flexibility of the mind, by using visual media to achieve critical and creative thinking. No assessment frameworks have been developed for this pedagogy which is still an indicatory one. However, we have used them in the classroom and our students have also done thesis work on a range of visual material indicating that these are achievable.

We look below at a new mimetic pedagogy.

A Mimetic Pedagogy: An Indicatory Framework
There are three different yet interlinked ways in which students may be taught to make interpretations and therefore enhance their critical and creative thinking skills through imaginative play. The first method appropriates the mimetic impulse of repetition and, due to its ubiquity in contemporary culture as well as in learning and creating, uses it in the pedagogy in the form of mimesis-as-repetition and makes it dynamic through substituting; the second method again uses mimesis-as-imitatio but this time through juxtaposing and the third uses mimesis-as-copia through re-ordering and ornamenting. Some of the exercises have been tried out in courses, and some have been taught to our thesis students as indicated, but only in the context of semiotics, not mimesis. This is the complete step-by step delineation of the pedagogy which has a conceptual framework drawn largely from semiotics, an analytical framework in ‘pictorial
mimesis’ and the theorization is in mimesis itself. Based on our understanding of mimesis, we accept two things: one that mimesis is innate to human beings; two that historically, mimesis, in one form or the other, has been the framework of critical and creative thinking.

**Using Denotation and Connotation in the Classroom: Making Meaning**

When using semiotic concepts in classrooms based on visual work, these turned out to be robust and flexible pedagogical devices for teaching critical and creative thinking. Although not designed as such, the methods we employ are very much within the framework of Gregory Ulmer’s (1985) post(e)-pedagogy which is ‘a vacation from oppressive rationalism’ (Huttunen 2011: 11) and addresses the disjunction between play and education. Developing it in the context of an academic lecture, Ulmer’s ‘lecriture’ is a playful discourse, a deconstructed lecture, whose content always remains open (Ulmer 1985: 43). ‘It aims to minimize reproduction and maximize student’s productivity ... It is a text that can be productively interpreted’ (Huttunen 2011: 11). Ulmer’s lecriture is an invention rather than a copy of an original, it aims at creating a love of learning in students who are participants rather than consumers (Ulmer 1985: 164-165). Rather than ‘invention’ we use the idea of interpretation in the context of visual texts.

We start with using denotation and connotation and elicit meaning from the students, using two questions:

- **What** is the picture about?
- **How** do we know that?

Thus teaching starts with elicitation, not with definitions, and leads in towards understanding the different levels of meaning. Naming the semiotic terms in the framework is done for the benefit of the teachers, not the students. In the classroom, this naming will come only after students have demonstrated they are able to perceive the different levels of meaning.

Illustration 1
The denotative meaning of this picture which stems from description (‘What is the picture about?) is that it is about several young women sitting in a room relaxing together. The connotative meaning (How do we know it? What do we sense?) is more abstract and comes about due to our understanding of the conventional codes of light, shade, color etc. Here the responses about connotative meaning could range from freshness, innocence, indolence, virginity, melancholic, reflective to other similar responses, depending upon how colors are interpreted through codes.

This distinction in meaning from denotative to connotative is important for students to understand. They may then play around with changing the meanings of the photograph as we describe below.

**Mimesis-as-Repetition through Substitution**

Example 2:

Look at the following picture (Illustration 2) from a German tourist brochure. The denotation is the underground bunkers where Nazis imprisoned Jews. We may or may not know this bit of information in order to get the denotation precisely right and it is sufficient if students are able to say it is indoors without the lights, or lit only by a flashlight or variations of these. Yet, the
connotation is something that everyone gets correctly. Ie, ominous, negative, dark, creepy, scary etc. This is because of the way colors and shadows have been used.

Illustration 2

Source: Tourist brochure from www.berliner-unterwelten.de

These meanings get confirmed in students’ minds when we do some imaginative exercises through the use of substitution. Students can be shown this picture and asked to change colors ie, they are mentally substituting color in the photograph, but the photograph remains the same. Rather than actually painting it again, or even using a picture amenable to photo shop, this exercise cultivates imagination. Students have to imagine what the photograph would look like. Instead of a black and white ‘original’ photograph with the sunshine flooding in, how would meaning change if it were a color photograph with all the girls wearing different colored dresses? Might the connotative meaning become cheerful? Anticipatory? Excited? We have to alert
students to the cultural and indeed conventional connotations of color as mentioned before in the example of the colors of mourning in different communities. This alert is especially important as young people watch a lot more of American and British media and do not realize that these are culturally loaded.

How would meaning change if the entire picture was well-lit – ‘flat-lit’ so to say, such that there are no shadows and only white light over the whole picture? Clearly the denotative meaning remains unchanged but its connotation would change as the negative associations would disappear. Thus, by practising substitution of lighting over a number of pictures of this kind, students are able to see how interpretations change simply by changing lighting, everything else remaining the same. They are also able to understand this when they change color and shading in the same picture in order to change connotations and thereby become extremely sensitive to the role played by color in visual interpretation.  

Using Paradigm and Syntagm in the Classroom: Making Interpretations

Although the term ‘paradigm’ is more familiar among the general populace owing to philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn’s work, paradigm and syntagm were concepts developed by the linguist Saussure. Using semiotics and the Latin concepts of imitatio and copia, we develop a dynamic pedagogy based in mimesis.

We recall that Saussure had said that meaning arises not from reference to the world outside (Platonic mimesis) but due to the difference between contiguous elements as explained in the earlier section. This gave rise to the Saussurean distinction between paradigm (horizontal, contiguous elements) and syntagm (vertical, associative ones) where syntagmatic meaning is the ordering or stringing together of a limited number of elements in a specific way or ‘grammar’ to make meaning. For example, a menu in a restaurant is a paradigm of possible meals that can be

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4 Some visually gifted individuals/visual artists ‘intuitively’ work like this without a conscious knowledge of the role of colour in connotation. However, their compositions reflect this ‘intuitive’ understanding very clearly. This is similar to children who read English story books or come from English speaking backgrounds who ‘intuitively’ get the grammar right in class exercises without necessarily knowing the grammatical rules. Such students have a more sophisticated understanding of codes and conventions of reading.
ordered. A syntagm will be the specific meal that you order from that paradigm. Clearly many such meals, or different syntagms, are possible from the same paradigmatic menu.

