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Marketing Hedonics: Toward a Psychoanalysis of Advertising Response

Abstract

The author advances a psychoanalytic theory of advertising response to theorize the intersection of brand positioning, the semiotics of gender, and consumer desire in advertising discourse. Researchers traditionally focus on the iconic representation of desire in advertising imagery. However, by drawing upon Lacan's theory of scopophelia, the author focuses on the dialectical implication of the spectator/consumer's psychic drives in the visual semiotics of advertising discourse. The consumer identifies with the brand discourse primarily by means of projective identification with the voyeuristic gaze of the camera referenced in the image, and only secondarily because of perceived parallels between consumer lifestyle and the content of the advertisement. By way illustration, the author analyzes the positioning of consumer desire in homoerotic advertising for Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana, which draw upon resistance discourses in contemporary art to hold the consumer in a passion play of alternative sexualities and subject positions. Though these campaigns deconstruct the conventional binary opposition of male voyeur/female object of the gaze, they have contributed to the broad popularity of these brands because the brand discourse - logo, product placement, and rhetoric – restores a conventional logic to these advertisements that would have been censored from the worlds of popular culture and fine art.

Key Words

psychoanalysis, advertising response, brand semiotics, consumer desire, eroticism, gender theory, luxury advertising, marketing hedonics, projective identification

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As a form of cultural production, advertising both reflects and constructs social meanings and engages the consuming and spectating subject in a circuit of desire linking code, capital and culture in post-modernity. Over the past fifteen years or so there has been an obvious shift in the representation of gender in advertising, with the emergence of the "eroticized male body" as an alternative to the bodies of women as sexual objects. In the luxury category in particular, a new staging of male and female subjects in visual discourse deconstructs the conventional opposition of male voyeur and female object of the gaze. In advertising campaigns for Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana, for instance, the artists draw upon resistance discourses in contemporary homoerotic art to hold the consumer in a passion play of alternative identities and sexualities. In this analysis the author examines ways such representations not only 'pass' the censor but also enhance the equity of the brand and appeal to a broad spectrum of consumer segments (Cole 2002, Hoovers 2007).

In this paper the author advances a general theory of advertising response based on the dialectical implication of the psychic drives, on the side of the consumer, and semiotic codes, on the side of advertising discourse. The dynamic of this relationship would look something like this: Consumer > Psychic Drives <> Semiotic Codes < Advertisement. This approach draws upon the neo-Freudian psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, (2005/1970) as applied to the study of photography and cinema by Christian Metz (1981/1977) and Stephen Heath (1982).

Literature Review

Current theories of meaning construction and consumer response in advertising focus on

three areas: 1) the formal or rhetorical organization of meaning in the image (Stern 1989, 1993, 1996, 1999; McQuarrie and Mick 1992, Mick and Buhl 1992, Darley and Smith, 1995; Dube and Morgan 1996; Wang et al 2000, Beasley and Danesi 2002, Brunel and Nelson 2000, 2003), 2) the role of social and cultural contexts on the consumer/spectator's interpretation of the advertisement (Williamson 1998/1978, Sherry and Camargo 1987, Stern 1996, Thompson & Haytko 1997, Ritson and Elliot 1999), and 3) the consumer/spectator's ability to infer parallels between the form and structure of advertising - from the logo to the placement of the tag line - and their personal and social contexts (Scott 1994a & b, Torres & Briggs 2007).

Furthermore, research on sex in advertising focuses on sexual themes and imagery, or reports consumer's conscious reactions to these textual elements, without accounting for direct correlations between semiotic operations in advertising discourse and heightened consumer responses, regardless of the specific content of the image (Lambiase & Reichert 2002, 2003, 2006). Research has actually shown that sexual imagery by itself does not have much impact on brand awareness or perception (Lambiase & Reichert 2003), so a content analysis approach is insufficient to explain consumer response to advertising.

√√The author extends the current literature by focusing on the dynamic of 'scopophelia,' a psychoanalytic concept that can be used to account for the consumer's ability to engage with brands through the medium of advertising by means of psychic displacements (eg. Freud , Lacan 2005/1970). These include the displacement of the erotic *drive* from the sexual function per se to the process of looking; and the displacement of the erotic *aim* from a lover to symbolic substitutes such as images. Freud's account of the voyeur is a good example of scopophelia, since the voyeur takes pleasure in seeing rather than possessing the "other," and distances the "other" as a kind of representation by means of the peephole framing the "other" in voyeur's gaze.

√√Scopophelia is central to understanding symbolic consumption, because it accounts for the psychic energy or "force" that enables consumers to engage passionately with symbolic substitutes for the real thing. This is not the whole story, however. From the perspective of Lacan (2005/1970), who described the unconscious as a kind of "language," the consumer's scopic desire is triggered by semiotic codes in visual discourse that reproduce the play of presence and absence between the object *seen* and the imaginary 'scene' of the voyeur's erotic fantasy. In other words, there is a one-to-one correlation between the deployment of specific visual operations in advertising discourse and the response of consumers to the advertisement, and this kind of correlation has been documented in consumer testing (J.Walter Thompson 2003). The implications of this finding for advertising strategy and creative execution are noteworthy.

By examining the intersection of visual semiotics and the psychic drives, the psychoanalysis of scopophelia accounts for the implication of consumers in the structure and meaning of visual discourse in general, not just their responses to the erotic content of certain advertisements. Furthermore, the consumer's desire in and for the brand world is not based on a one-to one correlation between their personal lifestyle and the content of the ad, but on a process of projective identification triggered by semiotic cues in advertising discourse. This explains why Bruce Weber's homoerotic campaign for Calvin Klein, for example, did not alienate mainstream consumers. In fact the campaign restored profitability to the company and created a broad positioning for the CK brand that resonates today (Hoovers 2007).

√√By citing homoerotic campaigns for brands such as Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana, I prove that the staging of subject-positions (*I/you/he/she*) in advertising discourse, not merely the content of the image, positions the consumer as a participant in the brand world and communicates the brand positioning. I argue that codes structuring relations between elements of

advertising discourse, including the logo, product placement, characters, and visual rhetoric, restore a conventional logic to radical sexual content that would have been officially censored from the worlds of popular culture and fine art, as exemplified in the prolonged legal battle over Robert Mapplethorpe's right to exhibit his work (Elliott 1991). This may explain why homoerotic advertising for brands such as Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana both challenges sexual mores and also increases market share for the brand among mainstream consumers. In a more general way, this example shows that the force of the visual codes for spectator engagement is stronger than the content of any given image, and therefore plays an important role in the ways consumers respond to advertising.

This paper is organized in three sections: 1. The Rise of Capitalism and the Commodification of the Feminine, 2. The Cinema Apparatus and the Staging of [Sexual] Difference, and 3. Positioning Consumer Desire in Luxury Advertising.

Background

The Rise of Capitalism and the Commodification of the Feminine

In *Structural Anthropology*, Levi-Strauss (1963/1958) examines the role of gender as an organizing principle of social reproduction. The incest taboo, for example, is a social code regulating the circulation of women between men in patriarchy. The incest taboo defines Woman as a symbol of exchange between men - both sealing the relationship between the men and their groups, and perpetuating the masculine order of kinship. In Levi-Strauss' account, the masculine √√symbolizes the law or the rational order of society, the "logos" in Aristotelian terms, while the feminine symbolizes the currency men use to ensure this order. "The woman is always that

which is given in relations of exchange between men and she is thus the symbol of exchange for a system that functions only to perpetuate itself," (Phillips 2004).

The real circulation of women in early patriarchy is paralleled in the modern era by the circulation of desire linking the voyeuristic male gaze to the female object of view in visual representation. In this, the scopic realm, female sexuality, rather than women per se, becomes a value to be bought, sold, and exchanged. From the emergence of bourgeois capitalism in the 17th century to the development of advertising in the late 19th century, the history of gender representations is a history of men looking at women. By the Age of Reason, mid-seventeenth century, classical representations of the feminine muse inspired by Greek mythology - nudes symbolizing beauty, liberty, and love - compete with the eroticized female body being objectified by the voyeuristic gaze of men located either within the tableau or implicated in the point of view of the spectating subject of the painting. Notably, the men referenced in this new tradition are not aristocrats or kings, members of a feudal economy based on inheritance and favor, but a "new man," belonging to the commercial and professional classes, whose claims of position and status are tied immediately and urgently to the quality and quantity of his possessions. In this symbolic economy, parallels between looking and sexual possession assign woman to the role of an object or commodity.

