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ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION.
A COMPARATIVE SOCIOSEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to provide an analysis of advertising on television based on a comparative approach to textual contents and structures which attempts to identify some of the ways in which semantic, pragmatic and textual elements interact and exert mutual influence. The main focus is on the way in which advertisements activate specific fields of discourse (the semantic aspect) by engaging the viewer in an interpretive activity (the pragmatic aspect) through specific visual and aural elements (the textual aspect).

Preliminary to the analysis is a brief review of some of the philosophical and sociolinguistic positions on textual meaning (Part 1). Particular attention is paid to the main contributions to a pragmatically oriented textual analysis, including Halliday's concept of social semiotics, which has been especially useful for the definition of the theoretical framework for the analysis.

In Part 2 the issue of the specificity of audio-visual language, as a language that combines different signifying systems (sounds, words, images, and music) is explicitly addressed; one of the aims of the research is indeed to avoid the transference of models of analysis from written or verbal to audiovisual texts, and to devise a method of analysis consistent with the specific character of the object of inquiry.

Two main imperative have guided the analysis (Part 3): the need to escape both textual and social determinism, while taking into account the way in which textual elements represent and address specific social situations; and the need to consider the context of advertising discourse, in order to avoid a text-bound approach. For this reason advertisements have been approached within a comparative framework. The main characters of the two broadcasting systems have been also considered (Appendix). The data for the analysis consist of British and Italian advertisements videorecorded in peak time from October 1988 to March 1989; the main focus being on car advertisements and on transnational campaigns. The other referential value of advertisements has been emphasized, with particular regard to the repertoire of social commonplaces (or "topoi") that bear upon textual production and interpretation. The comparative framework is crucial for differentiating social conventions from what in a mere textual perspective may appear as neutral representations. The aim of this thesis is not to exhaust the argument but to develop an original approach to televisual texts which is intended to complement rather than exclude other approaches.

INTRODUCTION

When I decided to engage in research in Britain I had two main concerns: the first was to build on my background knowledge, mainly focused on the philosophy of language and semiotics. The other was to undertake an empirical analysis, in order to overcome what I see as a shortcoming in the Italian tradition of social research, namely the subordination of empirical data to the analysts' hypotheses and intuitions, and the general overestimation of theoretical frameworks over empirical evidence.

My intention was to develop an analytical framework to be applied to a corpus of data which was significant both from a social and from a linguistic point of view (I have made the connection explicit between the two aspects in the first and second parts of this work).

My first task, given both my background and my present interests in pragmatics and consumer culture, was to define the field of inquiry. I considered that TV advertisements provide a highly suitable as well as underanalyzed topic for research, as they offer a powerful insight into the construction of social meaning, through and by TV language (I will provide more grounds for the social significance of advertising below).

The structure of the thesis reflects the different steps of my study.

First of all I have attempted to assess the relevance of existing theories of language and their implications for the question of **meaning**.

Then, having underlined the power of language both in framing

reality (for defining it, making it intelligible and so on) and in constructing roles for interaction, I have focused on the specificities of audiovisual language, and on the possibility of transferring some analytical tools from written (say literary) texts to TV texts; I have also tried to identify the specificities of audiovisual language, as a condition for the construction of a grid for the analysis tailored to the distinctive character of the object.

Once the broad framework for the research was established, I proceeded to formulate a global hypothesis, that is, to specify what I intended to look for and to test, and to select a research design, that is to choose the method to be applied to the object of the research (Part 3).

My assumption (which I have tried to support in ch. 7 and in the Conclusions) is that advertisements are, among the other TV texts, particularly significant in contemporary western society as far as social meanings are concerned.

There are a number of reasons why advertisements can be taken as, in some way, the "epitome" of TV texts and a crucial area for the study of representation and construction of social meanings.

There are some reasons that are not intrinsic to advertising, but nevertheless signal its cruciality in contemporary cultural debates: in fact advertising has been and still is a controversial area, the object (and sometimes the subject) of many discourses, in many different fields, with very different concerns. Advertising has been a topical matter from the late 50's to the early 70's, when the focus of mainstream social research was mainly on issues like manipulation, hidden persuasion, effects and then ideology; advertising was still an

important subject in the 80's, when issues like the blurring of high and low culture, the rising interest in consumer and popular culture (as the academic research on soaps and other popular genres testifies) and the taste and active role of the audience in making sense of TV texts, in being subject as well as subjected, were strongly emphasized (although within a dominant structure of "preferred readings" and hegemonic construction of meaning).

And advertising is still up for debate in the 90's, when the range of discourses generally embraced by the cultural category "postmodernism" bring to the fore, among the other aspects, the aesthetic dimension. Aesthetics is no longer confined to the sphere of high culture and art, but permeates everyday life, through the various objects that constitute our surroundings.

In the present cultural context the question of mastery and struggle over meanings seems to be receding into the background, while the active and pleasurable aspects of manipulation of signs and meanings are emphasized.

As one can see from the brief summary of the main approaches to advertising discourse over the last four decades there are many different aspects that can be foregrounded, and many possible angles from which to consider the phenomenon, as well as many controversial issues at stake; and I believe, as Raymond Williams suggested (1976), that the more complex and contradictory are the aspects which are associated with an issue, the more likely it is to become the focus for culturally significant debates.

The same conclusion can be drawn if one considers the intrinsic features of advertising texts rather than the "institutional"

discourses on advertising.

As I have tried to specify especially in ch.5, advertisements are very interesting texts as they stretch to its limits the active role of the receiver.

In fact advertisements, given their short format, have to rely on a high degree of linguistic as well as cultural competence among the receivers, in order to supplement their brevity. Tv advertisements in particular tend to be less informative (information and rational arguments take time to present) and to pursue an emotional impact (for which music, skilfully shot images, music, rapid editing and all the distinctive features of TV adverts are powerful devices).

Advertisements are also purposive texts, that is constructed as to produce consequences that range from the purchase of a product to the reinforcement of brand loyalty, to the construction of a positive corporate image, to the sensitization of the public concern towards delicate and harmful social issues (like drugs and AIDS) and so on. In each case what adverts attempt to avoid is to pass unnoticed.

The question of effectiveness is clearly a very controversial one, and it is not my aim to resolve a long lasting debate. Nevertheless I believe that my research throws some light on at least some aspects of advertising effectiveness, and particularly on the way in which advertisements offer themselves as cultural resources as well as sources of information about goods and services.

In other words the "effects" I was looking for were not unmediated, compelling or unconscious influences (all of which are very difficult to identify), but had rather to do with the

construction of cultural (or symbolic, in Bourdieu's term) capital. My assumption is that advertisements are neither the mirror of society nor the stage of its dreams. The analysis indeed confirmed that advertisements are less about "things" (in many adverts, as I have stressed, the good or service advertised are hardly visible, and not only because of the elliptical character of advertising language) than about "life": in fact it is only in the context of certain ways of life that "things" become meaningful and worthwhile.

Advertisements, then, have on the one hand to "hook" the social reality they address, in order to make themselves understood and to be "effective": for this reason they tend to rely heavily on a repertoire of shared images, of "topoi" (the competence about which is reinforced as well as presupposed), and to capitalize on issues of great social concern (from pollution to health care and so on).

On the other hand they have to "teach" new ways of life (in which the product becomes necessary), to make the viewer accustomed with the rituals, etiquette, display acts of contemporary life; they also have to provide solutions for the social dilemmas they represent, from starting a job to raising a child. This is why not everything which is "topical" in advertising is also "typical" in social life: in fact advertisements, as well as moral tales and parables, have (or pretend to have) an anticipatory character as well as a link with the present. Many scholars have emphasized the capability of advertising to express the anxieties and dilemmas of the social reality they address (Marchand 1985 identifies a series of "great

parables" told by advertising), as well as its "prophetic" character (Boorstin 1961).

What I have tried to discern in the analysis of TV advertisements is precisely the "topicality" of TV adverts, the repertoire of models, images, solutions, definitions of social situations the viewers are provided with and are supposed, or invited, to share. My understanding of the social reality of advertising has shaped the empirical part of the research.

I believe that on the one hand the comparative framework has been extremely useful for highlighting at least some of the unstated premises that underlie advertising representations (what is obvious from within a cultural system becomes problematic when compared with a different one); on the other hand, the period of time considered for the analysis (6 months) has allowed an identification of the more recurrent, long-running campaigns, and then of the actual viewers' approval ,or dislike , beyond advertisers' statements in their "protocols" for reading the adverts (like those provided by specialized magazines like Campaign).

The method and phases of my research are reported in ch.7. Three aspect are worth summarizing: the period of registration (one week for six months of adverts in peak time from 2 British and 3 Italian channels) which is long enough, in my opinion, to allow some consideration of the frequency and length of certain campaigns, or of the recurrency of certain products or patterns of consumption in a certain period of the year and so on; a general discourse on the whole of the recorded material, which has been useful for providing a "context" of the more recurrent themes, styles as well as kind of products and services in the

two countries; a more detailed analysis of car adverts and transnational campaigns, which has provided, in my opinion, a fresh insight into the construction of social "topoi" through textual means.

When it came to choose a methodology for the analysis of the collected material, I took special account of the following aspects of meaning.

- The first assumption, which in fact lies at the very basis of my research, is that meaning is not "inside" the text, and that a text-bound approach is very limited in its scope.

- Meaning is in fact constructed through textual elements on the basis both of a linguistic-textual competence and of a social patrimony of shared images and conventions (the two being mutually influential).

- The pragmatic process of making sense of a text involves a great number of contextual relations, and a complex set of extra-textual levels: although I have not paid the same amount of attention to all of them, I have tried to single out and to indicate at least some of the contextual elements that play some role in the construction of social meaning through advertisements. In fact I have tried on the one hand to consider the complex web of discourses on "meaning" that in a way constitute the theoretical context against which the meaning of advertising can be understood, from the general philosophical question of the relation between signs and meaning (part 1), to the consideration of the specificity of TV language in the construction of meaning (part 2), to the different approaches to consumer culture (appendix 1) and advertising (ch. 5). I have

also taken into account the "institutional" context of advertising discourse, and the regulatory body that determines what is "tellable" and what is not in the two cultural systems (Appendix 1). Finally, I believe the comparative framework has offered an insight into the cultural context, that is into the "obvious", "natural" forms of representation of socially relevant issues (relations, traditions, family and so on) which are hardly perceived as problematic from within a textual perspective.

- The aim of my research is not to map the similarities and dissimilarities in the "contents" represented as typical of the two cultural systems: I was, rather, interested in the way in which advertisements activate specific fields of discourse (the semantic aspect, recalled while reinforced by adverts) by actively engaging the viewer in a pragmatic process of "working out" unspoken (and non obvious) implicatures (which in turn interfere with the semantic field, as I have tried to show in the analysis of transnational campaigns) on the basis of specific visual and aural (textual) components. And, as I have found especially in the study of car adverts, certain "clusters" of textual elements (like music, rapid editing, absence of speech and so on) end with acquiring a semantic value.

- I am well aware that the possible "angles" from which to consider the phenomenon of advertising are many and different, and I have only mentioned psychoanalysis, aesthetics, consumer culture, theory of ideology and other disciplines offering a perspective on advertising. Nevertheless my aim was not to exhaust the argument, but to develop an original approach to TV adverts; I believe the awareness of the inescapable limitations of my work (and the attempt to indicate at least some of the

complementary lines of research) offers a positive anti-dogmatic perspective from which to look at the object under analysis without excluding other possible approaches.

PART 1 THE QUESTION OF MEANING

CHAPTER 1. BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

LOOKING AT SEMANTICS

The most obvious and pre-theoretical approach to any kind of text usually consists of a simple question: "what does it mean?". In fact this apparently natural query involves a number of linguistic and philosophical controversial issues, within the boundaries of the science of signs, which is semantics, in the classical Peircean distinction. In fact semantics is

"the portion of semiotics which deals with the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable" (Lyons 1977:115).

Such a definition is widely shared among a number of scholars, but there are many controversies about the nature and the forms of the relationship, as well as about the nature of the referents: is the association direct or is it mediated by, say, concepts or mental images? Does the relation exist between different and non-homogeneous levels (signs and reality) or rather is an intra-level bond, meaning depending on internal relationships among words? (Thrane 1980:23). Is "truth" a central concept in semantics? What kind of connections does it establish? Are they "discovered" or "constructed"? Or are they the product of a stimulus-response process? As Lyons acknowledged "semantics is the study of meaning. But what is meaning?" (1981:137).

From a synthetic review of the position of some important authors in semantics (Eco and De Mauro in Italy; Barthes and Greimas in France; Lyons, Leech, Linsky, Katz in Britain, among

others) it is possible to identify two main kinds of approach, philosophical and linguistic. In fact, as Lyons has put it, "there is little agreement among linguists and philosophers as to the boundaries of semantics" (1981:138).

Nevertheless the distinction between the two positions has never been really sharp. As L. Cohen claims:

"Twenty years ago most analytical philosophers would have been quite confident that they knew where the boundaries lay between linguistics, on the one side, and philosophy of language, on the other. But now there seem to be so many common problems that a substantial overlap is quite widely agreed to exist". 1

Then even if a real dichotomy is in a sense arbitrary, yet it can be useful to identify the two extreme poles between which the debate on "meaning" takes place.

I will call the "philosophical approach" the perspective in which language is considered as a "mirror" of reality (or, in more general terms, an involvement of ontological issues in linguistics is presupposed), and "linguistic approach" that confined to language in itself, as an autonomous system of signification.

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The problem of the relation between "signs" and "things", or "concepts" and "world" has always been a central issue in philosophy, from Plato and Aristotle onwards.

Among others the philosopher of language B. Malmberg underlines as crucial to philosophy the problem of whether there is an analogy of structure (isomorphism) between things (the

external world) and the language that we use to communicate them; whether language is responsible for the concepts in our conscience, or whether it reflects them (1983:413).

A comprehensive history of the elaboration of semantics from its philosophical sources can be found in de Mauro 1965. It is worth recapitulating here, in summary form, some of the main passages that are significant to the perspective of my research. Aristotelian realism, according to which the parallelism between words and things guarantees the semantic identity of words (against scepticism), is the first and decisive stage of semantic elaboration. In this perspective language is but a "trusty messenger" that reflects (and allows the knowledge of) the world.

In the history of philosophical thought many reactions to this conception of language as "phonic covering" of an underlying structure of universal concepts and categories can be envisaged, from Occam's nominalism to the anti-metaphysical critique by Hobbes, Locke, Hume, from Vico's attention to the idiosyncrasies of different languages as historical expressions of people's culture to the increasing interest in a universal mathematical language (Galileo).

As far as Hobbes, Locke and Hume are concerned, they all insisted on the contingent and historically determined nature of human language, which then cannot serve as a means for an "objective" understanding of the world. But the positivistic rejection of the metaphysical idealization of natural language goes from one extreme to the other: in fact it favours a new "metaphysics of data" and the idealization of mathematical

language. Among the other critics, Lyotard insists upon the fact that modern science constructs a new universal meta-language, not essentially different from the metaphysical one, apart from the immanent rather than transcendent perspective (1979:71). On the other hand the stress put by the empiricists on the historical and conditional aspects of language is at odds with their consideration of mathematics as universal language.

Between the XVI and XVIII century, according to de Mauro, two main trends can be acknowledged: on the one side a basic continuity with Aristotelism in Descartes conception of language and in Port Royal's rationalistic logic; on the other the emphasis upon the power of language in shaping mentality and customs, by providing frameworks within which human experience can be organized and understood, especially in Leibniz's New Essays on Human Intellect.

Thus a crucial problem to any comparative research arises, that is the possibility of literal translation from one language to another. In fact, as Malmberg also argues, even if the extra-linguistic reality can be the same, language performs a sort of "decoupage", in categorizing and providing frames of understanding: then the extension of the resulting semantic fields is not necessarily (better, is hardly) the same in different languages (1983). I will address this issue explicitly in the analysis of transnational campaigns, for the moment it is worth drawing the theoretical coordinates of the main themes I will face later in the empirical analysis and contextualizing them in the greater debate which they are part of.

Coming back to Malmberg, he asserts (but he is not the only one 2) that on these grounds the acquisition of a foreign

language is something more than the acquisition of new "labels" for pre-existing entities, as language is a means for establishing categories and concepts; moreover conventional associations (and this is a question of language use, that is a pragmatic matter) tend to become part of the semantic field of a word, even if they are not originally part of its meaning (and the forms of association are culturally specific and hardly hold from one cultural context to another). Then translation is a more complex process than a substitution of labels with the correspondent ones in another system.

Whilst XIX century linguistics mainly focused on the external relations between languages and disregarded their semantic dimension, in the XX century, as de Mauro emphasizes, interest was renewed in the relevance of language to the question of meaning. According to Katz (1985:1)

"there have been two linguistic turns in twentieth-century philosophy. In the first and most celebrated **language** became the central concern of philosophers who broke with the nineteenth-century idealistic philosophy. In the second **linguistics** became the central concern of philosophers who wished to put their thinking about language on a scientific basis".

Emblematic of the "first turn" is Wittgenstein's "theory of imagination" in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.

In this earliest phase of his thought Wittgenstein deals with language as a representation of the world: not necessarily an iconic, specular representation, but a correspondence of structure. A sentence is the representation of a fact, because like a fact consists of a relationship between articulated elements: nouns on the one end, objects on the other. Then the structure of the sign is the reply of the structure of the

referent (Malmberg 1983:418), and language has a merely denotative function in respect to the world (or, as von Wright has put it, a "picture-like function").

In the early 50s' a second linguistic turn takes place, "by philosophers who felt the need to inform their thinking about language by what the science of language had to say " (Katz: 1985:3).

What scholars like Quine, Chomsky, Carnap have in common is the emphasis on the relevance of linguistics to philosophy and "the development of semantic theories of natural language in relation to linguistics" (ibidem: 9).

Philosophy of language tries now to answer epistemological and metaphysical questions, such as

"the question of what kinds of objects there are. The philosophy of mathematics and logic have approached the question by asking whether number, sets, properties, relations and propositions are physical objects, as realists claim. The same way of approaching ontology is possible in linguistics. We can ask whether sciences and language are physical, psychological or abstract objects. The philosophy of linguistics can play an indispensable role in answering the general ontological questions" (Katz 1985:11).

The fact that ontology has played a central role in the philosophical approach to linguistics has been underlined by several scholars (Lyons 1977:118; Kempson 1977:23; Malmberg 1983:417). Some of them insist on the fact that from this interference unintended consequences stem in terms of vagueness and oversimplification: the supposed one-to-one correspondence between words and an already categorized world, the confusion between logical and ontological levels, or between signifiers and signified.

These and other elements , according to Kempson, have played a

decisive role in the consideration of semantics, until recently, as "the Cinderella of linguistics, a branch of the subject which many scholars thought was not amenable to such rigorous methods of evaluation" (1977:2).

According to Lyons (1981) two philosophical presuppositions are particularly controversial: the presupposition of **existence**, that involves the belief in some kind of reality of what we refer to with words, and the presupposition of **homogeneity**, in conformity with which "everything referred to as a meaning is similar, if not identical, in nature" (1981:136).

Because of the dispute caused by these assumptions, Lyons prefers not to deal with the ontological implications of language:

"In particular we shall avoid saying, as several books of linguistics do, that language throws a bridge between sounds and meanings. Statements like this (...), taken as their face value, are misleading and philosophically tendentious. They encourage us to think that meaning, like sound, exists independently of language and is homogeneous in nature" (ibidem).

This is also the reason why many linguists, among them Benveniste, prefer to consider the referent (the "thing") as not pertinent to the linguistic perspective, apart from its merely linguistic existence. 3

The alternative is realism, such as that of Putnam, particularly as expressed in the essays "Is semantics possible?" (1970) and "Language and philosophy" (1974), both in 1975. Putnam shifts in fact the focus from a theory of language and meaning in general terms to a "pragmatic" definition of semantic fields for a communicative purpose: in his perspective, in fact, the *raison d'être* of semantics becomes "how to convey the meaning of a word to someone that does not know it".

Then for the transmission of meaning purely linguistic instructions are not sufficient, and some references to reality are necessary:

"Language is like a great balloon, anchored to the ground of non linguistic facts only by scattered and thin (but fundamental) ropes. If there is no interaction between purely linguistic behaviour and non linguistic facts, then language is mere rumor" (1975:5).

This is not the same as to support a "total semanticism", or a naive realism, that is the reliance on a bi-univocal correspondence between signs and things or "states of fact". One of the author charged with semanticism by Putnam is Katz. 4 Putnam's criticism to this version of semantics can be summarized in three steps:

- meaning does not determine the extension of a term (that is knowing the properties of an object is not sufficient to determine its identity) and truth is not an analytical property.
- the premise above does not necessarily entail a relativistic view: Putnam proposes to change "names" (that refer to individual objects) with "natural kinds" (that indicate a group of essential characters beyond phenomenonic differences). They are representations, but not analytical definitions.
- Putnam formulates the "empirical hypothesis" (1975:148) that in meaningful communications, associated to each word, a set of "core facts" is transmitted:

"the hypothesis is that there are, in connection with almost any word (...), certain core fact such as (1) one cannot convey the normal use of the word (...) without conveying those core facts, and (2) in the case of many words and many speakers, conveying those core facts is sufficient to convey at least an approximation to the normal use" (1975:1489).

Then meaning is not a definite thing, unambiguously correlated to the signifiers; but it is not a merely linguistic element

either, for it requires the acknowledgement of empirical properties. To the question "is semantics possible?" Putnam answers positively, even if "his" semantic is not a one to one correspondence between words and object, but a more complex relation between groups of terms and core facts that involves pragmatic aspects of use and communication and is "realistically" grounded on a state of facts.

Any position that considers semantics as a kind of relation involving pragmatic questions of use and communication, without this entailing necessarily a relativistic perspective is useful for my research (inasmuch as I will consider the relation between advertisements and the social reality they represent and address).

I will consider Halliday's conception of social semiotics as the linguistic correspondent to this philosophical position.

Another philosophical perspective committed with ontological questions in relation to language is contemporary hermeneutics (Gadamer, Ricoeur). According to Gadamer ontology is but a speculation on language:

"Being that can be understood is language. (...) Hence the speculative nature of language shows its universal ontological significance. What comes into language is something different from the spoken word itself. But the word is a word only because of what comes into language through it" (1975:432).

"Speculative" does not mean necessarily "mirroring". In fact, in the hermeneutic perspective, a word is neither the reflection of a defined ontological order, nor

"an instrument that can construct, like the language of mathematics, an objective universe of being that can be manipulated by numbers " (ibidem:415).

It is rather a "medium" that, because of its relation with the

totality of the world, allows the communication between the historical man and the world.

According to Ricoeur (1969) language can refer to experience because of the structural homology between them.

In his perspective both total realism ("mimesis") and total conventionalism, the two extreme positions expressed by Plato in Cratylus, are rejected, as well as the possibility to consider language as an object, as linguistics does. Language is in fact "objective", for its constitutive relation to the world, but not "objectifiable", unless its nature of "medium" is neglected.

For this reason Ricoeur rejects the structuralistic overemphasis on the formal aspect of language, and emphasizes the total involvement of the subject in the act of speech (against the anonymous character of "structure").

Truth is not a correspondence, but an "event", an instance of being. It does not simply consist of letting being appear, but rather puts being in a perspective, in a relation: "coordination to being" is the main hermeneutic criterion of "truth".

As far as the philosophical perspective on issues like reference, truth, meaning is concerned, critical realistic theories are particularly useful to the perspective of my research: in fact they consider the issues above not merely as functions of relations between terms in a consistent and closed system, but rather as involving a relation between non homogeneous levels (like signs and reality, or names and core facts).

Like Ricoeur, Putnam and many others, I assume that the question is not how language reflects a state of facts (because language also serves for categorizing reality), but how language

is used to represent a reality that cannot be "objectively" and "exactly" described (yet exists apart from language).

In my opinion "reference" is a crucial issue to be considered in dealing with TV texts, even if it has to be taken not as a correspondence (naive realism) but as a form of representation, a "frame" for defining and dealing with a portion of reality: reference is not an automatic process, but a cultural, social, dynamic process that has something to do with the social use of signs, as we will see in the next paragraph.

LINGUISTIC APPROACH

The realist standpoint according to which reality founds language has been questioned from different fronts: on the philosophical side, for instance, Rorty has criticized Putnam's position as an example of "impure" philosophy of language, a sort of "disguised epistemology" too close to epistemological realism (1979:224).

From a semiological point of view, Eco has christened "referential fallacy" the naive assumption that there is an identity between the "signified" of a sign and the correspondent object, and has given the name "extensional fallacy" to the more sophisticated version of this position, which involves the notion of truth as a correspondence between utterances and a verifiable "state of facts" (1975:88-97).

If we consider the question of meaning from a linguistic perspective two main tendencies can be acknowledged.

One emphasizes the **power** of language and its force in shaping

our perception of reality by providing interpretative frameworks; the other stresses the character of language as a **structure**, a formal system that can be analyzed in itself.

For a summary of the main perspectives in the first position Malmberg 1983 is particularly helpful. He also maintains that reality is an amorphous "continuum" (1983:341) on which different languages draw the boundaries of different semantic fields: although a "state of fact" is presupposed, it can be submitted to different versions and accounts, and even between similar versions of the same reality it is possible to notice semantic differences.

Another linguist calling attention to the power of language in determining reality is Benveniste: he focuses especially on the way in which the formal structure of language allows the construction of definite roles and categories real interlocutors identify themselves (and the world) with (being language an element of production, rather than reflection, of social and interactional roles).

According to Benveniste the power of language is encapsulated in two main functions: it re-produces (in the literal sense) the world, that is it categorizes reality in order to render it manageable; secondly, its syntactical structure provides the polarity I/you, that is the fundamental pattern of social relationships. As for the first point, Benveniste distinguishes between linguistic and philosophical competencies:

"At this point there immediately arises a serious problem, which we shall leave to the philosophers, notably that of adequacy of the mind to express 'reality'. The linguist on this point considers that thought could not exist without language and that as a result **the knowledge of the world is determined by the expression it receives**. Language reproduces the world, but by

submitting it to its own organization. It is 'logos', discourse and reason together, as the Greeks said it". (1966:22; my emphasis and translation).

The power of language in creating easy to handle representations of, (particularly social) reality is an issue I will take on and develop in the empirical analysis of advertising discourse.

The second aspect concerns the formal structure of language, inasmuch as it allows the mutual definition and relation between individual and society:

"Each speaker can affirm himself as a subject only by implying the other, the partner who, endowed with the same language, shares the same stock of forms, the same syntax for the utterances, the same ways of organizing contents. Viewed from the standpoint of the linguistic function, and by virtue of the I-you polarity, individual and society are no longer antithetical, but rather complementary terms. Indeed it is in and through language that individual and society define one another". (1966:23; idem)

This is clearly a corrective to the structuralistic emphasis on language as a self-contained system, which claims as germane to linguistics the double task of analyzing "language" and "languages":

"In placing man in relation with nature or with another man with the medium of language we establish society (...). For language always is actualized by a language, a definite and specific linguistic structure, inseparable from a definite and specific society. Language and society cannot be conceived without one another. Both are given". (1966:26).

How language is made real by different national and social groups is an element I have taken into account in the empirical analysis of ads texts.

On the other hand language has the power of constructing not only grammatical, but also interactional roles. These are crucial issues for the analysis of mass communication texts: in fact on the one side each text reveals the I-you pattern that has

determined its configuration at the productive level (inasmuch as it addresses the "you" of the viewer in several possible ways), and on the other it offers a model of identification, even if not necessarily fulfilled as such, at the level of consumption (although as far as media outputs are concerned neither on the side of "I" nor on that of "you" the interactors are well identifiable and homogeneous).

Roland Barthes defines Benveniste's idea of language as "linguistique de l'interlocution": "Le langage, et pourtant le mond entier, s'articule sur cette forme: je/tu" (1984:194).

He particularly appreciates the stress which Benveniste places upon the social foundation of language, in virtue of which linguistics merges with a "sociologie universelle" ("la science de la societe qui parle, qui est societe precisement parce qu'elle parle", *ibidem*) and only within which subjectivity can exist:

"Subjectivity does not precede language: one becomes subject only inasmuch as it speaks; in sum, there are not "subjects" (and, then, points of subjectivity), but only 'locutors'; better, as Benveniste continuously stresses, there are only **interlocutors**". (*ibidem*:195).

Barthes has forcefully expressed and summarized his own position on the "power" of language in the Lecon inaugurale he pronounced for the chair of "Semiologie Litteraire du College de France", in 1977. In his view "language" is tightly connected with "power", because of its "legislative" and "classificatory" characters that determine a particular form of oppression and alienation. Moreover Barthes defines language as "fascist", not because it **prevents** people from saying something, but rather as it **forces** their utterances to conform to its own structure: hence "to speak" is not the same as "to communicate", but is rather a

form of "subjugation" of people and things. (1979)

Barthes also emphasizes two other characters of language that are significant to the perspective of my analysis: on the one side the force of **assertion**, through which an "implacable" tendency toward ascertainment almost always prevails on negation, doubt, suspension; on the other side the trend toward **repetition**, a more "servile" aspect of language that founds the understanding of signs and transforms them into stereotypes. (The balance between affirmation and reiteration, power and servility, innovation and stereotype is an element I will consider in my analysis).

According to Barthes no freedom is possible out of language, because language has no "exteriority". On this ground the revolution against the tyranny of language only can take place inside the language itself, and rests on the possibility of "déplacement" that the act of writing allows in respect to language. Like Benveniste, he shifts the focus from the "enoncate" (the product) to the "enonciation" (the act that at the same time reveals and hides the subject).

Two further points of Barthes' discourse provide fruitful suggestions for my analysis.

The first one is that literature (a synonymous, according to Barthes, with "writing" and "text") cannot help trying to represent reality, in spite of the "topological impossibility" to conform to the multi-dimensional order of it the one-dimension language: then every text is at the same time "realist", because reality is its "object du desire" and "irrealist" (or utopic) because of its faith in such an impossible achievement.

Whether and in which ways every text wishes to represent reality, and whether and in what degree the impossibility of a complete fidelity is made explicit in the text, or rather concealed behind the effect of the veridical is another interesting topic in media analysis.

The second point concerns Barthes's definition of semiotic in respect to linguistics.

It is a commonplace among linguists that linguistics is a branch of semiotics, the latter dealing with every symbolic system, either artificial or natural, the former focused on natural symbolic systems. 5

Barthes assumption is completely different: in fact he considers semiotics as a branch of linguistics, and precisely as the realm in which a "deconstruction" of linguistics is possible by working on its "residuals" ("les desirs, les craintes, les mins, les intimidations, les avances, les tendresses, les protestations, les excuses, les aggressions, les musiques dont est fait la langue active").

For this reason semiology is mainly negative or "apophatique" and refuses either to assume well defined and scientific properties, or to become a meta-language that provides frameworks for making reality immediately intelligible. Semiotics is active, does not rest on a "semiophysis" (that is an inert naturalness of signs) but rather becomes a "semiotrophie": in respect to the formal pole of linguistics, it represents the ludic counter attraction, in which signs are played with, so as to allow their "savoir/saveur" to appear.

Then semiology provides tools for the "depouvoir" of language: it is significant that according to Barthes this does not depend

upon the political engagement of the writer or the ideological content of his work, but on his ability of "displacement" inside the language itself.

Perhaps the more famous position about the power of language in categorizing reality is that known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It is a well-known theory, and it seems unnecessary to summarize it here; suffice it to say that the hypothesis, formulated in the late 50s', is still a source of debate within sociolinguistics 6.

I will then focus my attention particularly on two aspects : the first concerns the role played by linguistic patterns in the perception ("projection") of the objects of the world, which Whorf calls "sway of pattern over reference" (1956:262), and also "tracendental logic of language" (ibidem:269) and "linguistic manas" (ibidem:268).

The second aspect, strictly linked to the first (that is "how" we see objects), can be summarized by a Whorf's assertion: "the context, or sentence pattern, determines **what** sort of objects the world refers to" (ibidem:259. My emphasis).

In fact, according to Whorf

"Reference of words is at the mercy of the sentences and grammatical patterns in which they occur (...). Reference is the lesser part of meaning, patternment the greater" (ibid:259-60).

I intend to move from this kind of problem in order to consider the role played by language in the "contextualization" of contents: I will later support the claim that all kinds of language do not simply describe a state of facts, but put the elements of reality in a particular perspective, according to specific patterns that only allow some features of objects or

relations to appear, and not others.

Thus language, while **describing** the environment, also **constitutes** it: language in fact brings in a set of cultural conventions, logical models, social relations; moreover it is the basic "code" that allows communicative interaction, which is then part of the competence of the speakers (both elements can be disentangled and brought into focus by a comparative framework of analysis, as I will discuss in depth later).

I will consider now the second set of linguistic positions, according to which language is above all regarded as a self-contained system.

In this perspective Saussure is an emblematic figure, as he was the first to get rid of the referential side of language as non pertinent to a "pure" linguistics (that is to linguistics as a science): hence the methodological choice to focus exclusively on the "langue" (as a system) without considering the instances of actual language use ("parole").

Although in his later years Saussure introduced, alongside the theory of sign as a "value", also a variable external to language, that is the social environment in which signs are used ("Nous ne reconnaissons donc comme semiologie que la partie des phénomènes qui apparait caractéristiquement comme un produit social"); and although some of the more extreme and rigorous statements probably stem from the editors of the Course, rather than from Saussure himself (as de Mauro claims), yet the relevance and novelty of the Saussurian position depends precisely on the consideration of language for its own sake, as a closed system ("un systeme ou tout se tient").

In fact Saussure's ideal of linguistics as a pure science is

the crucial point of his theory: hence he considers every extrinsic aspect of language as unessential, such as the users of language on the one hand and the world that constitute the subject matter of speech on the other. And actually this kind of approach has brought about a significant development in techniques and terminology of linguistic analysis, in rejecting both the external formalism of preceding comparative theories (based upon the analysis of the evolution of the different languages) and the "semanticism" of philosophers (according to whom the identity of a word depends on the semantic connection with a "designatum").

Under the influence of Saussure linguistics enters into a third phase:

"It took for its subject neither philosophy of language nor the evolution of linguistic forms, but brought to the fore the intrinsic reality of language, and aimed at making itself a formal, rigorous and systematic science" (Benveniste 1966:19).

Saussure's confinement of "signified" to the internal scope of language is the exact counter-attraction to Wittgenstein's logical atomism. As Benveniste has pointed out:

"The positivist notion of a linguistic fact has been replaced by that of **relation**. Instead of considering each element by itself and seeking for the 'cause' in an earlier stage, it is considered as part of a synchronic totality, 'atomism' giving way to 'structuralism' " (ibidem:20).

What is at once the force and the limitation of this position is the sharp distinction between "langue" and "parole", and the consideration of the act of speech as non pertinent to linguistics.

But as Saussure himself has argued, and made explicit in the last stage of his thought, a closed system determines a vicious circle (words are defined by relations, relations hold between

words), and fails to consider phenomena like the role of "parole" in producing variation within the system (langue).

At present Saussure's "principle of autonomy" is mainly regarded to be germane to a microlinguistic approach, rather than to the more comprehensive view of language in a macrolinguistic perspective (Lyons 1987:153); and Benveniste has shown a way in which, within the structuralistic framework, a mediation between the instances of langue and parole can be realized by the "énonciation".

Nowadays any sharp distinction between a closed system and its unsystematic actualization in the act of speech is questioned, and the point is no longer whether or not to consider the social aspect of language use, but what degree of relevance to attribute to it.⁶

As well as semantics, linguistics is also leaning towards a consideration of the social context of signs' usage (as the growing of disciplines like sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, conversational analysis and many other confirms).

Philosophers like Austin and Searle have played a crucial role in breaking down the syntactical bias stemming from an abstract and strictly formal study of language such as we can find, for instance, in Chomsky's theory of competence as opposed to performance.

Since the early seventies an awareness of the relevance of language use has developed, including within the syntactic perspective.

The renewed interest in semantics by linguists, after having for long time considered it as a matter of philosophy, has

involved contributory consequences for semantics itself in terms of rigour in the account of "meaning" and "content" as aspects that cannot be considered apart from "expression (Leech 1974).

Lyons has provided an account of the relation between philosophical and linguistic approaches to language:

"The fundamental problem for linguists, as far as reference is concerned, is to elucidate and to describe the way in which we use language to draw attention to what we are talking about. In many situations it may be unclear, and of little consequence, whether a speaker is implicitly committed, by the words he utters, to a belief in the truth of particular existential propositions; and it is rarely the case that a speaker uses a referring expression for the purpose of ontological commitment. Philosophy and linguistics undoubtedly converge in the study of reference, and each can benefit from their joint discussion of the notions involved. But their primary concerns remain distinct; and it is only to be expected that what the one discipline consider crucial, the other will regard as being of secondary importance, and conversely". (Lyons 1977:84).

Once linguists have recognized their interest in the actual use of language, and not only in language as a system, it is possible to acknowledge some important contributes carried by linguistics to the study of reference

"by describing the grammatical structures and processes which particular language systems provide for referring to individuals and groups of individuals" (ibidem:197).

An "agnostic" position on ontological issues, in my opinion quite close to that of Lyons, is expressed by Eco in A Theory of semiotics (1975 Italian edition). According to Eco the question of the referent (considered as the set of "states of fact" that are supposed to correspond to the "meaning" of the signs) has a great relevance in the philosophical perspective, but can determine unwanted consequences in semiotic analysis. Eco insists on the fact that, for instance, signs can be defined as something we can use for lying. (1975:89) to say that they do not necessarily correspond to an effective state of the world.

For this reason it seems (to him) necessary to distinguish between the "production" of signs (that involves a relation to reality and, dealing with the conditions of truth, determines an extensional semantics) and the way in which they "work" within a given semiotic system, which determines the conditions of signification object of an intentional semantics (ibidem).

I am not totally sympathetic with such a sharp differentiation of tasks (which ends up with the consideration of the semiotic system as a self-contained entity), as I will try to explain later in this work, especially in assessing the framework for the empirical analysis.

For the moment it is sufficient to outline some of the issues which I will reconsider in the comparative analysis: the significance of linguistic patterns (whatever kind of language is at stake) to the constitution of frameworks for the perception of the world; the way in which linguistic structures work to the construction of roles for social interaction; the cultural nature of meaning; the relevance of the social use of language.

CHAPTER: 2 FROM "NATURE" TO "USE": TOWARD A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

The aim of the summary above was not, obviously, to provide a thorough review of the main theories of meaning in philosophy and linguistics, but simply to emphasize some of the issues I will pay attention to in my research and also to recognize as a recent

trend the growing interest toward an integrated view among different disciplines, all concerned with the social use of signs.

An interdisciplinary perspective is made possible by the overcoming, in the different fields of study, of categorical assumptions (that always exclude the possibility of complementary approaches): for instance the mirroring conception of language in philosophy, or the strictly formal perspective in linguistics, or the postulation of sharp boundaries between semantics, pragmatics, syntax.

My purpose now is less to underline the respective specific elements than to benefit from an integrated approach for the analysis of media texts.

To shift the attention from the "nature" of individual languages to their "use" in a communicative situation is in my opinion the first step toward a non-sectorial view. This is not the same as to say that differences between disciplines have no "raison d'etre", or that language cannot be approached as a formal system, or that ontological issues have to be excluded from the account of meaning and so on, but rather that the exploration of the way in which texts produce meaning (especially media texts, as they involve several languages) can benefit for the integrated contributions of different disciplines.

It is not my intention to create a patchwork out of the fragments of different disciplines, but rather to consider, as a basic assumption, the complementarity of the different approaches, and the consequent limitation and partiality of any individual perspective of research; and because of the difficulty

(and often impossibility, if not uselessness) of a polymorphic theory it is necessary, in my opinion, to be aware of the intrinsically incomplete and circumscribed nature of any single point of view in order to avoid any kind of dogmatism.

On this basis, and for an "heuristic" and not "taxonomic" purpose I will try to locate, in the next paragraph, the boundaries and the correspondences among the several disciplines which focus on the social uses of language.

NATURE AND USE IN A FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In speaking about the relation between semantics, grammar and social context Halliday (1978; 1985) outlines a framework in which some of the issues arisen up to now seem to merge.

The dichotomic nature of language / use of language (that is formal structure/function in a social context) is crucial to linguistics, and brings about two different analytical perspectives, synchronic on the one hand and diachronic on the other. The two labels "structural" and "functional" do not refer to really incongruous domains, as Hymes underlines:

"structural analysis of course involves questions of functional relevance within the linguistic system, and functional analysis discloses structures of use, so that there are both structural and functional aspects in fact in both" (1974:78).

Nevertheless they refer to a mainly "internal" and a mainly "external" approach to language (the latter involving, at least in part, a reaction to the former) which are still mentioned in mapping the borders between the different theories on language.

In fact the oppositions nature/usage, form/function, freedom

from context/context dependence are still the criteria for drawing the boundaries between semantics and pragmatics, and for defining the domain and the perspective of disciplines like sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis and so on (Levinson 1983).

In Halliday's position (which mainly derives from Malinowsky's work in anthropology, Firth's study in sociolinguistics and Bernstein's focus on the role of language in the process of socialization) a clear cut distinction between nature and use of language is overcome, and both aspects are taken into account within the concept of "function".

Function is not exactly synonymous with "use", as Halliday points to, being at the same time more general and more specific.

The basic assumption is that language has evolved according to, and in the service of, social needs and purposes:

"Learning a language is learning 'how to mean', that is developing a semantic potential in respect of a set of functions in language that are in the last resort social functions" (1978:54-55).

Therefore language is not definable as an instrument on the one hand and as unrelated social functions on the other; quite the contrary, language is a system of functions, that is a system of "discrete areas of meaning potential which are inherently involved in all uses of language" (ibidem:47).

Functions at the same time "organize" language (both its semantic potential and its lexicogrammatical expression) and represent the way in which language operates (or is used) in the social context: hence they are fundamental properties of language itself, built in its own nature. (They also are more than "use" because, as Halliday suggests, there are several uses of language not systematized).

Therefore, whereas the expression "language use" is too general to define a domain for the analysis, as Levinson has maintained (1983:5-6), the notion of function allows a more precise approach to language.

As is well known, in Halliday's position the three basic functions that constitute the set of choice within the semantic level (ideational-referential; interpersonal-social; textual) are activated by/actualized in the social context (as field, tenor, mode) and are expressed by lexicogrammatical patterns (transitivity, modality, coherence and so on).

The relation between functions is a "paradigmatic" one.

In Halliday's view (as well as in Saussure) the concept of system as a network, a range of oppositional possibilities, plays a crucial role, but the consequences of this priority are quite dissimilar. On the one side, in fact, Saussure, in order to fix the compass of linguistics as a scientific discipline, considered language as a system of relations between elements (phonemes) negatively defined by their oppositional value, and from which every substantial aspect (objects, social reality) is banished (hence the character of "formalism"). On the other side Halliday considers the social and referential functions of language as part of its own nature: in this perspective an integrated approach to the social reality of language is not only possible, but desirable. A similar position is suggested by Hymes:

"We can no longer believe wholeheartedly in disciplines with exclusive claims on levels of reality or regions of the world. The institutionalizations that confront us appear as obstacles as often as they do aid. Pursuing a problem, or a student's training, one continually finds the unity of both fragmented among disciplines and faculties" (1974:116).

Because of the deliberate overcoming of specialist domains

(considered as founded upon artificial and academic distinctions) the functionalistic perspective escapes, in my opinion, Levinson's criticism:

"Such a definition of scope (...) would fail to distinguish linguistic pragmatics from many other disciplines interested in functional approaches to language, including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics" (1983:7).

As the purpose is not to classify disciplines, but to find tools for interpreting the social relevance of language, the boundaries between different disciplines are not a crucial issue. Moreover Hymes draws a distinction between "structural" 1 and "functional" linguistics from the viewpoint of the respective foci of interest (1974:79): the crucial difference has to do with the structuralistic "replication of uniformity" (a single code used/ a homogeneous community presupposed) against the functional "organization of diversity" (speech community as matrix of code-repertoires).

Not only Saussure's system, but also Chomsky's competence is charged by Hymes with "replication of uniformity" ("A taxonomic grammar that stops with the patent uniformities of language..." 1974:172).

Chomsky is one of the main targets of sociolinguistic and pragmatic criticism, because of his idea of "competence" as mere possession, by human nature, of an idealized syntactic structure, a sort of "biological software" (as Greimas defines it 2) by virtue of which all human beings are homogeneously programmed to form grammatically correct sentences.

It is a "formal" approach ("grammatically of sentences is, at least in a first stage, independent from their 'semantically'" 3), but is different from Saussure's formalism: in fact in

Saussure there is no dichotomy between form and sense, signifier and signified in the sign, because they are the two sides of the same mental entity.

Hymes points to the differences in the two formalist perspective (yet similar in the exclusion of referential and social aspects):

"In seeking structure, Saussure is concerned with the words, Chomsky with the sentence (...) that is for Saussure the object of linguistics was language as a structured fact, and its sphere was the word, combinations of words in sentences were aspects of speech, a matter of individual free creation in particular acts **outside the sphere of structure**. Late linguistics extended structural analysis to the sentence, but structure was conceived as **segmentation and classification** of actual forms" (1974:90).

In a functional sociolinguistic perspective also the boundaries of the sentence are overcome, as well as the opposition semantic/grammar and the exclusion of social reality.

Halliday considers even Hyme's theory of communicative competence as too formalized and implicitly accepting the opposition competence/performance in trying to set up a "theory of performance". Halliday adopts in fact the more "objective" concept of "potential" instead of the "subjective" competence:

"We accept a much lower level of formalization; instead of rejecting what is messy, we accept the mess and build it into the theory (as Labov does with variations). To put it in another way, we don't try to draw a distinction between what is grammatical and what is acceptable. So (...) there is no place for the dichotomy of competence and performance, opposing what the speaker knows and what he does. (...) The background to what he does is what he could do, a potential which is objective, not a competence, which is subjective" (1978:38)

The emphasis on language as a "resource" (a socially actualized potential rather than a set of rules) is the reason for the priority given to the concept of system as distinct from structure:

"In the interpretation of language the organizing concept that we

need is not structure, but system. Most recent linguistics has been structure bound (since structure is what is described by rules). With the notion of system we can represent language as a resource, in terms of the choices that are available, the interconnection of the choices and the conditions affecting their access. We can then relate these choices to recognizable and significant social contexts" (1978:192).

Coming back to the thread of my argument, I have tried to show how the concept of function , in Halliday's perspective, makes it possible to overcome oppositions like nature/use, competence/performance.

I have also tried to made clear the relation between function, structure, system.

In particular, Halliday provides an account of language as a system in which a certain degree of formalism does not exclude referential and social aspects. The philosophical problem of reference, the linguistic claim of a "shaping" power of language and the sociolinguistic assumption of the social relevance of language do not contradict each other, but seem to merge: and this is why a sociosemiotic approach to the social system can be possible:

"Above and beyond 'language as system' and 'language as institution' lies the more general, unifying concept that I have labelled 'language as social semiotics': language in the context of culture as a semiotic system" (1978:191)

"Semiotic system" means a system in which meanings are constructed, or where a meaning potential is actualized; the notion of "meaning potential" is crucial to an interpretation of language in a social perspective, because it represents the linguistic realization of a "behaviour potential": what one can signify is the intermediate level between what one can do and what one can say:

" to my mind the key concept is that of **realization**, language as a multiple coding. Just as there is a relation of realization

between the semantic system and the lexicogrammatical system, so that 'can say' is a realization of 'can mean', so also there is a relation of realization between the semantic system and some higher level semiotic which we can represent, if you like, as a behavioural system. It would be better to say that 'can mean' is the realization of 'can do' or, rather, is one form of the realization of 'can do' ".(1978:39). 4

In this perspective language combines the representative and the "shaping" features. The former is not a reflection, a one-to-one correspondence, but rather the expression of a meaning potential, a cultural range of options paradigmatically organized according to social functions : the lexicogrammatical selection expresses the semantic possibilities, which are realized in the social structure. 5

The latter is concerned with the production/reproduction of social roles by grammatical forms that reflect models of behaviour as appropriate to social contexts, and at the same time encode social roles as communicative roles: for instance, when a speaker chooses the semantic option "question", and realizes it in the interrogative function, within the communicative situation, he assumes a role -the questioner- and attributes the complementary role -the respondent- to the hearer.

This point is close to the Benveniste's theory of the I/you pattern mentioned above: yet Halliday defines more precisely the relation between grammatical structure and social context through the semantic level. Halliday labels "sociological grammar" the analysis of social roles created by language in a communicative situation, but this does not exhaust the task of social semiotics.

On this respect Halliday's position offers a useful corrective to the dominant trends in textual analysis, particularly to those which consider texts as self-contained (non referential) objects

and, on the other hand, to those which claim the possibility of "decoding" social roles directly from texts.

Following Halliday I will try to see the ways in which TV advertisements tend to circumscribe semantic horizons as appropriate to specific social contexts. In other words I will try to give an idea of the complexity of the relation between semantic, textual and contextual level in a comparative framework of analysis; for the moment it is sufficient to point to the theoretical issues crucial to the framework of the empirical analysis.

Coming back to Halliday's account of the representative/constitutive function of language, he assumes that "reality consists of meanings" (1978:139) and precisely of social meanings: as a consequence, both the philosophical issue of the relation symbols/things and the linguistic relation among symbols can be subsumed under the semiotic approach to meaning, inasmuch as "both the things and the symbols are meanings" (ibidem).

Language is in fact the "realization" of the semantic level in the social context and "reflects" cultural reality in a twofold sense: it is "activated" by it (consider for instance the notion of "register" as a variety of linguistic use determined by the situation) and in turn can modify the environment in which it occurs.

The referential function of language is part of a large "metaphorical" feature: language in fact symbolizes through its functional organization the structure itself of human interaction and the way in which both social structure and human experience and understanding of the world are articulated.

The rhetorical figure of "metaphor" theorized by Jakobson as the "order of the system" or "domain of substitutive associations" 6 is, incidentally, a recurrent topic in the analysis of language in situation 7.

A position I have found useful to the construction of the theoretical framework is that expressed by Ricoeur, especially in his recent Du texte a l'action (1986): here he underlines the crucial role of metaphor in the question of reference (being metaphor a sort of "ruled transgression" of conventional meaning, essential to re-define, and then make intelligible, extralinguistic reality); he also emphasizes the fundamental relation between text and action, where the former acts as a "paradigm" for the human action, and the latter as a "referent" to a wide range of texts. 8

Halliday himself is not too far from Ricoeur's concept of text, that is not a merely formal construct superimposed to a pre-existent system of meanings, but rather the result of the way in which meanings are socially determined, through a selection from a number of different possibilities:

"But as language becomes a metaphor of reality, so by the same process reality becomes a metaphor of language. Since reality is a social construct, it can be constructed only through an exchange of meanings. Hence meanings are seen as constitutive of reality." (Halliday 1978:191).

Rhetoric in general and metaphor in particular play a crucial role in the production and interpretation of media texts, particularly advertising, either because of their referential potential (which explodes the constraints of literal expression and allows more concise and effective forms of representation), or because of the involvement and interpretive effort they

require of the receiver (pragmatic aspect). I will therefore consider this aspect in my analysis.

Before focusing attention on the "actualized" process of meaning exchange, that is text, I intend to consider some of the criticisms of the functionalistic approach to language.

I have already mentioned Levinson's critique of functionalism ("it attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic pressures and causes" 1983:7) as a criterion for defining the scope of pragmatics; yet I disagree on the grounds of Levinson's criticism, namely the non-specificity of the notion of function and a presumed confusion between motives and goals.

In my opinion, in the light of the mutual influence Halliday theorizes between linguistic, semantic and social systems, the motive for studying language (its socially functional development and nature) and the goals of the analysis (recognition of a mutual relation between the different systems, for the particular purpose of an educational use of language) are deliberately considered in their reciprocal links.

Another criticism of the concept of function stems from Greimas, who considers functionalism as a reification of structural formalism omitting in turn, in its "instrumental" essence, the fundamental aspect of "pure signification". 9

But, even supposing that to speak about "signification" apart from "communication" is possible (a question that is clearly beyond my present scope to investigate in depth), Halliday's theory is explicitly concerned with signification as exchange of meanings in a social context, that is communication.

As far as an "epistemological" concept of function is

concerned, as in Jakobson and Bühler, Greimas is sceptical of the possibility of identifying a definite number of linguistic functions such that altogether they can exhaust linguistic activity; at the most they can point to some crucial issues on language and provide a taxonomy for utterances.

Greimas' critique is founded on the distinction between a study of the "nature" of language (as in Jakobson) and an analysis of the act of speech in the context of intersubjective relations: in the last case, according to the critic, some functions can be identified, but cannot constitute a coherent system 10.

This dichotomy recalls, in my opinion, the Kantian distinction between "a priori" analytical judgements and "a posteriori" synthetic ones (the former lacking in explanatory power, the latter in "universality"); it also rests on a sharp distinction between nature and use of language (overcome by Halliday) and between the boundaries of different disciplines.

Against the consideration of "function" as an "a priori" category the anthropological background of this notion can provide a warrant, as well as the constant reference by Halliday to actual instances of language-use in the everyday life (he often refers to ethnomethodological studies 11 as well as providing actual fragments of conversation).

The real risk, in my opinion, is that the system can become a static grid, a sort of procrustean bed that cuts out any dynamic and irregular aspect that does not fit it. But Halliday, conscious of the ambiguity of the notion of system, makes his own position clear on this point:

"It is all the more important, in this context, to avoid any suggestion of an idealized social functionalism, and to insist that the social system is not something static, regular and harmonious, nor are its elements held poised in some perfect pattern of functional relationships. A sociosemiotic perspective implies an interpretation of the shifts, the irregularities, the disharmonies and the tensions that characterize human interaction and social processes. It attempts to explain the semiotic of the social structure in its aspect both of persistence and of change, including the semantics of social class, of the power system, of hierarchy and social conflict. It attempts also to explain the linguistic process whereby the member constructs the social semiotic (...) processes which, far from tending towards an ideal construction, admit and even institutionalize myopia, prejudice and misunderstanding" (1978:126).

I will try to exemplify the social semiotic processes at work across advertising texts, and make them more openly related to the way in which language is used in the different social contexts.

For this purpose Halliday's system of function provides a useful framework, but needs to be specified further and actualized in a concrete field of analysis.

Moreover, as we will see later, the concept of function is but one of the various ways to consider the social relevance of language, the pragmatic aspect of language in use.

For the moment I will confine myself to the review of some of the positions that provide useful suggestions for the empirical analysis.

The next step has to do with some pragmatic versions of textual analysis.

CHAPTER 3: TEXT AS SOCIOSEMIOTIC UNIT

In this section I will take into account some of the positions that consider text in a pragmatic perspective, that is as the basic unit to be analyzed in order to study the process of social interaction.

PROCESS VERSUS PRODUCT

The character of text as a "process" (that is as a dynamic object involving active cooperation) and not simply as an "object" (an self-contained entity, ready to be consumed as such) is by now almost taken for granted 1, as is evident from the growth of movements like reader-response criticism and the like (also in the field of media studies 2).

A crucial contribution to the consideration of the dynamic and productive function of the text stems from the work, since the late sixties, of the French group "Tel Quel", and particularly from Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes. 3

Julia Kristeva defines the text as a "pratique significant",

within a structuralistic perspective in which several elements merge, like the marxist priority of the productive process on the exchange of products, some issues of Russian formalism and linguistics (especially Saumian), the Chomskian distinction between a deep and a surface structure of the text:

"More than as a discourse, that is as an object to be exchanged between a sender and a receiver, the practice of signification that we are investigating can be seen as a **process of sense production**. In other words we can approach it (..) not as a finished structure, but as a **structuration**, an apparatus that produces and transforms meaning, before it circulates" (1968:298)

The process brought about by any text is twofold: Kristeva names reflection/refraction the way in which representations of reality interacts with pre-existent ones (the notion of "intertextuality" being crucial) and in so doing take part in the transformation of reality itself:

"A text does not simply represent, signify reality. In signifying it takes part in the transformation of reality (...). In other words, while it does not simply replicate and simulate a fixed reality, it constructs the dynamic stage upon which it can act, it contributes to its action of which it is an attribution. In transforming 'la langue' (its logical and grammatical organization) and by transferring in it the relations among social forces in the historical scene (in the meanings regulated by the position of the subject of the communicative utterance), a text has a twofold link with reality: through language (reordered and transformed) and through society (which changes it conforms to).(..) Texts have then a twofold orientation: toward the system of signification within which they are produced (the language of a precise period and society) and toward the social process of which they are part inasmuch as 'discourse'" (1969:9-10. My translation).

On these grounds, what definition of text will I support in my work?

First of all text is something more than a string of utterances, a sum of parts, neither it is a complete and self-contained object. Rather it calls for an integration, an active process involving the receiver. The idea of text as something to be accomplished, rather than a collection of meaningful sentences

(a "datum") represents a fundamental pragmatic achievement, and is shared among a number of scholars interested in the pragmatic dimension of texts: among others Grice, according to whom in order to make sense of communicative texts, one has to grasp the intention of the speaker through a series of inferences; Eco, who defines text as a project of communication by a "model author", requiring an active cooperation from the receiver who has to "fill the gaps" (which is also the condition for a "transgressive" use of the text); Schmidt, who considers text as a system of utterances-in-function in a socio-communicative situation 4 . Halliday emphasizes, in my opinion opportunely, the double nature of text, both as "process" and as "product". The fact that text is

"an output, something that can be recognized and studied, having a certain construction that can be represented in systematic terms" (1985:10)

must not be dismissed 5, because of the dialectic relation between what is already there (textual constraints) and what has to be actualized, both on the basis of textual elements and of the social (context) and linguistic (co-text) environment in which the text occurs.

ACTUALIZATION AS INTEGRATION

But how can the process of textual actualization, in a pragmatic perspective, be accomplished by the receivers?

Many scholars insist upon an activity of "integration" from the receiver, but the manners and the emphasis change.

Generally speaking the integration is not considered as a totally free or casual activity, but directed at a certain extent by a twofold connection: with the sociolinguistic environment on the one side and with the social situation in which the communication takes place on the other. Some scholars, including Kristeva and Halliday, emphasize (although in different ways) the crucial role of categories of mediation between the linguistic and the social system (which makes society susceptible of semiotic analysis).

According to Kristeva, the mediating category is "intertextuality", being text considered as "a translinguistic mechanism that redistributes the order of language" (1969:113).

In fact texts relate, within language and through it, any instance of communication with others, contemporary or preceding. Text itself is an instance of intertextuality, because within it a new elaboration and a transformation of other texts take place. And as every text is related to a specific situation, the social system itself can be seen as a system of texts (1968:113), and the specific intertextual configurations as a sign of a precise historical and social context.

Hence, to put it in a nutshell, every text is the re-writing of other texts, and in a way embodies them. Kristeva coins the word "ideologeme" to indicate the intertextual structure that gives the text its historical and social coordinates (1968:312). 23

In Halliday's theory "function" is the element linking the different levels of reality: as we have seen before, semantic, linguistic, social systems are functionally structured, as they reflect in their organization and development the basic requires of social life. For instance, within the semantic level (of which

texts represent an actualization) the textual function is a constitutive one (as the semantic level itself is structured according textual criteria, for example "relevance"); it is also, by its own nature, "textualizable": for this reason Halliday can say not only that texts express meanings, but also that meaning can only exist in texts. And text being the same as language actualized in a social situation, meanings have for their own nature a social character.

From his pragmalinguistics perspective Schmidt expresses a point of view quite close to Halliday 6, as he considers textuality as an intermediate (or, to put it in its own terms, "bilateral") structure between linguistic and social aspects. (1982:171): as in Halliday, textuality is a structural feature of the socio-communicative action that cannot be defined apart from the context of social interaction. Then it is considered as the basic and compulsory form of realization of the communicative action in every language (ibidem:172) and of any effective communication.

Apart from these attempts to define an intermediate category between language and society (which I will take up later in dealing with "codes"), within the same pragmatic framework different authors give a different amount of emphasis to the factors of "integration".

I can identify two main positions, characterized by different purposes and methodologies of enquiry: the sociological side, stressing the context-dependence of texts and using methods of analysis mutated by social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology), which accord priority to empirical evidences; and the

semiotic side, rather focused on the inner structure of the text and on the way in which it reveals and constructs social meanings.

INTEGRATION AS CONTEXT DEPENDENCE: THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIDE

Since the early 70s', under the influence of anthropological and ethnological studies and as a reaction to linguistic (but also sociological) formalism, communicative interaction has been submitted to a micro-level analysis, mainly focused on everyday informal use of language and supporting the almost total dependence of meanings from the communicative situation.

I will briefly sketch the three main positions within this trend, on the basis of the suggestions they can provide for the analysis of advertising texts (although, as they mainly deal with face-to-face conversation or conversation within small communities, they need opportune specification in order to be used for audiovisual texts).

According to their increasing degree of formalization I will focus my attention on Conversational Analysis, Ethnography of Speaking, Discourse Analysis, which common assumption is the inadequacy of a mere grammatical, syntactic or referential perspective: "conversation" and "discourse" are regarded as dynamic objects, against the fixed nature of "text".

For the first stream I mainly refer to the work of ethnomethodologists like Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, Garfinkel, Ervin-Tripp, focused on everyday conversation, or, as Levinson defines it, "locally managed communication" (1983:300).

The object of analysis is in a sense determined by the methodological assumptions (to avoid premature formalization and constructions, to apply a rigorous inductive procedure to empirical data) and by a deliberate reaction to the exclusion of irregular, contingent, concrete manifestations of language from linguistics. Hence the choice of an unexplored field, also considered as unexplorable from the perspective of grammatical competence, and for this very reason free from previous interpretations and bias. In fact in everyday conversation grammatical rules are usually disregarded, and the "text" of conversation does not follow a linear and consequential development (as if it reflected a well defined intention) but rather proceeds through a series of "negotiations" and follows a sort of ritual in its progression. It is on the whole a "naturalistic" approach, both for the object and the procedures of data collection (tape-recording of phone conversation; videorecording of conversations in informal settings), but the results are rigorous in terms of recognition of recurrent and structured patterns.

Conversational analysts (or ethno-methodologists 7) focus their attention on interaction as it takes place in naturally organized activities in which "the interactants create their own social world, by the way in which they behave" (Gumperz 1982:158).

The main unity of analysis is "turn", which is neither necessarily a grammatical unit, nor a particular kind of social activity: "a turn may contain anything from a little 'mm...' (or less) to a string of complex sentences" 8

According to Sacks a conversation consists of a string of at least two turns (see Coulthard 1977:70); it is also possible to

provide a structural description of conversations in terms of summon (an "attention-getting" device) and answer, or question and answer, or challenge and response. (Coulthard 1977:64), which are distributive rules usually out of the awareness of interlocutors. The results of empirical analysis show that meanings depend very little (or not at all) on grammatical and semantic elements, but only can be grasped in the context of situated interaction. Conversation is rather like a "game" which rules are progressively defined through mutual adjustments and repairing between the two "players". Conversational expressions, then, are characterized by a total "indexicality", which also means the absolute meaninglessness of "text" in itself: this is the "open" side of the theory. The "closed" one concerns the recurrence of patterns and rituals that enable and order the course of interaction (like those ruling the "opening" and "closing" of conversations, the turn-taking and so on).

There are many non-verbal elements involved, ranging from glance, intonation, ritual attitudes related to particular passages in the conversation and so on. How can all these elements be related to my research?

First of all in advertisement texts, more than in others, an appearance of conversation is produced at least in three senses: 1) the language used in ads is often elliptical, sometimes grammatically incorrect, not always literal; moreover it often tries to reproduce colloquial conversation, and seems to presuppose and produce the same kinds of implications and expectations; 2) everyday informal conversation is often "simulated" within ads texts 9 : the interlocutors inside the

"story" can "figurativize" the viewer thanks to mechanisms of projection and identification; 3) a conversation is also powerfully simulated between the screen and the viewer, through direct address (a summoning mechanism): various strategies of summoning, or attention-grabbing can be identified, with the function to determine the "turn" of the viewer and challenge him to cooperate.

Moreover, even if "turn taking" cannot be applied as such to the analysis of media texts, nevertheless opening and closing procedures can be singled out, which circumscribe the individual item from the others in the TV flow. Opening-closing devices, requests of interaction versus requests of acquiescence are categories that can be applied to the analysis of TV texts, as well as other like "availability" 10, noticeability, tellability and newsworthiness (Coulthard 1977:75) as criteria for providing an account of the interaction and determining the order of the topics of conversation. All these are in fact determinant components of the "negotiation", as they provide resources for acknowledging and interpreting what is uttered.

The ethnomethodological approach to interaction is charged with two main criticisms: the lack of formalization in defining the descriptive categories employed (which causes a lot of problems to the researcher who attempts to apply them to the data. See Coulthard 1977:91-92); and the lack of connection between language use and wider social structures, as a reaction to rigid schematism and abuses of typologies.(Giglioli 1973:24).

A closely similar perspective is the so called "ethnography of speaking" 11, particularly in the refusal of a merely referential approach to verbal expressions. But here the method

is slightly more formal, and moreover the object of analysis consists of more ritualized events, or "speech events":

"By ethnography of speaking I shall understand a description that is a theory- a theory of speech as a system of cultural behavior; a system not necessarily exotic, but necessarily concerned with the organization of diversity" (Hymes 1974:89) 12.

According to Hymes a "mass society" does not exist:

"There are no masses, only ways of reading people as masses (...) The ethnographer is likely to look at communication from the standpoint and interest of a community itself, and to see its members as sources of shared knowledge and insight." (1974:8).

The shared knowledge of communicative elements that provides rules for social interaction and interpretation determines a "speech community"; it is not a linguistic, but a social concept (ibidem:48) for which the grammatical knowledge of forms of speech (Chomskian competence) or rules of speaking is not enough:

"A speech community is defined tautologically but radically as a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech and knowledge also of its pattern of use." (ibidem:51).

The concepts involved in such a definition are "repertoire" (the range of linguistic forms related to social functions available to a member of the community) and "competence" (the condition of the possibility, for a member of the community, to communicate through appropriate options within the verbal repertoire, or "set of conventional resources available to the members" (1974:198).

The basic unit of analysis is the "speech act", that is a "situated utterance" always considered within the interactive situation (speech event) and within the context associated to the speech (speech situation): Hymes provides the following example:

a party (speech situation); a conversation during the party (speech event); a joke during the conversation (speech act) 13.

Then the focus of analysis shifts from texts to interaction. Speech events determine the variety of forms in a speech community, as well as what Hymes calls "code-switching", that is "the alternate use of two or more languages, varieties of languages or even speech styles" (1974:103).

Code-switching is a phenomenon that questions the possibility of identifying speech communities through merely linguistic criteria; it also provides an interesting device for a comparative analysis of TV ads (by investigating, for instance, whether the same portion of audience is differently addressed by using different forms of language within the same spot).

"Style" is the general framework within which code-switching takes place, and is defined by Hymes as a selection of linguistic elements which entails a relation with contextual factors; in this sense "stylistics" is almost indistinguishable from ethnography of speaking, and speech itself can be interpreted as "the set of rules in the repertoire of a person or community". Style also embraces a number of aspects disregarded by linguistic analysis (expressive, emotive, attitudinal and so on) 14.

A further character of style (especially stressed by Eco, as we will see in the next paragraph, is that it can be seen as "arousal and accomplishment of expectations", as crucial element to the sphere of "rule-governed creativity" (ibidem :106).

The ethnographic approach to language use is susceptible to the same kind of criticisms as the previous one. As Gumperz has put it:

"Ethnographers of communication have collected new, highly valuable descriptive information documenting the enormous range of signalling resources available in various cultures (...) They have provided convincing evidence to show that much of language use, like grammar, is rule-governed (...) But they tend to see speech events as bounded units, functioning somewhat like miniature social systems where norms and values constitute independent variables. The proper question of how group boundaries can be determined is not dealt with, nor are the issues of how members themselves identify events, how social input varies in the course of an interaction and how social knowledge affect the interpretation of messages". (1982:155)

In discourse analysis (even if the boundaries are not clear cut) a greater level of formalization occurs. For instance, in dealing with the problem of "how functional categories are realized by formal items" (i.e. the relation request/question) 15 conversational analysts offer intuitive criteria of recognition, while scholars (like Labov) attempt to find and fix rules to explain the relation between given lexicogrammatical structures and given functions in a given situation. One of the methodological assumptions is that "there are degrees of idealization between raw data and the idealized sentences of Chomsky's competence" (Coulthard 1977:9)

As Levinson (1983) suggests, whereas conversational analysis and ethnography of speaking share backgrounds and methodologies typical of human sciences (anthropology, ethnology, microsociology), and avoid any "a priori" formalization (and often "a posteriori" as well), discourse analysis is mainly related to linguistics, both for the theoretical framework and for the analytical instruments. The linguistic background of the discipline is also emphasized in Yule-Brown's definition:

"Discourse analysis is concerned with what people using language are doing, and accounting for the linguistic features of discourse as the means employed in what they are doing" (1983:26).

Particularly relevant in this approach are deictic elements, that is linguistic elements that, within the utterance, refer to contextual information.

Method and principles of linguistics are extended beyond the sentence; according to some critics (like Levinson) a sort of "ontology of rules" is also constructed (1983:294) 16.

Whereas conversational analysis suffers from lack of formalization, discourse analysis runs the risk of overlooking data with premature formalization 17; it also results awkward for the study of interpersonal conversation (which is not necessarily sentence-structured), but can provide useful instruments for the analysis of more structured kinds of texts, in showing the strong relation holding between linguistic elements inside the text and contextual features of the situation. This is also the main scope of the positions considered in the next paragraph.

INTEGRATION AS FULFILMENT OF TEXTUAL INSTRUCTIONS: THE SEMIOTIC SIDE

A number of disciplines merge in the approach to text as a set of "instructions", or as a communicative project, as a symbolic conversation between an ideal author and an ideal receiver, which does not necessarily exclude the "sociological" one.

The main common points can be summarized as follows:

- every text has a surface structure -the actual configuration of textual elements -which expresses a deep semantic structure- the

theme, the intention of the speaker, the meanings.

- texts have a perlocutive force, that causes in the receiver a twofold action: a linguistic act (recognition and fulfilment of lexicogrammatical 'patterns) and a social act (accomplishment of the process of signification through inferences, presupposition, references to personal competence and to the situation and so on), the latter following from the former rather than vice versa.

The risk of this approach lies in the overemphasis of structural, formal aspects; when interpretation is grounded in the recognition of an "intention" a further problem arises, both because often more than one intentionality informs the text (think for instance of ads text) and because what a text can mean explodes what the author wants it to mean.

In spite of some severe limitations of this approach (particularly in the consideration of text as a self-contained entity) that I will discuss in more detail later, I think it is possible to draw from textual analysis some useful elements for the study of media texts, especially in considering what kind of social world the text reveals and allows to construct in the communicative exchange. I intend to consider briefly, under this particular respect, the position of three different but equally important authors : Grice, Eco, Schmidt.

The Gricean distinction of two level of meaning (what is said/what is conveyed) is well known, as well as the relevance of the notion of "implicature" to a pragmatic approach to language 18. It is not my intention to survey here the whole Gricean account of communicative process and its contribution to a pragmatic analysis of language use (particularly face-to-face

conversation) 19. I will rather try to identify some weak points in this theory, which limit its application to media texts. I take the point of Levinson:

"Grice has provided little more than a sketch of the large area (...) Much has to be done to apply his concept to particular cases" (1983:118).

Nevertheless it seems to me that some of the shortcomings in the theory depend less on the lack of elaboration than on the perspective used by the author. In my opinion Grice's view of communication is in a way both "idealized" and "idealistic".

It is idealistic in the sense that the success of the communication is defined in terms of recognition, by the hearer, of the utterer's communicative intention. This involves an overemphasis on the rational and instrumental use of language as a transparent medium through which mental content can be transferred from one mind to another. But, in my opinion, the surplus of information that every text conveys beside the manifest content (implicature) is not only a matter of retrieving the utterer's intention, but it rather depends on unintentional (or not necessarily intentional) factors (such as cultural idiosyncrasies, ideologies, economical or social constraints and so on). In other word Grice does not consider the crucial role played by the "unintended consequences" (I borrow the term from Merton) in social processes, including communication.

Another problematic concept is "non detachability" as a defining property of implicatures, that is the impossibility of finding "another way to say the same thing" that conceals the implicature: in fact implicature is attached to the semantic content, not to the linguistic expression (see Levinson 1983:116). All this supports the claim of a semantic level

independent from the communicative interaction (Grice himself in 1975 makes known his sympathy for realism), but hardly combines (and anyway the relation is unclear) with the "meanings in speaker's head" 20.

Grice's model of conversation is also "idealized" as the cooperative principle, and the maxims that specify it are but the skeleton of a quite unrealistic communication, an exceptional rather than standard form of interaction, especially if one considers media texts in general and advertising in particular.

In fact in this perspective many current forms of language use (such as irony, redundancy, repetition, reticence) or quasi-constitutional characters of audiovisual language (like the effect of the veridical) constitute an impasse (as they hardly can be considered as exploitations or flouting) in the functioning of the model.

From a more realistic position Eco considers that language, inasmuch as a system of signs, can be used (and is actually used) for lying. 21

In Eco's structural framework (applied to narrative texts but, according to the author, also true for other kinds of texts) the intention of the utterer is taken into account, but is considered no more than a way of organizing linguistic elements tentatively intended to give some "instruction" to the receiver. For this purpose any text constructs a "model author": "the author, through a personal comment, suggests which meanings the words of the text can assume" (1983:21)

Eco distinguishes between two kinds of "conversation". The first one has two moments, as it occurs between the text and the

other texts (see the concept of co-text in Kristeva) on the one hand and between the author and his "model reader" on the other. The construction of a "simulacrum" of the receiver inside the text is a crucial point in Eco's theory:

"Text is a product such as the interpretative possibilities have to be included in its own generative mechanism (...). To generate a text means to realize a strategy within which the moves of other players are forecasted". (1979:54. My translation).

And also:

"For the organization of his textual strategy the author has to refer to a range of 'competences' (an expression wider than 'knowledge of codes') that give meaning to the expressions he uses. He also must assume that the range of competences he refers to is the same as the reader refers to. Therefore he will imagine a 'model reader' such as he/she can cooperate in the textual actualization in the way he has thought, and can move in the interpretation in the same way in which he (the author) has moved in the generation" (1979:55. My translation).

When the text is realized, and becomes a "product", a second kind of conversation occurs between the texts and the receivers in a given context: the author is then cut off, and his intentions can be completely misunderstood or disregarded (the latter case being that of "aberrant decoding") 22. As Ricoeur also underlines, the world constructed by the text, and perceived by the receivers according to their situations, usually explodes that of the author. 23.