In our pictorial mimesis, we use the term ‘paradigm’ to indicate that each of the elements in the visual can be differentiated along several axis: color, size, direction, placement, foreground/background, spatial relation. In this sense, each of them is substitutable, not by another element but by another aspect/parameter of the same element.

It may appear that we are moving away from mimesis with the introduction of paradigm, syntagm. However, this is only as transition stage in teaching which will disappear when we introduce the next level of meaning-making which is intertextual. Alongside the distinction between denotation and connotation, which helped students understand two distinct levels of meaning, we want to shift it to ‘meaning’ of a different order, that is, ‘interpretation’. We take cognizance of the fact that philosophically speaking, one is indistinguishable from the other.

Example 3:

The visual (Illustration 3) below is an example of how we build into interpretations and critical thinking by using denotation and connotation as well as paradigm and syntagm. We move to introducing the next level of meaning making which is making interpretations. The important thing in this case is to make an interpretation first on looking at the picture and then deconstructing it before we play around with substitution.

This is an example of graffiti art by the artist Banksy. It is a picture of a house drawn in crayon and two stenciled figures standing in the foreground. There are flowers drawn in crayon also. If we use denotation here, we get the idea that this picture is something to do with a house, a repairman and a girl. The girl has just returned from school as is evident from her uniform. She had drawn her home on a wall, as the crayon is still in her hand. The repairman or worker has started boarding up the house as is clear from her planks on the door of the painting.

On the surface of it, this is an innocuous picture, pleasant to look at but as we open up its visual semiotics, we will see how complex it is and the kinds of codes used by Banksy to create it and the viewer to read it. The connotations for this picture are complex as the child represents

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5 This graffiti is from the MS thesis of my student Abraham Joseph (2011) who used it to do analysis based on the only one part of the method I taught him on the use of paradigm and syntagm in making interpretations.

6 This picture is from the MS thesis of my student Abraham Joseph (2011) followed by his analysis where indicated.
something more abstract: a creative person. This is because childhood is connected with creativity, and therefore stands for creativity itself. The man is not just a repairman but someone who is closing up the creative spaces of the child. The house itself is the creative product, innocuous, pretty and nurturing as the smoke from the chimney shows. This picture can be interpreted as Joseph (2011) does as *The Killing of the Imagination* or *The Imprisonment of the Imagination*. It is a simple statement made by Banksy. It can be read as a political statement through the codes of reading which are built up as below.

Illustration 3

Source: [http://banksy.co.uk/img/outdoorimg/004_cande_la.jpg](http://banksy.co.uk/img/outdoorimg/004_cande_la.jpg)

Now let’s use paradigm and syntagm to see how we can understand this better as an exercise in critical thinking. The paradigm is comprised of all the individual elements in the picture which are the man, girl, flowers, toolkit, and a house, planks, smoke as they are
represented here. Other details are also observed: the man is a maintenance man or a carpenter of some sort going by his dress and the tools he is carrying. It is he who is boarding up the house.

Students can try to guess what the house stands for. In Joseph’s words, ‘The house stands for creative activities, maybe to do with production and reproduction, sustenance and nurturance as the smoke coming out of the chimney indicates cooking, warm fire etc’ (Joseph 2011: 18). He goes on to analyze this in the following way:

‘We see that the house is a metaphor for art. The girl, and the house she has drawn, signifies vulnerability, as well as the nascent power to produce something which will withstand time. She is an icon of an artist. Her age and dress signify that she is in a learning, vulnerable yet creative stage’

(Joseph 2011: 18).

Although Joseph doesn’t state it explicitly, by boarding up the house, there is an idea of censorship that enters into our interpretation. He rather surmises that ‘All these elements work together to give us the interpretation that the imagination or art or creativity is under threat’ (Joseph 2011: 18).

The use of black and white by Banksy to paint the two human beings is rooted in filmic conventions where they turn out to be ‘real people’ as explained in Chapter III about filmic conventions of realism. By using black and white in parts, it also conveys us the idea that this is a documentation of what is truly happening to our society.

This picture is a wonderful illustration for teaching critical thinking by repetition through substitution: How does interpretation change when you use substitution as a pedagogical principle in the case of color and size? What happens if the entire painting is in color? What happens if the entire painting is in black and white? What happens if the colors are reversed – if the house is black and white and people are colored? Is the interpretation the same if the repairman painted over the house rather than boarded it up? We can do substitution with size also: How does the interpretation change if we make the girl or the man larger than the house? How does it change if the house becomes really large and the people are tiny but doing the same things? Can we change the size of the flowers and change the interpretation?

This point is extremely important in the formation of pictorial mimesis: if we do not understand the complexity of interpretations possible in repetition via substitution, we end up thinking it is routine and dull, if not deadening. Visually, if we repeat the same element but
change the size, it can completely alter its impact as well as its interpretation! Just like in rhetorical mimesis, changing the ‘inflexion’ or ‘tone of voice’ of a statement changes its meaning completely and gives rise to genres like parody and satire.

Thus, we see that a simple pedagogical device – repetition through substitution of various elements of pictorial mimesis – brings out the levels of complexity in composition and interpretation. It also brings in the aspects of imagination and play into pedagogy. Most important, although the students work focused on making interpretations and justifying them through semiotics, they work because of the analytical framework of pictorial mimesis. We may recall that in Bloom’s original taxonomy of education objectives (1956), higher order skills were: **analytic, synthetic and evaluatory skills.** Every time we use any of these skills such as break problems into components (analytic skill), make connections between components (synthetic skill), or make a judgment about the quality of information (evaluatory skill), we are in fact, using critical skills. All these actions and tasks are clearly used and accomplished in the method described above.