For example, in a dramatic departure from the style of his predecessors, Blanchard stages an erotic twist on the classical tradition in European painting in works such as "Venus and the Graces Being Surprised by a Mortal" (1630). Blanchard introduces the figure of a contemporary male, dressed in the suit and hat of the commercial class, peeping in on the sleeping goddess and her entourage (Figure 1) The fleshy, curved bodies of the nude figures and the untamed natural backdrop that supports them heightens the eroticism of the scene.

Place Figure 1 about here - Venus.

Art historians point out that the scene depicted in Blanchard's painting does not have a clear reference to a Greek myth (Kazerouni 2005), nor does it maintain the respectful distance between the nude-as-allegorical figure and the secular space of the painter and spectator that characterizes the earlier, allegorical tradition. Thus Blanchard's Venus marks a shift both in the style and the cultural priorities of his generation at the edge of modernism. The representation of the feminine here crosses over the boundary separating allegory from eroticism, and defines a moment in the objectification of female sexuality by means of the "objectif" or lens of the male gaze, a form of visual staging that would be perpetuated and expanded in the photographs of Niepce, some 200 years later, and eventually in the peep shows of George Eastman (Williams 1999). From the Age of Reason to the twentieth century, the eroticization of the female nude takes women off the pedestal of classical esthetics and locates her in the brothel, the bedroom, and the erotic fantasy.

The Blanchard painting reflects an economy of gender difference structured in terms of paradigmatic oppositions between the male voyeur and female object of the gaze that characterize western culture in the modernist era. The voyeur is in a position of dominance, control, and power; the object of the gaze is in a position of subjection, passivity, and lack of power. The following table summarizes the various dimensions of this paradigmatic system (Table 1).

Place Table 1 about here.

In the modernist tradition, broad binary distinctions between male and female regimes of

experience tend to be collapsed into the biological differences between the sexes. In Blanchard's *Venus*, for example, the male subject position (the voyeur) is identified with a man in the painting; the female subject position (the object of the gaze) is identified with a woman. In post-modern perspective, sexual difference can be understood in terms of semiotic codes inscribing subject-positions in discourse (e.g. I/you/he/she), rather than of the biological differences between men and women in their civil status. In post-modernism, male actors can be staged as objects of the look and female actors can be staged as voyeurs. However, as I claim in this paper, such role switching does not change the underlying structure of gender stereotypes in the dominant culture.

The male/female binary generates a paradigmatic series of oppositions at the levels of psychoanalysis, epistemology, economy, and discursive style between masculine and feminine subject positions, including the opposition of voyeur/object of the gaze, subject/object, prose/poetry, logic/play. This account provides means of interpreting gender archetypes and their deconstruction in formal, rather than simply biological terms. Thus, innovations such as the flattening of Quattrocento perspective in Impressionism, the deconstruction of narrative voice in the New Novel, and the staging of multiple sexualities and subject positions in post-modern cultural production, parallel the deconstruction of firm boundaries and oppositions between female and male stereotypes in the broader culture. In other words a male body could occupy the female position in representations as the object of the spectator's gaze, as in homoerotic advertisements.

Parallels between the commerce in women and the commerce in representations of Woman's body come full circle in the 19th century artistic genre of the Turkish odalisque or female slave. Odalisque paintings by artists such as Ingres (1814, 1842), Delacroix (1857), and Lefèbre (1874) reflect the popularity of Orientalism in European art and popular culture, and

conflate colonial domination with the symbolic domination of Woman. In such paintings, the woman's body is an explicitly erotic figure exposed for the enjoyment of men both within and in front of the canvas. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the odalisque figure evolves into a critique of the genre and the sexual economy it represents. Shown with increasing nudity, she is often shown looking out at the spectator with a look of seduction and complicity. She is often accompanied in the image by figures of dark-skinned servants who bring to mind Europe's colonial adventure. Such paintings foreground the exploitative nature of representations of women since the 17th century by frankly displaying woman's body as a term of exchange, both parallel to and implicated in the circulation of money and power in advanced capitalism.

√√ Take Manet's *Olympia* (1863), for example, which includes a critical reflection on the representation of the female body as a commodity (Figure 2). The odalisque figure - a woman for sale – reclines nude on a bed, looking out at the spectator. An African servant delivers a bouquet – presumably from her keeper. The nude's body lacks the soft, fleshy contours of previous incarnations of this figure, and her posture is somewhat stiff and straight. She returns the gaze of the spectator/voyeur off-frame in an impassive stare, asserting both her complicity in this exhibition and a certain authority over the voyeur and his gaze. She looks back at the male voyeur/spectator with the cool detachment of a professional.

Place Figure 2 about here - Olympia.

This "looking back" has broader implications for the history of figurative painting, because it dismantles the illusion of reality in the image and deconstructs the economy of desire linking money, power, and scopophelia in figurative painting. Manet's painting marks a turning point in Western art, which would evolve increasingly toward abstraction and a demystification

of vision throughout the 20th century.

As I show throughout this paper, the dominant gender paradigm that positions the male voyeur against the female object of the gaze is so deeply rooted in Western culture that it keeps reappearing in different guises, even as it is dismantled in one medium or another. For example, just as movements in modern art announced an end to figurative painting as it was then known, developments in the technology of visual reproduction recuperated the illusion of reality and reinstated the authority of the male gaze. The commerce in women's bodies would be taken up in other media where painting left off mid-19th century, deployed in the scopic realms of the strip tease, the peep show, the movies and eventually – advertising.

√√The commerce in scopophelia is potentially much more profitable than pandering, since representations can be reproduced and distributed on a large scale. The trade in representations of women, in advanced consumer culture, has outstripped, as it were, the actual trade in women. Advertising has an important function here, as it mediates the *implication* of consumer desire, brand communication and economic exchange in the marketplace. This circle of desire accounts for the consumer's seemingly inexhaustible need for symbolic gratification.

What interests me here – as it interested Metz (1989/1977) with regard to cinema spectating – are the ways the very construction of an advertisement can capture the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of consumers in an endless cycle of desire, depletion, and renewal of desire that drives consumer culture. In the following section I present an overview of the theoretical debates that inform my analysis of consumer desire in advertising.

Theory development

The Cinema Apparatus and the Staging of (Sexual) Difference

In the *Imaginary Signifier* (1989/1977), Christian Metz changes the focus of film theory from analysis of the structure of meaning in the image (e.g. Eisenstein The Film Form), to an examination of the phenomenological relationship between the spectating subject and the invisible I/eye of the camera. The scope of Metz's approach extends beyond the text to the broader interrogation of cinema and the cinematic, including the ontological specificity of photographic reproduction, the semiotics of visual discourse, and the psychology of spectator identification.

√√Metz's theory of the "imaginary signifier" articulates cinema into two levels of analysis – the still image and the "moving image" created by the alignment of multiple images in the film chain. At each level of analysis, semiotic codes account for the structure of meaning and the spectator's implication in the discourse. Though I focus here on print advertisements, not moving pictures, I show how cinematic codes such as continuity editing can be deployed in still photography to give the illusion of movement and engage the spectator in the image. Metz does not stop with a structural analysis of the codes shaping film discourse, but invites us to consider how these codes may contribute to the ways spectators respond to photography and cinema. He draws upon the psycho-semiotic theory of the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, to consider why, for instance, Hitchcock's editing style holds spectators on the edge of their seats, while the simple alignment of the same images does not.

Metz draws parallels between the structure of meaning in the photographic image and the linguistic sign, which is formed by the dialectical implication of a material signifier, such as a word, and a "signified" or concept. Metz asserts that the photographic signifier lacks the material substance of sounds or images, since it is merely a trace for a reality that once stood before the camera. Hence the signifier for cinema and photography is 'imaginary,' because it does not simply represent reality but points to an imagined space and time that are no longer present to the

spectator - a space-time that the spectator must imagine for him/herself. This explains the force of family photo albums, which not only record images of past events, but trigger our memory of different times of our lives. These photographs are both icons and indexes for imaginary scenarios that must be conjured up by the spectator. So when someone says that they 'identified' with a film, they do not necessarily have to resemble a character in the story (take E.T. for example). In the imaginary-symbolic realm, they take the place of that character. From Metz's perspective, spectator identification consists in the spectator's psychic projections into the imaginary recesses in the film created by the fleeting and incomplete play of light and movement on the cinema screen.

Mind and Meaning

√√Metz draws upon the work of Jacques Lacan (2005/1970) in order to account for the emotional force of this interface between the "imaginary signifier" and the spectator's psychic drives, a force that both elicits emotional responses in the spectator/consumer, and prompts them to repeat this experience over and over again. Since this compulsion to repeat drives the economy of consumer culture, understanding this theory provides insights into the psychological dynamic driving consumption.