The concept of "intention" is still present (Eco explicitly refers to Grice's principles and maxims), but it is a textual intention, not a mental one:

"textual cooperation must not be considered as the actualization of the intention of the real speaker, but of the intentions virtually included in the text" (1979:62)

The model author hardly coincides with the real author, being rather the resultant of textual features like style, point of view and the like. Style, which Hymes defines as "a way or mode

of doing something" and considers a choice having social meaning (see Coulthard 1977:36) is a crucial key in the recognition of textual strategy. Ricoeur is also close to Eco on this point:

"Since style is labour which individuates, that is which produces an individual, so it designates retroactively its author. Thus the word 'author' belongs to stylistics. Author says more than speaker: the author is the artisan of a work of language. But the category of author is equally a category of interpretation." (1981:138).

Then "author" is not a given figure, as the process of identification is guided by the text, but the result is not predetermined by it, rather depending on its interaction with the context of reception. The simulacrum of the author evokes a simulacrum of the receiver, determined by his capability to fulfil the textual process. I quote Ricoeur again

"The intended meaning of the text is not essentially the presumed intention of the author, but rather what the text means for whoever complies with its injunctions. The text seeks to place us in its meaning, that is, according to another acceptation of the word 'sense', in the same direction. So the intention is that of the text and this intention is the direction which it opens up for thought" (1981:161).

For this reason, according to Eco (and I agree on this point) even if, for instance, a given word is used out of habit, or absent-mindedness (e.g.: Russian rather than Soviet), the receiver can legitimately infer an ideological connotation (which is actually activated inside the text) (1979:64).

As well as Barthes, Eco maintains that ideology is not a "extrasemiotic surplus" that determines semiotic elements: on the contrary, it is a structured interpretation of the world that can be submitted to semiotic analysis" (1975:359). Eco prefers to deal with mechanisms of organization rather than with motives, with structures rather than with genesis; he speaks of a

"ideologic inventio" as a semiotic assertion, based on a specific point of view (that is a selection among circumstantial possibilities) which attributes some properties to a "semema", by ignoring or concealing other properties, equally predictable.

A non-ideologic assertion, on the contrary, is a metasemiotic one, which shows the contradictory nature of the semiotic space it refers to". (1975:363) 24

Eco's textual analysis provides some important issues, that I will consider in my analysis, but also reveals some weak points, that I will try to avoid. Let's summarize the former first:

- texts have a manifest structural organization; and although meanings have to be achieved through a cooperative integration and in relation to a given context of interpretation, the actual configuration of the text must not be disregarded: even in order to subvert the rules it is necessary to know the game.

- texts have a propositional and an illocutive force: in conveying a meaning they also give "instructions for use" in the form of a strategy, or project, or structure of organization that can be considered as the "intention" of an authorial (textual) instance (that can be the result of a compromise or even a conflict of interests). In any case the materiality of the text is the basic element the receiver can deal with. As also Greimas underlines, the possibility of sociolinguistic analysis itself is based on the information, insufficient but real, provided by the text (1986:335).

For this very reason the first step of my research will be the full transcription of the ads texts I intend to analyze.

- The actual configuration of texts provides the basis upon which

the receiver, drawing on his competence 25 can interpret the meanings and perform the reference. The "objective explanation" (in Ricoeur's sense) and the subjective and socially shaped "interpretation" are not contradictory, but mutually influencing.

The emphasis on textual organization can lead to the hypostasis of the text as a self-contained entity or to an absolutization of textual structures that relegates the receiver to a subsidiary role. A rival attraction to this position is Fish's idea of textuality as totally dependent on the interpretive community and its particular system of belief (so that a reading list can be read as a poem) rather than on author's intention or textual organization. Especially if one thinks of TV programmes it appears clearly how difficult it is to analyze texts on the exclusive basis of their structure: first of all because of the nature of TV output as a flow (which means not only lack of sharp distinction between programmes, but also an high degree of auto-referentiality and cross references between programmes); and as a consequence for the multiple joints that link the programmes. All this to say (but I will develop the issue in more detail later) that structure is neither a necessity nor a sufficient element for textual analysis. In particular it is not sufficient, if one does not consider the co-textual aspects, for instance: among the scholars in media studies Tony Bennet has stressed the social nature of reading , and the fact that all texts come to the reader already "encrusted" with the effects of previous readings that condition their interpretation.

In my opinion, and I will try to support this claim as the analysis proceeds, texts cannot be considered in themselves, as autonomous meaningful units, especially if one looks for issues

like representation of social reality or interpretation in given social contexts. Co-textual information can provide keys that textual analysis is unable to offer, and I will focus especially on them, both in, considering the advertising "flow" as a whole and in setting a comparative framework to evaluate similarities and dissimilarities between two parallel flows.

Coming back to textual analysis, a greater concern with the relation between texts and social context is expressed by Schmidt (1982): he provides a definition of his pragmalinguistic approach to textuality both as a theory of "execution" ("performance" being a too heavily connoted term) and a theory of "reference":

"Pragmalinguistics accounts for language from the point of view of its usage, namely in relation to its users: in analyzing the linguistic actions (speech acts) of communicative utterances, it takes into account the context and the speech situation in which they occur, and tries to clarify the relation between the propositions and their manifestations in the act of speech"(1982:52)

Pragmalinguistics always considers text-in-situation, within the wider category of social interaction. Schmidt refers to previous analysis in sociology and philosophy of language (by Wittgenstein, Austin, Hartman, Habermas, Frege) and conceives language as the fundamental component of social action. Texts are not regarded as linguistic units, but as socio-communicative realizations of textuality, or linguistic realizations of communicative action (which recalls Halliday's theory of realization). In fact the basic units in Schmidt's perspective is the "communication-action-game" 26, which harks back to Wittgenstein's "sprachspiel" (language-game) and Mead definition of linguistic action as dimension of behaviour which conditions can be made explicit. Schmidt in fact formulates a model of

linguistic communication structured according to various levels of decreasing generality (Schmidt, 1982:69):

SOCIAL INTERACTION

LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION ACTION GAME

COMMUNICATIVE ACTS

Linguistic components (texts)	Non linguistic components
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Textual analysis cannot overlook the relation with the other levels, and the direction of analysis goes from the general to the particular rather than vice versa. As we will see below a text is considered a set of instructions given to the participants to the communication action game in order to refer to an extralinguistic correlate.

The unit of analysis of linguistic communication is the c-a-g, a set of communicative actions spatially and temporally defined (micro-social systems), having recurrent characters (perceptibility of participants; complementary roles; thematic orientation; dependence on social context). They are in a way analogous with Hymes' speech events, or Bernstein's crucial context or, for some aspects, to Habermas' ideal communicative situation. What is relevant in the perspective of my research is that c-a-g are specific kinds of social situations, according to which the participants to interaction use language in specific ways to refer to social models of reality.

The process of reference is not accomplished by textual elements, but by the participants interaction through textual elements 27. And the object referred to is neither reality in

itself, nor the reality of the text, but the model of reality shared within and constructed by a communicative situation (so that "ontological" reality coincides with social relevance).

Structural and functional aspects merge in a "semantic by instructions": here the textual "deep structure" (or macro-structure, as Van Dijk has called it, that is the level underpinning the micro-structure of utterances) can be considered as a set of instructions to the participants so that they can refer in a particular way to the linguistic and non linguistic elements of the situation. Then textual analysis has to be grounded on the study of c-a-g.

The concept of c-a-g can be related to the notion of "register" as Halliday has put it:

"The configuration of semantic resources that the members of a culture typically associate with a situation type, the meaning potential that is accessible in a given situation" (1978:111).

And even if two features of c-a-g contradict the nature itself of mass communication itself (as participants are in fact spectators, and neither can perceive each other nor can exchange their role or integrate that of another participant), I believe that the notion of c-a-g can provide a fruitful criterion for the analysis of advertising, for two main reasons:

- Advertisements usually reproduce a whole gamut of typical social situations, that is a range of stereotypical communication-action-games.

- Advertisements (by virtue of their performative character) are often structured so as to involve the viewer in a specific c-a-g (this is a point I will develop in the empirical analysis).

Schmidt also theorizes a generative model of text production (1982:189), as a process that accomplishes both a social function

and a communicative intention through a series of choices among different possibilities regarded as acceptable in a social group (which recalls the notion of "meaning potential" in Halliday). He tries to account for the dynamic and interactional factors that determine the production of the deep structure, and then its realization in a social situation. Yet his model suffers, in my opinion, from a high degree of idealization and "a priori" presuppositions. Schmidt himself declares that, although his analysis is oriented toward a practical use of language, its aim is rather

"to draw a sketch of models of interaction between texts, acts and communicative situations, in order to obtain the outline of the factors of an idealized model of sociolinguistic communication " (1982:38).

A last element I intend to emphasize is a further similarity with Halliday's idea of social semiotic, as for both authors the unity of the text depends not only on its linguistic cohesion, but also on its realization of a higher systematic level:

"What is revealed in a single sentence, or other units of lexicogrammatical structure, is its origin in the functional organization of the semantic system. (...) The semantic system has its own further context in the total sociosemiotic cycle, the series of networks that extend from the social system (the culture as a semiotic construct), through the linguistic system on the one hand and the social context on the other, down to the wording and the sounds and written symbols, which are the ultimate linguistic manifestation of text" (1978:150)

After having considered some of the pragmatic approach to textuality that can be relevant to the construction of a framework for the analysis of TV adverts, it seems opportune to devote some attention to the specificity of audiovisual language in itself: textual theories are in fact related to verbal (either written or oral) texts, while the role of image in its interaction with the aural track is crucial to my perspective.

This is the main topic of the next section.

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NOTES

PART 1

Chapter 1. BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

- 1) "Philosophy of Language and Semiotics" in Chatman, S.; Eco, U.; Klinkenberg, J. (ed.) A Semiotic Landscape, Mouton 1979, p 19. On the same topic see also Malmberg 1983:339.
- 2) See also Lyons 1977 and 1981; De Mauro 1965; Oller 1972. From a hermeneutic perspective Gadamer defines translation as "emphasizing clarification".
- 3) See also Malmberg 1983:345. Also Greimas considers "a mental revolution" the fact that today linguistics is a theoretical construction, and not longer a mere "account of facts". See 1986 302-305.
- 4) Other scholars agree on the same criticism: see for instance the critique to Katz's "principle of effability" by Sperber and Wilson 1986:191.
- 5) See for instance Lyons 1977.
- 6) See for instance Lyons 1981; Hymes 1974; Brown and Yule 1985.

Chapter 2. FROM NATURE TO USE: TOWARD A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

- 1) He mainly refers to American structuralism (Bloomfield).
- 2) See the definition of "Generative Grammar" in 1986:156
- 3) Ibidem
- 4) For a critique to the concept of "realization" see Coulthard 1981.
- 5) See Halliday, M.A.K. "Il linguaggio in una prospettiva sociale" in Giglioli P.P. (ed) Linguaggio e Societa, Bologna, Il Mulino 1973 p. 246. This essay is not included in the previous English edition of the book (Language and Social Context, Penguin 1972).
- 6) See Barthes, R Elements de semiologie, Paris, Seuil, 1964.
- 7) Among others see Lakoff 1980; Ortony 1979
- 8) Ricoeur, P Du texte a l'action, Paris, Seuil, 1989 (I refer to the Italian edition, p 168).
- 9) Greimas 1986:151-154
- 10) Ibidem, p 152.

11) For instance those of Sacks and Schegloff.

Chapter 3. TEXT AS SOCIOSEMIOTIC UNIT

- 1) For a criticism of the "linear" as well as "reflective" and "idealistic" conception of textuality see Tel Quel Theories d'ensemble, Paris, Seuil, 1968. p 274.
- 2) Among others see Allen, R. Channels of Discourse, Methuen 1987.
- 3) "Texte veut dire tissu; mais alors que jusqu'ici on a toujours pris ce tissu pour un produit derrier lequel se tient, plus ou moins caché, le sens (la verité), nous accentuons maintenant, dans le tissu, l'idée generative que le texte se fait". Barthes. Le plaisir du texte, p 100-101.
- 4) S. Schmidt is a German author close to the neo-Frankfurt school (Habermas, Apel); he consider texts from a pragmalinguistic perspective. I refer especially to Texttheorie, Munchen 1973, in the italian translation (Bologna 1982). See pgg 177,178.
- 5) On the relation between the objectification of discourse in the text (distantiation) and the "fulfilling" character of reference (interpretation) see also Ricoeur "The hermeneutic function of distantiation" and "What is a Text?" in Thompson 1981.
- 6) Schmidt defines his own position within the pragmalinguistic framework: texts in fact are not considered as mere linguistic entities, but as processes that fulfil a communicative function:

"The task of a text theory consist of examining by what means and according to which rules texts-in-function are produced and received" (1982:34).
- 7) See Giglioli, 1973.
- 8) Schegloff, E. "Sequencing in conversational opening", in Gumperz-Hymes 1972.
- 9) R. Allen (1987) argues that the impression of an "unmediated interpersonal communication situation" through the use of the "on screen characterized viewer" (who stands for the real viewer) is widely exploited in ads; in fact beside personalizing and textualizing the "implied viewer", it makes an interpersonal exchange out of a one-way, mass communication phenomenon.(pag 92).
- 10) As Schegloff points to, it is a practice in which "the power of reciprocity makes itself felt" (in Gumperz-Hymes 1972:362).

- 11) I mainly refer to Hymes 1974.
- 12) Among the characteristic traits of the ethnographic perspective see also the rejection of a sharp distinction between micro and macro levels of analysis and the aim to balance practical relevance and scientific advance. (1974:85).
- 13) For a critique of the notion of speech community see Coulthard 1977:32-34.
The levels indicated by Hymes correspond roughly to social interaction-communication action game-communicative act in Schmidt's model of communication (see next paragraph).
- 14) For the difference between "style" and "register" see also Coulthard 1977:37 and Erving-Tripp in Gumperz-Hymes 1972.
In summary, register is topic and context specific, whereas style is not determined by the situation, but rather expresses an individual choice within a social repertoire.
- 15) See Coulthard 1977:8
- 16) The great emphasis is not on "What can actually be found to occur" like in conversational analysis, but rather on "what one would guess would be acceptable if it were do so" (Levinson, *ibidem*).
- 17) See also Halliday 1978:37.
- 18) See Levinson's account of the contributions carried to pragmatics by the notion of "implicature". (1983:97-101).
- 19) See especially "Logic and Conversation" in Cole-Morgan (ed) Syntax and Semantics 9:Speech Acts, 1975 and "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation" in Cole-Morgan (ed) Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics, 1978.
- 20) Also Ricoeur calls for a "depsychologization" of meaning.
- 21) On the same position see also Lyons 1977
- 22) I will come back on this concept in speaking about "codes" in Part 2 of this work.
- 23) "Writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; henceforth, textual meaning and psychological meaning have different destinies". (Ricoeur 1981:139).
- 24) I will deal with the topic of ideology in more depth in Part 2.
- 25) I use the term in a way different from Chomskian definition: I rather refer to Hymes and Habermas perspectives, the former including the aspects of real occurrence and relation with a

community, the latter defining competence as the structure of intersubjectivity (see also Giglioli 1973) which is not limited by, but rather determines, the communicative situation.

- 26) See also Schmidt, S. "Some problems of communicative text theories" in Dressler, W. (ed) Current Trends in Textlinguistics, Berlin 1978 pp 47-60.
- 27) In his definition of text (as linguistic part of a communicative act, oriented by a theme, realizing an illocutive force and having a recognizable social function, 1982:177) Schmidt distinguishes between the common linguistic acceptance of the term (that is "coherent set of linguistic signs") and the pragmalinguistic version of it (that is text as a set of utterances-in-function, as a sociocommunicative realization of textuality), and name the former "textual module". The "textual module" is then a metalinguistic concept, analytically isolated from the CAG; it is an incomplete entity, an abstract set of instructions that only within a CAG can have social relevance. Schmidt quotes van Dijk as supporter of an analogous perspective: the text is but a formal construction that only in a concrete situation can be used to refer to something (1982:178).

PART 2

TV LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSES

CHAPTER 4. THE LANGUAGE OF TELEVISION

The considerations of the previous chapter on different pragmatic approaches to the issue of language in use only make sense in my perspective if one assumes that TV outputs in general, and advertising in particular, can be regarded as texts. Yet methodologies of inquiry and instruments for the analysis cannot be transferred as such from one system of signs to another, as Corner has emphasized:

"It is extremely difficult to make a proposition about 'texts' (even when it is qualified as being about 'media texts') that holds over the range of textual types and instances possible" (1983:270).

At present the analysis of media language is heavily influenced by linguistic methodologies and tools, being linguistics, as Eco has stated, the more rigorous and scientifically developed branch of semiology (so that titles of books on TV like Fiske's Reading Television do not sound particularly odd).

Because verbal language is indeed a component of TV language, and because it is -as well as the iconic one - a system of signs for communicating, some analogies can be drawn in order both to verify the field of application and the limits of the linguistic model, and to find distinctive tools for studying the language of television. Analogies between the two linguistic practices have been pointed out by several authors (Fiske in Reading Television; Allen in Channel of Discourse) and they are legitimate, providing that the arbitrariness of a complete exchange of methods, the qualitative difference between the two and the impossibility of a total equivalence are acknowledged. It

is also true that

" there is no general science of visual language, like linguistics, which delivers agreed methods of description and analysis. Semiotics attempts to hint at ways in which an analysis might be done but with the significant exception of Peirce's categories of 'index', 'icon' and 'symbol', it suffers from an underdeveloped system of descriptive and analytical categories" (Davis and Walton 1983:43).

An attempt to specify the nature of the iconic language and the possibility of identifying a set of codes (although 'weak') for the analysis has been made, in the late sixties , by U. Eco in La struttura assente (1968).

According to Eco the 'analogical' (or 'continuous') character of the iconic image does not exclude the presence of codes and conventions, for the iconic sign shares some properties not with the object, but with the 'perceived' model of it (as Gombrich and Panofsky have powerfully emphasized , perception is a cultural, historical, social phenomenon, and even 'imitative' codes are conventional).

The consequence is not that 'strong' linguistic codes (in which 'standard' elements prevail on individual variations) can be, for the common conventional basis, simply transposed to the domain of the iconic image, and that "every act of communication is grounded on a language similar to verbal language", but rather that "every act of communication is code-grounded" (1968:130).

Moreover not every kind of language is articulated as the verbal one, according to the two levels of phonemes (set of units, limited in number, with oppositional/positional value, meaningless in themselves), and morphemes (significant units, composed by phonemes, almost unlimited in number). The "myth of double articulation", as Eco calls it, can produce misleading

interpretations, if dogmatically assumed: in fact the "pertinent traits" of a given code do not necessarily consist of simple oppositional elements like letters of an alphabet, but can be identified at a higher level of complexity.

According to Eco, in fact, all visual signs are "semi", that is signs the meaning of which is an utterance (like road signs); and such a complex utterance, as an "idiolect" (Barthes) , provides the context within which individual elements can be acknowledged, as bearers of meaning, and not vice versa. (1968:143).

Eco provides a classification of visual codes 1 within which the social and historical character of visual conventions is considered as an intrinsic feature, as well as the large predominance, within the same cultural context, of individual variations and characterizing standard elements.

Such a 'weakness' of visual codes, and their possible exploitation according to different contexts is a crucial aspect I will consider in the comparative analysis of TV advertisements. It is very common to account for TV language as a combination of a visual and an aural track, being the latter usually considered as a mere "illustration" and "anchorage" of images that substantially 'speak for themselves'. This kind of approach to the issue contains, in my opinion, a double oversimplification. First of all the "low" level of iconicity, and the consequent pivotal role played by the verbal track in defining the meaning of TV texts has already been stressed in media studies, at least for some TV genres (News, Documentaries, Current Affairs).²

As Davis and Walton have stressed with regard to a specific piece of tv news

"more than half the shots are predominantly indexicals or symbolic, and do not bear a direct relationship to the TV news text. We must therefore conclude, as our previous studies have done, that to make semantic or cognitive sense of the visual, the average viewer would have his or her viewing guided by the preferences of the verbal track- which is telling the audience to read in this way, rather than that...Our findings suggest that the relationship between image and text is more than purely illustrative. They reveal that there is often no direct or even indirect correspondence between the content of voice-overs and the shots which appear. It would seem that the relationship is more than an imperfect parallel" (1983:46).

Moreover, as Masterman has emphasized, beside the "ideological" closure imposing a preferred reading to the image on the screen (I will deal later in ch. 6 with this issue), the "collective authorship" in TV texts has also to be considered:

" Media texts are collaborative projects, and frequently contain internal tensions and contradictions indicative perhaps of the differing perspective of those who work on them" (1985:152)

Tv commercials represent a case in point both for their "collective" authorship (as they mediate between different intentionalities, namely clients, agency, regulatory bodies and so on) and for the substantial relation between visual and aural track.

Most of them, in fact, have no verbal track at all.

Given the short format and the difficulty of a "convincing" argument, an "economic" interaction between the two tracks is mainly pursued, and the function of "closure" or instruction is performed especially by the sounds, or music, which relation with the images seems to be, in many cases, more substantial than speech (this issue will be explicitly addressed in the empirical analysis).

The relevance of the aspect of "sound" (" Indeed, it could be

argued that television is itself primarily a sound medium". Masterman 1985:153) allows to consider the second element of the oversimplification mentioned above, namely the consideration of the aural track as an homogeneous one, mainly dominated by the verbal components (which among other things is not homogeneous in itself, as language is present both in the spoken and in the written form, with different consequences in terms of relevance and reliability of the utterances).

It seems more opportune to distinguish three components of TV language, namely image, speech and sound (which includes naturalistic effects, special effects and music), as many different scholars already did (among the others Hood 1980, Ellis 1982, Masterman 1985, Armes 1988).

I will face later, in the empirical analysis, the different status and authority of what is uttered by speakers in vision vs by voice over; I will also consider the "iconicity" of sound and its shaping force in establishing rhythms and patterns of vision, in providing narrative cues, in suggesting connotative interpretations of the image through an emotional appeal, in activating cultural references and so on.

For the moment my purpose is to single out some general features of the aural track essential to the specificity of tv language, and to bring to the fore the fact that sound, as well as image, is not a neutral reproduction but rather a construction, a "discourse" which can determine the way in which the "message" is received.

While the discursive character of the TV image has already been stressed in the media studies over the last years, both from a theoretical perspective and as a finding of empirical research on

media texts 4, the consequences of the manipulated and artificial nature of sound have been only recently made explicit 5.

In fact , from the point of view of its production, the sound track is submitted to the same procedures of technical manipulation as the visual one: selection of elements and creation of a "perspective" (by placing the microphones in certain positions); processes of sound assembling and editing which involve

" standard procedures to give a better sound quality, to avoid audible distortion and to improve the signal-to-noise ratio ...as the hierarchization of sound tracks, the creation of a sound perspective etc.." (Armes 1988:169).

As well as the visual , sound treatment conforms to precise conventions (for example: a certain amount of noise as signifying realism, or the standard order of ranking : "speech above music, music above general sounds and effects", ibidem 170).

To disregard the activity which "make sense" of sound is to overlook the possibility of an "ideology of sound" : "microphones, like cameras, are necessarily positioned, both physically and ideologically" (Masterman 1985: 154).

Only recently sound has been considered as a bridge between diegetic (that is represented in the audiovisual text) and real space, in providing a unity (through the permanence of background noises against a changing visual track), and a continuity which softens the effect of sharp cuts (the sense of continuity is particularly exploited in advertising texts, given the high rate of different shots that constitute the visual track) 6.

The role of sound in compensating the intrinsic weakness of the

image (low definition, small amount of visible details), of enhancing TV discourse features (as the use of narrative, the sense of presence and immediacy), of counter weighting discontinuous amounts of visual attention, has also been emphasized. The latter element is linked to the typical patterns of TV consumption, which usually takes place in doing something else, in a room with other people, with lack of concentration , in a sort of daily routine which is "something of a last resort, rather than a special event"(Ellis 1982:128).

Sound provides, in fact, both continuity and emphasis which summon the attention of the viewer at the crucial moments of the visual.

Sound, particularly in its off-screen way of occurrence, has also been seen not only as enriching the diegetic space with the inclusion of "implied" elements, but also as providing an additional dimension , an extra diegetic space, a different and displaced point of view from which the image can be seen and judged, in creating " a three-dimensional space of which the two-dimensional image on the screen is only one perspective" (Arnes 1988:177).

Sound can, of course, interact in an oppositional rather than auxiliary way with the image, then producing a range of rhetorical effects; the relation can also be "odd", creating a "puzzle" for the viewer which calls for his competence and active involvement, and so on.

In any case both the visual and the verbal track are submitted to a balance between conventional and socially shared procedures on the one hand, and individual-expressive variations (which can be more eloquent about specific idiolect) on the other.

In the first stage of the empirical analysis, consisting in collection and classification of advertisements according to the kind of goods and services advertised, I will try to disentangle the complexity of, levels of both sound and image; as the analysis will proceed, I will consider the pragmatic consequences of their interaction in reflecting/determining social frameworks for dealing with specific issues and typical forms of social interaction, hence providing cues for the interpretation of textual meaning according to a shared horizon of competence and expectations.

In spite of the difference , already stressed, between interpersonal conversation and mass communication, I will assume on this issue the standpoint of conversational analysts. As Atkinson and Heritage underline

"The development of speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969) in linguistics has greatly forwarded the view that utterances can be usefully analyzed as conventionally grounded social actions.(...) Conversation analytic research into sequence is based on the recognition that , in a variety of ways, the production of some current conversational actions proposes a here-and-now definition of the situation to which subsequent talk will be oriented." (1984:5).

The emphasis accorded above to the aspect of sound is grounded both on the relative lack of attention given to it in TV studies (which, as seen before, often reduce it to the verbal elements), and in its technically manipulated nature , similar under this respect to the visual one, and, like the visual one, perceived as natural: both are, in fact, submitted to a transformation in kind rather than to an alteration in degree of accuracy (from reality to representation, from nature to discourse, from objects to images, either visual or acoustic).

As for the image, more will be said below in dealing with TV texts; it is worth saying here that for the analysis of TV texts a basic and quite unambiguous technique has already been assessed, which is commonly used in this kind of empirical analysis 7, consisting in a tabulation of the shots (considered as units of analysis, as an expression of TV language rather than image content 8, mounted alongside with a column reporting dialogues, music, effects, as to allow, for the purpose of the research, further analytical descriptions.

This is a sort of translation (which inevitably implies, given the transition from one medium to another, a certain degree of interpretation and selection, although as low as possible) of the "raw" material in a homogeneous and formalized set of transcriptions which allows the identification of the basic elements and their relations within the texts considered.

Although transcriptions are extremely useful for the analysis of audiovisual texts, yet they cannot be considered as an adequate substitute for the material under analysis (for this reason I have used transcriptions especially for comparing variations in the aural and visual track in transnational campaigns, but I have used as main referent the tape-recorded material).

THE DISCOURSE OF TELEVISION: FLOW, SCHEDULE, TEXTS.

In 1974 Raimond Williams acknowledged a characterizing feature of TV output : it is no longer a sequence of discrete unities (programmes), but rather a continuous and inclusive "flow" of

images, words, sounds available to be consumed: hence "watching television" is less selecting a particular item from the sequence offered than allowing the audiovisual flow as a whole to reach us, by the operation of a switch. As R. Williams has put it "what is being offered is not , in older terms, a programmed of discrete units, with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programmes items, but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real 'broadcasting' " (1974:90).

The experience of viewing is still defined by many scholars on the blueprint of Williams' analysis:

" Our experience of television is usually not of isolated works, but of chunk of time filled with multiple texts carefully linked together so that they flow almost unnoticed one into another. A commercial is followed by a network promotion for a future programme, which is followed by a 'teaser' for the episode , interrupted by another commercial , followed by a news break that anticipates the late-evening news program and so on " (Allen 1987:5).

Although both Williams and Allen refer to American television (where advertising standard practices are different from the European ones), yet the pattern of viewing they present is not too far from that of European viewers (especially in an era of deregulation).

Flow can be both the effect of a changing model of production and consumption of TV programmes, and a sort of strategy deliberately set up. In fact, on the one hand (that of the "effects") the new technological resources available (for shooting, recording, editing materials), and the consequent

increase of TV supply at a cheaper cost, have merged with an increasing demand for programmes by the audience.

Moreover several elements have contributed to reinforce this phenomenon.

The filling of the gaps between programmes with advertisements in commercial television (or with other kind of publicity, as the trailers for new programmes in not commercial TV) is the basic factor in this change (Williams 1974:89-90), which has been so effective as to shape the "format" of the programmes themselves: since in most of commercial TV (in Italy as well as in Britain) the programme cannot be interrupted by ads, "natural breaks" have increased by dividing each programme in thematic or temporal units, whose rhythm is articulated by the "clusters" of adverts (This is especially true of movies or programmes produced not to be shown on commercial TV).

But the most common practice is now to incorporate spaces for advertisements from the planning stage, in tailoring TV discourses

" to fit 'naturally' around commercial breaks. (...) Shows built their stories to a high point of interest before each break to ensure that the audience will stay tuned" (Allen 1987:67).

The presence of adverts shape "a priori" the way in which each programme will be received :

"In quite short terms there is a rationalized division into 'acts'. In features there is a similar rationalized division into 'parts'. But the effect goes deeper: there is a characterizing kind of opening sequence, meant to excite interest, which is in effect a kind of trailer for itself(...) thus a quality of the external sequence becomes a mode of definition of an internal method" . (Williams 1974:92)

This kind of "deconstruction" of the original unity of each programme, and the successive reassembling in a compound macro-unity, has been compared by some critics with other kinds of aesthetic and artistic practices within the common cultural framework of "postmodernity": "bricolage" instead of project, heterogeneous composition instead of homogeneity, play with the text instead of research of a sense etc.⁹

I will discuss in more details later this far too optimistic position.

The viewer's behaviour has also changed under the effect of the various instruments of control and manipulation of the flow (remote control, videorecorder...), which have determined a more subjective and personalized dimension of consumption: TV flow is not only the planned sequence of images and words available on the screen by switching the TV set on; it is also (and above all) the individualized combination of fragments assembled by the viewer and constituting his unique experience, which is shaped by the interaction of different factors: on the technical side the use of the remote control or, at a more sophisticated level, the combination of images having a different source (one of which can be independent from TV) by the use of VCR and TV set providing "picture in picture" images , and so on.

At the social level the patterns of consumption of TV programmes are influenced by the domestic surroundings: the character of viewing (which usually depends on family units, as in Hood 1980 and Morley 1986), can imply and stimulate the superimposition of a conversation, different interpretations, intertextual associations which influence the reception or, a discontinuous amount of attention. The latter aspect is regarded

by many scholars as the most distinctive feature of TV consumption (Ellis 1982); it also determines an elliptical and, in some way, casual perception of the elements of the flow.

The "random" character of TV consumption is linked to at least two further aspects: TV represents a "last resort" rather than a special event; TV "engages the look and the glance rather than the gaze" (Ellis 1982:128).

But even if the flow can be considered as a result, an effect, it is also at a certain extent a planned effect: from the point of view of broadcasting the sequence of images and words is neither a fragmented discourse without a referent, nor a "work" without an author, but can be considered as the unitary meta-discourse of a supernarrator, whose strategic weapon is the schedule. Far from being the casual consequence of a cumulative sequence of unities, the flow can instead be seen as a system in which the different elements are defined by their positional/oppositional value, fixed by the scheduling rules rather than by their content and intrinsic features.

In other words, programmes are like "tokens", which have to fit in the schedule space (considered in its daily and weekly course, schedule is a supplier of spaces , organizing time through space) and to conform to standardized rules (which is also true of non-commercial TV).

In this sense, as Williams has emphasized, talking about "interruptions" of programmes by adverts and trailers is to remain attached to a residual way of watching TV:

" There is a quality of flow which our received vocabulary of discrete response and description cannot easily acknowledge. It is evident that what is now called 'an evening's viewing' is in some way planned, by providers and then by viewers, as a whole;

that it is in any event planned in discernible sequences which in this sense override particular programme units." (Williams 1974:93)

Hence, advertisements and trailers are less forms of interruption than elements of punctuation 10 within the flow, as they determine its rhythms, emphasize its crucial moments, ratify the exactness of viewer's expectations. Adverts and trailers constitute the punctuation of a meta-discourse , which "subject of enunciation" is the channel itself , and whose main functions are phatic and pragmatic: like in every great master narration (epopeas, mythologies, metaphysics, history of scientific progress 11), and more generally like in every kind of discourse, the whole narrative naturalizes an heterogeneous set of elements arbitrarily selected and assembled.

This kind of meta-narration also serves to legitimate its own image and its way of seeing the world, like that of a storyteller in position of great knowledge and power :

"We can also look behind each station's schedule to see a kind of supernarrator. These supernarrators are personified and individualized by various means: logos, signature music, and, most importantly, voice-over narrators who speak for the station or network as a whole (...) providing flashforwards of coming attractions, justifying schedule change or technical difficulties, interrupting for news bulletins or tests of the emergency broadcast system"(Allen 1987:70).

(I will come back on the issue of channel image in the next chapter).

I will argue that TV discourse, that is the sequence of texts organized by the schedule within the broadcasting flow, is structured in order to achieve three main functions: the creation, consolidation, enhancement of the channel image (auto-referential function); the contact with the viewer, repeatedly

and variously addressed, whose loyalty to the channel is continuously urged for , through different kind of promises and instructions (phatic function); the creation of an audience for the programmes (to, be sold to advertisers in commercial TV), and the creation of patterns of viewing (like evening's viewing) and patterns of seeing, or framework of interpretation of the world settled by TV programmes (pragmatic function).

These three functions are relatively independent from one another (the channel image, for instance, is not totally subordinated to the pragmatic function, but, in determining a phatic contact of familiarity, fulfils a pragmatic task in producing effects of credibility, authority and so on). Nevertheless they indeed work in a strict relation and mutually reinforce one another.

Moreover they are particularly evident in a system of competitive broadcasting. In Italy, for instance, the scenario is quite variegated: in fact, besides the three channels of the Public Service (RAI) ¹² there are a lot of "private" channels, the most important of which are assembled in networks (property of Mr Silvio Berlusconi), which are received almost all over the National Area, and also some "local" small TV stations, which have a regional and sometimes even more restricted diffusion.¹³

In Italy (as for some networks in the USA) every single channel always and continuously displays, usually in the bottom right corner of the screen, its individual logo, which "forces" an immediate identification of the "source", whatever the kind of images we are watching, and before any possible recognition of the genre of the programme. Hence it is impossible to see (or to

record) any item of the flow, from movies to advertisements, without a particular trademark (functioning as a weapon for limiting the effects of "remote control syndrome", last minute viewing etc.) which incessantly reminds the viewer what the source of his/her possibility to see is.

As Williams has emphasized, rather than watching a programme we are "watching television"; and the obsessive phatic identification of the channel tells us that we can watch a programme because we are watching a particular channel.

The pragmatic exploitation of the "flow effect " (or "hauling effect") in consequence of which "Who begins watching a channel , stays with this channel" (Williams 1974:93) is strictly linked to the way in which the channel has connoted its image, as authoritative, entertaining, reliable 14, as well as to its phatic organization of exciting and special occasions through a set of visual and verbal promises for the spectator.

Out of this wider context the effective relevance and the role of adverts and trailers cannot be fully understood. I consider them together, for the moment, because of the common character of publicity and their complementary functions (adverts can also be seen as a way to confirm the channel image, as there are some kind of commercial exclusively linked to a certain channel; trailers, in turn, can be seen as advertisements for TV programmes, using the same language and the same strategies as commercials).

I consider them on the one hand as elements of the flow, with a precise "editorial " function as they mark the articulation, sequence, importance, emotional character of the bits of flow they connect; on the other hand they constitute a sort of

"summarized flow", or "flow in the flow" (apart from the case of the BBC, carrying no advertising at all, adverts and trailers come usually joint together in a common sequence) which condenses the properties and functions of the global TV flow. The rigid "30 seconds" standard format becomes an opportunity to explore, invent or consolidate typical patterns of viewing, the continuous exposition to which has determined an increasingly sophisticated competence in the viewers' approach to TV programmes in general.

I will return later to the language of adverts; what is worth emphasizing for the moment is the homogeneous nature of adverts (and trailers) in respect to the other elements of the flow, both at the level of content represented and of formal ways of representation. Advertisements are texts, elements of the macro-text which constitutes the daily narration of each channel, and not an interruption, a qualitative suspension, an injection of an outrageous substance in an independent and autonomous body.

Speaking of a flow or macro-text as the most characteristic feature of TV broadcasting does not necessarily imply the impossibility of discerning individual units within it. The flow does not cancel the text, but urges a redefinition of it, more committed with its reception and use, and not only with intrinsic features.

In fact, in order to explain in what sense "the older concept of programming (...) is still active and still to some extent real", Williams speaks about "expectations of a discrete event or of a succession of discrete events", and of the possibility to turn on for a particular item, and "select and respond to it discretely" What I intend to argue here is that the formal unit

of a televisual text, although factually given by the system of broadcasting (and recognized as such by viewers), also implies an act of selection, connection and interpretation of elements, which is "performed" by the receiver, although not necessarily in a conscious way.

Hence a pragmatic component can be acknowledged not only in the processes of textual interpretation, as I will try to show in the empirical analysis, but also in the commonly taken-for-granted identification of the boundaries of the text, and of its unity beyond the composition in discontinuous elements. 15

As the co-textual relations between the different items of the flow are so strong, what actually the viewer consumes are not individual texts, but blocks of mixed elements of different kind of programmes, only originally conceived as texts; then a characterization of text exclusively based upon a "project" of communication from someone to someone else and space-time bounded, appears at least inadequate.

Instead I intend to consider the text as the result of the interaction of different variables and processes, like: contextual and intertextual relation with the other items of the flow; the set of different kinds of texts it shares common social convention with; the position it occupies in the flow (which is determinant of the meaning it can achieve, depending on what kind of people is supposed to be watching); the intrinsic features of the text, as cohesion, style, strategies, instructions for the viewers, codes implied and so on (features that never stand alone and are not self-contained, but are created and identified within a system of social conventions). Each of these variables has, as we will see, a deeply and

intrinsically social nature.

TV TEXTS AND LITERARY TEXTS: SOME ANALOGIES AND DIFFERENCES

In the previous section (Part 1) I have mainly dealt with two kinds of texts: spoken texts, in the form of vis-à-vis conversation, and written texts, as they have been analyzed in recent trends of text-theory and literary criticism.

The reason why a brief survey of the main issues in this areas of study has preceded the analysis of TV texts is the assumption of some kind of analogies that justify, at least in part, an exchange of methodologies of inquiry.

I have already stressed the "conversational" nature of TV texts, both in their "representation" of everyday interaction in characteristic social contexts and in their activation of a symbolic conversation with the viewer, by engaging him/her in an active and cooperative "closure" of the text, through different forms of (more or less direct) address.

But whereas the analysis of everyday conversation suffers, as shown before, from a lack of formalization that undermines the transfer of criteria of analysis, the "textual conversation" has been almost exclusively dealt with on the more secure and already explored ground of literary analysis 16.

Over the last few years the mutual relationship between literature and TV texts, and the role of television in accelerating and magnifying some of the processes outlined by literary analysis, namely those involving the relation author/reader (or viewer) have been frequently emphasized:

"The relationship between television and its viewers provides an excellent laboratory in which to test the insights of reader-oriented criticism, away from the notion of a stable and eternal text to that activations of texts within historically specific conditions of reception is accelerated by the very nature of television (...) The insight that the texts carry within them a place marked out for the hypothetical reader to occupy, applies with particular force to television. Because of its economic nature (...) commercial television addresses its prospective viewers much more directly than does the fictional cinema or literature. The need of advertisers to persuade viewers to become 'good viewers' infuses all aspects of the flow of programming" (Allen 1987:107).

Allen seems to assume a basic analogy between TV and literary texts, and he is not the only one.

I will try instead to consider the two forms of textuality in their similarities and differences, and to open up some lines of inquiry into the controversial issue of TV texts specificity.

For the sake of the synthesis I will consider three general aspects of the analogy, strictly linked to one another, and commonly acknowledged as typical of both forms of textuality: the narrative character; the distinction fictional/not fictional; the rhetoric nature (the first concentrated on the text in itself, the second on the relation between text and world, the third on the relation between author/reader-viewer).

In fact when we can identify a " story " it is natural to think to the "storyteller", not necessarily as a person in the flesh , but as a point of view, a site from which the relations to the referential world on the one side, and the audience on the other, are articulated.

NARRATIVE

In stating that "only that which narrates can make us

understand", Susan Sontag (1978) grasped the pervasiveness of narrative characters in our knowledge of reality (at least in our western industrialized society): even the photographic image which, as Berger has suggested, has no "meaning" in itself and is but an "appearance" (1980:61), can only be understood when the "before" and the "after" of the actual "still" image have been recognized.

To acknowledge an event is to re-create its temporal context, to place it in time "not its own original time, for that it is impossible, but in narrated time" (ibidem).

Berger identifies the two possible sides of narration, namely history (memory and social action) and ideology (narration which in naturalizing a constructed vision of reality creates "a substitute which encourages the atrophy of any such memory" (ibidem :58)).

The structural ambiguity of narrative is also emphasized by Lyotard, who distinguishes between an "original" way to tell stories, as means of cohesion and identity; a "modern" way to set up a master-narrative that legitimates a state of facts, using the same tools it criticizes (like modern science, for instance, did with metaphysics) 17; and a "postmodern" narrative consisting in "local" stories , the validity of which is limited in space and time and intersubjectively determined.

What is true for the still image, in this case, also holds true for TV language, as S.Hall has suggested in his influential article on encoding/decoding (1974):

"The raw historical event cannot in that form be transmitted by, say, a television newscast. It can only be signified within the aural/visual form of a televisual language (...) To put it paradoxically, the event must become a story before it can become

a communicative event".

The pervasiveness of narrative has also been emphasized by M. de Certeau, in a powerful article named "The Jabbering of social Life":

/

"From morning till evening, unceasingly, streets and buildings are haunted by narratives.(...) They 'cover the event', that is they make our legends (legenda=that which must be read and said). More than the God recounted to us by the theologians of the past, these tales have the function of providence and predestination (...) Social life multiplies the gestures and modes of behaviour imprinted by the narrative models (...) Our society has become a narrated society in a threefold sense: it is defined by narratives (the fables of our advertising and information), by quotations of them, and by their interminable recitation". 18

Before discussing in more details the issues raised by the passage above, and for the sake of terminological accuracy, it is opportune to establish a general definition of "narrative" (intension) and then to check the "extension" within the televisual flow of programmes.

Within the traditional analysis of narrative, the distinction between narration and narrative, discourse and story (Todorov), is quite common, that is between a sequence of events and actions (the chronological and logical development of a "content") and the way in which it is presented by somebody to someone else: as Barthes has suggested

"in linguistic communication, je and tu are absolutely presupposed by one another ; similarly there can be no narrative without a narrator and a listener (or reader)". (1977:109)

Narrative is less a way to describe things than a model of discourse that organizes facts in a sequence: Eco has singled out the basic conditions for the narrative sequence, following

Aristotle, as the "agent" (either human or not), an initial "state of facts", a set of "changes" oriented in "time" and produced by "causes" (not necessarily explicit), up to a "final result" (even if often a temporary or interlocutory one). The crucial issue is that the sequence only makes sense in relation to a precise point of view, a definite perspective:

"It is both a process of production and an activity of structuration, but it is so in and for a subject: The subject is a function, or, better, a functioning of signification (...) specifying its effects as narrative function, pulling those functions into figures of symmetry and balance, mainstream narrative binds together, implicating the subject as the point where the bindings mechanisms cohere, the point from where the displacement and configuration of discourses make sense" (Neale 1981:12)

One aspect needs to be stressed here, namely the presence of the world and its role both inside the text (as matter from which events and actions are selected) and outside it (as situation in which the text is interpreted). The former is not identical with a correspondence to reality, as stressed above; and the latter (the situation) is constituted by other kinds of systems, no longer narrative, in respect to which narrative is understood. Whether these systems (ideology, economy, society) are actually free from narrative models is not so sharp, as de Certeau has stressed.

The characteristic use of language performed by narrative with its high degree of predictability, its recurrent patterns of action, its progressive and resolute development are the main reasons for its power on viewers' attention: the "pleasure" of narrative is a composite feeling that includes the satisfaction for the prediction of the events, the sense of coherence and

unity determined by the composition of the conflicts represented in the story (the unity and unicity of the point of view determines a coherent perspective and an ordered framework for the events), the reassuring gratification (or consolation) determined by the recurrence of patterns beyond the different events 19. The pleasure for unity and coherence results from the satisfaction of the desire of a solid and stable place from which to look at the events and make sense of them: the coherence of narrative is the coherence of the subject. And the subject is both "actor" (in his identification with the characters), and "narrator"(in his identification with the point of view), powerful site of sight, according to the (ambiguous) literal sense of "sub-jectum": subordinated to/origin of the action.

As J. Williamson has suggested, although narrative closure presupposes time (events occur in time; the place of the subject is defined through time), yet it denies it, by transforming the continuum of temporal development in a synchronic a-temporality (or in a play between memory of the past/projection into the future):

"I have suggested that there is an ideology of the synchronic, a category which is used to misrepresent history, since it can represent history as a story (full of mythologies) which has an end, and thus might just as well have happened all at once, from the vantage view point of the present (which is somehow separated from history)" (1978:153-54).

But whether narrative is a way to reinforce or subvert ideology does not rest on the nature of the narrative in itself.

What I would stress here is that narrative is one of the main discursive models we use for making sense of reality, which turn into ideology when the conventional character is disguised under an appearance of "naturalness".

The narrative character of TV texts has been emphasized for almost every genre, from sport to science (see for instance Bennet 1981), commercials (see Williamson 1978, Allen 1987), documentary (see, Nichols 1981). More controversial seems to be the issue of TV news; whereas on the one hand every claim of "neutrality" and "naturalness" has been demystified, and the manufactured and ideological nature of their production underlined 20, on the other hand the "narrative" character itself has in some cases been questioned. In the study of BFI Television in transition (1986), with regard to the viewers' activity of decoding, J. Lewis defines TV news as the only form of television which subverts the narrative model, based on the hermeneutic code and the "enigmatic" process of closure.

The argument is that TV news are not articulated in enigmas, but rather around "focal points"; moreover the enigmatic character (contradiction/struggle/solution) is eliminated by the way in which the "global story" (introduction /summary) is told, although it is not necessarily the case in individual news stories. But Lewis is clearly speaking about the whole programme (which does not necessarily present a narrative structure) and not of the individual items (always presented according to a narrative model).

Hence narrative is a discursive practice almost coextensive with TV language and a practice that can assume a claim of normativeness: in fact it can not only determine the "suspension of disbelief", but also the institution of the real, the creation of new beliefs (less related to the contents presented than to the "modality of adfirmation").21.

Speaking (and not viewing) seems to be the main feature of our era according to De Certeau:

"Our orthodoxy is made up of narrations of 'what is going on'. Statistical debates are our theological wars, the combatants no longer bear ideas as offensive or defensive arms. They move forward camouflage of facts, data and events (...). When they advance, the ground itself seems to advance. But in fact they manufacture it, they simulate it, they cover themselves with it, they believe in it. They thus create the stage of their law." (1985:151)

The main "risk" of narrative is in lending itself to the practices of "institution of real". In fact a "narrated" society involves a production of tales (from an author who has the same ethnological root as "authority"), a diffusion and circulation (or "advertising") of them through the various channels available, and the "performance" of them, the performative effects they determine on the receivers (this is what the theories of "hyperreality" and "simulacra" maintain).

Unlike ideology (that rests on the construction of a false consciousness through the concealment of the real relationships between facts and does not exclude the possibility of being demystified and subverted), simulacra do not need to deceive about being the result of manipulation. In fact according to scholars like, among the others, Baudrillard, to acknowledge their nature does not determine the "suspension of disbelief", as the new form of belief does not rest on the relation with reality, history, but on the convergence of discourses, and the self-referential and self-legitimizing texture of quotations (the possibility of a revolution is hence virtually excluded, there is neither "truth" to be affirmed, nor "justice" to be reestablished): what is known as "the reality" can (and indeed

do) produce real effects.

Although I am not sympathetic with this position, I think it expresses clearly some of the risks of advertising imagery, in its construction, of a hyperrealistic version of life that can become normative.

Now I will try to evaluate the relevance of the inter-textual, self-referential (beside referential), reality-making set of aspects in advertising discourses, and their effectiveness, despite the fact that the viewer knows what he/she is seeing is not "true".

FICTION

The issue of narrative involves as direct correlate, the issue of "fictionality", one of the most characteristic (although not necessary) features of literary as well as televisual texts:

"Dramatic shaping is endemic to most televisual editing and the medium is frequently involved in the production of fictional forms even when dealing with avowedly factual material (television, for example, constructs sporting events as primarily dramatic occasions" (Masterman 1985:178).

I will also discuss the legitimacy of the claim of "autonomy" of narrative texts (in respect to the norms of truthfulness and referentiality) as well as the ambiguity of this notion, especially evident at the level of reception.

TV texts in general and adverts in particular seem to play with the claim of autonomy on the one hand (which means freedom from the constraints of reality) and aim of effectiveness on the other (which means power to affect the real world).

What I intend to underline is that, as Schmidt (1976) has suggested, " fiction" is not a semantic feature (depending on a

particular non-referential relation between the world created and the real world), but a pragmatic one (depending on a set of socially shared conventions whose recognition determines the factual reference).

Hence, the "alienating" and "narcotic" effect of fictional texts is not inescapable (unlike in the classical opposition high culture/low culture), and as some subversive uses performed by subcultural groups instead have shown 22.

The two meanings of "fiction", namely "imagination" (construction of a coherent self-contained world, either as poetic invention or mathematical hypothesis), and "deception" (questionable assumption that pretends to be real) are emphasized by Williams (1976 :111-12), and constitute a site of ambiguity easily exploitable by TV discourses in general, and advertising in particular.

A crucial contribution for a critical approach to fictional texts is, again, the shift from the text in itself to the set of conventions, or instructions, that work for determining the perception of it as fictional.

Hence different levels of analysis need to be considered.

- The fictional and dramatic character of texts does not depend on the events narrated, but on the textual strategy
- The character of fictional texts is both "assertive" and "non-denotative (the claim of autonomy depends on the fact that "the assertive sentences do not have to be judged according to the referential truth of their assertions"(Schmidt 1976:17); in this respect the opposite of "fiction" is not "truth", but "fact".
- The suspension of factual reference follows from a semantic evaluation regulated by a set of pragmatic conventions which

prescribe how to treat the possible relation between the world of the text and the real world.

- The problem is complicated by the mere fact that fictional texts can involve "different sort and degree of reference to extra-literary reality, and that a range of such levels of reference can co-exist in the same work" (Hawthorn 1987:93).

In other words fictional texts presuppose "the reader's bringing certain knowledge from the world in order to understand the work" (ibidem 96).

Then the autonomy is not complete, the two worlds are not unconnected: the connection is mainly a social one ("in our society we are socialized into an understanding of fiction", ibidem 95), grounded on a shared competence of the fictional experience, and a pragmatic one (texts as set of instructions to construct a world).

- Hence fictionality is a principle working in a contextual system, as Schmidt suggests:

"The isolated text alone cannot motivate the readers to treat texts, presented as literary ones, as if they only contained sentences which are regarded as being neither true nor false (...); it must be the literary communication as a system of norms (for the production, reception and interpretation of texts) including the inventions and expectations of an author, text features, the training by social institutions, and the expectations and habits of readers together, that bring about this phenomenon "(Schmidt 1976:171).

I will argue that what is true for literary texts, also holds, in this case, for TV texts; and as not only the construction of reality is a social one, but also the construction of fictional worlds. It will be interesting, in analyzing TV advertisements, to find out cues pointing to the social conventions that underpin fictional constructions in the two different cultural systems.

RHETORIC

Considering narrative and fiction as two crucial categories in the analysis of TV texts is to draw attention to their being constructed, and to raise a number of questions, like "who is telling the story?", "what techniques are employed?", "what values are implicit?", "to whom is the story addressed?".

Rhetoric is precisely the domain of strategies and techniques that make it possible to establish the effectiveness of the message.

I will deal in more detail later (ch.6) with the social function of rhetoric; for the moment I will especially emphasize some semantic and pragmatic aspects of rhetorical devices: on the one side the power to transform reality in discourse, to coin purposeful definitions of reality (generative-cognitive aspect) and on the other the power to persuade, by excluding different definitions of reality (ideological-hegemonic aspect).

I will consider first the transformation of reality in discourse, following Barthes and his recognition of the main "operations" of rhetoric art, that are "inventio" (finding what to say), "dispositio" (putting in order what has been found), "elocutio" (finding the proper words and adding the ornament of "figures") 23

According to Barthes "dispositio" is the proper place of rhetoric technique, as an art of mediation between, and transformation of, respectively, signified (extracted, rather than created, using the method of "inventio") into verba, and signifiers (elocutio is, in this respect, the same as

enonciation).

The fact that reality can be "framed" by a set of "topoi" (both forms which in articulating contents produce intelligible units , and repertoire of stereotypes, "loci communi"), causes the "figures" to be 'an exemplary condensation of imagination and reality; it also points to the complex relation between the poetic aspect (in the sense intended by Jakobson, as emphasis on the message in itself), and the semantic one.

Whereas in the domain of the poetic aspect, mainly questions of style, techniques of enhancement and addition of attracting qualities to the discourse are dealt with, the latter (semantic aspect) involves a referential function. And the negative features usually attributed to the former, (to be an empty form, a mere "store" of stereotypical formula) cannot be pertinent to the latter. In fact, as Ricoeur emphasizes,

"Far from being a divergence from the ordinary operations of language, (rhetoric) is the omnipresent principle of all its free actions. It does not represent some additional power, but the constitutive form of language. By restricting itself to the description of the ornaments of language, rhetoric condemned itself to treat nothing but superficial problems. Whereas metaphor penetrates to the very depth of verbal interaction" (The Rule of Metaphor:90).

As we will see shortly, the semantic aspect of rhetoric is strictly connected with the pragmatic and the social ones.

As also D.Schon has emphasized 24 rhetorical figures (and particularly metaphor) can be considered both as "products" (ways of looking at things, formula which function as frames), or "processes" (by which new perspectives on the world are brought about) 25.

And the latter can be approached from the point of view of the "interpretation", as hermeneutics and literary criticism suggest,

or of "generativity", by looking for the way in which a new perspective on things is brought about.

Although some scholars argue against the referential function of rhetorical figures, exclusively accounted on the basis of linguistic rules 26, rhetoric is considered by many others as a device for the discovery of a kind of "truth" (not necessarily as a state of fact, but as a new comprehension of reality).²⁷ As Quine has put it:

"Pleasure precedes business (...) Art for art's sake was the main avenue to ancient technological break through. Such also is the way of metaphor: it flourishes in playful prose and high poetic art, but it is vital also at the growing edges of science and philosophy" 28.

As for the "ontological" value of metaphorical language, Ricoeur states that "we readily assent to speak of a metaphorical grasp of reality itself" (1981:82). And also:

"In service to the poetic function, metaphor is that strategy of discourse by which language diverts itself of its function of direct description, in order to reach the mythical level when its **function of discovery is set free**. We can presume to speak of metaphorical truth in order to designate the realistic intentions that belong to the redescriptive power of poetic language". (1981:247. My emphasis)

We are back to the problem of transformation of reality, a problem which involves aspects of use, strategies, performative effects: in other words, a pragmatic problem.

Within the domain of rhetoric, in fact, semantic and pragmatic levels are deeply connected and mutually defining. The pragmatic function of rhetoric has been particularly emphasized, in an anthropological perspective, in the work of Cassirer and Burke, especially in the idea of language as an "equipment for living": In this perspective any definition of reality represents a

strategy for handling existential moments (Ortony 1979:37). Rather than for "naming"(that is establishing a sort of labelling), rhetorical devices are mainly used for framing reality by a sort of "entitlement", that is

" a process whereby actors attempt to provide some linguistic truth about a social situation which summarizes its moral essence in such way as to define possible actions" (1979: 47).

Hence rhetoric is less a way to express reality than a technique that provides "the semantic conditions through which actors deal with reality" (ibidem).

It is precisely the generative feature of certain rhetorical figures that makes it possible to consider the deep relation between semantic definitions, pragmatics effects and social relevance.

According to Schon social issues are usually transformed into "powerful stories" capable, through the rhetorical devices employed, of shaping the public consciousness and transforming diagnosis in prescriptions (ibidem: 265).

Before being a question of problem-solving (that is before dealing with critical situations or conflict frames), according to a common definition of pragmatics 29, rhetoric plays a crucial role in defining what the problems actually are, by selecting and organizing in "frames" particular features of the situation: "The way in which we set social problems determines both the kinds of purposes and values we seek to realize, and the directions in which we search solutions" (Ortony 1979: 268). Different stories are always possible:

"In order to bring generative metaphors to reflexive and critical awareness, we must construct them through a kind of policy-analytic literary criticism, from the givens of the problem-setting stories we tell. Indeed, it is through story

telling that we can best discover our frames, and the generative metaphors implicit in our frames" (ibidem 267. My emphasis).

The main feature of generative metaphors is their capability of redefining or restructuring a conflict of perspectives so as to achieve a common 'frame in which the two position are neither suppressed nor fused, nor compromised; a perspective in which elements of both are rather brought to the fore, so that they can be mapped one into another and create a new integrated image, and the competitive game of contenders "gives way to a collaborative game in which both win"(ibidem: 273). 30

It will be interesting to see how in advertising typical conflicts of interests (for instance make people spend as much money as possible/do not throw money away) are transformed in a cooperative interaction. But, as Schon underlines, not all metaphors are generative, and beside the inventive aspects, other can be present (and often prevail) which are static and rigid.

Several authors have suggested (e.g. Leech 1983) that rhetoric, as well as pragmatics, can be seen as a system of principles or regulative rules, by which language is matched to the communicative situation.

But, unlike pragmatics, rhetoric is a more rule-governed domain, and rhetorical devices are semantic strategies, verbal codification of meanings which are part of the society's repertoire of techniques for expressing the truth of things.

Also the coded aspects of rhetorical devices bring to the fore the social dimension (being code a set of rules, socially acknowledged as such, that establish a correspondence between different systems of signification).

According to Eco the relation between "ideology" and "rhetoric"

is the same as between culture and language, or "system of knowledge" and "system of signs": ideology is intended as "the universe of knowledge of the destinatary and his group" (expectations, attitudes, experiences) (1968:94); and rhetoric as "the universe of coded communicative solutions" (ibidem 93), the former requiring the latter in order to be communicated, the latter allowing an insight into the former through semiological analysis:

"Semiology shows in the universe of signs, structured in codes and lexicon, the universe of ideology, reflected by the ready-made means of language" (ibidem 95).

A "semiotic positivism", that is the possibility of identifying ideologic bias on the productive level and to guess ideological effects on receivers exclusively on the basis of the text has certainly to be rejected, for it overlooks the active role of the receivers in making sense of textual elements.³¹.

But it is also true that the use of rhetorical devices for ideological purposes is very common, both in the form of a "creation" of new frames and of use of socially shared stereotypes. The identification of rhetorical strategies is then a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for textual interpretation; moreover textual analysis is always not sufficient to identify all the rhetorical strategies (that is the conventional means to frame situations, issues, relations in order to maximize the communicative effectiveness) that work in the text: this is why I have favoured a comparative approach, which in my opinion is particularly useful for identifying the conventional character of seemingly "neutral" textual element. The creative power of figurative language (both persuasive and

paradigmatic) can indeed serve hegemonic purposes: the double aspect of democracy and demagogy, and the ambiguous balance between them come then to the fore.

In the social sphere rhetoric works to build "public opinion" ("an evocative concept through which authorities and pressure groups categorize beliefs in a way that marshals support or opposition to their interests"³²); it also allows the identification of the main "topoi" in existing public opinion, by providing set of stereotypical answers for typical social situations: in other words, by "managing politically contentious features of reality" ³³ rather than by creating new frames.

In media and literary texts the relation between speakers and hearers is quite similar. Ricoeur outlines a "split" of the addresser and addressee (both inside and outside the text), and the consequent split of reference, not suppressed but "profoundly altered by the working of ambiguity" (1981:224).

Power is fragmented and distributed (even if not equally) between different poles.

Particularly in television (as well as cinema) the most common feeling exploited is the sense of identification, either as conjunction or distinction, psychological merging of boundaries between two different selves or specification of individualities. Through the strategy of direct address, in fact, the manifold narrative participants (real author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader, real reader) collapse and implode in merely two: the speaker and the viewer ³⁴, and a regime of "fictive we" is instituted. Like in many social practices, identification seeks to convert 'yours' and 'mine' in 'ours'.

Hence rhetoric provides effective tools for an ideological

framing of social reality; the "dark" side of its generative and semantic capacity of restructuring conflict situations in a new perspective is the ideological power of reinforcing existing state of facts; problematic situations are neutralized by being mapped into accepted frames, which prevent alternative views and definitions. Such an effect does not follow from direct and authoritative statements, but rather from a more subtle set of strategies of interaction that involve a certain degree of negotiation, as I will try to show in the empirical analysis: "legitimation and reification are accomplished by means of claiming common grounds" 35.

DIFFERENCES

I will try now to consider whether the general considerations above need to be specified in more details and how they are related to the object of my analysis.

When we buy a book we usually know who wrote it and when; we pay a certain amount of money and we become the owners of a well defined object, having a certain format, structured in a certain manner(chapters, paragraphs), often provided with an introduction and conclusion that mark its limits as a text; we can read it when and how we prefer, either going backward and forward or following its linear development. Moreover we are relatively free of building up the image of the world represented in a personal way, as the "instructions" of the text, however precise, can never be exhaustive.

As far as TV programmes are concerned some differences can be acknowledged: we can select a programme from the TV flow, like a

book from a shelf, yet what we get is never an unique object, but rather a "packet" of different elements. As we have seen above, the internal division of the text in "crucial moments" (less sharp than that in chapters) is related to the introduction of further elements (adverts, trailers).

Then there is always a component which is intentionally selected, and a component which is not. There are also programmes that are self-contained texts, and some that are not: some soaps, for instance, continue for a hundred of episodes, and sometimes are suspended before the events reach a solution.

Normally one does not know who the author of the programme is, and anyway it is very difficult to attribute authorship just to one person: will he be the director, or the script-writer, or the producer...?

Some differences also arise about the "time of consumption". On the one hand, in fact, the widely spread practice of videorecording virtually allows to treat a programme like a book, by breaking off both its temporal collocation in the schedule and its internal chronological structure.

On the other hand it is also true that, unless professional or "cult" approaches, the majority of people mainly uses VCR for reaching "schedule times" otherwise awkward (like, for instance, "late night movies"), or for fixing special events, and usually see the programmes recorded just once, in "respecting" their structure and their ephemeral nature.

Finally the viewer cannot imagine things his/her own way, as he/she actually sees them; he/she is not a reader, but a witness, a "receiver".

I will examine briefly the different elements mentioned above

(namely authorship, textual unity and determinacy, iconism) as the basis on which to treat the specificity of TV texts.

AUTHORSHIP

As far as the author is concerned (TV texts are mainly narrative, thus someone must be responsible for the story), television suggests the idea of an "equipe", a team rather than an individual: especially if one thinks of the nature of "public service" according to which information, entertainment, education are the main explicit purposes, individuality could even be associated with bias, authoritarianism, partiality, lack of completeness, narcissism etc. (whereas in literature, as "art", individuality is the condition of the creative "genius"). We do not expect, unless in particular cases, the programme we see being the product of a singular mind; we hope (and ask) that a lot of people have worked on it, to make it as good as possible (for certain kinds of programmes, as talk shows or TV games, ordinary people hope and claim to be co-authors).

As broadcasting is a collaborative enterprise within which conflicts of interests, policies of mediation and negotiation, balance between different political and economical demands need to be considered, to assign the status of author to an individual 36 is neither easy nor desirable.

And for this reason in the analysis of TV texts what is commonly defined as "point of view", preferred reading, project, intention of the text can hardly be seen as the outcome of an unique intentionality, but is rather the result of different and often contradictory forces: the implied author, or no matter what

other names is used for designate it, is a textual construction, a fictive simulacrum built up by the reader in order to deal with the text: its function is indicative rather than normative, pragmatic rather than semantic 37.

"Collective authorship" is a typical feature of TV programmes, unlike literary works which usually exhibit the name of a single author on their covers; nevertheless, although at a lower degree, also literary authorship can present some aspects of collectivity:

"Friends who have read the manuscript, audiences which have responded to early readings of poems, editors who have suggested major or minor additions or deletions, and even censors who have blue-pencilled or altered substantial parts of the text. Such contributions are the rule rather than the exception" (Hawthorn 1987:65).

Common to the two kinds of text is the one-way communication that makes it difficult, for the reader/receiver, to check the validity of his/her interpretation. As Atkinson and Heritage have stressed, the situation is completely different in interpersonal conversation, where not only the text, but also the hearer's interpretation is available to the analyst :

"As a second speaker's analysis and treatment of the prior is available to the first speaker, so it is also available to overhearers of the talk, including social scientists. The latter may thus proceed to analyze turns at talk, together with the analyses and treatments of them that are produced by the parties to the talk, and employ methodologies that fully take account of these analysis and treatments. Students of talk are thus provided with a considerable advantage that is unavailable to analysts of isolated sentences or other 'text' materials that cannot be analyzed without hypothesizing or speculating about the possible way in which utterances , sentences, or texts might be interpreted." (1984:9).

On the side of production the lack of an immediate feed-back makes it possible for the persons responsible of the messages

both to deny any responsibility for unacceptable implications and to claim the right on creative interpretations, included those probably unintended. 38.

To deny any responsibility is easier in media discourses than in other kind of public discourses, given the "anonymous" character of the authorship, as Pateman rudely stresses with regard to advertisements:

"Advertisers get consumers to do their dirty ideological work for them, and keep their own hands clean(...) because many of the intentions which advertisers have are undoubtedly deniable without self-contradiction in virtue of the 'open' pragmatic implication which they are getting people to draw" (1983:200)

To place the total responsibility of meaning in the act of viewing (or reading) can be as wrong and mystifying as to consider it totally dependent on the structure of the text, or on the "intention" of the author, or on the social conventions which constitute the context of reception.

I agree with Corner when he emphasizes

"the need to regard **reading** and **interpretation** as a combination of differently levelled activities involving different kind of symbolic transactions (...).Not as a single transformation of 'message' into meaning(...) but a set of transformative productive practices."(1983:278)

TEXTUAL UNITY

The problem of textual physical boundaries and textual unity have been outlined above, in relation to TV flow, and are quite evident, especially with regard to certain kind of texts, such as soap operas and serials.

Less evident is textual indeterminacy of literary works, but there are some reasons for confirming that, also in this case, the text has to be "established": not only, as Hawthorn points

to, by finding out which, among the different versions of it, was the one preferred by the author, or how to deal with unfinished texts, or different versions used in different contexts with different etc., but also, as Iser (and other, among whom Fish) confirmed, by recognizing that unity is less a quality of the text than a product of the act of reading (1972:282).

It is the reader, in fact, who underlines and unifies some elements of the text while dismissing others (although, as Eco has outlined, not every kind of text presents the same degree of closure and room for an external intervention).

To recognize an indeterminacy and incomplete unity of the text is to prevent the equation $\text{unity}=\text{autonomy}$, that is the self-containing character of texts (as in formalism and structuralism) and disregards the pragmatic interaction with "socialized" receivers.

AUDIOVISUAL LANGUAGE AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF TV TEXTS

Although some analogies, as we have seen, can indeed be drawn, it is misleading to extend the "linguistic paradigm" to every kind of text, for determinative aspects of the production of meaning are in such a way inescapably cut off. As Corner put it

"It is extremely difficult to make a proposition about 'texts' (even when it is qualified as being about 'media texts') that holds over the range of textual types and instances possible. (...) The modes of perception and cognition involved in 'reading' distinct types of communication forms will differ, as well as their referential character and their history of development". (1983:271)

For that reason I will concentrate now on audiovisual language, which is not the same as images plus words (or vice

versa), but is rather a new language "in which the signifying properties of the visual and linguistic elements become 'written into' one another" (ibidem).

Although I do not intend to find out a "grammar" of televisual language, I will focus my attention on some specific features of TV texts, which show the inadequacy of a purely semiotic approach (which is the most common up to now), and call for an integration of different levels of analysis.

This further step will clarify the reason why I have chosen advertisements as a particularly representative TV text.

THE MESSAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

A number of features (and oppositions) can be identified related to the specific character of the TV image, its continuity, literalness, liveliness, immediacy, sense of reality delivered to a mass of individual receivers.

The first and most famous is McLuhan's opposition hot/cool: the low definition of TV image requires a greater participation of the viewer. In McLuhan's view the televisual spectator is not only active, but hyperactive: in fact, before filling the gaps between the different elements of the text, he has to fill the gaps between the little visual information, in order to perceive the image: and the active participation goes beyond the integration of visual and textual gaps, up to involving a simultaneous co-presence and mutual solidarity between all the participants to the act of viewing, which determines the implosion of the whole world in a sort of "global village".

Although out-of-date and naively optimistic, this position contains "in nuce" most of the aspects at stake in the present

debate.

Recently the focus has been shifted from "perception" to "production":

"The television image is no lower in data than 16mm film, the notion of a 'scanning finger' is no more than a metaphor (it does not make the medium 'audio-tactile'), the formation of the image occurs at too great a speed for the viewer to be aware of how it is assembled, and the distinction between 'light through' and 'light on' is meaningless, since there is no difference in the way in which film and video picture information reach for the eye" (Armes 1988:188).

According to Armes, the different way of production of the image (additive colour mixing for videos vs subtractive colour system for films) is irrelevant at the point of perception, and once a film is shown on the small screen of television the way in which it has been recorded, is "virtually indistinguishable to the general viewer" 39

Nevertheless the standard format and features of TV image are still commonly considered as the principal determinants of the impact of images on viewers.

J. Ellis, for instance, draws a number of distinctive oppositions which recall, at least in part, McLuhan's ones (1982:127ff): TV images are lacking in details and background, given their small size and low definition, whereas cinema presents a nearly fetishistic attitude towards details. Hence TV sounds and words are more likely to be carriers of essential (omitted by the visual) information, whereas in film narrative images have a more exclusive central role (as silent movies reveal). TV images supplement their 'weakness' with a higher flexibility in cutting and changing the visual: a variety of segments is provided (of which schedule is the example on a

large scale), in spite of the continuity of the events 40, while cinematic narration is characterized by a "progressive accumulation of sequences" (Ellis 1982:143). Hence two different kinds of perception are involved: the concentrated way of looking of the film spectator (gaze) on the one hand, and the rapid and discontinuous "glance" of the TV viewer on the other.

The techniques of registration also determine different attitudes on the grounds of their original relation with the reality represented: whereas cinema, for its photographic roots, maintains an "analogical" trace of reality (which is totally absent at the moment of projection), TV produces a digital (artificial) image, but reality is somehow made "present", given the temporal and spatial continuity and sense of immediacy allowed by the camera: two different regimes are instituted, of "sacrality" and separation on the one hand, and of co-presence, familiarity and intimacy on the other. (ibidem:138).

As Metz has emphasized (1974), the distance between screen and spectator is the condition of his/her projection in the fictional world of film: once the threshold has been trespassed, nothing prevents the spectator from the complete suspension of disbelief. A number of factors converge in determining a sense of nearness of TV situations to our own lives, rather than a projection of them on the realistic world of the screen; whereas distance produces identification, a sort of "extension" is produced by the sense of nearness of TV characters:

" a nearness so close that any identification of one or the others (characters) is impossible. The viewer does not become the characters (...) but rather relates to them as intimates, as extensions of her world" 46

The different factors determining a sense of familiarity are

only partly grounded on the medium itself, and partly instead on the conventions that lead the production of programmes and on the social use of them.

PRODUCTION CONVENTIONS AND SOCIAL USE

The different impact of cinematographic and televisual "close up" (in the first case with an effect of distance, in the second of intimacy) seems due to the different size of the screen (Ellis 1982:131); the degree of distance within TV image is highly influenced by the "tightness" of the shot, which in turn varies according to the "genre" of the programme (the quotation below, for instance, holds true for non-fiction, but not for fiction programmes) :

"Generally, important figures will be shown in medium close-up which shows them from the waist up. This may be replaced by a close-up which shows only the subject's head and shoulders. It would be very rare for a big close up to be used of an important person. Just as in our normal social intercourse we observe certain conventions about how close we come to other people and how close we allow them to come to us, so when choosing their images, television cameras keep a certain distance from their subjects." (Masterman 1985:173).

The balance between distance and closeness is crucial to the way in which TV reports the events 41, according to the conventions typical of the different genres. Another feature regulated by conventions is the look to the camera (direct address), given the connotation of authority and reliability the speaker achieves.

Stuart Hood has commented on the figures of "talking heads" as following:

" They are there to give us information which we are asked to

assume is accurate(...), unbiased and authoritative(...); they can be described in a useful phrase as 'bearers of the truth' " (Hood 1980:3).

Not only in TV news, but also , say, in weather forecasts the way of address contributes to create a sense of co-presence and immediacy) makes TV "direct, and direct for me" (Heath 1977:54), Another important element for the sense of intimacy, which does not depend solely on a voyeuristic and individualistic activity, concerns the incorporation of the TV flow in the domestic daily experience, namely a social situation.

D. Morley (1986) lists a whole range of surrounding activities that commonly go along with watching television: from eating to knitting, from reading to letter-writing, from ironing to arguing (women are more likely to perceive a mere activity of watching as a waste of time). People watching TV, frequently use what they see as a starting point for talking about issues relevant to their own lives ; as also Arnes suggests, "As a result the individual programming is in some respect less significant than the viewing context" (1988:141).

The relation between TV programmes and viewers in the familiar context has been seen as constitutive of the conditions of socialization within this particular situation, by constructing viewers as subjects and providing the "limits of communicating". Heath and Skirrow puts it this way:

"TV is the institution of an occupation: it occupies the viewer as subject in a permanent arena of 'communicationality' (...). Little matter in this respect what is communicated, the crux is the creation and maintenance of the communicating situation and the realization of the viewer as subject in that situation (...). Before the fact of drama or of any other particular form , watching television in itself is a requirement of socialization exactly in so far as it represents the proposition of the intelligible, the conception of the limiting of communicating.

The role of the image is to be present, available for you, for me...". (1974:56).

But, as Morley opportunely emphasized, the process of signification cannot be reduced to the production of a position for the subject ,(1980:153), and other elements need to be primarily considered.

TV LANGUAGE AS IDEOLOGY AND SPECIFICITY REVISITED

The consideration of TV as "meaningful social technology in itself" (Heath and Skirrow 1974:59) leads quite easily to that of a general (and generic) ideological attitude of the medium:

"What is missing so often in analyses of television programmes is any reference to the fact of television itself and to the ideological operation developed in that fact: there is a generality of ideology in the institution 'before' the production of a particular ideological position" (ibidem:57).