**Example 4:**

This is an advertisement but as far as teaching is concerned, the distinction doesn’t matter. As can be seen, the ‘normal’ visual should have been a soft-drink vending machine. But the designer has already used repetition by substitution to make an interesting, if depraved, advertisement. The student analyses the denotation of this picture as ‘promoting the product Red Tape through the man who is wearing the shoes and putting cash in the can dispenser to have a soft drink’ (Ghalian 2011: 61). The connotation, according to Ghalian, is ‘…that men can have access over women through the means of material things like money…” (Ghalian 2011: 62).

Illustration 4

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7 This picture is from the MS thesis of my student Sonia Ghalian (2011).
Ghalian (2011: 61) interprets the advertisement as saying, ‘Everything has its price.’ The paradigm consists of the man, the can-dispensing machine, the glass display, the women, the table and chairs and the shoe.’ The elements of the paradigm have been arranged or ordered in such a way as to give rise to, and support, the interpretation Ghalian has made. ‘If any sign is shifted from its original position, the meaning will undergo a change and the perception will not be the same’ (Ghalian 2011: 62). Ghalian justifies her interpretation in the following way:

‘The posture of the man is that of confidence and authority, of someone who has the money to buy ‘things’ depicted in the ad, both the shoes and the women. The posture of all four women is sensual and they are dressed in modern western attire and three of them are staring at the man who is using the machine. They are looking at him in a suggestive way, almost trying to capture the man’s attention’

(Ghalian 2011: 62).

Of course this tunes into the male fantasy that women ‘want it too’ if the price should be right. Thus the denotative meaning of money in this picture is the price paid for women. But its connotation could be several other options such as marriage and children, a house, and the like. Although Ghalian in her analysis did not see this, the glass cage could also be interpreted connotatively as the price paid by women through relationships with men, including marriage and children.
Rather than substituting color or size, Ghalian changes the posture of the women. This had not been taught, indicating an independently developed ability to extend pictorial mimesis through an addition of parameters. By changing posture, she showed how substitution could be used to subvert or undermine the message of the text. She notes,

‘If the posture of these women is changed, the meaning coming across will also change. For example, if the women in the cabin are made to sit and the expression on their face is changed to that of suffocation and plight, trying to break the glass wall that is restricting their freedom, the power which the man is exercising in the ad will be subverted and will show the dark side of the visual’

(Ghalian 2011: 62).

Ghalian thus makes two substitutions in this picture to change the meaning. She explains it and it is worthwhile quoting her completely:

‘If the women (…) are shown untying their hands and breaking the glass ceiling that confines them, it will change the power relation in the ad completely. The man will be alone facing the strength of four women who refuse to get commodified by men and society. It would be a rejection and rebellion against a society that objectifies a woman’s sexuality for the satisfaction of men … The text itself reinforces the commoditization of women. It suggests that women can be available [to] men 24 hours [a day], allowing men to “live their fantasy”. It also suggests that by using money they can buy anything and anyone they want. Man can buy not only what he wants but also choose among various women who are displayed for him alone. Words like “served chilled” make the objectification of women very direct and crass. Generally “served” is used for food given to people but here served is used in the context of women available to satisfy man’s sexual thirst’

(Ghalian 2011: 63).

We can see from the above analysis that students can be taught undermining and subversion as acts of agency through visuals. Ghalian had already been taught visual intertextuality and subversion through juxtaposition, and her interest in gender and sexuality made her see the advertisement from those perspectives. These are extremely complex learning outcomes for young people to have and it demonstrates that such complex outcomes can be brought about through pictorial mimesis.
From the above four examples, we can say that mimetic impulse of repetition can be turned into an effective pedagogical device by using it in tandem with substitution. We have indicated some of the ways this substitution of elements in pictures can be done through substitution of color, shade, lighting, size. In addition, we suggest that substitution can be done in any of the other following ways:

• Change the context and substitute it with another;
• Change or substitute one of the (content) elements in the picture such as the product if an advertisement or brochure; the people in an advertisement or photograph;
• Change or substitute the viewer’s perspective. For instance, in the Ghalian (2011) example her perspective and interpretation is from the male subject’s viewpoint; but she could also have done it from the female viewpoint. Then the connotation of the glass display could have been en-caged by marriage, family, home and the interpretation could have been ‘The Suppression of Female Sexuality’;
• Change or substitute the underlying assumptions;
• Change or substitute the theory;
• Change the arrangement of elements.

The last substitution is what we plan to expand upon in the pedagogical section which uses *copia* as a framework. This involves the visual re-arrangement of a given set of elements.

**Mimesis-as-Imitatio through Juxtaposing**

This is the last concept in our pedagogical toolbox and systematically follows the others (denotation, connotation, paradigm, syntagm) as each builds upon the previous one. We have already looked at intertextuality earlier on in Chapters II and VI. Briefly, intertextuality is a concept to see how the understanding of one text is influenced by other texts, or concepts from other texts. For example, understanding of justice or injustice in the real world situation in India may be strongly influenced by how justice plays out in the Mahabharata or Ramayana for Hindus or those familiar with these epics. Or if there are two visuals which are placed against each other or follow each other in succession, then there appears to be a third meaning that is constructed
based upon this intertextuality. Frequently, one sees in the classroom that students recognize intertextual meaning, once they are shown a few examples and are made to respond to it.

Intertextuality plays a big role in the comprehension of meaning but also in the critiquing of it. Again this has been done very well in verbal domains even with devices as simple as punning to those as sophisticated as parody. These are duplicated in some intelligent visual ads, but one depends on the reading of the copy to get a complete and accurate interpretation of it. A cursory look at contemporary ads in English in India shows least usage of these devices. One could hypothesize that the maximum use internationally in English would be in the British media, both verbal and visual, thanks to a historical tradition of using these devices. The arts of understatement and irony are historically well-developed there. It would be interesting to see how they fare in the Italian. Some strands of activism are also now using these devices to actually subvert the commercial media such as adbusters.