√√Lacan advances Freudian theory by conceiving of the subject or Self as a function of the dialectical implication of Being and meaning in discourse, rather than as a transcendent essence or origin of meaning. Lacan defines Being in terms of three interlacing registers of human experience: the Imaginary, or what Freud described as the Unconscious, the Symbolic, or the human's participation in the production and consumption of meanings, and the Real, the reflection on the process of production of the symbolic and imaginary, such as the technology that produces the image.

By emphasizing intersection of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real in the construction of the Self, Lacan moves beyond the Cartesian logic that limits human subjectivity to an internal metaphysical concept, expressed in the famous statement, "I think, therefore I am." In Lacan, the Self is a subject-position rather than subjectivity per se; a cultural construction rather than a being that transcends culture. For this reason, when Lacan talks about the male, the phallus, or the female, he is not referencing the biological differences between men and women per se, but the culturally defined positions of masculinity and femininity in discourses such as the paintings shown earlier, and the subject's (e.g. the spectator's or the consumer's) imaginary identification with these positions.

Metz, building on Lacan, examines cinema and photography from the perspective of a multi-dimensional schema, including the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real.

The Symbolic. The symbolic realm includes the material, intelligible dimension of the image as a signifier or representation, a socially determined system of semiotic codes. The symbolic is dialectically linked to the imaginary, when the subject derives abstract meanings from the signifier.

The Imaginary. At the imaginary level, photographic representation is a "dream machine," a signifier of absence (a trace of physical reality), inviting the spectator's identification with the world within the frame.

The Real. At the level of the 'real,' images are material productions created by the convergence of money, talent, and marketing in the film industry and advertising. As Metz says, the spectator (or consumer) is primarily engaged in cinema and photography from the standpoint of the symbolic and imaginary realms, since the very force of these media derives from a masking or denial of the technical or commercial processes of production.

Metz points out that while all experience tends to oscillate between the symbolic, the

imaginary and the real, film spectating leans to the side of the imaginary/symbolic, unfolding as a series of mirror effects between the film screen and the spectator's psychological "screen" organized in a chain. Cinema is thus an 'imaginary signifier,' a symbolic, technological, and commercial apparatus linking visual representation, consumer desire, and the circulation of capital in the entertainment industry (Figure 3). The cinema is also an erotic apparatus, preserving and perpetuating the ideal of the film as a "good object," as guarantee of the subject's closure with the Other in the imaginary realm. The imaginary/symbolic apparatus of cinema and photography contributes to the ability of advertising to engage not only the mind but also the passion of consumers in the brand world. Like cinema, advertising is a cultural representation as well as an industry - a kind of dream machine linking consumer desire to brand perceptions and capital exchange. Advertising frequently capitalizes on this gender paradigm in order to create associations in the consumer's mind between the allure of woman's eroticized body and the desirability of the brand.

Figure 3 about here -Imaginary Signifier.

Projective Identification

The consumer/spectator is engaged in the imaginary-symbolic realm of advertising by means of projective identification, a dialectical movement between the psychic drives of projection - when the subject projects themselves into the Other, and introjection – when the subject internalizes the Other as a part of themselves. Projective identification was originally understood by Melanie Klein (1946) as a defense mechanism underlying early childhood development, by means of which the child projects internal phantasms onto the mother and then

internalizes the mother as a "good" (or bad) object.

Lacan developed this concept further, underlining the importance of projection and identification in the very development of the ability to form and manipulate symbols. The dialectical movement between projection and introjection contribute to the subject's understanding of and identification with the meanings organized in representations. Though the popular culture has reduced the notion of identification to a one-to-one correlation between a character in the story or ad and the reader or spectator's personal identity (Torres & Briggs 2007), projective identification focuses on the implication of being or subjectivity in the semiotic codes tracing 'voice' or subject-address in discourse, such as the pronouns *I* and *you*. Even Williamson (1998/1978), who brings Lacan to bear on her analysis of advertising response, oversimplifies Lacan's mirror phase, emphasizing a mimetic relationship between the consumer's self-image and the images in the ad. The present account, on the other hand, emphasizes the dialectical implication of semiotic codes in advertising discourse and the speaking and spectating subject's psychic engagement in that discourse.

In verbal discourse, the personal pronouns engage readers in the world of narratives, regardless of the reader's material similarities with the narrator. For example, we do not have to resemble the narrator Ishmael in order to "identify" with *Moby Dick* as an omniscient observer or a participant in the story. We identify with the place of the narrator by means of the conventional implication of reader and narrating I, e.g. "My name is Ishmael." This explains why spectators can identify emotionally with the most unfamiliar characters and events on screen.

In a similar way, codes governing visual point of view engage spectators in the world of film and photography. Metz draws parallels between the first person narrator and the spectator's implication in the omniscient I/eye of the camera in photography. The photograph is an index for the place of the absent camera in front of the world seized on film, and also for the look of the

spectator looking at what the camera "sees." According to Metz, a play of presence and absence between what is seen in the image and what is referenced out of frame, engages the spectator's involvement in the world of the image by means of projective identification. As a spectator, I take the place of the absent camera – I become the narrating "I" of the representation in-frame. I also internalize the meanings organized in the image – they become associated in consciousness with memories and fantasies I have previously associated with these meanings.

Next, as images are linked together in film discourse, the spectator's identification with the look of the (absent) camera is superimposed onto the looks of characters in the story. As a character looks off-screen, they reference an imaginary space that the spectator fills in by means of projection. The parallel dynamic of presence and absence in the signifier and projection and introduction in the spectator drives the emotional investment of spectators and consumers in film and advertising. By projecting themselves into the ellipses inherent in cinema discourse, the spectating subject becomes, in the imaginary/symbolic realm, a principle player in the fiction. The following example illustrates this phenomenon.

Murder by Looking

In his famous film, *Psycho*, Alfred Hitchcock engages the spectator in the suspense of the narrative by means of a cross-cut editing style that exploits the psychic play of presence and absence in cinema. When the murder victim's sister, played by Vera Miles, comes looking for her at the isolated motel where she was murdered by a psychopath, a series of cross-cuts between Miles and the murderer looking off-screen opens a play of presence and absence that engages the spectator's identification in the film as a potential victim. Since we can only imagine the space they reference off-screen, we must actively create that reality in our minds as the scene unfolds.

These kinds of cross-cuts, in the fiction film, engage the spectator in the film world by masking the real of the camera and the screen separating the spectator from the film narrative.

This sequence illustrates the dialectic of desire in the classic narrative film, in which the gaze of the camera is traditionally matched with the gaze of male characters looking in the direction of women (Bordwell et al 1985). The semiotic codes that structure the cross-cut – on the side of representation, are implicated in the cultural codes that structure gender roles – on the side of the spectator. This pattern illustrates the way the semiotics mediates the dialectical implication of communication codes and the social and psychological construction of the spectator (or consumer).

The Psychoanalysis of Gender

As I illustrated in the cross-cut example, there is a gendered dimension to the imaginary signifier of cinema and advertising that Metz explains with reference to psychoanalysis. Metz associates cinema spectating with the 'mirror stage' of psychological development, when the child both recognizes his/her internal division between a subject for itself and a subject for others, and recognizes the sexual differences between the parents, and between the parents and the child. At this stage the child also develops the ability to form symbols, and uses symbolic displacement to recuperate, in the imaginary/symbolic realm, the mother's difference (as lack of a phallus) and her separation from him/her in reality. Freud developed the notion of the fetish to account for the role of symbolic displacement in this process. The male subject defends himself against the fear of his own castration by projecting the "same," the phallus, into the Other (the image of woman) (Figure 4). FREUD SAYS:

Place Figure 4 about here - Fetishism.

Lacan extended Freud's theory by identifying the role of language and symbol formation in this process – insisting that the phallus should not be reduced to the biological differences between the sexes, but understood as the symbolic anchor around which logic, meaning, and consciousness are organized in Western culture. The feminine, on the other hand, would represent fragmentation, excess, and play or non-sense. The mirror stage is played out repeatedly in adult life as the endless fluctuation of the speaking and spectating subject between passion and reason, negotiated by means of symbolic displacements. (Table 1)

Place Table I about here.

MAKE A GRID OF THIS INFO FOR Phallas/Lack???

According to Metz, the cinema replays the castration phantasm repeatedly, in the imaginary/symbolic realm, engaging the spectator alternatively between the movement of desire and excess in the image and the order of the *logos*, the unity of meaning and being in visual discourse. The dialectical implication of the spectator's look, semiotic operations in the film, and characters in the image, transforms the cinema signifier from a fragmented chain of images and sounds (24 frames per second), in the realm of the real, into a coherent narrative, in the imaginary/symbolic realm. The illusion of continuity and closure in visual discourse depends not only on rhetorical devices in the image, but on the spectator's ability to "read" the codes for constructing continuity in film discourse. In other words, meaning and being are not transcendent 'givens' but are constructed in dialectical relation to cultural codes shaping meaning in specific contexts.