In his conclusion to Nationwide Audience research, Morley criticizes the equation "production of the subject=reproduction of ideology". In fact for him

" specificity is not a world apart from that of ideology , but is always articulated with and through it (this articulation is precisely the space in which we can speak of the relative autonomy of the media)" (1980:132).

And because specificity has much more to do with communicative decisions and professional codes rather than with intrinsic technological features, Morley goes on arguing that

"the concept of 'television in itself' is on a par with the concept of 'ideology in general', or 'production in general': as an analytic abstraction with cannot be related directly, without further socio-historical specification, to the business of analysing the production and reproduction of specific ideologies in concrete social formations at a specific stage in their historical development" (ibidem :152).

What I intend to argue in concluding this section is precisely that, although some "material" constraints indeed exist (which anyway can be exploited in various manners, and can become "opportunities",, as we will see for advertising), what is actually germane to TV texts largely depends on productive conventions, as seen before, and can be better considered in terms of social use and pragmatic effects.

But, as Morley has opportunely emphasized, "what is communicated" is not a secondary question:

"As ideologies arise in and mediate social practices, the 'texts' produced by television must be read in their social existence, as televisual texts but also as televisual texts drawing on 'existing social representations' within a field of dominant and preferred ideological meanings" (1980:153).

It is mainly for this reason that I have decided not to treat TV "textuality" in general, but to deal with a specific kind of text, that is advertisements.

CHAPTER 5. THE DISCOURSE OF ADVERTISING

ADVERTISEMENTS AS THE EPITOME OF TV TEXTS

"The outstanding and unpredictable achievement of television advertising is that millions of our countrymen have so accepted it that they see no objections to the BBC taking advertisements (...) The point needs to be made because it is proof that advertisements have proved sufficiently entertaining and informative to justify a place in broadcasting."

(Airwaves, Autumn 1986. My emphasis)

Advertisements can be considered as entertaining texts, as a

number of viewers actually enjoy them.

Advertisements are also (or should be) informative: this is a claim of the agencies and a characteristic highly recommended by the competent authorities, for the sake of the protection of consumers.

David Ogilvy himself has predicted that the dominant trend will be more and more toward giving facts, data, elements for a "free" and "rational" choice 1: "Advertising will contain more information and less hot air"(1985:217).

And in fact all of us nowadays know that, unlike butter, margarine is high in polyunsaturated, and that instant coffee must be "freeze-dried" (even if, in general, nobody knows what the terms exactly mean).

Whether "information" has to be intended in the most common sense of supply of elements on which a decision can be based, or in the most literal and effective sense of process of giving a shape (from the Latin "forma"=shape, essential structure) to our knowledge and behaviour, is related to the controversial issue of persuasion. Information is here intended as what can make an object (event, service, piece of news) so relevant to our life (and then so "real") that we will buy (or believe, or trust in) it. And the power of advertising lies not only in creating objects of consumption (or a right place for them in the market and in the life of consumers) but also in building up objects of belief has already been emphasized. 2

Then, as we will see in the empirical analysis, the informative character of advertisements is less like suggested by Ogilvy (more information about products) but rather focused on the

situation of use, on the character of users.

As for the third main task of TV texts, namely "education", advertising has proved to be a powerful instrument for training the audience to the rhythms, fashions, crucial situations of modern life (I will discuss this point in more details in the analysis).

This claim is supported by the fact that the British government is increasingly using TV advertising to promote issues of health education, safety and so on.

Moreover in Britain the general concern about health care has allowed adverts by private services, carrying a whole range of suggestions on how to plan a "secure" future.

In fact, health is not only presented as the physical well-being of the individual, but as a condition for the soundness of the whole society; hence advertising plays an important role in educating, informing (or rather instructing) people about the fact that they have to take care of, say, their economic future, and how to do so. Even financial ads, once a sensitive matter hardly allowed to appear on TV, adverts are now very frequent, even though almost exclusively in evening hours. 4

QUESTIONS OF ADDRESS

One of the most evident paradoxes about advertising is, as Eco (1968) has suggested, the co-existence (that is realized in many, although not all, advertisements) of two mutually exclusive strategies in appealing to the audience: the logic of "quantity" ("everyone does it this way, then follow us!") and that of "quality" ("if you really want to be different from everybody

else, you have to behave this way"), which in their combination invite everyone to do the same thing in order to be "unique", which is precisely the nature of the paradox.

What I intend to stress here is the dialectic tension existing between personal and collective address, that is the attempt to reach the largest number of viewers by appealing them as individuals. In order to reach this goal, one half of the paradox is usually not made explicit: in the so called "claim for individuality", the massive address of the message is rarely expressed. (This is not really a form of deception, as everyone actually knows that, but in the majority of cases it does not really matter).

Such a powerful strategy is carried on through the establishment of a direct link: the sense of "exclusivity" is created by the way of address which is totally (even if at different degrees of openness) direct, either in the visual, or in the verbal, or in the sound-track.

The "direct address" strategy, conventionally regarded as the way through which the naturalness of fiction is broken, is completely flouted in advertising, even if this fact is not sufficient to break the convention in other TV genres (like news).

First of all, in fact, unlike other TV programmes, in advertisements anyone featured can address the audience directly (even the pets): this kind of "democratization" of direct address is but one of the strategies that contribute to the sense of immediacy mentioned above.

In literary theory, self-reference and being reflexive of texts are regarded as metalinguistic devices determining a

continual oscillation between immersion in and consciousness of the text. As Hawthorn puts it: "The reader is continually forced to compare and contrast the world and the work, rather than experiencing the work as a world closed in itself" (1987:102).

This kind of consciousness is seen as the condition of an active involvement of the reader,

"as he or she has to struggle to establish how and the way the text requires to be perceived in different ways, as window on the world and window in the world, or as world or work. In one sense techniques of literary self-reference force the reader into dialogue with the author and the work" (ibidem).

But in "reading" televisual programmes, and adverts in particular, this is not always the case: in the analysis of a car campaign broadcast by Italian TV, the "Renault 5 Spot Festival", I have found that although the fictive nature of each spot was made open, the viewer's involvement was not broken (although, as we will see, it assumed a particular character); self-reference (or meta-communicative emphasis) does not always produce, in advertising, a "dialogue" with the author and the work.

We know that what we see is not true, but in a certain sense we believe it, we use it as a cognitive framework to see reality, our reality, with fresh eyes (I will be more explicit about that in the analysis).

The sense of power given by the recognition of the constructed nature of advertisements can be the mere condition of an effective communication, in which actually we do nothing but accept the rules of the game: the result is to buy (or to trust) the object (or "image").

Hence the strategy of direct address does not mean a "dialogue" between the two poles of the communication "per se" (as literary

criticism suggests); in making explicit the conventions upon which the textual illusion rests, advertising does not necessarily break the fiction, but can make it more effective, and create a new, kind of illusion: the illusion of "power", or mastering over meanings.

Direct address, meta-communication, self-referentiality are devices largely exploited in order to incorporate the viewer in the fiction of narrative at a higher degree of realism, rather than to break such a fiction.

The awareness of fabrication does not preclude the suspension of disbelief. Unlike other TV texts, advertisements do not conceal their manufactured nature, do not make "natural" what is an artefact, but rather transfigure what is natural, make paradigmatic and exceptional what is common and daily, transform common situations and things in events and objects of desire. (The dialectic, especially in Italian adverts as we will see, is less between natural /artificial, reality/ideology, than between what can and what cannot be desirable).

A fundamental aspect I intend to stress (in spite of the difficulties I have underlined) is the basic attachment of advertisements to reality.

In fact on the one hand advertisements represent a world (and the representation is , for the nature and the purpose of the message itself, as appealing , vivid and "live" as possible); on the other hand they construct a world the viewer can desire to live in and then become "real" for him/her, inasmuch as capable of providing new goals to achieve or new ways of seeing things and relations and so on. They are also explicitly conceived as

to have real effects in the real world (in the form of purchasing actions, for instance).

But most of all, as I will try to show in the exposition of the results of the empirical analysis, they draw upon social conventions (in order to be intelligible) while reinforcing and naturalizing them (in providing frameworks of intelligibility that explode the ambit of TV texts).

According to Eco (1968), who applies Jakobson's "functions" of communicative message to advertisements, referential and conative functions are paramount, being the principal concern of advertisements the presentation of an object and the injunction to pay money for it (or trust in it, according to the kind of advert).

The relation text/world is in fact so tight that the fulfilment of the textual role is aimed to cause an action in the real world. Hence a further paradox can be envisaged: in fact, by actively accomplishing the textual role, the viewer runs the risk of becoming the passive executant of external instructions, the heterodirect "target" of injunctions about consumption. In advertising texts, the more actively involved the viewer is, the more likely he/she is to become the passive recipient of the message.

The "alert and knowledgeable viewer" who participates in the closure of the message is more likely to play the game and fall in the pitfall. If the viewer participates in -helps to create- the meaning of the advert, he/she is more likely to recall it.

The exploitation of the role of the reader created by texts for advertising purposes, is made explicit by G.Kress (1985), who stresses the relation between adverts and other (written) texts

within and through which the members of a culture are socialized:

"Some of the strategies of advertising industry are broadly similar to those of the these texts, though somewhat differently motivated" (1985:70).

Taking the example of a school textbook, he notices that it

"reflects the ideological categories of the economic and social system into which the (child) readers are being socialized so closely, and indeed mirrors the texts and strategies of the world of advertising.(...). In other words (...) it constructs the ideal readers and the audience /consumers for the world of advertising. Clearly this facilitates the work of advertising and the creation of consumers enormously"(1985:77).

The relation is so tight that an "origin" s difficult to be detected: advertising exploits existing models of textual relations and at the same time is considered a model for textual organization and a framework within which reality itself can be understood.

In the empirical analysis I will try to make explicit the way in which social relations and socially shared categories for dealing with reality are represented in TV commercials. I will also attempt to overcome the generality of the definition and to find some actual forms of the relation between advertisements and the social environment within which they are received, by selecting as ambit of inquiry the way in which two different cultural and social systems are represented (and preserved) by advertising.

THE LITERATURE ON ADVERTISING

At the moment the principal approaches to advertising fall within a limited range of scopes : semiological (mainly

structuralistic, following the path of Barthes' celebrated reading of advertising texts), anthropological (the classic example being the Douglas and Isherwood perspective) and economic.

The psychological perspective centred on "hidden persuasion" (Packard) or the sociological "theories of conspiracy" (Ewen), although important at the time of their elaboration, seem now oversimplification of a more complex phenomenon, and "demonization" of an element which is not responsible on its own right for the inequalities of western society (see Sinclair 1987:25).

As for the semiological and anthropological perspectives, they often merge, like in the case of Williamson's analysis; the anthropological framework, especially used by Anglo-American scholars, is also employed in a sociological perspective, sometimes with interesting results, like in the case of Campbell's "hedonistic" approach to contemporary consumerism (which I will consider in Appendix 1).

In order to make clear the position of my analysis, I have to specify some of the analogies and differences in respect to the existing approaches (where the aim is not an exhaustive survey of the literature on advertising, but rather a determination of borders and a recognition of influences in contents and methods).

Inasmuch as I will use some semiological tools for the analysis, it is worth considering in the first instance the semiological approach, which, especially when applied to advertising, mainly draws on the structuralistic tradition (whereas I intend to follow a different path, closer to Halliday's social semiotic, and a heuristic method closer to

Peirce's "abduction" rather than to an inductive inference- from the particular case to the general law, or "deep structure").

What I intend to criticize about the semio-structural method of analysis is the synchronic framework in which each single text is analyzed and the exclusive focus on the inner (or deep) structure as autonomous source of meaning; although the "elements" of the text are cultural, the text itself is conceived as an "object" which "functions" thanks to a "mechanism", a structure that, once discovered, allows to establish an "objective" relationship between signs and meaning.

In my view this is a revisited version of the naive semantic realism: the main difference concerns the fact that the one-to-one correspondence between signs and referents is not immediate, but mediated by a code; once the code becomes clear, we "possess" the meaning of the text.

Sinclair (1987) addresses an analogous criticism to Williamson's analysis, and particularly to the way in which, according to the author, the "reader" supplies his/her activity in order to connect the signs (signifiers) and their meaning (signified):

"Characteristically this is done through the advertisement establishing apparently 'objective' associations between the product and some 'referent system' in the culture, a body of knowledge both 'real' and mythic" (1987:49).

What this perspective assumes (without justification, in my view) is an already existent "cultural" world of reference (the rival attraction of the "natural world" of semanticism, with the same philosophical presupposition); what it fails to give an account of, is the fact that texts are not neutral dispositives

for retrieving cultural meanings, but on the contrary strategic pieces of social interaction through which meanings are constructed and negotiated.

For this very reason all the elements that the structural approach "purges" in the name of its "scientific rigour" turn back to show their relevance: in particular way the "context" (which Williamson, for instance, completely disregards by avoiding any reference to the "source" of the material of analysis), the "time" (against the emphasis on "synchronicity" which isolates the text from its situation), the "activity" of the receivers (against an overrating of their "positioning" by the structure of the text).

While it is not a problem to acknowledge that semiological analysis does not pay attention to the context and the temporal (diachronic) dimension of texts, one could object that the receiver of the text is supposed to be active, as he/she has to work out the meaning, to re-create it, to elaborate the codes which allow the connection between signifiers and signified. (see for instance Williamson 1978).

But actually the mentioned "activity" is quite limited in its scope, as it merely consists of "filling" the gaps, tracking down the hidden connections, de-coding what is already there.

Even if some scholars speak about "re-creation" of meaning (see Leiss and others 1986:155), the stress is rather on the repetition implied by the suffix -re- (repetition, in the opposite direction, of the process of coding; repetition which is inevitably an imperfect one, as coding and decoding cannot be symmetrical) than on the autonomous and creative effort of the

receiver in making sense of the text. In fact in this perspective the resulting interpretive activity is closer to the solution of a riddle than to an hermeneutic and social practice.

Before considering in which sense I will try to overcome some of the shortcomings of traditional semiotic analysis of advertising texts it seems opportune to stress a sharp as well as odd difference in the status and character of the semiological approach in the two countries involved in the comparative analysis.

In Italy, the structural analysis of texts is regarded as being highly reliable, objective, scientific in its results, as providing "general" laws and rules with high explanatory power, but with no attention to the specific elements and details of the text which do not "fit" into the conceptual schema (even if they are relevant to the richness of the text). 5.

In Britain, on the other hand, the structural method is considered to be sensitive to the multiple layers of meaning and to the richness of textual details, but hardly rigorous and systematic, the significance of the results depending more on the skill of the individual analyst than on the method in itself (see for instance Leiss 1986:165 ff).

Then structuralism in the two countries is differently credited with the inversely proportional quantities "description" and "explanation", according to the following scheme:

	EXPLANATION	DESCRIPTION
ITA STRUCTURALISM	+	-
GB STRUCTURALISM	-	+

It is in my opinion quite peculiar that, even at the methodological level preliminary to the research, there is such a different consideration for the same analytical tool in the two countries.

The reason for the discrepancy lies, in my opinion, in the fact that structuralism has, so to speak, a double "soul", according to the two field in which it has developed, that are linguistics and anthropology (even if the first is the original source).

It was a linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, the originator of the movement with his Course de linguistique generale of 1916, and, as mentioned in Part 1, his ambition was to establish a scope for linguistics as a science by eliminating all the factual and contingent aspects (like the contextualization of language in discourse); hence the formal system in which the identity of the elements is not given by an essence or a content, but by a position in the system and a relation (a negative one, as it consists of non-identity) with the other elements, and the scientific character of the structure.

This perspective, transferred to the text considers, it as a system (a closed system) which parts do have sense in relation to the whole. The structure is the mechanism that produces signification and, once identified, allows the "decoding" of textual meaning.

It is not my aim to undertake a review of this side of structural textual analysis; it suffices to mention some of the most influential scholars like Jakobson, Barthes, Eco. (Although Barthes is a special case, as we have tried to show in Part 1,

because he pays attention to the social use of signs -hence concepts like "idiolect"-, at least in one phase of his thought). As for the second soul of structuralism, stemming from the work of Levi-Strauss, it tends to consider the social system as a closed system, and communication and circulation of signs as a means to preserve the integrity of the system: things are symbols which regulate social dealings.

Whereas in Italy the first ("scientific") attitude is prevalent, in England the second seems to dominate: texts (and advertising in particular) are means to perform symbolic exchanges in order to maintain a given social order. (This is why, for instance, "cultural" approaches on media outputs, focusing on ideology, are rather more common than in Italy).

Moreover the kind of structuralism that seems more familiar to English scholars is embedded in a psychoanalytic framework, following the marks left by Lacan on Barthes' work. Williamson's Decoding Advertisements is a case in point in the blending of a cultural, a structuralist, an anthropological and a psychoanalytic approach in a unique framework, as can be worked out from the select bibliography at the end of the book.

In summary, whereas in Italy the main concern of structural textual analysis is with the textual structure as a guide for the receiver, the cluster of "instructions" for the decoding, the project of conversation between a "model author" and a "model receiver", in Britain far more attention is paid to the ideological implications of the process of positioning.

The textual structure is seen as the site of strategic action for reinforcing social relations and maintaining conditions of domination between social groups; roughly speaking, the position

one is accorded in the text is related to the position one is accorded in the society.

The anthropological tradition of fieldwork and attention to the ethnographic peculiarity of each individual context also determines a remarkable concern for the peculiar characters of phenomena, rather than for the general "laws" that rule them.

At the same time, under the influence of the psychoanalytic version of French structuralism, a great deal of symbolism is attributed to textual elements, the meaning of which becomes heavily dependent on subjective insight and largely relies on the individual skill of the analyst, offering no guarantee of intersubjective (if not objective) values.

In my analysis I will leave the psychoanalytic understanding to one side, while trying to combine some of the aspects of "Italian" and "British" textual analysis so as to overcome, at least in part, some of the respective limitations.

I will consider the formal and substantial elements upon which advertising texts are constructed, not in an abstract way (each text as an autonomous self-sufficient source of meaning), but by taking into account the layers of contextual articulation sketched above; I will look for the social relevance of advertisements not by "decoding" social roles from the individual texts but, for instance, by comparing two different universes of discourse constructed upon the same product or situation of consumption.

I will also pay some attention to the aesthetic component of advertisements, which is increasingly mixed with the strategic one: even in this case a comparison between the output of two

different countries can provide an insight into singularities and similarities in tastes (as "manifested preferences", in Bourdieu's terms), expectations, competence.

I will consider later a perspective in which taste is defined in individualistic terms, but I will rather support a socially sensitive definition of taste, like that sustained by Bourdieu and others:

"For Bourdieu (1984) 'taste classifies and classifies the classifier'. Consumption and lifestyle preferences involve discriminatory judgements which at the same time identify and render classifiable our own particular judgement or taste to others. Particular constellations of taste, consumption preferences and lifestyle practices are associated with specific occupation and class fractions, making it possible to map out the universe of taste and lifestyle with its structured opposition and finely graded distinctions which operate within a particular society at a particular point in history" (Featherstone 1990:11).

Some of the criticisms I direct to the existing literature on advertising are present throughout Part 2 and Part 3 of this work, but it is worth summarizing here some of them with reference to the individual authors.

I have addressed (and more will be said in the next chapter) the issue of ideology in media discourses. I think that a book like The Language of Advertising by Vestergaard and Schroeder (1985) is a case in point in "ideologized" analysis of advertising. In fact the authors move from an anti-capitalistic perspective, within which advertising is but a means through which consumers are manipulated by industry: the receiver is then confined from the beginning to a merely passive and impotent role. If advertising has such an unconditional power on our thoughts and behaviour (namely to perpetuate capitalism and a male dominated society), there is little we can do, either as

critics or as spectators. But I believe this is a narrow perspective (which does not mean I support capitalism or male domination) and moreover it is a "conclusive" position, that presupposes what has to be demonstrated: the analysis tends in this way to become a mere "illustration" of the initial idea.

I think this explains why the analytical tools used by the authors are so heterogeneous : from Greimas' actantial model to Peirce's distinction of index, icon, symbol, to Halliday and Hasan cohesion and so on. Moreover not all the criteria are applied to the material under scrutiny, but vary according to the discretion of the authors: the result is that all adverts, no matter which method is applied, confirm the "conspiracy" thesis.

All those elements, beside the out-of-date character of adverts (mainly from the late 70's) and their exclusive "press" format make this work quite far from my perspective.

In fact I am less concerned with the "content" of ideological discourse (as I will specify later) that with the "sites" of meaning production that can be exploited for ideological purposes. Moreover I am not looking for specific (pre-fixed) contents, but for similarities and differences in the way ads construct semantic horizons of meaning in drawing from social repertoires of forms and contents.

I have found useful for my perspective Leiss, Kline, Jhally (1986) and Marchand (1985): all of them, not by chance, take in fact into account a diachronic (historical) perspective, which puts the issues in a context. The former book, in spite of the limitations of a collective authorship as far as the unity and consistency are concerned, is particularly helpful in setting up an anthropological framework for the interpretation of adverts

(in which the different relations between product, person, setting are particularly emphasized).

Marchand's work is focused instead on the development of advertising's capacity to respond to "social dilemmas"; it throws some light upon the way in which advertising, although in a particular way, is "anchored" to the social reality it addresses.

For the construction of my own framework of analysis Goffman (1979) has been crucial, particularly the aspects of display-acts and commercial realism. Yet I criticise the way in which the analysis of press adverts is actually performed: in fact in many cases social roles result "encoded" straightaway by the pictures (while Goffman himself, in the first theoretical part of the book, stresses that display acts do not refer back to a state of facts, but forward to an image of reality one is called to align himself with).

I have also found that Schudson (1984) and Sinclair (1987) provide an interesting "context" to advertising discourse, the former by emphasizing its cultural and political role, the latter by treating economic and institutional aspects, and by offering case histories of transnational marketing.

Also Myers (1986) brings a useful insight into the matter, from an angle anchored to advertising actual practices (how the advertising industry works, the problems linked to the launch of a new campaign, the growth of political advertising).

On the contrary texts like Dyers (1982) belong, in my opinion, to the traditional text-bounded analysis I would try to integrate in my research with contextual elements.

In fact, I will try to combine a structure-content approach

(like Leiss and others 1986) with a context sensitive and comparative method, in order to overcome some of the elements of subjectivity and personal discretion which heavily characterize the bulk of the analysis of advertisements.

The aim is not to provide a comprehensive discussion on what the social meanings of advertising on television are, but to carry a contribution to the pragmatic analysis of advertising texts through comparative empirical research: the result will neither be all-inclusive nor definitive, but claim to reach some evidence which can be checked against the collected material, and which can widen the perspective of the actual approaches to advertising texts.

CHAPTER 6. RHETORIC, IDEOLOGY, TEXTUAL STRUCTURE: PREPARATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

MORE ON IDEOLOGY AND RHETORIC

Several scholars agree that, language being one of the principal media (if not the principal one) through which meaning is mobilized in the social world, the analysis of language is crucial to the issue of ideology: such a concern is shared, for instance, both by the so called "critical linguists" (Kress, Fowler), and by sociologists who stress the crucialness of social interaction (Habermas; symbolic interactionists), or by "culturalists" who combine in their theoretical framework

structuralistic insight and critical aim (R. Williams, S. Hall and the CCCS in Birmingham).

Although only the last scholars mentioned above are explicitly committed with, media discourses, and particularly with television, most of the issues concerning language can at least be tested against TV language (considered not in general, but in particular instances).

I will try here to make clear which features of ideology will be relevant for my empirical analysis, and on what grounds.

For this scope I will mainly consider the work of authors like Hall (1977), Thompson (1984 and 1987), Giddens (1979), Van Dijk (1987), Ricoeur (1981) and Habermas(1981).

Thompson (following Giddens 1979), defines the study of ideology as "the way in which the different uses of language intersect with power, and relations of power are maintained and reproduced through the mobilization of meaning in the social world" (1987:519).

The crucial role of television as an agency of "mobilization of meaning" does not need to be proven; in TV texts, in fact, not only meaning are mobilized for creating images of social situations, but such "representations" tend to legitimate themselves and to exclude other possible alternatives.

These two processes (legitimation, dissimulation) are but two of the ways in which ideology works in social texts; in this perspective mainly the "strategic" configuration of the text is emphasized, and thereby the intentional project carried on by the "author".

This is an important aspect for understanding how ideology

works and, more generally, how a text can be interpreted, but it is not the only one; moreover it involves a hypostasis of the textual structure, and a consequent consideration of the receiver as a mere "decoder" , a simple executor of instructions already in the text before and apart from his/her interpretation. Through the comparative analysis I will try, on the contrary, to provide grounds both for the possibility (against what S. Fish and other critics maintain) to identify ideological constraints "from outside", in a partial but in a sense "objective" way. Thompson distinguishes between a "neutral" conception of ideology (as a fixed, clearly bounded, easily identifiable body of political beliefs and symbolic practices, usually associated with a specific group) and a "critical" one, in which ideology is defined as a **process** of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power, as the way in which power serves to sustain systematically asymmetrical relations.

Ricoeur maintains a similar distinction between ideology as "integration" (that is as a way of providing collective values and shared norms of behaviour that can reinforce the identity and cohesion of a group), which is basically a positive phenomenon, inasmuch as it constitute the symbolic texture of social bonds (1981:225), and ideology as justification of the system of authority as it is, or ideology as "domination".

What I want to stress here is that, as I have also tried to show in Part 1, meaning is not the invariant correlate of a linguistic or visual sign, but the result of a process of interaction and "negotiation" between the two complementary moments of production and reception. 1

For this reason, while on the one side it is necessary to

consider the structural features of the text (narrative, style, patterns of argumentation, rhetorical devices) as "mediators" of meaning (which is achieved with them, not by them), nevertheless the analysis cannot be reduced to the textual strategies.

Rhetoric for instance, as Ricoeur 1985 has opportunely underlined, is mainly about textual "tactics" and "author's" purposes (this is not the same as to say that the "author" is totally free: on the contrary, he is submitted to a whole series of social and cultural constraints, which he has to accept, if he wants make himself understood. On this respect the notion of "topos", as both a textual and a sociocultural concept, is paramount. I will try to account for at least some of the different possibilities of interpretation opened up (if it is the case) by the text, which make the role of the viewer active and not merely automatic (as the word "decoding" might suggest).

Ricoeur has powerfully expressed the necessity of overcoming an exclusive rhetorical approach:

"From a purely rhetorical approach the reader is, at the same time, the prey and the victim of the strategy assessed by the implicit author, being such a strategy usually dissimulated. Another theory of reading is required, which puts the accent on the response of the reader, his response to the stratagems of the implied author. The new component with which poetics has to be enriched is then an aesthetics rather than a rhetoric, if we give back to the term "aesthetics" the wider sense which the Greek "aisthesis" gave to it, and we will consider as its task the exploration of the multiple ways in which a work, acting upon a reader, affect him. What is relevant of this being affected is that it combines (...) a passivity and an activity, which allows to consider as the reception of the text the action of reading itself". (1985:243).

In Ricoeur's view, within the aesthetic (in the wider sense) approach two perspectives merge, as complementary to the rhetoric of text: a phenomenology of the individual act of reading (like

Iser's "concretization"; Ricoeur calls it "rhetoric of reading") and a hermeneutics of the reception, which is mainly focused on the "public" reading of the text by a "reading community", acting in a given historical dimension (like Jauss' aesthetics of reception) (1985:250).

Beside "poiesis" (the study of textual, structure, or "rhetoric of fiction") and "aisthesis" (the study of interpretation, or "rhetoric of reading"), the third crucial moment in Ricoeur's view is represented by "catharsis".

Unlike aesthetics, which sets the reader free from his daily routine, catharsis allows a freedom which is the condition for new evaluations of reality within the process of re-reading. What is at stake here is the possibility to consider, as the main character of rhetoric, not the mere strategic technique for persuasion, direction and domination, inscribed in the text once and for all (and in this sense, as we will see, as the basic instrument of ideology), but rather an equipment of "topoi" available to the whole interpreting community to make sense of reality, compose conflicting views and so on. And also beside ideological exploitation it lend itself to the possibility of an active and critical (about the understanding of cultural unstated premises one is embedded in) viewing. As for advertising, mainly the "textual rhetoric" (or, in Ricoeur's terms, the rhetoric of fiction) has been the crucial concern of recent analysis (like Williamson 1978; Dyer 1982; Vestergaard 1985); this framework has brought some useful findings, but is clearly insufficient for describing the complex process of textual interpretation.

An "aesthetic" approach (in Ricoeur's sense, which is mainly cognitive) has not been attempted yet for the analysis of

advertising texts; aesthetics tends rather to merge with the "hedonistic" trends, which emphasizes the "pleasure" of consumption, from the viewer's subjective point of view (like in "postmodernism"),².

These perspectives, while opportunely stressing the active intervention of the receiver upon the text, suffer from an overemphasis of the interpretive freedom, and of individual needs and taste (being rather "need" and "taste" socially and culturally determined).

Coming back to the "textual rhetoric", the limitation of such approach (and, in my view, of any approach which is merely text-bounded) is quite evident: in spite of the claimed (in many cases) "pragmatic" framework (which includes attention to the role of receiver and to the context of reception), it is basically text and author-oriented. The weakness of this approach can be summed up as "representative bias": texts, in fact, are supposed to encode straightforward social situations, relations of domination, through strategic and effective means to represent reality: in other words rhetorical devices encode ideology in the textual structure.

As the main emphasis is on the "producer(s)" of the text, who organize the textual elements according to their (hegemonic) purposes, "text" becomes synonymous with "ideology"; this is in part true, but it is only one side of the issue, the side of "authorship", the side of mastering of meanings through rhetorical means for ideological purposes.

The fate of the viewer, in this perspective, is clear: positioned by the text, guided by the configuration of elements

through an already defined itinerary, forced by structures over which he has no power, and that were already there, before he could approach the text.

From the point of view of the textual structure the receiver is already there, as the point to which marketing strategies, audience research, psycho-sociological analysis of TV effects, textual style and strategies converge; but, in my view, the receiver **within** the text (the "ideal viewer") is not necessarily normative, unless processes like negotiation of meanings and "struggle over meaning" are empty expressions.

There is a range of critical studies on language and media output which tend to overemphasize the impact of textual structure (which does not preclude, in most cases, their value, but calls for an integration): from the critical linguistics of Fowler and Kress, who investigate how "ideological formations" are encoded in (or translated by) syntactic means like transitivity (active vs passive), nominalization, reification, up to the psychoanalytic (post)structural framework assessed by the Screen group, and the idea of "preferred meaning" developed by S. Hall (who has in part revised this concept later).

These positions in fact tend to consider the text (all kinds, from verbal to audiovisual) as the exclusive site of meaning production, and the process of signification as a sort of "mirroring" function, no longer of a "natural" world, but of an "objective" social reality, reflected by the text or systematically distorted by it.

According to other scholars (like Corner) texts are not polysemic **per se**. On the contrary, they are strongly structured as to force the interpretation towards a precise direction (as

Barthes has underlined in French, as well as in Italian, "sense" can be used both for "meaning" and for "direction"). The plurality of meaning cannot be found in analyzing the text as a self-contained unity, but requires the observation of the process of receptions, and the consideration of the intertextual relations which can affect it (I will be more explicit below).

The weakness of the "preferred reading", and of the linguistic (mainly grammatical and syntactical) coding of social relations and groups' attitudes has already been emphasized (see Corner 1983; Thompson 1984; Morley 1986), which does not imply a global critique, but simply the acknowledgment of a partiality, and the necessity of an integrate perspective: rhetoric, coding, representation, ideology are fundamental elements for the analysis, but they are neither text-bound, nor just purposively exploited by a powerful source of discourse for persuading (or obtaining consensus from) a powerless audience (conspiracy thesis).

Moreover many of these positions do not consider that the same constraints can bear not only upon interpretation, but also upon textual production, as both production and interpretation draw from a repertoire of socially shared and conventional (or even when unconventional, socially acceptable) images of social reality, as I will try to show in the comparative analysis of TV advertisements.

TEXTUAL ASPECTS AND THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF VIEWING

As far as the side of interpretation is concerned, the main attempt to break the "aseptic" conception of a viewer as

individual receiver of a structured message (with no attention to the sociocultural situation of reception, and to the way in which it can affect interpretation) has been made in Britain by David Morley ; he elaborated Hall's encoding/decoding paradigm and used it as a guide-line for empirical research on instances of actual interpretation of TV texts. The systematic effort to integrate the theoretical insight and the practical observation which animates his long running project (Morley's first study on audience and TV texts was in 1978) represents a turning point in British media analysis.

I will consider particularly the synthesis of Morley's results as it appears in 1980 and 1986 by arguing that, given the great value of the research, most of the findings are still limited and provisional (as the author himself reckons), and call for an integration within the same perspective (strict relation between theory and practice; pragmatic consideration of the actual, active, social and cultural specific process of reception), but exploring different and complementary directions.

The first work on "Nationwide" audience suffers, in my opinion, of the same "representative" bias as the theories criticized in the previous paragraph: to put it in a nutshell (which renders my criticism harsher than it actually is) not the textual structure (with the "preferred meaning" encoded in it), but the social structure (with the class hierarchical division encoded in it), is seen, in fact, as the site of production of meaning and of different decoding. In his following work (1986) Morley acknowledges that neither "individuals" and "classes" can be seen as "coherent, unified subjects whose actions and consciousness

reflect their underlying essence" (1986:41), the subject being rather the "result" of many different and simultaneous relations (although not all equivalent).

The value of the research lies not in the observation of real people (instead of "ideal viewers"), but precisely in that of different sort of people considered in the process of decoding the same text.

But, beside the "artificial" setting of viewing, also the "a priori" assumption of a rigid class structure as basis for the process of reception seems to raise more problems than it can solve: in fact it is not possible to generalize from an individual decoding (by a member of a specific class) to the decoding of a class as a whole; in the same way the decoding of a programme from a member of a class is not necessarily consistent with the decoding of other programmes from the same person. Decoding (or, better, interpretation), in fact, cuts across genders, ages, TV genres. The different variables which affect this process are much more complex and intertwined than a simple class-membership can suggest. As Morley himself puts it, the Nationwide study

"allows too little space for the consideration of the contradictory nature of the 'decodings' which the same person may make of different types of programme material" (1986:40).

In order to overcome this limitation Morley shifts his attention away from the process of "decoding" (that is the analysis of how specific social groups make sense of TV texts in a "laboratory" condition) to the "viewing context" (through an "ethnographic" participant observation of viewing patterns and habits in natural settings); he abandons the representative bias

of a tight correspondence between decoding and social classes in favour of the "how" of TV reception (1986:41).

Morley has translated the generic theoretical imperative of integration text/context in a concrete situation of analysis; his project has proved to be highly contributory in setting TV consumption in its context, in considering the way in which different TV texts are actually received and consumed and in drawing patterns of reception and viewing habits.

This is a complementary approach to the Nationwide's one, which takes account of aspects previously neglected: but as also Morley admits, the study on "family television" presents a number of limitations as well.

First of all, even in a natural setting, the presence of the observer cannot be neutral (and in fact Morley puts "natural" between quotation marks): much evidence has been produced, from physics to social sciences, that the presence of the observer modifies the system under observation.

Secondly, this approach does not allow any consideration on how people make sense of specific texts, even if it provides important issues for contextualizing the interpretive activity.

And finally Morley's findings are hard to generalize, and his method is difficult to apply to textual analysis:

"Because of the small size of the sample (and the restricted definition of household type employed in its construction) care must be taken in attempting to generalize from my findings. The research was of a preliminary nature..." (1986:12).

RHETORIC AS SOCIOCULTURAL FORM

The two most common meanings which the term "rhetoric" recalls in the ordinary language today are "the art of speaking or

writing in a way that is likely to persuade or influence people", and "speech or writing that sound fine and important, but which is really insincere or without meaning" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English).

Both senses stem from the ancient Greek tradition, in which rhetoric was conceived as "the means for producing something which either can exist or not, as its origin is in the creator agent, not in the created object" (Barthes 1972:20).

Like dialectic, rhetoric has to do "with things that do not belong to any one science" (Ong 1971:6); but, unlike dialectic, "rhetoric covers any subject matter, for it is the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (ibidem).

Hence the second meaning of "play of forms without reference": the various "tropes" or figures, employed in order to make pleasant and effective a discourse that cannot exhibit the force of "truth" and logic, become a sort of consolidated deposit of ornaments and stereotypes, which the skilled orator can rely on in the moment of enunciation ("elocutio").

But, as Barthes himself emphasized, rhetoric has, from the very beginning, also a moral and a social aspects: moral, as it is a system of rules and prescription for dealing with the structural ambiguities of words and their powerful effects, and social, as it is strictly related with power, and as it relies on common forms of understanding and representing social reality ("topoi", or "loci communi", were either familiar stereotypes or common patterns of reasoning shared by all the subject involved in the communication).

Habermas, in recalling the traditional definition of rhetoric, also stresses its role in the achievement of social consensus:

"Rhetoric has traditionally been seen as the art of producing consensus on questions that cannot be decided on the basis of compelling evidences. In classical antiquity rhetoric was the realm of merely 'plausible', as opposed to that in which the truth of statements is discussed on theoretical grounds. It is a matter, then, of practical questions -questions that can be reduced to decisions about the acceptance or rejection of standards , of criteria of evaluation and norms of behaviour. When such decisions are made rationally, they are arrived at by means which are neither theoretically compelling nor merely arbitrary; instead, they are motivated by convincing speech. In the notable ambivalence between conviction and persuasion which attaches to consensus produced by rhetoric, **one sees not merely the element of force**, which to the present day remains an ineradicable part of any consensus (...); the same equivocality is also circumstantial evidence that practical questions can be decided only through dialogue, and therefore remain bound to the context of the colloquial language". (1986: 269. My emphasis and translation)

Recently rhetoric has been in fact revalued in a pragmatic perspective, as it requires an active participation of the receiver for making sense of a text.

As also Farrel (1985) has stressed, rhetoric is a form of communicative action (as well as a form of discourse) which distinctive character is "to anticipate an audience-response as part of its very meaning".

But the rhetorical analysis of media texts (especially of advertising) suffers, in my opinion, from an intrinsic limitation which lessens (if not excludes) its pragmatic value; in fact, maybe under the influence of the pervasive structuralistic model, rhetoric is mainly considered as a structure within the text, as a purposive organization of textual elements aimed to persuade (or instruct) the receiver.

The element of power (of the text, of the author, of the dominant group whose interests are reflected by the text) is

overemphasized, which allows no room for an active intervention of the receiver, and makes unnecessary every attempt to integrate extra-textual elements in the process of reception (as pragmatic elements like "context" and "action" are both entirely prescribed by the text).

Similarly no great support for a pragmatic approach to media texts comes from Gricean positions like Sperber-Wilson's (1986); even if they emphasize "inference" against "decoding" in text interpretation, they reduce the meaning of a text (or utterance) to the intention of the author (or speaker).

Inference, unlike a mechanical decoding, is indeed an active process, but it does not consist, in my opinion, of reproducing a mental content from one mind to another. Similarly, rhetoric cannot be simply considered as the sum of strategies deliberately employed by a subject in order to influence other people.

Both these position (rhetoric as textual strategy for persuasion; rhetoric as means that reflects an intention to persuade) present the same limitation (even if one is text-bounded and the other mentalistic): they presuppose what they want to demonstrate on the one hand; they consider the role of the receiver as deterministically guided by the text on the other. (In fact the process of reception can be almost "analytically" deduced from the structure of the text).

Most of the analyses of advertising texts, although claiming to be sensitive to the social context of reception, produce an exclusively text-bound analysis, which inevitably determines the reification of textual structures and rhetorical devices. (Williamson 1978, in spite of some acute insights, suffers, in my opinion, of such a weakness).

I don't want to dismiss the crucialness of textual strategies, or the exercise of power through textual devices, but I think it has been exclusively (and "one-sidedly") stressed, whereas other elements that constitute conditions for an active approach to the text have been neglected. I mainly refer to the second "social" aspect of rhetoric, that is the cluster of commonplaces, patterns of argumentation, schemes of representation which constitute common points of reference both for producers and for receivers of texts.

The concept of "topos" is, under this respect, at least as important as that of strategy, and whereas it is true that "topoi" can be exploited for strategic purposes (ideology), it is also true that on the one hand they constitute a constraint both for producers and receivers, and on the other hand they provide "sites" of possible detachment and negotiation.

In fact they "signal" significant points in the definition and representation of the social life (condition of its reproduction), points upon which the meaning of actions and event can be negotiated (like in the case of "generative metaphors") points that often offer oversimplified representations and, once identified, can be questioned and subverted (figures of substitution, for instances, can recall a range of different possible alternatives, included disruptive ones). This point will be one of the main concerns of the comparative analysis of TV advertisements.

In summary the rhetorical features I consider relevant to a pragmatic analysis of texts involving social representations are mainly two:

- Rhetoric as deposit of resources (rather than strategic techniques), as repertory of forms and contents (topoi, stereotypes) socially and culturally specific, which affect both producers and receivers of texts either as a constraints or as the possibilities of creative, active, alternative production of meaning.

- Rhetoric as instrument for resolving and re-defining situations which are controversial or problematic (generative metaphor), or simply for providing representation of social groups or realities in view of an integration (social cohesion) or of the dissimulation of possible alternative representation (I will consider those ideological aspects in the next paragraph).

For evaluating the social character, the alternative implications, the possibility of non-deterministic decoding of TV adverts a text-bounded analysis is, in my opinion (and as the results of advertising analysis up to now confirm) insufficient.

I will try to justify later how a comparative analysis of TV advertisements can allow to overcome at least some of the intrinsic limitation of traditional textual approaches.

For the moment I will try to specify the social dimension of rhetoric, with reference to some authors who, in different fields, have opportunely emphasized this fundamental character.

For brevity I will summarize the main issues around four key-points: the social use of rhetoric, its semantic value, its character as a social code and its link to ideology.

THE SOCIAL USE OF RHETORIC

I will mainly refer, in this section, to the work of Burke

(1950), Ortony (1979), Lakof (1980), Sapir-Crocker (1977), Habermas (1986).

All those authors agree on the fact that rhetoric is a characteristic form of language use which not only expresses reality, but involves an active structuring of the experience: rhetoric is in fact a strategic "equipment" at one's disposal for handling social situations by "framing" or "entitling" them. Habermas, for instance, maintains that in rhetoric

"The speaker can make use of the creativity of natural language to respond spontaneously to changing states of affairs and to define new situations through fundamentally unpredictable expressions. (...) This productivity, however, is by no means limited to the short-term production of individual statements, but extends as well to the long-term process of shaping colloquially formulated schemata of interpretation - schemata which not only make experience possible, but prejudice it at the same time." (1986:296).

Similarly, according to Shon and Sternberg (in Ortony 1979) rhetorical devices, particularly metaphor, are essential to the construction of social reality.

Metaphor, in fact, works by "mapping" a "frame" (that is a set of expectations about familiar objects and events) into another, by reinforcing existent social images of reality, or by restructuring in a more acceptable way problematic situations 3.

The process of re-framing is crucial to advertising, as it makes it possible, for instance, to incorporate new products or modes of consumption into an already familiar pattern, or to conceal negative connotation from certain product by re-naming them (like in the case of "ecological" fur coats).

Another significant contribution to the understanding of the social role of rhetoric, from an anthropological perspective, comes from the work of Sapir and Crocker, whose point of

reference is the classic study on rhetoric by Kennet Burke (1950).

According to the authors the principal feature of rhetoric is the "entitlement" of complex social situations, which is something different from "naming", that is matching labels to events and objects. Rather, it is

"somewhat as the title of a novel does not really name an object, but sums up the vast complexity of elements that compose the novel, giving it its character, essence or general drift" (1977:35).

In all the perspectives considered, the social function of rhetoric is taken into account: rather than "persuading" it provides models. In defining social situations it provides directions for action (in this respect advertisements have been defined as "self-fulfilling prophecies" by Boorstin, 1963).

Moreover the social function of rhetoric is not confined to the framing of social situations, but also produces social action (cohesion, identification in shared metaphors) and interaction. For all these reasons to reduce rhetoric to persuasion seems highly restraining.

SEMANTIC AND REFERENTIAL VALUE OF RHETORIC

In the perspectives I am considering rhetoric is far from being an empty play of forms lacking in semantic force: on the contrary, rhetorical entitlement is a process whereby "actors attempt to provide some linguistic truth about a social situation which summarizes its moral essence in such ways as to define possible actions" (Sapir-Crocker 1977:37).

Rhetoric is not a use of language which "distorts" or misrepresents reality in order to persuade, but is a constitutive use of language, that is an essential part of the social repertoire of techniques for understanding and expressing the nature of things:

"Figurative language does not just express the pertinence of certain cultural axioms to given social conditions, it provides the semantic conditions through which actors deal with that reality, and these conditions are general to all social contexts and all actors within that society". (ibidem:46)

And also:

"In terms of the entire cultural system, the rhetorical device itself is to be viewed as a fully semantic strategy, as a verbal codification of meaning which is part of the society's repertory of semantic techniques for expressing 'the truth of things' ". (ibidem:38).

Hence rhetoric can tell a great deal either about the way a social situation is perceived (whether delicate to handle or not, for instance), or about the social repertory of linguistic and stylistic devices related to the representation of particular situations, or about the way in which social interaction takes place in particular situations and so on.

The mutual relationship between social interaction, semantic fields and repertory of socially shared expressions and formula closely recall, in my view, the interdependence of interpersonal, ideational, textual dimensions in Halliday's model (1978), which I have already indicated as a point of reference for the empirical analysis.

RHETORIC AS A SOCIAL CODE

Another crucial character of rhetoric, usually fading into the background when the "persuasive" aspect is foregrounded, is

the "paradigmatic" function (strictly connected to the "entitlement" of social situations): in fact, by allowing the re-framing of social situations, rhetoric constitutes a sort of analogical matrix for encoding opinions, in such a way that the definition is a ground for action. Rhetoric can be considered as "an analogic system, or code, whereby the complexities of relationships between social entities can be manipulated in terms of paradigmatic unities (...), a logical matrix in which a threatening 'this' can be discussed in terms of an aptly incongruous 'that'". (Sapir-Crocker 1977:50).

A typical example, in the anthropological domain, is the way in which aspects of sexuality are correlated with a code of raw-cooked foods; but different representative illustrations of rhetoric as a socially shared system of substitution can be found in every aspects of social life, from puns and humour (which social end is often to "repair" an embarrassing situation) to euphemisms in social and political speech (I will consider later the ideological character of euphemism).

"The social utility of the analogic capacity derives, implicitly, from its ability to handle a virtually unbounded range of recurrent issues within a single paradigmatic formula". (ibidem: 55).

Rhetoric is not an abstract "system" of paradigmatic relations; it is rather a social code, that is a code which operates at the "interface" of linguistic and social systems.

Rhetoric has the fundamental property of conjuncting system (of paradigmatic relation; of linguistic devices; of consolidated traditions) and context (the actual social situation in which meanings are exchanged; the interactional relation between communicators). Too often, on the contrary, only the "power" of tropes as instruments of domination has unilaterally been

stressed.

RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY

In summary I can say I conceive both rhetoric and ideology as "a function of the discourse and of the logic of social processes, rather than an intention of the agent" (Hall 1982:88). Then I will briefly take into consideration some of the cases in which rhetoric tropes lend themselves to an ideological exploitation, before giving full attention to the phenomenon of ideology.

The ideological potential of rhetorical figures is strictly linked to their cognitive function (defining a situation in order to deal with it), and their interpersonal role (providing socially acceptable representations, or models for generating representations, as condition for interaction in social situations).

The exploitation of rhetoric for ideological purposes has been emphasized in different social and political contexts (see for instance Chilton 1982), especially as a way of legitimizing existent institutions and dissimulating alternative views of reality: legitimation can be accomplished by claiming common grounds (as Thompson 1984 and Ricoeur 1979 have suggested, "integration" is one of the main ideological strategies, which can either act as a positive means of social cohesion, or as the creation of a "fictive we" to be reckon with, as we will see); dissimulation is achieved with tactics of "avoidance".

P. Chilton considers the ideological role of rhetoric in mitigating and making nuclear speech socially acceptable, and regards metaphor and euphemism as the two poles of the

ideological discourse. Metaphor is the positive one, for its generative force of defining or re-framing social situations. Euphemism is the negative one, as it reduces the access to model of reality, instead of building new ones; it is primarily oriented to "suppression or evasion of reality" (1982:22), and it mainly serves dissimulation (even if the two strategies, metaphor and euphemism, frequently overlap).

Sapir and Crocker call "synecdochic fallacy" the tendency to mistake the part for the whole by assuming, for instance, a small number of selected attributes -say, of a social group- as determinant of the whole; another political exploitation of rhetoric is realized in "metonymic misrepresentations",

"common in the substitution of social effect for deterministic causes (as when black are characterized by any or all ghetto conditions)" (1977:63).

There is no point in extending the list of ideological exploitations of rhetoric apart from an actual analysis of particular instances of discourse; after having (hopefully) clarified the concept of rhetoric which will inform the empirical analysis, it is worth considering the sense in which "ideology" will be relevant to my research.

IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

As we have seen "discourse" is the term that refers, in contemporary criticism, to the use of language (as a system) in specific social situations:

"Discourse is the site where social forms of organization engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values which

make up a culture" Hodge and Kress (1988:6).

I will consider ideology less for its "mimetic" content (that is as a set of representations of reality) than for its "semiotic" value (that is as one of the social processes by which meaning is constructed and exchanged).

Ideology, as we will see, is not a system of beliefs existing independently from the way in which they are expressed. S. Hall has stressed, among others, this crucial feature of ideology: "This move from content to structure or from manifest meaning to the level of code is an absolutely characteristic one in the critical approach (...) If ideologies are structures (...) then they are not 'images' nor 'concepts', but sets of rules (...) Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages" (1982:71).

T. van Dijk (1987) purports that ideology is a means of social cognition (that is a "monitoring system" that controls attention allocation, construction of frames, structures of relevance), which is fundamental both for discourse production and understanding, and mediates between power and discourse; as power has not direct access to discourse, and so requires a structure of mediation, similarly ideology only manifests itself indirectly, through structures of action and discourse.

Rhetoric tropes, as we have seen, lend themselves to ideological exploitation, as they constitute semiotic devices for resolving contradictions and diverting attention. Being a matrix for paradigmatic substitutions, rhetoric allows connotative associations which easily produce ideological effects, as Barthes has powerfully indicated in Mythologies.

But there are many other features of language use which are

instances of ideological discourse: style, for instance, as Labov consider it, is "a kind of variation which is free in some respects, yet serves to mark specific social agents and occasion within a broader speech community" (in Hodge and Kress 1988:80).

Broadly speaking, every instance of "metacommunication" is a possible "site" of ideology, that is of use of signs which "continually refer to and monitor the social relations of semiotic participants" (ibidem:79).

Hodge and Kress define "logonomic system" as the higher-level control mechanism that regulates the function of a message both at the levels of production and reception and as it is strictly linked to the context of its use, it implies "a theory of society, an epistemology and a theory of social modalities" (ibidem:5), and functions as an ideological complex inasmuch as reflects contradictions and conflicts in the social formations.

What all these positions testify is the indissolubility of ideology and discourse, as ideology (and I will precise this point in the next section) is mainly the structural organization of linguistic forms in social situation in order to (re)produce meaning, in a such a way that it legitimizes a certain image of the world.

IDEOLOGY AND REPRESENTATIVE BIAS

I will not consider ideology as a set of particular representations (or misrepresentations) that serve to create or maintain a status of domination.

I will refer mainly to Hall (1982) and Thompson (1984) and

(1987) for criticizing any "representative" definition of ideology, and for arguing that ideology is neither a set of specific contents or bias, nor the reflection of a distorted view of reality, of an intentionality of domination, of a precise class-structure or of relations in other spheres of social action, like the economic one. I reserve to the last two paragraphs the "positive" definition of ideology, as it will be considered in the empirical analysis.

IDEOLOGY AS MISREPRESENTATION

In traditional Marxist theory, the working of ideology is compared, using a famous quotation from Marx and Engels, to that of a "camera obscura", in which the real world is turned upside-down, and an illusory and distorted image of reality is presented as the "truth".

A sort of "descriptive fallacy" stems from the supposed mirroring relation between language and (social) reality which, from Austin and Wittgenstein up to the critical paradigms of Williams and Hall, has been questioned and rejected:

"In the referential approach, language was thought to be transparent to the truth of 'reality itself' (...). The real, world was both origin and warrant for the truth of any statement about it. But in the conventional or constructivistic theory of language reality came to be understood, instead, as the result or effect of how things had been signified" (Hall 1982:74)

I believe (and I will specify the issue in the empirical analysis) that language can be referential without being a mirror, or a transparent means. On this respect Thompson suggests:

"We must resist the temptation to think of ideology as an inverted or distorted image, a misrepresentation of what is real in our societies. We must resist this temptation because, once we recognize that ideology operates through language and that language is a medium of social action, we must also acknowledge that ideology is partially constitutive of what, in our societies, is 'real'. Ideology is not a pale image of the social world but is part of that world, a creative and constitutive element of our social lives" (1987:523).

Hence I will not say, for instance, that advertisements are ideological because they present an unfaithful image of reality, that conceals the truth, or because they impose false needs, which distort the fundamental ones, in order to maintain asymmetrical relations of power in the social scene. I will stress, instead, the way in which advertisements enter the construction of social reality, inasmuch as they "frame" (rather than reflect) the actual context of social action, in a way that affects the action itself. And, as Hall indicates, "framing" and classification are questions much more relevant than bias or distortion. The ideological character of a social discourse cannot be tested against a presumed "truth" that it seeks to conceal, but rather against the set of possibilities that it actually excludes (this point will be crucial to my analysis, as we will see later):

"Particular discursive formulations would, then, be ideological, not because of the manifest bias or distortions of their surface content, but because they were generated out of, or were transformations based on, a limited ideological matrix or set". (Hall 1982:72).

IDEOLOGY AS REFLECTION OF AN INTENT OF DOMINATION

If rhetoric cannot be simply considered as a textual strategy for encoding a determination of persuading people, ideology, in the same way, is not simply a strategy of direct imposition of a

particular framework in order to gain and maintain domination.

First of all because, as Giddens suggests, (1976; 1979; 1984), social action (and then also ideological discourse) is bounded both by unintended consequences and by unacknowledged conditions; that is, as I have already suggested, we cannot find powerful actors who consciously and deliberately organize ideological discourses which serve their own purposes. Ideology, instead, is something that both enables (through modes of textual organization like rhetorical figures, or narrative structures) and constraints (for its intrinsic selectivity on the social reality it claims to represent, and for the existence of "unstated premises" not always acknowledged) either the producers or the receivers of ideologically connotated messages.

As S. Hall underlines, the concept of ideology as representing an intentionality of dominance has to be overcome:

"That notion of dominance which means the direct imposition of one framework, by overt force or ideological compulsion, on a subordinate class, was not sophisticated enough to match the real complexities of the case. One had also to see that dominance was accomplished at the unconscious as well as at the conscious level: to see it as a property of the system of relation involved, rather than as the overt and intentional biases of individuals; and to recognize its play in the very activity of regulation and exclusion which functioned through language and discourse before an adequate conception of language could be theoretically secured" (1982:85).

IDEOLOGY AS REPRESENTATION OF A CLASS STRUCTURE

If ideology is not a coded meaning, as Hall has stressed, but rather a code-system, class relationships cannot be translated directly into ideological discourses.

First of all because class structuring is not a clear cut

phenomenon , but largely depends on the context of its definition (class identity, as Morley has acknowledged in 1986, is a complex and unstable category).

And, in spite of the value of social theories like Bernstein's and Bourdieu's about the different access to means of signification by different social groups, "class belongingness" cannot be deterministically related to ideological positions:

"Though discourse could become ,an area of social struggle, and all discourses entailed certain definite premises about the world, this was not the same thing as ascribing ideologies to classes in a fixed, necessary or determinate way. Ideological terms and elements do not necessarily 'belong' in this definite way to classes: and they do not necessarily and inevitably flow from class position. " (Hall 1982:80).

Hence struggle over meaning does not necessarily reflect class struggle.

IDEOLOGY AS REPRESENTATION OF ECONOMIC STRUGGLE

The same order of considerations also applies to any other "site" of social or economic struggle: ideology, in fact, is not simply the emanation, at the level of social use of language, of a more basic conflict of interest or asymmetrical power (like in the classic relation structure/superstructure). It is, instead, an active and fundamental element in the construction, representation, control, refusal of social meanings. Hall is clear on this point:

"The fact that one could not read off the ideological position of a social group or individual from a class position, but that one would have to take into account how the struggle over meaning was conducted, meant that ideology ceased to be a mere

reflection of struggles taking place or determined elsewhere (for example, at the level of the economic struggle). It gave to ideology a relative independence or 'relative autonomy'. Ideologies ceased to be simply the dependent variables in social struggle: instead, ideological struggle acquired a specificity and a pertinence of its own- needing to be analyzed in its own terms, and with real effects on the outcomes of particular struggles. This weakened, and finally overthrew altogether, the classic concept of ideas as wholly determined by other determining factors." (Hall 1982:82).

After having justified the rejection both of a "descriptive" notion of ideology (as fixed system of belief, as set of distorted representation of reality) and of a "mirror" of more fundamental and "real" relationships, I will try to specify the sense in which I will consider ideology as a crucial element in the production- reception of meanings.

IDEOLOGY AS MATRIX OF SOCIAL MEANING

Some of the features commonly attributed to ideology have already been questioned; now, in order to define positively the nature of this phenomenon I intend to stress its character of structure, rather than its contents, as well as its generative potential (instead of imitative character) in the active production of social meanings.

The rhetorical code that allows to originate social meanings out of a limited matrix is fully exploited by ideology, which "historicizes" it (that is applies it to a concrete situation of social struggle over meanings, and to an already existent context of unstated premises and taken-for-granted representations of the world) and makes it a substantial element of its work.

What makes ideology a crucial and intriguing point in the

study of the social production of meanings is precisely its double component of "structure" (limited matrix out of which images of social reality are generated) and "discourse" (always occurs in actual instances of expression which relate linguistically any communication impossible).

The structural character of ideology has been stressed, among the others, by Althusser (see especially 1971:151-2) who did not adequately recognize, however, its historical character (by considering it, on the contrary, a "non-historical" or "omni-historical" reality).

S. Hall has instead put a great emphasis on the "historicization of structure" (1982:72) as crucial element for the understanding of how ideology works; not only in producing social meanings out of a limited code, but in winning social consensus.

Even if ideology is a code, a matrix, a structure, it can nevertheless not be studied apart from the socio-historical conditions in which ideological claims take place (and this is a crucial point, although a very difficult one to be translated in actual methodologies of analysis, as we will see).

Being a limited matrix, ideology produces "partial" images of reality, which nevertheless are able to win credibility and gain consensus:

" A claim is ideological not because it is false but because (...) it offers a partial explanation as it were a comprehensive and adequate one -it takes the part for the whole (fetishism). Nevertheless its legitimacy depends on that part of the truth, which it mistakes for the whole, being real in fact, and not merely a polite fiction" (ibidem:86).

What Hall calls "fetishism" and other call, as we have seen, "synecdochic fallacy", is a crucial ideological exploitation of a rhetoric mechanism which requires, in order to be grasped, an acknowledgement of a whole set of "unstated premises" which constitute the horizon within which meanings are constructed and exchanged.

Before trying to assess a methodology of inquiry into this complex but fundamental condition of social meaning production, I need to state precisely how and for which purposes ideology, defined as matrix of social meanings, actually works in the social context.

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF IDEOLOGY.

In presenting Ricoeur's contribution to a critical insight into the question of ideology, Thompson underlines the ambiguous character of the term, that both refers to a "positive" concept (integration, self-representation in order to achieve social cohesion) and to a means of manipulation.

I intend to give the main emphasis both to the positive aspect of "integration" and to the negative one of "dissimulation", in the analysis of how social meanings are produced in advertising

texts; I will leave aside the aspect of "politics of signification", that is the study of how the way in which meanings are produced serves to sustain relation of domination (except in so far as they are visible in the text), because it would imply a different perspective and different means of investigation from the textual ones.

My analysis will necessarily be partial but, hopefully, not evasive, as the socio-semiotic approach constitutes a preliminary to, rather than excludes, an enquiry into the political dimension of ideology.

As I mentioned terms like "integration", "dissimulation", "domination", it is opportune to specify the sense in which they will be used, and I will do so by mainly referring to Thompson (1984).

In the positive sense ideology plays a fundamental role in the constitution of the image by which social groups represent themselves, not only as a way of circumscribing boundaries and creating a sense of social cohesion between members, but also as a way of supporting and reinforcing a specific image, against the negative effects of external forces or of the passing of time:

"In its most elementary sense ideology is linked to the image which a social group gives of itself, to its self-representation as a community with a history and an identity. (...) The growing gap between the inaugural events of a group and its present life calls for images and symbols, for ongoing interpretations of actions-events, which mediate between present and past and integrate the members of a group. The primary function of ideology, therefore, is to mediate and integrate, to consolidate and conserve" (1984:186).

By which means and in which way social groups are represented will be one of the object of my analysis, both at the syntagmatic (associations of elements in the text) and at the paradigmatic level (choices within possible alternatives; connotative correlations). I will use a comparative framework as a means to overcome at least some of the limitations of a pure textual analysis.

But also the "conservative" character of ideology needs to be stressed, as it determines other functions of ideology, like dissimulation and domination.

In a sense, in fact, ideology plays, in the social construction of reality, the same role as "euphemism" in rhetoric (as it limits the horizon of possibilities, hides awkward alternatives, reduces access to models of reality), whereas the "constructive"

role of

metaphors is taken by utopia which (in the classic definition by Mannheim)

"tends to subvert the social order by creating a gap, by projecting a possible future of what present society could be" (Thompson 1984:186).

And in fact the other aspect of ideology which will be

emphasized in my analysis is the set of consequences in terms of justification, rationalization, legitimization which a concept of ideology as integration inescapably produces.

PART 2. NOTES

Chapter 4 . THE LANGUAGE OF TELEVISION

1) He distinguishes between 10 kinds of codes, either grounded on structural perceptive conditions, or on social and cultural conventions, or on individual or collective unconscious.

2) On this topic see Glasgow University Media Group Bad News, London RKP 1976.

J. Berger, in speaking about the relation between words and (artistic) image, argues that since images have been accompanied by words, they have become the illustration of them: "the image now illustrates the sentence, and not viceversa". (1972:28)

3) I use "naturalistic" instead of "natural" because of the discursive character of sound that, as well as image, constructs a perspective on the reality represented.

4) See for instance Hall 1974, Eco's Working Papers in Cultural Studies, the work of Glasgow University Media Group.

5) See Masterman 1985:154 for a list of quotations supporting the naturalness of recorded sound, and for Masterman's critique of them.

6) On unity/continuity see Armes 1988, Ellis 1982.

7) For a clear exposition see "Measuring the Visual" in GUMG, Bad News, 1976.

8) Davis and Walton 1983:43

9) This kind of interpretation does not exclude, as Hawthorn 1987 has stressed, the social construction of meaning, being "play" highly dependent "upon concrete social existences rather than arbitrariness and unfettered freedom and independence". pagg 55-56.

10) See Rizza, N Immagini di televisione, RAI 1986. The author draws heavily from Williams 1974.

11) See Lyotard 1978. I will consider later the narrative character of TV discourses.

12) The opposition Public Service/Commercial television does not work for the Italian case as RAI, the national broadcasting, is largely financed by advertising, besides fees.

13) See Part 3 chapter 8.

14) Recent surveys show, for instance, that in Britain the majority of viewers has a quite clear image of each of the four channels (BBC as authoritative, ITV as entertaining, Channel 4 as culturally and politically engaged), which leads in some cases to prejudgment and errors of evaluation (like "serious" programmes broadcast by ITV attributed to the BBC by viewers interviewed

after a period of time. Reported in AIRWAVES, fall 1986) .

- 15) Some issues raised by American Literary Criticism on the inconsistency of the text itself can offer useful suggestions for the analysis of TV texts, although the parallelism between literary and TV texts is not so plain, as I will argue in the next paragraph; there are also in Literary Criticism some extreme positions (like, for instance, Fish's 1980) that can hardly be maintained: to say that a text needs to be recognized as such in order to become meaningful is not the same as to say that there are not intrinsic features which allow such a recognition.
- 16) See among the others Eco 1968; Fiske 1978
- 17) This thread of the argument benefits from Kuhn's and Feyerabem's criticism of scientific methodologies.
- 18) See Blonsky 1987 pagg 146-154
- 19) See Eco, 1979
- 20) See G.U.M.G. Bad News 1976; Katz and Szchesko, Mass Media and Social Change, Sage, 1981.
- 21) De Certeau, in Blonsky 1987
- 22) Hebdige 1988 provides many examples.
- 23) L'ancienne rethorique, Paris 1966. I follow the Italian edition La retorica antica, Milano, Bompiani 1985, pag 57 ff.
- 24) Schon,D. "Generative Metaphor", in Ortony 1979, pag 254 ff.
- 25) Eco draws a similar distinction in speaking about "repertoire of stereotypes" and "generative mechanism". (1968).
- 26) See Rumelhart,D. E. "Some problems with the notion of literal meaning" in Ortony 1979, pagg 78-90
- 27) In fact generative metaphors do not generate reality, but bring about new cognitive frameworks which make it possible to see reality with fresh eyes.
The creation of a new perspective (re-framing) is particularly evident if one considers the way in which rhetorical figures serve to overcome an "impasse", an awkward or embarrassing situation (puns, jokes); anthropologists have also shown that rhetoric provides tools for dealing euphemistically with delicate areas of social life (like taboo), while in the same time revealing something about them.
- 28) Quine,W.V."A postscript on Metaphor", in Sacks 1978, pag 159.
- 29) Cicourel, for instance, defines pragmatics as "problem solving behaviour".
- 30) Schon calls this aspect "frame restructuring" ("we respond to frame conflict by constructing a new problem-setting story": 1979:270) ,and provides a very interesting example in the domain

of housing policy in developing countries: he refers to a case in which municipal officials in Peru mapped their description of formal governmental housing program into the informal, self-helping activity of the "squatters". For details see 1979, pp 270-280. very interesting example in social policy

31) Corner, J, 1983:269

32) See Katz and Szchesko, 1981:116

33) Ibidem 116-117; see also De Certeau, "The Jabbering of Social Life", in Blonsky, 1985, pag 146 ff.

34) See "Narrative Theory" in Allen 1987, pag 59 ff.

35) Chilton, Mimeo; in analyzing the ideological use of rhetoric in military speech, the authors consider metaphor and euphemism as the two complementary poles of ideologic discourse : the former represents the positive one, in that it works for building models of reality, whereas the latter (negative), functions by dissimulation and erosion of reality. Both are, in any case, resources which can be exploited in different ways.

36) See Allen 1987:56-57. In advertising, for instance, "account" is the formal figure whose task is to mediate between the often contrasting interests of the clients and the agency.

37) In fact, as Hirsh has pointed out in 1967, in order to recognize the "intention" of the author, it is necessary to identify the genre of literature the work belongs to, and genre is a socially determined category.

38) Hawthorn states, following Eliot (according to whom the author is but another reader of his own work) that there are a number of reason why the author may not be the best person to ask about his or her work (1984:66). According to Eco (1983) the author cannot have any claim on the meaning of his work, once it is become part of the communicative circuit.

39) Armes 1988:175. The author reports the fact that although one of the episodes of the BBC drama series "Boys from the Blackstuff" was shot on film rather than on video, very few viewers noticed it.

40) Modlesky, T. "The rhythm of reception", in Kaplan 1987: 69.

41) See Dayan, D-Katz, E. "Performing media events", in Curran , ed Impacts and Influences, 1987:180.
For an interesting insight into the dialectic closeness/distance in painting see Berger 1972:97-98.

Chapter 5 . The DISCOURSE OF ADVERTISING

- 1) See Ogilvy 1985: in fact he sees the preliminary study of the characteristics of the product as the condition for a successful and informative campaign.
- 2) See De Certeau 1985; Williamson 1978
- 3) See IBA Code of Advertising Standard and Practice, March 1988
- 4) Between February and June 1988, there was at least one financial advert in each commercial break in evenings hours.
- 5) This idea is underpinned in the work of many Italian scholars: among others Bettetini 1984, Eco 1990.

Chapter 6: RHETORIC, IDEOLOGY, TEXTUAL STRUCTURES

- 1) I agree with Ricoeur when he says, about literary texts, that "il faut recuser avec la meme force la these d'un structuralism borne qui interdit de sortir du texte, et celle d'un marxism dogmatique qui ne fait que transposer au plain social le topos use de l' 'imitatio naturae'; c'est au niveau de l'horizon d'attente d'un public qu'une oeuvre exerce ce que Jauss appelle la fonction de creation de l'oeuvre d'art". (1985:253-4).
Against an aesthetic representation, endorsed both by the opponents and by the supporters of the social function of literature, Ricoeur supports a theory of mimesis, which is at once "finding" and "transforming".
- 2) This tendency is emblematically represented in the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism, as can be noticed in the work of Barthes himself (compare early studies like L'analyse structurale du recit and later ones like Le plaisir du texte).
- 3) For examples in nuclear speech see Chilton 1982 and 1986. For examples in social policy see Schon, D. "Generative Metaphor: a perspective in Problem-Setting in Social Policy" in Ortony 1979: 254-283.

PART 3 ADVERTISING AS SOCIAL SEMIOTICS:
THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 7: GROUNDS AND METHOD FOR THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

I have declared, at the beginning of my exposition, a "pragmatic" intent, that is an approach to advertisements which, although based on a textual analysis, takes into account both the active role of the receivers, and the crucial role of contextual determinants in the interpretive process.

I have also reviewed some of the most representative studies, either in semiotics, or in linguistics, sociology, media analysis, focused on the active role of the participants to the communicative act and/or on the crucial role of the social context. In trying to sort out some useful suggestion for the analysis, I have also recognized some of the intrinsic weaknesses of those approaches either in the sense of a textual determinism (in most of the semiological models; in the emphasis of linguistic structures by "discourse analysis"; in the structuralistic approach of most of media analysis, like Screen's), or in the overemphasis of contingent and particularistic elements of the communicative situation, which renders almost impossible any generalization of the findings (like in the conversational analysis approach, or in the participant observation of Morley 1986).

When a textual determinism is refused (like in Morley's study on Nationwide Audience), social variables become so important as to constitute the main condition and the framework of specific decoding practices; when a less deterministic version of "textual

structure" is maintained, like in the case of Hall's "preferred meaning", a lot of ambiguities arise, as this notion hardly allows possible alternatives, being already incorporated in the text before decoding takes place; and finally, when contextual elements are advocated as crucial, they tend to be recovered and established on the exclusive basis of the text, which involves again the supremacy of the textual structure (like in the case of Williamson's analysis of advertising text, and in general in most of the analysis of media outputs).

Many of the considerations on social context and audience role, thus, suffer from being either text-bound (and then subject to textual determinism), or extratextually determined (with few possibilities of direct access to a representative number of cases, and consequently of generalization of the findings).

The starting point of my research is instead that meanings cannot be simply "decoded", by grasping the structure of the text, or by acknowledging what a text represents or reflects (either a state of facts, or social structures etc...); hence textual structures, although relevant, cannot give reason *per se* of the complex process of making sense of texts (moreover I will argue that a text-bound analysis is even insufficient for grasping all aspects of the textual system itself, as it offers a limited and internal perspective that does not allow a full insight, especially as far as the distinction between "natural" and "conventional" is concerned)).

I assume as real the possibility of "struggle over meaning", that is of a process of negotiation of meaning for which the text is the mediator, not the artificer. I also intend to consider the horizon of unstated premises that constitute the condition of

actual production and reception, without retrieving them entirely from the text (which is a very common practice).

In other words, I will try to assess a method for searching, inside the text, those "sites" of meaning construction that involve a socially shared images of the world, engage the receiver in an active process of signification, and "signal" the points upon which alternative possibilities can be imagined and constructed.

My position differs from the theory of the "preferred meaning", as my claim is that the conditions of the "struggle" (or negotiation) cannot be established on the sole basis of the text; they cannot be simply inferred, imagined by the analyst as possible (that is non-contradictory) ways of interpretation, as this will mean to overlook the social horizon, and to fall in the domain of arbitrariness; they cannot be established "a posteriori" either, as generalizations from actual decodings by "real" receivers, because this will create a number of practical problems (how many people? what criteria of selection? in what condition of observation? and so on). The way I have opted for is something in-between, which will not solve all the contradictions of textual analysis, but will make it possible (hopefully) to overcome some of its limits: through a comparative analysis, in fact, I will try to identify, among other things, the actual alternative that compete for the same structural place inside the text and for the same degree of social credibility, in two different social systems. In this respect I am now able to specify the sense in which my analysis will be pragmatic: the possibility of an active approach to advertisements by the

viewers will be indicated by identifying textual sites for the negotiation of meaning (inasmuch as they presuppose a shared social competence). Those sites of social meaning production and of possible "struggle" will not be identified (unlike in traditional textual analysis) on the sole basis of textual elements, but in a comparative framework on the basis of cultural cross-references, which can illuminate the respective unstated premises of the two systems.

In fact each system in a sense "contextualizes" the other, as it allows a wider framework of analysis (from the inner, textual one) that breaks the naturalness of certain representations and queries what from a textual perspective can appear as not problematic and taken for granted.

I will try to justify the legitimacy of this approach throughout this chapter.

AUDIENCE RESPONSE AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MEANING

In an article of 1987 (now in 1989) J. Hartley defines audience provocatively as a "fictional community", discursively, rhetorically, textually defined (p. 241); as a "literally unknowable" entity (p. 233); as a construction both of TV as an institution, and of theoretical conceptualization like in Screen (audience as subject, constructed as textual effect) or in Morley (audience as social subject, constructed by the projection of an empirical method).

Audience in fact is never self-represented ("It is the largest community in the world subjected to "orientalism" 1987:125).

I will not discuss this position, but simply present it, for

indicating the difficulties and contradictions arising when the audience is conceived as a uniform and individual entity: it becomes a "simulacrum", an abstract concept constructed by the analyst as a correlate to the method of analysis. In fact also the different trends in media studies, focused on the active and personalized "appropriation" of media text by the audience (like the "uses and gratifications" perspective) failed in giving reason of the complex social variables that affect the individual "use" of texts.

What I will try to do instead is to identify the textual "sites" that offer a repertoire of forms of representation as well as contents the audience is supposed to share as a "cultural" community: I will call the repertoire resulting from the comparative analysis of advertisement "tellability index".

"Tellability" is a term designating "an important subclass of assertive or representative speech acts" (Pratt, M.L. 1977:136); in order to be "tellable" an assertion must not simply report, but **display** a state of affairs about issues held to be controversial or problematic; hence tellability is synonymous with "display- producing relevance", which means to give the interlocutors "a piece of information which will usefully correct their knowledge and expectations of the world" (ibidem, 135) with regard to particular issues.

