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## The dialectic of the image in Roland Barthes' theory

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### Abstract

Just like words, images are polysemous, implying 'a free chain of signifieds' (lexias or readings). The photo, as 'memento mori', is the absolute proof that everything and everybody is mortal. There are two ways of reading pictures: *the studium*, which governs all the information we can obtain from a photograph based on our knowledge of the facts that are presented to us and *the punctum*, the subjective response of an observer. A photo can play the role of the 'madeleine' in Proust's novels, provoking one's involuntary and complete memory. The photography questions the established meanings of notions like identity, time (past, present), history.

**Key words:** *image, photo, artist, mimesis, sign*