FETISH??The film fetish plays a role here. In secondary identification, the spectator internalizes the looks of characters looking off-screen, filling in the gaps in the image opened by

their looks with his or her own projections. The object of the character's look, usually a woman in the classical narrative film, (Bordwell et al 1985), takes on the psychological role of the fetish, an object to be loved and a means of keeping at bay the threat of castration symbolized in the fragmentation of the cinema signifier. For the fantasy to work, the woman on-screen cannot look back at the spectator/voyeur without opening another gap in the signifier and a threat of symbolic castration. This cultural code acts as a sort of "law of the look," and dictates the way film and video are edited for the mass media. As we move the discussion forward, we will see that this code is deployed somewhat differently in advertising.

Scophelia and Advertising

So far we have been discussing the dynamic of scopophelia or "the desire to see" with reference to the fiction film, whose success is measured in terms of its ability to engage spectators in a fantasy by masking the process of production of the image, including the voyeuristic gaze of the camera and the lack (of the phallus as signifier) associated with the feminine. In advertising, however, it is not unusual for women in the image to look back at the camera, to address the voyeur/consumer and . This apparent violation of the 'law of the look' does not, however, threaten the spectator's pleasure in looking or their identification with the image, as it did with Manet's *Olympia* mentioned earlier. I contend that in advertising, the brand - signified in the logo, tagline, packaging and other brand elements, "sutures" absence (of the voyeur off-screen) and lack (of the woman's phallus) by standing in as a fetishistic replacement for the phallus and an object to be loved.

(WOULD A GRAPHIC HELP HERE?)

Feminist critics claim that theories grounded in the primacy of the phallus and its lack reduce women to the role of man's 'other.' In the dominant order of patriarchy, they claim,

gender is reduced to the biological difference between male and female bodies. (Copjec 2000, Cowie 2000, Doane 1993, 1990, Friedberg 1990, Silverman 1988). To the extent that representations perform as fetishes, THESE CRITICS CLAIM, they guarantee a male order of the symbolic, an ideology of the "same" turning around the phallus (and its lack). Moreover, by reducing the cinema apparatus to the dominant representation of gender in the classic narrative film genre, Metz's approach forecloses discussion of a feminine subject of discourse, the potential for a multi-voiced or doubled identity of the cinema subject, or deconstructionist interpretations of the cinema apparatus as a function of the political ideology of late capitalism.

However, neither Lacanian psychoanalysis nor Metz's psychoanalysis of cinema collapses the masculine and feminine orders of discourse to the biological reality of men and women (Penley 2000). By detaching the structure of gendered discourse from the biological differences between the sexes, Metz provides a framework for theorizing the movement of desire in advertising as a response to semiotic and rhetorical operations in visual discourse, not a one-to-one alignment of men and women in advertising with biologically masculine or feminine consumers. This enables us later in this paper to discuss masculine and feminine subject positions with reference to homoerotic imagery in advertising.

Metz's contribution provided us with a new way of looking at visual representation that takes into account the phenomenological relation between conscious perception and the production of meaning – the condition of possibility of visual discourse. And though the 'imaginary signifier' references the 'essence of cinema,' not the analysis of any particular film text or style, it does not foreclose analysis of the subject in historical and ideological context.

Since visual representations such as photography and cinema constitute material productions, in the realm of the real, the cinema apparatus is also a capitalist apparatus. The film industry is the engine that drives the economy of desire implicating money, representation, and

consumer scopophelia in cinema. Modern advertising leverages this kind of economy to draw consumer desire to brands. In advertising scopophelia, the female body is not in and of itself the commodity, but a symbolic currency adding brand value to goods ranging from cars to perfumes. The following grid maps the implication of spectator look, the camera eye/I, consumer desire, and the brand fetish in the psycho-semiotic system referred to here as marketing hedonics (*Figure* 5)

Place Figure 4 about here.

The theory of cinema scopophelia presented above privileges spectator's imaginary-symbolic engagement in artistic representations. However, as soon as we apply this theory to questions of branded discourses in advertising, we are faced with the real, commercial dimension of the marketplace and the need to exploit this imaginary-symbolic engagement to garner market share for the brand. In the following section, I engage these debates in order to theorize the dialectical implication of consumer desire, visual representation, and capitalism through the medium of advertising.

Advertising campaigns by Bruce Weber for Calvin Klein (1990) and Steven Meisel for Dolce & Gabbana (2006) seem to revolutionize the dominant order of gender representation, since the eroticized male body is the object of consumer scopophelia. The following sections will address the ways brand semiotics restores a conventional logic to homoerotic advertising, not only dodging the censor but also building brand equity across a range of consumer sexualities.

Applications

Positioning Consumer Desire in Luxury Advertising

Marketing hedonics describes an economy of desire linking brand meaning to symbolic consumption. This means that advertising involves a delicate balance between consumer passion and rationality, expressed in terms of a movement between visual play, emotion, non-sense, and a call to order. When the woman 'looks back' at the spectator in the Dior advertisement (*Figure* 6), her gaze provisionally deconstructs the male order of scopophelia by acknowledging the presence of the voyeur (the consumer) looking at the image, raising the spectre of alienation, castration and non-sense associated with the feminine.

Place Figure 5 about here -Dior.

For advertising to ultimately "work," it must link the play of meaning to a logical association with the brand message. In the Dior ad, the psychological space that is opened up when the woman looks back at the camera is sutured by means of the BRANDED bottle of perfume she holds - interestingly shaped like the male sex. In this way, the product placement restores a phallo-centric logic to the representation. Feminine desire is thus reinterpreted here as the desire for completion and satisfaction in relation to the brand as sex symbol. Though marketing hedonics forms the psychological cornerstone of symbolic consumption generally, luxury advertising lays bare the series of displacements in the symbolic/imaginary realm that engage the consumer in the brand world.

Luxury advertising was once the unique domain of male fantasies about women in roles ranging from the goddess to the whore. In recent years, luxury advertising replays post-modern trends in the arts that challenge the dominant heterosexual interpretation of gender, most famously exemplified in the work of Robert Mapplethorpe. Mapplethorpe's photographs of male nudes challenges the dominant association of beauty and desire with Woman's body. Since his

works include explicit representations of homoeroticism, they have drawn fire from conservative groups and prompted lawsuits and outright censorship, particularly in the well-publicized scandals surrounding the "Perfect Moment" exhibit from 1988 to 1990 (Kidd 2003).

Recent advertising in the luxury sector seems to leverage the *succès de scandale* of Mapplethorpe's work. In these kinds of ads, the eroticized male body often stands in place of female body as the object of the voyeuristic gaze of the I/eye of the camera/spectator. This perversion (*pervertere* – to twist) of the traditional dialectic of male/female, subject/object of the gaze challenges the closed system of meaning and being symbolized in the order of the phallus, the look, and the logic of discourse and introduces alternative voices, positions, and sexualities into luxury advertising.

The Calvin Klein Jeans Campaign

A case in point is the Calvin Klein brand, which has leveraged associations with shocking sexual representations since the 1970's. The television spot (1980) where Brooke Shield's says, "Nothing stands between me and my Calvins," moved the brand into the spotlight and generated strong reactions in the media. The introduction of even more scandalous imagery in the 1990's, including eroticized male bodies and nude shots of Kate Moss (Obsession perfume, 1993), with and without male partners, reflected not so much a revolution in the social mores of the audience as a public relations strategy of shock and scandal.

Though the photographer Bruce Weber is credited with initiating the figure of the eroticized male in advertising, his work builds upon the publicity generated by Mapplethorpe's art. In a 1991 Calvin Klein jeans advertising insert in *Vanity Fair* (Figure 7), Weber positions the male body as an object of the voyeuristic gaze of the camera/spectator, while reiterating the

ambiguity of this figure – is I . The eroticized male body performs – like the female body in traditional representations – as a kind of currency in the circulation of desire within consumer culture. Weber deconstructed the traditional order of scopophelia positioning male voyeur against female "viewed" by staging men in both the male and female points of view. The advertising insert created a scandal, but was successful with straight as well as homosexual consumers because they created a harmless dalliance with homosexuality while maintaining the dominant order of scopophelia.

Figure 6 about here - CK.