Let us see how we can use this intertextual knowledge about punning in understanding the example below:

Example 5:

Illustration 5


Humour is the best example where punning, sarcasm, and irony as linguistic tools give rise to the genres of parody (spoofs), satire and all the double-entendre genres. These are essentially intertextual genres and are understood completely only if the original text is also
known and understood. There may be one level of understanding that is possible, as for instance with punning, and can be used to great profit in wit as we show below.

Illustration 5 is another example of graffiti by Banksy. If we read it at the literal, denotative level, the graffiti shows a beggar holding out a begging bowl and a placard asking for loose change from passers-by. But we do not read it only at this innocuous level. By making a pun on the word ‘change’, Banksy makes us draw upon a second but imaginary text, a discourse in this example, to make a political statement, that poor people want actual change at a social level rather than (only) change as money.

There are more complex levels of intertextuality. The *Scary Movie* series which were a big fad with our students two years ago, are an example of this where at one level, each is a funny and enjoyable movie even if one doesn’t recognize the intertextual meanings; but if one does recognize the collage of films which are being spoofed then the enjoyment is far more since the complexity is understood as the polyglottedness of the film is perceived. This is pure intertextuality; that the innocuous meaning remains and may be entertained as such; but it is with the intertextual meanings that we see an understanding of complexity coming in. While the above example appears to depend upon verbal play, it works easily and at a far more complex level with the presence of the visual. In fact, it is the visual which makes the intertext more clear as it draws upon tacit knowledge of the students. Thus, in this case, the picture acts as a pedagogical support for understanding puns and intertextuality.

One can see from the above description that if students remain at one level of thinking or meaning- making such as the literal, denotative level, then their appreciation of complexity is also stunted. They need to understand complexity to appreciate the world at large. In order to access that complexity, students must be taken through connotation and intertextuality as well.

**Juxtaposing as pedagogical device**

We have seen that critical thinking is required for one to do intertextual readings as the one above. How does one use ideas of intertextuality in teaching critical thinking? Our own experience has been that visuals work well to encourage critical and creative thinking among students rather than only verbal. Partly, this is because one needs a more sophisticated control of language as well as texts to identify the intertextuality. Thus, verbal ‘play’ is not understood by

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8 This picture is from the MS thesis of my student Abraham Joseph who, however, used it for a different analysis. I use it here as a baseline picture to teach-learn punning.
students as easily, at least in English, as language is not upto the level of everyone being able to even pun in English. It is also possible that in our pedagogy, we have not given as much thought about using language to teach this aspect, as visuals hold the attention of students more easily and it seemed a more interesting way to teach critical and creative thinking based on this. The most important reason, however, is to come up with ways to teach these kinds of thinking outside of domains of reading and writing verbal texts. We describe the method as below: We use a series of half a dozen combination sets, each ‘set’ comprising of three ‘texts’ in a specific order. The first ‘text’ is shown (this could be a magazine or newspaper article headline, with or without picture) as Illustration 6 below and the meaning is discussed and ascertained.

Example 6:
Illustration 6 (below) is an Outlook article with the headline: Something is Rotten
The deck reads: The poor stare vacantly as a food surplus nation lets its stock spoil in the open.

Illustration 6
SOMETHING IS ROTTEN

The poor stare vacantly as a food-surplus nation lets its stock spoil in the open

by Anuradha Ramon

Despite the record procurement of 608.79 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat last month, more than 40 per cent of the population goes hungry and 46 per cent of the country’s children are malnourished. As if that wasn’t burden enough of guilt, reports have come over the last fortnight of government agencies leaving thousands of tonnes of foodgrain to rot in the open. India, meanwhile, has also been emerging as a leading exporter of foodgrain—sending huge consignments to poor African nations through cartels (see “The Rice Scam”, Outlook, July 27, 2009) that batten up in the name of charity.

The mountains of mouldy grain, in Punjab, Haryana and elsewhere, amount to some 46,000 tonnes, and could house at least 120 lakh people for a month. Sources say the figure could be several thousand tonnes higher. But the government did nothing about storing the grain properly to save it. Neither the Centre nor any of the states considered the option of distributing the grain to the needy through the rations. In March this year—months before the monsoon arrived and rendered the grain unpalatable by the official yardstick of no more than two monsoons, or one year, in the open under tarps—the Union food ministry and the Food Corporation of India (FCI) had suggested that 50 lakh tonnes be released to the poorest districts. The empowered group of ministers (EGOM) headed by finance minister Pranab Mukherjee rejected the suggestion. Sources say this was because it would have added as much as Rs 5,000 crore to the food subsidy bill.

“The country should get its priorities right,” says Dr M.S. Swaminathan, a renowned agriculture scientist. “It’s a shame. If it cannot save its foodgrain for the needy, the state should not be talking of a food security law. Providing food should be the priority. Instead, the government has chosen to focus on airports and the Commonwealth Games.”

He wants a parliamentary committee to investigate the wastage.

To judge the degree of carelessness and callousness this inaction exemplifies, consider all that the government did do, once the wastage was revealed: it merely acknowledged the fact. No investigation, as a system, of what preventive measures could have been taken.

Or of possible schedules for moving grain from bounties scattered across the country, each with some 1 million tonnes. The idea was to centralise storage—eventually storage units right down to the level of the districts—and solve problems of long-distance transport. Had it been in place, this year’s wastage of grain may not have been.

But over the years, governance remained myopic. A note from the department of food & public

Source: Outlook August 9, 2010 pg 14

Then the second ‘text’ (this could be a visual or only text) is shown as in Illustration 7 below and the meaning is discussed and ascertained.