Tellable speech acts call attention through shared controversial topics ("in need of experiential and evaluative resolution") and call attention through them using a specific strategy, aimed to involve the interlocutors so as they "share and interpret them collectively" (ibidem:140): display acts tend in fact to produce not only belief, but also "an imaginative

and affective involvement" in the state of affairs represented.

In this respect assertion are both world-describing and world-changing, and the unspoken (as such) but recurrent agenda of topics commonly displayed under the viewer's eyes can be a fairly significant indicator of what, within each cultural system, is considered worthy of interpretation and evaluation.

The comparative analysis can allow the identification of the textual elements upon which the receivers are expected to act, to possess a "social literacy", and that at the same time constitute points of ideological mastering of meaning, and therefore sites of possible struggle and negotiation.

An identification of the differences between two systems of social representation is in my opinion particularly fruitful (even if it certainly is not the only way) for grasping the horizon of social competence apart from which textual structures themselves are not even intelligible.

THE SOCIAL HORIZON OF MEANING

"Meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process, never simply imposed inexorably from above by an omnipotent author through an absolute code. Traditional semiotics likes to assume that the relevant meanings are frozen and fixed in the text itself, to be extracted and decoded by the analyst by reference to a coding system that is impersonal and neutral, and universal for users of the code. Social semiotics cannot assume that texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action, and their effects on the production of meaning." (Hodge-Kress 1988:12)

I completely agree with the statement above although, as I have tried to show, a great deal of difficulties occur when it comes to translate the general idea into a method of inquiry.

How can struggles over meaning as instances of social action

be analyzed? How can the implicit system of reference, the taken-for-granted body of social representations be grasped?

Not, as I have stressed, from a perspective inside the text, as one could not acknowledge the system in which is totally "immersed", and of which it is part; but also an "external" view (by an analyst who does not share the same conventions) could fail to understand the relevance and singularity of specific elements, in lacking a criterion for assessing their value.

One of the ways (certainly not the only one) for discerning at least some aspect of the shared horizon of "topoi" which enables the production/reception/negotiation of meaning, is to compare two different systems of meaning production, in order to grasp the distinctive features that otherwise (in a mere textual analysis) can pass unnoticed.

If any system of social representations is ideological (inasmuch as it does not manifest its partiality), how can we understand the "historicization of the structure", the limits of the social matrix, by simply analyzing the system itself? How can a "limit" be acknowledged as such, being it a relative concept? (limit in respect to which different possibilities?).

A system cannot reveal its characteristics and limits as such, while they can be grasped when the system is compared with a different one. In the case of advertising, for instance, the comparison of two groups of analogous texts (commercial recorded in the same period and in the same scheduling position) from two different countries (Britain and Italy) can allow an insight into the respective distinguishing and common traits.

TEXTUAL PLURALITY AND INTERTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES

"Because meaning is not given, but produced, it follows that different kinds of meaning could be ascribed to the same event. Thus, in order for one meaning to be regularly produced, it has to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself. That involves marginalizing, downgrading or de-legitimizing alternative constructions" (Hall 1982:67).

I agree with Hall, on the condition that the alternative constructions are not justified on the sole basis of a textual analysis.

In my opinion, a comparative analysis makes possible the identification of points of difference (for instance, in advertising, different ways to define the same social situation, or different ways to refer to the same value) which are socially meaningful both in themselves and as "points of plurality" (actually revealed by the intertextual analysis), that is points of possible social cohesion, dissimulation, struggle and negotiation of meanings. They are not simply syntagmatically defined by their internal relationships with the other elements of the text (like in the case of the "preferred meaning"), but rather are paradigmatically identified thanks to the comparative framework of analysis as sites of alternative possibilities, unstated premises, strategies and procedures for winning credibility.

I hope that in this way it will be possible to avoid both textual determinism and absent-mindedness for the social horizon of interpretation.

GOALS, INSTRUMENTS AND PLAN OF THE RESEARCH

My study of TV advertisements is conducted from a sociosemiotic perspective within a comparative framework of

analysis. As for the former aspect, I mainly refer to the work of Halliday (especially 1978) and I am principally interested in the way in which semantic, pragmatic and textual elements mutually influence and define one another. Other scholars (like Vestergaard-Schroeder 1985) have applied some concepts drawn from Halliday's work (like that of "register") to the analysis of advertisements, but not systematically (that is not to all the material under analysis), not with the same purpose and not to TV advertisements.

My assumption (that I have tried to support in the first and second part of my study), is that texts do not straightforwardly "encode" meanings, but rather delimit semantic fields of interpretation, whose identification is also based on pragmatic aspects (like in Schmidt's "semantic by instructions").

As far as pragmatics is concerned, my main (but not exclusive) focus is on the possibilities of interpretation opened (and closed) by the text and on the "activity" of the viewer. The latter does not simply consist of the recognition of a "preferred meanings", but rather involves a cooperative definition of the semantic horizon of the text, and the effort to work out the pragmatic implicature appropriate to the semantic field.

In other words I am not looking for meanings, but for sites (topoi) of meaning production and I do not consider interpretation (or meaning production) as an automatic decoding or as a textual positioning (like in theories of ideology), but rather as an activity for which the viewer has to rely on extratextual elements and constraints (some of them, like the

"topoi" characteristic of a given social system, also bear upon textual production), beside textual instructions.

I am especially interested in the way in which TV advertisements represent social reality (especially interpersonal and group relations) in drawing from a set of visual and verbal "topoi" (which is a less connoted word than "stereotypes").

I do not exclude that individual viewers can totally disregard the aspect of social conventions (for instance by approaching the text "hedonistically"), but it is not my present scope to account for the whole range (if there is a range, and if it can be circumscribed) of interpretive possibilities. I am rather concerned, and this is in my opinion a relevant pragmatic issue, with the relation between text and extra-textual reality, or, better, with the aspect of extra-textual reality consisting of social conventions, metaphors, chief values as they emerge from advertisements.

For exploring this relation to analyze a body of texts, even a sample of texts systematically and rigorously collected (which is not always the case in many analyses of advertising) it is not sufficient, in my opinion. There can be, of course, different methods of analysis aiming to overcome the limitations of a text-bounded analysis (which I have tried to make clear previously): one is, for instance, the "ethnografic" approach adopted by Morley in his study on family television.

The path I intend to follow is different (but not necessarily incompatible) and, as far as I know, unconventional, if only for the accurate and systematic collection of the sample. In fact it is my assumption that to set two homogeneous (as far as collection criteria are concerned) but different (as far as the

social universe represented and addressed is concerned) against one another, it can provide some interesting insights into the respective crucial "topoi", the conventional manners of handling crucial themes for social cohesion, the kind of arguments and values appropriate to certain situations and so on. In other words, in the way textual elements serve to delimit a semantic horizon of reference in respect to which only a limited range of inferences (made on the basis of textual and extratextual competence) result appropriate. This is particularly evident, as I will try to show, in transnational campaigns, where even imperceptible variations between the different versions can reveal (especially when considered in the context of the specificities of the individual countries, as emerged by a previous analysis on national advertising) a great deal about sociocultural specificities.

The comparative framework allows the analysis to be text-based, but not text-bound: texts in fact are not considered as self-contained entities whose meanings can be "extracted" by the interpreter, but on the contrary, are seen as complex entities whose interpretation heavily relies upon extra textual factors. The comparative method is useful, as I have stressed above, for illuminating the aspect of "competence" (which is in a sense the counter-attraction of the "presuppositions" at the productive level); in fact it points to the cluster of "loci communi", stereotypes, ritualized behaviour and the like, advertisements rely on (and reinforce), and that are socially and culturally specific (one could say class specific, age specific, and so on, but the level of my analysis is less particular and

focused instead on national specificities, with particular regard to the broadcasting areas, namely South-East for Britain and North for Italy).

Clearly the comparison requires that certain pertinences are given priority in the analysis of the material (which involves a certain degree of subjectivity and arbitrariness, although lower than in traditional textual analysis). In fact I have singled out a limited number of variables (related to structural, stylistic and content features, as we will see below) to be considered in the two groups of samples.

PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

THE SAMPLE

My comparative analysis of advertisements on television from a sociosemiological perspective is based on a sample of about 5.500 commercials from Britain and Italy, videorecorded during the period from October 1988 up to and including March 1989.

Commercials were recorded in peak time (in both countries around the main evening news); one week for each of the six months was recorded as a sample, the same for the two countries.

The reason why I have opted for evening viewing time is that it is regarded (especially by advertisers) as the most important in the daily schedule, because of the massive presence of an adult audience (the one with the greatest spending power).

I will list below the criteria of collection and the main features (as well as the main limitations) of the sample of British and Italian adverts:

- Because of the difficulties in coordinating the collection of data in the two countries, the weeks chosen as sample differ from month to month, although being the same in the two countries. Here is a list of, them:

- 1 - OCTOBER 1988: from Monday 24 to Sunday 30
- 2 - NOVEMBER 1988: from Monday 21 to Sunday 27
- 3 - DECEMBER 1988: from Monday 12 to Sunday 18
- 4 - JANUARY 1989: from Monday 16 to Sunday 22
- 5 - FEBRUARY 1989: from Monday 6 to Sunday 12
- 6 - MARCH 1989: from Monday 6 to Sunday 12

- All TV channels in Italy carry advertising, but not all of them have been considered: I have mainly focused on two out of the three public service channels, that are RAI 1 (the one with the largest audience in Italy) and RAI 2; RAI 3 has not be taken into account, partly because there is not a different policy of advertising broadcasting among the three public service channels, and partly because of the low audience figures of the third channel (also due to the fact that it is not yet received all over the national territory).

As far as non public channels are concerned (which in Italy are called "private channel", unlike "independent" or "commercial" TV in Britain), I have systematically considered only the most popular among Berlusconi's networks, that is CANALE 5 (which, together with RAI 1, but with lowest audience figures, shares the bulk of the total Italian audience).

I have not considered minor private networks and foreign based channels available in Italian language to the audience of

Northern Italy (like RST, the channel of the Italian Switzerland, or TELEMONTENCARLO).

- Because of the higher number of channels to be considered simultaneously in Italy, the number of advertisements recorded for each channel was lower than in Britain: in Italy in fact only the advertising breaks immediately preceding and following the evening news (scheduled at 8.00 to 8.30 p.m. on RAI 1 and at 7.45 to 8.30 p.m. on RAI2) have been systematically recorded, while preceding and successive commercials were less methodically collected.

As private channels at the time of the recording were not allowed to broadcast news (after the new legislation on TV, the "legge Mammi", after the name of the minister, the situation is different, as we will see in the section on the Italian broadcasting system), CANALE 5 breaks were recorded in the correspondent schedule time, between 8.00 and 9.30 p.m.

As far as Britain is concerned, a more systematic recording routine was possible with there being only two, and with a different schedule for the evening news, channels to be considered. Advertisements on CHANNEL FOUR were recorded from the break preceding the Channel four news at 7 o'clock to a "closing" time which was not precisely established, although it rarely exceeded 9.45 p.m.

As for ITV, I started to record at about 7.45 p.m. (or at the first change of programme after that time) up to the break of 10.15 (being the break of News at Ten regarded as an "advertising oases" by agencies).

Because of the recording procedures the number of spots available for the two countries is uneven (about 2.400 for Italy

and 3.100 for Britain). But given the inescapable cultural distance, I considered it more important to have an accurate representation of the British advertising scenario, the one less familiar to me. That's why I personally recorded the British material, while having the Italian one recorded, rather than the other way around.

Nevertheless I reckon that the existing limitations (mainly due to the objective difficulties of coordinating the recording procedures) do not affect too heavily the validity of the material and the workability of reliable findings, as quantitative results have been calculated as a percentage of the total number of commercials for the same week in the same country.

THREE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

The research is structured according to three phases: the first is more general and aims to provide a "context" for the more detailed textual (and intertextual) analysis carried out in the other two.

A) THE WORLD OF GOODS

In this part of the analysis the percentages of the main goods and services advertised in the two countries are compared, as well as other elements that can be relevant to my general framework of analysis, among which: recurrent associations of products and social situations; possibility of identifying signals of a "periodicity of consumption" which in turn can be related to social patterns of life organization; absence or

cautious presentation of delicate subject matters, that can be a sign either of crucial "topoi" in a given social system, or of a system of regulation that draws upon social conventions about what is "acceptable" on TV, and in which ways and so on.

The method of analysis in this first part is based on the calculation as a percentage of the main categories of goods and services (which I will specify later) in the six months considered, and the comparison of the quantitative findings on the light of general considerations based on the vision of the material. For each spot the day of broadcasting and the schedule time have been listed. I have not even attempted a more rigorous form of coding, given the number of spots, and my considerations are not fully systematic (they are in a way in-between statistical and interpretive approaches), principally because in my global project this phase is rather a preliminary than a stage of the analysis: too often, in fact, the study of advertisements totally neglects the context of the "discourse" they are part of, and apart of which they can hardly been fully understood (my aim of course is not to be exhaustive, yet I hope to overcome, or to show how it is possible to overcome, some of the limitation of the traditional textual analysis).

B) THE CASE OF CAR ADVERTISEMENTS

In this part of the research a more rigorous methodology is used to inquiry in depth the way in which semantic, textual and pragmatic aspect intersect in a specific sector of advertisements.

All examples of car adverts (49 for Italian TV, 32 for British TV) in the two countries (excluding repeats) have been considered

and submitted to three levels of coding:

- full transcription of each advert.
- coding of each advert according to a prearranged schedule including a number of variables related to structure, content, kind of argument and other features which I have assumed to be relevant to the global perspective, like interactional and intertextual elements. (see below for a full discussion of each variable).
- listing of all variables and all adverts (of both countries) in a unique catalogue, so as to evaluate more easily similarities, differences, recurrent patterns of elements and so on (reported in the Appendix).

The method I have used is a combination of quantitative and qualitative, structural and content analysis, with particular regard to the communication-action-games (or textual speech acts) represented by the text and/or engaged with the viewer. As far as social relations are concerned, I have found that the study of car adverts allows an insight into the crucial issue of gender representation, not only for the contents featured, but also for the kinds of "logic" involved and for the recurrent association of certain structural features (like colour or music, for instance) with the concepts of "masculinity" and "femininity". I have tried, on the basis of the coded material, to identify the recurrent patterns of content organization in each country, and then to compare the main findings so as to test their nationally-specific vs sovran-national value.

The risk of a self-contained approach to textuality is (at least in the intentions) avoided by the reference to a number of

extra-textual elements, mainly the interactional (considered not only as a relation among characters within the text, but also as a relation the text engages in with the viewer, in the form of direct address or other strategies of more or less explicit involvement), the intertextual (many adverts refer to the output of other media, either in the aural or in the visual track) and the international (many adverts present sovran-national elements, either for the setting, or the language, or the agency creating the spot and so on; the different forms of transnationality have been discussed in the third stage of the empirical analysis).

C) THE FORMS OF TRANSNATIONALITY

Given the simultaneous existence of two opposite trends in advertising, that is toward a worldwide audience and toward segmented and specific targets, I have found interesting, in the perspective of my research, to see how "general" and "particular", "universal" and "individual", national and sovran-national elements combine in advertisements featuring "transnational" characters: more specifically, I have distinguished between transnational campaigns (broadcast with minor variations in the two countries), multi-domestic campaigns (advertisements for the same product presenting different strategies in the two countries) and national campaigns presenting transnational aspects (either authorities, or settings, or foreign speech and so on).

I have used the method of full transcription for transnational campaigns, in order to see how subtle textual variations (inescapable when translations occur) can affect the definition of the semantic horizon of the text, and then change the

pragmatic conditions of interpretation.

Multi-domestic adverts have shown their relevance for one aspect in particular: in fact they usually associate the same values to the same product, and emphasize the same characteristics, but with different textual strategies, tailored to the (real or supposed) characters of the single national markets.

The study of national adverts carrying transnational elements, eventually, makes it possible to gain an insight into some of the stereotypes advertising draws upon.

While all transnational car adverts have been considered, for the sake of brevity only few samples have been selected of transnational adverts for other kinds of goods; the criterion for the selection has been the significance of the spots for my perspective, either for the great investments and the number of broadcasting countries (like Gillette campaign) or for the frequencies of repeats (like Sheba cat food and Jif cleansing).

The method I have followed is full transcription and comparison of advertisements, in order to identify the textual elements which can be "sites" of semantic variations and conditions of different interpretations.

It is worth repeating that I assume that advertisements are referential, inasmuch as they both represent (not necessarily in a realistic or explicit way) a social reality and address it, in constructing a discourse that draws upon a repertoire of social representations of reality.

Even if the core of the research consists of the second and third stages of the empirical analysis, I believe that also the other considerations are useful, in a perspective aiming to

preserve a good degree of circularity between textual and non textual ("contextual") aspects. In fact the three phases of the analysis are not separable, and only in their relation they can provide, hopefully, an original contribution to the study of advertising on TV. Moreover, in the attempt to contextualize the analysis rather than to hypostatize texts, some considerations on "the context of advertising discourse" can be found in Appendix 1, providing some basic information both on the system of broadcasting in the two countries (with regard to advertising norms and regulation) and on the main approaches to the use of goods (theories of consumption).

AN OUTLINE OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS

I have already questioned and provided at least some arguments against many of the most common approaches to the media output, including (and especially) advertising: from the total "arbitrariness" of the link between signs and meaning to its supposed "mirroring" character; from the reduction of the textual sense to the "retrieval" of the deep structure (a structure which is already "there", before and apart any instance of interpretation) to the post-modern subjective "bricolage" with the textual elements ; from the self-containing character of the text, which offers its meaning to anyone who can find the "key" (or code) to enter it, to the hard-line pragmatism that confines the meaning to the particular situation of use (as if all the meaning were "outside" the text).

As many authors have recognized a shift has to be realized

away from the traditional trend of textual analysis,

"because textual analysis and textual theory have traditionally concentrated on recovering from the depth of the text the final, 'true', ideological, latent meaning. Textual analysis has concentrated on the forces of closure within the text, the forces of homogenization." (Fiske 1989:31)

The tyranny of the text, which "positions" the receiver and drives him along a pre-arranged path, is neither so inescapable as to become part of the textual "nature", nor so discretionary as to denote a conspiracy against the audience : as Stuart Hall himself recently recognized, the "manipulation" theory has to be overcome, as it underestimates the role of the people who consume and enjoy "commercial" culture:

"That judgement may make us feel right, decent and self-satisfied about our denunciations of the agents of mass manipulation and deception - the capitalist cultural industries: but I don't know that this is a view which can survive for long as an adequate account of cultural relationships; and even less as a socialist perspective on the culture and nature of the working class. Ultimately, the notion of the people as a purely passive, outline force is a deeply unsocialist perspective" (1981:23).

Moreover, both the supporters of the "natural" character of the textual structure and of its "hegemonic" role have contributed, in my opinion, to widen the gap between the text as an object and the subject receiver, in confining the latter to a subordinate role.

The different attempts to fill that gap, stemming from different disciplines like semiotics, sociology, rhetoric, aesthetic of reception, literary criticism (only to mention some of the most relevant), ended in fact with splitting apart the subjective and objective pole, by legitimizing a definition of both which already excludes any integration. On the one hand, there are the multiple versions of the so called "theory of

reception" (which includes reader-response criticism, literary criticism, aesthetic of reception and other branches of -mainly-literary theory), 1 in which the interpreting subject is "active", yet this activity is hedged in by the interplay of explicit and implicit, of "filled" and "blank" spaces, which is already and completely arranged by the "author" (whether real or "model": here the focus is on the interpreting subject rather than on the textual object, but the textual supremacy is not really questioned). On the other hand, there are the different positions that see the source of meaning exclusively within the receiver. On this side can be grouped the theories of the individual "use" of the text as an object, either in terms of satisfaction of needs (of identification, distraction and so on), or of pleasure-seeking (text as a "menu" out of which different people select different meanings and pleasures).

I am not entirely sympathetic with the theories of "semiotic resistance" either, like Hartley's and Fiske's, as I do not see how it can translate into social resistance rather than simply generating a "simulated" getaway (confined to the sphere of "synthetic experience" that surrogates, rather than influence, the real one). 2

Moreover theory is impossible, once the text is conceived as an "open" object, whose meaning totally lies in the subjective resonance it can determine in the receiver.

The alternative between total determination and absolute indeterminacy seems the only one available, in my opinion, when the referential dimension of the text (especially advertisements, as I have already stressed) is removed, as in structuralist and

subjectivist theories.

Even if the reduction operated by structuralists to the "formal" aspect of the system was useful for the overcoming of the "naive" realism of the one-to-one correspondence between signs and reality, it nevertheless has to be dropped in turn in the direction, I suggest, of a critical rehabilitation of the referential level (especially given that TV texts, and advertisements in particular, are to a great extent part of the "real" experience of everyone; moreover they are perceived as in a way "realistic", even if it is a matter of "commercial realism", as Goffman has put it).

What does "critic realism" mean?

First of all, in a "negative" sense, it means to avoid the mirroring metaphors and the rhetoric of transparent correspondences, still linked to the "myth" of demiurgic power of the code (which I have tried to define instead as an interface between linguistic and social systems, a set of negotiable rules rather than a system of laws), and to the utopia of an "exact" decoding process (whether the determinant structure is textual or social).

On the other side, positively, it means to shift the focus from the search for the "dominant" element (whether textual, that constitutes the reality, or real, that is mirrored in the text) to the mutual definitions and implications of the semantic level (the horizon of meanings) and of the pragmatic one (the context in which signs are exchanged), instead of thinking of them as mutually exclusive (which is less theorized than practically applied as method of analysis): a text is neither a self-contained object that entails all the meanings (the "dictionary

fallacy" which hypostatizes the semantic horizon of the text, as Pateman 1983 describes it), neither the mere reflection of a completely meaningful reality (the naive semanticism that can be easily exploited for ideological purposes), nor a pure instrument that can be used for whatever purpose in whatever way, which main character is effectiveness (the pragmatism that equates textual meaning and communicative success, or the individualistic "hedonism" that reduces reception to consumption and diversion).

Textual determinism or unpredictable "multiaccentuality" are not the sole possibilities.

One could paraphrase the Peircian definition of sign in order to characterize the nature and work of the text (which is a preliminary operation to any analytical procedure): the text represents something (semantic-referential level), for somebody (pragmatic-communicative level), under certain aspects (reference is not a specular process, but is mediated and constructed by the discourse).

The text constructs a world that becomes part of our world, drawing upon a repertoire of conventions, of other texts, of beliefs, of discourses (and not only of an underlying reality).

But conventions, other texts and beliefs are not a mere play of signifiers; they rather constitute stages and trials of the relation between man and world, or, better, an "equipment for living", a store of knowledge and a wealth to rely on in dealing with physical and social reality.

At the same time the text constructs a world (by selecting a range of elements within a wider paradigm of possibilities) and a way to perceive the world, in creating a series of perceptive

habits, of frames, of visual and linguistic competence that turn into expectations to be raised not only by texts, but also by the everyday experience.

Texts do not refer exclusively to themselves, nor to a "state of fact".

Texts do not mask the emptiness, they are not exhausted by their use. They do not refer immediately to a reality and the reality they refer to is neither unique nor uniform. A text constructs a discourse on reality drawing from other discourses and becomes in turn part of the repertory thanks to which the interaction with reality (physical as well as social) takes place.

Then some concepts borrowed from philosophy of language, sociolinguistics, literary criticism can be fruitful: concepts like "tellability", "display", "communication-action-game" all make sense in a sociosemiotic perspective, in which the relations and mutual implications of textual-conversational, social-relational and semantic-referential levels are at stake.

Advertisements can be considered, as Goffman put it, "display-texts" par excellence, where display (a term that Goffman mutates from the ethological approach to communication) designates a communicative act that provides a highly readable image of the situation, so as to make available to the actors of the interaction some evidences for establishing, at least tentatively, the terms of the relationship. (1979:1)

Because of this character of immediate readability, display acts involve the use of stylization (or "hyper-ritualization") which foster stereotypes and conventional portraits.

It is worth stressing, in my opinion, that such a textual

modality is not "per se" representative of the social reality it depicts (in which case it would have been highly limiting) but the intent is rather communicative: in fact it does not refer to a reality, but to a speech act that employs a simplified version of reality in order to favour the interaction (that is: the semantic aspect of content is structured according to a pragmatic purpose, and only can be weighed against it). Textual meanings are negotiated on the basis of evidence progressively made available in the course of interaction about the alignment of social actors to the communicative situation.

Linked to that of "display" is the concept of "tellability", a term stemming from the sociolinguistic tradition (see Labov 1972), and developed in the analysis of speech acts from different perspectives (see Pratt 1977).

The core of tellability, as we have seen, is the production of relevance through display, or exhibition of evidence (different indicators of tellability can be identified in the text, from exclamation marks to visual hyperboles, from prosodic elements to adverbs like "absolutely" etc).

L. Pratt singles out a further character of the concept of display (as production of textual relevance), that, in my opinion, integrates Goffman's perspective: even if it is true, as Goffman says, that in order to be highly readable a text (or an image) has to be simple and conventional, it is also true that the first character of "tellability" (unlike "assertibility", which only requires non obviousness and hearer's interest) is a request for attention, a claim of relevance:

"Assertions whose relevance is tellability must represent states

of affairs that are held to be unusual, contrary to expectations, or otherwise problematic (...). In making an assertion whose relevance is tellability, a speaker is not only reporting but also verbally **displaying** a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it. His point is to produce in his hearer not only beliefs, but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing and an evaluative stance toward it. (...) Ultimately, it would seem, what he is after is an **interpretation** of the problematic event, an assignment of meaning and value supported by the consensus of himself and his hearers" (1977:136).

The communicative exhibition that constitutes a "display", and the request for attention that it entails, do have a pragmatic effect, as they urge for a hearer's (or viewer's) response in terms of evaluation, interpretation, assignment of meaning and value.

Then the hyper-simplified description have less a representative (semantic) function than a communicative (pragmatic) one: the richness of the text depends on extratextual elements (socially specific repertoires of images, themes, forms of expression used to deal with the complexity of reality and human relations) at least as much as on the textual ones. In other words, stylization and even stereotypes are not necessarily symptoms of reductionism (if one does not confine the textual value to the semantic level), but can be signals of more complex communicative processes, which the text does not exhaust.

Texts, in this perspective, are neither pure representations (which cancel out in their referring function), nor pure instruments (which unique function is to reach a strategic goal), but complex mechanisms through which relevance is ascribed to certain aspects of reality, in view of a communicative interaction, within a socially specific situation.

The "content" of the text (its semantic horizon) can have less

a representative function than have a value as, say, signal for establishing membership and exclusion, or boundaries between social groups (a pragmatic function).

On the other side, the "textual" (formal) elements can have a semantic value, inasmuch as they "tell" something about the perspective from which reality is approached, and also a pragmatic value, as they establish, at least tentatively, the terms of interaction with the receivers.

In trying to keep in focus the presence and mutual interaction of the textual, representative and pragmatical elements I have set up a grid (comprehensive even if not exhaustive) for the analysis of "hyper-hyperritualized" texts like TV advertisements (see p.284) which I have applied systematically to car advertisements (Ch. 9) and used to make some cross-cultural considerations about the whole range of goods and services advertised in the period from October 1988 up to and including March 1989.

CHAPTER 8: THE GOODS AND THE WORLD: MAIN CATEGORIES OF GOODS AND FORMS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATION.

As I have already stressed in the first theoretical part of this work, the aim of my textual analysis is neither to find the "meaning" of advertisements, nor to "discover" the textual structures that produce signification. I would like to avoid what Pateman 1983 calls "dictionary fallacy", that is the assumption that all meanings are in the text.

My intention is rather to carry on an examination which, although text-based, is not text-bound, and which adopts a pragmatic rather than semantic framework (the limitations of a purely structural approach, the most widely used in the analysis of advertisements, have been already outlined, as well as the different character of the two approaches in the two countries considered).

Inasmuch as pragmatics, as we have seen, is a "passe-partout" term, I will focus especially on two components of the pragmatic approach, namely **activity** (of the receiver) and **context**: both of them, and the latter in particular, need a further specification.

As for the first, I assume that any instance of textual interpretation is not simply a semiotic work (that identifies the inner, "objective", meaningful structure of the text as an object) but also, and especially, a piece of social action (which involves competence, occurs in a particular spatial and temporal situation, establishes relations with other texts, activates specific codes and conventions and so on).

I will focus particularly on three levels of social action, which I hope to be able to bring to the fore:

- The social action "represented" in the adverts in the form of activity-games and heavily conventional and stereotypical scenes of social dealings (display, ritualized acts).
- the social action "requested" by the adverts, in order to make sense of the audiovisual elements, that is the capacity of recalling (or building, or modifying) the appropriate social competence (I can call this process, following Schmidt, "semantics by instructions"); in the case of product adverts (but also for image adverts, as we will see) there is also a "performative" component, that is the attempt to produce socially relevant effects (for example, to reinforce styles of life in which certain products appear as desirable or indispensable).
- The recognition of (or new competence about) socially shared frames and conventions that the comparative approach brings to the fore. In fact the comparative framework makes it possible to recognize both the differences between the two systems, and the conventional character of the representations within each system, as the obviousness and naturalness of typical representations is problematized.

As meaning, I assume, is not entailed by textual elements, but rather implicated and constructed out of them (which has, in Gricean terms, both a conventional and a conversational aspect), texts do not "have" a unique meaning, but rather "mean", can produce meaning (and different meanings).

Yet advertisements are purposive texts, constructed so as to achieve the maximum communicative impact, and the greatest effectiveness; they therefore tend to conjugate, for instance, novelty (to catch the attention) and stereotypes (to facilitate comprehension).

One of my goals is to specify some of the elements that play some role in the disambiguation of advertisements, that is those elements which offer themselves with particular emphasis (or relevance) as bricks out of which the sense of adverts can be constructed (relevance resulting from the comparison rather than from textual elements).

I also believe that the search for the relevant contextual elements is not independent from the texts considered (as each text in some way constructs its context while referring to it): the comparative framework constructs in turns a context for understanding and evaluating the relevance of textual elements.

My approach does not contemplate a study of the "ethnographic context", that is an analysis of patterns of consumption in specific situations by specific social groups (like Morley's), yet it does not exclude it, as it is complementary rather than alternative.

I do not examine the "production context" either, that is the point of view of agencies, and their statements about the social role of advertising: this is another "text", which has indeed some effects (I can call them "paratextual" effects, as they can provide elements for improving the effectiveness of the messages). I have mainly considered second hand information on this respect, that is the point of view of agencies (only for some important or controversial campaigns) as it is reported by specialized magazines like Campaign.

My analysis of TV advertisements is essentially text-based although, as I have already stressed, not text-bound: in order to avoid an abstract and synchronic approach to adverts I have opted

for a comparative framework and for a sample collected during a relatively long period. I have also focused on different levels of textual implication (related to both textual and extra-textual aspects), which have something to do with the construction of the context, namely:

- SOCIAL CONTENT: Activity games and socially relevant/recurrent situations represented in the commercials. Some of them can also be considered as a sort of code of etiquette and good manners about how to behave, to dress, to deal with people in specific social situations (considered, as Goffman put it, as "arenas of mutual monitoring").

- INTERACTIVITY: communication-action-games between the text and the viewer (direct address, strategies of involvement, "tenor" in Halliday).

- COTEXTUALITY: The advertising discourse as a whole as relevant to the interpretation of textual elements (see Pateman 1983); the relation (when it is the case) between several advertisements in a "series", that is a sort of macro-text.

- TEMPORALITY: the relation between periodicity of advertisements and periodicity of consumption (that is organization of social life); the frequency of presentation of certain goods and services and the relation with their value (or, in Douglas' terms, their "identification potential").

- INTERTEXTUALITY: Significant references to well known texts of the same (or different) medium and culture.

- CULTURAL CONTEXTUALITY: Cross-cultural comparative evidence of differences and similarities in social representations and of the conventional character of specific and recurrent representations.

All these elements are systematically identified in the

analysis of car advertisements (ch.9), yet provide a broad frame of reference for the considerations of this chapter as well.

THE CATEGORIES OF GOODS

Among the most frequently recurring (and most significant in my perspective) categories of goods and services in the recorded material I have selected 16 different items, identical for the two countries.

Most of them are related to products, but there is also a good proportion of non-product advertisements, from services to image adverts and government issues.

Some of the categories are actually relevant for only one of the two countries: for instance "Financial Services" adverts are recurrent in the British sample, but examples hardly occur in the Italian one. Nevertheless I estimated that a case like this is worth being considered at this stage of the analysis, because it can tell something about differences between the two advertising discourses and the social reality represented and addressed.

There are other categories, like computers, which rarely appear either in U.K. or in Italy (although in the U.K. more frequently than in Italy). Their presence has yet been outlined as they are assumed to be significant as far as the popularization of new technologies and instrument to a mass audience is concerned.

Other categories have been singled out that are not particularly common in both countries, yet represent a particular form of advertising, as far as the transmitter of the message is

concerned. I outlined the presence of those "different" practices of advertising as significant inasmuch as they depart from the standard trend, and can be significant of patterns of social organization.

Here is a list of all the categories, with a brief description for each of them and with some examples:

- FOOD: any raw, frozen, ready to use ingredient; prepared meals; biscuits and cakes; confectionery; canned food; cereals.
- ANIMAL FOOD: domestic animal's food, either canned or dried.
- DRINK: any liquid beverage. We distinguishes 4 subclasses:
 - Alcoholic: wine, and spirits (whisky, brandy, sherry)
 - Soft Drink: alcohol free wine ; fizzy drinks; mineral water; instant drink; herbal drinks including tea.
 - Coffee: either instant or ground.
 - Beer: including alcohol free.
- TOILETRY: any item for personal body care and hygiene, from toothpaste to soap, shampoo, deodorants, aftershaves; baby disposable nappies ; electric items like shavers and hair removers.
- COSMETICS: any item for enhancing (mainly female) beauty and charm, including perfumes.
- CLEANSING: any cleansing agent either for the house or for hand washing, for dishes, washing machine and dishwasher powder.

-DOMESTIC DURABLES: any item suitable for home and garden maintenance and improving: furniture, home decoration items, tools, electric appliances (washing machines, microwaves, drills and the like).

- CARS

- VIDEO-TV: any item related to the reception and production of images on the small screen, from TV set to VCR and videocameras.

- COMPUTER

- FINANCIAL SERVICES: any offer of assistance and benefit related to money saving or investing: bank account, credit cards, insurances, pensions, mortgages, shares.

- PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICES: any service available to every citizen for improving his/her standard of life. It is public as far as the users are concerned, while it can be either public or private in its management. We distinguished 3 subclasses:

- transport: trains; aircrafts; ferries; travel companies

- telecommunications: telephone; video services (Oracle, Televideo); satellite TV

- facilities: water, gas, electricity.

- CORPORATE: adverts designed to reinforce or modify a firm or brand image, or to make clear its position in respect to a particular issue; attempts by transnational corporations of creating a national image (Shell, Esso) or viceversa (ICI).

- ASSOCIATE: adverts in which a product (rather than a brand) is advertised by a consortium of national producers (british beef; butter; Italian citrus fruits and wine). It can' also be the case for a country by different categories linked to the common tourist business (eg. Australia).
- COLLECTIVE: any case in which more than one sponsor is present (or SHARED) for each commercial (eg: Persil + Hot Point)
- GOVERNMENT: any issue of the government including:
 - warnings (drinking and driving; anti drug and AIDS)
 - information about employment or services (Employment Training, Benefits)
 - enhancement of government departments and bodies (eg: DTI)

Some categories of goods present in the sample are not represented here. Among them: the press (newspapers, magazines, books, weekly issues); there was a significant amount of this kind of adverts, which represent the bulk of the goods in the category "others". As the quantity was roughly the same for the two countries, I did not report the data in more details; toys and games; cameras; car related items (oil, clearing agents); specific gift items; clothes and jeans; shoes; batteries; drugs.

All these categories have been coded as "others" in order to avoid a huge number of items and to favour, when possible, a concise presentation at the descriptive level; I can also say, after the examination of the whole of the recorded material, that the final considerations of the analysis are supported, rather

than questioned by the categories of adverts I do not describe here.

The percentage of the occurrences of each category has been calculated for each week and each country in relation to the global number of commercials for that week, followed by a global synopsis covering all the period considered.

I realized during the coding phase that some of the categories are less straightforward than they can at first sight appear, like, for instance, the distinction between toiletry and cosmetic items. I held as a criterion for the distinction the difference between cleanliness (which is in any case a social and cultural category, as it includes some unnecessary but routinized practices like the use of deodorants and aftershaves) and appeal, self-enhancement: whereas in the first case the human body is in a sense "asepticized" (unwanted odour, hairs, etc. are removed), in the second elements are "added" so as to make it more attractive. A further difference, less arbitrarily established, lies in the cost of the items in the two categories: toiletry items are usually cheap (even if some of the electric appliances are not), whereas cosmetics are expensive. There is also a difference in the place where they are bought: toiletry items are usually found in supermarkets, whereas cosmetics in selected stores.

The greatest amount of semantic ambiguities lies probably in the non-product sector, especially when it comes to establish clear cut boundaries between categories which actually overlap. I will try to make clear the criteria I have used for the distinction, criteria that although in a way arbitrary, can allow an intersubjective reading and interpretation of findings once

they become explicit.

As far as **financial services** are concerned, for instance, I found some cases of overlapping with the category I have labelled **government**, one classic example being the offer of shares in sector of the British industry shifting from public to private management (like British Steel). The criterion I used was to classify every occurrence of the circumstance "share" under the voice **financial services** (being the focus of the advert on the "investment" made by the addressee rather than on the origin of the enterprise).

Another case of ambivalence can be found in the category I have named **public utility services**, for a similar reason: as far as "facilities" (water, gas, electricity) and some sector of "transport" (namely train) are concerned, in fact, the adverts were mainly aiming at increasing the awareness and the utility of the service (a "public" one, formerly dependent from the government) in view of its planned privatization. But in the transport section travel agencies are also included, which are private enterprises. Moreover I have found manifold examples of pre-privatization campaigns in the mentioned sectors, which bear no reference to the successive step, the appliance for shares. In all these cases I have classified the adverts according to their "content" rather than their source.

On the contrary, services made available by the government to specific segment of the population (like the "Employment Training" scheme) have being coded as **government**.

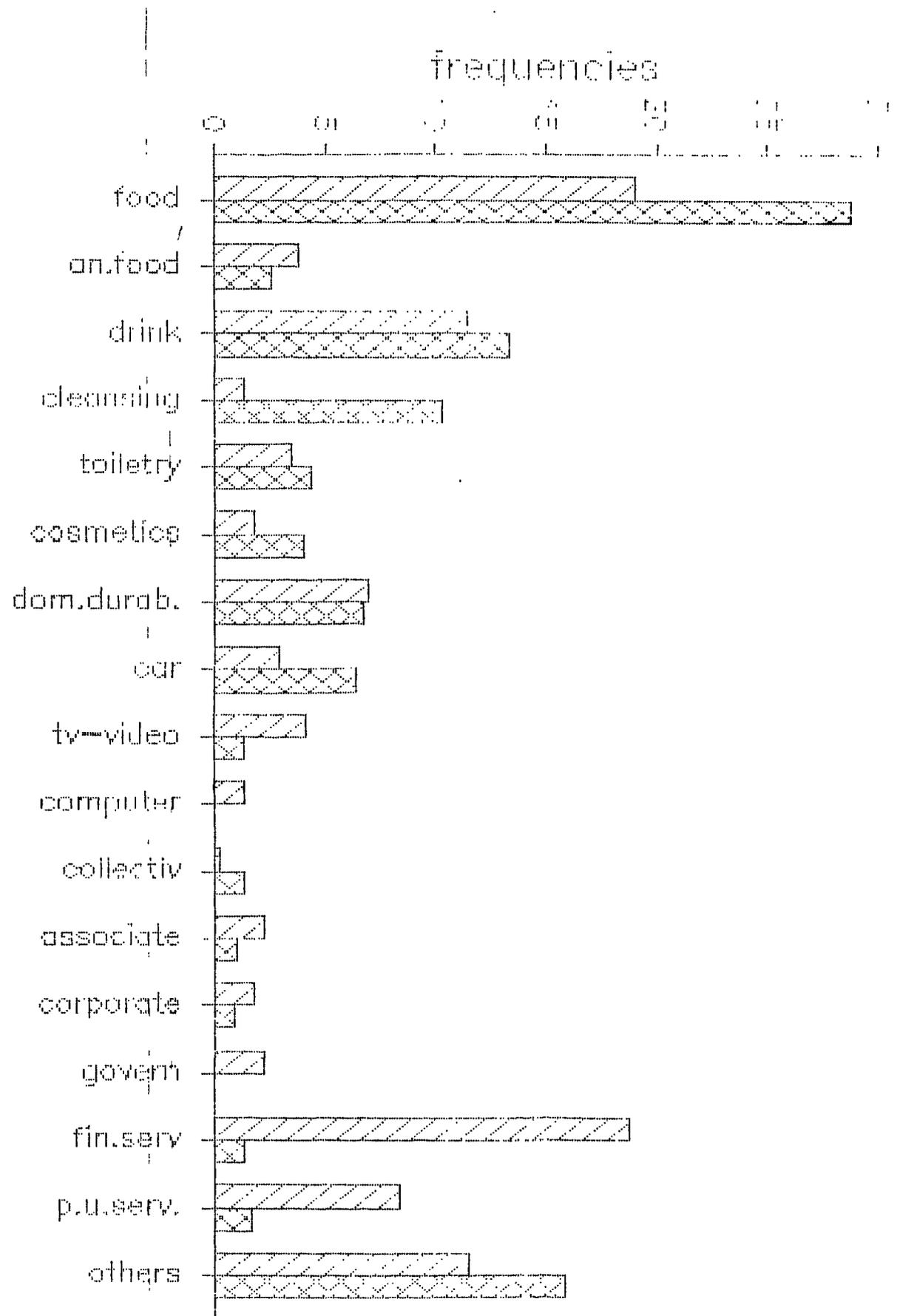
Even if **corporate** advertising is a relatively unambiguous term (for a definition see Sinclair 1987:2-3), I have found this

category occasionally overlapping with **government**, inasmuch as particular bodies and department of the government were given a "corporate" image. In this case I adopted as a criterion the origin of the message, and I defined as **corporate** the advertisements stemming from private companies and multinational, whereas the other were classified under **government** .

One case of overlapping was found between the categories **corporate** and **car**, namely a corporate commercial for Vauxhall showing no cars but presenting instead the company's concern and commitment towards environmental issues. The advert was coded as **corporate**, but was taken into account in the analysis of car adverts in Chapter 9 .

The quantitative results, calculated in percentage, for each of the six months of our sample in both UK and Italy are represented by the histograms below:

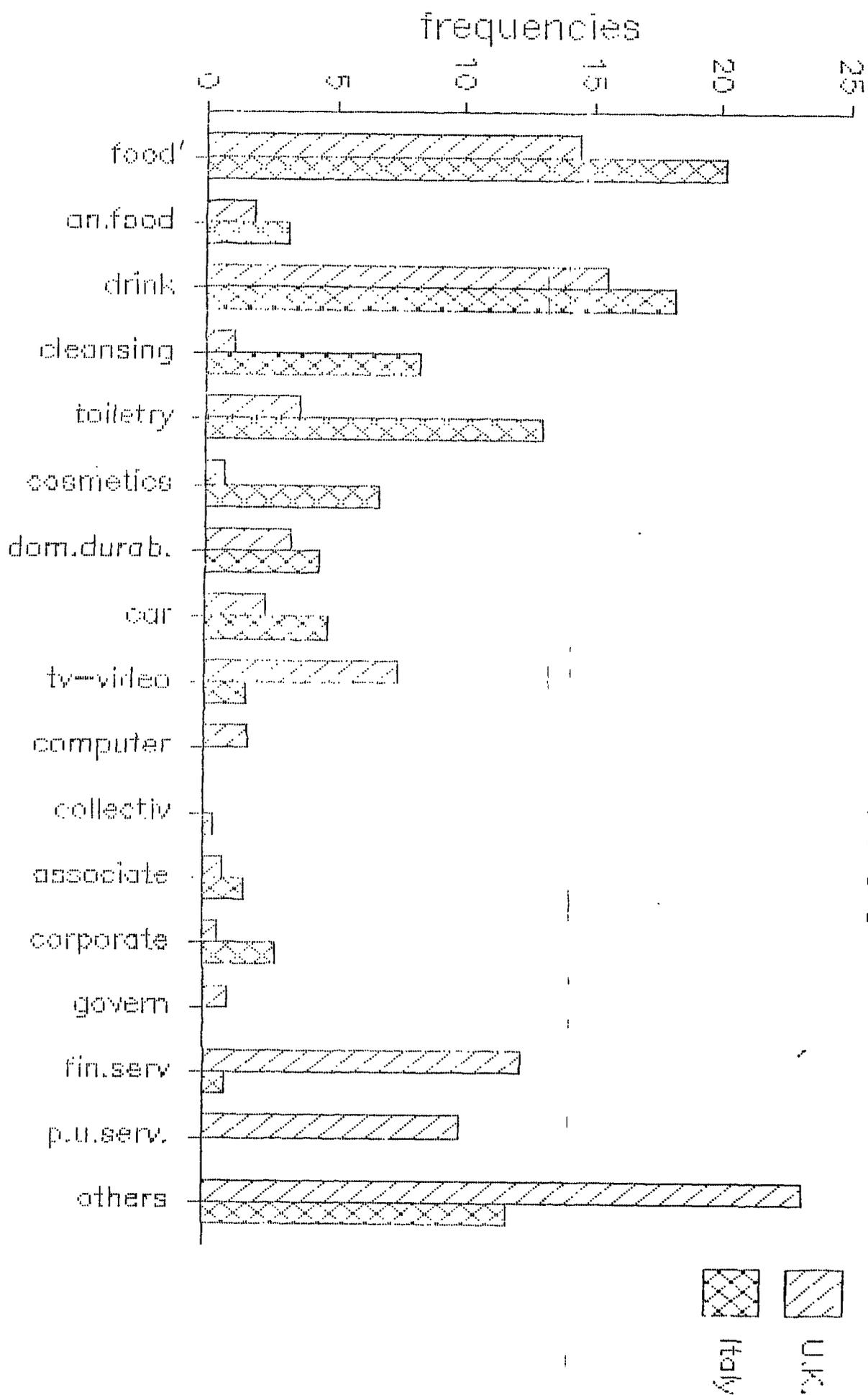
Goods and services



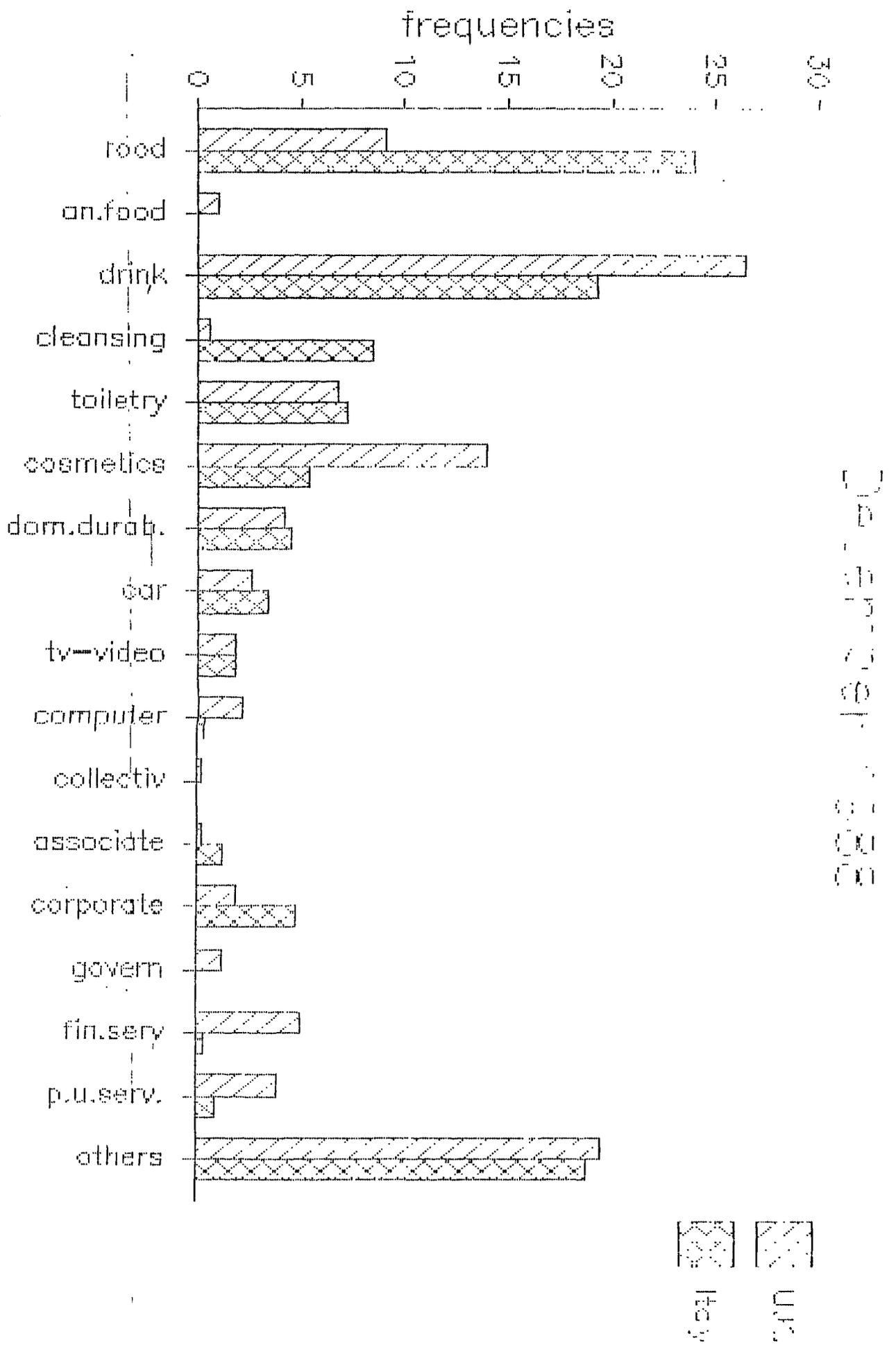
0
1
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3
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10

11111
11111

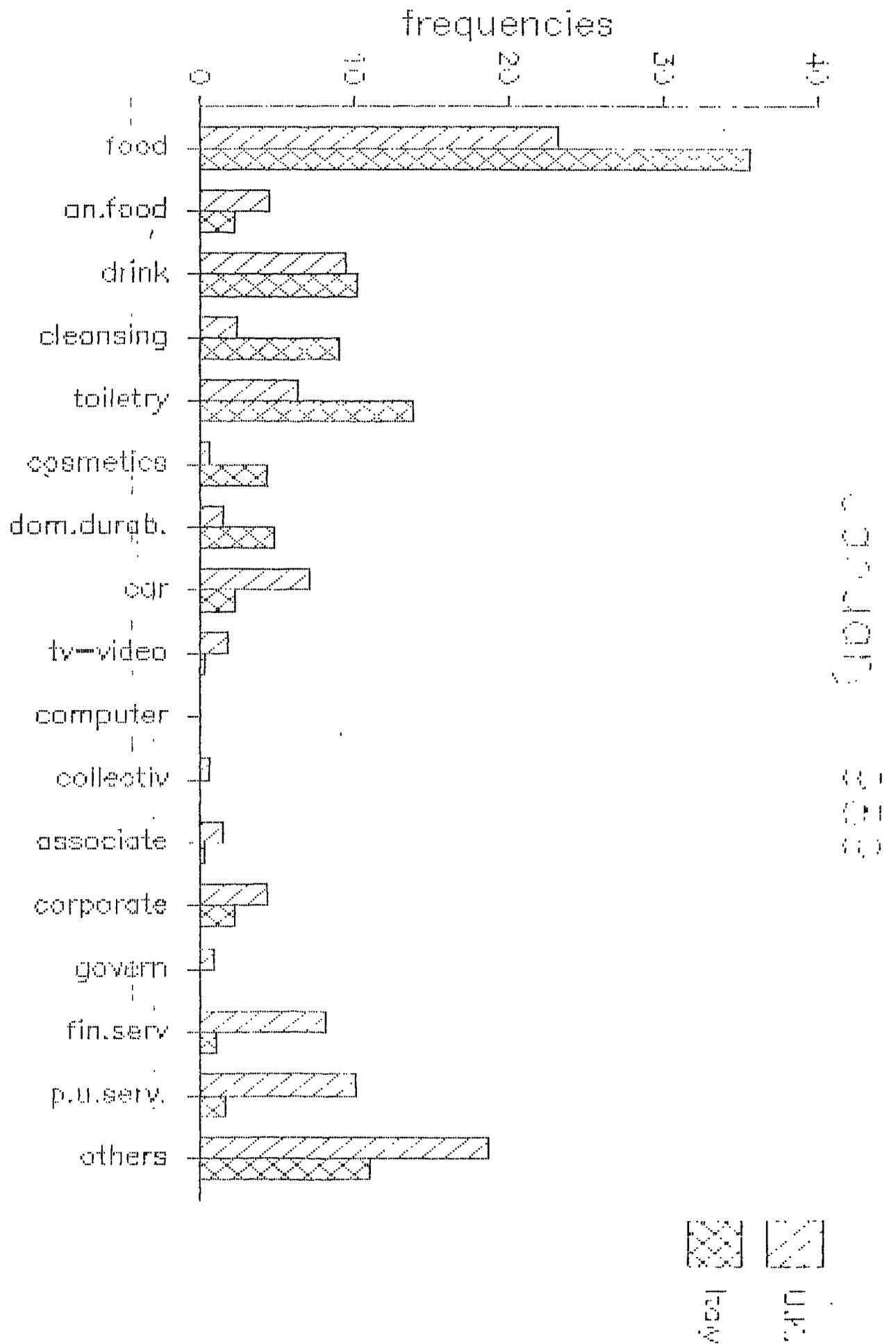
November 1988

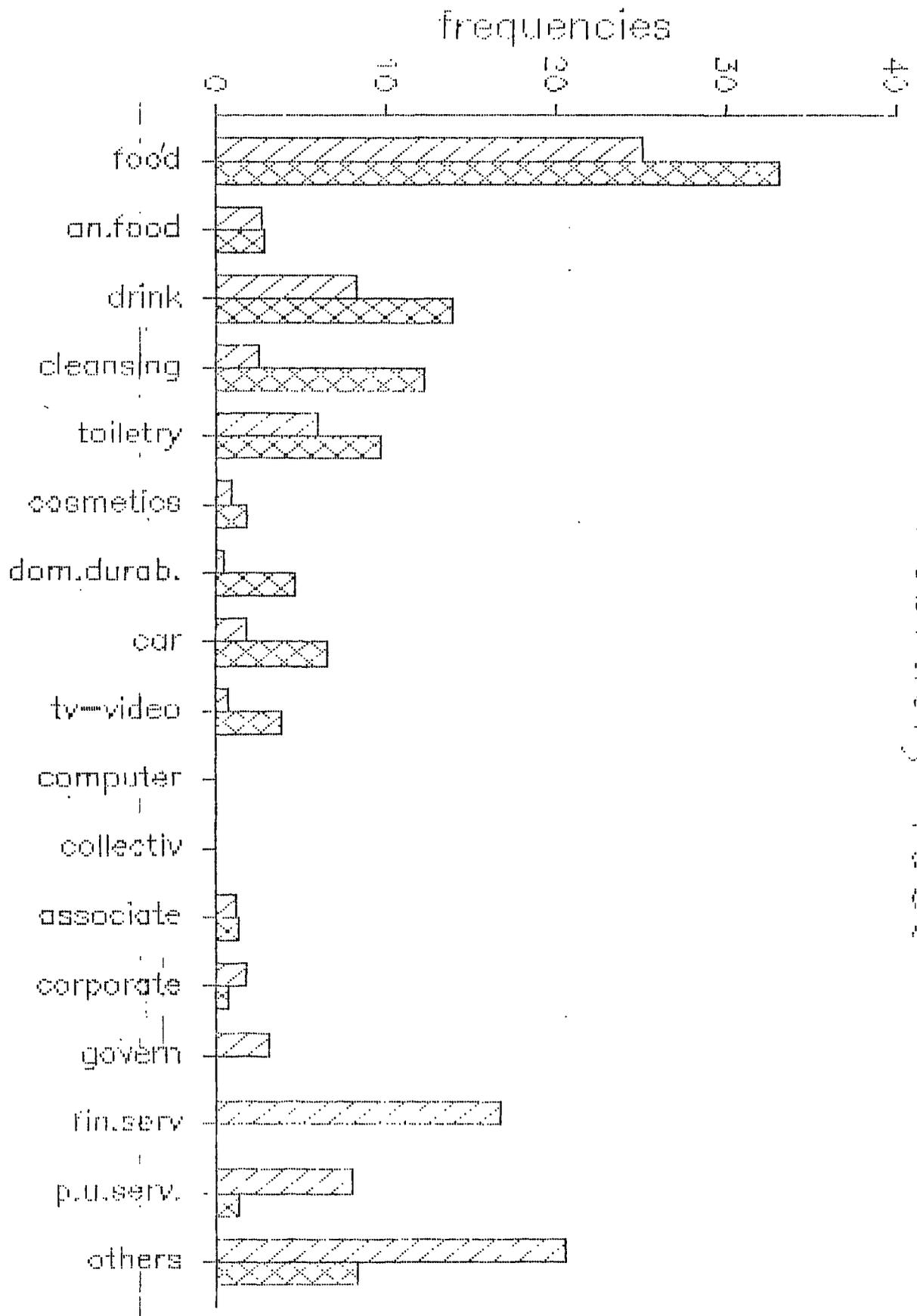


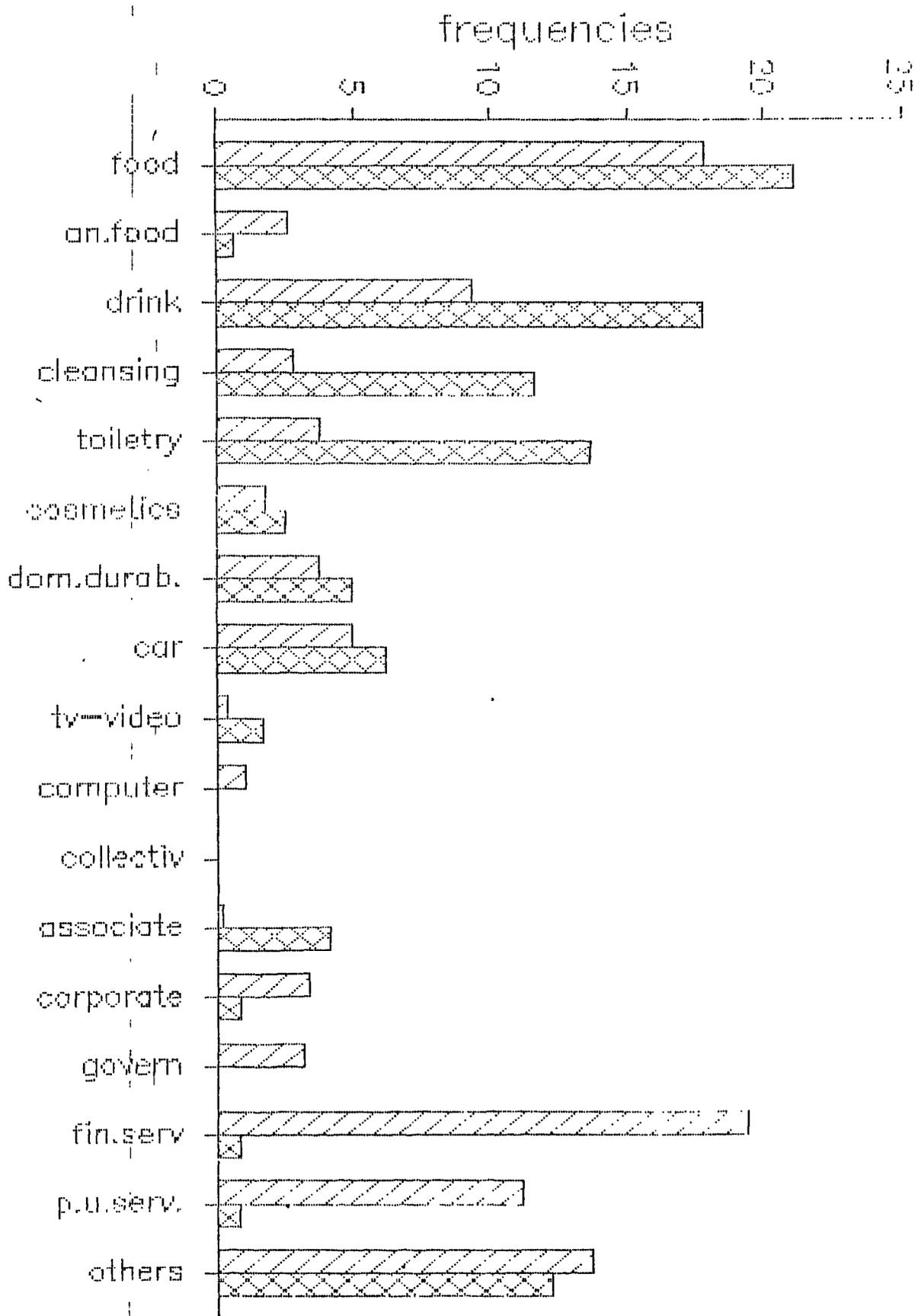
Goods and services

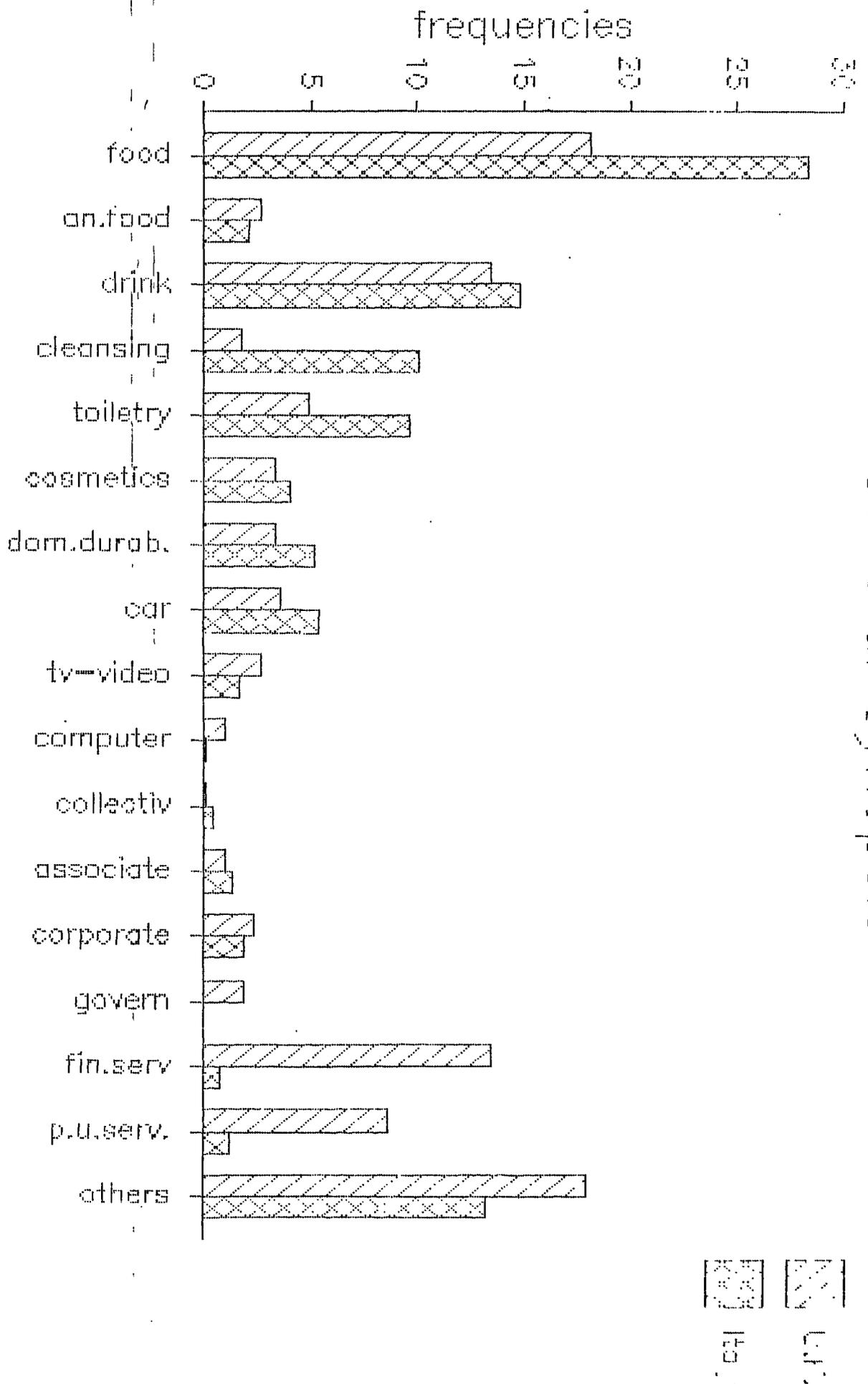


Goods and services









Before entering the matter of the specificity of goods representation, from the comparative framework, some features of the advertisements of the sample need to be stressed (some of which have already been mentioned in the analysis of the two TV systems), which do not appear from the mere quantitative synopsis.

I have made no distinction among channels, when it came to quantify the available commercials and coding them according to the previously selected categories; in fact I consider the advertising discourse in prime time television as a whole. But for the sake of accuracy some specific features of each country's output are worth considering.

The first concerns Italy and the duopoly of public and private TV: although there are no major discrepancies as far as advertising is concerned, two differences do exist: the first one is related to the quantity of advertisements, dramatically higher on private channels (where commercials are not confined to "natural breaks"); the second has to do with the different minimum standard of decency among the public and the private channels (even if the gap is narrowing). Especially as far as body product are concerned (but it also applies to other kind of goods), it is much more frequent to find sensual and alluring images on private rather than on public channels (where the remit of service is not at stake, the code is interpreted quite arbitrarily).

As for the British channels, I noted a difference, even if a

not dramatically sharp one, which is also outlined by the critics (when they say that "C4 reaches the parts ITV doesn't"): it was much more frequent to see advertisements for services like airlines or telecommunications on C4 rather than on ITV (BRITISH TELECOM INTERNATIONAL, for instance, exclusively advertised on C4).

Conversely, it was far more frequent to see commercials for food and cleansing agents on ITV (with the exception of the NEWS AT TEN's break).¹

One example: in the week starting Monday 16/1/89 to Sunday 22/1/89, among the total 177 commercials on C4, 10 advertised telecommunications, 16 financial services, 19 travel companies and airlines; in the same week, out of the 301 ITV commercials, 5 advertised telecommunications, 16 financial services and 10 travel companies and airlines.

In the same week I found 9 commercials for clearing agents on ITV and just one on C4. As for food, on C4 the greatest proportion was of bars, snacks and occasionally frozen meals, whereas ingredients and convenience foods were generally confined to ITV.

This trend can be acknowledged throughout the six weeks considered.

Hence a sharp difference can be acknowledged between the two countries: advertising in Britain seems to take a more segmented attitude toward the audience, and to rely upon an higher level of consciousness about what kind of people is likely to watch that programme on that channel.

On the contrary, Italian policy of advertising does not show the same degree of awareness, the difference being rather on

quantity (the amount of advertising on each channel depends on the budget of the channel, and so there are more advertisements on RAI1, than in the other two, and more on RAI2 than on RAI3).

This can depend on a number of reasons, not necessarily on the inadequacy of the public service in allocating advertising as to reach particular segments of the population. I only suggest some of them as hypotheses (which to gain credibility should become the objects of an inquiry in themselves, which is beyond my present scope). One potential consideration regards the dissimilar criteria of social differentiation in the two countries: whereas in Britain class belonging (as well as ethnic, although hardly represented in TV commercials) is one of the main criteria of social differentiation, in Italy other elements prevail: regional provenance (industrialized-efficient north vs agricultural- plagued by criminality south); occupational role and income level; personal success. Moreover some values (like family harmony and unity) cut across class and regional differentiations, offering a consensual basis for the advertising discourse. Whereas British society is more "physically" mobile (people hardly are born and live as adults in the same place), but more much rigid when it comes to class relations, the Italian "way of life" is much more static and traditional as far as living areas and values are concerned (it is common, for instance, for students in higher education to live with their parents until they have completed their courses, which in some cases happens when they are nearly thirty; as for workers, it is more frequent that they apply for a job where they already live first, and, unless particular reasons, that they ask for a

transfer as soon as possible if they need to move away from home). On the other hand the individual is not tied to his inborn social position: there is no particular consideration for aristocracy and even education is not always a discriminant element (particularly as far as income possibilities are concerned).

On the whole, advertising in Italy is much more likely to represent widely accepted national values by portraying a very narrow fragment of the population (the northern affluent society), whereas in Britain regional differences are more frequently exploited for enhancing, for instance, the genuineness of particular products (like beers): on the contrary regional accents are quite uncommon in Italian advertisements (the language spoken in Italian advertisements, even more than in other TV programmes, is deprived of any regional specificity, and in fact is very artificial and, as it is, it has a pure "televisual" existence).

I will consider many of these aspects in the conclusions of this work; for the moment, in order to avoid premature considerations, I will confine myself to the features of the recorded material.

GOODS AND SOCIAL WORLD: MAIN FINDINGS OF THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The general synopsis shows an apparent similarity both in the rank of goods in each country, and in the weight accorded to the

different goods and services (apart from the disproportion in the Financial Services and Cleansing adverts).

But there are also profound differences, which only partially emerge (or do not emerge at all) from the quantitative results.

A more detailed schema of analysis will be applied to one specific case study (car ads) in the next section: the aim of this chapter is rather to provide some general considerations which can be useful to specify the frame, the global context against which more subtle differences can be understood and evaluated, as far as the discourse about goods (and through goods) is concerned.

Hence the discussion will proceed by considering some of the specific divergences between the two countries, with particular regard to the world represented and addressed in the discourse upon goods; for that purpose and for the sake of clarity some of the categories are grouped together (although cross references are regularly carried out as the comment upon findings proceeds).

At this stage a numerical punctiliousness seemed to be inappropriate, given the quantity of the material.

Cars will be excluded, as they are the object of chapter 9.

FOOD AND DRINK

The only difference emerging from the comparison of quantitative findings, as far as food is concerned, is the uneven proportion of food advertisements in Italy and Britain: although in both countries food is the most heavily advertised kind of good, the ratio is nearly 3:1 for Italy.

But from the observation of the material also qualitative differences come to light, even more significant in my perspective.

First of all the nature and variety of food advertised.

In Britain there are more adverts for chocolate, snacks, confectionery, ready-made pies and cakes (which could have been differentiated in further categories, but are grouped together for the sake of brevity and in order to avoid analytical punctiliousness, unneeded at this stage).

Also prepared food, either canned, dried or frozen, are considerably more copious: the so called "convenience food", that is a product of large-scale food manufacturer that eliminates most or all cooking process, constitutes in fact the main object of British food commercials. Saving time (and in many cases money) is at stake here.

A greater concern with daily calories amount and fat intake is also expressed in British adverts than it is in Italy. A sort of "health consciousness" seems the philosophy presupposed to the trend towards smaller portions, low-calories, low-fat, low-cholesterol food (which includes either solid or liquid aliments: low fat spreads, low calories frozen meals, soups and hot drinks).

Very little emphasis is put on "ingredients", as well as on the process of preparation and cooking. Most of the foods advertised can be eaten as they are, and little skill or involvement is required: in many cases cooking is simply a matter of adding liquid or at most heating the product to the desired temperature. Microwaves (together with just one advert for a food processor)

are the only electric appliances related to cooking that occur in the British sample, while no microwaves appear among Italian "domestic durables" in the same period: in fact in Italy they are usually employed for making "fast food" at home, by heating commercially prepared meals, rather than for cooking "from scratch".

Significantly, the only branded ingredients (that is elements which either can or cannot be eaten as such, but usually serve to prepare more elaborated dishes) I found in British commercials were canned tomatoes, showed in an Italian setting, with an Italian "traditional" family, Italian music in the background and Italian name ("Napolina") and end comment ("Grazie"), and also cubes ("Oxo"), using the family meal as setting (I will return later to this feature).

It was more common, as far as the period I have considered is concerned, for "ingredient" to be advertised in the **associative** form rather than as brand names: I found some cases, among which "butter", "British pork", "British beef" and "milk" (although the last case, and the first to a less extent, can be considered "food" and "drink" in themselves, as well as ingredients).

Another feature of the kind of food advertised on British TV is the variety of countries which "cuisine" is represented: from India to Mexico, from China to Russia, from France to Italy (a range of soups is presented in a series of commercials called "Cooking with Culture"). Most of the product advertised are in fact industrially British-made artifacts, but the food culture they refer to (and that the commercials represent) is artificially shaped and defined (see below).

Drinks are also, on the whole, heavily advertised, and I have

found a much wider variety of soft and hot drink in Britain than in Italy. As the regulation is strict in Britain as far as alcoholic drinks containing more than 1.2% alcohol by volume are concerned 2, the only alcoholic drink I found advertised were showed in December (see the section on Periodicity of consumption).

On the contrary, beer and coffee are heavily advertised, the former either in the alcoholic or alcohol-free form, the latter almost exclusively in the instant form (with the exception of one advertisement for "Lyons" ground coffee)

As for the form of presentation, unlike in Italy, British advertisements use occasionally animation (like in "Vytalight" margarine and "Green Giant" pasta) and testimonials either for food and drink: Bernard Matthews as a "celebrity" in prepared turkey, Jerry Hall as a more sophisticated image to be associated with "Bovril" hot drink, and Scottish and Dutch actors for "Guinness" beer. (the only testimonial used in Italian drink advertisements is a popular Italian actor for a long-running coffee campaign).

In Italy the range of food products advertised is much wider, and also reveals a different emphasis, namely on the phase of preparation rather than on the moment of consumption (and as far as consumption is concerned, as we shall see, further differences do appear).

More foods are shown as ingredients (frozen vegetables for minestrone, uncooked frozen fish, uncooked pasta, canned tomatoes for preparing sauces and so on). More food is shown like having a "national" character: olive oil, Parmesan cheese, "prosciutto

crudo" (Parma ham). A national consciousness and pride is displayed in several adverts (epitomized by an associative commercial advertising the "Italian way to eat", "mangiare all'italiana"). No mention or reference is made to the cookery art of other countries, whereas a strong emphasis is put either on the "national" kind of food, or on the tradition in which preparation and consumption are embedded. Conversely, other countries are represented like competent and estimator of Italian cookery, which is hyperbolically represented as a sort of universal instrument of mutual understanding: in an advert for Pasta Barilla a couple in their honeymoon in Moscow make themselves understood at the restaurant with the ecumenical word "spaghetti".