The next section includes analysis of ~~three~~ an advertisement taken from the famous Vanity Fair insert for Calvin Klein jeans published in 1991. In ~~all of~~ the ad, formal dimensions, including ~~the organization of bodies and looks within the frame,~~ the positioning of models *vis a vis* the spectator, the product display, and the organization of line, shading, and mass within the frame - contribute to a system of visual codes for gender identity and identification in advertising discourse. The semiotic structure of the ad reinforces the association of the Calvin Klein brand with passion and engages consumer desire in the brand. ~~(A complete semiotic analysis of the three ads is appended to this paper, Appendix 1.)~~

PUT THE FULL ANALYSIS HERE

In Lacanian terms, the campaign exposes the castration scenario as a play of division, ambiguity, and lack, and the threat of a potential breakdown of meaning altogether. Not only does the voyeuristic gaze of the camera/spectator project the promoridal phantasm of the 'castrated' mother onto the female body, as seen in the Dior advertisement in Figure 4; it also superimposes this phantasm over an image of the male body, suggesting the phantasm of the

castrated male. In the analysis which follows, I show how the product placement in these ads resolves the castration figure by means of a kind of ”logic of the logo.”

In this ad we see only the muscular torso of a nude man holding a pair of jeans in front of his body. The water splashing down his body suggests he is in the shower, but we have to imagine for ourselves the exact “story” behind this image.√√The initial staging of voyeur and object of the look puts into play a movement of consumer scopophelia based on a series of displacements between the symbolic (metonymies such as the torso, the water, the jeans), and the imaginary (the fantasy that these signs trigger in the spectator), and the real (the marketing function). The ad stages a kind of visual seduction, inviting the consumer/spectator to imagine what the whole man looks like and what he is masking with the jeans. The placement of the jeans, *there* where the genitalia have been censored (lacking) from the image, opens up a figure of lack or symbolic “castration,” that is recuperated, in the symbolic order, by means of the CK brand. (Table 2)

Place Table 2 about here.

The staging of looks in this ad resembles the peep show or strip tease, where pleasure derives not from what the spectator sees but from a play of presence and absence between what is seen and what lies beyond the reach of vision. The twist of course is that the ad suggests a homoerotic fantasy. Rather than using the woman’s body as a figure of symbolic “castration” and lack associated with the feminine, the ad employs a man’s body, a figure for the “castrated” male (the male as object of the gaze). The fact that the figure of the eroticized male has been censored by the dominant art institutions, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, is testimony to the dangers this figure poses for the dominant culture. So why, we might as, does

this same figure "pass" the censor in advertising? I propose that the critical placement of the CK jeans in the place of the genitalia in effect censors the homoerotic fantasy by displacing the fantasy from the real sex object to the brand - a fetishistic replacement for that which is lacking in woman's body. In the same way that the bottle of perfume restored a phallo-centric logic to the Dior ad, the jeans in this ad recuperate the dominant order of the phallus as signifier for sexual power. This displacement underlies the erotic force and positioning of the Calvin Klein brand in general. The Calvin Klein brand not only looks sexy; it stands for sex.

The product placement both censors the explicit sexuality of the scene and opens an imaginary space in the representation that invites spectator projection and identification with the characters. It also brings the focus of the scene – and consumer desire – back to the brand as a fetish to be loved – reminding us of Brooke Shield's famous line, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins."

This chain of displacements – from the relationship in the scene to the consumer/spectator's relationship to the brand characterizes the way advertising contributes to symbolic consumption in general. Psychological displacement accounts for the transfer of meaning from advertising discourse to the brand, enabling the brand to fulfill unmet consumer needs by means of intangible, emotional benefits.

What differentiates these ads from the covers of body building magazines or publications targeted to gays is that the sexual cues in the ads are ambiguous: the men are both muscular and vulnerable, seducing and seduced, homoerotic and straight, subject and object of the gaze. The visual rhetoric implicates the spectator in an ambiguous relationship to the image. In this scenario, the spectator - male or female in reality, is divided in the symbolic/imaginary realm by means of identification with the male gaze of the camera gazing at men. This figuration deconstructs the gendered logic of cinema scopophelia by projecting gender difference onto a

polymorphous figure of the eroticized male body. The semiotic organization of the ads recuperates this logic with reference to the brand meaning and positioning.

The repositioning of masculinity in this ~~these~~ advertisement~~s~~ performs strategic functions relative to positioning, differentiating, and clarifying the Calvin Klein brand with regard to competitors. It also initiated a trend in mainstream advertising that both reflects and contributes to changing styles, behaviors, and attitudes related to popular representations and conceptions of gender. We are loath to imply that such advertisements challenge the status-quo in the manner of Mapplethorpe, since their force derives from a staging of dominant paradigm opposing the male subject and the female subject-positions traced in the organization of looks in the image. It would also be a mistake to limit interpretation of these ads to their obvious homoeroticism, since they contribute to the strong performance of the Calvin Klein brand in the mass market and continue to inspire Calvin Klein campaigns. What has changed in these ads, and in advertising in general, is that the monolithic order of male subject and its female Other has been deconstructed into a spectrum of gendered identities and subject positions loosely organized around the voyeuristic gaze of the camera.

The eroticized male body in this campaign incorporates codes for feminine appearance in body language and physical appearance, including physical shapes and gestures, and the placement of the bodies within the frame. In this way, "the eroticized male body" is taken up and implicated in the commodification and circulation of the feminine in consumer culture, in spite of the obvious homoerotic implications of some of the ads. This may explain the success of these campaigns in the mass market (Elliott 1991).

Dolce & Gabbana Cinema

British critic Stephen Heath (1982) extends Metz's theory of the imaginary signifier with reference to a specific movement of subject-address in narrative film, traced and orchestrated by cinematic codes for structuring spectator point of view in cinema. Heath insists that in Lacanian theory the term "castration" *covers two distinct regimes of meaning*. It describes both the division of the subject in the symbolic order and the real division between the sexes. In popular culture and advertising, the dual notion of "lack" tends to be reduced to the second meaning, the lack of a specific organ: the male genitals. ✓✓ As I said earlier, Lacan cautions us not to reduce the phallus or the castration phantasm, a symbolic construct, to the biological differences between the sexes, but to understand them as symbolic constructs which anchor logic, meaning, and consciousness in Western culture

✓✓ The consuming and spectating subject's desire in and for the image is regulated by the codes governing meaning production in cultural representations such as the arts and marketing communication. The gendered figure of the voyeur looking at the object of desire is a classic example of this. Heath (1982, 16) explains: *"*An important - determining - part of ideological systems is then the achievement of a number of machines (institutions) that can move the individual as subject, shifting and tying desire, realigning excess and contradiction, in a perpetual retotalization—a remembering—of the imaginary in which the individual-subject is grasped as identity. It is in terms of this 'double bind'—the statement of social meanings and the holding of the individual to those meanings, the suturing of the enounced and the enunciation, what was called above 'the vision of the subject,' that the institution of cinema can be understood."

The cinema "signifies" to the exact extent that it obeys the "law of the phallus" as a symbol for the unity of meaning and being in discourse, and a defense against the order of "castration" or lack. This unity is sustained in two ways. First, the film editing masks the real

fragmentation of the film chain into shots and sequences. Next, the staging of subject-address in film discourse sutures the relationship between the meaning communicated outward *for* the spectator and the meaning created internally *by* the spectator by means of their personal psychic projections into the representation. Heath clarifies that these suturing effects are not indifferent to gender difference. They are inscribed a paradigmatic series of culturally-defined binary oppositions in which masculinity is aligned with the organizing logic of the gaze, and femininity is aligned with the fragmentation, lack, and passion associated with the object of the gaze. In other words, in film and photography, the object of desire in the image evokes an imaginary, psychic space – the space of the scene off-frame and the figure of the absent voyeur/camera. This formal structure invites the spectator to complete the scene by means of their personal projections.

The viewer/I is always and already aligned with the masculine order of the logos. From this vantage point, the figure of woman-as-voyeur – as spectator and director of her own desire - is always and already mediated by the lens of masculine desire. The feminine 'subject' of discourse is thus a figure for alienation and lack with reference to the dominant male discourse. The suturing effects of classical narrative editing perpetuate an economy of heterosexual desire by masking the real fragmentation and incompleteness of the cinema signifier (24 frames per second), thus resolving, in the imaginary-symbolic realm, the castration anxiety associated with the mirror phase of development.

The figure of the eroticized male body reflects cultural shifts in the sexual roles of men and women in Western culture, but may also obscure the more complex question of how representations of alternative sexualities that have been banned from popular culture and the arts – particularly in the U.S. - have 'passed' the censor when they appear in advertising. The previous analysis of the Calvin Klein ads demonstrated how the brand work - the logo, product

placement and style – recuperated lack, fragmentation and difference in the order of the logos or logic of discourse. In the following section this is examined problem further with reference to a recent ad campaign by photographer Steven Meisel for Dolce & Gabbana (Figure 8) (A complete semiotic analysis of the advertisement INCLUDE HERE.)