Illustration 7
Illustration 7 above is an IBM advertisement with copy reading: It’s Time to Ask Smarter Questions

Students are shown the above two illustrations repeatedly in the same order, allowing them to run their eyes around the visual and the text. Then the two are shown together as a juxtapositioned composite image to see whether and how one comments upon the other. When
We go through half a dozen examples to ensure that they have reached level 5 of the revised Bloom’s taxonomy. Then the students are given a similar exercise to do themselves. Anything that catches their eye is fair game, but they need to get the order ‘right’ sequence...
(dispositio) to ensure that the intertextual meaning comes across. In the process of doing this exercise, students get quite agitated because they have to go through newspapers and magazines to find the two images which worked together to give the third meaning. But most students managed to do it and in the process they became more critically aware of the media, of visuals and texts and how critical thinking can be learned. The advantage of this is that students also have to make sure they comprehend the copy clearly, and although this is verbal text, there is also a supporting visual alongside which helps in aiding this comprehension.

Of course this can be done in a very simple and creative way through the superimposition of copy on a picture as the current rounds of memes on the internet indicates. This shows a propensity among young people to use intertextuality for poking fun, and this ability is complex and valuable and maybe also included.

Example 7:

Sometimes, juxtaposition occurs in one picture itself when it looks random or like a badly composed photograph in terms of aesthetics but is actually complex in terms of the comment it makes intertextually.

Illustration 9

Source: Down To Earth February 16, 2013, vol 10

This photograph is an interesting one which shows one part belonging to modernity and the other to the more rural. In one photograph, you have two images which act as comments on
each other. In many parts of India, this is a common sight, but combined here in one photograph, they give us a third intertextual meaning or a third reality.

Example 8:

As we have seen above, intertextual meaning is generated from two codes of reading and the juxtaposing of two texts to create a third meaning through the creation of a third reality. We now demonstrate this understanding through an analysis of vinyl covers of recorded music of big bands.

Illustration 10: Front album cover THE WHO SELL OUT

Source: www.allcdcovers.com/.../the_who_sell_out_retail_cd/front
For example, the Beatles’ image was different from other bands of that time. They had a different image from the Stones, from Queen, from Black Sabbath etc. You would need to use appropriate signs to communicate those different images of each band, whether it was funkiness, machismo, youth, freshness, rebelliousness and the like in order to convey the band image. But when we see the signs, we understand what the band is about because of the way signs work. In other words, we understand the codes of the signs or their ‘grammar’. When we use the word ‘grammar’ here, we do not mean it in the literal sense of grammatical perfection but merely in terms of comprehension. Just like in a sentence, we understand what it means basically, even if it is more or less grammatically incorrect. ‘I go school’ is basically comprehensible, even if grammatically correct.

But as we have seen so far, complex meaning and interpretations in visuals and words come not only from denotation but also from the other semiotic devices such as intertextuality, which are mimetically grounded but hermeneutically complex. Only then can we ‘read’ visual signs fluently and accurately just like we do words as we see from the example (Illustration 10) above\(^9\) which is from the vinyl album cover of the English rock band *The Who* which was formed in 1964. It is an example of an extremely complex use of a variety of texts, each of which works in myriad ways to create meaning for those in the know, namely their fans.

So when we see an album cover like the ones above of The Who, of the album called *The Who Sell Out* (1967), which was released a year after their US trip. What do we understand about the band and the particular album? The album itself is a concept album wherein all the musical and lyrical ideas are guided by a single theme. The songs are broken by false commercials, jingles and public service announcements all as a mock tribute to the then recently banned British pirate radio. The cover is one of the most complex bits of visual mimesis that we have come across, at once critical and creative with a lot of intertexts that we need to be familiar with for complete comprehension. However, even at the superficial level, they are enjoyable.

Illustration 11: Back cover THE WHO SELL OUT

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\(^9\) The two album covers are from the MS thesis of my student Collin Furtado (2011).
The denotation of the front cover is four scantily clad men and women, with strange expressions and stranger contexts, posing with products, with copy/text below them.

The connotation/association: Free-spirited, quirky, individualistic, ‘funky’. When we think of rock bands, we associate them with most with their music and accoutrements. Here rather than instruments, the band is shown with products. How to make sense of this? 

The Album Title: ‘The Who Sell Out’ puns on the double meaning of ‘sell out’, the text supports an interpretation that the band is making a connection between ‘a performance being sold out’ to the larger requirement of themselves becoming ‘a product that needs to be sold’ and their acceptance that by coming to America, they have ‘sold out’. This is clearly an ironic title. As Furtado puts it in a different way, ‘It also stands for the fact that they have sold out or compromised on some principles of making music and made themselves into a product in order

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10 If you are familiar with The Who, you would know they were also famous for destroying their instruments during a performance! Hence a smaller, witty aside by making them ‘safely’ pose with products other than instruments.
to make further entry into the market place’ (Furtado 2011: 30). He also points out that ‘the larger form of the (vinyl) covers as ads is (itself) a parody because it uses the form of one genre (ads) to say something about something unconnected to it ie music’ (Furtado 2011: 30)

The intertextual references in the album cover may be hard to get for students of this generation and ones not steeped in old American culture but are useful to deconstruct in the classroom anyway. They depend on a good deal of cultural and other knowledge for comprehension as these are heavily encoded, culturally and historically. If we go through the list below, students are able to get many of the intertextual meanings. Thus, for instance,

• The Who make fun of themselves being ‘productified’ by posing with larger than life size products, fairly typical of American life as it was and clearly their best known products abroad (Deodorant and zit busters, both American inventions; canned baked beans, an early American export to Britain; Jane, also American although Tarzan was British and the story goes that although he met her on the island where he lived and she got marooned, she returns with her family to the US and soon after, he follows in search of her)– using an outsize deodorant, lying in a tub of baked beans, a large ‘zitbuster’ (acne remover), and matching Tarzan-Jane outfits with a stuffed teddy bear.