This colonial attitude on matters of food is different from that of Britain, which rather incorporates in its own tradition those of other countries in a sort of "gastronomic cosmopolitanism": food culture and colonial history are not totally unrelated worlds.

To be more precise, British commercials for food show a wider range of possibilities as far as the "criteria of palatability" (I borrow the expression from Mary Douglas) are concerned; but, as we will see, they also reveal a more rigid set of rules on matters of permitted combinations of elements for each meal. In other words, British adverts show a larger variety along the paradigmatic axis, whereas the Italian display a greater flexibility along the syntagmatic one.

Much more than in Britain, where food is ready to be consumed, and most ready meals can be consumed anywhere, in Italy the moment of preparation is almost "sacred", and the "temple" of

this ritual (almost exclusively performed by woman, only occasionally by helping men), is the kitchen.

As it can be worked out by the adverts for other categories of products (like "domestic durables" and "cleansing"), the kitchen is really the site of maximum expression of the "nurturant ethos" which inform most of Italian advertisements featuring women.

The kitchen is a "physical" place; it is the well equipped site of preparation of family meals (with a huge display of a wide range of paraphernalia, from electric friers to special saucepans, to food processors and other various utensils); it is a "clean" space, as the frequency of adverts for cleansing products continuously reminds us: children playing on a shining floor, sinks as bright and immaculate as dishes just drawn out the dishwasher (an end comment for a cleansing agent for kitchen sinks only few years ago was "You can even eat in it!"), grease and dirt removed from even the more secluded spot are habitual images even in prime time advertising.

A kitchen is also the place where all the family gathers together (in Italy each meal, from breakfast to dinner, is usually a "family" meal"), and where the mother's concern for the unity and wealth of her family is more frequently shown. Healthy food is prepared for all the members of the family, the emphasis being on the receivers of the food besides the activity of preparation.

In a series of adverts for Pasta Buitoni, a good looking young woman (not the "standard" housewife) was shown in her modern flat, waiting for a man (either a husband or a lover), dreaming about how he would have been happy to come and stay, while

chopping raw ingredients for a sauce. The end comment was: "Rasagnole <a sort of tagliatelle> Buitoni, quelle col sentimento" <those with sentiment >. In Italy to say "doing something with sentiment" is the same as "doing something properly": Italian food is good and well prepared because it is done for somebody.

There is another difference in respect to the British way of advertising food, which bears some reference to the classic anthropological concepts of "raw" and "cooked", and to the correlates of "natural" and "cultural" (which includes "social").

Let's begin with some examples and then sketch a line of interpretation: in England preparation, as already seen, is less stressed than consumption. Moreover, when preparation is shown, it often has little to do with the product advertised: it can be presented through animation technique (like in the case of Knorr Recipe sauces), or in other different forms of "distantiation", like the case of Dolmio tomato sauces, in which an impersonal and clearly false (so not deceitful) home preparation stands for genuineness (the argument being analogy rather than proof: it is as good as that). The "natural-like" character of British food is most frequently expressed by a metonymy, that is "stirring", which stands for the whole process of preparation.

And, finally, preparation (when it occurs) is rather a guarantee of genuineness and goodness (that is refers "back" to the quality of food preceding the consumption) than a process of "gift-making", oriented "forward" to the social occasion of the family meal.

In Britain, where "junk" and convenience food is far more diffuse, the main reference point is paradoxically "nature" (or,

in Williamson's terms, "the natural"); in Italy, where food is usually more "natural" (or less processed), the elements of advertising discourse are rather "cultural" and social.

Williamson (1978) maintains that "nature" becomes a referent of a "cooking" society (where cooking indicates either the technological process of manipulation or the cultural act of use and consumption in a social situation): although this seems to apply to the British discourse on food, it doesn't hold likewise for the Italian case, where the emphasis is less on the "raw" or "unspoiled" or "natural" (a procedure that Marchand has called "the civilization redeemed": advertising serves to re-inject through technological means the same qualities technology has destroyed in nature. Industrial preparation, being "like" the natural, brings nature back), but rather on the concern for the well being of that social community which is family.

I have already stressed the "cultural" conscious character of Italian adverts for food (as well as the role of the kitchen as a "symbolic" place): but I have also found some sharp differences related to the representation of social reality (particularly social relations) in Italian commercials.

Both British and Italian adverts equally disregard the "provenience", as distinct from the "origin", of food (unless it is an advert for a supermarket chain, women are not shown going shopping for food in food ads). But as far as preparation is concerned, as we have seen, two different attitudes prevail ("from where" in Britain, which is an analogous and not real "from where", and "for whom" in Italy, where the family is often shown in part or on the whole).

In Italy both preparation and consumption are (or can be) social activities; in England, except for very few cases, preparation is an almost impersonal activity, and consumption is either a private or a social one (where the place, the persons and the relation between them are far less predictable than in Italy).

Let's begin with Italy: the social character of consumption is quite evident, given Italian standard eating habits. Every meal is a social occasion, either when it is confined to the family or, as shown in many adverts, when it is a circumstance of social gathering: hence each meal is a "ritual" that requires various degree of accuracy in its preparation; the table is always laid with a table cloth, even if the number and style of dishes and glasses can vary according to the occasion (even in British adverts, when the Italian stereotype is activated, like in Napolina canned tomatoes, a large family is shown around a prepared table).

Many commercials depict the whole family having breakfast before each member starts his daily routine; even if men, more than women, are supposed to be off to work, breakfast or lunch are the most common occasion that precede the separation: in one advertisement for Pasta Barilla (there are two level of symbolism here: Pasta is food par excellence, and food is one of the most common symbol for family and love), the father was leaving (presumably for work), and all the family ate together before he drove to the airport: while kissing him goodbye his little daughter dropped in his pocket a piece of raw pasta, and when he looked out of the window in his S.Francisco's hotel room he found it and smiled, feeling at home.

But unlike British advertisements, Italian commercials also stress the social character of preparation: in fact in the Italian sample there is a series of advertisements for cubes in which a group of women (again, not the standard housewives, but rather stylish in the way they look) are preparing lunch together, in trying to keep away from the kitchen, with their men craving for food. Finally, when everybody is ready to start eating, a young woman stands with her husband putting a hand on her womb for thus making it known to all that she is pregnant, and the atmosphere is then very joyful. In another advert of the same series again women are preparing a lunch for their men coming back from a shooting party. In both adverts the occasion is probably a holiday time (or week-end).

As Rieder remarks in "Sociolinguistic Aspects of Rhetoric" (1990) there are typical differences in the representation of gendered styles of moral reasoning, where men usually advocate individual responsibility over moral commitment to others, and women favour the latter instead (whose gender specific attitude is defined by what Rieder defines as "nurturant ethos").

Moreover this basic disposition can take (and often does, especially in ad representations) the "oblique" (sic) form of male connectedness on the one side and of female aggressive individualism on the other.

I will not enter here the question whether it is the same attitude that expresses contradictory aspects or rather whether genders are subjected to incongruous representation: but, especially as far as women are concerned, I noted that the "nurturant" attitude is the main value which shapes the arguments

for almost every Italian advert for food, the other most common way being the attribution of sensual and pleasurable connotations to food. I found this attitude is less current in British advertisements for food, although there are some example, like some adverts for Cadbury's chocolate; it is more common, in British commercials, to ascribe the "sexy" connotation to foreign kinds of food, especially French.

Cleansing product and most of home durables and toiletry, present similar characters, whereas aggressive individualistic personalities are the main characters of cosmetics and cars advertisements, both in Italy and in Britain. Significantly the "nurturant" attitude, in British adverts, is increasingly becoming a male feature, as many adverts, from financial services to cars, seem to confirm (see chapter 9 and Conclusions).

Coming back to the cubes advert, there is one feature of the social character of food preparation that seems especially relevant to my perspective: in fact, as we have seen, it is not very common to see women really cooperating in advertising representations, that is doing things together, enjoying a position of absolute equality. It is rather more common, on the contrary, to see men as "mates", either on work or in their leisure time. When women are represented as interacting, it is usually according to one of those two recurrent patterns: one woman is giving advices (for instance about which powder washes whiter) and the other is learning, either by listening to the more experienced friend or relative or by emulating her. This is indeed a kind of interaction, but a particular one, based on a sense of inferiority and anxiety of one of the two; the aim of the interaction is not the relation itself, but rather the desire

of acquiring knowledge and skill for a better performance of the housewife role in each woman's household. Another common situation of interaction between women is leisure time, either as moment of relaxation after work (like, for instance, in British commercial for Brooke Bond tea), or in convivial occasions like dinner parties: in both cases women are depicted in doing nothing but chatting.

In the Italian advert for cubes, on the contrary, although they confine their action to a traditional female task (that is preparing a meal), women are sharing a job, together with a conversation, which breaks a stereotype (the woman alone in her kitchen) and introduces a fresh view both in women equalitarian relations and in the social character of food preparation as well as consumption (I have found some cases, both in Britain and in Italy, of mother preparing food together with their daughters, but, again, this is not a case of balanced relation, but of "teaching" and "learning" so as to better perform an individual role).

In British commercials the meal, as represented in food advertisement, has quite different characters.

First of all there is a much sharper distinction between ordinary meals and "festal" meals (or meals for special occasions), and between structured (meals) and unstructured (snacks) food events in the daily pattern of consumption. Moreover the main course meal is only one specific meal (usually called "dinner": this is another difference, as in Italy the name of the meals depends on the schedule time, rather than on the quantity, variety and sequence of dishes that constitutes it),

which is the one in which time is invested for preparation and in which the adult component of the family are supposed to eat together. As in the British eating habits snacks prevail over meals, it is the less structured way of consuming food, the most frequent during the day (which feature also appears from the sample of commercials), but it seems that when a structured food event takes place, it is always highly structured, especially in the case of celebratory food (Mary Douglas pinpointed the uniformity of wedding cake formula in Britain, which cuts across class structure: this is not the case in Italy).

Neither the "quick" lunch, nor the more elaborate dinner, seem to have the same strong social character as the two main meals in Italy. The former, in fact, is not (necessarily) a social occasion, as it is most frequently consumed by individuals on their own, and has to fit on a very tight schedule. As English people probably estimate it to be a waste of time to spend more than, say, half an hour cooking (unless in particular occasions or on holiday), they seem to prefer ready-made food, even if they are at home. And, unlike in Italy, lunch is a meal every member of the family usually consumes on his/her own (either at home, or school, or work).

The value of time-saving is often stressed in adverts for food (one name for a range of ready-non frozen meals on British TV was "Perfect Timing", and the brief was that even prepared frozen meals required too long to get ready in a microwave). In Italy time-saving is a value inasmuch as it does not affect the quality (and the "sentiment") of the food: this is why kitchen electric appliances are so heavily advertised, as they which enable people to make more elaborate dishes and preparations while saving time

and effort, whereas, say, canned spaghetti bolognese would have been seen like an aberrant and inconceivable species of food.

The main difference depends on the fact that many of the ready meals advertised on British TV are conceived for being eaten by individuals on their own, or in collective, but not necessarily social situations: this is often implicitly or explicitly stated (from the mentioned example to the Philadelphia girl eating tempting crispy crouton in her break at office, instead of the limply sandwiches of her colleague - another example of inequality in women relation).

But also the dinner is not as much a social occasion as it is in Italy: usually it is not a family meal either (children are supposed to be already in bed when the adults gather for the evening meal), at least in weekdays.

Among the few commercials I have found in which all the family have dinner together there is an advert for a prepared sauce, "Ragù", inspired by an Italian recipe, in which father and mother sing opera while tasting the sauce, while the end comment suggests: "It brings out the Italian in you".

It is curious to see that in British commercials dinner is more frequently represented as a social occasion in commercials that are not for food.

There are plenty of dinner parties in advertisements for wine ("Le Piat d'Or"), for coffee (the famous "Nescafe Gold Blend" series), even for cars (the ad for Fiat Croma is just one example).

A further element of cultural specificity the comparison brings to the fore is the different connotations that "eating in"

and "eating out" are accorded in the two countries: whereas in Britain a sharper line of demarcation divides a "high", urban, luxury way to consume food (mainly out of home, either at the restaurant or in sophisticated friends' flats), from a "low", domestic, popular one (where usually all the family members are tied to the kitchen table), in the Italian commercials the boundaries between luxury and ordinariness are more blurred. Sophistication does not exclude domesticity (like in the adverts for cubes and pasta mentioned above), and is neither confined to the moment of the day when the children are in bed: in many adverts for Italian food, from breakfast biscuits to Parmesan cheese, a "stylish" family get together either in a smart kitchen or in an elegant dining room, and children are an essential component of the "tableaux" (as they are the main object of love, expressed through the quality of food). Whether these pictures are "realistic" or not in the way they depict the "look" of family and setting (and I believe they are not, as far as a standard way of life is concerned), they surely refer to a different way to conjugate family, domesticity, glossiness, luxury: social realism is not necessarily sit-com like.

As far as Britain is concerned, either the setting in which the consumption of food takes place, or the persons who are supposed to have a meal together are rather unspecific variables.

As for the first aspect, the setting can be the place one works (either realistically represented, like in the case of Philadelphia girl, or reproduced in humoristic and fantastic way, for instance through the animation technique, like in the adverts for Batchelor's Cup-a-Soup); or can be the home, either in a break of (house)work or in a different occasion; or can be during

an excursion (like Pot-Noodle ad), or even the street (like in Heinz Tomato Ketchup advert: eating while walking on the street seems to be a much more common attitude in Britain than it is in Italy).

As the setting is so variable, there is not a unique standard for eating (related, for instance, to the quantity, variety and sequence of food, or to the way in which it is consumed, using cutlery, or just a spoon, or hands).

This is quite different from the Italian representation of food consumption: the setting here is less variable, the home (and particularly the kitchen) being the proper place, and always, whatever is the number of people eating, a minimum standard of table setting is observed.

People are hardly shown in consuming food at work, but when it is the case, they do not regard it as real food, but just as a "snack" able to keep them going, presumably up to the "proper" meal (like for "Poket Coffee" and "Fiesta Snack").

This can depend on various reasons: in Italy, for instance, breaks for lunch are longer than in England (up to two hours; the working day, consequently, finishes later in the evening), and so people can either go back to home, if they work in the same place in which they live (which is a more common situation than it is in Britain), or go to the restaurant (there is a tradition in Italy of small family managed restaurants which arrange preferential conditions for working people, students and military men), or to use the canteen (many firms have one): in all these cases people eat according to the normal standard (laid table and the like).

This is especially the case for the centre and the south of Italy, while in the north (where efficiency is accorded more significance) it is more common for people to have a sandwich or a salad for lunch, but even in this case the meal is likely to be consumed in a cafeteria, in front of a laid table.

A further difference, related to the advertising of snacks in the two countries, particularly those targeted to children, need to be stressed. First of all snacks are mainly targeted to adults in British prime-time advertising, whereas in Italy most of snacks and chocolate are supposed to be consumed by children, even if the mother is in charge of the purchase.

As snacks and chocolate are not considered "proper" food, they need, in a food-conscious society, to be "regulated" and in some way legitimized: for this reason they are mainly handled by "authorities" (like parents or teachers) who give them to the children or suggest them to the parents, by including them in a more general discourse on children diet (like it happens for the whole range of "Kinder" products).

As far as the persons eating together are concerned, the situations in the English advertisements were more varied than in the Italian case. In Italy the more common situations are the family (either extended, like for Christmas dinner, or nuclear, either complete or with some members absent) and the dinner party among friends.

When the focus is on family, and the family is not complete, the more likely depicted members are the mother and a son (like in Mulino Bianco breakfast cakes or in Findus Pancakes).

In Britain, on the contrary, it is hard to find the whole family together (apart from the Oxo family and, less frequently,

the Heinz family), and also, as we have seen, to find dinner parties, at least in food commercials. Instead, as prepared food can be used by anyone, it is possible to envisage a wider variety of situations and of combinations of different people: there is for instance a grandfather popping in for a soup at his nephew's place (Heinz Soup), or female colleagues having lunch together (Philadelphia), or a cab driver having a soup at his neighbour's house (Batchelor), or a boy and girl eating hamburgers in the street (Heinz Tomato Ketchup). Not to speak of the "reconstruction" of exotic locations and inhabitants characters: a female host has dinner with a group of Russians noisily drinking vodka, and tortillas chips are consumed in a Mexican tavern to the sound of guitars (Phileas Phogg).

This is quite an interesting aspect of British food commercials, especially when considered in association with other variables like, for instance, the number of advertisements for travel companies (which is much higher in Britain than it is in Italy). As far as "geographical" mobility is concerned, British society seem to be much more dynamic, while the same cannot be said, I think, for "social" mobility.

I lack adequate evidences for stating the reverse, that is that Italian people are less physically mobile, but can more easily shift from one class position to another, yet this is the impression I got from comparing many aspects of the social life in the two systems, in a wider framework than that offered by the two advertising discourses. In this respect I disagree with what Mary Douglas suggests in "Food as a System of Communication":

"This has the reactionary implication that social stability is

favourable to the development of food as an art form and social change as inimical to it. Perhaps those countries which used to cast a stone at British culinary standards permitted a lower rate of social mobility" (1982:112).

Whereas in Italy an ideal of "domesticity" is normally associated with wholesome food, in the UK other values are usually brought to the fore, among which the "ethnic" character of many dishes; the greatest geographical mobility on the one side, and the relevant presence of ethnic minorities in the British society on the other, make British people more likely to be exposed to a variety of food and eating experiences.

Another element which probably contributes to the spread of a cosmopolitan attitude towards food in British society is the significant amount of TV shows, special sections in magazines and other food related issues, which also presuppose an hobby-like interest ⁴ on the subject matter (this is a further difference: in Italy there are no specific TV programmes on cookery, but only recipe section in programmes envisaged for a female audience. Moreover, whereas it could seem very strange in Italy to parallel cooking and, say, gardening, it does not seem the case in Britain).

Even if in British commercials the "urban" (eating out, far from home) and "ethnic" character of food experience are more relevant than in Italy, the "domestic" aspect is also present, as we have seen.

In the Oxo and Heinz families (the former campaign running since 1958, the latter since 1988) the members usually eat together, and wait for one another before starting eating.

The atmosphere in this genre of adverts closely recalls that of popular British soap operas like Coronation Street (ITV) and

Brookside (C4), and the kitchen becomes the theatre of the ups and downs of everyday life, which makes the members of the family less "ephemeral" than the characters in other commercials.

The association family meal-working class setting is not an incidental one, as one of the advertisers responsible for the Heinz campaign acknowledged: "The sort of people who watch soap operas are the sort of people we are going after" (see Campaign, 4/11/1988).

Then even the British advertising discourse seems to share the analogy family meal=love=value, and to stress the social character of consumption for emphasizing this particular aspect. But the social character is also class-bound (family meals are working-class family meals); and also, as we have seen, it is the exception rather than the rule, at least in commercial representations.

As far as persons are concerned, there are indeed some similarities, but also some significant differences: in both countries women are mainly associated with food, and children are also often represented (although in Italy it is more frequently the case).

In Britain a wider range of age and ethnic groups is represented, and also a less institutionalized set of relations (especially as far as men/women relations are concerned: less married couple are depicted than they are in Italy, like for instance in the commercials for Nescafe Gold Blend or Findus Lean Cuisine).

Men eating alone do not appear in Italian adverts for foods, while they do in British ones ("Perfect Timing" meals, "Wall's

Microwave Sausages").

As far as the relation of cooking to gender is concerned, I have found a close pattern in the two countries (although in Britain when men are cooking, they are more likely to prepare food for themselves, or at most for the wife, rather than for the whole family); in general terms my impression from the review of the material confirms what Robert Hanke states on matter of gender role division in cooking patterns in Britain:

"His is festal, hers is ferial ; his is socially and gastronomically experimental, hers is mundane; his is dish-specific and temporally marked, hers is diversified and quotidian; his is play, hers is work" (Hanke 1989:137)

Testimonials for food are more frequent in Britain than they are in Italy, as well as the use of animation (in Batchelor Cup a soup, Knorr Recipe Sauces, Cadbury's Caramel chocolate, Kellogg's Cereals, Vytalight Spread and others) or of the "impersonal" form (no people in video, a usually male voice over). The more convincing testimonial for Italian food seems to be the family, which epitomizes tradition (the culture of past) on the one side and love, care and concern (for the present and the future of the members) on the other. Lifestyle, as we have seen, is rather incorporated in family scenes than typified in one individual, although popular, celebrity.

A separate, although related, field of goods is that of animal food, which again reveals some strict similarities (especially given that some of the products advertised are the same in the two countries, like Whiskas and Sheba cat food).

The most common traits concern the species of pets that are endowed with "human-like" attributes (which explain why it does

not sound odd to serve canned rabbit to a cat).

But I also found two main differences, one related to the range of animal represented, the other to the way in which their relations with human beings is depicted.

As for the former, exclusively cat food is advertised on Italian TV in the period considered, while in the British material there are also advertisements for dog food (even if they are a minority). I will not attempt an explanation for this difference, apart from suggesting that cats are more popular animals in Italy, being easier to keep even in flats (the urban configuration of Italian towns is such as that great majority of households, either in the elegant city centre or in working-class neighbourhood, have no garden, whereas in Britain even in council areas, is much more common to find at least a small courtyard).

But the second difference is perhaps more significant in my perspective, related as it is to the issue of "familiarity" and of "culture" (or "the cooked"). I have found a higher degree of "intimacy" between persons and animals in British advertisements than in the Italian ones, the best example being the commercial for "Sheba" cat food, broadcast in Britain and then translated for Italian TV. I will analyze it in more detail in the section on transnational advertisements (chapter 11), but it is worth underlying here at least one idiosyncrasy, which can be symptomatic of cultural distinction. The visual track is almost identical 5 : a woman in her thirties reading a book is reminded by her cat that it is time for eating, and then she carries a portion of food on a white porcelain dish; but a quite different end comment is uttered by an equally female voice over.

While in the British version of the commercial the stress is on

the fact that the food "looks, smells and tastes like you cooked it yourself", and the conclusion is "For your cat is home-cooked", the Italian commercial ends with a colourless "Your cat will love it". ,

The shared equation home preparation=love is referred to in the British version of the commercial, but it is clearly evaluated as inappropriate in the Italian cultural context. In a country (Britain) in which there is not a unique standard for eating, and where the time and effort for the preparation of food are normally minimized, serving a meal to a cat on a porcelain dish, and pretending it is "home-cooked" is but one way to show affection and familiarity; but the same gesture can be perceived as being even offensive in a country where food is the material upon which a ritual of family harmony and care is daily performed.

Then while home-cooking is a common metaphor for love, having the same "meaning" (at least apparently) in the two countries, the "use" is different, and the "felicity conditions" change.

In my opinion this is a quite interesting example of a mutual definition of semantic and pragmatic aspects: the semantic field is roughly the same, but the pragmatic appropriateness is not. The conclusion I want to suggest is that the different use (pragmatic aspect) of the same metaphor affects the semantic level, inasmuch as it weakens its boundaries and makes them more flexible (in the British case).

There is not a rigid common semantic level and two different pragmatic attitudes, but the different uses are possible inasmuch as differences already exist at the semantic level; and, in turn, pragmatic specifics reinforce or modify the way in which the

semantic level is perceived. In Halliday words, tenor and mode affect the field of discourse, as well as being affected by it.

Let's go back to human beings and their consumption patterns.

As far as **drinks** are concerned, a sharp difference immediately appears from the quantitative findings, related to the massive presence of alcoholic drinks in Italy. This is clearly less a matter of social differentiation or difference in patterns of consumption than of institutional control and regulation (as can be worked out, beside the English Advertising Code, from the government warnings on drinking and driving).

It is neither the case that in Britain alcohol is less represented because less diffused (although, even apart from the television system, there are more cogent restrictions on alcohol purchasing, for instance by minors), nor that the greatest concern is due to a more dramatic relevance of the phenomenon (drinking and driving, for instance, is becoming a matter of collective concern in Italy as well, inasmuch as the number of car accidents related to alcohol abuse are increasing, especially in week-end time).

Nevertheless it is impressive to see that almost one half of Italian commercials for drink in prime time are for spirits: in almost any prime time break in Italy there is one (or more) commercial for alcoholic drinks (the same is true on British TV for financial services: and in fact the proportion is roughly the same, about 7% of total advertisements).

Wine is not frequently advertised on Italian TV, and I found this odd as wine, like coffee, is an essential element of the two main Italian courses, as well as being served as aperitif in social occasions (in this respect Italian drinking patterns are

closest to the French habits: wine can be drunk almost at any time of the day, and there are not "segregated" moments or occasions); paradoxically wine (especially Italian and French) is more heavily advertised in Britain, where it marks particular celebrations or social occasions rather than being a routine element of the meal.

Moreover the same consideration as for food holds true for wine: in Italy there are not specific TV programmes, or even slots in them, about wine; this can mean that a widespread level of "natural" -which is cultural- connoisseurship among Italian consumers is presupposed.

In Britain, unlike in Italy, there is an enormous variety of soft drinks, appearing under different forms (as powder, granules, bags etc), and with very different tastes (all the range from sweet to savory): this is due to the fact that one essential component of British meals (particularly less structured meals) is a liquid one.

As far as beers are concerned, I found a great deal of commercial in the British material (all of which male-oriented), and only one (series) in the Italian one, in the form of associate rather than brand advertising: in the case of GB the trouble seems how to distinguish among a variety of names and products which differ very little from one another, whereas in Italy the main concern seem to promote and support a drinking habit which is not so diffuse (where the brief insists on the "female" low-calories, low alcohol features rather than on the "male" values of companionship, strength, humour and the like, all prevailing in the British adverts).

As for coffee, the main, culturally specific difference is that between "instant" and "ground", the former being the most widespread among British consumers, and the latter the almost unique (and characteristic) form in which coffee appears on Italian adverts.

But, again, British commercials reveal a significant trend towards differentiation (or discrimination), especially on the matters of class habits and ordinary/celebratory occasions: ground coffee is also called "real" coffee, and it is almost indispensable for marking differences of status or/and circumstances.

Let's then consider the material from the two countries in more details, in order to compare the way in which the representation of drinking patterns refers to, or aims to construct, different social universes of discourse.

After a first examination of the two groups of commercials, I have defined a set of factors to look for in a more detailed analysis, in order to assess the temporal, social, activity setting in which the consumption of different kind of drinks is represented as appropriate.

The elements I found more recurrent as well as significant for comparing the drink-commercials in the two countries are listed below:

- the OCCASION: some kind of drinks are more frequently represented as appropriate in FESTAL circumstances, others in FERIAAL ones (when they appear without distinction in both occasion I coded them as EITHER; when they appeared on an abstract background, or with no reference to this specific dimension, I listed them as UNSPECIFIED. These two features also

holds for the elements below)

- the ACTIVITY: some kind of drinks are suitable for being consumed at WORK, other are confined to (and in some cases heavily marked) LEISURE.

- the SETTING: the main distinction I used here is between DOMESTIC and NON DOMESTIC setting, which is very sharp for some kind of drinks in the two countries, as we will see.

- the PERSONS: as far as people involved in the act of drinking are concerned, I distinguished between a SOCIAL and a NON SOCIAL form of consumption, depending on whether the consumption is an individual act or is embedded in social relations.

- the CLASS: some drinks are more frequently than other associated with a particular class. According to the class belonging (when clearly represented) I distinguished the consumers in CLASSY and ORDINARY people.

- the CIRCUMSTANCE: one of the main difference between the two countries is the way in which drink are represented as a component of the meal or as inappropriate for going with food (which, as we have seen, tells a great deal about the social character of the circumstance): then I distinguished between drinks that go WITH FOOD and others WITHOUT FOOD.

- the GENDER: the consumption of certain kinds of drinks is more frequently associated with either a male or a female background, and the distinction is not always the same in the two countries. Then I differentiated between MALE and FEMALE drinks, according to the gender of the most commonly represented consumers.

I will begin with the similarities in patterns and settings of drink consumption, as they are represented in the two countries,

and then discuss the (more significant) differences.

The category in which differences are more blurred is that of "soft drinks", especially as far as fizzy and low calories drinks are concerned. Also tea is apparently advertised according similar features, but it is accorded far more importance in the British culture, which emerges less from the commercial themselves than from other pieces of "social realism", like soap operas (where expressions like "Let's have a cup of tea", or "I'll put the kettle on" and the like are common stock phrases).

Drinking tea is not only an everyday gesture in Britain; it is also a repeated ritual in the daily schedule, which serves for the majority of people as a temporal code for establishing a pattern cutting the flow of temporal experience in meaningful units. "Tea-time" is also used to mark a specific moment of the day, much more precisely than "dinner".

But the cultural distinctiveness of tea drinking hardly emerges from the sample of British commercials, and the differences in respect to the Italian adverts only become significant if one is already acquainted with the cultural context. I think this is another meaningful case in which the limitations of a pure textual analysis become evident.

In British commercials tea drinking is both represented as a social and an individual activity, but most of all as a habits that recurs in different moments of the day, either in domestic setting, in leisure time or at work (like for the monkey secretaries in "PG Tips" commercial); it is also a widespread gesture, that cuts across class differentiation ; and, finally, tea is mainly represented as being prepared and consumed by women.

In Italy tea drinking is a more domestic and leisure activity, either socially or individually performed (but "individual" drinkers prevail in Italian adverts); it is not supposed to be a cyclical habit, during the day, but rather to mark specific moments of relaxation, after work or sport (decaffeinated tea is more heavily advertised on Italian TV); Italian commercials more frequently use testimonials, either "classy" or successful people (sports men, actors); and finally tea consumers in Italian advertisements are more frequently men.

Commercials for fizzy drinks are in both countries mainly targeted to young people, represent non domestic settings and mainly leisure activities, display a higher degree of friendship and solidarity than many other commercials (the "Coca-Cola" philosophy of brotherhood and harmony), but also an increasing trend towards individualism, competition, success (like in adverts featuring sport champions or risky performances).

For low-calories drinks the argument is almost the same as for tea: there is not a significant difference in the form and content of presentation (apart from the wider variety available to British consumers), but their relevance to the daily eating habits is uneven: although in both countries low-calories drinks have a "ferial" character, and a female target (usually epitomized by a fit model), they are an established component of British diet, especially as far as "unstructured" meals are concerned, whereas they hardly fit in the more rigid Italian meal schedule.

Notably, in British commercials for low-calories drinks all ages (including children) can be represented (like in an advert

for "Ovaltine Light"), unlike in Italy.

Another daily ferial product, mineral water, is in Britain mainly associated with the idea of "purity", either conveyed by natural unspoiled landscapes or by female images of innocence, whereas in Italy the more common referent is the family, including very small children.

As for the differences, apart from a general prevalence of "humour" in British commercials and "lifestyle" in the Italian ones, two distinctive ways to associate drink with time, setting, people and occasion emerge from the comparison.

As I have tried to make in relation to theories of consumption, I do not think that food and drinks (and goods in general) are in themselves symbols of social position and status, but rather that the way in which they are consumed and the way in which the consumption is represented can tell something about some attributes of social organization in that specific culture, especially when a fresh view is brought about by the comparison between different cultural systems.

In particular I believe that goods, particularly "primary" goods like food and drink, are used by people to organize the flow of their temporal and social experience into an understandable set of actions and events: to consume is to share a cultural order by using it as a blueprint for the organization of one's own day (which is both a passive and an active attitude).

On this respect drinks, as well as food, are devices for framing "the continuum" of everyday life in units that can be more easily handled, and enable the participants in social interaction to assess the criteria for dealing with the

situation; drinks can be seen as "keys", as cues for seeing one's way in the continuous shift from one frame to another and in the changing agenda of appropriate behaviours.

I think that the representation of consumption offered by the sample of commercials keeps a track of this social attitude, even if it is not necessarily spelled out and it is often entangled with an "ideal" depiction of social habits.

As far as the sample of commercials is concerned, I have found quite sharp differences in the way in which drinking patterns are associated to (and then contribute to the framing of) the organization of the daily routine and, more generally, of social life.

Let's begin with the "rituals" of drinking time. If we consider the ferial vs festal criteria of distinction, different (represented) habits emerge, the difference being not simply a matter of different products in the same circumstances, but also of different rhythms, settings, gender of participants as appropriate to the different drinking situations.

I consider first the alcoholic drinks: wine, spirits, beer. They are used for marking time, activity, social situation in a completely different way in the two countries.

In Britain wine is festal, beer is ferial (even if in holiday time the advertisements are more recurrent), and spirits are not allowed on TV adverts (but I assume for other sources having a festal character).

Moreover, beer is consumed in non domestic settings (being the pub the institutional place of consumption), almost exclusively by men in advertising representation, and hardly ever with food.

The consumption of beer is either a "rite de passage", marking the transition from the working time (which can be inferred by the way many consumers are dressed in adverts for beers) to the domestic leisure, or an activity not at odds with work (a can of beer can be drunk in a break, especially in hot weather or during hard work), or a symbol of male companionship (men meet at the pub in the evening).

The only "domestic" setting I recorded was in a series of commercials for "Carling Black Label" and Alcohol Free "Guinness" featuring male characters in front of the TV set (in the first case watching games shows, in the second car races). Beer consumers are always ordinary people (the only exception, which is made possible by the general rule, being the "Pure Genius" Guinness advert, where individuality and intelligence are recalled instead of companionship and strength).

In Italy the representation of beer consumption has a different character: as drinking beer is not an entrenched habit among Italian people, it needs to be rendered an attracting habit in itself, even before any brand name is advertised. In the period of recording I only found a series of associate adverts, featuring a famous Italian showman drinking beer at the restaurant, together with smart female partners (also drinking), while enumerating to the spectators the virtues of the drink (as already stressed, mainly "female" features: low alcohol, low calories). In Italy beer goes with food (like wine); the occasion is rather festal (restaurant) than ferial; the consumer are rather "classy" (exactly the kind of people who can "launch" fashionable trends of behaviour and style) than ordinary people, and either male and female.

In successive brand campaigns, not included in the material, beer is attached a "stylish" image, and almost always represented in social, gender mixed settings.

This way of presentation can have indeed more than one function: if on the one side in fact it helps to create a fresh image of the product that viewers would be pleased to associate themselves with, on the other it also works for "demolishing" a more traditional view of beer as a gross, unsophisticated working class drink. This is a clear case of re-positioning a product by activating a completely different semantic field of association from that one could expect to find: I believe this is possible because drinking beer is neither a widespread nor a culturally specific drinking habit, and beer drinkers are not a specific segment of the population. The same attempt would have been much more difficult with goods more deeply established in the Italian culture, like wine.

Wine seems in fact to have the opposite character in the two countries, as far as its representation in TV commercials is concerned. In Italy it is ferial, in Britain festal; in Italy it is ordinarily consumed in domestic settings (unless it is taken as an "aperitif" in public places), in Britain it is mainly consumed outside the home; in Italy it is an essential component of meals, in Britain it is not; in Italy it is either consumed by men and women (even if the quantity and the kind of appropriate wine change), in Britain always by men (apart one example of alcohol free wine); in Italy it is consumed by ordinary people as well as classy (the difference being in the quality of the product rather than on its presence), whereas in Britain by

middle class people (or by celebrities in wine commercials).

Only in one of British commercials for wine the consumption takes place in a social occasion (a dinner party with elegant people), while otherwise it is one celebrity (always male) who introduces the audience to the connoisseurship of continental wines.

The fact that wine in Italy is served with the meal is not of little relevance, as it has something to do with the organization of the daily routine, and with the way in which time is distributed across the activities: Italian people spend more time sitting at the table, have a longer and more nutritious lunch, and often an interval between the end of the meal and the moment they come back to work (so that the effect of wine can fade and be neutralized by that of coffee).

Moreover wine is not a substance at odds with the representation of the family gathered around the table (while it may be in Britain, either for different habits or on regulatory grounds).

As far as alcoholic drinks are concerned, a comparison can hardly be attempted, as on British TV spirits cannot be advertised (except low-alcoholic drinks).

But it is nevertheless an interesting categories of goods, both for "pragmatic" (that is related to the way in which the presentation of the drink affects viewers' attitude) and for "semantic" reasons (related to the features of the product in itself).

This is another case in which advertising does not necessarily reflects the way things are, but rather speaks out the criteria of acceptability of certain behaviour (which is another way, more

subtle and less direct, to refer to social reality). People do indeed consume spirits on their own, and often for "consolatory" purposes; but this cannot be the subject of an advertisement, and not just for restrictions concerning TV regulation (in Italy they are not so severe), but, more broadly, for a socially shared set of conventions that regulate the dealings with a delicate subject matter (alcohol abuse is a social problem, unlike, say, improper eating habits - or at least, not at the same extent).

Alcohol representation, like other critical subject (for instance intimate hygiene), has a "taboo" aspect in European culture, which narrows the field of possible representations: again a pragmatic concern about possible side-effects determines a careful delimitation of the semantic field of possible associations (more than the latter actually can influence the way in which people relate to alcoholic drinks).

Then the representation of alcohol consumption in Italy follows some recurrent (and in some cases inescapable) rules: it is always a **social** activity; it is always confined to leisure time (either after work or on festal occasions), because of its "releasing" effects on the level of awareness and self control; it has not a cyclical character, the same as wine can have neither in the daily routine , nor as far as wider intervals are concerned: it always marks very special, and then rare, occasions (although there is a tendency towards representing an upper class kind of consumer who has less rare occasions). But there are also some characters of the representation of alcohol consumption which are in a way specific to the Italian culture. One is that women, as well as men, take part in the social occasion of

consumption: even whisky (as a series of ads for "Chivas Regal" testify) is not a "gendered" kind of drink, and is associated with lifestyle (two glamorous couple meeting for planning a travel to India), rather than to some specific "male" qualities, like strength.

This is in my opinion a significant feature, especially if one considers one of the main characteristics normally attributed to spirits: in fact they are considered "an accompaniment of social solidarity", and "a dissolver of hierarchy" (Gusfield, J 1982:79).

Inasmuch as alcohol is considered a "disinhibitor", it is at odd with structured relations, like those of work, and it is rather appropriate in socially bound situations, where the act of drinking and the related activities and conversations take place among peers (this is why in British ads for beers women are not represented: in this respect a more sexist attitude emerges; but this is also why the consumption of spirits, especially whisky, is always represented in upper-class restricted circles and in this respect the Italian representation is more classical. But I also believe that the "glossy" representation is a counterpart, which is also intended to neutralize it, to the images of poverty and drunkenness we all encounter in our everyday life).

Then, in Mary Douglas' words, drinks (and alcoholic drinks in particular) not only "construct the world as it is", by providing elements upon which the experience is organized, but also "construct an ideal world", offering "brightly colored material labels of events" against "the painful chaos threatening all the time" (1982:11).

Then, both on "realistic" and "idealistic" grounds, alcoholic

drinks, more than other categories of drink, are context-markers, that is associated with a recurrent, predictable, positive set of cultural, situational, social elements.

There is also, another typical feature, related to a unique Italian class of spirits, namely "bitters liqueurs" (amari).

It is a common view that spirits are not appropriate to go with food: in describing the American drinking habits, for instance, Gusfield remarks:

"One rule of taste is that the alcohol served before the main meal may be of higher 'proof' than that served during the meal. Whisky or gin may be offered and accepted as a prelude to the meal, but not as an accompaniment to the meal" (quoted in Douglas 1982:82).

But in Italy "amari" are served while one is still sitting at the table, immediately after coffee. As their main components are alcohol and herbs, they are supposed to "improve" the digestive function. I found a huge amount of advertisements for bitters liqueurs, which fit quite well within the overall philosophy of food consumption emerging from the whole of the Italian sample.

As their "prolongue" the duration of the meal, they presuppose the time passed in front of the table being a worthy one; and it is worthy because the meal is conceived as a social occasion.

The images most commonly associated with consumption are either bucolic (a more appropriate setting for the herbal nature of the product) or urban, but always social: in the first case men prevail, in the second both genders appear. As far as we know the name "bitter liqueurs" does not activate any particular semantic field among British consumers, while it has a strong connotation of sociality in Italy, and also "naturalness", either directly represented by the physical setting, or advocated as

"therapeutic" capacity of the product to counter-effect the unhealthy aspects of urban life, like excessive eating and lack of movement (another example of the "civilization redeemed" parable), and mainly maleness. ("true" friendship is always represented through male companionship in Italian adverts).

And, finally, coffee, which relevance to the daily routine in the two countries needs no explanation.

Coffee is commonly perceived as having opposite characters in respect to alcohol: in fact the former serves to achieve sobriety, to return from the world of leisure to the world of work, to break as well as accompany one's work activity, to stimulate one's faculties and awareness; the latter to achieve relaxation, to mark the passage from work to leisure and the like.

But apparently the two elements are not at odds in the Italian culture, as coffee and spirits can go together, literally the latter within the former, at the end of the meal (which Italian men call "caffè corretto", "corrected coffee").

There is plenty of "folkloristic" details about the role of coffee and the way in which it is consumed in the two countries that one could get lost in; so let's confine ourselves to the way in which coffee is related to social life and the organization of daily experience in advertising representations, in a more concise way.

Coffee appears in both countries in the twofold form of "instant" and "ground", but with different relevance, either quantitative (only one advertisement for instant coffee in Italy; only one for ground coffee in Britain), and related to the fields of associations activated by the product.

As a "substance" it perform the same function in the two countries (in both the sample the function of "eye-opener", among the other already mentioned, is stressed: in the British "Maxwell House" advert a young couple, made to get out of bed early in the morning by a baby son, can start the day only after a cup of coffee; in an Italian advert for a brand of ground coffee, a man going to work by bicycle early in the morning calls for a coffee to his friend, a bar keeper, telling him he cannot start without a proper cup of coffee).

But a further distinction needs to be made, which entails a set of interesting implications.

In Britain coffee is ordinarily consumed in the "instant" form, while "ground" coffee (also called "real coffee") is confined to special occasions. Instant coffee comes in a wide range of types, either ordinary or decaffeinated: it can be consumed in a domestic setting or on work, and mainly by individuals, unless it is served at the end of a dinner party, like in one of the Nescafé soap-adverts. Apart from the last case, instant coffee is more often shown against a background of ordinary people, using mugs rather than cups. 6

Advertising has probably some responsibility in the creation of a simulacral image of what a coffee must be (a real-like) in which the instant coffee fits better than the ground one (so it is even more real than the real one: in fact instant coffee can be considered as the "real" British coffee, the more culturally distinctive).

In some of the British adverts the ordinary character of instant coffee is fully recognized, without any comparison with

the more sophisticated ground product (Like in "Maxwell House" and "Red Mountain" adverts); in others, on the contrary, instant coffee is advertised as tasting "like" the real one, in association with the kind of social setting one will expect to find in ground coffee adverts. In a Nescafe commercial (not one of the "Gold Blend" series) an Italian maid gives advices to her master and his guest on the quality and flavour of the coffee.

I was quite impressed by the phrase the female guest utters to her friend ("Whatever you pay her it is not enough"), as well as by the representation of such an outdate and classical example of social inequality for improving the image of quite an ordinary instant coffee (the only "positive" piece of information provided by the ad being the acknowledgment of a significant level of expertise even in the working class segment of the Italian population on matter of coffee). 7

Significantly the only example I found in the Italian material also purporting a maid is also for a coffee (ground coffee, this time).

There is actually a long running series for a popular brand of coffee ("Lavazza"), featuring a famous Italian actor (Nino Manfredi) and his very old maid (she must be about 90 now), but the atmosphere is completely different there. In fact she acts like a mother: she cares about him, she rescues him from embarrassing situations and finally she spoils him with a good cup of coffee. She is one of the family, not a servant.

Incidentally, to have a daily or weekly help for the housework is quite a common situation among Italian women, and has not the same connotation of status as it probably has in Britain.

Ground coffee, in British adverts, hardly appears: I recorded only one commercial for "Lyons" coffee, quite stylish both in the form (all the scenes are mirrored by a coffee spoon), and for the people represented (upper class man and woman). But I think it is enough for substantiating the view of ground coffee as having a "festal" rather than ferial character (also in the ad above it marked a "special" occasion: the reconciliation of the two), a social rather than individual way of consumption, and as being a hallmark of status.

On the Italian side the ways of representation are quite different, in spite of the analogous function and relevance of the product, and so are the fields of discourse involved in the illustration of the "felicity conditions" of coffee drinking.

There is not antithesis between a "junk" and a "real" coffee, because there is only one coffee ("real" being an attribute that presuppose something "false" to be set against).

Better, there is not a qualitative difference among kinds of coffee, but only a difference of degree (precisely on the degree of concentration and "strength") which depends on the way of preparation rather than on the quality of coffee.

Then the only meaningful opposition in Italy is between a "domestic" coffee (made with a typical coffee-maker called "Moka") and an "espresso" (the kind of coffee one can drink in public places like bars, which is reduced in quantity and has a very strong flavour). The difference is also blurring, because on the one side "domestic" coffee is advertised as tasting "like" espresso, and on the other special machines are advertised, resembling those used in bars (only smaller) for making espresso

at home.

"The" coffee, then, is ordinary, ferial as well as festal (being the way to serve it rather than the quality of the product the changing element in special occasions), socially as well as individually consumed, and has a cultural rather than social status.

Instant coffee is also available in Italy (I have found only one ad for "Nescafe"), even if it does not come in all the varieties at British consumers' disposal, but it is accorded a very limited place in the Italian habits. It is the kind of coffee one uses when the traditional is not accessible, or when the preparation can be too awkward, like during travels abroad, excursions etc. (the advertisement represents a stylish South-American women drinking it while travelling by train): it is a non-routine product (and then in a way "festal"), as well as non-domestic; it is hardly social (it is a "secondary choice" solution which is not appropriate for social occasions), it is related to leisure rather than work. In summary, it is not the kind of product one has in mind associated to the word "coffee".

The case of coffee is significant, in my opinion, of the "cultural" distinctiveness of the two universes of discourse represented: in fact upon the same product different representation of life organization are constructed, and different images of social reality are provided, especially as far as issues like class, gender, interaction are at stake.

CLEANSING AND HOME DURABLES

It is almost amazing to see the uneven amount of cleansing

products in prime time advertising in the two countries (while home durables are much more equally represented): in Italy cleansing products are 10% of the global amount of commercials (the most advertised after food and drink), while in England they are only about 1% of the total advertising output, a quantity even inferior to that of animal food.

These data cannot be "literally" interpreted as such (by saying, for instance, that British people do not clean their houses).

One thing they can "tell", in fact, is that the audience for these kind of commercials is not the same as that which is supposed to watch TV at this time, or is not the one advertisers want to reach in this precious slot.

Another element that does not result directly, but can be worked out from cross references to other sectors of goods, is that in British houses different materials are generally used for interior decoration: in fact in Britain carpets are widespread, whereas in Italy they are very rare, being different kind of material like marble, wood, ceramic the most common. So while, say, cleaning a ceramic floor requires special liquids (which one finds advertised in prime time Italian TV), cleaning a carpet requires a Hoover, which, when appears, will be found among the domestic durables.

As well as cleansing agents, domestic durables in Italian advertisements are also heavily targeted to a female audience: most of them are in fact electric appliances or goods related to the activities of cooking and washing.

On British TV, on the contrary, domestic durables are mainly

targeted to men: electric tools like drills, screwdriver, grasscutters and so on; items related to home maintenance and decoration, like paint and wallpaper are in fact the most common goods in this sector.

An overwhelming female domain which employs cleaning agents and electric appliance for its perpetuation is still granted a dominant role in Italian prime time advertising, while a male kingdom of do-it-yourself prevails on British TV. Clearly, women are easiest to reach in other schedule time than men are, but it is probably the same in the two countries; then this does not explain why British prime time adverts are more heavily male-targeted.

The "cleansing" adverts I found in the British material are almost exclusively for washing machine powders (the more heavily advertised being "Persil"); the fields of discourse more frequently associated are, as quite obvious, the family and the mother's concern for the well-being of the other members (which includes providing clean clothes).

Different is the stress on "cleanliness" I found in the Italian commercials, the more significant in this respect being the commercials for domestic cleansing agents: a sort of obsession appears in most of them, not only with removing dirt, but also with killing bacteria; houses do not have just to be clean, they must be sterilized. The most common images for illustrating the achieved result are children (even small ones) playing on a shining floor, or amazing contrasts between a "before" and an "after" situation; sometimes a housewife puzzles a friend by telling her she just thinks her floor is clean, but actually it is not the case (and when the floor is re-cleansed with an

improved result the friend is convinced).

The themes of individual consciousness (to provide a clean environment for the family) and of social criticism (a woman is immediately judged by the way she keeps the house), especially among "peers" (at least in advertising representation) are the most recurrent throughout the Italian material related to domestic cleanliness.

A common trend can be identified in the form in which Italian advertisements portray women: the nurturant ethos is in fact the main female character, together with the more general and cultural value of the "sacredness" of familiar life, which requires an appropriate surrounding.

Moreover the house is a social place (hospitality being a highly prized value in Italian society, especially in the central and southern regions). The house thus reflects on the one side the woman's capability as a mistress, on the other her concern for the people, either of the family or outside it, who are in the house.⁸

As far as the relation women-product is concerned, I found a further cultural specificity in the representation of Italian consumers: products are mainly male-gendered (and this is also the case for British adverts), and women are represented as being loyal and faithful to the same product, once their choice has been made. Fidelity is another of the traditional virtues of Italian women, either expressed in the devotion to her husband, or to the family as a whole, or to a specific product (inasmuch as it guarantees the well-being of all the members).

I can be wrong, but I do not think that the same semantic field

could have the same impact on the British audience especially as far as the pragmatic implicature are concerned, as the conditions of appropriateness are different. In fact, on the one hand Italy is still a country in which family is perceived as a valuable institution (also because of the influence of the Catholic moral doctrine), and family means the insoluble character of marriage.

Because there are choices that are lasting and immutable, and the semantic field of stability is associated with very common elements of women's life, like family relations, it is not inappropriate to extend the same attitude to everyday products (especially when related to the well being of the family): one of the most popular and long running campaigns (it must have been going for at least 15 years now) for a brand of washing-machine powder represents a man "tempting" a women on her way home from the supermarket by offering her two washing powder bins instead of the one which she has just purchased, which is also "her" one. The woman of course refuses, because she is happy with her choice and she intends to stick to it.

On the British side, where a significant proportion of marriages ends into divorce, and where, by the year 2000, one out of 5 young people under 16 is expected to be born by non-married parents ⁹ to capitalize on marital loyalty for promoting a brand loyalty is inappropriate. Even if "family" (and then love, care) is the main semantic field activated in British cleansing adverts, its boundaries do not encompass the attribute that is so heavily stressed on Italian commercials, then the same pragmatic implications cannot be inferred by the audience, and simply cannot work.

Women in soap commercials (as men in car and petrol ones)

express an environmental concern both in British and in Italian advertising. It is quite interesting to see how a shift in values is represented in the advertising discourse, as far as women's attitude is concerned: from the (competitive and domestic-bound) desire to overcome the white of other housewives' washing, to the more universal and less selfish concern with the benefit for the common environment. Ecology, unlike moral issues, is a topic that works equally well in the two countries.

A final feature cleansing commercials share in the two countries (but is overemphasized in Italian adverts) is the "gender" of products: as cleansing agents need to be "tough" and vigorous (notably male virtues) against dirt, they are "naturally" male gendered: it would probably sound strange, both for a British and an Italian consumer, to hear a washing liquid speaking in female voice from above a washing machine, while a male voice over, like it actually happens in many commercials, does not sound odd.

And when the product does not speak as a character, the voice over for the end comment is more likely to be male (see the Cif/Jif example in Chapter 10).

I found that in Italian advertisements the voice over is almost always male (even for typically female products like cosmetics), whereas in Britain this is less often the case (apart from the case of car adverts, see Chapter 9 and Conclusions).

And, finally, class representation: usually adverts for cleansing agents are quite "abstract" as far as classes are concerned; in fact in both countries both a too "stylish" and a too ordinary image seems inappropriate to the kind of product.

I have found in this category some distinctive trends: products that speak for themselves, or glossy images of happy family life with catching jingle on the British side; humour and/or unrealistic and hyperbolic representations on the Italian side (liquids changed in a "superman" who plunges in the sink, struggles with enormous dirty dishes and finally gives them all nice and clean to the housewife, before flying away towards the sun -which is also the name of the product-); even when people are represented in the house, the atmosphere is often artificial, colours and style of decoration are quite unnatural, cool, aseptic even more than the quality of the product they present.

A semantic field commonly associated with cleansing products in the two countries is that of "technology": powders are "automatic", detergents "scientifically" eliminate stains and so on. As well as environmental concern, and even more than that, science and technology are considered universal and positive values, which, even if apparently out of place for certain kind of products, yet offer a way to deal with delicate or unpleasant themes (like the everyday routine of cleaning) by avoiding other semantic fields that could have had counter-effecting implicature: this is what many author call "generative metaphor" (cleansing is not doing a dirty and routine job, but putting technology into action).

Moreover in this way women are not inferior to men in the use of the latest technologies, but their participation is confined to their "realm", the house.

On the matter of cleansing and homework the general tendency in both groups of examples is quite similar: specific semantic fields are activated (and others avoided), so that specific

(positive) connotations can be worked out; the textual means employed (images, voice over etc), even if not directly pertinent to the field of discourse, are yet functional to the reinforcement and (closure) of the semantic field (inasmuch as they create taken for granted associations). This in turn is the basis upon which pragmatic consequences are worked out and conversational implicature, in Gricean terms, "calculated".

This process, which is more complicate to describe than to understand, and which I draw basically from Halliday, also provides a sociosemiotic interpretation of the suggestive although intuitive definition of advertising as self-fulfilling prophecies, as we will see in the conclusions.

TOILETRY AND COSMETICS

Only few remarks for these categories of goods, which are mainly related to women, as I have already explored many aspects of the representation of women in product advertisements, and the point at this stage is not the analytical description of the world represented in advertising, but rather a global evaluation and comparison of the main themes associated with products, and of the relation between semantic, pragmatic, textual elements as they appear in the advertising discourse considered as a whole.

Again, some quantitative considerations to start with: toiletry products in Italian adverts appear as much as three times more than in Britain, and cosmetics nearly twice.

Moreover, the bulk of cosmetic advertisements in the UK is in December (the 13,9% of the total ads for that month, while in the other 5 months it spanned between 0.6 in January and 1.8 in

October), while in Italy the presence of adverts for cosmetics is more fairly distributed across the fall-winter period (between October and January the percentage varies from 4% to 6.8%, the peak being in November).

Another feature of the commercials in the two countries can be significant: in Britain cosmetics are not only mainly advertised in December, but also they are almost exclusively perfumes (to be purchased as Christmas gifts); in Italy advertisements for cosmetics include a wide range of products, from mascara to nail polish, in which women are represented to buy them for themselves.

Unlike in Britain, as far as I know, in Italy there are lot of shops selling cosmetics products only: one of the associate adverts I found in the Italian material was precisely for this kind of shop (called "profumeria"), which promoted the heaven-like character of the place for women who either want to make the most of their look, or to transform themselves.

Which kind of features in the representation of social life can these differences refer to?

There is a difference in time, related to "appropriate moments" I will consider in more detail in the next section.

But there is also a difference in attitude (in British commercials the woman is mainly the "object" of a gift, in Italian adverts the "subject" of an act of purchasing), and also in the relation between women and their appearance on one side and the degree of separation between domestic-social time, or relaxed-busy moments on the other. The distinction is much less sharp on the Italian side, where the ideal represented is that of

a life spent in the very centre of the biggest cities, where one has to be always "on the move", ready to catch any social, cultural, professional occasion that can occur. The kind of woman more frequently represented in cosmetic adverts is a professional woman, a stylish' busy woman who is supposed to perform crucial roles in prestigious job, and always has (and chooses) to be perfect.

I have found that the Italian adverts for cosmetics can be considered according to what Marchand (1985) has called "the parable of first impression": in a historical perspective of advertising themes transformation he recognizes a shift from a 19th century "culture of character" (which "stresses morality and work discipline") to a new "culture of personality" ("which emphasizes the cultivation of one's ability to please others"). What he describes as a "diachronic" tendencies can be synchronically recognized as features of Italian cosmetic adverts: an "emphasis on externals of appearance and the accessories of sociability"; a "heavy reliance on instantly recognizable displays of status calculated to create a desired impression", as "the larger scale and relative impersonality of business and social life invited decisions based on anonymous judgements and quick impressions" (1985:209).

Important occasions can come at any time, and one always has to be prepared to offer quick cues of her character and personality in a world of quick decisions.

This approach to the setting of cosmetics use in Italian commercial refers to at least two different values in respect to British advertisements: the rapid tempo of the age (which in Britain is more frequently associated with particular kind of

goods, especially cars) and the concept of social mobility (if she is able to produce the right impression at the right moment she can make her way successfully, no matter where she comes from (as Marchand remarks "Externals were more significant in a mobile, urban, impersonal society", 1985:214).

The fact that beauty is presented as a personal achievement rather than a "birthright" is another element reinforcing the overall impression of "democracy" in the life contest.

A further difference related to the representation of cosmetics in the two countries concerns the "aesthetic" dimension. Cosmetics are "luxury", superfluous items that one uses without other function than beauty and charm for their own sake, for instance by making her face up (then they are closer to "art" than to "technic"). But whereas in Italian adverts the aesthetic dimension of cosmetics use is mainly represented as the opportunity to "play" with different versions of one's personalities (which is an attitude clearly addressed to women), in British commercials cosmetics (namely perfumes) show an impressive similarity, in representing an attractive woman in a sumptuous dress and lavish jewellery who indulges in the pleasure of adding perfumes to the already gorgeous image of herself (like for instance in "Byzance" and "Opium" adverts).

In the former representation women "exploit" the aesthetic dimension by using cosmetics to transform or enhance themselves 10. In the latter, on the contrary, women are part of the aesthetic image, a component (even if the most important) of a static, fascinating "tableau" which is clearly aimed to affect male rather than female fantasies (as men will be those who

purchase the product). The former is presented as a world of self-expression, the latter as a world, in Roland Barthes' phrase, entirely constituted by the gaze of man.

I am not evaluating the two representations, by saying for instance that in the first example women are supposed to be more "free" to construct their life (as they can also be considered as vulnerable and dependent on the other's judgement of their appearance), or that in the second they are considered as commodities in the same way as the perfume is. I am just recognizing that commercials are referring to different fields of associations, as far as the activity represented and the gender of people addressed are concerned, and also aim to produce different attitudes in the viewer, as the different textual elements testify (dynamic vs static, light vs dark, realistic vs abstract background etc.).

A sharper segregation appears on British commercials, between ordinary (very ordinary) and special (very special, almost magic) occasions, and not the same concern appears about the external appearance as in Italian adverts.

All this contributes to convey a higher impression of formalism in British life: the separation between ordinary and special occasions, and the lower frequency of the latter is such as in every special occasion, precisely for making the extraordinary character clear, certain attitudes, dresses, conversation topics etc. become mandatory. 11

As far as toiletry products are concerned, I also found quite a different approach in the two countries, especially around the following points:

- The quantity of commercials on Italian TV is huge, with has

certainly something to do with the obsession with cleanliness that I have already stressed (as a "domestic" value), but is also entangled with the more "mundane" concern for appearances, which so clearly appears in cosmetic adverts.

The elements of self-enhancement and pleasure on the one side and others' judgement on the other are more balanced than in the British commercials: here in fact the major concern is with social approval and appreciation, and then social backgrounds are more likely to accompany the product, whereas in Italian adverts the dimension of individual (especially female) pleasure is also equally stressed.

- Related to this aspect I found a sharper distinction between cosmetics and toiletry products in British than in Italian commercials, as in the former the element of "removing" is paramount (much more deodorants and products against bad breath, for instance, are advertised); this aspect somehow recalls the fear for other's scrutiny and evaluation, which can result in negative feelings and loss of confidence. The field of association is mainly a negative one, which the product is meant to keep at distance.

On the Italian side, on the contrary, the distinction toiletry products-cosmetics is often blurred, either because the former performs some of the functions normally attributed to the latter (like adding fragrance and charm), or because they produce the same pleasurable effects. Pleasure (of freshness, of fragrance etc) for its own sake is the most frequent reference point, which recalls a positive domain of associations (related to the "self") rather than the phantom of social stigma. 12

TV, VIDEO, COMPUTERS

Very few remarks here, as the analogies, either in the frequency of representation or in the form and content of the adverts largely overcome the differences.

TV sets and videocamera are almost equally represented (1.62% of total advertising output in Britain, 1.69% in Italy), but the relative standing in respect to the other categories of goods and services in the two countries is different: in Britain TV and Video come immediately after domestic durables (1.68%) and before other commonly used goods like animal food and cleansing products; in Italy they show a relatively lower figure, if compared, for instance, with the percentage of other domestic durables (5.20%); they are also the less frequently advertised kind of goods, only second to computers.

This is in a way related to the different consideration the video equipments (especially VCR) enjoy in the two countries: in Britain it is a very popular and widespread kind of commodity, not necessarily a status marker; in Italy it is less diffuse, and only recently its popularity has started to grow.

Another difference, related to the style of the commercials, is the presence of humour (and parody as well) in some of the British commercials (see for instance the adverts for Ferguson VCR and Super Planar TV), which I did not find in Italian commercials.

Apart from these specifics, both kinds of values advocated (latest technological development, superiority of vision, and the like, and the brand name advertised are roughly the same (for the

discussion of a specific case, ITT Nokia, see Chapter 11).

More differentiated is the discourse on computers: in the Italian material I only found one example of PC advert, in the Christmas period, featuring a boy age 15-17 with a broken leg, trying to find a strategy for convincing his parents to buy him a PC as Christmas present: In speaking with a friend on the phone, he suddenly comes out with the idea: with a PC he can regain faster what he has lost at school because of the broken legs. It is a very popular opinion among Italian parents who know nothing about computers that the possession of a PC can help their children to improve their progresses at school, while the lack of it can seriously diminish their chances. The commercial heavily capitalizes on this commonplace and in so doing reinforces it.

In Britain the attitude towards computers is more differentiated, and it is not confined to commercials for PC.

Children and young people appear when computer are shown as a support of videogames programmes (like in an Amstrad advert, where the daughter teaches her father how to use it); but also businessmen are represented in appraising the versatility of the machine (Apple). Moreover, computers appear on commercials for other goods and services, as elements of the setting (like in one of the adverts for "Allied Dunbar" pensions, or in one commercial for "Carlsberg" beer). Women as well as men are shown while using them, which indicates a more widespread diffusion of the product and familiarity with it. Professional and domestic settings are represented, even if the former are prevalent.

NON PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS: FINANCIAL AND PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICES

The sector of services is the one in which the sharpest differences exist between Britain and Italy: in fact in British TV the categories I have called "Financial Services" and "Public Utility Services" are the most recurrent (with a share on total advertising output respectively of 7.8% and 4.9%), only second to "Food" and "Drink", whereas in Italy they represent a very low percentage (0.76% the former, 1.2% the latter).

Then whereas Italian commercials are overwhelming on matter of food, drink, home cleansing and body products, the British ones are much more sensible about more "serious" and "social" issues. It is not my intention to oversimplify the argument, but if I can express the immediate impression I got from setting the two groups of commercials side by side, the Italian material gave me a sense of an overall "hedonistic" attitude (being the emphasis on everything and everyone as nice, clean, smart, happy and bright), also conveying an (even irritating) feeling of superficiality; by contrast the British commercials appeared more sober and, most important, also dealt with the less pleasant aspects of "duty", "responsibility", "limited resources" and so on.

While on the Italian side the stress on "pleasure" makes all the steps to reach the hypothetical happy condition as taken for granted, on the British side commercials recall that even the fact that we can switch the light on in the evening must not be taken for granted, or that starting a new business is like playing snakes and ladders. British commercials in short, especially as far as financial and other services are concerned,

show the other side of the moon, offer a more realistic and down-to-earth perspective.

If on the one side it can be true that the degree of civilization of a society can be worked out by the number of services it offers, on the other it is also probable for the kind of services advertised to be related to the kinds of concerns (and also anxieties) symptomatic of the particular socioeconomic juncture.

I will not analyze in depth here the political and economic situation to which issues appearing in the adverts refer (like rates of unemployment or the strategy of the British government to sell out public sectors to private organizations); it suffices here to say that in the period of recording many of the issues raised in advertising breaks were also the subject matters of news reports, which gave all the British sample of commercials the strong sense of reality (not always a pleasant one) I mentioned above.

As far as PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICES are concerned, the only light-heartedly advertised sector is that of private travel agencies (which target, as also in Italy, is mainly low-middle class), while for other areas like facilities, public transport, telecommunication the main goal seems to be to build awareness with the audience.

Either in the Electricity Board campaign (millions of kettles on the same floor to convey the idea of simultaneous consumption), or in the British Telecom long running campaign, or in the pre-privatization campaign for water (portraying a milkman like character delivering bottles of water door by door), the brief is to question the taken-for-grantedness of services where

use is almost automatically, which sounds slightly at odds with images of luxury and style like those of certain car commercials, for instance.

The textual strategies employed vary from the "educational" style of the electricity campaign (similar to that one would expect to find in morning school programmes), to the slice-of-life of the British Telecom Jewish mother (a campaign which would not have had the same impact on an Italian audience, because of the nationally based character of the stereotype).

No upper class or stylish image are employed here.

Unlike Britain, the range of public utility service advertised in Italy is quite restricted, limited as it is to a campaign for a private travel agency, another for Yellow Pages (very similar to the British one, either in contents or style), and a commercial for answering machines issued by SIP, the Italian equivalent of British Telecom.

The last constitutes quite an interesting example of the inversion of roles and of increasing shift of the nurturant attitude from women to men: a young professional (as can be worked out by some situational cues like furniture, briefcase, style of dressing), but not yet established (as the lack of a "real" secretary testifies), in quitting his office leaves a messages on the phone saying that he is attending an important meeting. But he actually comes back home to bottle-feed his baby son (the mother being presumably at work).

In the example I recorded from the two countries this caring attitude as a male character is more common in British advertisements (from "Maxwell Coffee" to "Scottish Amicable").

The most impressive difference between the two countries lies in the uneven proportion of financial advertisements, which is almost irrelevant in Italy (0.76% of total output), and huge in Britain (financial services being the most advertised category after food and drink).

A further difference is related to the content: the few Italian adverts for financial services represent almost exclusively wealthy families, or **already** affluent (where the brief is "Don't simply put your money in a bank account: make them grow faster with a financial investment").

Most common in British commercials are instead young couples looking for mortgages ("Leeds"), or ordinary families, or men trying to start small business activities and the like (a more down-to-earth kind of target).

Whereas insurances, for instance, are a kind of service advertised on Italian TV, pensions are not. In fact both the State or the private firms provide a pension which entity can vary but which represents quite a safe point of reference (although in some cases a very low one) for many segments of the population. Although it is a widespread custom among independent workers and professionals to invest in a private pension or insurance, TV advertising is not the official source of information, being rather more restrict circles of colleagues or businessmen the place where advice is obtained. This is a case in which advertising does not "reflect" a "real" aspect of social organization of life. The overall image advertisements provide of Italian life is such that financial anxieties do not fit within it (which in turn can reinforce commonplaces like that Italian people like to live "from hand to mouth", or that they know the

art of making the best of every contingent situation, instead of planning their future).

A great concern appears with consuming and "showing", rather than saving, and, only the value of family can occasionally break in and overcome that of pleasure (which is a word obsessively recurring in Italian commercials, together with love, as one might expect from traditional stereotypes).

The huge amount of financial advertisements on British TV determines the necessity for advertisers to differentiate their message by using original intuitions, rather than by "reflecting" a (rather dull) social reality: hence I found "anthropomorphic" attributes ascribed to banks and financial companies (Midlands, the "listening" bank), or real persons who epitomize and stand for the whole financial institution either as individuals, like the far-sighted (in spite of the glasses) Norman of Sun Alliance, or as a team ("Eagle Star").

Men are most frequently represented, either as fathers concerned with the well-being of their family (this is one aspect of the nurturant ethos we mentioned above) or as clients concerned with their new business activity or with their future after the retirement, and always appear in the role of the experts; women are represented as giving advices at bank windows (but also out of work, like in the dinner party of "Friends Provident" pension), sometimes as clients (like in "Freedom" pension) and sometimes as "symbols" for the name (like for "Scottish Widow").

Formal and structural features also vary, from the colour/black and white combination of "Barclays" to the animation of one of

the adverts for "Guardian Royal Exchange". Humour is sometimes present ("Freedom Pension", "Leeds" and, to a lesser extent, "Sun Alliance"), but the basic attitude is to show a "human", caring, organized and up-to-date financial institution to be confident in.

GOVERNMENT

In the material recorded from Italian TV, I did not find any communication from government bodies, thus a comparison is not possible between Italy and Britain (where they represent the 1.04% of global ad output) on this subject. Nevertheless some aspects on the Italian side need to be stressed, as they refer to a similar attitude than that expressed in the categories I labelled "government".

The whole of Italian broadcasting output has been, since the origin, heavily characterized by a pedagogic and paternalistic attitude toward the audience (as we have seen in the part on Italian TV system), which has gradually lost intensity after the irruption of private channels, but still remains, especially in some qualified and institutional tribunes, like that of the News on RAI 1. TV adverts do not seem to be a suitable scene for official communication.

On the contrary, the British Government makes use of advertising breaks for conveying messages about public concern issues, especially those topics located on the uncertain boundary between individual morality and public security, like drinking and driving, drug, AIDS. Even if the basic attitude of the present government is towards promoting competition and self-

regulation in many sectors of the economic and social life (which shifts away from its competence and the concern with many forms of financial commitment, from pensions for individual citizens to funds for the Universities), the pedagogic and paedocratic attitude remains on matter of "moral" issues, especially as far as they can become social plagues.

The language used for conveying the messages is always very essential, the images even crude, the style documentary-like (black-white is used in two of the campaigns). Simplicity and straightforwardness are the main features of the rhetoric of reality the present government seems to like most.

NON PRODUCT AND DIFFERENT FORMS OF ADVERTISEMENTS

In analyzing the features of the material I was interested in seeing whether non-standard (that is brand-product) types of advertisements were present, and if so in what proportion, in the two countries.

I was particularly interested in the one I called "Associate" advertising, inasmuch as it seemed to presuppose a particular perspective on the market economy, based on solidarity of specific group of producers rather than competition of individuals.

As I expected the proportion was higher on Italian TV (which tells something, in my opinion, of a certain organization of the economy in small family business rather than big concentrations).

Also collective adverts are more common in Italy than they are in Britain, even if figures are low in both countries.

Corporate adverts are almost equally present in the two

countries, for almost the same kind of products (the most common being Esso).

The relation between these non standard forms of advertising is sketched in the schema below.

	PRODUCT	NON PRODUCT	(BRAND) NAME	IMAGE
ASSOCIATE	*			*
COLLECTIVE	*		*	
CORPORATE		*	*	*

PERIODICITY OF CONSUMPTION

As far as the representation of social reality is concerned, "time" is a crucial variable, both as "frequency" of occurrence (certain goods appear more frequently than others) and as time represented (or appropriateness of certain products for certain

moments of the day, of the year, of one's life and so on).

In fact, while a comparison of the main categories of goods and services in the two countries (and of the "quantity" of them) can tell something about specific national patterns of consumption and hence discrepancies in social values (e.g. more raw ingredients in Italian adverts and more prepared food in Britain can be related, as we have seen, to a different emphasis on the consideration of meals as social occasions and most of all on the identification food preparation/family love), it also allows another set of considerations, given the span of six month of the recording procedure.

In fact on the one hand the **frequency** of the occurrence of the spots for each category of goods is a significant variable, as far as the "value" of goods and the recurrence of their use are concerned: one can assume that the more frequently one good appears, the less valuable, or at least exclusive (in terms of prestige, price, status) it is, and, conversely, the more common it is (in terms of use, utility, essentialness). In Douglas-Isherwood terms, there is an inverse relation between the frequency in the use of certain objects, and their "identification value" (their capability to mark special occasions) and prestige.

Even if this can be true for products like food, drinks, cleansing agents there are, as we have seen, differences in the two countries related to other categories: cars, for instance, although an expensive good, appear frequently in Italian adverts; on the other hand financial services, although demanding in terms of investments, are heavily advertised on TV.

But I have already made some comments upon this "quantitative" (frequency being the rate of occurrences in a given period) and "extratextual" temporality (that is related to the number of repeats rather than to the time represented in/by the text).

On the other hand a further dimension results from the comparative analysis which is related to the **cyclical** character of consumption, the referring to patterns of consumption happening repeatedly and routinely (eating, cleansing) and to more crucial events in the year (Christmas, summer holidays, car registration); also a **linear** dimension of temporality can be acknowledged, related to the representation of events that happen (or should happen) once in life, and can be seen as "stages" of one's existence like wedding, retirement and so on.

I assume that all dimension of temporal representation are relevant and meaningful features of adverts as far as their social significance is concerned: in fact those features are both "referential" (as they represent, which is not the same as "reflect", certain patterns of consumption and life organization typical of a certain society in a certain period) and "paradigmatic" (as they offer themselves as examples and models of what they represent).

The temporal dimensions represented by advertisements can be summarized according to the following schema:

TEMPORALITY IN ADVERTISEMENTS

TIME	INDIVIDUAL	COLLECTIVE
LINEAR	one's life (wedding, father- motherhood)	one's culture (youth, adult age)
CYCLICAL	one's day (ordinary routine)	the year (special events)

Like every distinction, the schema above is in a sense an arbitrary simplification: in fact, for instance, ordinary (periodical) routine is collectively experienced; but different emphasis is given by ad texts on daily tasks and rituals (where individuals act on their own, especially in British adverts as we have seen) and special moment of the year, where social bonds and collective behaviour are particularly stressed (even if it is not always the case: while this is true for Christmas, it does not hold for car registration, for instance). Broadly speaking, as it also results from the paragraph on "drinks", ferial time is mainly individual, while festal time is collective.

As far as linear temporality is concerned, other variables beside cultural ones can be envisaged as related to the temporal dimension collectively experienced, like particular economic events determining the presence of new products and services (e.g. government decisions of privatization).

Mainly financial and public utility services appear related to linear temporality on British TV: starting a new job, getting a mortgage, preparing a quiet retirement are all stages in one's life that sometimes need a financial support (or a specific training). This aspect clearly appears from British advertisements, whereas is totally absent from Italian TV.

As for cyclical temporality not only "cultural", but also

"institutional" events appear as related to patterns of consumption: gift giving is a cultural manifestation of Christmas time (explicitly referred to), while the frequency of car adverts in particular moments of the year is rather related to the institutional organization of social life, that schedules registration in a specific time (namely January in Italy and August in Britain).

Individual and collective temporality are clearly connected and mutual influencing, although the latter seems to regulate the former, rather than the opposite.

The most evident findings are related to the advertisements recorded in December, and the comparative framework is particularly useful for underlying the individual cultural specifics, and avoiding arbitrary generalizations.