Place Figure 8 about here – D&G

In the Dolce & Gabbana campaign, Meisel evokes the counter-cultural strategies of artists/filmmakers such as Dean Sameshima and Bruce LaBruce, who use photomontage, photography, video and performance art to stage a social revolution at the edge of visual culture. In multi-media exhibits in Berlin and Los Angeles such as "Heterosexuality Is the Opiate of the Masses" (2005), Bruce LaBruce superimposes revolutionary slogans over homoerotic photography that both foregrounds the technology and ontology of photography and cinema and interrogates the ideological foundations of the cinematic apparatus. This kind of work dismantles the eroticism of the strip tease or peep show – an eroticism grounded in the domination of the omniscient voyeur over the erotic object caught unawares in his gaze – and exposes men as erotic objects looking back boldly at the camera/spectator with an insinuating smile. Bruce LaBruce's work resists the ideology of mastery and logic shaping the dominant (heterosexual) discourse by suspending the synthesis of camera position, subject positions, and spectator desire in cinema and photography.

Place Figure 6 about here.

Meisel's campaign replays this artistic radicalism to communicate the edgy and risqué

positioning of the Dolce & Gabbana brand. By foregrounding the work point of view in the construction of meaning, Meisel engages the consumer/spectator in a play of looks staged over a four-page magazine spread (Figure 6). All four scenes reveal the process of production of the image – we see a film set, a director, and by implication, the actors. Foregrounding is a revolutionary art device developed by Russian Formalists to create a critical distance between the meaning of a work and the ideological apparatus that gave it form (Lemon and Reis 1965). In Meisel's campaign for Dolce & Gabana, the disclosure of the production process invites a reflection also on the ideological apparatus at work in cinema and photography. Rather than mount a serious attack on the capitalist apparatus in which advertising is engaged, however, this imagery seems to parody the dominant representation of eroticism in advertising in order to underscore the urbane, sophisticated and advanced-guard personality of the Dolce & Gabbana brand. Meisel introduces fragmentation, lack, and critical distance into the scene while reinstating a "logic of the logo" to the discourse.

The four scenes in the ad are loosely connected in a kind of cinematic montage joining actors, actions, and product line in a single imaginary space from one page to the next – the space of the production of the image. These continuities are reinforced by the placement of the Dolce & Gabbana brand name across the four pages, beginning on page one and ending on page four. The construction of the ad sets in motion a play between brand positioning and subject positions traced in the cinema signifier – at the levels of point of view, references off screen, references to the eye of the camera.

Each scene suggests a homoerotic encounter, and each scene is embedded within a representation of a director shooting these scenes for a film. In the background of each shot the lights, camera and set are exposed to unveil the technical process of cinematic production. This formal strategy deconstructs the unity of scene and seen of the classical narrative style, and

exposes the real fragmentation and discontinuity of the cinema signifier.

This reflection on the discontinuity of the cinema signifier is paralleled in the formal composition of each shot. In scene #1 two men are getting dressed together, one in the background, one in the foreground, suggesting the aftermath of an erotic encounter. The head and shoulders of the man in the foreground are cropped out of the frame, placing focus on the man's action of zipping up his pants. The elliptical construction of the shot opens up a play of presence and absence between scene and seen, dress and undress, that teases the spectator in the manner of a strip tease.

In scene #2, Meisel stages a seduction-by-looking in which an impassive male nude is subordinated by the gaze and scrutiny of two more dominant men. By framing this scene within the scene about making a movie, Meisel draws attention to a psychic economy of castration, division, and lack underlying the production of meaning, being, and sexual identity in cinematic discourse. Scene #3 shows an actor in the left foreground of the shot, dressed only in briefs, mounting a cot on which another man, dressed in Dolce & Gabbana sports shirt, is reclining, arms behind his head, looking at the other man with complicity. This shot appears to be a set-up for the fourth and final scene, in which the director and one of his actors look off in the direction of an action off-screen, leaving it up to the imagination of the spectator "he" (gay or straight) or "she" (gay or straight) to fill in the details.

The staging of bodies, product placement, and brand logo in this type of ad engages the consumer in a play of identifications and subject positions, held between the risqué world of homosexuality, suspended logic, and unfulfilled desire, and the brand world of creativity, innovation, and symbolic satisfaction. The brand logo linking one page of the ad to the next does not so much resolve these pluralities and discontinuities as it satisfies consumer needs for a brand that challenges the status quo and engages them in this adventure. In this and other, similar

campaigns for brands such as Yves St. Laurent and Dior, especially in Europe, luxury advertising announces a shift in the economy of desire linking economics, semiotics, and consumer satisfaction in advertising discourse. This move is not unlike the gesture of Manet's Olympia, who broke the erotic spell of the voyeur's gaze by looking back boldly at the spectator, signaling a terminus in the history of figurative painting.

This phenomenon has important implications for the future of advertising, not only for showing gender relationships in a new light, but also for extending and perpetuating the current fragmentation of consumer targets in the media world itself (Cappo 2005). The multiplication and segmentation of subject positions or 'voices' within advertising discourse parallels the breakdown in the single-focused, monolithic order of the mass media in recent years and a rethinking of the capitalist apparatus joining brand positioning, advertising, and consumer desire in post-modern consumer culture.

Conclusion and future research

The psycho-semiotic approach offered here advances the literature on advertising response by focusing on the interplay between the discursive positions of the consumer/spectator and subject-positions traced in advertising discourse in semiotic codes for point of view in visual discourse. Consumers internalize the force and meaning in advertising by means of the psychic drives of projection and internalization, projecting themselves into the brand world of the ad and also personalizing that world as their own. This dialectical process is the condition of possibility of symbolic consumption, whereby consumers satisfy unmet emotional needs by means of branded consumer goods. Furthermore, lest one reduce the notion of consumer to an abstraction or single, universal subject, the author examined potential responses of a range of consumer

targets to these campaigns based on their personal and lifestyle choices (Appendix 1). This approach also lends itself to advertising testing among a broad range of consumers. This same principle explains the positive market response to the campaigns for Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana. The radical sexuality of those campaigns did not tarnish or narrow the appeal of the brands to a niche segment, but reached a broad audience and increased brand sales, awareness and loyalty.

Further research could include a consumer experiment on the lines of the Milward Brown Link™ survey to both prove the correlation between visual codes in advertising and intensity of consumer response. The Link™ process tracks consumer engagement by recording their responses to the same ads by means of a touch pad. [1]

In order to ensure that consumer response is driven primarily by semiotic operations in the text, rather than by the content alone, two parallel studies should be conducted, one that tested response to ads with erotic content, and another one for testing ads with neutral content.

The expansion and interrogation of gender roles in the West due to political struggles in the realms of civil rights and sexual liberation has of necessity changed the way men and women are represented in mass consumer culture. The very representation of sex in advertising, not to mention the positioning of the eroticized male body as object of the (male) gaze in ads, is a radical change indeed. It would be an exaggeration to assert, however, that such moves have radically overturned the dominant apparatus of marketing and advertising, or that such advertisements reflect radical changes in social norms relating to homosexuality.

When "sex sells," it still trades in female sexuality – as subject position rather than as woman's body per se. Inasmuch as the eroticized male body incorporates the meanings and

[1] In a recent case study for the J. Walter Thompson Company in Chicago, the author proved a correlation between the strength of consumer response and visual codes for spectator engagement in an advertising campaign for Kraft Singles. The agency ran an independent Link™ test that corroborated findings from the semiotic analysis, e.g., that emotional response is strongest at those junctures in advertising discourse when the consumer is prompted to fill in the voids left by references off-frame. (J.W. Thompson 2003)

discursive positions of the feminine in advertising discourse, one is returned to an examination of the "same," of the feminine as universal Other in relation to the male gaze. In fact, the figure of the eroticized male is at once seductive, transgressive, and impactful in the marketplace to the extent that it is embedded in the dominant apparatus of cinema and photography.

Though homoeroticism in art such as Mapplethorpe's enrages and threatens the public because of the symbolic castration that this positioning implies, similar imagery in advertising engages consumers in the brand. We have seen that brand semiotics – in the form of rhetoric, product placement, and brand logo - anchors marketing hedonics in an economy of scopophelia joining code, capital and consumer desire in advertising. Thus, on a symbolic level, the brand discourse sutures the real division and lack of the male subject in the homoerotic discourse and appeals to unmet consumer needs for virility, sexual performance, and pleasure.

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Figures

Staging Scopophelia at the Edge of Modernity.

Blanchard, 1630's.
Venus and the Graces Surprised by a Stranger.