• Witty copy which makes connections between excess (sweating) and success; between turning perspiration into inspiration

• Cowboys are part of the original myth of America (But why are they then using American signs, you may ask. 1967 was the year this album came out and was also the first year they hit the American top 40…)

• “Those who know how many beans ‘make five’ get beans inside and outside at every opportunity” – culturally loaded: beans as staple food of American cowboys conquering the Western frontier (just as a British group is conquering the US); ‘make five’ could refer to the ‘high fives’ as symbolic of celebration; or it could refer to the ways beans multiply so you ‘get beans inside and outside’ which again refers to the American myth that eating beans causes flatulence (beans outside)

• ‘There used to be a dark side of the moon’ is a verbal play on another English band which was contemporary to them, the Pink Floyd album ‘Dark side of the Moon’

• Also plays on pun between acne and acme, a playful verbal play between words to gently poke fun at the quintessential American ideas of looks being all important to success
• Who is Charles Atlas? Makes fun of the minute changes made by body building ads - Changes 9.5 stone to 9.75 stone – also refers to the muscles being superficially strong - good only for hugging toy bears.

Intertextuality as Subversion
Subversion means ‘the act of trying to destroy or damage an established system of government’\textsuperscript{11} an ‘overturning or uprooting’.\textsuperscript{12} In general terms, subversion is the means by which a (major) paradigm/framework of understanding is called into question. It may also refer to ‘an attempt to transform the established social order through revealing its structures of power, authority, exploitation, servitude and hierarchy’. Eg state structures, gender or caste hierarchies, scientific or economic paradigms’.\textsuperscript{13} While it is not always concerned with the political state, it is always deeply political as it reveals the framework of power in its many dimensions.

We have already seen how in contemporary appropriation of mimesis, Judith Butler (1991) urges the act of appropriating mimesis in a very subversive way so as to reveal the construction of gender identities. Thus, she says, simply because something is imitative, it does not mean that it is trivial, especially if it is consciously done as in the wearing of drag and gender identity. Subversion is the act of revealing the frameworks which underlie something. Not only does it require conceptual understanding, it premises intertextuality. It cannot be taught as easily as the other tools in verbal media, and it is an extremely higher order of intertextual meaning. The third meaning must be of a certain kind for it to be recognized as having been subversive.

At this point, we think that this ‘meaning of a certain kind’ must be ‘political’ in basis for it to be considered subversive because usually one shows intertextual opposition as a way to reveal the framework of oppression, exploitation, sexism, racism etc. All these are political in nature because they deal with power in one way or another. When the exercise was conducted in class, all we did was project the meaning of subversion and then decided to let the students free. Most students naturally came up with oppositions and many came up with the third meaning which showed the framework. Of course, we would need to fine-tune this tool much more as well as the way it can be used in pedagogy to cultivate critical thinking.

\textsuperscript{11} \url{http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/subversion}
\textsuperscript{12} \url{www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Subverse}
\textsuperscript{13} \url{www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Subverse}
We have already described an example, Ghalian (2011) above, as an illustration that this can be done with visual material.

**Mimesis-as-Copia through Embellishing/Ornamenting**

Thus far, we have outlined ways in which semiotics and mimesis can be used for teaching critical thinking through two methods: the first based on mimesis-as-repetition through substitution of elements, using denotation, connotation, paradigm, syntagm; the second method was based on Latin mimesis-as- *imitatio* which thorough intertextuality and used juxtaposing of texts as well as through substitution for all the elements of a particular kind. We thus used mimesis itself in the sense of *imitatio* to teach intertextual readings such as punning, irony, parody, satire and subversion. We used existing material and superimposed rhetorical devices on them to develop critical thinking through visual analysis, imagination and play.

In this section we look at ways in which creative thinking can be taught. We have developed these techniques sequentially and they should also be used as such in a systematic pedagogy, rather than teaching the creative thinking by itself and directly, without going through the steps for critical thinking. Thus, in this pedagogy, one needs to go through critical thinking in order to best leverage creative thinking.

First of all, can creative thinking be taught? What does it mean to teach students to think creatively? Isn’t one either ‘naturally’ creative or not? It is important to distinguish here itself that what we are trying to do here is not teach students to be creative but to think creatively ie not routinely and not like others, what is generally called ‘thinking out of the box’. This involves making new connections between things, and we have seen how this was possible in the previous section with the use of substitutions in paradigms and syntagms through pictorial mimesis. Thus, critical thinking skills also require making creative connections and making new interpretations of existing material. In Bloom’s revised taxonomy, to create indicates an ability to put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; to re-organize elements into a new pattern or structure which our new pedagogy enables students to do.

Using only the conceptual framework largely from semiotics, we have developed a process-based pedagogy based on pictorial mimesis-as-*copia* to teach creative thinking. The framework here is based on the Latin rhetorical framework of *copia* which comprises *inventio* (selection of elements); *dispositio* (ordering of elements); *elocutio* (expression) as explained in Chapter II. But it also draws upon the mimetic impulse of repetition through the re-ordering and
ornamentation. These are important features of the oral tradition and in another context, Walter Benjamin talks about the importance of embellishment or ornamentation which allows a different pattern to become visible to the eye. He points out, ‘[o]rnament as the set of possible ways in which a perception of a particular form might emerge out of a pattern or weave’ (quoted in Boon 2010: 59). Thus, although two things may appear the same or even similar to each other, a deeper analysis may reveal the differences in them, through particular ways that can be defined as ornamentation in Benjamin’s terms or as ‘detailing’ in general terms. There is nothing ‘superficial’ about these smaller differences and the idea that these small differences in ornamentation hide the ‘essential’ similarity of two things is not at all justified in my view. There may also be the tendency for critics to think the method as formulaic, static and even non-rational. If one has understood the positive aspects of oral traditions, as indeed we ought to in India as we continue to live among such extant traditions, one will be convinced that such criticisms are not valid. It is indeed these small differences that teach young students creative thinking, the joy of learning and, as an important bonus, taking pride in their work.