Toiletry products (especially soaps and creams) and cosmetics reach in fact their highest frequency in December on British TV, but the comparison shows that this trend cannot be generalized: in fact on Italian TV cosmetics are advertised throughout the year, while toiletry products are among the less advertised in this period. December is not (at least in the representation of advertising) a moment of particular enhancement of one's appearance (as it is in Britain), because it is always the case.

It is rather a period of family life (food appears in the 24.02% of ads, against the 9.09% on British TV), of joy and relaxation (in both countries the figures for drink are higher than in the rest of the year).

Another difference appears from the comparison: domestic durables are heavily advertised on British TV, and hardly on Italian TV in this period. If we look to the kind of adverts a

possible explanation comes to the fore: in fact in Italy domestic durables are mainly targeted to women and related to the domestic duties (which have a period of vacancy in Christmas holidays), while in Britain, they are mostly addressed to men, as they include various items related to do-it-yourself activities (men are supposed to perform especially during the holiday).

The "special" character of Christmas time also explains why in this period the category "others" is very high in both countries (as gift items, plays and games are more advertised than primary goods), as well as categories like TV, Video, computers.

I am not saying that the presence and frequency of goods alone is sufficient to tell something about the organization of social life: in fact only because of the comparative framework I can sketch some hypotheses on the relation between patterns of consumption represented and social reality.

Moreover certain findings cannot be explained if one ignores cultural and religious traditions: for instance the lowest figure of food in Italy is related to Lent, a period of sobriety and even fast for the catholic majority of Italian citizens.

But what I intend to emphasize in this paragraph is less the "content" of cultural specifics related to temporality, most of which are obvious (chocolate and perfumes in Xmas time in Britain, for instance, or travel agencies during holiday time), and the other have already been commented in the comparison of data; my principal aim here is rather to support the referential dimension of commercials (which characters will be specified in the conclusions of this work) which is the condition, in my opinion, of their semantic and pragmatic value .

In fact the semantic horizon circumscribed by ad texts (unlike, for instance, poetic texts) can only be recognized and make sense if texts themselves are supposed to tell something about "real" life (which does not mean they must be "realistic" in the sense that they "reproduce" reality) and/or to be pertinent to the moment of the year in which they occur (this is why, for instance, the same spot can be repeated for a short period but also for more than one year, like an Italian ad for Volvo), or to fit easily with the routines of everyday life (no WC cleansing agents at mealtimes).

I agree in part with Fiske (1989) when he says that popular texts (and advertisements among them) are per se "impoverished" and not self-sufficient objects and that they are resources to be used rather than objects to be admired. For this reason Fiske argues: "Because of their incompleteness, all popular texts have leaky boundaries; they flow into each other, they flow into everyday life" (1989:126).

And, one could also add, everyday life flows into them, as they tend to provide ready made models, as well as representations, of behaviour and interaction in a range of situations. According to Fiske, then, "Intertextual competence is central to the popular productivity of creating meaning from texts". (1989:125)

I believe that intertextual elements are crucial to the viewers' understanding of adverts, and I have tried to make this point clear (and to support it) especially in the analysis of car commercials and transnational campaigns.

But I think Fiske stretches things too far when, in criticizing any "aesthetic" approach that considers texts as "freezed", self-sufficient objects he concludes that "all texts are incomplete

and can be studied only intertextually and in their mode of reception" (ibidem 123. My emphasis).

I partly disagree with Fiske's position precisely because I believe that it is not the object of analysis that determines the method of inquiry (so that only high culture deserves an aesthetic approach while popular culture must be approached in a different way), but rather the interest of the analyst: popular culture can be studied "aesthetically" (especially if one gives the term the wider connotation of synergy of form and content), even if aesthetics alone cannot (presumably) "decipher" popular culture in all its aspects.

In my opinion, and it is what I have tried to support in my analysis, texts can be considered as meaningful representations of social values, tendencies, topoi, although they do not signify "per se": but one thing is to say that texts are self-sufficient objects (with all meanings, including the preferred, already encoded), and another (equally partial, in my view) that texts are meaningless except in the context of their reception.

For the sake of brevity I will list below a sketch of the main points of disagreement in respect to Fiske's position on popular culture, which also explain the role of a (although brief) paragraph on the periodicity of consumption.

- Adverts, inasmuch as "popular", certainly present what Fiske calls "textual poverty", as they are full of gaps that need to be filled by viewers' competence (of other texts; of social conventions and so on). But, and there is not necessarily contradiction between the two statements, they also possess a kind of "textual richness" as they are, we have seen, a

distillation of display-acts, rituals, commonplaces, conventions that characterize a given society in a particular moment.

In other words poverty and richness are relative concepts (in this case: poverty in respect to an "ideal" of text as perfect object - supported while opposed, in my view - and richness in respect to a "functional" as well as referential concept of text as a way to represent social reality).

- Adverts are not meaningful per se: but what kind of other elements have to be taken into account? Fiske says: intertextuality and modes of reception. I agree (I personally I have tried to focus on the first, while scholars like Morley mainly on the second), but they are not the only ones.

I believe that an exclusive emphasis on intertextuality and use makes the text disappear, with a shift from textual determinism to textual insignificance. In my opinion other aspects of "context" need to be considered, which I have tried to point to in my analysis, among which the extra-textual world that is referred to and addressed. Commercials, I believe, are not meaningful per se, but only for someone in a precise situation (or differently for different people in different contexts) precisely because of their referential value. They address a given social reality by trying to speak its own language and to present situations that can be understood in a given context. In other words, the fact that adverts tend to circumscribe a semantic horizon and engage the viewers according to precise strategies must not be disregarded, also (and especially) if one is interested in the sites of possible "struggle" between closure and openness and the instances of "semiotic resistance".

- Advertisements are not only semantically consistent (that is

they create their own world, or they offer themselves to the viewer for creating his own world), but they are generally pragmatically appropriate, that is they are constructed so as to fit within a shared view of the world and conventional patterns of life organization: they refer to a structured world by addressing people engaged in structured and patterned activities, and in so doing they support and legitimate the activities themselves (what Schudson calls commercial realism). In order to be effective (which is their main purpose, it is worth remembering) adverts have to "hook" the reality we live in, although with scattered and thin ropes, in Putnam's expression. And the representational function of certain visual or verbal cliches, or "generative" (as opposed to merely formal or ornamental) rhetoric devices and other textual means with a semantic and pragmatic value is precisely what I am interested in. On the other hand also merely structural and extra-textual elements (like frequency of spots for certain goods) can have a referential function, which is not a one-to-one correspondence, but a meaningful relation.

Although the focus of my analysis is the semantic and pragmatic value of advertisements as it results by the examination of textual means in a comparative analysis, I am also interested in the possibility to approach adverts from a perspective that explodes the traditional dichotomy structural/content analysis (both of them text-bound) and tries instead to consider the complexity of contextual that elements which influence interpretation of adverts and thus perception of social reality.

The time of consumption, either represented by texts or by

their frequency and scheduling time, is one of the contextual variables that both tell something about the organization of social life and offer themselves to the viewers to assess, or legitimate, a code of appropriateness that connects consumption and lifetime.

It is not my aim to study this relation in depth here, but only to sketch an outline of the pragmatic implications of textual aspects as well as elements of broadcasting policy, in order to suggest at least a direction toward a study of ad texts that takes into account, and tries to specify, contextual as well as textual elements.

This is why the empirical analysis has been preceded by a long discussion on different aspects of text interpretation: even when I could not deal extensively with issues related to my research, although important, I have tried to indicate the other possible and complementary directions of inquiry.

This in a sense, relativizes my analysis in showing how many elements can be considered which are not treated in depth here, but also contextualizes it, in providing at least some suggestions for integrating the partial (inescapably partial, in my opinion) point of view.

CHAPTER 9: THE CASE OF CAR ADVERTISEMENTS

"Until now the ultimate in cars belonged rather to the bestiary of power; here it becomes at once more spiritual and more object...It is now more homely, more attuned to this sublimation of the utensil which one also finds in the design of contemporary households equipment...One is obviously turning from an alchemy of speed to a relish in driving". Barthes 1957:89

THE SAMPLE

The material for the analysis has been videorecorded from ITV and C4 in Britain and RAI1, RAI2, CANALE 5 in Italy, between the beginning of October 1988 and the end of March 1989 for one week each month.

In both countries the schedule time for the collection of the material is around the evening news (peak time).

The grid has been applied to car advertisements, and the sample collected includes 31 different spots from British TV and 49 from Italian TV.

Repeats of the same commercial have not been considered.

Here is a list of the spots, together with the duration and the period of registration:

BRITAIN

- 1 FIAT TIPO ("Taxi Driver") 30" October 1988
- 2 FIAT TIPO ("The Competitor's Test") 30" October 1988
- 3 FIAT TIPO ("Long Distance Call") 30" October 1988
- 4 AUSTIN METRO 60" October 1988
- 5 VAUXHALL CAVALIER 90" October 1988
- 6 RENAULT 5 ("Faithful") 30" October 1988
- 7 FORD GRANADA 60" October 1988
- 8 CITROEN AX 5 Doors 30" " "
- 9 PEUGEOT 405 (Launch campaign) 40" October 1988
- 10 VW PASSAT 30" October 1988
- 11 VAUXHALL NOVA 30"
- 12 FORD Different models 30" November 1988
- 13 PEUGEOT 405 (follow-up campaign) 60" November 1988
- 14 FORD SIERRA 30" December 1988
- 15 RENAULT 5 ("Sarah") 30" December 1988
- 16 AUSTIN MONTEGO 1.6L 30" January 1989
- 17 CITROEN BX GTI 60" January 1989
- 18 AUSTIN METRO GTA 60" January 1989
- 19 NISSAN BLUEBIRD 2.0i 60" " "
- 20 VOLVO 340 30" January 1989
- 21 AUDI COUPE 60" January 1989
- 22 PEUGEOT 205 60" February 1989
- 23 VAUXHALL CORPORATE 40" February 1989
- 24 VAUXHALL SENATOR 30" February 1989
- 25 FIAT TIPO ("Opera") 60" February 1989
- 26 RENAULT 19 60" February 1989
- 27 VW GOLF 60" February 1989
- 28 ROVER 800 FASTBACK 60" March 1989
- 29 VW POLO ("Beauty Farm") 60" March 1989
- 30 FIAT CROMA TURBO 60" March 1989
- 31 NISSAN SUNNY 10" March 1989

ITALY

- 1 ROVER 820 FASTBACK 30" October 1988
- 2 ALFA 75 30" October 1989
- 3 RENAULT SUPER 5 (testimonial) 30" October 1988
- 4 Y 10 30" October 1988
- 5 Y 10 30" (series) October 1988
- 6 VW POLO 60" October 1988
- 7 FIESTA FRIEND 30" October 1988
- 8 ALFA 33 Sport Wagon 30" October 1988
- 9 CITROEN BX (Special discount initiative) 30" October 1988
- 10 VW GOLF 10" October 1988
- 11 FORD ESCORT VOYAGER 30" October 1988
- 12 CITROEN AX (Special Discount Initiative) 30", October 1988
- 13 FIAT TIPO ("Londra, Settembre 1988"), 30" November 1988
- 14 FIAT TIPO ("Un circuito di prova") 30" November 1988
- 15 FIAT TIPO ("Roma, ottobre 1988) 30" November 1988
- 16 AUDI 30" November 1988
- 17 PEUGEOT 405 SW 30" November 1988
- 18 VW PASSAT 60" November 1988
- 19 RENAULT SUPER 5 (testimonial) November 1988
- 20 RENAULT 19 30" November 1988
- 21 RENAULT ESPACE 30" December 1988
- 22 RENAULT CHEROKEE 30" December 1988
- 23 PEUGEOT 205 jr 30" December 1988
- 24 SEAT IBIZA 30" December 1988
- 25 OPEL VECTRA 30" January 1989
- 26 ALFA 33 BOXER 30" January 1989
- 27 FORD ESCORT GREEN 30" January 1989
- 28 BMW serie 3 20" January 1989
- 29 BMW " " " " "
- 30 BMW " " " " "
- 31 CITROEN AX DIESEL 30" January 1989
- 32 HYUNDAI PONY 6" January 1989
- 33 RENAULT SUPER 5 Spot festival ("Il sequestro") 30" January 89
- 34 ALFA 75 20" February 1989
- 35 ALFA 75 20" February 1989
- 36 CITROEN AX-BX (Special discount initiative) 30" February 1989
- 37 RENAULT SUPER 5 Spot festival ("Il piccione") " "
- 38 RENAULT 21 30" February 1989
- 39 RENAULT SUPER 5 Spot Festival ("Harakiri") 30" February 1989
- 40 FIAT UNO 40" February 1989
- 41 RENAULT SUPER 5 Spot festival ("Dune Ski") 20" February 1989
- 42 OPEL CORSA 30" March 1989
- 43 RENAULT 21 NEVADA 30" March 1989
- 44 CITROEN AX-BX 30" March 1989
- 45 RENAULT SUPER 5 Spot Festival ("Vita da cani") 30" March 89
- 46 VW GOLF ("Changes") 30" March 1989
- 47 Y 10 (testimonial: Gullit) 20" March 1989
- 48 Y 10 (testimonial: de Sio) 20" " "
- 49 Y 10 (testimonial: Scotti) 20" " "

METHOD AND GRID FOR THE ANALYSIS

What I have tried to avoid, in the analysis of car advertisements, is an attitude I find widespread among authors writing on advertising, especially when problems like "meaning" and "interpretation" are faced: I refer to what Rieder calls "narrative presumptuousness" (1990). According to Rieder this is a character common to many of the authors (including Bourdieu) who study the uses of languages by different social groups; *but* it seems appropriate for many analyses of advertising and its impact on social reality as well. In fact, beside sometimes brilliant insights into the subject matter, the analysis of advertising often presents a good deal of presumption, that is provision on the interpretative process which results rather from the generalization of the analyst's interpretation than from intersubjective and textual evidences:

"Absent the production of specific, practical evidence, the analysts must rely on his or her own language to validate their (...) attribution. As a result, the rhetoric procedures of the analyst -rhetoric of assertion, the tendency toward tautology and the primacy of translation - come to overshadow the concrete experience of the folk actors who are the object of the analysis" (Rieder, 1990:207).

I am convinced, and this is an epistemological assumption whose discussion is beyond the scope of this work, that an "objective" description of phenomena is impossible, that any description is also an interpretation, and that different

methodologies of analysis bring about different descriptions of the same phenomenon (none of which is necessarily better or more "true" than the others).

This is not the same as to say that no reality exists beyond our interpretative paradigms (relativity being an attribute of the paradigms, rather than of reality). I also believe that an effect of the observer on the facts observed is unavoidable; in other words every description, together with "the facts", also represents/reflects the attitude of the subject who is describing them.

Nevertheless to admit the relative and incomplete character of (any) analytical framework is not the same as (and it not necessarily involves) to fill the gaps personally and to generalize the subjective interaction with the text (which is an act of narrative presumptuousness: my story of interaction with the text becomes the story of the text when it meets anybody).

In my opinion a relevant proportion of the literature on advertising suffers from this limitation, which the present analysis aims, at least in part, to overcome, if only because of the attempt to find intersubjective (comparative) evidences.

The material has been coded according to a prearranged grid (which I will describe and comment below), then it has been analyzed according to two main foci of interest:

- The interaction and mutual constitution of the textual, semantic and pragmatic levels.
- The search for a sort of "tellability index", or range of "topoi" which relevance appears as socially legitimized and conventionally associated with specific fields of discourse; and, at the same time, an inquiry into the most recurrent forms of

representation of physical and social reality, which become the "natural" way to perceive them, so as to determine expectations and frames of approach to the real experience.

Following Funkhouser and Shaw (1990) I will call these two aspects micro and macro agenda-setting:

"More important than the media's ability to affect public opinion on specific issues via content may be their potential to comprehensively distort entire cultural world views via synthetic experience (...) We suggest the term 'micro agenda-setting' for the ability of mass media, through emphasis on content, to influence public perception of the relative importance of specific issues. The potential of electronic media to colour, distort, and perhaps even draw an entire cultural world view, by presenting images of the world suited to the agenda of the media (...) we might term 'macro agenda-setting'. This process involves analogous variables: systematic deviation of media depiction from the observable, everyday reality; actual characteristic of everyday reality; and changes in public perceptions of physical and social reality" (1990:85-86).

The interplay of form and content is certainly not stated here for the first time: McLuhan already stressed the deep embeddedness of the content in the form, or "the content of the form", in equating medium and message, not to speak of previous theorizations in linguistics (like Hjelmslev's formalism) .

More recently concepts have been coined that refer to the deep relation between the semantic level and the formal-aesthetic one within advertising discourse ; Kloepfer, for instance (in Umiker-Sebeok 1987) calls it "sympraxis": the referential side of the text does not perform an informative-mimetic function, but rather aims to a kind of communication which is at once "involving/sensuous/phatic/creatively engaged" (1987:125).

In my analysis I have considered a semiotic aspect (some elements of the textual "structure" as relevant to the communicative exchange with the receiver), but I have also tried

to take into account the dialectic between what (and how) is present in the text and what the text refers to (either represented or implicated). I have found the comparative framework paramount to grasp the referential aspect of adverts, as I will try to explain below (and in the conclusions).

My global perspective then is close to Halliday's social semiotics, particularly to the idea of the mutual constitution of the semantic level (the field of discourse), the textual (mode) and the pragmatic one (tenor).

The grid for the analysis includes a number of heterogeneous variables, yet my aim is not exhaustiveness (even at the descriptive level); I am rather interested (basically) in the way in which textual elements (the relevance of which is established both on the basis of textual and comparative evidences) presuppose while reinforcing a competence on social relevant issues (topoi) and on the way in which features of textual organization as well as content contribute to this end.

In fact some of the variables are more related to the textual structure, others to the contents and typical situations recurrently associated to car adverts, whereas other (more "qualitative" and then arbitrary) try to identify some aspects of the context represented, constructed and implicated by the texts considered.

Here is a list of the variable considered, followed by a more detailed justification of each single item.

GRID FOR THE ANALYSIS OF CAR ADVERTISEMENTS

STRUCTURE Music ; Jingle ; dialogue ; V.O. (M F)
 characters (1 2 +2); end comment (visual verbal
 editing (plain fast) ; logo

STYLE Narrative (1 lifestyle - 2 slice of life - 3 test -
 4 other)
 Mood
 Design
 Humour
 Spectacle

DISCOURSE STRATEGY Rational-informative ; Factual ; Non rational
 Relation product-brand
 Relation Product/Person/Setting
 "Gender" of the car (M F N)
 Target: National ; Transnational

PRODUCT In use (yes - no)
 Instrumental use (yes - no)
 Only outside view (yes - no)

PHYSICAL SETTING Abstract
 Realistic (Urban - non urban)
 Unrealistic

SOCIAL SETTING Prevalent gender (M F Mix)
 Interaction (yes no)
 Activity (Domestic ; Work ; Leisure)

PERSONS User (M F)
 Other relevant (M F)
 Credibility basis (1 testimonial - 2 expert - 3
 status - 4 other)
 Relation to the product (1 self-enhancement - 2
 social approval - 3 affective -
 4 utilitarian - 5 pleasure - 6
 other
 Viewer: directly summoned (yes no)
 by audio by video

CONTEXT Interactional: CAG in the text (yes no)
 CAG with the viewer (yes no)
 Intertextual (yes no)
 Transnational (yes no)

The grid makes it possible for many of the variables to mark just a presence or an absence. Where the range of possibilities is wider, numerical progression has been used.

Very few elements have been coded under **structure**: other structural aspects (like the direct interpellation of the viewer) are present elsewhere in the grid (in this case as modalities of interaction).

On the other hand some elements coded under structure (like presence and number of characters) could also have appeared in the "content" section (their presence here depends on the relation with the structural element of dialogue): again, elements of content and structure are deeply intermingled, and every distinction is in a way arbitrary and tentative.

The narrative character itself, coded under **style**, is also part of the structural organization of the text: but if we intend "style" in a general sense as a formal property of the text which shapes the content while bearing some relations with the social and cultural context in which it is used, as Chatman did (in a sense close to the concept of "register" in Halliday) the categorization makes sense:

"What is **style**? Among other things, it has been used to refer to the idiosyncratic manner of an individual or group; or to a

small-scale formal property of the text; or to a kind of extra or heightened expressiveness, present in non literary language as well; or to a decorum based on social or cultural context" (1971:XI).

Within the narrative model (the most typical in advertising, especially in, the form of hyper-condensed narrations or "scripts") various forms of occurrence can be recognized: with **lifestyle** a glossy representation of exclusive people engaged in exclusive activities and/or against exclusive settings is intended (which Eco calls "logic of quality"); **slice of life** is also typical of TV adverts, and is characterized by a presumed fidelity to the real life (impression of verisimilitude which in fact implies a great deal of idealization and hyper-ritualization). And whereas in the first case the social class represented is "de rigueur" the upper class, in the second it is mainly not the case.

A further narrative form, typical of advertising discourse since its origins, is **test**: under this category fall only the explicit cases of cars' test, on race track, under the supervision of some kind of "experts", accompanied by data and technical information on the vehicle's performances to appear; the number of spot based on the mere exhibition of the car's achievements in difficult driving conditions are listed elsewhere (for instance under "spectacle").

Different narrative forms have been listed as "other".

Mood is one of the most characterizing elements, as far as the sample is concerned, which includes references to the emotional and affective sphere of the subjects represented and of the receivers, rather than directly to the product and its intrinsic features. Mood does not necessarily go with a narrative form (an

example being the number of spots based on a videoclip-like format); yet more often than not it appears within the first two narrative modalities. Mood can both "colour" a realistic representation or "surrealistic" texts (see VW Polo Italy, October 1988).

Design denotes a category of texts in which aesthetic, pictorial, graphic values, those which determine the "impact" of the image, constitute the essence of the text: the spots are characterized by the absence of people and by the presence in tight shots of the car and its parts, by unusual angles and shots, by the sophisticated use of black and white, light and dark, by the search for effects of "abstraction", geometric design, sharpness of lines (which are mainly functional to the emphasis on technology, as we will see).

Humour seems to be a feature more appropriate for other, less expensive kinds of products, as its effectiveness in promoting the image and sales of goods is still a controversial point. ¹ Another point needs to be emphasized, in my opinion: humour is, more than other stylistic aspects, culturally specific, that is deeply rooted in manners, idioms, fashions heavily dependent on national and often even local traits: then in an age of transnational advertising campaigns, humour seems to be difficult to deal with, if the impact of the text has to be as wide as possible. To consider in which cases and in which ways humour appears in advertisements for expensive and often transnational advertised goods like cars can be an interesting point to look for, in the perspective of this study. In fact humour covers a large spectrum of discursive forms, from irony to puns, from lapsus to equivocations, all of which require an active

cooperation from the receiver in order to fill the gap between what is said and what is implicated.

I don't think that to recover the intention of the "author" of the message can exhaust the activity of interpretation. Nevertheless it can be a necessary condition when humoristic texts are at stake, as the polysemy is very limited, and if one does not grasp the intention, one can hardly make sense of the message.

Finally, the **spectacular** element is the most explicit (even if it also presents a cultural connotation: what is perceived as spectacular in one culture it is not necessarily so in another) even if multifaceted in the ways of enhancing the impact of the image: from striking angle of shot to impressive and unsafe locations, from special effects to computer enhancement and so on.

The elements of style listed above are by no way mutually exclusive, but rather combined in various ways in the texts analyzed.

The group of variables constituting the **discursive strategy** are the last of the section of the grid more focused on the textual-structural-formal elements (although a sharp distinction is pointless as well as impossible), preceding the one on contents.

The basic distinction is between three kinds of strategy that I have called rational-informative, factual and non rational. The first two share a strong referential and mimetic character, yet are different. The **rational-informative** is a very common strategy in advertisements for cars (and in advertising in

general) and closely recalls that of the real "salesman": the car is often motionless, the setting is either abstract or directly represents a car dealer (Metro GB), the voice over (rigorously male) enumerates the features and performances of the car in providing the viewer with "rational" evidences (that is socially credited with reasonableness) in order to encourage the purchase. The reasons vary from utilitarian (saving petrol, low cost of the car, favourable terms of payment, wide range of optionals for no extra cost and so on), to value-oriented (stressing aspects like safety, reliability, versatility and the like). Protagonist of the spot, like in a shop-window, is always the car: when other characters appear, they certainly have a secondary role (the driver, for instance, is mainly "invisible", impersonal).

Factual strategy denotes instead a kind of presentation of the car "in action", where the focus is not (at least explicitly) on the car itself: the car is usually part of a narrative plot, and the human characters assume a relevant role (in many cases the car is but a means for driving somebody, carrying somebody, helping somebody to reach his/her goals and so on).

Mood is usually a typical stylistic feature that colours this strategy, and technical information are unobtrusively provided. Factual strategy provides information, but the information relates less to the car in itself than to the kind of people who are supposed to use it, their style, the activities in which they are engaged, the situations in which they find themselves and so on: a surplus of information in respect to that strictly confined to the qualities of the product is a distinguishing feature of those "neo-informative" advertisements.

I have called **non-rational** the spots which core is the relation subject-car, a relation which has nothing to do with technology, or safety, but is rather imbued with affective connotations (the car is given human qualities, and becomes the term of the affective relation, or is represented as a "cocoon" that contains and hides-shelters interpersonal relations or individual emotions), with "magic" power (it can affect a metamorphosis of the driver in allowing him/her to reach aspirations like success, freedom, love), with desire and pleasure (terms like "passion", "pleasure" and the like are more recurrent than one could imagine, not to speak of the equation car-woman).

None of the three models is such as to exclude the others; on the contrary, they mostly come in combination (the rarest, but not impossible, being that rational-informative/non rational blend: the Italian campaign for BMW is in fact a case in point, as we will see).

Another variable I have considered relevant to the perspective of the research is the **relation product-brand**, especially when the product capitalizes on a reputation builded in long-running successful campaigns based on a single, easily identifiable (and identifying) point, which involves intertextual references and allows textual ellipsis to be filled by the viewer's competence.

A further element to be taken into account is the shifting balance between the variables of **product**, **person** (user) and **setting** (both physical and social). The last element, half-way between content and form (especially if one thinks the "abstract" settings) also reveals some connections with the kind of strategy brought into play: many of the commercials following

a "rational" strategy, in fact, tend to emphasize the relation car-physical setting, whereas non rational arguments incline to favour instead the association product-person.

Finally I will consider the **gender** of the machine and the **national** or **transnational** character of the target. The second element is the easiest to evaluate: many campaigns for cars are conceived to be broadcast in more than one country, and in fact some of the commercials recorded appeared both on British and Italian TV. Whether a campaign is produced for one single country or for different ones is relevant to the textual means, which one could expect, for instance, less keen on cultural specifics and more stereotyping (I will deal specifically with the different aspects of transnational advertising, including car adverts, in Chapter 10).

As far as **gender** is concerned some clarifications seem opportune. First of all a distinction needs to be stressed between gender of the driver, of the car and of the target of the advert, as the three hardly coincide (the voice over constitutes a further variable).

McLuhan in The Mechanical Bride already emphasized the deep relation between the mechanization of erotism and the "organicization" of machines, for both of which he holds true a practice he names "cultural dynamic of substitutable parts" (which has something to do, in my opinion, with the considerations Goffman and others after him have done on the "dissection" of the female body in advertising). McLuhan also stressed the "feminine" role played by the car in the life of the male driver, as the title of the book suggests.

Among the "apocalyptic" (according to a categorization proposed

by Eco) scholars writing in the 60's stands Vance Packard, with his triple "invective", tinged with misogynic tones, against the hidden persuaders, the status-seekers, and the waste-makers (the General Motors). In his trilogy, as Hebdige put it, Packard carried along

" a series of analogies between the decline of the 'real' solid/masculine/functional aspect of American industrial design which symbolise the pioneer spirit, and the complementary rise of the 'fantastic'/feminine/decorative elements which symbolise consumer decadence. The fact that terms taken from women's fashion are beginning to infiltrate the language of automobile design is cited as evidence of a more general decline in standards (...).The sinister nature of these developments is inferred through the connection between General Motors' success and the investment in styling which is itself indicative of the 'feminization' or 'emasculatation' of American society (...). Misogynist values are thus relayed mechanically through the medium of objects and attitudes toward objects. The marking out of sexual difference moves along a chain which is constantly slipping: man/woman: work/pleasure: production/consumption: function/form." (1988:87).

The "gender" of the car seems then less an arbitrary concept than one could imagine: as Goffman emphasized, "gender" is a notion less dependent on biological and "essential" characters than on cultural stereotypes individuals align themselves with in order to "show" their sexual identity (the concept of "display"). Cultural stereotypes heavily affect the definition of "feminine" and "masculine", also as far as cars are concerned: power, safety, adventure, technology, engineering are usually (hard) male features, whereas charm, passion, capriciousness, practicality are almost certainly (soft) female attributes (other contextual features favour the identification; where the gender is not specified or not relevant it is classified as "neuter").

As for the product, whether it is in use or stands still makes a

difference that can be related to the global strategy of the advert (usually, but not necessarily as the Italian series for BMW testifies, motionless cars appear in traditionally informative adverts).

Whether the driver is visible or not can also make a difference, as in the second case the driver tends to become a mere "function", instrumental to the car and secondary to the core of the message.

Another element I found interesting is the kind of purpose the car is used for. I have singled out two general categories, that are **instrumental** and **non instrumental use**: in the former the car serves as a means of transport, allows to move from one point to another (points usually explicit in the text, or entailed by it); "non instrumental", on the contrary, designates a kind of use of the car as an end rather than as a means (like in adverts based on themes like passion and desire), or an emphasis on "going" rather than "moving", the destination being unknown and probably irrelevant, and the car, in many cases, being a sort of "extension" of the driver rather than a mere machine. This is a feature which I suspected being in a way related to the gender of the driver and the analysis substantiated it.

Finally the exclusive representation of the **exterior**, or of the **interior** as well can tell something (even if this is not necessarily the case) about the "cocoon" character of the car as protective shelter of emotions and relations, especially when there is more than one person inside (a couple, a family, some friends and so on); in many cases, of course, the display of the interior can provide just a further piece of information to complete a rational argument. On the other hand I thought it was

very likely that an exclusive focus on exterior would have mainly implied a rational-factual-design strategy (with no presence of the human element), and it was mainly so, although significant exceptions were found (especially when "desire" and affective relations were involved).

The following variables of content concern some aspects of the intra-textual context, that is of the situation and the social setting that constitute the environment or the background of the product within the commercial.

First of all I have distinguished among an **abstract setting** (typical of the style I have called "design"), whose distinctive character is non-representativeness, and which actual occurrences vary from a dark background to the effects of light and shade, to the absolute lack of environment (the gestalt relation foreground/background being totally unbalanced toward the foreground, with an effect that Marchand (1985) defined "numinosity") 2; a **realistic setting**, which is the most common and can be either **urban** or **non urban**. The former includes all scenes of metropolitan and town-life, whereas the latter embraces all the cases in which the landscape serves as a counter-attraction to the car, a landscape changing from idyllic country roads to sheer rocks above the sea, to deserts and glaciers; and finally a **non-realistic setting**, which comprehends either surrealist compositions, or animation and synthetic creations, or trick shots and special effects and so on: in short, any signal of the primacy of the linguistic elaboration and expressive autonomy of the medium over its representative capacity.

As for the **social background**, three main aspects have been considered, that are the **dominant gender** (quantitatively determined), the presence of **interaction** among the subjects represented, and the **kind of activity** in which they are engaged: I have distinguished between a **domestic** activity (when the car is used to perform routine functions related to the daily, mainly familiar life, like going shopping, bringing the children to school, carrying objects and furniture for home decoration and so on): a **work** activity : and a **leisure** activity. My assumption is that any of those sector of activity defines a limited range and modalities of interpersonal relations (which I expected more homogeneous in the first and second kind of activities, and more variegated in the third one) and defines a field of appropriate (and conventional) associations, which can be interesting to compare in the two countries.

The last textual variable concerns the **subjects** involved, both from a textual and an extratextual perspective: in fact on the one hand the subjects physically represented in the commercial have been taken into account; on the other hand the eventuality of direct interpellation of the viewer has also been considered.

Direct summoning can occur in various forms: I have grouped the different possibilities in two categories, according to the "track" that supports the interpellation: by **audio**, which includes any direct reference to the "second person" (you in English, "tu", singular, and "voi", plural in Italian) made by the voice over or by the characters or testimonials in the spots, including the jingle or the song that accompany the images; by **video** when the characters look directly to the camera, or when titles are screened in which the second person is expressed

(usually in the pay-off). In any of these cases, present elements call explicitly for an absent entity, the physical viewer. Among the **subjects** represented in the text, first of all I have distinguished between who uses the car (the **driver**) and other **relevant subjects** within the advert: not always, in fact, the driver is the most relevant personality in the commercial for cars (as he/she is often not even visible).

The relevant subjects have been catalogued according to their gender, their **credibility basis**, that is the main reason for which the viewer is supposed to pay attention to the content of the message and credit it with trustworthiness. I have singled out three different credibility basis, depending on the identity of the main characters: he/she can be a well-known public figure, a **testimonial**; or can be famous (or can appear) as an **expert**; or can reveal a connotation of high **status** (which activates a field of associations like wide possibilities of choice, having the "right" kind of information, no financial restraints and then the opportunity of "choosing the best").

The cases not falling within those types have been categorized as "other".

Finally I have tried to specify (and here the level of interpretation and thus arbitrariness is higher) the kind of relation that ties **person and product**, either by considering the subject represented and the car, or by following the indications of the voice over (and here the relation referred to is between the present car and the absent hypothetical buyer) when no character appears. I have identified five general categories: **self-enhancement**, which includes either the presentation of the

car as an extension and amplification of the driver, or as a dispenser of benefits for the driver (safety, power, up-to-date technological supremacy); **social approval**, which indicates the acquisition of status or the acknowledgement of prestige, or the possibility to 'start new exciting relations and so on; the **affective** relation with the car, that can be presented as an "allied", as a surrogate of the interpersonal relation (where the mechanical substitute is sometimes to be preferred to the real substitute, like in some of the recorded examples), as object of desire, as narcissistic reflection of the driver and so on; the **utilitarian** relation, characterized by the achievement of advantages like saving money, petrol, time for maintenance, etc.); **pleasure**, a character exalted as a *supreme aspiration and* sometimes presented as the essence of the relation car-driver or as accompaniment and integration of the "colder" features like technology and precision.

And eventually the **context**: given the intricacy of the concept, that I have tried to disentangle in the theoretical framework, and the value as contextual elements of many of the variable considered up to now, I confined myself to the registration of a limited number of elements: the first concerns the **communication action games** represented inside the text (a concept I mutate from Schmidt 1982, that indicates typical communicative situations normally associated to attitudes and language uses perceived as appropriate by the participants to the interaction 3); the second focuses on the "games" engaged by the text **with the viewer**: this aspect includes direct interpellation (which is a sufficient but not necessary condition for establishing a CAG with the extra-textual subjects), but also a wider range of viewer's involving

strategies: catching an irony, solving a riddle, retrieving a missing piece of information. Even if all the commercials, for their very nature, tend to involve the spectator in various manners, it is also true that some texts provide a more active cooperations, while others offer themselves as objects to be "contemplated" (especially the "design" adverts); what I have tried to do, and this is another part of the grid where subjective insight plays a relevant role (but the comparison provides at least an intersubjective test) is to distinguish between more and less actively involving commercials, and to evaluate the proportion of both in the two countries.

A third element is relative to the registration of **intertextual references**, either to other TV commercials (like in the case of series or parodies), or to other TV texts, or to famous movies or classical music excerpts and so on: obviously the acknowledgement of intertextuality heavily depends on the competence of the viewer: where an "illiterate" viewer simply recognizes a passage of classical music, a competent one can identify the author, the title and the date of the composition, having this way at his/her disposal a wider range of association for the determination of textual meaning.

The last contextual variable concerns the possibility of establishing a **transnational frame of reference** for the commercial considered, even if it is not part of an international campaign, for instance when the same car is advertised in the two countries with different strategies, or when the setting of the commercial is openly (and in most cases stereotypized) a different country from that in which the spot is broadcast.

In some cases (WV Golf, Peugeot 205) the same spot appears in one of the two countries and only later on in the second, so as it does not fall within the recording period (the first appears in the Italian version, the second in the British one) . They have been coded as having transnational target, and the differences between the Italian and British versions (in both cases simply related to the visual pay-off) have been taken into account in the analysis.

(All the contextual variables have been registered according to a presence/absence scheme).

A last methodological specification: as I anticipated in sketching the theoretical framework of the research, the categories constituting the grid for the analysis have been partly modified and partly instituted from scratch as the examination of the material was proceeding. Some of them are formulated both on the basis of the available material and of a personal familiarity with the subject matter. It is by no means that an "a priori" model has been applied to the empirical material, and I do not think, as substantiated before, that such an approach guarantees any "scientificity".

Neither, is this the same as to say, I believe, that the result is a vicious circle (one shows as findings of the research what in fact one has decided to find), nor that all the research is a tautologous operation.

First of all because I believe, as far as the examination of texts is concerned, that the texts themselves indicate certainly not a meaning, but at least a "sense" (as Ricoeur 1981 put it) a direction for the interpretation, which blends with the interests and the perspective of the analyst.

Secondly, and more importantly, because the comparative framework guarantees an objective (non-subjective) trial for the variables selected: which is not, it is worth recapitulating here, to find what texts mean, but upon which means they construct meaning, which fields of discourse are activated and related to the product, which strategies are represented and tentatively submitted to the viewer, and how those aspects interrelate. The comparative framework of analysis allows, for example, to perceive as pragmatically relevant or strategic (or potentially so) elements that within the compass of the isolated text can appear as "natural" or neutral, or can even pass unnoticed.

Even if it is impossible to exhaust the range of possibilities according to which texts construct meaning, nevertheless it is possible to offer some insights into the mechanisms of representation and interpellation of social reality, insights that claim to be intersubjectively ascertainable and significant to the social and cultural universes they explore.

In other words, what I am going to say is not all can be said on the subject, but is something that can be verified against the material and, in spite of the (inescapable, in my opinion) subjective construction of the analytical grid, offers some *"objective" understandings of the phenomenon* (where "objective" is used in the "weak" sense of being grounded on the social reality I am talking about). And also, as far as I know and at least for the Italian side of research, something new for the diachronic and systematic collection of material, for the focus on TV text rather than press ads, for the attention to the

context of the global advertising discourse in the two countries and for the comparative cross-consideration that aims to explode the boundaries of self-containing approaches to texts. As my aim is not exhaustiveness, not all the results of the application of the grid to the material have been given the same relevance in the analysis, and only those which seemed particularly illuminating were commented extensively. The results of the application of the grid to the whole of car commercials are reported in a catalogue (in Appendix 2), which provides a reliable map of similarities and differences in the two countries as far as all the variables are concerned. This is the third level of formalization (after transcription and coding), preliminary to the comparative analysis. The analysis below is mainly descriptive, while general considerations can be found in the Conclusions.

THE ANALYSIS

Let's now examine more closely how the variables differently appear in the sample of advertisements from the two countries, and how different patterns are constructed out of the same range of elements (if it is the case).

As far as structural elements are concerned, no striking

differences come into view, especially if one considers basic variables like colour, music, editing.

Colour is a dominant feature: 27 out of 31 British spots are shot in colour, and 45 out of 49 in Italy.

One British spot (for the launch of the new Vauxhall Cavalier in Oct. 88) is shot partly in colour, partly in black and white (the colour of the "past", of the anticipation of the future).

Moreover three among the British commercial, although shot in colour, favour the almost exclusive preeminence of "cool" and colourless tone of white, grey, metallic surfaces: 2 of them (new VW Passat and Nissan Bluebird) are shot against an abstract setting (white in the first case, which then became grey as the car drops and passes through the floor, grey in the second, with informative titles running vertically on the screen); even if in the Passat advert a human figure appears, his clothes, tie, hairs all are grey-white.

The third case is an advert for the Rover Fastback, where the setting is urban (interior in the first part, exterior in the second) but extremely stylized and heavily connoted with "design" ("British architects" is the pay-off, related to the style both of buildings and of the car) and "technology" (the spot is spoken in German with English subtitles, and German, as also the quite achromatic spot for Fiat Tipo or the Audi slogan testify, is a language conventionally employed for denoting precision, expertise in car building, advanced technology); the subjects represented (two male "professionals") are also dressed in colourless tones.

Both in the Rover and in the Nissan adverts, "colourlessness"

seems to indicate the predominance of **technology** and **design** . The Passat commercial makes a more sophisticated use of toneless shades: on the one hand they refer to the temporal dimension ("In the beginning VW built the Beetle..." is the "inception" of the spot, something 'in-between a biblical and a historical tale); unlike the Vauxhall use of black/white to indicate the passage from past to future, from dream to reality, in the VW advert the ultimate model represents a continuity rather than a break. On the other hand toneless colours are related to the design aspects ("aerodynamic" is one of the attributes, made evident by the use of the panoramic window as a slide).

A similar pattern of relation between chromatic tones and global structure of the ad is present in the Italian sample, with some further specification: in fact, unlike in Britain (at least in the period considered), some car ads appear to be targeted expressly to young people (namely R5 "Dune-ski", Peugeot 205 jr); they all present some common features, among which the vivid chromatic combination of natural elements (blue sky, gold sand plus highly-coloured dressed young people).

Colour, as well as **music** is a distinctive trait of youth-targeted adverts: in fact the sound track of the Renault 5 ad is arranged on the blueprint of a famous chart of the early 80's (now having become the tune of the R5 model in Italy); in the other the verbal track is a song composed "ad hoc" according to rock rhythms. Colour then is quite a significant feature and seems to be related to sets of "contents" quite similar in the two countries. The colour of the cars in fact appears in typical associations with recurrent pattern of structure and content: apart from the cases in which in the same spot different versions

of the same model are shown in different colours (Ford Sierra in Britain, Seat Ibiza, Alfa 75, Alfa 33, Y 10 in Italy), in the other cases I have found the following common associations:

- grey, metallized car are mostly related to technological, "male" spoken adverts (no female voice over is associated with metallized cars)

- black is mostly used to connote elegance (paradigmatic is the association black swan/black car in the British spot for Vauxhall Senator; other examples are Audi 100 in Britain, Peugeot 405 SW and the more styled versions of Alfa 75 and Seat Ibiza)

- red usually indicates passion and is mainly related to female figures or young people, like in Peugeot 205, Metro GTA, Fiat Tipo ("Long distance call") and others in Britain and Opel Corsa, R5 ("Il sequestro") and others in Italy (in both countries red cars are usually not the biggest in size).

- white seems to be the less connoted colour, and is also less frequently used than the others (colours like metallized blue are also quite rare, just one case in the British ad for R 19, and no occurrences have been recorded for other colours like green, light blue or yellow, for instance); it may recall an image of "purity" (like in the case of Ford Escort Green) or be related to values like reliability (VW Golf GB), but the associations are less precise.

Whereas the relations grey-technique, or colour-youth, or red-passion can appear quite obvious, yet it can be interesting to notice whether the associations present a transnational character (so that, in Gricean terms, the relation becomes conventional, entailed rather than conversational, inferred on the basis of a

work of interpretation); it can be also interesting to consider whether or not colour, beside being recurrently associated with elements of the content, is also clustered with other textual components in "conventional" frames of content organization having pragmatic effects (especially in terms of macro-agenda setting, or structuration of a "normal" perceptive approach to social phenomena). In fact, as we will see as the analysis proceeds, colour tends to form clusters with other textual elements (gender of the voice over, setting, social background and so on) which present some recurrent relations with the global "strategy" of the advert (I do not use this term as a synonymous with "intention" or "preferred reading"; I have rather in mind the concept of "tenor" in Halliday, and the semantic horizon and pragmatic implications made possible by the text).

As far as **music** is concerned, a preliminary remark seems opportune, related to the significant and not merely "decorative" role of this textual element; music, as well as editing, for instance, is one of the textual components which more than others reveal the "constructed", discursive, anti-naturalistic character of audiovisual texts. It can be interesting to notice, with regard to the problem of semantic fields and of translations, that what in English is called "background music" (which seems to involve a connotation of "minor" element) in Italian is named "commento musicale" ("musical comment"), which seems to imply a quite explicit and relevant function: to enhance, to outline and even to add significance to the visual track.

On the other side music is conventionally expected to be a common feature of TV adverts, and in this respect it is a "natural" aspect (there is no contradiction between the

artificialness of background music in audiovisual texts and its naturalness in TV adverts for, as I will suggest later, they are not generally perceived as faithful images of reality, even if a link with reality is recognized: they might be considered as "quotation" of reality, music performing the same role as inverted commas).

The double character of music appears in both the groups of samples: music is present almost everywhere, as only the Tipo series (in both countries) plus three cases in the British sample and two in Italy do not present this feature; and always music plays a crucial role in emphasizing the impact of images (which is a character of advertising language, where brevity and "density" are directly correlated). I could mention as an example the case of the Italian series for BMW, where very static, achromatic and graphic-like shots are accompanied by few notes on electric guitar ⁴ enhancing the cold, high-tech, technological advanced character of the car, together with the elements of harmony and balance between technology and less rational elements (charisma, status, pleasure).

Conversely, the adverts in which music play no role at all share a common form of narrative organization, which I have called "slice of life": from the British Metro to the Italian Escort Green (the first depicting an ordinary man going to purchase a car, the second two friends going jogging in the park), the format conjugates everyday-like scene with a realistic sound track (unlike, for instance, Ford different model in Britain or Renault 21 Nevada in Italy, where the slice of life style adopts rather a "idyllic" mode, then music plays a

substantial role).

But the more interesting case is represented, in my opinion, by the Tipo series: here the "effect of reality" is enhanced, beside the absolute absence of music, by the dialogue in the original language of the speaking characters with English subtitles, as if the linguistic intervention were only at the level of translation rather than at the more comprehensive discursive level (I will come back later on this campaign).

But even when the slice-of-life naturalistic format prevails, in both countries I have found other elements beside music that break the naturalistic illusion: they range from the abstract setting of the British advert for the new VW Passat to the different nuances of humour of other cases (I will discuss this aspect below).

The material provides evidences for saying that music is always a dominant presence when the accent is upon the expressive autonomy of advertising language (in this case acting as a substitute of dialogue, which risks to slacken the rhythm), whereas it plays a background role or is absent when the accent is on the representative function of advertising.

In the **jingle** section I have included both the commercials in which a song constitute the audio of the whole spot, and those in which only the final slogan is sung.

The example includes a range of different occurrences of this feature, although the number of total cases is low in both countries.

Two main tendencies seem to be at work in the two countries: in British adverts intertextual references prevail: the "refrain" of the Peugeot 405 campaign, for instance ("take your breath away")

is taken from the movie "Top Gun" (with all the connotations of bravery, skill, precision, masculinity that the association entails); the sound track of Fiat Tipo ("Opera") is sung on the aria of an Italian opera by actors in their costumes (opera being synonymous with "Italianicity", as other adverts for Italian product like "Ragu" testify, together with having a connotation of high status among the British audience).

The other two cases, that are Peugeot 205 (with a female voice whispering "See me, touch me, love me") and the corporate advert for Vauxhall (which sound track is the famous Louis Armstrong's "What a wonderful world" over images of nature and free animals) bear no other reference than to the universe of music.

In Italy the source of jingles is circumscribed to the field of music, either when a song is composed ad hoc on a rock rhythm (Peugeot 205 jr, Opel Vectra), or when a famous tune is used as such (like Beatle's "Baby you can drive my car" for Rover Series 200), or when a well-known melody is rearranged for the purpose of the spot (like the version of Platter's "Only you" for Escort Voyager or the new version of a famous Italian song of the 40's, "Baciami piccina", -"Kiss me Baby"- for VW Polo).

The case of VW Golf is interesting: the sound track "Changes" was based on a hit of few years before, which was in turn composed (unintentionally, according to the advertisers) on the blueprint of a very popular hymn in the Baptist and Methodist Church: a movement of protest lead by a small group of methodists persuaded then the VW car company not to have the spot broadcast on Sunday 5; eventually the spot was withdrawn from British TV, and appeared in Italy almost one year later: obviously Italy was

judged a more appropriate context, either because of the different religious context (in which the tune is not perceived as a "sacrilege") or because of the lack of regulatory bodies like the IBA. This is a case in which the same semantic fields of association (I 'will come back later on this spot) is openly credited with different appropriateness conditions, according to the different context of reception of the text.

A further difference can be noticed between British and Italian jingles: the latter, in fact, accompany a more precise kind of car and one mainly an emotional strategy. The singing voice is more often female in Italian jingles, the driver mainly young people (Voyager, Peugeot 205 jr) or women (Vectra, VW Polo, VW Golf), the argument hardly rational but rather emotional: songs seems to be an effective communicative means only for a female or youth target, and within a non-rational discursive strategy; the same is not true of British adverts, where the correlations are less conventional.

Although in the majority of spots recorded more than two **characters** appear, and in many of them some forms of interaction occur, **dialogue** is not a prevalent feature in either country.

Monologue is definitely more common in Italian adverts either when testimonials or presenters speak on camera (8 cases altogether), or in the cases of "pseudo-dialogue", given by the combination of one character telling a phrase and of the voice over responding: Renault 19, R5 ("Il piccione") and Peugeot 205 are cases in point (in the latter one of the characters asks for the price of the car, and the - female- V.O. answers the question).

A real dialogue, in the Italian sample, occurs in the Tipo

series plus other 7 cases (2 Y10 spots; 2 R5 spots; Fiesta Friend; Renault 21; Escort Green) and only in the Tipo series it excludes the presence of the Voice Over.

In the British sample two cases of monologue have been recorded (Passat and Vauxhall Cavalier: the first excludes the VO, the second does not), one case of "pseudo-dialogue" (the Vauxhall Nova, where the "reply" to the uncle's invitation for a ride in his new car is a sort of "chuckle" coming from the cradle), and 8 cases of dialogue (including the transnational campaign for Fiat Tipo and R5 "Faithful"), 4 of which (Tipo series plus Rover Fastback) are shot in foreign languages with English subtitles. The last feature is significant, in my opinion, as it constitutes a strategic way to explode the heavy national connotation of this textual feature, which also limits the "exportability" of the commercial: the presence of foreign-speaking actors offers instead the twofold opportunity to enhance the effect of reality, as argued above, and to add further connotations to the explicit textual content in exploiting the national stereotypes of the countries represented (I will come back on this topic in the next chapter on transnational campaigns).

As for the **Voice Over**, which is certainly, together with music and fast editing, one of the most distinctive traits of TV advertising language, some interesting issues emerge from the comparison.

The voice over is pervasive in Italian commercials, unlike the British ones: in fact apart from the Tipo series (in both countries) and few other spots (among which VW Golf, originally

broadcast in Britain, Opel Vectra and the commercials in which a "presenter" talks directly to the audience, which are 2 spots for R5 and the spot for Seat Ibiza), the voice over is a typical feature of Italian adverts.

Less than half of British commercials, on the contrary, present a Voice Over; moreover, visual end comments prevail, while in Italian adverts visual-verbal or only verbal are more common. A global impression of "verbosity" stems from setting the Italian material against the British one, which does not emerge directly from the exam of Italian commercials.

A second difference concerns the gender of the Voice Over: no cases of female VO are recorded in the British material, while 6 cases are present in the Italian sample (against 32 cases of male VO). This result provides a cross-cultural frame for understanding the outcomes of other inquiries into Italian advertising like that of Furnham and Violi (1989) according to whom , for instance

"men are almost always portrayed as authorities and are thus appropriate to make end comments with a higher degree of credibility than females" (1989:182).

To say that discrepancies in the British and Italian material "may reflect a difference in culture", or that "Promoting food products is a prerogative of males in a gender stereotyped society" (ibidem) is to say, in my opinion, something too general as the whole western culture is gender stereotyped, and the problem is to see how these stereotypes are expressed and reinforced through the output of the different media.

In fact to find a ratio of nearly 1 female to 5 male VO in car commercials is probably more than one could expect from a gender

stereotyped society. Nevertheless a stereotypical aspect does emerge from the recurrent correlations between female VO, strategy of the advert, size of the car, target of the message.

It is worth examining the female-spoken commercials one by one, in order to grasp their common and typical (if not stereotypical) features:

- Peugeot 205 jr: the name of the model itself suggests that the car is aimed to a young target (which appears clearly also from some characteristics of the car, like denim covered seats, or from the main point of the story, that is success with girls, who are "stolen" by the other members of the gang); the VO answers to the question posed by one of the fellows, who wants to know the price of the car (all the optionals being outspoken by the male voice singing in rock-like rhythm); it then performs a "practical", realistic role and also a reassuring one, in informing that the cost is commensurate with the target.

- Peugeot 405 SW: the main point of the advert is to make it firm that the Station Wagon version of the 405 model is by no means inferior to the saloon version as far as elegance and style are concerned, and the female voice is appropriate in conveying the message (together with some "decorative" female characters on the visual track). The driver is, by the way, a man.

- Fiat Uno: here the pay-off is "Uno, che passione!" ("Uno, what a passion!"), stated in the form of visual/verbal end comment. A female voice over reads the phrase while appearing in italics at the bottom of the screen: also from a graphic point of view, then, different values are suggested from those typically male like precision, geometry, technic.

- Ford Escort Voyager: a young couple enjoy the sunset in front

of the seaside; the young man looks out of the sun roof to the camera (the scene is shot from above) and suddenly shuts it to protect their intimacy from indiscreet looks. The car is clearly a container of emotions, and the final comment, spoken by the female VO is "Prendi il largo, prendi Voyager", where the semantic ambiguity of "largo" as a name and an adjective is exploited to convey both the senses of "make off" and "get a large car": again, getaway fantasies and practical arguments are associated with a female element.

- Opel Corsa: a completely "female" spot: female car, female driver, female "activity" represented (shopping) and female VO uttering the name of the car.

All these examples share a common character, that is a mainly emotional (or practical) strategy or kind of argument.

Moreover the cars are mainly practical small cars or family cars.

A female VO never appears in conjunction with rational and factual arguments, or with values like technology and power.

The main difference between British and Italian adverts as far as the presence of **subjects** is concerned is that in Italy commercials in which no characters appear are more common: 9 cases (in 4 of which a male driver is present but not shown), against 4 in the British sample (one of which entails the presence of a male driver, even if he is not visible).

In Italian commercials it is also more common to find just one subject, particularly a testimonial (3 spots for Y10) or a male driver (Rover 820 Fastback, Alfa 33 Boxer).

In both countries I found one example of "presenter" (Passat in

GB; Seat Ibiza in I) and a couple of examples of female driver with no other characters in view (VW Polo in GB; VW Golf in I and GB, both by the same agency, DDB Needham).

The bulk of the commercials in both countries, however, shows more than two subjects involved in the "story", even if there are usually one or two main characters: in fact the variable of **social setting** is by far the most common both in British and Italian adverts, while abstract and unrealistic settings are confined to a limited number of commercials.

Also the figure of the "lone driver", as Gitlin (1986) defined him in paraphrasing the mythical character of the "lone rider", that is the fearless male pilot who travels across wild landscapes or metropolitan jungles, is not as common a character as one might expect.

It is much more frequent to see groups of subjects, even if their presence does not mean necessarily their interaction. Gitlin has coined the effective expression "loners in group" (1986:150) for describing the most common kind of relation in TV commercials: far from being a case of explosion of the individualistic model of the "lone driver", the close proximity of people often means nothing but "covenant-bound" communities, extrinsically tied up with similar styles and patterns of consumption.

If one sets the number of subjects in the commercials against other variables like presence of **interaction** and **communication action games** (that are more ritual and stereotypical forms of interaction) it is possible to obtain an idea of the proportion of mere closeness to social relationships when more than two characters appear on the screen.

In the Italian sample, for instance, we can find a relative amount of not merely conventional (but, on the contrary, substantial) interpersonal bonds: from family ties (explicit in VW Passat; Renault 21; Renault 21 Nevada; entailed in Audi; parodied in R5 "Il sequestro") to bonds of friendship (Renault 5 "dune-ski", Renault Espace; Escort Green) to partners' relationships (Renault Cherokee; R5 "Vita da cani"; Y 10; Escort Voyager; Fiat Uno; VW Polo; Opel Vectra).

In the British sample, on the other hand, it is more common to find chance meetings (like the two drivers who run out of petrol in the VW Golf ad), especially when it is the car that is met by chance (like in the ads for Peugeot 205, Metro GTA, Fiat Croma). This recurrent character recalls two "commonplaces" of viewers' competence: the first is one of the typical issues of modernity called by Marchand "the parable of the first impression" (in a society where relationships are anonymous and on a large scale, it is paramount to be able to produce, or to get, a decisive impression at a glance); the second is the romantic motif of "love at first sight" (which anyway has very little to do with rational and factual grounds, and certainly is far much common in advertisements for other sectors of goods).

Conversely, as far as male-female relationships are concerned, fewer cases are present in the British sample, and also 'less "institutionalized" relations are represented: only one case has been recorded of a car carrying a family (Renault 19) , unlike in Italy (see for instance Seat Ibiza, Renault 21 and Renault 21 Nevada).

But also the way in which partners' relations are depicted is

different: jealousy (R5 "Sarah"), uncertainty and awkwardness (Citroen BX), moodiness (R5 "Faithful") are the most common way of representing the interaction, compared with far less troubled and more idyllic pictures provided by Italian adverts (Renault Cherokee, Escort Voyager, Opel Vectra, VW Polo and others). It is significant, and I will consider this aspect in more details in the next chapter, that the two versions of the same spot for R5 produce different frames for evaluating the relation between the two characters: in fact on the one hand the title of the British version, "Faithful", suggests a semantic field of association in which the focus is upon the quality of the relation (that the car is implied to fulfil better than the person). On the other hand the Italian headline "Vita da cani" ("dog's life") shifts the accent to the modern way of life in broader terms (and then the metropolitan location becomes more relevant than in the previous case), in respect to which irritability and gloominess are but by-products which a reliable car can help to face.

If on the Italian side lone drivers, happy couples and family are the main characters of car adverts, on the British side a more variegated spectrum of relations can be found, a wider range of modality of interaction, that are also quite interesting cases of communication action games: from the salesman-customer of Metro to the anchorman-spectator of Vauxhall Cavalier, from the high business or diplomatic group (Granada) and pair (Rover Fastback, Peugeot 405), to race competitors (Montego) and the high society meeting (Fiat Croma).

If one considers in this perspective the kind of activity most frequently represented in association with the product in the two countries, I do not think it will be an oversimplification to

identify in the urban universe of work on the one side and in the social universe of interpersonal relations on the other the two main repertoires of images and situations British and Italian adverts respectively draw on, at least in the broadcasting period examined.

But the comparative framework also provides a spectrum of possibilities wider than that of the single country and makes it possible to identify, together with the most recurrent forms of content organization, the overlooked ones too. In fact even if it is true, for instance, that the sphere of social relations constitutes the most common reserve of advertising scenes for Italian commercials, it is also true that the repertoire of forms of interaction is quite restrict, and some patterns of relations seem a taboo subject in Italian adverts: I have never found, for instance, two male friends on the same car like in the British spot for Rover Fastback, nor two or more women together (when women drive in Italian commercials they are alone or they drive a man, and "tertium non datur": even the family seems to be a too precious good to be driven by a woman, and in fact we can find fathers driving a son or the whole family , but not women).

Moreover, when more than two friends are represented (like in the case of R5 "dune ski" or Renault Espace) they usually are two couples; when a man drives more than one woman, the more likely number is three rather than two (see for instance Peugeot 205 jr).

If one assesses this limited range of forms against other "taboos" related to the representation of affective life in car adverts (but also in other commercials, as we have seen in the previous chapter), some hypothesis emerge, as far as the range of

"appropriate" representations is concerned: monogamy, heterosexuality, racial identity (ethnic minorities do not appear, apart from a folkloristic indigenous in an Italian commercial for Citroen AX-BX, who is part of the landscape rather than subject) are the possible forms, and "happiness" is the suitable mood. In order to be appropriate (and I assume they are, given their frequency and consistency throughout the different commercial sectors) these typical representations presuppose, and are addressed to, a social context in which consensus prevails over dissent and transgression as far as the topics of family, friendship and romance are concerned.

The realm of possibilities is wider and less uniform in the British material, although some limitations, especially linked to the female role, as we will see later, are present.

The end comment is an almost universal feature of car commercials, with very few exceptions (mainly related to rational-informative or factual commercials), and most frequently appears, in the combined visual/verbal form in Italian commercials and in the visual form in the British ones (the exclusively verbal being the less common in Britain and the purely visual the less common in Italy).

It is possible to infer various hypotheses in giving reasons for these dominant patterns: the visual-verbal end-line allows a synthesis between the "anchoring" function of visual captions and the more direct seductive-persuasive power of the human voice; it also seems to epitomize the "redundancy" character, typical of the effective communication in general and of advertisements in particular, in spite of their brevity.

Written end comments, on the other hand, can be easily substituted in case of transnational campaigns (like in the Fiat Tipo series) and perform a more discrete but anyway explicit role in fixing some boundaries of semantic associations; verbal end comments seem rather to open the semantic horizon of the text, either because the sense of hearing is less reliable than sight, and involves a higher degree of attention and cooperation in the reception of the message, or because a merely verbal end comment tends to suggest non-rational connotations rather than information or rational aspects. The latter character is enhanced by the timbre and intonation of the voice over, and also made possible by the less formal and more colloquial character of the verbal speech, which allows more cases of "imperative" speech acts than the written form would do (I will consider later the case of the transnational P205 campaign, where the English written caption "Love it" is changed, in the Italian version, into a more neutral and meaningless "205: a lovable number").

But none of these hypotheses appears to be culturally-specific, and the main feature the comparative analysis outlines is the general greatest relevance of the verbal aspect in Italian commercials .

Brand logo is also a typical feature of car adverts, although a difference can be found between the two countries as far as the emphasis on the relation between car and brand is concerned.

On one side, in fact, brand logo is an easily identifiable trade mark that allows a quick recognition of the "source" of the product and of the sponsor of the images we can see on the screen. In this respect it performs the same function as, for instance, the channel logo superimposed to any output of Italian

TV: in an age of proliferation of channels (even if at present this is only true of Italian TV) and, as Gitlin has put it, of similarity of themes, styles, mood between advertisements and TV programmes, it becomes almost a necessity for the single campaign to be immediately related to a specific product, in order to be effective: not always, in fact, enjoyable campaigns are also effective, if they are not able to establish an unbreakable connection to the product. The brand logo then plays the twofold role of "memento" to the purpose of the story, which is in turn a potential message in itself. In fact beside the "phatic" purpose of establishing a preferential channel between one brand and the mass of viewers for the message to get across, the brand logo also performs an "expressive" function, inasmuch as it tells something of the firm producer, at least of its readiness in conveying a stylized but effective image of itself: who would fail in recognizing the double circumflex accent of Citroen's logo? Barthes in Mythologies has also shown forcefully how many possible connotations can be profitably worked out by this simple sign.

Then in both countries a brand logo is a constant element, but in Britain (as can be also evaluated in relation to the strategy of relation **product-brand**) a stronger emphasis is put on the distinctive characters of brand name, which often appears in a final punch-line (visual, verbal or both) concerning the whole brand and not the individual model (for instance the Peugeot's "The lion goes from strength to strength", or the Vauxhall's "Once driven, forever smitten", or the VW's "If only everything in life...").

A case in point in the different attitude of British and Italian advertising as far as the relation model/firm is concerned is the Fiat Tipo transnational campaign: the British version contains two visual end-lines, one related to the specific model and one to the company ("Tipo: everybody's talking about it" and, below, "Fiat. European driving force"), while in the Italian version, beside the brand logo, the unique visual end-line is: "Tipo. L'ultima tentazione" ("The ultimate temptation").

I will discuss in the next chapter the possible semantic and pragmatic implications of the different textual focuses, on the one side upon an intersubjective basis of the car's significance, on the other upon an individual non-rational appeal of the car . For the moment I will confine myself to acknowledge a general tendency to put the emphasis on the specific model in Italian adverts and to stress the relation with the productive firm in British commercials. One could object that the case of Fiat Tipo can be scarcely representative, the firm being far more famous in Italy than it is in Britain; but evidences from the collected material show that the focus on the single model is more typical of Italian ads, even for foreign firms (like Rover, for instance) than of British commercials. Unlike in the British sample, for instance, adverts for French cars like Peugeot and Renault (the R5 models) do not present an end-line related to the firm. (There are of course some exceptions: I have found emphasis on the firm in commercials for Ford Escort Green, Opel Vectra, VW Golf, Alfa).

The reference to the productive name, typical of British car commercials, is not a meaningless textual element, as far as the

definition of the sematic field of associations and the strategy of interaction with the viewer is concerned.

In fact, unlike the "Unique Selling Proposition" characterizing the bulk of the promotions of any single model with a single-minded, narrowly-focused message (see on this point Evans 1988), the brand image entails a richer and more complex range of connotations, in many cases already part of the "competence" of the viewer. Then the reference to the brand name can perform the role of "anchoring" the polysemy of the message, or its apparent oddness to the commercial purpose: in the British advert for VW Polo, for instance, the punch-line "If only..", far from being a mere "coda" is a constitutive part of the message; in the commercial for Audi Coupe, "Vorsprung durch Technik" represents a solid reference point beyond the erratic character of the spot.

In all cases the well established brand name (and image) allows a greater freedom in the choice of themes and structure of the commercials. The feature of "reliability" distinctive of VW brand name is simultaneously reinforced and presupposed by any single spot, which in turn capitalizes on this taken for granted piece of viewer's competence for constructing heterogeneous and unconventional campaigns: each commercial represents in fact a piece of the jigsaw of "reliability", from a different point of view: affective (VW Golf "Change"), ground on tradition (Passat), practical (Golf), consistent against the inconsistency of human (female) character (Polo).

The connotations built by successive campaigns around the brand name can also play the opposite role of widening the semantic field of possible associations, by recalling or adding

further elements having little or nothing to do with the text in itself (Audi and the reference to German technology is one example); or furthermore they can substantiate and reinforce the message of the commercial (like in the Italian case for Alfa Romeo).

I disagree in part with Evans (1988) when he sharply distinguishes between two different ways of reaching brand identity, that is through the USP (unique selling proposition) which usually needs to be more "to the point" and precise (as it has to provide the "motive" for the purchase), or through brand images, that can convey a set of more open and less cogent implications.

On the contrary, evidences from the material of both countries show that the field of associations related to the brand name is both single minded as confined to specific aspects like safety, tradition, technique (all values the brands are happy to position themselves as synonymous with), and "open-textured", as different features and implications of those values are outlined, the distinction being of degree rather than a substantial one.

As for the relation between **end comment** and graphic aspects, a link can be envisaged between non rational strategy, female presence (or voice off) and italics characters in Italian ads (Fiat Uno; Opel Vectra).

Editing plays a crucial role in advertising language: in fact in the thirty second spot thirty or more distinct images can be squeezed without creating a perceptive distress, but quite on the contrary producing a pleasurable effect.

Editing not only enhances the pleasurable nature of the message (with aesthetic and attention-grabbing effects), but also

produces signification, in bearing a part in the definition of the semantic boundaries: editing can in fact parallel the zero-to-sixty acceleration of the car (Citroen AX GB); it can construct, in Gitlin's terms, a sort of commercial cubism or rearrangement of the space around the car in simultaneous and ubiquitous perspectives so that the same car can appear simultaneously in the arctic tundra and in crowded metropolitan settings (Renault Espace I); it can combine objective-subjective visions, external and internal perspectives (Alfa Romeo, Rover Fastback I); different angles of vision can coexist almost at once; it can also convey the flow of urban fragments glimpsed from the windscreen of a moving car (Opel Vectra I); it can construct a story out of a fast sequence of shots (any of which being actually a micro-screenplay, a "social tableau" filled with highly conventional, ritualized, easily readable elements and portraits as in Renault 19 I; VW Golf I; Fiat Croma GB; Peugeot 205 GB and many others).

As for the **urban setting** (which is the dominant in both groups of samples), crisp editing seems to be one of the more effective textual means to convey in a unique stream the random haphazard cluster of "lone driver"'s visual perceptions (Audi Coupé GB; Fiat Tipo "London"). Editing "speaks" the language of the city, made out of contrasts, incoherences, surrealistic combinations; and the real viewer is in a way like a synthetic pilot, glued to the screen upon which a tantalizing urban videogame runs.⁶

Plain editing is mostly related to one particular narrative form, that is **slice of life**, when people are involved (see Tipo "Long distance call"; Escort Green I; VW Golf GB) or to the informative

strategy, either with a speaker in video (Passat GB; Seat Ibiza I) or without (Nissan Bluebird GB), and dominates in **abstract settings** (VW Golf I), especially when the impact of image is graphic-like (BMW I). **Fast editing** (where the "fast" character is given by the ratio number of shots to seconds) is broadly speaking the most common in both countries and is usually associated with narratives, factual arguments, urban and non urban settings. Then editing performs both a semantic and a pragmatic function: semantic because, as we have seen, it is one of the elements that contributes to define the "content" of the commercial; pragmatic as it progressively builds a perceptive habit made of continuous visual excitement induced by the constant variation of images, and also produces an increasing competence and skill in identifying at a glance images and situations. This competence can be easily transferred to the real experience, both in terms of expectation of stimula and in terms of categorization frames (as recent studies on "macro-agenda setting" support).

Moreover, if one looks to the ideological implications of constant (and transnational) associations like fast editing/metropolitan setting, it is possible to envisage, following Marchand 1985, less a "conspiratory" role than a sort of acculturation and training of spectators to the rhythms imposed by the metropolitan way of life: in fact the capability of changing what for ordinary people is motive of stress into a source of excitement, and of combining in new configurations of meaning the apparently chaotic fragments of urban perception are presented as positive and sophisticated attitudes.

Narrative model is definitely the most used in both countries,

as it can be conjugated with any discursive strategy (even with the rational-informative, although the combination is quite rare). Among the forms of occurrence of narrative, **lifestyle** is certainly the most common (supported by the fact that **status** is the most frequent credibility basis): in an age of contrasting incitements and countless opportunities of choice among attitudes, products, styles of life, advertising provides a "slang" almost automatically memorizable, up to date on present tendencies and fashions.

In the narrative format more than in others the variables of person, product and setting are deeply entrenched.

In many cases (in both countries) the social setting is but an indifferentiated human environment, where the single identities are not specified (Citroen AX 5 door GB, for instance); moreover it is the kind of activity, rather than the consumption as such (given the nature of the product) that unifies people, product and setting: The **activity** is more often confined to leisure on the Italian side, although some cases of lifestyle presented in a professional setting are present (Fiat Tipo); work prevail in British adverts.

Lifestyle format commercials are less characterized by the element of consumption, of use, of immediate satisfaction than by a global way of life the product is "naturally" part of.

The informative dimension, although present, explodes the traditional elements of data, performances, technical features, and exploits emotional and aesthetic aspects in creating a "neo-informative" kind of message.

Referential-mimetic and expressive-symbolic elements blend in a

discursive modality that Kloepfer (1987) defines "sympraxis", where the communicative goal is not the transmission of information, but a "sign directed co-action", the participation to a shared system of values through the mediation of the text (analogous with the cathartic effect as Aristotle defined it):

"There is thus a need for a wider term that will include all modifications of consciousness achieved by the use of signs, from alarm to astonishment, from interest to well-being, from fascination to ironic distance, from identification to a superior smile of acceptance: I propose to call this complementary half of the effect of the sign - and hence of communication - **sympraxis**." (1987:125).

The **slice of life** modality is less common in both countries, and is often characterized by elements of distantiation like humour (Metro GB; R5 I), background music and overemphasis on mood (R 21 I; Escort Voyager I), blending of different genres and cinematographic quotations (Renault 19 I), merging with the category of lifestyle (Fiat Tipo).

The daily life of ordinary people, unless infused with further elements, seems not to offer an appropriate field of associations for the promotion of durable and expensive goods like cars (although an allusion to popular sit-com can be envisaged in some of the British commercials, like Metro and Vauxhall Nova).

Also the category of **test** does not occur very frequently, especially in the classic form of performance of the car on a race circuit under the supervision of experts (like in the Fiat Tipo "The competitor's test", where a surplus of information is conveyed beside the performances of the car, by the German language, synonymous with high technology and successful production of cars).

The test formula presents contaminations with other elements

like humour (Citroen AX diesel I; R5 "Harakiri" I) or graphic-design (R 19 GB; Citroen AX-BX I).

Several cases are present in both countries of less formal kinds of tests: cars are shown in action, under difficult conditions and with specific focuses (for instance on safety, like Volvo 340 GB, Audi I, Granada GB): braking becomes in this case a metonymy for safety, which is present in many spots (Citoen BX GB; Audi I; Alfa Romeo 75 and 33 I).

The character I have called mood is almost ubiquitous, although it does not everywhere have the same degree of relevance. Usually it combines with other characteristics, in a sort of "sympractic" synthesis. In fact it does not exclude even the more explicit emphasis on technology and engineering. The Italian campaign for BMW serie 3 is a case in point: in fact both the technological rational aspect, and the emotive-non rational are present: on a visual track characterized by the static (and graphic) presence in tight shot of the car (or its parts), verbal hyperboles ("an extraordinary engine") blend with commissive speech acts 7 and paradoxes ("for us perfection is a vice".. "A car demonstrate its greatness in the smallest details"), with glorifications of the logic of "quality" ("Power is a very rare virtue that many would like to have, but few really have"), with unorthodox connections like "science" and "pleasure", with personifications of the car, which qualities (charisma, infallible brain) are refracted by the driver over the car and viceversa, in a narcissistic interplay of mirrors.

When the emphasis is on the rational-informative aspects and on technique as potential for manipulating , controlling , pushing reality toward perfection, the commercials usually express what

Leiss and others have defined as "idolatry" of the product (framed as to emanate an aura of "numinosity", and presented as to inspire deference and admiration); on the other side when the non rational or emotional aspects prevail (when for instance the relation with the car is affective, or suggests identification) commercials insinuate in most cases a "narcissistic" connotation (where the product mirrors the holder -or the user- and other relationships are ruled out, like in the case of Peugeot 205 GB or R5 "Faithful").

As Leiss and others (1986) suggest, the product can also work as a "totem", that is as an element of identification of a particular social "clan", the point of convergence of social relationships (1986:295).

In the case of the Italian BMW campaign the two interpretative models of "idolatry" and "narcissism" overlap and mutually enhance, as well as the rational and emotional aspects.

Moreover in both countries the non-rational dimension and the character of mood prevail when it is a woman, or a couple who drive the car (R5 "Faithful", Ford different models, Fiat Tipo "Opera", VW Polo, Peugeot 405 and other in Britain; Opel Vectra, Fiat Uno, VW Golf "Change", Escort Voyager and others in Italy), while they play a quite limited role when a man drives or when no subjects are on screen.

Unlike one could expect, given the Italian stereotypes on this topic, the character of mood prevails in British advertisements (as it is present in more than half of the samples).