Gender as Cultural Construc t

Male	/ Female
Voyeur	/ Object of Desire
Looking	/ Looked at
Phallus	/ Lack
Culture (clothed)	/ Nature (naked)
Logic	/ Passion
The Code	/ Sign Play

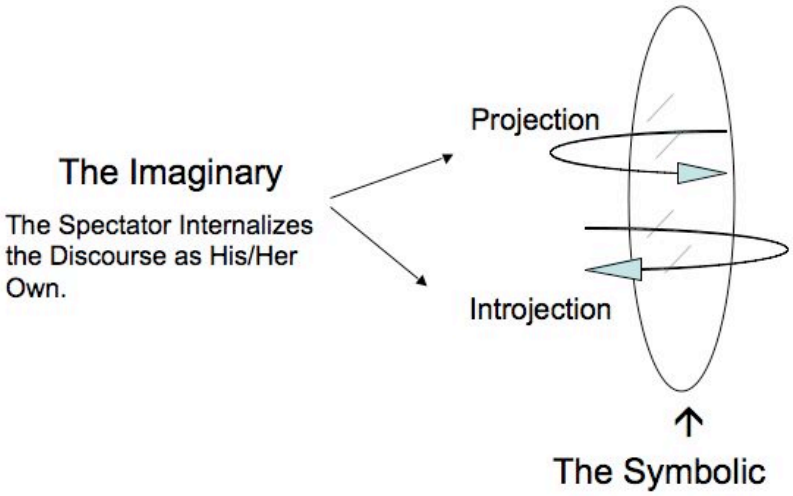
Deconstructing Scopophelia at the End of Modernism

Figure 2 Manet, 1863, *Olympia*, 1863.

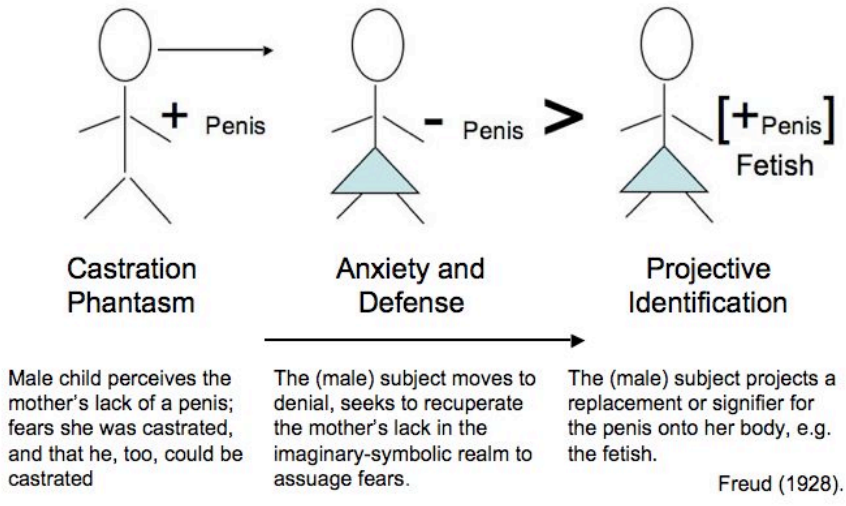
Deconstructing Culture

Male/Female	→	Male *and* Female
Voyeur/Object		Voyeur Exposed
Looking/Looked at		Looking Back
Phallus/Lack		Lack Exposed (castration)
Culture/Nature		Representation
Logic/Passion		Sex for Sale
The Code/Sign Play		The Code Deconstructed

The Imaginary Signifier



The Fetish in the Castration Phantasm



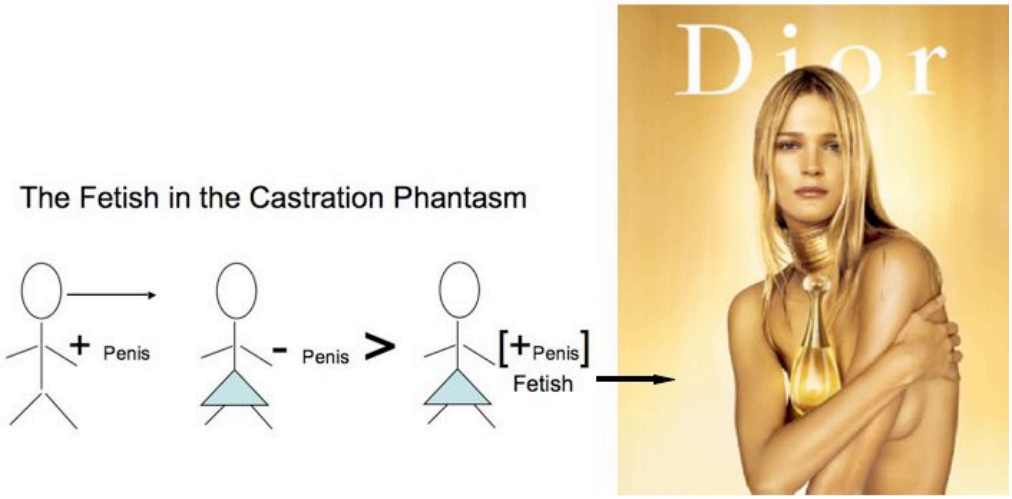
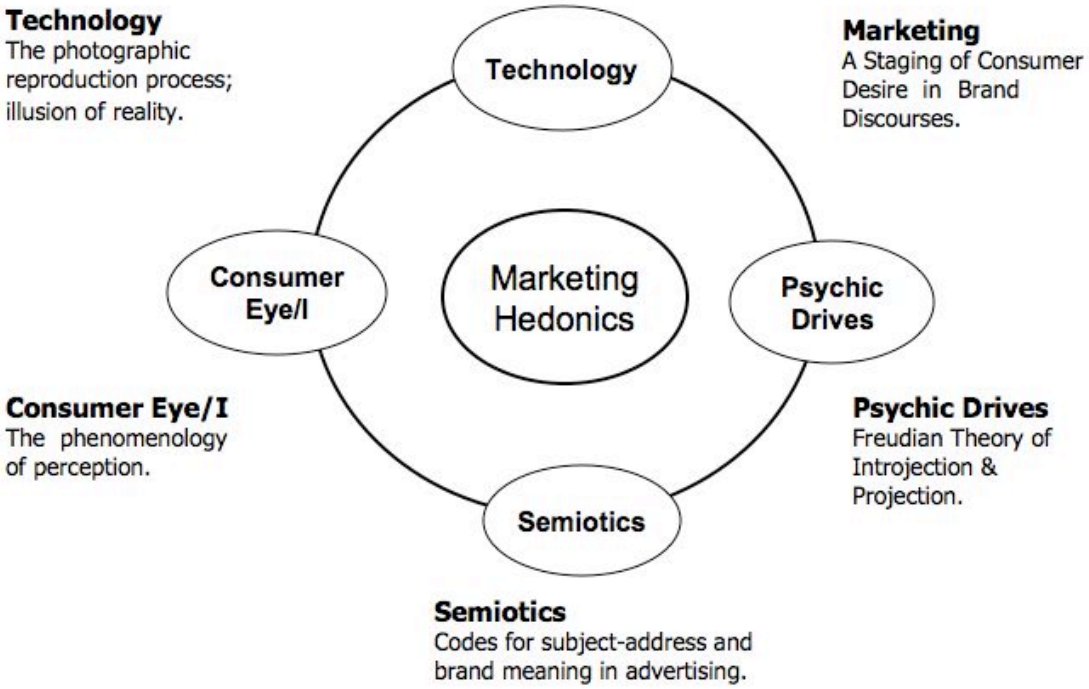
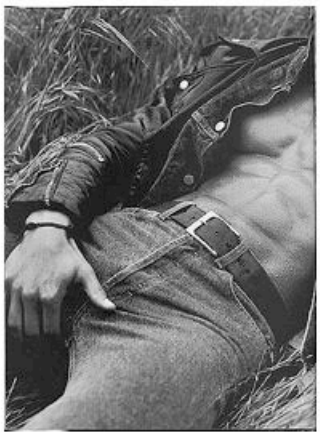


Figure . The Brand Fetish

The Apparatus of Consumer Desire



Bruce Weber for Calvin Klein



#1 #2

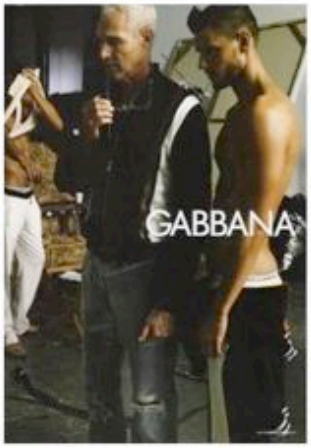
Figure 5. The Brand as Fetish, *Vanity Fair*, 1991.