Since education, in fact, may kill the capacity for creative thinking in students, they are taken through some tasks to make the mind more flexible, break the habit of thinking in the particular way that they have been taught, see new connections between elements, and therefore provide some definite ways to come up with new ideas. This is how we look at creative thinking in this dissertation. It is based upon working with a constrained number of elements and coming up with new ways of seeing them.

The method is premised on the fact that in order to be creative one has to become aware of how deeply conditioned and socialized we are, how well we have learned ‘the grammar’ of doing things. In other words, the conventions of education itself teach us to be more similar than different. In order to tease out the difference, students have to be taught to do the following things:

1. to break the ‘grammar’ of doing things as this may also eschew the clichés and stereotypes that appear constantly;
2. to loosen the stranglehold of tradition/history as they encumber us unnecessarily;
3. to break linearity in thinking and perceiving as there are other ways of approaching creative thinking without being linear, for instance through circularity, spring-like, rhizomatic, inversion etc;
4. to also break the stranglehold of ‘rationality’ and this also had something to do with linearity and the domination of paradigms of writing in our thinking. Pictorial mimesis is really about simultaneity. It has something also to do with getting into the morass of ideas and images we carry with us which we may not be able to explain or describe in a ‘rational’ fashion but we know they are very much there;

5. to develop intuition, the ability to go blind-folded into a project and keep producing something using non-linear, non-rational and yet creative ways of thinking.

Thus, from the above we can say that when we say creative thinking, we mean breaking the grammar of conventional thinking which is dominated by the past, by linearity and one kind of rationality, and to make new connections between existing things.

(Note that each of the above are linked with each other so that stereotypes are understood to have a basis in what we have seen repeatedly in the past (1 is caused by 2) and equally, history is another kind of linearity (3 is a variation of 2).)

The pedagogical method is based on Latin *copia* adapted within pictorial mimesis and is described as below.

**Exercise: Composing a Pictorial Landscape**

The class is comprised of ten students, all post-graduates in communications taking an elective course with me. They are asked to do a drawing exercise. They work individually and use eight visual elements which are given to them in their creative drawing. The eight elements are: sun, house, river, road, birds, mountain, window, grass. No other elements can be used. This was the given ‘paradigm’ with which students are asked to come up with an indicatory drawing.

As the elements are pre-selected in the sense that they are given to the students, it may be thought that the element of *inventio* (selection) is redundant. However, in our pedagogical framework based in pictorial mimesis, *inventio* is not only selection of the elements but more importantly, *selection of actual visual ways of representing* them, that is, how they choose to depict them in their drawings from the repertory of ways there exist to depict them. For instance, their selection of how to portray a tree (as a coconut, pine or any other) or a bird (as a sparrow, crow, swan or a duck or even a peacock or any other) represents *inventio* in this case.
After doing the first drawing, they are then asked to come up with two alternatives to the drawing. The ways they draw the relations between the elements of the paradigm is *dispositio*. The relation between the elements of each drawing (their ordering or arrangement) can also be looked at as *dispositio* in the framework of *copia*. In fact, in visual mimesis, *dispositio* is even more dynamic than in rhetorical mimesis. *Elocutio* is the actual drawing itself, the particular expressions of the syntagms, including relationship of size of each element, placement, foreground/background, directionality, color.

The logic of using a restricted number of elements which are innocuous-looking (and intentionally selected for pedagogical purposes) is firstly that it focuses upon making students realize that they are not being judged on how they draw aesthetically but on how they choose to represent their thinking. Secondly, it encourages creative thinking by putting constraints on thought. It helps students learn that with the same number of elements, there are many different valid alternatives. The alternatives (*dispositio*) that students try to come up with have the same logic of the previous section where we broke components down to elements and then substituted them. Here rather than substituting elements, we use the same eight elements to form a different *dispositio*. How students relate the elements to each other is *dispositio*. Doing this draws their attention to the fact that from the same elements, it is possible to generate different alternatives, if one puts one’s mind to it.

The actual implementation where again decisions are made about size, color, direction and the like is *elocutio*. Decisions like this help them understand the nature of denotation and connotation in their work.

The students do the drawings quickly in a maximum of half an hour as they are indicatory drawings only and there is time to explain the drawings later to the whole class. The drawings are collected and then passed around among the students for mutual sharing and observations. They are then asked to discuss what they saw and whether they were able to see a pattern in the drawings. They then discuss the patterns, the ‘grammar’ in what people had drawn. The main observations on the patterns in the exercise done by the group of post-graduate students in my class were as follows:

1. Students tended to make their representations using visual stereotypes. A single bird was always what is drawn as a prototypical cross between a crow and a sparrow in India. A
number of birds as in a flock were represented by the alphabet V in a series. Mountains were inverted Vs or a series of them were the letter M. Most times, there were no visual indicators suggestive of a difference between a mountain and a hill except for one student who drew a ‘lacy’ line on the peaks of the mountain suggesting snow.

2. Students tended to use the horizontal layout of the page and tended to follow it while drawing so that the river would follow the bottom edge of the page. Therefore they took the boundary conditions for granted and did not try to even visually manipulate it to suggest something else. For instance, letting one or more of the elements be cut off at the edge of the paper. Or superimposing another shape onto the paper they were using such as the outline of a leaf or a flower or a star. There was one exception of a student who created a window with a crossed grilled in the centre with the elements positioned so as to give the impression that one was looking at the scene outside of a window.

3. Students tended to take the background of the paper for granted, portraying it as ‘air’ as a default background for the eight elements. There was no attempt to provide texture to the background by giving dots, dashes, or weave to the background. Such ‘embellishment’ or detailing in one form or the other was completely absent. There was one indication that the background was the sky when students drew clouds.

4. Students tended to follow what we referred to as the ‘kindergarten’ mode, lining all the mountains up in the background, positioning the house and appropriately placed window in the middle, grass around the house, river flowing in extreme foreground. There was no visible distinction between what they would have drawn when six years old and now, hence we named this the ‘kindergarten model’ of thinking.