Among the other stylistic features, design (that includes refined images, unusual angles of shot, chromatic balance or

contrasts and the like) is more common than **spectacle**; evidences from the two countries show that French cars are mainly advertised according to a spectacular strategy (Peugeot 405 in Britain; Citroen AX-BX, R 19 and R5 "dune-sky" in Italy).

As for **humour**, in spite of the difficulties outlined above, it is quite a common element, yet there is a difference between the two countries: while in British advertisements it seems to "inform" the whole spot in many cases (like in the sit-com-like commercials for Vauxhall Nova or Austin Metro, or in the spot for VW Golf featuring the two men), in the Italian ones it appears rather as an element of "colour" than as an essential feature, rather as an unobtrusive presence only peeping in some shots than as a characteristic of the whole text: among the examples, the bespectacled dog appearing in one shot of the Peugeot 405 SW commercial, or the last shot of the spot for Fiat Uno: here a charming gentleman, in a "gag" typical of cartoons or silent movies, keeps on knocking at the window of his own car even when the pretty woman who had occupied the driver's seat has already driven away.

This peculiar use of humour, rather as a means of ironic distantiating and breaking of the "suspension of disbelief" brought about by the narrative form, than as a distinguishing element of the whole text, allows to obviate in part the non-universal character of humour by confining it to limited sections of the text (which widens the chances of appropriateness to the context of reception).

Among the discursive strategies, the least common in both countries is the purely **rational**, that mainly occurs in conjunction with the factual (Fiat Tipo "Test") or the non

rational (Fiat Tipo "London").

In the British sample **factual** strategies dominate, while in Italian ads **non-rational** aspects are present in the bulk of the spots.

The most recurrent combination in both countries is between factual and non-rational strategies, that constitute an effective blend of "demonstrative" (yet avoiding the routine Voice Over, and the tedious enumeration of technical performances) and emotional elements. For instance, we learn about the presence of electrically operated window winder on the R5 as a piece of information emerging discretely from the in vain search for a handle by the driven man (in "Faithful"); or about the sun roof of Escort Voyager when it is suddenly shot by the couple looking for some privacy.

A paradigmatic example of the superiority of immediate and emotive approach over rational and informative arguments is provided by the spot for Fiat Tipo ("Taxi driver" in the British version, "London, October 1988" in the Italian one): in fact the English gentleman goes on reading his newspaper, absent-mindedly assenting to the taxi driver who magnifies the technical features of the new Tipo; but he does not hesitate in making the driver run after a Tipo, careless of traffic signs, when he discerns the fancy female driver (the viewer can only spot her through a significant effect of mirrors and refractions I will comment later on).

What is "seen", in this commercial, is more relevant than what is "said", and emotion moves the action better than reason.

Many of the spots from both countries (but especially Italy)

present a purely non-rational strategy, where the "objective" features of the car fade definitely in the background while affective values, emotions, passion, even "magic" are overemphasized. Several examples can be singled out:

- In one of the commercials for the Italian Renault 5 campaign called "R5 spot festival" (I will deal with the whole series in more detail in the next chapter) shot in English language with Italian subtitles, the viewer witnesses a sort of "thriller" in which what is presented as a kidnapping of son, or friend ("Il sequestro": it is an ambiguous term in Italian, as it both means "kidnapping" of persons and "sequestration" of goods) eventually appears as the tow-away of the car due to the infraction of illegal parking (the accent being on the personification of the car and on the strong affective relationship with it).

- In the famous spot "Change" for VW Golf, similarly, the car is presented as a source of affective security, as starting point for the beginning of a new, more independent life (I will come back on this spot).

- In the Italian spot for Opel Vectra the "new look" of the car becomes the "magic" element capable of metamorphosing everything it meets into gloomy and bright images, as if everything were seen with fresh eyes (also in this case metropolitan lights and forms glide on the windscreen, which turns into the source of images for the spectator); the (female) driver also feels "new" to the others' eyes (difficult to imagine the same spot with a male driver).

Let's come back for a moment to the **person/product/setting** relation: while the most common pattern, in both countries, is the blend of the three variables, the main difference between the

two groups of samples lies in the different role accorded to the person/product link: in fact in Italian commercials the relation is clearly paramount, in many of the adverts the physical and social setting being almost invisible and out of focus (with tight shots on the subject and the car), like in R5 "Il Sequestro" or VW Golf "Change". On the British, on the other hand, it is rather the relation product-setting that prevail.

In both countries a sort of parallelism can be noticed between **urban setting** and emphasis on technology on the one side, and **natural setting** and emphasis on a kind of cosmic harmony on the other. In fact, while technic epitomizes the human capability of manipulating natural resources, bending them to the needs (and pleasure) of the users and keeping them under control, the presence of a natural setting in car advertisements seems rather to refer to some kind of order and harmony human beings are part of and must not disrupt (while they are called to enhance and fulfil it potentialities). Two paradigmatic examples are the corporate advert for Vauxhall, which sound track is the famous Louis Armstrong's "What a wonderful world", while the visual track is a succession of images of animals and nature: cars do not appear at all.

On the Italian side, the most significant example is that of Audi, where a car runs on a mountain road and the aspect of "safety" (both for people and environment) is metonymized by braking: in spite of its power, in fact, the car can stop suddenly so as to avoid a goat pasturing on the road's verge (with a figure of redundancy or repetition the braking is repeated 4 times by 4 cars alike).

Other British samples in which **physical setting** plays a crucial role are the launch campaign for Peugeot 405 (with the sugar cane burning), Ford Sierra (the changing setting is a metaphor of the versatility of the car), Vauxhall Senator (where a swan is used as "natural" analogous of the car), Renault 19 (where the car is a "bridge" between the chaos and stress of urban streets and the freedom and peace of a natural setting).

The latter is a typical example, although in a unusual graphic format, of what Marchand has called the parable of "civilization redeemed": if cars have made the city poisonous, get a car to escape it!, that is technology provides the means to overcome environmental damages caused by itself.

In the advert for the Rover Fastback the use of logistic and temporal co-ordinates ("Must be in Stuttgart by 8.00") confers, in Williamson's terms, "the vein of Edge of Darkness conspiracy thrillers" (The Guardian, 9/12/1988, p 25).

When the focus is rather on the **affective relation** with the car or its value as a "totem" which identifies homogeneous social groups, both the aspects of technical control and natural harmony fade into the background, while the field of interpersonal relations and of social activities is particularly emphasized.

One of the textual elements significant to the definition of the semantic horizon is the exclusive view of the **exterior** of the car, or of the **interior** as well. Although a bi-univocal correlation cannot be established, I have noted a recurrent combination of predominance of technical-design aspects and view of the exterior on the one hand and view of the interior as well (especially when occupied by visible subjects and not by a mere

"driving function") and emphasis of the whole spot on the role of the car as "container", means, totem for social relations on the other. Also, a motionless car is most commonly the object of a technical-aesthetic contemplation (what Leiss and others 1986 define as "idolatry" of the product), like in the Italian campaign for BMW (but there are also some exceptions, like the affective relation to the R5 "Il Sequestro") while the car in use with visible passengers is more likely to be linked to a non-rational strategy and to a "content" of social relationships.

The samples of both countries show quite clearly that certain clusters of features are more common than others.

One of the issues dependent both on the kind of textual strategy and on the content represented is that of **gender**, that includes either the potential target, or the car itself, or the driver (or owner, or presenter) of the car in the spot, or the voice over.

The possible combinations of male and female components can be catalogued according to a limited number of recurrent patterns, where one gender usually dominates, so as the textual strategy itself ends up with assuming a gendered connotation.

The most straightforward example is provided by rational-informative commercials like those for Alfa Romeo and Audi in Italy or Ford Sierra and Rover Fastback in Britain: the male voice over (when it is the case), male car (inasmuch as characterized by power, precision, safety, reliability, high technology), male target and male driver (even when he is not visible, but the gender appears to be "entailed" by the textual elements themselves).

When the relation **product/setting** prevails, or the focus is upon **design**, or performances, the textual strategy as a whole is more likely to present a "male" connotation.

Less plain and transparent is the distinction when others are the basis or the person-car relation. In the Fiat Tipo campaign, for instance, particularly in the "Long distance call" spot the relation happens at a glance, as an instantaneous infatuation one could expect by a "female" logic (as it is represented in the stereotypes of commonsense and televisual "wisdom"), but which is perfectly consistent with the maleness of the character if the car is not seen as an object but as a female figure (the car itself is red, a colour mainly associated with passion and female drivers in advertising; a female leg is also spotted out of the car door).

In this case the gender of the car is female, as also the target (the diplomat or businessman is preparing a surprise for his wife), but the strategy is basically male: quick decisions (that cancel previous arrangements), opportunity of down payment of high amounts of money, faculty of foisting his own decision on other persons and so on.

Gender differentiation is certainly a sphere in which two crucial issues of my research become especially evident: on the one side the tight connection between textual (formal) and semantic level; on the other the pragmatic capability of advertising of sorting out, reinforcing, naturalizing a repertory of images (in the broadest sense) that become almost automatic ways of perceiving reality itself.

Let's take as an example the way in which the product (the car) is used. I have distinguished, in the analytical grid,

between an **instrumental** and a **non instrumental** kind of use: in the first the point of departure and the destination are made explicit, or are entailed by the text (the emphasis being on the locomotive function of the car, as a medium whose nature is equivalent to its function), while in the second the act of "driving" in itself is stressed as meaningful (and thus the car becomes a "message" of freedom, power, adventure and so on).

In examining the material from both countries I have noted a clear correlation between type of use and gender of the driver, the non-instrumental use being almost exclusively confined to male drivers (with a difference: in Italy rational and factual strategy prevail, like in the Alfa Romeo campaign, while in Britain factual and non rational dominate, like in the Peugeot 405 launch campaign). The "lone driver" is a typical male figure, at least when the car is used to pass through wild landscapes. The female driver, on the contrary, is a typical "urban" character, whose self-confidence is confined to the circumscribed and well-known ambit of the city, along familiar streets and in many cases with precise destinations, the most common finishing line being the collection of a man. Two paradigmatic examples:

- In the Italian spot for Opel Vectra a metropolitan female lone driver, after a short journey full of emotions and feelings of being "new" (as emphasized by the song of the sound track) arrives to a glazed building where she collects her partner.

All through this spot provides a typical image of the kind of "autonomy" women are accorded in advertising portraits: the main character is a top model (Rosemary McGrotha) familiar to the public through a long running press campaign for a brand of

cosmetics (emblematic figure of an existence spent, at least in part, to be under others' eyes, and to be turned into an image to be "consumed"); the journey in the neon-lighted city is presented as a gratifying experience whose essence is in the play of gazes between the "outside" (the way in which the others see the driver according to the car she's driving) and the "inside" (the way in which the driver sees the city with fresh eyes thanks to the car), being the surface of the car the mediating point. The sense of feeling new is given especially by the way in which others look at her, by an appearance. And, "dulcis in fundo", the even brief and mainly "aesthetic" experience of autonomy culminates (and concludes) with the arrival at the most conventional among all (female) destinations: man. It is not of great relevance here that a woman collecting a man is a less conventional figure than the opposite: it seems rather a mechanism of attention-grabbing that reverses the form without modifying the substance.

- The follow up British campaign for Peugeot 405 is styled like a "yuppie drama" featuring a young woman and a man racing against time respectively by driving a 405 and by being involved in a Business Initiative Training scheme (it is worth noting that the woman relies on the car, while the man only relies on his own capacities). In spite of the fact that the woman drives along a lonely and presumably slippery road (the weather is drizzly), she is not endowed with bravery or self-reliance; quite on the contrary, she passes from the protective domestic environment (where she takes her time in looking at some pictures of her beloved) to the car (whose sheltering character emerges from the contrast between inside and outside conditions), to her man, who sanctions her dependence by taking the driving seat (in other

words: women are accorded a certain liberty, but always under man's supervision and in controllable conditions.)

But there are also many other examples of very conventional portraits of female figures under the appearance of autonomy and liberation. In fact in most of the cases of driving women the presence of a man (more or less explicit) is a constant element. In the Italian ads for Fiat Uno and VW Golf ("Changes"), for instance, the woman goes away from a man : in the first case from a visible man and in a humoristic tone, in the second from a man metonymized by his gifts (ring, fur coat, pearls, car are the "classic" presents one expects a man gives to his woman in a "yuppie drama"). Here throwing things away stands for the break of a relation, break that the woman submits herself to, judging by her annoyed expression. Then she decides not to drop the VW keys but, instead, to ride off in the car. As Williamson has put it:

"Instead of a luxury to be cast of it <the car> becomes her means to escape. The theme song, with the line 'It's here today and gone tomorrow', seemingly refers to love - yet, in the post-Big Bang era, it must also refer to money and lifestyle. 'Everybody changes places', the song reminds us, 'but the world is still the same'. This is a world of the survival of the fittest, and the fittest are the less loaded-down" (The Guardian, ibidem).

The final decision to use the car as a starting point for a new life is significant, in my opinion, under two perspectives: on the one hand freedom is not obtained through a complete fracture with the past, but through a limited repudiation and a giving up submitted to convenience. An article in The New Statesman commenting on the broadcasting of the spot on British TV was entitled "Thatcher's new woman arrives - in a Golf GTI"

(11/12/1987); the woman was described as a Cinderella endowed with free enterprise, who does not exult in leaving with the golden coach of her previous prince in search of a new one. Out of analogies, the spot for VW Golf is effective in presenting, in a non-problematic and quite natural way, a series of connotations which are not at all neutral as far as their implications in terms of definition of social reality are concerned. In the article some of them are singled out, one of which I find especially interesting, that also constitutes the second point I intend to focus upon: the relationships with things is represented as more satisfying than that with persons, as things are more "reliable" (I will comment on the semantic differences between the British and the Italian versions in Chapter 11) and, more specifically, the "liberated woman" is capable of using things, of keeping for herself what is convenient for her, without giving a damn about their provenance: liberated woman is also a "greed" woman.

This seems to be confirmed, in a more humoristic way, by the Italian spot for Fiat Uno, where a young charming woman leaves with a car that is not hers (probably for a party, judging by her dress), simply in throwing a kiss towards the disconcerted (male) owner; or also by the spot for R5 ("faithful"), where a couple is probably going to work (the man can not use his car because it is out of order) and the female driver definitely refuses to lend her car. Actually the spot has been broadcasted in Italy in a "barked" version (connoting both a hostile atmosphere and a strong sense of property) with Italian subtitles, while in Britain the same spot appeared in two versions, the first just

"barked" (that preceded the other as a "teaser") and the second dialogued. The last remark (from the woman) consists of a pun: "the car- thy car", which further stresses the property link.

Also in this case woman's autonomy is expressed in almost obsessive terms in the form of attachment to things, and the textual elements of tones, tenor of the conversation (consisting of monosyllables) and "barking", while reinforcing the "content" of the story, anchor the semantic field and suggest further connotations. (I will specify the main differences between the British and the Italian versions in Chapter 10).

If one then widens the scope of the analysis as to include the co-textual level, it is possible to acknowledge a completely different image of women in advertisements for other kinds of products, especially for domestic products or for food. Here women are characterized, as we have seen before, by a "nurturant ethos", a sense of responsibility and availability to others, against any utilitarian and selfish interest (while men tend to favour the aspect of individual responsibility over moral commitment to others. See Rieder 1990:201).

On the contrary, women in car adverts hardly interact with somebody, and when it is the case it is mainly in a mocking tone (Fiat Uno I) or hostile mood (Renault 5 I) or in a unrealistic situation (Fiat Tipo "Opera" GB). When a woman drives somebody she seems rather worried about her belonging than concerned about social relations. She never drives other women (while men drive men in the GB Rover Fastback), neither a group of friends (when it is the case, the driver is always male: R5 dune-ski; R Espace), nor the family; in fact, unlike in real life, in car advertisements is always the "pater familias" who drives when the

family is in the car (R 21).

The liberated woman is as a matter of fact incapable of familiar and social relationships: the rival attraction of the out of date stereotype of pin-up laying on the car or of the housewife happy with her housework is a character that in refusing the whole traditional imagery on femininity constructs an equally inadequate simulacrum of femininity.

Moreover, as far as formal features are concerned, an abstract setting never reveals a female connotation: abstraction has in fact something to do with engineering, mathematics, science, that are patrimony of man. Never, in short, a purely rational strategy is associated with a "female" definition of the car, with a female target, a female driver or a female voice over.

What I intend to suggest here is that formal and structural aspects, beside the outspoken content, contribute to define the semantic field of the text, also together with the rhetoric implications of some common images: for instance, the character of "autonomy" is conveyed through a typically male imagery, which dominant feature is an "instrumental" logic (see Rieder).

Two distinct semantic fields can also be seen as related to maleness and femininity in car adverts, as far as the relation desire-fulfilment (or dream-reality, or lack-possession) are concerned. In many of the female-centred adverts the woman "desires" the car (in a wider sense than that involving mere possession), and runs after it, like in the cases of Peugeot 205 or in the British advert for the New Metro GTA; she wants to be like the car (Opel Vectra), and when she eventually gets it, she does not let it go (R5, VW Golf).

Different is the way in which men deal with the car: they control it, use it, dispose of it; they do not tend to it, they naturally have it.

The kind of gender identity car advertisements tend to construct through the interplay of formal and semantic features is certainly not neutral from a pragmatic point of view, at least inasmuch as it provides a set of ready made images for acknowledging, defining, categorizing and then shaping social reality and real experience.

As for the aspect called "dynamic of substitutable parts", McLuhan offered a still actual example:

"Legs today have been indoctrinated. They are self-conscious. They talk. They have a vast public, they are invited at meetings. And in a different degree advertising agencies have extended such a treatment to any other segment of female anatomy. A car plus a pair of nylon well filled stockings constitute a well-known formula both for success and for male and female happiness" (McLuhan 1951:197) 8

While women as users follow an instrumental logic, women as passengers have much more conventional traits, if one considers the kind of images employed (like the "classic" female leg out of the car door: Fiat Tipo "Long distance call"; Italian advert for Peugeot 405 SW among others). In other words, when the focus is not obsessively on the aspect of autonomy (in which case the logic becomes instrumental-masculine, or at least anti-feminine), the way in which women are represented as far as content and style are concerned is totally conventional. In particular a feature, also emphasized by Goffman 1979 appears emblematic of gender differentiation: the female "touch" as opposed to the male "hold":

"Women, more than men, are pictured using their finger and hands

to trace the outlines of an object or to cradle it or to caress its surface (...) or to effect a 'just barely touching' of the kind that might be significant between two electrically charged bodies. **The ritualistic touching is to be distinguished from the utilitarian kind that grasps, manipulates, or holds.**" (Goffman, 1979:29)

A case in point of this "ritual" (that is relative to a portion of a heavily codified act, used to establish the terms of interaction) is that of the Italian spot for Renault Cherokee: the male trait is effectively expressed by the hand holding tightly the gear lever to drive the car on the rough ground, while femininity is epitomized by the woman's touch: in removing with a finger dust below the car's name, in fact, she underlines it while caressing the car.

The tendency of advertising language toward "dissecting" female body in elements that stand metonymically for the whole, or isolating a portion of a gesture that becomes a symbolic ritual of gender differentiation is part of the same logic McLuhan acknowledged long time ago and christened "the cultural dynamic of substitutable parts" (1951:197). According to him, on the one side the general trend toward specialization (especially in technology) drives to focus the attention on specific parts (of the woman's body as well as of the car); on the other the association with highly connotated parts of the female body (legs, lips and so on) is easily exploited to convey the non rational aspects of the relation person-car.

The dynamic of substitutable parts seems yet confined to the female universe: in fact a trouser with male shoe out of a car door would produce a definitely different effect than a "well filled" nylon stocking (and, as far as I know, it is a meaningless image, totally alien to the advertising repertoire).

Another recurrent form of content organization also related to gender identity is that of "mirror". Here mirror, unlike in many contemporary literary works (see for instance Borges), is a metaphor for the ambiguous and disquieting theme of "double", but rather for the more aesthetic and glossy aspect of "reflection" that sanctions the triumph of the images that are casted in our direction ("We are the screen", McLuhan warned as far back as in 1968).

Two interesting examples, I have already referred to previously: The first is the Italian spot for Opel Vectra, in which the windscreen acts as catalyst for the neon-lighted images of the city by night: upon it the shining name of the car overlaps for a moment with the face of the driving woman, so as to sanction the mechanisms of identification and osmosis between the two; the car, like a new dress, attracts the gazes upon itself and returns to the onlookers an image of it and its driver centred on the "look". In this respect the female driver does not differ substantially from the other objects refracted by the car. ("She is a fancy dressed girl, she walks and behaves as a person who sees herself as a fancy object, rather than who becomes aware of herself as a person" McLuhan 1951:198).

Gitlin describes an analogous mechanism of refraction by mirror-glasses, a typical accessory of the lone driver; but in both countries women are rather the main object of the reflection-refraction play; this has something to do, in my opinion, with phenomena like social recognition and search for approval (I exist inasmuch as others see me), all things men are supposed not to look for, as they already possess them.

The other example is the already mentioned transnational

campaign for Fiat Tipo, precisely the spot called "Taxi Driver" in Britain. Here the female face exclusively appears as refracted by the taxi's window glass, so that it is not even endowed with an autonomous existence; the "original" is less important than the seductive image (which has rather the character of a mirage, or a dream). The car, quite on the contrary, has an absolutely "real" existence. Glass is the ethereal element par excellence, between transparency and mirror, as Barthes in Mythologies has powerfully suggested. The example considered is a perfect illustration of Barthes' idea: in fact in the same shot the man's face appears behind the window and, below, the woman's face is reflected by the glass and refracted in the viewer's direction: a subtle play, dense of possible implications (for instance: transparency refers to an ontological presence, refraction to an absence - it is only the support to be present), which even when superficially and distractedly consumed can have at least a role of "trainer" of the visual capability of grasping and disentangling layered and complex images.

On this perspective even an apparent counterexample like that of the Italian spot for R5 ("Pidgeon"), where the volitive girl makes the fireman wash her car roof with an imperative gesture can be read in the "to be is to be viewed" framework: in fact, in the last shot, the girl kisses the fireman on his helmet, but as a matter of fact she kisses her own image as reflected by it (in other words: she likes the way others see her).

The way in which gender identity is constructed and represented in the text, thus, constitutes a very stimulating field of analysis for grasping the intersections between elements of

content, style, discursive strategies; intersections that in advertising form recurrent patterns of possible combinations.

In both groups of examples, for instance, the "female" element is mainly expressed by background music, narrative model, mood, non rational and factual strategy, urban setting, an affective relationship with the product and an instrumental use of it.

I will now consider briefly the other variables of the grid, as many of them have already been dealt with in the exposition.

Physical setting: as many of the examples examined up to now show, the physical setting for car adverts in both countries is predominantly realistic (either urban or non urban; urban and non urban setting can also be present in the same spot, the car being the "trait d'union" between the two): 27 spots in Britain and 37 in Italy are in fact shot against a realistic background (which is related, in my opinion and as the cross-reference with other variables confirms, to the overall dominance of other features of textual organization like the narrative model, particularly in his "lifestyle" and "slice of life" occurrences, or like the factual and non rational strategies, definitely more common than the rational-informative one).

If one considers the two groups of examples in more details, it appears clearly that the relative proportion of urban, non urban and mixed setting in the two countries is impressively similar: urban settings are paramount (being the city the core of professional and social relations, and the place in which elements like lifestyle and status make sense, as they can be acknowledged by other people); the number of spots presenting non urban settings are about one half, and there are few cases (6 in Britain, 5 in Italy) of "mixed" setting.

Abstract settings, on the contrary, are rather more common in Italian adverts, at least as far as the sample is concerned: in fact, in the British sample only two cases have been recorded, and moreover there were very different between one another. One is in fact the advert for the new VW Passat, which I have previously defined as neo-informative; the other is for the Nissan Bluebird, shot in the typical "Japanese" style, highly informative and rational (it provides in fact 60 good - written - reasons for buying the car). In the Italian material, on the other hand, I have found 6 examples. But it can be interesting to notice that the correlation abstract setting/ rational-informative strategy is less straightforward in Italy than it is in Britain: in fact, apart from the Japanese case (Hyunday Pony), the others present all a non-rational component. From the BMW campaign, previously mentioned, in which science and pleasure, charisma and technique are part of the same strategy, to the Seat Ibiza spot (which end-line is "Envy is included in the price"), they all refer to elements other than rational to "convince" the viewer.

As far as unrealistic settings are concerned, very few examples have been recorded in both countries: on the British side the only "true" unrealistic setting is that for the R 19 ad, as part of the background of the car is drawn by a designer's hand and shot with an animation technique (on the blueprint of a successful videoclip). Among other things, this spot is a paradigmatic example of the "getaway" function of the car: a road is drawn just in front of it, so as it can escape the traffic jam and carry its precious content (the family) towards clean spaces.

There is also one case of unrealistic situation (the "nightmare" in the R5 spot "Sarah") and of artificial setting (the stage set for Fiat Tipo "Opera").

On the Italian side there is one case of computer-graphic animation: the video-game like sequence of the spot for Citroen AX-BX (in which realistic-non urban and computer graphic animated settings are mixed). The spots for Citroen AX and BX promoting special discount initiatives are also shot against an unrealistic, black and white (silent movie style) background. Moreover one case has been recorded of unrealistic (spectacular) situation: in the R19 spot the car comes out from the sea and is casted on the jetty. In my opinion a correlation can be envisaged between the prevalence of socio-narrative models of textual organization (where the "story" is constructed upon elements like status and lifestyle) and a predominance of realistic representations. The potential discursive autonomy of electronic techniques (and then advertising language) from reality is not exploited at a great extent, representation (although stylized and "ritualized") rather than, say, production, expression, transformation being the main form of the relation between signifiers and signified. Advertising imagery is definitely "realistic".

Social setting: here the two groups of samples reveal a quite sharp difference, as far as the composition of the social background is concerned (social setting being as such a common and dominant feature in both countries). In fact, while in British adverts "mostly male" backgrounds prevail, in Italy the majority of spots present a mixed background (even if in both countries male drivers, or male relevant figures prevail). Women

are more likely to be shown in Italian than in British car adverts, and also to be the main character of the spot (9 cases against 5).

In spite of the dominant social character of the setting, interaction among characters is more "implied" by the situation (which is generally identifiable according to a limited set of typical communication-action-games, or ritualized pieces of interaction) than being actually represented.

I have singled out 7 main recurrent forms of interaction, six within the text and one between text and viewer (in the case in which one or more characters speak directly to the public):

1) Boss-subordinate relation (like taxi-driver/customer and salesman/customer): clearly linked with work activity:

Britain: 6 cases; Italy: 3 cases

2) Peers relationship (including both colleagues and friends: can be found in association with working activity or leisure):

Britain: 7 (mainly colleagues); Italy: 9 (mainly friends)

3) Man-woman relation (including spouses, lovers)

Britain: 5 ; Italy: 15.

4) Kinship relations (including family relations, father-son, relatives):

Britain: 2 ; Italy 6.

5) Party (co-occurrence of several people in leisure time):

Britain: 2 ; Italy: 2.

6) Chance meetings (including bump into or find themselves in the same situation):

Britain: 3 ; Italy: 2.

7) Screen-viewer relation (including presenters and

testimonials):

Britain: 2 ; Italy 6.

The main differences are evident, and concern particularly the sphere of "durable" interpersonal relations (partnership, kinship, friendship), while on the British side circumstantial (especially incidental to the working activity) and fortuitous kinds of interaction are most commonly represented. The more massive presence of women in Italian car adverts is less due to a more sensitive attitude toward the female element than to the fundamental role of woman in all this forms of interaction (as counter-example one can notice that when the form of interaction is friendship, women are less necessarily present, and no friendship is pictured exclusively among women).

As for the **activity** represented, which is of course related to the setting and the range of possible interactions, again a sharp difference can be noted: in fact the ratio of working to leisure activities (the most common two in both countries) is respectively 10 to 5 in Britain and 8 to 25 in Italy. This fact bears some reference, in my opinion, to the considerations above: in fact the realm of interaction that constitute the bulk of Italian adverts content takes place especially in leisure time.

The most common **credibility basis** in the two countries is "status", although with a different degree of relevance: in Italy, in fact, 21 commercials refer to status as a core aspect of the global strategy, while in Britain only 9 are explicitly and exclusively based on the status of the character(s).

Moreover, in the British sample testimonials are not used for car adverts, while 9 of the commercials in the Italian sample

present one or more testimonials. Experts, on the other side, prevail in British adverts.

If I can express my own position on matter of status and social mobility (which is in part, I think, supported by the samples, or can at least provide a possible framework of interpretation for the differences between Italian and British adverts on this issue), status is so frequently displayed in Italian adverts because it is mainly regarded as a function of consumption rather than as a "innate" monopoly of circumscribed social groups, as I think it is the case in Britain. Social groups in Italy are in a way "latent", not well defined categories: one can have access to an higher status if he/she can have access to the distinctive symbols of it (given, of course, some restrictions, among which the colour of the skin). Patterns of consumptions and then style of life define social groups more than other factors, allowing a relative mobility subordinated to the available assets.

Conversely in Britain status seems to be rather an "inborn" quality than a conquer: consumption is not sufficient to qualify status (this is probably why patterns of consumption even in the higher strata of society are far less showy than they are in Italy), even if status allows "naturally" certain patterns of consumption. If on the British side status can provide a model, but not a goal, in Italy it represents a "democratic" condition (then heavily advertised) anyone can have access to, providing he/she has the money.

As for the **relation with the product**, very similar patterns can be acknowledged in the two countries, although subtle differences appear too.

Self-enhancement is by far the most common form in which the

relation person-car is expressed (23 occurrences in British ads, 37 in the Italian ones), followed by social approval (17 to 23) and pleasure (13 to 18).

More than one aspect of the relationship can of course be present in the same spot; and in fact the most recurrent "combination" in both groups of samples is that between the three elements above.

"Pure" self enhancement is prevalent in British adverts (4 cases against 3 in Italy), while in both countries social approval never appears as the exclusive character of the relation, but always in association with other elements (especially with self-enhancement, which includes success and social recognition: 5 occurrences in both countries).

The character of "affective relation" is far more common in Italian adverts than it is in Britain (9 cases against 4), and I believe this has something to do with the relevance generally accorded in Italian adverts to interpersonal bonds, particularly romance. (although, as stressed before, a trend can be envisaged also in Italy toward the increasing exclusive character of the link person-car, that excludes other persons).

Also the "practical" and utilitarian aspects of saving money, of having benefits and so on is a more common feature in Italian than in British commercials. This elements clashes only apparently, in my opinion, with the overall emphasis on status in Italian adverts, particularly if one considers status as something that can be achieved. In fact, whereas "saving" and the connotations entailed do not seem appropriate to the semantic universe evoked by "status" in a country where status is not

qualified by patterns of consumption, it can be the case where status can be achieved (so that if one spends less, one can get more "status symbols"). Moreover in Italy status lies mainly in patrimony of big entrepreneurs, businessmen, industrialists, manufacturers (Gianni Agnelli is also an authority on matter of fashion and "bon ton"), so that "saving" can be positively related to business capacity and far-sightedness in money transactions, rather than to the negative connotation of "poverty", or shortage.

The variable of **direct address** is useful to bring attention to quite sharp differences in the two countries.

First of all a quantitative consideration: roughly one half of Italian adverts present this textual feature, against one third of the British ones. British adverts are in fact, as can be also worked out from the absence of unrealistic settings and from already commented textual features, heavily committed with referential and realistic representations, in respect to which direct address constitutes a break of the "suspension of disbelief" (generated by advertising in general and by the narrative model in particular). Such a break seems pragmatically more appropriate in Italian adverts, which content is more centred on relations than on events. The direct relation between screen and viewer is a qualifying feature of Italian adverts, as also clearly emerges if one compares the modalities of direct address in the two groups of samples.

In fact on the British side the audio-visual form of direct interpellation is the most common (6 cases), while the least frequent is the mere auditive appeal (only two cases). In Italy, on the other side, verbal address is far the most recurrent form

(11 cases against 6 visual), the audio-visual form the least common (5 cases).

Another difference: while in British adverts the verbal address comes exclusively from the voice over (which is in a way a super-textual feature, as it is not part of the "story"), in Italian commercials there is a balance between interpellation by the voice over and by characters looking straight to the camera (especially testimonials). It is not my intention to trivialize the argument, but the overall impression one gets from the comparison of the two groups of adverts in the two countries is that interaction, and then conversation, are the main fields from which semantic universes and pragmatic strategies are drawn in Italian adverts, while the same is not true of British commercials (even if I find it more difficult, probably because of the cultural distance, to delineate an homogeneous sphere as a British rival attraction).

I have already sketched a list of the prevailing and most conventional "topoi" related to the presence of ritual interaction (or communication-action-games) within the texts; as far as the viewer is concerned, as we have seen, direct address mainly takes place in the more "colloquial" form of verbal interpellation in Italian adverts, while it shows a higher level of formality and redundancy in the British ones. However, direct address is not the only way to call for viewers' active involvement: in other words, it is a sufficient but not necessary condition.

One can also object that advertising as such calls for viewer's involvement as condition of the message passing through, and in a

sense this is true; yet evidences from the empirical analysis show that different degrees of activity are requested to the receiver, from "contemplation" and assent or admiration to resolution of puzzles, intertextual associations and so on.

In particular my impression after the comparison is that British adverts rely more on viewers' participation and capability of calculating "missing" elements and making associations. In Italian commercials, on the contrary, almost everything is already "in" the text (and what is external can enrich the meaning, but not change it); this impression is supported, for instance, by the different role played by humour in the two countries (see above), or by the less "risky" version of the same spot for the R5 "Faithful" (an exclusively "barked" spot as a teaser is almost inconceivable for the Italian viewer), or by the absence of spots, in Italy, where the car is absent or hardly visible (like in the British spot for Vauxhall Nova, in which the car appears for a fraction of a second only in the last shot, or the corporate advert for Vauxhall, where no car is in view).

Everything in Italy has to be "out-spoken", explicit, and the receiver can supply his/her own competence but is not forced to do it (different "layers" of meaning are available, in Eco's terms, to the competent receiver, but also the "illiterate" can enjoy the text); grasping the missing element or catching the pun seems, on the contrary, part of the "pleasure of reception" in British adverts.

Intertextuality is another interesting element of comparison, that allows the identification of similarities and differences.

The great majority of commercials in both countries reveals in

fact explicit intertextual references (which allow to capitalize on extra-textual connotations easily available to the receiver, for the sake of brevity and density of advertising texts), but the analysis of individual spots brings to the fore two different patterns. To put it in a nutshell, in Italy co-textual references prevail, television and advertising itself being the main sources from which extratextual connotations are drawn, while in British commercials a wider range of references is brought into play.

On the one side, in fact, there are some features of Italian adverts that can be immediately grasped from a quantitative comparison: for instance campaigns based on series of adverts are far more common than in Britain (9 cases in GB against the 25 of Italy : Alfa Romeo, R5 and Y 10 and others)

Moreover in Italian adverts testimonials, as seen before, play an important role as authorities, which is not the case in Britain; and apart from one case (the actor Christopher Lambert for the R19) the totality of testimonials givers are famous as TV celebrities (the two series for Y 10 are a case in point, the main characters being all recruited from the ambit of TV shows and game shows at CANALE 5).

This tendency is consistent, in my opinion, with the general character of Italian adverts (in the period considered), that is the self-containment of texts: little effort is in fact required for the interpretation, the core of the message in the relations being expressed within the text and/or directly engaged with the viewer.

British adverts, by and large, put less emphasis on direct interpellation than on more subtle means of involvement; and

also, this is the impression I got from the exam of the whole recorded material, TV celebrities are more likely to be used in adverts for different, cheaper product, or for some kind of services, than for car or other expensive durables.

Here intertextual references are rather to the output of other media (like music, for instance, in Vauxhall corporate adverts) and are mainly based on "genres" rather than on direct reference to specific texts: sit-come (Vauxhall Nova, Austin Metro), spy-story (Ford Granada), thriller (Rover Fastback), documentary (Vauxhall corporate), opera (Fiat Tipo) and so on. On the whole, then , British advertisements rely on a wider and extra-televisual (although many of the genre have been made familiar by TV) competence.

Transnational references (the case in which, for instance, the same product is advertised in different ways in the two countries) will be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10: THE UNIVERSAL AND THE SPECIFIC: TRANSNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

FOREWORD

The analysis in the previous chapter was mainly focused on the cultural specifics and differences of the semantic universes open by textual means. But the comparative approach is also useful to evaluate another aspect which is relevant to my perspective: the construction of a super-national, homogeneous (more or less, as we will see) repertoire of images and discursive means.

Debates on the international flow of TV programmes on the one side and on industrial concentration and global marketing on the other are by no means new in the scenario of media analysis either from a sociological or an economic point of view; the role of advertising in promoting global patterns of consumption, consistent with the logic of transnational production has also been stressed ¹. On the contrary there are no attempts, as far as I know, to focus for instance on the way in which transnational advertising draws upon repertoires of visual and verbal elements that can be considered (or are assumed to be, or becoming) "universal", so as to construct a system of reference which validity claims are super-national, on the basis of empirical evidences and of a systematically collected material.

I will also consider, as a complementary aspect, the way in which national advertising exploits or makes use of transnational stereotypes (like easily identifiable settings, persons, typical situations and habits, languages and so on): I call it complementary, as it both reinforces and capitalizes on the

semantic universe gradually built by transnational campaigns.

Many advertising agencies, in fact (at least the most important) are transnational corporations themselves with worldwide affiliates, and many of their clients are transnational firms or multinationals, so that in many cases a strategy is set up simultaneously for several countries, and campaigns created to be broadcast as such are easily apted to different audiences. Then either a multinational firm can sponsor a transnational campaign for a transnationally diffused product, or rather can ask for different locally based agencies (or even the same agency) to set up different strategies for promoting the same product in different countries (other combinations of national and transnational elements can of course be imagined): in any case the result (that is the campaign) tells something about the presuppositions of transnational groups like worldwide agencies and multinationals as far as the representation of sovranational and/or national characters is concerned. The audience is provided, in both cases, with a ready made kit of categories and images to deal with "transnationally".

Like in the previous chapter, I will make a tentative and merely analytical distinction between the "forms" of transnationality in the sample of adverts I have collected, and the privileged "contents", or recurrent themes and topics, or most common textual means (say, music rather than words, for instance); I will also consider some of the national specifics that emerge from the comparison of different strategies for promoting the same product in the two countries (multi-domestic campaigns).

Transnationality, in other words, is not only a matter of intentions (of advertisers or their multinational clients), but also a semantic field that the receiver builds from the evaluation, accumulation, comparison, balance of national and super-national stereotypes, of cultural specifics and universal appeal, of parochialism and xenomenia as they emerge throughout the whole flow of commercials (and, more generally, of TV texts).

The analysis in this chapter is structured in two main parts: in the first I will conclude the comments on car advertisements, in the second I will consider the whole of the recorded material. But before coming to the analysis it is opportune, in my opinion, to revise some of the commonplaces related to the topic of transnational advertising, or rather to discuss some of the (earlier) deterministic position about advertising as "producer" of a "world consumer" through "ideological management". I refer to considerations like those expressed, for instance, by N.Janus:

"The difference between the transnational firm and all other types of firm is precisely the improved form with which the transnationals co-ordinate the different types of capital which allows greater efficiency than other firms operating in the same sector. In this context, their ability to direct behavior to and from the stages they control takes on special significance. That is to say, the transnational firm is able to influence mass behaviour through ideological management, reorienting consumption patterns and making them compatible with their own productive strategies" (1981:14. My emphasis).

The "conspiracy" thesis that I have questioned for advertising in general does not hold, in my opinion, for transnational adverts either: here more subtle, and also more tentative strategies are at stake than a mere cultural imperialism through the spread of a global "uniculture".

The deterministic (and veteromarxist) absolute supremacy of the productive structure upon cultural sovrastructure (even if these terms are not explicitly employed in the essay) appears at least simplistic.'

After having examined a sample of six months of TV commercials in two European countries, my impression was not one of the consistent creation of a "global arena" for transnational products, or the promotion of a standardized global culture: in fact even when the same campaign is broadcast in the two countries, it is always submitted to minor changes, nuances that nevertheless affect the overall impact of the advert, while adjusting it to the "culture" (I use this term in the broadest sense) of the broadcasting country, as we will see shortly.

Global campaigns seem less an attempt to produce standardized messages on a large scale, than to realize an economy of scale in producing messages than can be made suitable to different cultural specifics with a minimum effort.

I do not intend to underestimate the role of transnational advertising in consolidating an oligopolistic market, erode and distorting national cultures in favouring mechanisms of "taste transfer" 2; what I contest is the total determinism of the economic factor in shaping cultural habits, and the presumed capacity of advertising to predetermine the wanted effects.

An idea of the complexity of mechanisms at play in transnational campaigns is given by Sinclair's account of the different transnational forms of the advertising industry (1987:108-115): from an "imperial" pattern of expansion of the oldest international agencies, opening offices all over the world

(which allow to combine the advantage of the common account with that of a local market activity), to the "nationalization" model (when a foreign-based agency acquires a minority shareholding or a partnership in a local or national agency): "This strategy has the advantage of lowering the foreign profile of the industry and simultaneously gaining access to local knowledge of markets". (1987:111).

A further pattern is "transnationalization", or international concentration (when agencies merge or are taken over). If one considers that any of these pattern implies different kinds of relations with the client and thus different advertising strategies, it appears quite clearly that transnational adverts do not constitute an homogeneous set. I quote from Sinclair again:

"In spite of the considerable fascination and controversy generated in the industry by the prospect of 'world brands', there have been very few successful examples of them: that is of products that can be made and marketed throughout the world with little or no cultural adaptation of the advertising material, such as the Coca-Cola campaign or the ubiquitous and apparently deathless Marlboro. Certainly some transnational advertisers are seeking to develop such brands on a global or at least regional basis, but others market the same product by different names in various countries, and other again tailor both the product and the marketing to the specific character of the markets in which they operate, a strategy known, as 'multidomestic' (...). Thus, while transnational marketers might be incline to engage the same agencies throughout the world, they may do so for reasons other than the 'one sight, one sound, one sell' marketing objective" (1987:115-116).

World brands, moreover , can hide behind their consistent image different manufacturer companies and can be handled by different advertising agencies.

From the point of view of "production", thus, transnationality is far from being the result of a straightforward and consistent

strategy; from the point of view of what the receiver gets, it explodes the scope of transnational campaigns, as some national campaigns both for internationally manufactured goods ("multidomestic strategy") and for national products sometimes exploit, as many examples in the recorded material testify, transnational stereotypes to convey their message to a local audience. The boundaries between the definition of a national culture and identity and the proposition of a transnational view by advertising cannot be understood if the two elements are considered separately.

From the point of view of the viewers, who do not know if "an appeal which seems to address them in their own national vernacular is in fact just a version of a global campaign" (ibidem:167), it is very difficult to discern whether the social definition of their nation advertisement present stems from a kind of "underlying" social reality , although stereotypized, or comes from "above" (I use the terms in inverted commas in a metaphorical rather than literal sense), from a global attempt to redefine the culture and tradition of each single nation in terms which are compatible with transnational commercial interest. The definition of "tradition", and the kind of distinctive traditions of a nation is a crucial point in advertising for many products in the two countries considered, and it is not surprising that, for commercial purposes, traditions are referred to that never were (being the accent on "tradition" in itself as an abstract value, rather than on the passed down "content"). 3

I put myself from the point of view of a privileged viewer, as I can have access simultaneously to two distinct universes of discourse, yet bearing some references to one another as far as

products, national values, and even campaigns are concerned.

What I am looking for is not an abstract essence of "transnationality", but rather some of the discursive means used to convey a national or a transnational perspective.

On this respect even the campaigns appearing in an identical form in the two countries are highly significant, as even a mere translation of endlines and slogans can open up the cultural differences. I will divide the exposition of this chapter in two main sections.

The first is about cars: I will try to disentangle the complex relation between nationally specific and transnational elements in examining three aspects:

- A) transnational campaigns
- B) multidomestic campaigns
- C) transnational stereotypes in national campaigns.

In the second part I will consider transnational campaigns for any kind of product, and I will discuss some of the most interesting cases I found in the material from both countries.

The framework for the analysis is the same as in the previous chapter, focused on the pragmatic construction of a semantic universe through textual means.

CARS

A) Transnational Campaigns

I will focus my attention on four transnational car campaigns, already mentioned in Chapter 10 : the series for Fiat Tipo,

broadcast in both countries between October and November 1988; the commercial for Renault 5 ("Faithful" in the English version, October 1988, and "Vita da cani" in the Italian one, March 1989); the commercial for Peugeot 205, broadcast in Britain in February 1989 and about 8 months later in Italy; the commercial for VW Golf, broadcast in early 1988 in Britain and in March 1989 in Italy.

I have already made a few comments on all these campaigns, yet some further remarks seem opportune, especially as far as the question of translation and semantic focus are concerned (which are also crucial to the pragmatic impact of the texts).

In the Fiat campaign the aural track remains the same in both countries, as well as the images, while subtitles and captions are screened in different languages (which involves the problem of translation I will face shortly).

A major difference concerns the "inception" and the pay-off of the commercials in the two countries. In fact the captions functioning as "title" of each spot are different in the two countries, as well as the final (visual) end comments.

The English titles ("Taxi driver"; "The competitors' test"; "Long distance call") put the emphasis on people talking about the car (as the final comment "Everybody's talking about it" confirms) and on the talking subjects.

The Italian headlines ("Londra, Settembre 1988"; "Un circuito di prova", "Roma, Ottobre 1988) give rather prominence to "where" and "when", the subject being the car itself ("The last temptation" is the pay-off).

The "contextualization" of the series by the British end-line ("Fiat. European driving force") reinforces such an impression:

everybody, all over Europe (an English gentleman, a French executive and some German engineers stand metonymically for the whole of european countries) is talking, in different manners (stressing charm, engineering, technical features) about the same car: the end-line legitimizes the whole series.

A different "frame" can be worked out from Italian titles and end-line, where the accent is less on the car being "talked about" and more on its presence all over Europe. And this presence, beyond any rational and factual motive (the viewer is provided with, but as a background element, as I have tried to show in the previous chapter with regard to the "Taxi driver" commercial) is marked by a universal (and super-national) kind of appeal: temptation, a semantic field totally overlooked by English captions .

Then the balance between rational, factual and non rational elements is not the same in the two countries, in spite of the identical shots: the element of "seduction", for instance, is present in two of the spots (French and English spoken), but the different "framing" shifts the accent on the multifaced ways the car impresses people all over Europe in the British series ("European driving force" being a kind of reassuring claim, germane of the "male" logic as we have defined it in the previous chapter). As for the Italian version, the focus is entirely on the "passion" moved by the car: the theme of passion is in fact a motive inspiring the whole of Fiat advertising strategy in Italy in the period considered (see for instance the "Uno" campaign). On the other side the element of "temptation" is more ambiguous to define than "force", as far as

the "gender" of the strategy is concerned: since the biblical episode of the apple and the snake, women usually are seen as tempters, and men as tempted. Temptation is as a matter of fact one of the rare fields of discourse in which women play a dominant role. (Here the female role being played by the car).

Moreover temptation seems to be at odds with the rational and factual character of the German-spoken commercial, unless the range of connotations associated with the term is widened beyond the sensual innuendo to include the aspect of challenge, of desire to be outstanding, of pursuing of supremacy (power being the possible counter-attraction to the sensual sphere, with a strongest male connotation).

This wider meaning of the term "temptation" provides, in my opinion, a different frame against which some apparently minor elements of the text can gain a crucial role, thus becoming "display" gestures or acts. I refer, for instance, to the cup of coffee falling from the hands of one of the German technicians to signal that he has been impressed, and/or disappointed by the performance of the car during the test on the race track.

In my opinion this quick shot is accorded a different relevance in the two versions of the commercial, depending on the "frame" provided by the captions. In the English spot, more explicit about the subjects involved (competitors), it is part of a general feeling of worry ("It's going to give us a lot of trouble"); in the Italian one it acquires a far more dramatic relevance, because the accent is on the "test", on the "race", on the challenge in which the testers are engaged: and as the car "wins", they "lose" ("last" temptation acquiring then the sense of "ultimate", "fundamental" challenge for the supremacy).

So while on the one side the caption "The competitors' test" is more impressing and powerful in suggesting as a matter of fact the element of rivalry and struggle for the supremacy in the car market (a "relative" supremacy, as the question is that of "positioning" in respect to an already -and nationally- defined group of competitors), the Italian one is only apparently more "neutral" (it does not say what's the matter, but only where we are). In fact the supremacy the car is accorded with is not relative to the competitors' cars, but absolute (the last temptation).

My assumption is that texts do not "directly" influence interpretation through textual means (like traces, projects, preferred readings, positioning of the receiver), but rather tend to circumscribe semantic fields of possible associations, in respect to which only a limited number of pragmatic inferences and interpretations result appropriate (which is less deterministic, I think, while it does not mean to overestimate the "freedom" of the receiver). Hence I can say that the relation between textual means and textual contents in this campaign clearly shows how the anchoring function of words and the relationship between words and images can determine a "multi-accentuality" (which is not totally open, but circumscribed to a semantic field) within which a shift of focus is possible.

As far as national stereotypes (transnationally meaningful) are concerned, a whole series is provided by the campaign: the equation German language/high technology (where the "competitors" are quite clearly from Volkswagen, the Tipo being presented as an alternative to the Golf); the "explosive" mixture of French man,

Italian good looking secretary and Italian setting for an entirely "passionate" spot; the "coolness" and self-control of the English gentleman which only the car is able to break (in making him break the "rules" of the traffic).

Also the colour of the cars seems to confirm a typical tendency in car advertising: in fact silver grey stands for technique, red stands for passion, white for beauty and style.

An "effect of reality" is achieved, as stressed before, through the absence of a background music (while natural sounds play a crucial role), through a kind of editing that suits the context of situation (fast in the traffic of the city and on the race track, plain in the "call" spot), through the combination original language/subtitles : all mechanisms which are supposed to hold and to be part of the viewer's competence beyond national conventions.

Few words about the question of "translation" from the original language into the language of the broadcasting country:

- Taxi Driver: the phrase used by the taxi driver to call the attention to the car is different in the two version, and is consistent with the uneven weight accorded in the final caption to the brand name and to the individual model. In fact, while the (original) English words are:

"Eh, look, is one of those new Fiat, the Tipo",
the Italian version sounds rather like:

"Here it is, the new Fiat Tipo!".

It appears quite clearly that the Italian public is supposed to possess already a competence about the car (through press campaign, for instance, or specialized magazines), so that the presentation of the car can be more straightforward: people are

already waiting for it to appear, and there it is. Different is the strategy in a foreign market, where the car needs to be "contextualized" (one of those new Fiat): we are informed that it is a new model from Fiat, and also that it is not the only one (the taxi driver being an "expert" on this matter).

Another difference lies in the appreciation of the taxi driver: it consists in fact in a (rhetorical) question in the Italian version ("Nice, isn't it?") and in a more emphatic statement in the English one ("They have made a nice job of it. What a car!): again in the latter case the appraisal of the car is contextualized, while in the former the focus is exclusively on the model. The response of the gentleman to this solicitation, on the contrary, is more emphatic in the Italian version ("splendid", against English "lovely").

Then the main difference emerging from translation concerns a pragmatic aspect, that is the different degree of competence the viewer is accorded in the two countries: a twofold competence, as it both concerns the brand name (that needs no further specification for an Italian audience, whereas it can be the case for the British one) and the single model.

But there is also another aspect, in my opinion, that although significant as far as the representation of social relations is concerned, is hardly noticeable in the Italian version (especially if the viewer is not familiar with English language and the different intonations). I think I can call it a prosodic factor, as it has to do with manners of speaking, accent, inflection. Television in Britain sanctions, in a sense, the sharp boundaries between classes in society: in fact, for the

sake of "realism", popular programmes like soaps and quiz shows are spoken in a "working class" accent. This is not the case in Italy, where the characters of soaps speak with the same intonation of the voice over in cultural programmes or documentaries. Paradoxically an opposite situation characterizes the news: in Italy journalists speak with a (slight) regional accent (mainly a Roman accent), as part of the global character of reality, whereas in Britain news is spoken with a neutral intonation, as a sign of their "officiality".

In any case, prosodic elements as index of class belonging are far more relevant in Britain than they are in Italy and the spot I am discussing is a case in point: the "Oxbridge" speaking gentleman is paying little attention to the "working class" speaking driver, the conversation being characterized by a merely formal and high-hat kind of courtesy. Although an expert on matter of cars, the taxi driver is not considered as an appropriate source of information by the gentleman more interested, as one can imagine, in status and prestige (about which the driver is not able to provide any convincing piece of information). The conversation is not between "peers", and as a matter of fact is not even a conversation. The car is not interesting, as long as it is presented according to an utilitarian-rational argument and by a "lowborn" speaker: but it suddenly becomes exciting when a glance between peers occurs, when the car reveals its "stylish" nature through its charming driver.

The element of class differences, although entailed by the situation, is then less sharp in the Italian version, while it is reinforced by prosodic factors in the English spot (which is

consistent and in a way supports, in my opinion, the considerations I have drawn in the previous chapter about social mobility in the two countries).

- The competitors' test. Here differences are less striking, and moreover a comparison with the original language is harder, as my German is very poor. I could only catch a difference between the two versions based on a missing phrase in the English version: the second phrase, related to the car passing a difficult point of the track, is in fact "Wasser" (water) in the original language, translated as "guado" (ford) in the Italian is not translated in the English one.

On the whole the English version is shorter and more concise: for example the English answer to the question posed by one of the (off screen) technicians ("Any good?") is simply "yes", while the Italian sounds like "Good. Very good".

But the main differences, as stressed above, lie in the "frame" rather than in the dialogue.

- "Long distance call". Here the secretary speaks Italian, and the executive French. The main difference between the two versions is at the end of the dialogue, when the man, impressed by the car, tell his wife (?) he's preparing a surprise.

The English version is less patronizing and directive, as can be worked out by the comparison of the three version (French speech and English and Italian subtitles)

FRENCH: "Tu sais la voiture dont on avais parlee? Surtout ne faire rien. Je te prepare une surprise."

ITALIAN: "Sai, a proposito della nuova auto..Ferma tutto.Ti faro'

una sorpresa"

ENGLISH: "That new car we talked about. I have a surprise for you".

It appears quite clearly that the Italian and the French (original) versions present a more volitive and imperative attitude of the male character. He is impressed by a car spotted by chance from the window in answering to his partner's call and he decides to cancel any previous arrangement (presumably they have already talked about a new car, which is clearly not this one). Moreover, except for the English version, he can "command" the partner (the destinatory of the new car) to favour the new project (raised as a "caprice" in his mind). The Italian version is the strongest in this sense: in fact "ferma tutto" means "stop everything", "cancel any previous arrangement" (that is supposedly already made), while "ne faire rien" means simply that she just has to wait.

In the English version he commands nothing, but simply commits himself to make a surprise. Gender relations are more "diplomatically" represented in Britain, where feminism has a longer and stronger tradition (both in the audience and among the critics).

- The Renault 5 campaign : "Faithful" - "Vita da cani"

There are some important differences in the transnational campaign by McCormicks Publicis, apart from the title (which semantic relevance I have already discussed in the previous chapter).

First of all a "co-textual" difference: the British commercial

appeared on TV (earlier in 1988) in a twofold version, one just "barked", and one just spoken. Hence the spoken one (which is part of my recorded material) is a sort of "follow-up" that the "teaser" version did prepare and toward which it focalized the viewers' attention.

The Italian version is a synthesis of the two, as it consists of a "barked" dialogue with screened subtitles. It is not preceded by any "teaser", nevertheless it has a kind of contextualization, although different. In fact the "story" is included in a global co-text (the "Renault 5 International Spot Festival", I will comment on more details below) in respect to which it is but an item, and from which it receive a "frame" (in this case: British flag and title and English end comment).

The English version (which title is diffused by other media like press and other TV programs, because of the fame of the spot, but is not screened in the commercial) consists of 21 shots in 30" time, while the Italian one presents 20 shots "squeezed" in 20" time (being 10" occupied by the "frame").

Unlike the Tipo campaign, then, also the visual track reveals some differences, although most of them relate to the duration and the order of the shots. The main discrepancy, apart from the different order in which some of the shots appear, is in shots 10-11-12 of the Italian version and 17-18 in the English one: in the former sequence, in fact, the man is looking for a window roller, while the woman pushes the electric window winder in saying "here it is electric"; in the latter the woman is putting some perfume on, then places the bottle in the glove compartment.

Although idiosyncratic in their content, the two sequences refer to the same semantic field, that is the whole of the car's

optionals and features (all of which are shown in tight shots and details): then the "story" becomes the support for the display of a series of technical details (like the remote control lock, missing in the Italian version), yet in an unobtrusive way, as they are deeply entrenched in the narrative.

The English spoken version is more complete than the Italian one as far as the dialogue between the two characters is concerned, and even if the main points of the story are roughly the same (disappointment of the man when he realizes that his car is out of order; cynicism of the woman about his car; outline by the woman of the value of her car; refusal to lend it; emphasis on property) the overall impact of the English version is different and more striking.

First of all it begins with a statement of the woman that sets the tenor of the whole conversation: "This is the **last** time" (being the prosodic emphasis over the adverb).

A number of inferences can be worked out by this phrase: it is the last time she allows him to drive her car, the last time she wastes her time in getting him out of troubles, the last time she stands his sentimental link with a useless and inefficient car and so on.

In the whole spot the woman displays a self-sufficient, instrumental logic (although she does not actually drive, she is the owner of the car and she "allows" the man to drive, which is a clear demonstration of superiority).

Here the man is presented according to a "female" logic: he stands up for his old car, although out of order; he purports values like "art", affection, sentiment against the

"functionalism" of his partner (M: "It's a work of art"-W:" So put it in a museum"; M: "You've got no soul"- W: "You've got no transport"); he reveals a "nurturant" attitude (only in the British version) when he repeatedly makes sure that his partner really does not prefer to drive.

On the contrary the woman incarnates an instrumental and strategic wisdom, typical of male stereotypes: what does not perform its function "has got to go", nothing is worth existing (apart in a museum) if it does not serve the scope; realism and utilitarianism are preferable to sentimentalism; who does not accept the rules will not survive and must not be encouraged (hence it is the last time).

She is "faithful" to the rules of progress, competition, frenetic life in the same way as the car is faithful to her; she is not faithful to her partner (paradoxically the moody tone of the conversation reveals that the two are a couple rather than, for instance, neighbours, as disappointment is directly proportional to involvement), inasmuch as things are not faithful to him, are not under his control. She is a "winner", he is a "loser", so they have to follow different paths: and in fact "this is the last time".

As I have stressed earlier, the title of the spot is eloquent to the field of semantic associations constructed by the text, and of the pragmatic implicature to be worked out from it. "Faithfulness" is a concept that entails dedication, monogamy, even jealousy: here the "faithful" subject is in fact an object (the car) and faithfulness overlaps with possession, exclusive link (which is also suggested by the barked teaser: dogs are the faithful animals par excellence, and those that guard property):

"The car, thy car".

And, like in the campaign for VW Golf I will consider shortly, things (at least, certain things) are purported as more reliable than persons.

I could not have drawn the observations above (although many other are possible, which is not my purpose to exhaust) without a comparative framework of analysis, and without setting the two versions of the text side by side in trying to grasp the potential social significance of the differences between them.

Thus a first consideration is possible on the basis of the two titles, that I have already anticipated: "faithfulness" is not a concept to be mocked or distorted in Italy, without provoking counterproductive effects in the audience.

What the Italian version of the spot does is actually to shift the semantic focus from the quality of the relation (faithfulness) to the "symbol" of it (the dog): and as the focus is on animals and things rather than human being, a greater degree of parody and sarcasm is possible. Moreover, a wider and more innocuous field of possible associations is activated, to begin with the title: "Dogs' life" is a very popular expression to indicate stress, pressure, race against time, all features well synthesized in the passage from a quiet neighbourhood to the busy motorway and the crowded city.

The accent being upon the quality of life rather than the quality of the relation, the latter acquires a less aggressive and more balanced character (impression also favoured by the shorter dialogue of the subtitles): nervousness and moodiness (rendered by the metaphor of barking) are signs of our time and

part of our (dogs') life, no matter if we are women or men. The man is less "nurturant" than in the British version (he straightforwardly asks for the car, unlike in the GB more rhetorical version "You won't be needing the car today, eh?"; he does not ask the woman if she wants to drive) and is more inclined to bad language ("Damn!" is his comment when his car refuses to start), and the woman is less cynical (the phrases "You've got no soul"- "You've got no transport" being missing in the Italian version).

To continue the analogy above, both the man and the woman are in a sense "losers", that is overwhelmed by the frantic pace of living of modern life (to which in fact they react barking). And the car is an instrument, an allied that can "smooth" the passage from quiet (the terrace villas) to busy (the motorway and the city) life.

And while in the English version the final pun poignantly expresses the intrinsic unity between the car and the woman, the link of possession emerges rather as an extrinsic bond in the Italian version (M: "Can I keep it today?"-W:"No"; M:"Why?"-W:"Because it is mine").

Faithfulness peeps in the visual and verbal end comment: the visual (in Italian) is "Super 5. Fedele come nessuna" (Faithful like nobody-nothing else: the ambiguity is purposively exploited), while the verbal (English male voice over) says "The Renault 5: faithful, obedient, and does not fail the road".

Whereas the visual comment seems to restore to original connotation of faithfulness (that the car fulfils better than people, in this case), the verbal one confirms the dog-like acceptance of the term, so that the semantic universe maintains

its coherence.

This campaign, in my opinion, is a powerful example of how the presupposition of cultural differences can affect the transformation of texts, and how advertisements lend themselves to completely different interpretations in spite of minimum variations. - The Volkswagen Golf campaign.

As I have already discussed some aspects of the campaign, especially as far as the content represented is concerned, I will confine myself here to the discrepancies between the two versions. Actually the two versions of the spot "Change" (from the title of the tune) are identical in the two countries, apart from the visual end-line. In fact in the English version the slogan is the famous "If only everything in life was as reliable as a Volkswagen", which appears in small characters at the bottom of the screen; the Italian (visual) pay-off is instead "Golf. Qualcosa di importante" (literally: "Something important").

I don't think I am venturing too far if I envisage in this discrepancy the same kind of shift I have mentioned for the case of Renault 5. Again, the universe of discourse is that of a (broken) relation between an (absent) man and a red dressed (the colour of passions, including wrath) woman. And, as we have seen in a number of cases, that of interpersonal relationship is a theme that must be handled tactfully in a society where family (and then romance, as a "prelude") is still a dominant reference value. Hence while the interchangeability of man and car is implicit and easily perceivable in the British version (cars are reliable, men are not), it is far less open in the Italian commercial, where the importance of the car seems rather stated

against the futility of the other gifts (luxury items are useless, the car is really important). In fact where "reliable" is an adjective that only can be pertinent to the man or the car (how could pearls or furs be unreliable?), "important" can also be an attribute of the various gifts.

Then the "throwing away" can also be seen as an "ethical" action of getting rid of the superfluous, of avoiding getting loaded down by things: when the most important thing (romance) comes to an end, the second important becomes paramount (the car as a means to start a new existence).

In the British version, on the contrary, the dominance things gain over people (no matter if it is for a feeling of grudge) causes an overall impression of "greed", attachment to things as surrogate of interpersonal relations (this is the way the spot has been interpreted by most of the critics, as the quotation by Williamson in chapter 10 testifies).

A last remark, concerning less a difference than a cluster of elements that hold for both countries: the red-dressed angry woman (all features designating "femininity") suddenly becomes calm, detached, capable of using her own initiative (all male characters) as soon as she decides to keep the car (utilitarian logic, another male feature): the car itself is silver grey, a "male" colour usually denoting technique (but also skill, intelligence and so on); and the kind of "display acts" (in Goffman's terms) the woman performs at this point of the story are all male-connotated gestures, like throwing the keys and catching them, or "slapping" the wheel like a friend on his shoulder. Once again, I shall venture to say, women gain independence by denying their "female" character and assuming a

"male" attitude; they paradoxically become liberated by men in trying to emulate them.

The Peugeot 205 campaign

The campaign by HDM Horner Collis & Kirvan had a great impact and caused a lot of comments (many of which critical because of the erotic overtones), as one can find out in reviewing the specialized magazines of that period 4.

The advert consists of a string of skilfully-lit images: a "fashion-plate model" spots the 205 arriving from the balcony of a mansion in a exotic location (incidentally, the car runs on the right side of the road, but is right-handed) and goes to check it out; a man comes out from the car and disappears, and then we know the girl is after the car, not the man. In the final shot she draws a heart in lipstick (which many interpreted as a phallic symbol) on the rear window, while a "super" exhorts "Love it". The sound track, "stolen" from recent charts, consists of a female voice whispering "See me, feel me, touch me, love me" (which according to the responsible persons behind the project at HDM H.,C.& K. is the voice of the car, not of the woman: the car is in fact represented as sexy and attracting. See Campaign 17/2/1989, p17).

The spot appeared identical in the two countries, apart from the final end-line: "Love it" in the English version, followed by a caption with the Peugeot slogan ("The lion goes from strength to strength"); "205. Un amore di numero" (the translation being approximately "A lovable number") in the Italian advert.

Again, "love" is not in itself a semantic field appropriate to

an object like a car, then it is opportunely translated into an adjectival expression ("E' un amore" being a very common expression in Italian to say "It is really lovely").

These two constant features, emphasis on the single model and cautious use of the theme of love and relationship, again characterize the Italian version of the transnational campaign.

B) Multidomestic campaigns

With the term "multidomestic campaigns" I refer to a kind of strategy that consists of national advertising for transnational manufactured goods. I will deal here with the advertisements for cars produced by transnational firms, but promoted according to strategies that are specific to the broadcasting country (although some references to the foreign setting of production are activated in various ways, as we will see).

I have borrowed the term from Sinclair 1987. In the chapter on "Transnationalization of advertising" he distinguishes between two main strategies as far as "world brands" are concerned:

"Certainly some transnational advertisers are seeking to develop such brands on a global or at least regional basis, but others market the same product by different names in various countries, and other again tailor both the product and the marketing to the specific character of the markets in which they operate, a strategy known as 'multidomestic'. (...) Thus, while transnational marketers might be inclined to engage the same agencies throughout the world, they may do so for reasons other than 'one sight, one sound, one sell' marketing objective" (1987:116).

In the sample of advertisements I have collected there are different examples both of identical products advertised with different names but identical strategies (I will analyze the Jif-

Cif campaign in the next section), and of the same product (either cars, or less expensive goods) advertised according to the specificity of the local market.

I will confine myself here to the latter group of adverts, as I will deal with the transnational campaign for other goods in the second section of this chapter.

If one is interested in the way in which advertisements represent and address a specific social reality, I believe that the combined analysis of "global adverts" (although the nationally specific versions of the same campaign always present, as we have seen, slight but meaningful discrepancies, if nothing else for the impossibility of a "precise" translation) and of "multidomestic adverts" (where the emphasis is not on the universal and supernational traits, but on the way in which a specific culture represents within its own "frame" of reference a non-national product) can offer a useful perspective.

Global strategies, we have seen, have also revealed cultural specifics; in the same way national strategies are a source of stereotypes concerning countries other than that broadcasting the commercial. Let's start with some examples.

I will discuss some cases particularly interesting in my perspective, namely a series broadcast on Italian TV called "Super5 International Spot Festival", consisting of a number of spots shot in various European countries and in original languages and a couple of adverts for the same model (VW Passat; Renault 19), but following completely different strategies in the two countries.

The SUPER 5 INTERNATIONAL SPOT FESTIVAL Series.

5 spots out of the whole series broadcast by Italian TV fell under the compass of my period of registration, which is a sufficient number, in my opinion, to give an idea of the global strategy. The series partially overlaps with the group of adverts analyzed above (as some of the spots appeared in more than one country), but is different inasmuch as it "frames" the element in a unique "macrotext".

Thus before considering the content of each single spot, that is the way in which the "spirit" of each European country is synthesized in a 20" micro-story, I intend to spend a few words on the structure of the series, that is on the common "frame" that unifies and gives sense to the single episodes.

The beginning and the end are in fact always the same: announced by a triumphal tune by wind instruments, a red R5 enters the screen from the left side, on a white background: then a stream of European flags appears on the top of the screen, while a male voice over declares the title of the series. The next shot consists of the flag of the country in which the story is set, with the title superimposed in white characters (and in Italian language). Then the story begins (lasting about 20"); in some of the spots a male voice over utters a verbal end comment in the original language of the "producing" country; finally the "frame" with car and flags, and the male voice over inviting the audience to vote the favourite spot at Renault concessionaires, with the opportunity to win a trip to Cannes (the modalities of the competition are not specified). Actually the formula is rather imperative ("vote your favourite spot and win..."), also given the brevity of the slot: the whole spot, frames plus story,

is squeezed in 30" time.

What seems to me interesting is less the kind of frame than its presence as a contextualizing element, its capability to order and legitimize a series of "Babelic" segments: unlike the Fiat Tipo series, where the foreign languages were not justified by external elements, here a specific connotation is attached to their presence, that is a connotation of "spectacle" (festival) and competition ("win"). As any form of contextualization, this one also tends to exclude a whole range of possible associations, in bringing only a finite and definite set of elements to the fore.

The frame is "Italian", the spots are not: thus in Italy a bricolage has been realized out of transnational spots, and with a double strategy of viewer's involvement: textual mechanisms on the one side and direct address and the appeal of "winning" on the other (one can vote the spot without buying a car, but is anyway drawn in the car showroom).

The kind of Europe-ness the series endorses is neither under the aegis of a "single market" economic perspective, nor in the name of a common feeling of "Europeanicity": on the contrary, differences are underlined and maintained, and the unity is merely extrinsic, depending on the structure imposed upon the segments rather than on homologies among them. Moreover, it is a form of unity grounded on a specific spectacular practice, (festival) something in between culture and folklore, that in activating associated practices ranging from different kinds of spectacular performances to different media involved (cinema, television, record industry) excludes more controversial sides of the same phenomenon, like economic and political aspects.

The mechanism of involvement is rendered even more alluring by the use of the "vote and win" formula, made familiar to the public by quiz shows and various televisual forms of sponsorship and merchandising.

Beside circumscribing and specifying the appropriate field of discourse within which the single items have to be interpreted, the mechanism of framing performs, in my opinion, another important role as far as the pragmatic impact of the spot is concerned. In fact it allows a clear-cut distinction between the two levels of the commercial, one characterized by direct (verbal) address and by the presence of the voice over, the other (the "narrative") in a way "distantiated" and demystified: the fictive nature of the story is signalled twice, at the beginning and at the end (it is a **spot** festival; viewers have to vote their favourite **spot**). Spots are offered to the audience's enjoyment as such, not as representations of some kind of social reality; the country that "signs" the realization is but an authorial mark, like the nationality of a director participating in a film festival, but the "object" of pleasure is the spot itself.

There is a double metacommunicative disclosure in this series that contributes to make it an interesting case of "pact" with the viewer: in fact he/she is made aware that what he/she is going to see is a commercial; he/she is invited (better, commanded) to apply a kind of aesthetic judgement to the spot, and to express it openly (by physically going and vote the favourite one in the proper place).

A semantic ambit of discourse is made clear (we are in front of

fictive constructions) and a pragmatic framework of reception is set up (we are told how we have to interpret the texts, what we have to do after it and for what - instrumental - purpose).

I can hypothesize a range of (merely conjectural) attitudes of a putative receiver: he/she can be frenetic with competitions and "special offers", and thus use the spot as a "token", a raffle ticket that can make his/her fortune: it is unlike that in this case the favourite spot is interpreted as a text, while irrational and "cabalistic" elements are more likely at work; the spectator can be, on the contrary, an estimator of film (and, why not, spot) festivals, in this case being prone to focus the attention on textual elements to the detriment, perhaps, of the commercial message (a common case of "vampirism" of textual "medium" over the commercial "message"). Many other cases can be envisaged related to the semantic fields of aesthetic and pleasurable enjoyment on the one side and of that of fortune, chance, success on the other: what is anyway excluded is any reference to economic, political, sociocultural elements.

Apart from the "Vita da cani" spot I have already discussed in depth, there are 4 other "vignettes":

- "Il sequestro": a kidnapping thriller story shot in London City (Covent Garden / Southern English accent are the coordinates which provide the physical location of the plot) whose main characters are a couple in their thirties and an elusive "Michael" who is missing (we know at the end it is the car). All ingredients are typical of the genre "noir", from the dramatic shot angles to the "suspense" music, from the dark-rainy conditions to the frantic tone of the conversation. There are not national stereotypical traits, apart from the conventions more

linked to the genre than to the context of situation.

On the contrary, super-national features prevail, from the bright red dress of the woman to the typical "female touch" (when the car is eventually reached, blocked in a no parking space, the woman caresses its surface with a gloved hand).

The spot belongs to the series (in the series) "What's yours called?", emphasizing the affective relation person/car. The interesting thing is that here the relation is not exclusive, like in the "Faithful" spot, but equally involving for both the woman and the man (even if it is the woman who goes and searches for it: nurturant ethos): in fact here the car plays rather an "auxiliary" role (a son, or a pal) than the "surrogate" of a partner.

- "Il Piccione": this is a French spot, although the only phrase the main character (a young woman) utters is "La" ("There"), pointing to the roof of her car, soiled by a pigeon. The charming and saucy girl does not hesitate in stopping a fire brigade to make them, with an imperative gesture, wash the dirty roof. Eventually she thanks one of the firemen by kissing him on his helmet (or rather, as I have already pointed out, in kissing her own image as reflected by the helmet).

There are some feature in this spot that can be interpreted as instances of "Frenchness": the impertinent, stylish girl, the pleasurable atmosphere, the sensual allusion (as the French-shot spot for Fiat Tipo substantiates "Frenchness" is synonymous with alluring atmosphere, passion, seduction). The girl is volitive, she points to the car's roof with great determination (a "male" gesture), but her volition is confined to the realm of seduction,

while the activity she is engaged in is typically female (shopping in fashionable boutiques).

The dominant colours are those usually associated to women in car adverts: red and black.

- "Harakiry": a French spoken spot, shot in Japan with Japanese characters and Italian subtitles. A team of test drivers is trying a R 5 along the streets of a busy town: at the end, astonished and weighed down by the car's performances, the chief tester commands the other two to execute harakiri. The spot is an ironic version of the "test" narrative model, the counter-attraction to the more "serious" version of the same model, like the Fiat Tipo spot. Also in this case the test is performed by competitors (Japan as well as Germany are leading car producers), but the mode is completely different. The competitive spirit, the sense of self-discipline and the total dedication to work (all features that epitomize the Japanese ethos in media portraits) are mocked in the spot, yet used to legitimize the international fame and success of the car. In this spot, more than in the others, national stereotypes are the element upon which the argument of the whole commercial is built.