Steve Meisel for Dolce et Gabbana

D&G, 2006, Sequence shot N°1

1 & 2

D&G, 2006, Sequence N°2



3 & 4

Tables

Table I. Realms of Sexual Difference		
	MALENESS	FEMALENESS
Psychoanalysis	The phallus.	Lack (Symbolic Castration).
Discourse	The unity of meaning and being in the logos, symbolized by the suturing of fragmentation and ambiguity in narrative voice.	Fragmentation, delay of closure, and difference, symbolized in the phallus lacking in the mother's body. (Lacan)
Scopophelia	The Voyeur; sexual possession displaced onto dialectic of looking/looked at, projection/introduction.	The Object of View, possessed by the gaze of the Voyeur.
Economics	Proprietor.	Commodity.
Epistemological center	Mind, Logic.	Body, Passion.
Esthetic	Unified, omniscient voice or perspective structures meaning around a coherent visual space (Quattrocento perspective) or narrative (the 19th century novel, continuity editing).	A problematic of the divided self, symbolized in the deconstruction of the unity of scene and seen in a discontinuous visual field (Cezanne) and narrative (the post-war novel, "jump cuts.")
Iconography	Hard, muscular surfaces, geometric lines, order.	Soft, fleshy surfaces, curves, disorder.
*Biological Fallacy	The order of maleness reduced to men, in their civil status, or to the male genitalia.	The order of femaleness reduced to women in their civil status, or to the female genitalia.

Table 2 Analysis of Ads by Bruce Weber for Calvin Klein. Images #1, #2, #3.	
Image #1 CK Jeans	Single male torso in autoerotic posture.
Forms	Long, thin torso, hard muscular abdomen highlights highly developed, curved breasts. The genital area is dead center in the image.
Postures	Definitely posed for the camera at an angle; hand over the crotch in an erotic gesture. The shower dripping on the body may be a displacement for orgasmic release. The hands instrumental in communicating the sensuality of the posture –one hand braced on the thigh, the other one holding the jeans in front of the genitals.
Subject-address Gay/straight men and straight women.	The unseeing/unspeaking torso – head cropped from the frame, nonetheless addresses the subjectivity of the spectator by means of the forward facing direction of shoulders and legs out toward the camera. The sexual gestures are "in your face. The target spectator could be a woman or a man who likes to look at men, or one who

	looks at the jeans as fulfilling an unmet need for experiencing a heightened state of virility.
Product placement	The jeans, held in the place of the genitals, are in fact a displacement for the male sex. This displacement provides a force to the sexual meaning of the brand – it not only looks sexy, it is a displacement for sex. This meaning is reinforced in Image #3 where the pair of jeans mediates the man's sexual performance.
Lighting	Lighting directs the attention of the spectator to the curves of the body and the genitalia.

Appendices

Image #2 CK Jeans	Two sleeping men.
Forms	Ying and Yang, obviously a homosexual couple or coupling of two men, one in black, one in white.
Postures	They are joined on an iconic level by the single geometric form created by their bent arms (or an incomplete swastika - Weber's representations of men have been associated with Nazi icons of German Ubermensch). The hands again "speak" about sensuality and connection. The man in white has one hand on the thigh of the man in black; the man in black has one hand in his jeans, suggesting self-sufficiency and independence one associates with the masculine.
Subject-address Gay/straight men.	These men are the passive objects of the voyeuristic male gaze of the camera eye/I. To the extent that the male spectator identifies with symbolism of the jeans as an extension of their virility, the ad can fulfill unmet needs among gay or straight men.
Product placement	The jeans belong to the man in black. If we follow the rhetorical meaning of the jeans in Image #1 and #3, we would assume that the man in black/the jeans symbolize the masculine role in this coupling, the man in white symbolizes the feminine role.
Lighting	Lighting highlights the torso and breasts of the man on the left, over determining his role as the feminine figure in this image.

Image #3 CK Jeans	Man and woman embracing.
Forms	A nude female figure on the left arches in a manner that highlights curves and female body parts – thighs, breasts, backside. The man's body is strong but smooth, not the hard, muscular male body in Image #1. He wears jeans – but then jeans signify masculinity in these ads. What initially may be construed as figure of subjection – nude woman/clothed man, must be framed within the semiotics of the campaign as a whole, in which the jeans are symbolic displacements of the phallus, a condition of possibility of male sexuality.
Postures	The woman's pose is off-balance, she seems to be falling into the man, whose legs are positioned to carry the weight of her body and right hand supports her back. However the rounded shoulders of the man, his head lowered to meet the mouth of the women, the fleshy texture of his muscles, suggest vulnerability as well. Sensuality of the man's left hand on the woman's backside.
Subject-address Straight male.	Indifferent to the voyeuristic gaze of the camera, the image addresses a third-person omniscient spectator/I.
Product placement	The male figure on the right is dressed in (armed with?) – the CK jeans, the phallic figure identified in the other two images. It's not about the product attributes – the jeans highlight the curves of the man's legs and backside and, as a displacement of the phallus, contribute to his virility.
Lighting	As in the other two pictures, lighting highlights curves and lines of the bodies.

Appendix 2. Analysis of D&G ads by Meisel. Scenes #1, #2, #3.	
Scene #1 D&G	
Forms	Two men getting dressed, in D&G fashions, one man seated in the left background is fully dressed but adjusts his tie, the other man – cropped so his face is out of frame - stands in the right foreground, pulling up his zipper, barefoot, shirt unbuttoned.
Postures	Gender roles may be reflected in background/foreground, seated/standing binary; the seated man points his toes like a dancer; the man working his zipper both exposes and asserts his sexuality.
Subject-address Ambiguous.	The voyeur could stand in for female or the hetero or homosexual male consumer. The cropped view of the man in the foreground, and his posture facing out toward the spectator, opens a play of presence and absence that inscribes the spectator in the scene as a partner – male or female.
Product placement	Product – fashionable suits and accessories – shown in disarray and process – on the side of passion rather than logic; rather than "dress" the man, i.e. hide the body behind the trappings of culture, they are accessories to an erotic performance involving undressing and dressing.
Misc	The film production stage is barely perceptible in the background.
D&G ads by Meisel.	
Scene #2 D&G	
Forms	In the foreground a nude man lays on a pillow or low bench, head thrown back toward the spectator, eyes closed. Seated in front of him and between his legs, is a man with legs spread wide, wearing a D&G white suit similar to the one in scene #1. The seated man is scrutinizing the man lying down. To the spectator's right of the seated man is another man in black, presumably the director of the scene within the scene, leaning over and gesturing – as if giving instruction to the man in white.
Postures	The nude man is leaning back in a vulnerable position, eyes closed and arms resting on his chest, legs open. The man seated above him is in control judging by his dress, his dominant position, his 'look' toward the nude man, and the central position of his crotch within the line of vision.
Subject-address Gay male.	The scene brings the homoerotic fantasy full circle – male/female, viewer/viewed. The reclining man in the foreground does not exchange looks with the man seated above, communicating an absence of volition and complicity with the action being staged. The consumer/spectator as voyeur.
Product placement	The suit speaks to the authority and confidence of the seated man. The director wears casual but fashionable shirt and pants.
Misc	Since the production lights are on bright in the background, we are peeping in on a production scene. The man in black appears to be directing actors in a sex scene. This inserts distance and division into the sex scene and disturbs the completion and closure of desire in the scopic realm.

Analysis of D&G ads by Meisel.	
Scene #3 D&G	Man in the left foreground, dressed only in briefs, appears to be mounting a cot on which another man, dressed in D&G sports shirt, is reclining, arms behind his head.
Forms	The two men exchange looks, obviously a complicit arrangement.
Postures	A homosexual interpretation of seduction - man mounting the cot is leaned over the other man, focused on him, while the other man waits, complicit but inactive.
Subject-address Gay male.	The spectator is implicated in the scene only as a peeping Tom.
Product placement	The D&G shirt is an object to be loved.
Misc	Lights are on; cameras are rolling in the background.
D&G ads by Meisel.	
Scene #4 D&G	
Forms	Here the director, dressed in a different black shirt and jeans, stands with one of the young men on the set – looking off frame left at a scene that can only be imagined. Presumably the young man will be playing in the scene. In the background we see a man dressed only in white pants and black belt, head hidden from view.
Postures	Attentive, collaborative.
Subject-address Straight or gay male.	The consumer/spectator 'creates' the scene out of frame, takes over to some extent where the director in the scene left off.
Product placement	The product placement supports the dynamic of the strip tease – dressed/undressed – in the ads.
Misc	The men are standing on the set; the man in the background is an actor from a previous scene.