5. Birds were drawn either in the ‘air’, or, if a single bird, on the ground or in one case in the branch of a tree. They were thus positioned as they would be in nature. All elements were drawn appropriately - vertical elements were drawn north-south such as house, mountains, grass, and bird. There was no attempt to change direction of elements for instance, a bird lying horizontally on the ground or hanging upside down from the tree. One exception was the student who drew a reflection of the mountain in the river.

6. Students tended to assume the frame and everyone’s perspective was of a landscape, except one. No one contoured, or ‘carved’ the paper with a line or curve or superimposition of another shape to create another background object.
7. There were no textural indicators on any of the drawings.
8. The representations of the elements were similar and followed what was done in kindergarten such that trees were drawn in a particular way, houses in a particular way etc. All were mimetic of other drawings and formed a kind of ‘visual stereotype’. It is not known whether this could be due to being taught at the kindergarten level to draw this way but this is not very likely to be justified as they have also been taught to read and write a certain way at kindergarten level but they have certainly outgrown it. In fact, if the case is true, then it reveals the amount of work that needs to be done with young people on the visual plane.

There were three interesting drawings but the majority of the thirteen who drew it followed this grammar, demonstrating that our first instincts to do things are usually based on socialization and conventions. They are thus ‘routine’ responses to tasks. But making students aware of these similarities in their representations and making them think through alternatives was the key to teaching them how to think creatively. Taking their initial responses as a given, we can then add ornamental elements to it to make them make creative thinking possible through drawing the attention of students to the myriad ways in which one drawing can be made different from another. These ornamental elements could be texture, relative size, color changes, directional changes (such as showing the backside of a house or an upside down bird), changes in frame, and the like.

Summary
In this chapter, we started with broadening the idea of mimesis as ‘representation’ by looking at the process involved in meaning making and interpretation through the use of semiotics. We also examined the work of two important philosophers, Locke and Dewey, alongside the insights from Bloom and Gardner. Rather than restricting the definition of ‘thinking’ to ‘critical’ and/or ‘creative’ and thereby creating false binaries\textsuperscript{14} between them, we have been guided by Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives to devise a method which will accomplish the higher order

\textsuperscript{14} To cultivate critical skills involves creative thinking and to have creative thinking implies a high degree of critical skills.
thinking skills based on visual material. Following Gardner, we have moved away from restricting the domains of expression to the verbal and focused on the visual.\textsuperscript{15}

In the second part of the chapter, we tried to devise a possible pedagogy in three parts using semiotic concepts namely denotation, connotation, paradigm, syntagm and intertextuality in analytical ways to show meaning and interpretation through compositional possibilities. This used the mimetic impulse of repetition and made it dynamic through the use of substitution. The Latin concepts of mimesis-as-imitatio and mimesis-as-copia were also used and adapted to visual material, the former through juxtaposing and intertextuality and the latter through re-ordering and ornamentation. It was seen that some clichés of mimetic pedagogy in the form of repetition have been deconstructed and made dynamic through the use of substitution of colors, posture, lighting, direction and pattern. We have devised pedagogical possibilities for teaching critical and creative thinking, using basic semiotics for visual analysis within the framework of ‘pictorial mimesis’ and responding to the challenges we face in actual teaching. This is mainly an indicatory pedagogy to show the possibilities of developing pedagogies within theoretical frameworks of mimesis.

The pedagogical possibilities described above would be very pertinent to how we approach teaching through the use of a theoretical framework based on mimesis. It uses visual material which is appropriate for the age group of 21-24 which is master’s degree students in India. This is an important aspect as currently we focus on cultivating good reading and writing skills through written research assignments, reports, essays, letters, thesis and all manner of written texts because we assume that young people (from time immemorial) need to learn (and be taught) good writing. This is a sign of an educated person for many people. However, there seems to be an innocence and ignorance about learning to read and write visual texts. Even courses in semiotics do not integrate the understanding of signs into a well-formulated pedagogy as, for instance, we have already done with our understanding of verbal grammar and even semiotics into writing. We are able to point out grammatical mistakes and evaluate the use of appropriate similies and metaphors and the like in writing. But when it comes to visuals, we tend to think that students should go by ‘intuition’ and that that they will have an ‘instinctive’ way to work with visual elements. While this may (or may not) be true of a minority of visually

\textsuperscript{15} We have done some exploratory work on the use of background score in moving commercials using semiotics (see Thampy, Lijo 2011) but it is beyond the purview of this chapter, which is focusing on only visuals and verbal material, to embrace it through the framework of mimesis.
sensitive children who will work intuitively and accurately through visual texts, as indeed do verbally sensitive children do with verbal texts, this section of the dissertation addressed the gap in the pedagogy of reading, composing and critiquing visual texts by developing a method of teaching critical and creative thinking based on pictorial mimesis. It will also no doubt help in improving visual literacy itself.

It remains to be seen how assessment of teaching-learning in these new frameworks can be done so as to conclusively prove that they are effective. This is particularly important given the powerful ‘success’ rates of mimetic teaching when assessed in conventional examinations which test ‘rote-learning’ and information rather than any of the above kinds of thinking. High scores in exams are common when they follow the conventional path which appears on the surface to be ‘clear’. However, this clarity is achieved at the cost of discouraging the other kinds of thinking which are more germane to jobs as well as citizenship. Using semiotics in the classroom through the use of visual material is one of the ways we bring back some of these kinds of thinking consciously, critically and creatively into our education; theorizing this in terms of mimesis makes us better understand the foundations of the pedagogy itself. Further, it allows us to start where young people are in terms of knowledge and help them build this knowledge base further, not in terms of content, but in terms of learning processes. It encourages teachers to also access visual media that young people are interested in or surround us in everyday life, while not precluding the use of more esoteric visual arts.