- "Dune-sky": another French spot with no dialogue, based on the spectacular performance of the car down the sand dune of a desert, running alongside young people on their skis. A group of young friends is on the car, with a young man driving. They all are dressed in bright and even phosphorescent colours, the same one can expect to see on a ski slope or in a windsurf competition: bright colours, together with rock music (the R5 tune is rearranged by electric guitars) are emblems of youth and "joie de vivre" ("La vie s'enroule en R5" is in fact the end

comment). Also in this spot, then, super-national and universal traits are paramount.

In the series considered as a whole, then, the transnational appeal of the car is validated, in spite of the appearance of a collection of peculiar national vignettes, by universal and unspecific features. "Transnationality" here is achieved both through universal elements and commonplaces (like the portraits of the Japanese): little to do, then, with national idiosyncrasies or with elaboration of the message according to culturally- specific canons.

Two car campaigns have been recorded for the same model using completely different strategies in the two countries, one for the Renault 19 and the other for the new Volkswagen Passat.

I have already discussed some aspects of them in the course of the analysis, but it is worth recapitulating here the main points in order to compare the national specifics and discrepancies.

I will start with the Passat launch, both because I assume that a very expensive car needs a very carefully assessed strategy and presumably greater investments and because of the striking, absolute differences between the British and Italian strategies, in spite of the common values purported (tradition, continuity, reliability).

The English version is shot against an abstract white setting: a man in a grey suit, looking to the camera, presents the milestones of VW production, from the Beetle to the Polo (the cars are dropped from above) 5 . The tone of the presentation is sober and "solemn" ("In the beginning VW built the Beetle...), then irony irrupts when the debut of the new Passat is announced

with an oxymoron ("and now VW, famous for the **great small cars**, introduces a great big one"), and the car, dropped from above, breaks through the floor. The man lets himself down on the car, uses it as a slide to demonstrate its aerodynamic shape, enters it and, before driving away, addresses the viewers directly and calls upon their competence ("in fact all you can expect from a VW, only bigger"). The viewer, in fact, is invited to consider all his knowledge about the brand and magnify it in order to obtain an adequate representation of the car's value.

This is simultaneously an image advert (the main "phylogenetic" stages of the brand are covered) and a product advert (where the product capitalizes on the brand fame).

The Italian campaign is completely different, although the themes are the same (small/great, tradition, continuity from Beetle to Passat). First of all the setting, anything but abstract: an average family (father, mother, one small child) is gathered in the living room, while a small, pink, rubber animated Beetle tries to grab the father's attention; eventually the man follows the small car in the garden, where a (real) Passat is parked. The Beetle is jumping with joy and the big car moves the windscreen wipers and puts the headlights on as a sign of recognition; the little one noses out the Passat and even sprinkles some water in its direction. In the meantime the man carefully observes the car, caresses the rear boot (a typical female or "nurturant" gesture) and when the little Beetle reaches him with an imploring expression, the father takes it in his arms and utters something like "OK, we will keep it", while a male voice over concludes "Passat, grande Volkswagen" (Passat, great VW).

The sound track consists of a motive in the 50's style alternating music and chorus singing "Oh mamma!" (the phrase precedes and follows the apparition of the big car).

The value of tradition, expressed in the British campaign through the narrative historical mode ("In the beginning..."), that is a verbal strategy, is figured in the Italian advert by the embleme par excellence: family (a "human" family and the firm as a family). It is interesting to note that such a "tropos" allows a paradoxical situation: the smallest car, the Beatle, in spite of being the oldest, is represented as the "son" of the biggest Passat (which is actually the ultimate model).

The core of the message is that the Beatle is part of a solid tradition (metaphorically represented by family), and the Passat is worthy an immediate "adoption" in the same tradition.

The features of reliability, security and the like are not advocated as part of the "fame" of the brand (and of the competence of the viewer), but rather can be inferred through a metaphorical transfer of attributes from the family (and its members) to the firm (and its models).

The most significant specificity of the Italian campaign, which confirms the general results of the analysis up to now, lies in my opinion in the absolute prevalence of the semantic field that includes relations, romance, family, and that serves as the main source from which a range of different (and positive) connotations can be worked out, even in ambit (like that of cars and technology) apparently at odds with it.

In the English advert each model (Beatle, Golf, Polo), metonymically stands for one stage in the history of the firm, as

a brick in the building of a glorious tradition: each car legitimized itself and is legitimized by the whole of the history it is part of. In the Italian spot, on the contrary, both cars are part of a "family" (the firm) which in turn is legitimized by being represented as a real family: worthiness is less an "intrinsic" property than a value acquired from being part of the family; the positive features are not stated as such, but are refracted by the family on its members. There are clearly two different concepts of the same value "tradition": one is based on a reputation gradually built (is the ancient ideal of the "homo faber"), the other on the participation in one of the chief values of Italian society, family (where the emphasis is less on what human being can construct, manipulate through technology than on the fact that they constitutionally are, as Aristotle said, "social animals").

Two faces of the same semantic field allow then different representations, entail different connotations and suggest pragmatic associations suitable, I believe, for the dominant values that characterize the context of reception.

The Renault 19 launch campaign is another case of multidomestic strategy, the promotion of the same product being differently tailored according to the different markets.

The British spot by Publicis 6 is a mixture of animation and live action in the style made famous by the director Steve Barron in his celebrated (and praised) video for the group A-HA.

The car is in fact re-drawn and refined against a real background, with powerful musical effects that signal the passage from the real use of the car to the drawing-board. Animated pencil sketches and live action alternate, which gives an idea of

the development of the car, progressively refined and adapted to any driving condition.

The spot is in itself a complex cluster of different elements: I will list some of the most relevant in the present framework of analysis: the association test-race circuit and wild landscape (typical of a rational-male logic); the combination family-traffic-getaway fantasies (typical of a nurturant ethos); the presence of a non-realistic situation (a road is drawn by the same pencil that designed the car in front of it, so it can escape the busy town and drive away in the countryside); the male hold (that uses the pencil and rubber energetically for designing and refining the car) and the female touch (that uses a sample of fabric as a remote control for changing the drawn interior of the car in a real luxury one); the alternation of a melodic, classic-like motive and a "cold" technological music according to the phase of the development of the car (melodic in the "test" phase, technological in the "drawing" stage); the alternation of real sounds (e.g. braking noise) and music; the use of animation to indicate the non-yet-definitive parts of the car (only after being redrawn and refined any single part, from tires to windscreen, becomes real; and only at the end of the spot the car is completely real); and, eventually, the male voice over that insists upon the rational-male side of the strategy in stating "Designed without compromise, tested without mercy, the new R19".

In spite of all the elements typical of a "lone driver" strategy, the car is presented as a model that suits the family (father, mother, a girl and two sons are carried in the last shots from the traffic jam to an open space).

Completely different is the campaign broadcast by Italian TV for the launch of the same car: the only common points are the focus on design and the intertextual reference, which in the Italian case is not the universe of videoclips but the cinematographic imagery (the movie "Jaws").

The strategy is totally non-rational, the situation non-realistic, the appeal totally emotional: the first shot presents in fact a lifeguard on the seaside shouting to the bathers: "get out, a shark!", while panic is spreading quickly among the people present. Suddenly, on the notes of a triumphal tune, a R 19 emerges from the sea and jumps on the jetty, while a male VO comments on the force of the car's engine and exhorts the viewer ("You must discover it, you must try it"). Then the car drives away very fast, arrives to a glamorous Hotel, and brakes spectacularly. A young man in smocking gets out of the car, and when he takes his dark sunglasses off the viewer can recognize the famous French actor Christopher Lambert. He throws the keys to the hotel porter and goes off. In the last shot the car throws a shadow like that of a shark on a white wall, while the voice over concludes: "Renault 19. The rising force".

The prevalent character of the spot is spectacle, the style is completely different from the English campaign, where the spectacular mix of animation and live action is functional to a rational argument. Here, on the contrary, a number of non-rational elements (shock, surprise, spectacular jump and brake, appeal of the actor and the like) are clustered as to suggest connotations like aggressiveness, energy, success, elegance, charm. The association emerging actor/emerging car and the cinematographic situation all invest in the car and involve it in

a play of identification and exchange of attributes.

Here the car is not a family car, but an aggressive car for an emerging single man: and whereas in the British campaign it jumps the traffic jam and reaches a quiet road, in the Italian commercial it jumps over all "ordinary people" on the beach and reaches an exclusive hotel. The emphasis is not on the car itself, but on the image it (literally) projects.

The fact that two different universes of discourse are related to the same car according to its positioning in the individual national markets, and most of all the fact that family is referred to in the British campaign and not in the Italian one is not at odds with the overall findings of the analysis up to now. Lone drivers are not an exception in Italian car adverts, and status and success (especially when "incarnated" in a testimonial) are very common elements, as we have already seen. Conversely, the presence of a family in the last shots of the British campaign does not seem to qualify the whole spot (based on test and design), but rather specifies the potential target.

Anyway the comparison shows clearly how the same product, and the emphasis on (roughly) the same features, can be linked to completely different textual strategies.

C) Transnational elements in national campaigns

I will mention here two cases of national campaigns set in a foreign country, or bearing evident transnational references: the British campaign for Fiat Tipo (January 1989) and the Italian campaign for Renault 5 (October 1988), the first styled like an

"opera" according to an Italian libretto (titled on the screen), the second set in London with a celebrated Italian showman as testimonial.

Fiat Tipo (Yellowhammer): the campaign is emblematic of a typical British commonplace: the equation of "Italianicity" and opera. Hence it does not sound particularly odd that two major campaigns for the launch of "Italian" products (although the second is actually made in USA, but this does not matter) did come up with the same idea: in fact also a campaign for "Ragu" (Still Price Court Twivy D'Souza) exploits the same transnational stereotype in showing a series of sober, ordinary British citizens metamorphosed into opera singers at the first taste of "Ragu", with a "juxtaposition of normality and flamboyant nonsense" (Campaign 6/1/1989, p 13).

The setting of the car is an actual opera stage, and the artificial and anti-naturalistic character of the scenario is overemphasized by the foppish characters and by the huge heroine with a even huger sunburst head-dress that comes out of the sun roof. In the 60 second aria fops (Amadeus style), heroine (Wagner style) and a female chorus (Greek tragedy like) all sing the praises of the Tipo (we are informed, for instance, that the exposed steel is 100% galvanized): at the end the heroine invites all the dandies in her car ("there's a lot of room" she says, and they confirm: "Loads of room") and drives away: quite an unusual way to position a car as a family saloon. The car is red, the matronly woman's attitude nurturant, and all elements are overemphasized, both on verbal track (100%, loads of room) and on the visual (grotesque characters). The combination of

exaggerated element, the pastiche of styles, the hyperboles of the woman as a matron, all scored according to the "aria", make a nice metaphor of the way in which "Italianicity" is seen abroad. The same spot would not have produced the same impact to an Italian audience, not (yet) accustomed to identify Italy with opera, or better, to say Opera for Italy. Moreover, the connotation of status associated with opera in Britain (where connoisseurship of Italian opera, food, wines is a middle-class fashion) does not hold for the Italian audience (where opera is a "popular" divertissement, rather than connoisseurship in classical music being a sign of status).

Renault 5: opera is not synonymous with Italy for Italians any more than a bowler hat is synonymous with London for English people: but it is certainly the case for the Italian audience. In fact the Italian campaign for R5 (2 spots) is entirely based on a series of English stereotypes (that is a series of Italian stereotypes about England), introduced and brought to the public by an Italian TV star, Johnny Dorelly, a singer and presenter also famous for his role in successful theatrical comedies.

In the first spot the location is made immediately familiar to the viewer by the presence of two English guards. Two judges in their black robes and wigs come out of the court talking to each other; one of them jumps into a Jaguar driven by a chauffeur, the other stops (with an imperative gesture) a white Renault 5 coming along. The driver is a young woman; the judge gets into the car, takes his wig and tie away, adjusts his hair and appears to be a young, good looking man. The testimonial man approaches the car, in which the two are kissing each other (with their safety belts

fastened!), and comments: "Ah, it is a Super 5!" ; then he turns to the camera, and, in addressing the viewers directly, illustrates the favourable conditions of payment. The man in the car confirms ("Correct!") and drives away.

The second spot presents in a way the opposite situation: a young man takes the car, gets dressed while he drives from a mansion in a rural location to the busy city (the viewers can spot a typical double-deck bus) and eventually arrives at an ancient building (the House of Lords?) and enters it in bowler hat and jacket. To the testimonial man commenting on his car and explaining the favourable payment conditions he says "Correct!", as above. And like in the first spot the showman invites the viewers to obtain further information about the car, but in Italy.

The series only makes sense for an Italian audience, because of the national popularity of the testimonial man who is a measured and well-bred Italian showman (he started his career as radio conductor, then became famous for roles in musicals and as singer and presenter in TV programmes; he is now in his late 50's).

The heavily characterized setting (guards, double-deck busses, men in their bowler hats and the like) is functional to the "international" image of the car (French car, Italian presenter, English setting), which is obtained through a figure of "accumulation" (a typical way to achieve this scope, as we will see below).

GOODS: TRANSNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND TRANSNATIONAL STEREOTYPES

I will consider in this section for campaigns that appeared in the period considered in both countries for different (and inexpensive, apart from the TV set) kinds of goods.

I will also focus my attention on the relations between semantic, pragmatic, textual aspects, with particular regard to the idiosyncratic construction of social representations of reality (or of representations of particular aspects of social reality).

Here is a list of the transnational campaigns I will consider in depth:

- Jif (GB)/ Cif (I) by the multinational Unilever (broadcast in both countries several times from 1988 onwards)
- Sheba cat food (broadcast in Britain in late 1988 and in Italy in early 1989)
- Gillette Contour Plus safety razor. (broadcast simultaneously in several countries since January 1989)
- ITT Nokia TV set. (broadcast in Britain since October 1988 and in Italy from January 1989).

Other cases have been recorded of transnational campaigns, like that for the perfume "Loulou" by Cacharel, that for hair products "L'Oreal Studio Line", that for Unyroyal Tires and for a cosmetic cream, "Plenitude" by l'Oreal.

The last case is very interesting because of a discrepancy in the verbal end comment : it is in fact uttered by a female voice over in the British version, by a male one in the Italian commercial.

Moreover the tone of the voice over is more "possibly-ized" in the British case ("Helps prevent the signs of ageing") and far

more categorical in the Italian one ("cancella i segni dell'invecchiamento", that is "Cancels the signs of ageing"). Two completely different logic are at play: preventive in the first case, therapeutic in the second; advisory in the first case (a woman giving advices to other women), "sanctionatory" in the second (a man being presented as an authority on the matter of female beauty); from "inside" (the same gender) in the first case, from outside (the opposite gender) in the second and so on. Unfortunately only the British version fell under the compass of the registration period, the Italian commercial being broadcast later in 1989. Nevertheless the differences I can signal on the basis of my personal memory can give at least an idea of some cultural idiosyncrasies, which fit well in the interpretative framework built up until now.

As for the other campaigns I have mentioned, I did not found them particularly interesting in the perspective of the present analysis, either because they contained hardly any spoken language or because of the substantial similitude in the translation. Therefore, I see no point in widening the material to be analyzed in depth beyond effective significance (although significance is a subjective criterion: I could also say consistency with the global perspective of this work).

Let's then begin with the first of the transnational campaigns.

JIF/CIF: it is a 30" commercial for a cleansing product by Unilever. The name is different, but the phonetic is similar (unlike if the initial consonant would have been the same for the two countries). The visual track is identical in the two versions, and also the sharing out of the aural track between a

female voice whispering the name of the product and a male voice over uttering its virtues.

In order to compare the differences between the two texts it is essential to put them side by side:

GB

I

If you clean your kitchen with product that

is too harsh

this is what may happen

Jif is different

Jif lifts in tough stains and leaves surfaces feeling like new

Jif. With the power to clean right through the shine.

Jif

Se pulisci lo smalto a della tua cucina con

una **polvere**

troppo dura

si puo graffiare

Cif, lui, non graffia

tira via lo sporco

e non graffia lo

smalto

Cif.Forte contro lo

sporco, delicato con

le superfici.

Cif, sempre il tuo Cif

Cif.

(translation of the Italian version:

If you clean the enamelled surface of your kitchen with a powder that is too harsh, it can be scratched. Cif, he, does not scratch. He lifts stains without scratching the enamelled surfaces. Cif, though against dirt, gentle with surfaces. Cif, always your Cif.)

What comes immediately to the fore is that the Italian version is longer and more detailed: where the English VO simply advises against unsuitable products in general, the Italian one specifies that powders can abrade the enamelled surfaces of our kitchen.

Moreover, while the English VO simply invites to consider what could happen (while the visual track shows a skater scratching the ice surface), the Italian one speaks out the content of the image ("It can be scratched").

In the following passage a long phrase restates the same concept in the Italian version, while the English one is far more concise (Jif is different). It can be interesting to note that the in the Italian commercial the product is referred to like a

person ("lui" being a male pronoun, like "he"): it is like a strong, male person who helps women in with daily task (hypothesis substantiated by another Italian commercial for a washing liquid called "il tuo amico per i piatti", "your -male-friend for dish-washing"). It is not by chance, in my opinion, that the skater scratching the ice is a female one: in fact, while in the British commercial this appears as a mere visual example, in the Italian advert, where the emphasis on the male nature of the product is overemphasized, and where the common (female) mistake (using an harsh powder) is outspoken, it sounds more like an explicit criticism (women are in charge of domestic duties, but they usually make mistakes: fortunately men help them).

The appearance of the product is accompanied by melodic background music, and by affectionate words; the tone of the VO changes (in the English version as well) and becomes softer: all characters suggest the special role the product assumes in relation to the woman, as a support she can lean on.

The insinuation of the relation man-women as a semantic field appropriate to understand the relation woman-product is far more outspoken in the Italian version, although is implicit also in the British one (see for instance the female hand caressing, in the last shot of both commercials, the profile of the bottle); I shall venture to add, it is even overemphasized in the last phrase ("Cif. Always your Cif") where the definitive nature of the man-woman relation is transposed to that between woman and product. This peculiar character of the bond is not even alluded in the British commercial, where the final phrase is rather

focused upon the intrinsic properties of the product ("With the power to clean right through the shine") rather than its relation with the user.

In sum, the aural track reveals two different approaches to the product, in spite of the common reference to the opposition male/female features: in the British spot the distinction between male (though, power, and the like) and female traits (gentle, light touch) is functional to the positioning of the product, and to the shift of attributes from man to the product.

In the Italian version, on the contrary, the focus seems rather on the relation man-woman (dependence, patronage, "forever-ness") which characteristics are transferred to the relation woman-product.

Relational vs intrinsic features is a typical opposition that characterizes and identifies Italian and British advertising, as far as the semantic field of discourse is concerned and the man-woman bond is one of the most pervasive sources from which a range of different attributes is drawn by Italian advertisers. Again, this theme can be applied to any ambit, provided that it is dealt with "respectfully" (that is traditionally).

- SHEBA cat food. Two versions of the spot have been recorded in the two countries, the British one lasting 40" (17 shots) and the Italian 30" (15 shots). Some differences are present in the visual band, differences of two main orders: the first concerns the product itself: the shots displaying the products are in fact different, as the Italian package is square rather than round, with Italian words on it (the same as the visual end-line); a further distinctive trait of those "display" shots is that they

are less tight than in the British version, then allowing a "contextualization" of the product (on a white surface, presumably in the kitchen; among fresh, raw ingredient, like lettuce and radish. I will comment on the function of these elements below).

The second feature of the visual track is the different ratio product-display shots to woman-cat relationship shots in the two versions, which is in Italy 5:15 and in Britain 3:17. Clearly the product itself plays a more crucial role in the Italian version of the commercial, while the woman cuddling the cat is given less relevance (shots are shorter; some are missing in respect to the British version : e.g. shot 17 in the GB spot, where the cat stretches out on the table and raises one paw to touch the woman's face is not present in the Italian spot).

As for the aural band, many discrepancies characterize the utterances of the female voice over: first of all a prosodic difference, that cannot be rendered by the transcription: in fact the tone of the English voice is softer, relaxed, warm and nearly whispering (quite adequate to the context of situation), while the Italian one is chuckling, lively, accomplice.

But the best way to acknowledge the differences (and most of all the different semantic fields called into play) is to set the two versions side by side (I give the literal translation of the Italian one):

GB: New SHEBA, food that is more like your own because it looks, smells and tastes like you cooked it yourself. New SHEBA. **To your cat is home-cooked** (the last phrase appearing simultaneously as visual end-line)

I: (chuckle) For your cat a brand new idea. SHEBA. A real temptation, a relish never tasted before. (chuckle) SHEBA. **Cat's great love** (also as visual end-line).

A striking idiosyncrasy comes immediately to the fore, related to the different semantic fields referred to by the text; whereas in the British commercial the focus is upon the relation woman-cat (then the emphasis on the activity of "cooking" for the cat, even if it is "like" so), in the Italian one the focus shifts to the relation cat-product: the product is a temptation, a treat for the cat; the cat loves the product, while in the GB spot the woman loves the cat; the woman looks at the cat with a feeling of complicity ("temptation" is something she is supposed to be familiar with, as she confirms in chuckling); while in the British spot the woman has with the cat the same relation she has with the other members of the family, in the Italian commercial the cat has with the product the same relation men have with women (they are attempted by them, they love them).

The emphasis on the product is also great in the Italian spot, and the product itself is associated with elements which properties are transferred upon it: fresh, raw vegetables suggest a kind of "natural" goodness of the product, opposed to the "cooked", manufactured goodness of the British one. The same field of association (goodness) is then referred to through completely different, better still opposite textual means and related semantic connections: the raw in the Italian advert, the cooked in the British version. A possible explanation, in my opinion, is that "nature" is a more appropriate reference field to associate animals with in Italy. In fact, as I have stressed

in a previous chapter, the activity of "cooking" is one of the most common expression of family love and care in Italian advertisements, thus inappropriate for characterizing affection to an animal. On the contrary British society makes a larger use of convenience and prepared food in general, "cooking" being an activity confined to special occasions. Then to be "like home-cooked" is simply a way to say "to be special", to be genuine (as we can read on the package: "Carefully cooked to keep all the natural taste").

There is also another possible reason: animals in general enjoy a greater consideration in British society, as can be worked out by a number of factors (many people are vegetarian, many people have pets, there are nationwide associations for the protection of old and sick animals and so on), while they are less well considered in Italy. This factor, together with the great respect for family as a reference value, contributes to determine the inadequacy of the semantic field constructed by the British spot and the shift of semantic focus for achieving the same pragmatic effect (promoting a new cat food as wholesome).

- GILLETTE CONTOUR PLUS safety razor: this is a worldwide diffused campaign by Ayer Barker, present both in Italy and Britain in the same period and in two versions, a short 30" and a full-length 60". It consists of a string of powerful vignettes, all purporting scenes that illustrate "the best of a man", from sport to the crucial moment in life (romance, marriage, birth of a child, play with a son and the like), accompanied by a catching jingle. The visual track is identical for both versions identical in the two countries, while the

jingle is in the language of the broadcasting country. This campaign is a case in point, in my opinion, for the way of "global advertising", thus is less interesting for the semantic variations (anyway very little) than for the construction of "universal" images. The visual track is in fact a sort of patchwork, a collage of nationally specific vignettes (like the American astronauts or the Italian young man on his Lambretta courting a pretty woman) together with "universal" ones (like that of sport success or affective life): the resulting narrative is a loose mosaic, made up of the juxtaposition of a series of different images of masculinity, each of which could itself be taken as a mini-narrative. The crucial strategy for cohering the images is the jingle which functions both to carry the overall message of the spot ("The best a man can get") and, at the various moments via individual lines, to "anchor" a meaning for the particular image with which it coincides. For instance, the jingle "captions" the image of a young man and a young boy combing their hairs in front of the mirror by saying "Father to son...", thereby providing a definition of the kind of relation between the two characters; it also captions the shot of a black athlete jumping over an obstacle in saying "you're the champion...", thereby providing a positive reading of the scene (he does not simply compete, he wins).

The 60" version consist of 50 shots, while the 30" of 19.

The shots can be roughly distinguished in two groups: those which identify the product and those which qualify the users.

Apart from the shots of the product, I have singled out 6 "themes" to which all images can be linked, and which determine

the semantic fields upon which the viewer is called to construct the meaning of the text. The proportion of them varies in the two versions of the spot, so I will provide a summary of the main themes and their relevance to the whole of the commercial (determined by the number of shots for each of them):

- The PRODUCT: in the 60" ad 13 shots refer exclusively to the product (9 alternate with the other scenes of the spot, while 4 constitute the last part of it); in the 30" ad the shots for the product are 6.

- SPORT : 12 scenes in the 60" version; only 2 in the 30" one (one of which purports father and his little boy in a gym doing weight lifting, the other shows a group of cyclists finishing the race). The other sports represented are: athletics, surf, running- training, boxing, discus-throwing and football.

- WORK : 8 scenes of work and career in the 60" spot and only 1 in the 30" version. Ambit of work are: journalism, finance (Wall Street), law, space-flight.

- FRIENDSHIP: 4 scenes in the 60" (2 cases, the young barristers, and the financial analysts -stockbrokers?- overlap with work) and 2 in the 30" ad.

- ROMANCE (including marriage): 8 cases (especially in the first part) in the 60" and 3 in the 30" ad.

- FATHERHOOD: 4 cases in the 60" and 6 in the 30" ad.

- MAN (close-up): 3 cases in the 60" and 1 in the 30" ad.

The most significant difference between the two versions is that in the long one sport and work are paramount, while in the short fatherhood and romance (that is ambit of interaction and interpersonal relation and commitment rather than competition) prevail.

As for the semantic fields brought into play by the themes above, I will make a few comments particular on some points, which are in my opinion significant inasmuch as they determine "presences" that exclude other images.

Sport is the most "democratic" universe of discourse, the only one in which colour of the skin, social background, political and ideological differences play no role. And in fact, also in the commercial, sport is the only ambit in which a black man appears (and appears as a winner). On the one side the jingle directly addresses the viewer in saying "when the race is run you're the champion" on the image of the black athlete, thus suggesting an identification of the viewer with him: this is significant for a number of aspects related to the perception of different ethnic groups in western societies (sport, as a star system, is a world apart) and most of all tells something about a common denominator: people can love a black champion without having to commit themselves to questions of racial equality in everyday life. As a counter-evidence, no black person (or no person who is not white, affluent and good looking) enters the spot. This is not the same as saying that the spot is racist, but certainly the strategy is very cautious and does not try to challenge the largest commonsense attitudes toward race.

Sport is also more democratic as far as social groups are concerned: it is significant, in my opinion, that snobbish sports like tennis, golf, squash, ski are not represented, while the selection includes all sports in which differences between classes and races are not at stake (sports usually typical part of the Olympic games, which gives then an aura of "universality");

they all are popular sports). Another feature is that they can be divided into two balanced categories: the ones in which man measures himself with a goal and challenges his forces and the forces of nature (surf, discus throwing, athletics) and the ones in which men play together as a team to reach the goal (football, cycling).

Especially when compared to work (where no manual labour is shown and men are not shown using their force), it appears clearly that in the economy of the spot the scenes of sport serve to convey a sense of maleness otherwise impossible to achieve, given the exclusive representation of professional jobs.

Social and racial equality, hard work, physical effort and stamina (all conceived as male features) are confined to the field of sport, which allows them to be present although excluded from the other ambit, more related to the everyday life.

In fact if we consider the sphere of work as it is represented in the spot, two elements comes immediately to the fore: the "soft" nature of the jobs (all confined to the realm of services rather than production) and the homogeneous working environment (all young men, all career minded, no women, no aged men apart from "losers" - like in the barristers' scene), no ethnic minorities.

The ambit and the instruments of work are also significant: journalism, law, finance, space research on the one side; computers, telephone, spacecraft on the other. As far as work is concerned, men do not need to use their hands, but their head, their intelligence and initiative. Manual work (which can express maleness even more powerfully, as other kinds of spots testify) is totally excluded. The only effort is that of physical

exercise in a gym.

Friendship is another sphere in which a good deal of stereotyping occurs. It is a commonplace in western societies, for instance, that "true" friendship is almost impossible between women (as motives of jealousy and envy tend to prevail), and it is also unlike between men and women (as attraction and involvement can overcome it, and also because friendship usually occurs between "peers"). Therefore in the advertising the image of friendship is always symbolized by male fellowship, and the spot I am considering is no an exception. It is also worth considering than in this spot friendship is always associated with success and happiness (and not for instance, with solidarity in a moment of need, which can be a topic represented - although positively- in advertising, and indeed as it is in other kinds of spots). If we consider the transcription of the 60" version we can see for instance in shot number 11 a man dropping the car's keys in the hand of another, who raises his arms as a sign of triumph; in shot 35 the two fellows glance at one another in sign of success; in shot 1 three man show their happiness at the wedding party of one of them and so on.

Apart from the case of the car and the wedding, friendship has always sport or work as a setting.

Romance is the only sphere women are allowed to enter in this spot (they are even excluded from the father-son relation, as we will see below). They are represented as an evasive object of desire (shot 28 in the long version), they eventually meet their beloved (shot 15 and reverse shot 16), they gently touch their partner's face with a typical female gesture (shot 27, as opposed

to the male hand holding the razor in shot 29), or adjust their tie as to improve their looks (shot 2), or cuddle them (shot 25). All scenes are very conventional in male targeted ads.

For the father-son relation I will consider the 30" version, which contains 2 more shots than the long one.

As one could expect, given the nature of the product advertised, fatherhood is represented as a relation between father and son, (and not a daughter) either he is a newborn, or a child, or an adult (shots 7 and 15).

Apart from the last two mentioned (in the first the father embraces his son before this son drives away with his bride; in the second, set in a typical Mediterranean lane, a young elegant man embraces his father, dressed in traditional clothes of southern and rural regions (he is clearly back after having succeeded in a more civilized world); the others are all about children, from the birth (shot 13) onwards. Children are represented in imitating adults (they pretend to shave themselves, they comb their hair like their father, they lift weight and play football). It is significant that fathers play with their sons inasmuch as their sons imitate them (fathers do not play childish games, but children play to be adult): and in fact the jingle provides the key to link all the image by saying "Father to son...", that is by stressing the continuity and the image of the adult (future consumer) as already visible in the child. Apart from the nurturant attitude of shot 13, where the young father takes his newborn baby out of the bath and tenderly embraces him, in the other shots a sort of "training" inclination prevails, which is a very conventional way to portray the role of the father (he has to "teach" his son to become a good adult, to

assimilate socially shared models of action and thought).

Finally, male close-ups are functional to demonstrate the product in use (shot 30 in the long version) and to address the viewer directly : "On so many faces it is plain to see we give you all we have to care for all a man can be", the jingle says, and the gaze of the man in close-up toward the camera contributes to establish the we-you relation, the communication-action game consisting on the one side in a commissive speech act ("we give you all we have..") and on the other in the proposition of a model for the viewer (to be at the top).

In this respect it can be interesting to note a slight yet significant difference in the jingle between the English and the Italian version at this point, where the Italian is even more direct in addressing the viewer:

GB: "On so many faces it is plain to see we give you all we have to care for all a man can be"

I (literally translated): "On so many faces ,also **you** can see, we do all what we can for all **you** can be".

But there is also another difference in the jingle, the most significant as far as the definition of different semantic fields is concerned. Consider the following passage: in the first part the difference is related to the same aspect as above, that is a greatest emphasis on the two poles of interaction in the Italian version, yet always within the same semantic universe; but in the second different fields of discourse are brought into play, which I can assume to be related to cultural specifics:

GB: "We know how you'll make the most of who you are. Father to son, is what we want we've done. Gillette, the best a man can

get".

I (idem): "With us you will demonstrate the best of who you are. From father to son, our tradition. Gillette, the best of a man".

As for the first passage, "we know how" and "with us" can be taken as synonymous, delimitating the same semantic field, although the pragmatic impact is different: "we know how" (and the implicit "you also know") is less straightforward and can presuppose a greatest degree of complicity; but it is also less determinate, and thus can be taken in a wider sense (that includes determination, perseverance, dedication, all virtues the men represented show it in their life in the same way as Gillette shows in the realization of the product). It is then less patronizing, if only because it allows a wider range of possible interpretations.

"With us" on the contrary is outspoken, less ambiguous but also more overweening (even if it can also be taken in the double sense of "using our products" and "like us", the first being the more immediate).

But the more significant difference lies in the second phrase, where the British version insists on "to want" and "to do", while the Italian one on "tradition": or, better, the focus is on the one side on what "we want" and "we've done", and on the other on "our tradition". While in the first case "we" calls in question a "you", all part of a "fictive we" who achieve their goal through application and dedication, that is through will and action, in the second case the appeal to tradition widens the field of subjects involved and lessen the "control" over the situation.

In fact "our" tradition is not only that of the brand on the

one side and of manufacturing of success on the other, but that of manhood in general (the world "tradition" captions the shot of the father with his newborn baby) and cultural specifics (the product can be part of, in spite of the differences).

Images of progress (astronauts) and achievement (men in career) blend with more traditional images (the mediterranean lane, the young latin lover on his Lambretta) and the Italian jingle insists on the continuity of an earlier tradition, that legitimizes the different kinds of efforts and success more than willingness and action. It is not that British advertising in general avoids any reference to tradition, quite on the contrary: but here the image of masculinity the spot aims to suggest is apparently at odds with the idea of tradition as something to rely on, to conform oneself to, and better conveyed by the image of "action man", who achieves his goals only relying on his own capacities, and totally projected into the future. The "passive" and "conservative" connotation of the word "tradition" renders the term more appropriate to situations in which the status quo has to be preserved, rather than to dynamic states of affairs.

There is not the same contradiction in the Italian version, where tradition refers to a repertoire of culture and social models of interaction that enriches the situations depicted in the spot with a connotation of continuity, solidity, reliability, (all male features): then the action man is not an individual hero of our time, but an archetypical figure and a paradigm inscribed in a wider cultural tradition.

-ITT NOKIA TV set. The 30" spot has been broadcast repeatedly in

Britain over the period considered, while it only occurs a couple of times in the Italian recorded material. The visual band is absolutely identical, apart from the last shot in which the visual end comment appears in the language of the broadcasting country.

The sound track is, on the contrary, quite different, as far as the dialogue between the two male friends (of whom we only see the feet up in front of the TV set) is concerned. The difference lies basically in the degree of specificity and technical details provided by the British version, in the form of the greater competence of both the speakers; in the Italian version, on the other side, the person asking the questions is clearly less skilled and ill-equipped with the vocabulary of latest technologies, and as a consequence the answers are also more plain and straightforward.

Then although the information provided is the same, the pragmatic impact of the dialogue is uneven, calling (and relying) on the British side for a greater competence and suggesting an overall impression of pointedness and up-to-date terminology.

Compare for instance the two versions of the first question (I give the literal translation of the Italian version):

GB: - Can it link with satellite technologies?

- It can

I : - What's that? Space?

- Yes. It can receive via satellite.

And below:

GB: - Great sound stereo?

- Thirty ... peak

I : - And what's that?

- Digital stereo sound.

While the Italian questioner confines himself to ask "what's this, what's that", thus revealing a basically naive and unacquainted attitude, the British one is clearly more skilled and his relation with his interlocutor is more balanced.

A slight difference emerges from the comparison also related to the last phrase of the dialogue:

GB: - The busiest! So that's why you bought it.

- No, I bought it because it is a good looking box.

- Oh yeah.

I : - It has everything. So that's why you choose ITT Nokia.

- No. I choose it because I like it even when it is switched off.

Again a recurrent attitude of Italian advertising appears, which I think depends in part on the nature of the language itself (which is less concise and more wordy than English), and part on a cultural feature: Italian spots are in fact generally more outspoken (here the brand is stressed) and less incisive (a long periphrasis expresses roughly the same concept as the English adjectival phrase "good looking box"). Another typical feature, frequently recurring, is the emphasis on the properties of the object on the one side (British version) and on the person user on the other: in fact "good looking box" is an intrinsic feature, while "I like it even when it is off" puts the emphasis on the user's attitude toward the product, "personalizes" the features of the object.

A further consideration can be drawn from the comparison, especially if one considers the aspect stressed above of balanced vs unbalanced relation between the interlocutors.

In fact where the relation is balanced, it falls in the background, the focus being rather on the technical information the two are both providing: they both are informants, equally endowed with the task of acquainting the viewers with the last technological opportunities.

On the contrary, an unbalanced relation in some way calls attention upon itself, injecting a further element in the argument of the spot: the use of the ultimate technologies is less an end in itself than a means to achieve status and prestige, and to compete in the arena of social mobility. Therefore, the product offers itself as an instrument of social promotion, in a society where status, as already stressed, is a matter of conquer rather than an inborn virtue.

The visual end comment is also different, and the difference can be interpreted, without forcing the text, according to the hypothesis above: in fact while the British version is "the future is looking good" (again emphasizing an intrinsic property of the considered subject matter) the Italian one is something like "future has never been so close", which can implicate "you can easily reach it, if you buy the right things".

The semantic field implicated (implicature being a pragmatic operation, as Grice has suggested) is that of "achievement", fulfilment, action. In the British version the viewer is asked to acknowledge a state of fact; in the Italian ad the viewer is encouraged to make a move to nearer the future to the present.

THE FORMS OF TRANSNATIONALITY

In considering transnational advertising several combinations can be envisaged according to the country of the mother firm, the country producing the product, the country of the agency realizing the spot, the country broadcasting the advert, the country in which the advert is set, the country of the language spoken in the spot. Although in my analysis I have given prominence to the latter rather than to the former aspects (given the sociosemiotic framework of the comparative research), the other have been occasionally mentioned. Further considerations could have been drawn by taking into account the way in which the whole range of possibilities combine, but it is not my purpose to widen the scope of the analysis beyond the way in which advertisements construct social representations of reality while drawing from conventional and accepted repertoires of images and phrases.

As far as multidomestic advertisements are concerned, there are more spots bearing transnational references in my sample, than probably appears from my analysis. Yet I assume that "the viewer" (that is a nationally located spectator) has normally no means to establish that a product has been or is being advertised in other countries; moreover, as I have said before, there is no scope in exhausting the cases when it is possible to identify an assorted range of examples against which to test the hypothesis that emerged in the course of the analysis.

As far as the texts themselves are concerned, in fact, the

specific case of multidomestic campaigns consisting of products from non national or multinational firms advertised within national (or neutral) frames of reference are more difficult to be spotted by the viewer. For this reason I have focused especially (but not exclusively) on two broad categories of adverts: the ones (broadcast in the two countries) where universal and international appeal prevail (although nationally specific traits can be present both in the verbal or visual track) and the ones (mainly broadcast in just one country) where the specific appeal is paramount, although transnational elements can occasionally be at stake; examples of the first case are for instance VW Golf (Change) and Gillette ads, while for the second the British ad for Fiat Tipo (Opera) or the Italian one for R5 (with Italian testimonial and English setting).

I will make some brief considerations of the most recurrent forms in which the two groups of adverts occur and then make few remarks on the main content features, which will be considered in more details in the Conclusions.

A) Universal appeal/both countries broadcasting.

I have mainly considered a few variables, namely images, speech, subtitles, captions; the comparative analysis reveals that even in the case of identical visual and aural texts (like in of Peugeot 205 and VW Golf ads) final captions always change according to the language of the broadcasting country, and the change always brings about minute but substantial discrepancies between the two version, as far as the definition of semantic fields and appropriate pragmatic inferences are concerned.

The cases of identical speech or jingle or of spots spoken in

foreign languages are more than one could expect, but subtitles screened in the language of the broadcasting country often provide a cue to the viewer (with all the problems related to translation mentioned above). In this respect it is written language (either in the form of captions, visual end comments, subtitles) rather than images or speech that qualifies the adverts and "anchors" the transnational appeal to a national specificity.

In few cases (for instance Sheba cat food and R5 "Faithful") minor variations also occur in the visual track, which can be taken as significant of a national specific strategy, as I have tried to demonstrate in the discussion of the examples above.

B) Specific appeal/ transnational references

The main elements characterizing this group of adverts are (not necessarily altogether) mixed (or foreign) languages, transnational stereotypes (the Italian opera or the Japanese harakiri), transnational settings and international personalities. The support of foreign personalities is a common character in Italian advertising (R19) but hardly present in British commercials.

Also the mix of different languages in the same spot is a more common feature in Italian adverts (the campaign for R5) than it is in Britain; here, in fact, the overall use of foreign languages prevails (Rover 820; Fiat Tipo); sometimes English is spoken with a strong foreign accent, especially Italian (like the chef in an animated spots for Homepride Sauces or the Italian maid in a spot for Nescafe instant coffee). In this respect a stronger element of ethnocentricity and imperialistic attitude

can be envisaged in British adverts, almost absent in the Italian material. In fact also as far as exotic locations are concerned, different tendencies can be envisaged in the two countries: in British adverts' foreign settings are mainly (although not exclusively) English speaking countries (like Australia in various adverts for beer or tourism travels) or British colonies (like Hong Kong and Singapore); in Italian adverts exotic locations are mainly extra-ordinary anonymous places (like deserts or tundra) with a spectacular function, or in some cases well known (mainly European) cities.

As far as contents and strategies are concerned a first consideration seems opportune, that I have anticipated at the beginning of this chapter: transnational adverts not only are a less homogeneous set than one could intuitively presume, but also do not seem to promote, as I have tried to show in the analysis, a standard, global "uniculture". Better, they reveal what can be the first step toward it, that is the attempt to realize "general" (or not specific) messages that can be tailored to an individual, national audience with minor adjustments.

Cultural specifics then are not cancelled, yet are confined to subtle (mainly written-verbal, as I have stressed above) variations, which can fall in the background as far as the global impact of the text is concerned, and could eventually disappear completely (but it is not my aim to forecast the future).

Then I have tried to focus on some of the specifics of the two countries considered, and I will summarize below some of the main findings, as intermediate conclusions of this part of the research.

I will begin with the representation of differences, which I have found to be a very distinguishing aspect between the two countries. By and large British adverts display a wider range of social, ethnic and age varieties than Italian commercials. Moreover gender differentiation is less sharp and less stereotypical (at least to the eyes of a foreign observer) than it is in Italian adverts, as roles are more interchangeable, attitudes and "logic" (instrumental vs nurturant) less characterizing and so on. The relation between genders is also less patronizing and more tactful (like in the case of Fiat Tipo "Long distance call"). On the contrary in Italian adverts roles are more sharply defined, male presence is paramount even on matter of female competence like house cleansing and cosmetics, male attitudes are more high-handed.

But there is also the other side of the coin: in fact while in the image of social reality provided by Italian adverts differences are less variegated, sharper and unevenly related to each other, nevertheless they are less static and definitive than in British commercials (especially as far as class differences are concerned, while the same is not true of gender differences).

As I have emphasized in the analysis, in fact, a greater relevance to the aspects of individual success and status achievement is displayed by the Italian commercials, something which could be referred to a social context of greater social mobility than in British society.

Conversely in British adverts situations are more variegated but also in a way "given", like that everybody should be happy in his own role (like the Italian maid is happy in showing her competence on matter of coffee) rather than try to modify it

substantially.

Another characterizing point, which is a value frequently referred to in both countries although in different senses, is that of **tradition**. Both British and Italian commercials, in fact, allude to tradition as a value in itself (which allows in some cases to use the term for legitimizing products or behaviour which have nothing to do with it). The fundamental difference in the meaning of the word I have noted by comparing the way it is used in the two countries is, to put it in a nutshell, that in Britain tradition is in a way "made of actions", which is gradually built through making things well, while in Italy it is mainly "made of values", which are realized by conforming attitudes to universally shared models of action, through relations (the distinction I have called attention to with the terms "homo faber" vs "homo socialis" in the analysis of the multidomestic VW Passat commercial or the transnational Gillette spot). The value of tradition in Britain is then intrinsically conceived, while in Italy tradition means rather adhesion to (external) values: the same logic I have found in the strategy of many of the spots, where the British ones favoured the intrinsic features of the good advertised (or a tradition of reliable production) while Italian adverts insisted rather on the positive features which human relation (especially family bonds) refract on the product.

I will try to contextualize those findings in a more comprehensive frame in the next conclusive chapter.

Chapter 7. GROUNDS AND METHOD FOR THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

1) For an attempt to apply reader-oriented theories to TV texts see Allen, R. 1987: ch. 3.

Chapter 8 THE GOODS AND THE WORLD

1) I have in fact considered interviews and bulletins appearing on specialized magazines, like Campaign.

2) See The IBA Code of Advertising Standard and Practice, March 1986, page 6.

3) In order to avoid semantic ambiguity and unless different specifications, I will use "setting" for indicating the physical and social situations represented within advertising texts, and "context" in the wider sense of cultural frame.

4) This is especially true of a middle class audience.

5) For differences in the visual track see Chapter 10.

6) As Mennel remarks in his historical account of the development of eating manners and tastes in England and France, the widespread diffusion of instant coffee among ordinary people has determined a change in taste:

"And today, after a generation in which instant coffee has displaced real coffee more thoroughly from British kitchens than in any other country in the world, it is not uncommon to meet people who much prefer its taste to the very different one of the genuine article". In Mennel, S. All Manners of Food, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985:6.

7) Here I envisage a recurrent attitude in British advertising: the features of genuineness, naturalness and goodness are recognized, but applied to the "wrong" object: even if an Italian maid (a man would have been more appropriate from the Italian perspective) can be considered as an authority on the matter of coffee, precisely for her connoisseurship it is very unlikely that she advocates the virtues of a "fake" coffee.

From my culturally biased point of view I would have rather expected, from the Italian maid, a comment like "why do not throw this rubbish away and have a proper "espresso"?".

Jokes apart, this is in my view an interesting semiotic process: signs (or images, or stereotypical situations) increasingly become detached from their referents and turn out to be autonomous ways to convey certain qualities, attributes, properties. The commercial under discussion then is neither a mirror of social reality (although it contains some "true" aspects) nor a lie (in spite of the aspects underlined above), but is rather a discourse drawing on a repertoire of shared, conventional images. For a more detailed comment on this point see Conclusions.

8) It is worth underlying that in Italy to own the house one lives in it is less common than it is in Britain. Many families

live in rented houses, or in council houses, which does not prevent the "cleanliness" value being crucial: in fact it is a cultural, not a class based value.

9) These and other data have recently be diffused by Television and press (see for instance The Independent 19/7/1990)). The concern with family and single parents is at present one of the main points in the conservative campaign for the new elections.

10) Marchand also stresses the aspect of self-transformation as typical of an urban, mobile society, which fosters the idea of "a fragmented discontinuous self" and of "a series of manipulative social masks":

"Modern identity, in Peter Berger's phrase, had become peculiarly open. In an independent world of fragile institutions and shifting opportunities, individuals have to be prepared to transform themselves for new roles and new opportunities, thus making themselves vulnerable to shifting definitions of themselves by others. Moreover modern life induces a perception of living constantly in a crowd. (...) This inspires individuals to play roles or create traits that would distinguish themselves from the mass and make others think of them as 'somebodies'". (1985:215).

11) From the comparison of British and Italian commercials I got the impression that a different kind of "ideal life" is presupposed by the adverts: the impression is based both on contents (settings, activities, look of the characters) and formal features (use of filters, lights, kind of music, tone of the voce over and so on).

Roughly speaking in Britain the ideal life is often represented in a quiet countryside, close to nature, animals, authentic traditions in cooking and dressing; it is in fact a fashionable trend, among middle-upper class people to escape, at least for part of the year, from crowded cities toward rural locations.

In Italian adverts, on the contrary, other values are more often stressed like rhythm, efficiency, quick tempo, being on the move in an urban setting.

12) For this reason advertisements like the British one for a breath freshener called "Gold" would have been totally unacceptable on Italian TV: in fact it features a Sumo match played over the tongue of a man, while the male voice over says: "Stop your mouth feeling like a ...", followed by a brutal sound. It is a matter of taste and appropriateness, although standards for other subject matters, like the presence of half-naked women in adverts for soaps, for instance, are far less rigid.

Again, the reference to different semantic fields determines, and constructs, its own specific conditions of acceptability and appropriateness.

Chapter 9. THE CASE OF CAR ADVERTISEMENTS

- 1) Many studies on advertising have in fact brought to the fore contradictory results on this issue: the relation between attention and comprehension of humorous texts, for instance, is still controversial.
- 2) Marchand 1985. See especially chapter on "Visual cliches as Icons", pp 264 ff.
- 3) Schmidt, S. Texttheorie, 1978; I refer to the Italian edition by Il Mulino, Bologna, 1982.
The "communication-action-game" is a communicative story circumscribed in space and time (1982:66).
- 4) The sound track is an arranged version of Sting's "Fragile".
- 5) See The New Statesman, 11/12/1987.
- 6) Paul Virilio sees an interesting analogy between television and car's windscreen: they both are screens upon which images appear (which main characteristic is "speed"); in both cases the viewer-driver has the power to be an active spectator, that is to control, accelerate, decelerate what he/she sees on the screen. See Virilio, P. "Cinema-vitesse" in Revue d'Esthetique, 10, 1986, pp 37-43; see also the interview in Block, 14, 1988, pp 4-7.
- 7) I borrow the term from Pratt 1977:81.
Commissive speech acts are illocutive acts in which the speaker commits himself to do something, guarantees something to someone else.
- 8) I refer to the page-numbers in the Italian edition, Milan 1984.

chapter 10. THE UNIVERSAL AND THE SPECIFIC: TRANSNATIONAL
CAMPAIGNS

- 1) See for instance Janus, N. 1981.
- 2) On this topic see Sinclair 1987, Chapter 5, pp 99-123.
- 3) A recent example on Italian TV is a campaign for a brand of food ("Mulino Bianco Barilla"). A water mill has been bought by Mr. Barilla and adapted to the purposes of the series of spots, based on the natural and happy life of a family in the countryside. The series is directed by award winning Italian director Giuseppe Tornatore. As several articles on the press have revealed, the course of a river has been diverted in order to provide the "right" visual impact, and anyway the vane is moved by a sophisticated electronic system (the whole operation cost several billions). The kind of life represented is also quite unrealistic: the father works out (but also in the house with a computer); the children witness moving events like the birth of a little horse; the mother does nothing but preparing breakfast and enjoying the children's play. The sum of artificial elements aims to convey the value of naturalness, and a tradition is created of a life that never existed in that way.
- 4) For a summary of the debate see Campaign 17/2/1989, pp 12-13, p 17, p 20.
- 5) Drop is a distinctive trait of the VW campaign; it is so strongly assumed as part of the viewers' competence (in association with the feature of reliability) that parodies like that of Ferguson Videorecorder are possible: in this spot in fact a VCR is dropped from above, while a male voice over utters: "Few things in life are as reliable as a Volkswagen. Ferguson Videorecorder is one of them".
- 6) The exposure is confined to national TV. See Campaign 3/3/1989.

PART 4 CONCLUSIONS

1. WHAT DOES ADVERTISING MIRROR ?.

"Does this mean that advertising, a society's 'Mirror, mirror on the wall', provides benign, therapeutic deceptions rather than reflections of social reality? If we focus on the cast of characters in the tableaux (...) we will certainly be impressed primarily by the ads' distortion of social circumstances. If we focus on their specific prescriptions and advice (...) we will be most impressed by their manipulative evasion, their effort to finesse the problems of modernity. But if we focus on the perceptions of social and cultural dilemmas revealed in the tableaux, we will discover accurate, expressive images of underlying 'realities' (...) reflected in advertising's elusive mirror". (Marchand 1985:360).

Advertising is not a faithful mirror, many scholars agree: advertising distorts, magnifies, enhances, selects; signs (images) do not reflect reality, yet tell something about it. How can the relation be worked out?

First of all one point has to be made clear: advertisements do not lie (do not tell what is false), even if they not "tell the truth" either: in Schudson's terms advertising "does not make the mistake of asking for belief" (1984:226).

Advertising (often, not always) pursues credibility rather than truth. (ibidem:228).

Advertisements grasp some aspects of social reality (among which, as Marchand suggests, "social dilemmas", or, in more general terms, controversial issues, "tellable" topics), but represent them "unfaithfully":

"Such a mirror distorts the shapes of the objects it reflects, but it nevertheless provides some image of everything within its field of vision. Advertising's mirror not only distorts, it also selects. Some social realities hardly appear at all" (Marchand 1985: xvii).

Moreover what is grasped is more than what is depicted.

Beside the referential aspect (that is the "content" mirrored),

which I will consider later in chapter two, I will indicate, both as a result of the empirical analysis and as suggested by other scholars on advertising, other "angles" reflected by advertisements.

One of these consists of "institutional" constraints upon ad representations: as I have stressed in the comparison of the two broadcasting systems and in the examination of the global samples of the two countries, some differences emerge depending less on social behaviour than on regulatory principles. For instance, to put it in a nutshell, the absence of spirits in British advertisements does not mean a teetotal society (quite on the contrary, it can be the signal of alcoholism as a social concern); on the other hand the stylish, collective patterns of consumption presented by Italian adverts for spirits are less grounded on actual behaviours than inspired by normative rules related to the "acceptable" representation of this product to a mass audience.

Beside institutional restrictions basically related, in both countries, to a "code" of rules (more rigid and explicit about particular circumstances, as we have seen, in Britain), structural constraints also play a crucial role in the way social reality is depicted: the 30" standard slot forces the representation toward a sort of hyper-realism (or commercial realism, or effect of the veridical) in which no "dull footage" (unlike in "real" life) is allowed.

But there is also another element which, in my opinion, only a few authors sufficiently stress. One of the authors is Marchand, in his historical analysis of American advertising, who states

that:

"Most ad creators occupied a class position and displayed cultural tastes that distanced them from popular conditions and values. Not only were they likely to portray the world they knew, rather than the world experienced by typical citizens, but also they sometimes allowed their cultural preferences to influence their depiction of society. Their 'elite provincialism' and their tendency to create ads that satisfied their own tastes further distorted social reality" (1985:xvii).

Advertisers are indeed themselves part of a "cultural" community: they are (usually) specifically trained and acquainted with the up to date techniques and conventions, and most of all, when they create advertisements, they speak to each other at least as much as to the audience and to their clients.

Then if on the one hand ad representations are often determined by a range of conventions (stylistic, aesthetic and so on) rather than by a close observation of contemporary life ¹, on the other hand, advertisers are likely to look for colleagues' and critics' approval (as spot festivals like Cannes' testify).

In other words, advertisements are "texts", and inasmuch as texts, they bear the biases (the perspectives, the "tracks") of authorship (even if, as we have seen, this is a collective authorship, the result of mediation and often compromises between different requirements).

Nevertheless, Marchand reckons, advertisements capture something of the reality they present, although he narrows the scope, in my opinion, by confining it to anxieties, dilemmas, discontents with contemporary life (for which advertisers provide "therapeutic" advice). I prefer to say, and I believe the analysis supports this claim, that advertisements provide a sort of "tellability index" (and, as its correlate, some indications

about "taboo" themes) of the social reality they represent and address.

I adapt the term from conversational analysis (in turn drawing on Labov's work) to designate the crucial topics around which (and out of which) a social community is called to represent, itself, and to express evaluations (at the lowest degree of consciousness in the mere form of adhesion or "pleasure").

I will briefly sketch the specifics of the two systems considered in the analysis later (in chapter 2): here I would like to recapitulate the crucial role of a comparative approach, together with the co-textual rather than merely textual viewpoint, in identifying (at least some of) the "topical" issues.

First, the size and character of the sample has allowed the recognition of typical themes (like "family" in Italy) and typical patterns of social organization (as related to the cyclical patterns of goods presentation): I suspect the same result would not have been possible by considering only one category of goods or by a shorter period of broadcasting.

Secondly, especially as far as the "taboo" themes are concerned, only a comparative study can enable the recognition of the "missing" or untreated aspects: to stick to the example above, it is only by comparing the way in which man-woman relations are represented in the two countries, and the wider range of British portraits (less institutionalized, more problematic) that the possibilities Italian adverts actually exclude (presumably inasmuch as they contrast with the dominant values, or can introduce negative implications) become clear. Or, to put it differently, an intersubjective understanding

becomes possible, and the risk of "narrative presumptuousness" is reduced.

While the "what" of advertising discourse can indicate some of the crucial issues of a given society in that moment, the "how" is related to specific conventions and frames for the representation of that reality.

Goffman, as we have seen, uses the expression "commercial realism", that is:

" the standard transformation employed in contemporary ads, in which the scene is conceivable in all detail as one that could in theory have occurred as pictured, providing us with a simulated slice of life" (1979:15)

Schudson adds a further element: it is not only that advertising uses a particular kind of public portraiture, but this portraiture has a cultural and political role. He defines it as "capitalist realism" by analogy with socialist realism:

"If the visual aesthetic of socialist realism is designed to dignify the simplicity of human labour in the service of the state, the aesthetic of capitalist realism - without a master plan of purposes - glorifies the pleasures and freedoms of consumer choice in defense of the virtues of private life and material ambitions". (1984:218).

As realism, we have seen, is also a matter of conventions, what needs to be stressed is that the world displayed in advertisements is a world mediated by a discourse. I have tried to show in my analysis that advertisements are about "speech acts": they do not speak of goods and things, but they "stage" typical situations of social interaction (which, following Schmidt, I have called "communication-action-games") within which goods and services become worthwhile.

Then rather than "mirroring" social reality, advertisements put

it on stage, construct a discourse out of particular aspects, draw from topical issues and discursive conventions, select among a range of possibilities (both related to form and content) and elaborate a version of social reality which is neither "true", nor "false", and often even not verisimilar but always, I have tried to demonstrate, meaningful (inasmuch as it refers to, is "anchored" to what is represented, in the ways I have tried to spell out). 2

In particular I have stressed that semantics involves a theory of reference as much as a theory of meaning, and that reference, unlike in naive realism, is not a plain and direct relation (that simply has to be recognized), between signifiers and signifieds, but has to be "worked out" (what Schmidt calls "semantics by instructions"). Then there is a pragmatic (extratextual, conventional, social) element in the semantic process. As I have tried to show especially in the analysis of transnational campaigns semantic and pragmatic aspects are mutually dependent (as I will recapitulate later in chapter 3).

When I say that advertisements refer to, even if they do not mirror, social reality, what do I mean exactly? Two things basically.

The first is that reference is a two-way process: advertisements refer to social reality inasmuch as they are "affected" by it (for instance both producers and viewers draw, we have seen, for the same conventions): while drawing on shared repertoires of contents and forms advertisements also reinforce certain perceptions of reality, promote a selected range of frames for making sense of it, thus in a sense affect the way in

which reality is dealt with (what has been called "macro-agenda setting").

This twofold process, back to the social "topoi" and forward to the construction of interpretive frames, is a crucial one, which I have tried to disentangle in my research, while showing some of the ways in which semantic and pragmatic aspects combine in ad texts .

The second aspect I intend to clarify concerns the actual manners of reference: ad texts refer to social reality, without mirroring it. The more appropriate term to express the relation between texts and reality is "representation", but I believe a terminological specification is opportune.

The verb "to represent" is used both in English and Italian with roughly the same meanings: I intend to emphasize particularly two of them, namely 1) to depict, to be a picture of (or, as the Italian dictionary suggests, to make reality visible and intelligible by means of a depiction) and 2) to act or speak for (in the place of, in the name of) somebody.

In both meanings 'to represent' is 'to stand for', to be a sign of something or somebody (a sign that is not the same as the reality it represents, nevertheless is linked to it and refers to it).

If we think, as I like to do, to the etymological origin of the verb (from the Latin "repraesentare") this aspect becomes even more clear.

In fact the world is composed by re-prae-sentare: the prefix re-means both "again" (repetition) and "in a new way" (with reference to a preexisting state of affairs); -prae- has the double use of "before" and "in front of"; the word ending is from

the verb "sum" (to be).

The literal sense is then to reveal to someone what is given, but in a new perspective. There are three fundamental aspects: a reality referred to; a new perspective brought about; a communicative or interactive aim.

I believe this is a fruitful way to interpret the relation between ad texts and social reality (according to which social meanings do emerge, but related, or confined, to a perspective which inevitably selects and excludes while describing).

I have also found that a comparative analysis is particularly helpful for grasping the relative, and then partial, character of representation of social reality (or socially meaningful representations, when social reality is not directly portrayed).

As I have stressed in the methodological section, a perspective for the analysis wider than the textual one can allow a better grasp of the "representational" character of advertising portraits. For this reason, I have taken into account the whole of advertising output of a relatively long period, even when my focus was on a particular category of goods (cars). In this way I was able to notice, among the other things, that the "flow" of TV output is less chaotic and casual than one might think, and that in advertising the "accumulation" of specific contents and forms of representation performs indeed a pragmatic function (by providing conventional frames, rapidly "naturalized"). Moreover (and most of all), I have found the comparative approach peerless as far as the problematization of the obvious (or what makes it possible to grasp the partiality of the representation) is concerned. I can therefore say I disagree with S.Fish (1980) when

he maintains which an interpretive community cannot grasp the set of conventions that influence interpretation, because they are "embedded" in them. Perhaps they cannot be grasped and discussed "from inside" the system, but I believe (and I hope to have produced at least some evidence in the empirical analysis) that a comparative approach can throw some light on at least some aspects of the cultural "taken for grantedness" that bears upon the representation of social reality in different cultural systems.

2. THE TWO REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIAL REALITY

CULTURAL REPERTOIRES AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Advertisements are referential, we have seen, but the reality they refer to is more than (and sometimes different from) that which they depict. In fact they not only refer to things and situations, but to ways of seeing and interpreting them.

There is, as I have mentioned in Part 2, a range of theories on TV interpretation that focuses upon the way in which the "discourses" of the text and that of the viewer collide: among them the ethnographic perspective which emphasizes the ways in which television is integrated within the culture of the home; the theories of the "preferred reading" which give rather preeminence to the "discourse of the text" (or, better, the discourse "through" the text), as well as those based on traditional textual analysis.

What I have tried to do is to find within the text at least

some of the conventions and the images the viewers are provided with, which constitute a repertory both for representing and understanding themselves and for making sense of external reality. Morley makes the point well, when speaking of the TV viewer:

"He is indeed a 'subject crossed by a number of discourses', but it is he, the particular person (...) who makes the readings, not the discourses which 'speak' to him in any simple sense. Rather, they provide him with the cultural repertoire of resources with which he works" (1986:43. My emphasis).

I have focused then on the discourse of the text rather than on that of the viewers, but with two particular points in mind:

- texts are referential, that is, affected by the reality they represent at least as much as affecting it themselves.

- a textual perspective is not sufficient, in my opinion, to grasp the "cultural repertoire" supplied to the viewers: for that reason I have tried another way (which is not the only one, and perhaps not even the best of all the possible ones, but which nevertheless offers some useful insights in the subject matter), based on the consideration of co-textual, intertextual, and contextual features in addition to textual elements.

By co-textual, as I said before, I mean the whole of advertising discourse for a certain period: to give an example, in order to grasp the significance of certain ways to portray women, say, in car commercials it is indispensable, in my view, to consider the whole range of women's portrayals provided by advertising in that period.

Intertextuality is, I agree with Fiske on this point, an "inescapable" textual feature 3 . While I do not argue for the image as a signifier without signified, linked to others in a

boundless chain of intertextuality, as in postmodernism, I yet believe intertextuality is a crucial point in the understanding of images and of reality. Fiske puts it this way:

"In this view a television program can **only** be understood by its relationship to other television programs, **not by any relationship to the real**. So a representation of a car chase only makes sense in relation to all others we have seen - after all, we are unlikely to have experienced one in reality, and if we did, we would, **according to this model**, make sense of it by turning it into another text, which we would also understand intertextually, in terms of what we have seen so often on our screens. **There is then a cultural knowledge of the concept 'car chase' that any one text is a prospectus for, and that is used by the viewer to decode it, and by the producer to encode it**" (1987:115. My emphasis)

I believe one can support the last statement (as I do) without accepting the exclusive supremacy of the text in determining interpretation and even perception of reality (Fiske himself relativizes the position he is presenting). I do not think that intertextual relations make reality disappear; quite on the contrary I believe, and the analysis supports this point, that intertextuality brings to the fore the complex web of even contradictory representations that reality causes (as a range of discourses that cannot exhaust their object, but can only put it in a perspective, by selecting and presenting some features rather than others). In turn these representations constitute a repertoire of images and conventions for dealing with reality 4 (the cultural "context" I have tried to throw some light upon).

In short, the relation between images (representations, cultural frames) and reality is not one-way: images do not mirror reality, images do not cancel reality. The relation is more complex, and thus to look for boundaries between what is "real" and what is "cultural" is, in my opinion, meaningless and

useless. Yet it can be useful, in my opinion, to try to grasp the "sites" (topoi) in which the representations (with the characteristic of partiality I have outlined) of social reality tend to become "natural" and nearly automatic ways to perceive what they refer to (that is interact with everyday non-televisual experience 5).

The main "topoi" (the cluster of which I have called the "tellability index") constitute in turn the "content" of the ad representations and the "context" within which they (and analogous situations in everyday experience) are interpreted.

TWO TELLABILITY INDEXES: AN OUTLINE

I have not approached British and Italian advertisements with the purpose of explaining the whole range of cultural presuppositions that bear upon production and interpretation of the texts in the two cultural systems. I am well aware that my work raises more questions than it gives answer to, and being completely exhaustive is outside my scope. I have only tried to provide some examples, hopefully validated by the material itself, of the way in which a comparative framework can allow a problematization of the "taken for granted" (implicit, unspoken, conventional, naturalized) horizon of texts production and interpretation.

For the very nature of the TV language and of the texts considered (which I have tried to specify in part 2) the analysis

has required a method tailored on the object rather than derived from other fields of study, like literary criticism.

I have not considered texts as unities, but as part of a "discourse" on social reality that they help to construct while being part of it. I have found that inasmuch as discourses on social reality (and because of their structural brevity) advertisements tend to capitalize (and then reinforce, not thanks to the individual texts, but due to the accumulation and repetition of "ritualized" representation throughout the whole advertising flow 6) upon recurrent "figures", both in content and forms of presentation. I have also found that the comparative framework makes it possible to grasp the conventional character of certain images that from a textual perspective figure are "just" representations. It also makes it possible to assess the conventional (that is relative, partial) value of certain representations against actual, visible alternative possibilities (rather than against mere hypotheses): one example is the way to represent the value "tradition" in the two countries, which I will recapitulate below.

I have frequently emphasized, in the course of this work, the difficulty in disentangling aspects of form and aspects of content. I have also tried to show how important it is to consider formal (textual) and content (semantic) aspects in their interaction, and how formal devices (like colour, editing, music, light and so on) play a crucial role in the definition of the semantic field 7.

I will summarize the main findings about the interrelation of textual, semantic and pragmatic aspects in the next paragraph;

here I will present the main results of the analysis, as far as social "topoi" are concerned (them being the result of the relation of the three aspects above, rather than the sum of contents depicted).

The comparative framework has allowed the identification of two broad categories of "topoi" (although the distinction is not sharp). Some of them seem in fact culturally specific (like the Italian consideration of faithfulness and the indissolubility of marriage bonds, which is often transferred to the relation woman-product), while others seem to hold throughout the two cultural systems, but are in some cases differently inflected (like the value of "tradition").

On the whole (I am anticipating an evaluation of what I will summarize below), I have noted a more consistent attitude with Italian adverts in establishing solid points of reference (and "taboo" themes as correlated), all presenting "moral" aspects (like commitment, abnegation, faithfulness and so on). The main themes of Italian commercials all involve the possibility of disruption of acceptable behaviour and offer a kind of protection by avoiding "dangerous" representations.

British advertisements, on the contrary, offer a wider range of situations, relations, class representations, and the "ethos" (as I will try to show below) seems less anchored on moral values than on practical action (doing things well rather than behaving well, doing the "good" thing); situations are more variegated, attitudes less conventional, but conditions are more static, and possibilities to move from one state of affairs to another (especially as far as class belonging is concerned) are totally absent; class resentment and conflict being, like the breaking of

family bonds in Italy, one of the main "taboo" themes in British advertisements).

I will begin with the universe of discourse represented in Italian ads, because of the cultural affinity, but cross references will be the rule rather than the exception.

I have underlined, in the course of the analysis, that the theme of "relation" is paramount in Italian commercials, and I can identify a range of legitimate and "acceptable" forms and connotations (that exclude their opposites): romance and family, for instance, prevail over friendship (which is always, when it is the case, a friendship between men). Family, we have seen, is the semantic field "par excellence", from which the wider range of positive connotations and attributions is drawn, even in a totally alien ambit like technology (emblematic is the Italian advert for VW Passat).

The legitimate modes of representation tend to minimize any negative feeling (anger, moodiness, lack of understanding) 8 and any reference to a possible split of the marriage bond is carefully avoided (which cannot be fully understood, in my opinion, without recognizing that Italy is basically a Catholic country, and marriage a sacrament that cannot be discredited without irritating a large segment of the public).

I have considered many examples (from "Cif" home cleansing to Volkswagen Passat, to Gillette safety razor) of the crucialness of (substantial and long standing) relations as a semantic field from which images are drawn and positive connotations activated.

In British commercials relations play a relevant role as well, but I have noticed different characteristics: everlastingness is

not alluded to at all, family is a less frequent topos, relations are more often occasional, fortuitous or dependent on external circumstances (like work dealings). The neat supremacy of "work" activities in British adverts for cars, against the prevalence of "leisure" in Italian commercials supports this consideration as relations occurring on work are in fact more likely to be accidental, while in leisure time people are supposed to choose the persons they deal with.

Italian adverts, we have seen, are also more "spoken", and I believe this is a characteristic feature, especially if one considers the findings about verbal end comments, voice off and verbal direct address in Italian advertisements for cars and compare them with the British ones. Italian adverts not only represent more substantial (non fortuitous) relations than the British ones, but they engage the viewer in a more direct relationship. Italian adverts are also, as we have seen in the case of Jif/Cif transnational campaign, usually more discursive, verbose, outspoken, while in British commercials usually concise speech, supers and written captions prevail.

All these aspects (related to content as well as structural features) seem to support as culturally specific in Italian adverts the "topos" of interpersonal relation, especially in the supreme form of family, substantial bonds. 9

I have found that "relation" is also a relevant theme in British advertisements, but from a different perspective: one aspect the analysis of car adverts has brought out is the dominant trend in British advertising to relate the single model to the firm producer. My impression is that as far as things are concerned a logic of the "whole" prevails (which has something to

do with the inflection of the term "tradition" in British commercials, as we will see shortly). Things are valuable inasmuch as they are part of a system whose credibility is already assessed. British advertisements, (at least in the case of car ads), tend to privilege the relation product/firm (brand) or the intrinsic properties of the product rather than the relation product/user. As far as persons are concerned, on the contrary, British adverts (I refer only to the material analyzed) reveal a more individualistic perspective, where accidental relations prevail.

On matter of relations another finding seems to confirm the differences underlined up to now: in Italian commercials no relation human being/things or human being/animal can replace or be a surrogate for interpersonal relations (as emerged from the analysis of international campaigns like Sheba cat food and Volkswagen Golf), but the same is not true of British advertisements.

Connected with these ways of representing "relations" in the two countries is, in my opinion, the different way inflecting the same value "tradition". As I have emphasized in the empirical analysis, the transnational campaign for Gillete is a case in point, but other adverts (like the multi-domestic campaign for VW Passat) are illuminating on this aspect.

On the British side, in fact, tradition is a positive semantic field from which connotations are drawn regarding (mainly) aspects like the continuity of practices and the passing down of skilful actions from the past to the present (where the emphasis is on what has been done throughout time).

In Italian commercials, on the contrary, tradition refers principally to a systems of principles and beliefs (like the unbreakability of certain relations) one is called to conform to. To summarize the two positions, borrowing from Aristotle, British commercials emphasize the "homo faber", while Italian adverts rather privilege the "homo socialis": a continuity of accurate actions vs a system of values for social cohesion.

While in British commercials the fact how things have been done guarantees their quality (a tradition of production), in Italian adverts the emphasis is rather on how things are used, and most of all on who uses them (where the characters of the users serve to identify the product and its attribute rather than the opposite).

There is an active and factive aspect linked to the way to represent tradition in British adverts (tradition is built), while in Italian commercials a sense of "conformism" prevails (that is an attitude to conform one's behaviour to the dominant values in society): tradition is participated. But the scope is narrowed in the British inflection ("doing things well" against "doing the good").

One particular aspect of interpersonal relations which the comparative framework illuminates is that of gender representation, particularly of the conventions by which men and women are socialized into relating to each other in the two cultural systems (which helps to break the seemingly naturalness of certain recurrent figures as grounded on set of apparently distinct psychological traits).

In both countries, for instance, I have found that the representation of women in car commercials changes according to

whether they drive or not (the representation in the former case being generally closest to a "male" logic). If we consider (as I have done, on the light of the whole of the material analyzed) "nurturant" and "instrumental" attitudes as typical respectively of female and male portrayals in TV advertising, it is possible to acknowledge that the main strategy for conveying a sense of independence of female characters is to endow them with a "male" behaviour (like in the adverts for VW Golf "Change" and Renault 5 "Faithful").

However, some differences (even substantial ones) need to be stressed apart from this broadly similar trend.

In Italian commercials differences are sharper than in British commercials (where, for instance, "nurturant", sensitive men are more common, as we can see in comparing the two versions of the Renault 5 commercial). Ambiguity is absolutely avoided, as far as sexual identity is concerned: heterosexual relations are the only ones allowed to appear on the screen (no couples of male or female friends are depicted); adventure, open spaces, wild settings are not appropriate to female drivers: realistic, urban settings are more acceptable. In contrast to the British advertisements for cars, Italian commercials present cases of female voices over, but always in very conventional and predictable cases, mainly related to practical aspects (low-price cars) or emotional connotations (passion, desire). Never does a female voice over combine with the emphasis on technology, or speed, or power.

Female voices over in Italian car adverts seem to confirm a general trend in Italian commercials: women are suitable for

giving information as "authorities" (main characters or voice over) only about benefits for individuals (which is part of the "nurturant ethos"), while men are more likely to provide information about production, features of the product and effectiveness. 10

On the whole, women play a subordinate role, and men are authorities even on matters of domestic duties (see the Cif/Jif campaign) 11.

Meyrowitz 1985 summarizes male and female stereotypes in a way that fits well in Italian gender representations:

"Men's ability to travel and to associate freely with other men allows them a great measure of control over their activities, emotions and image. (...) A woman, in contrast, has little control over whom she associates with; she can gain neither privacy nor distance, and she therefore develops little personal value in her own eyes or in the eyes of society.(...) The public/domestic split does indeed lead to real differences in male/female forms of thinking and reasoning. Because women work at repetitive and intimate tasks which ignore their individual interests and goals, they develop ways of seeing, feeling and acting that seem to be intuitive and unsystematic -with a sensitivity to other people that permits them to survive. Men, on the other hand, value abstract, rational thinking that isolates one or two variables and is removed from the complexities and ambiguities of emotional and intimate life" (1985:205-6).

There is a distinctive sector of Italian advertising, as far as the representation of women is concerned, represented by (most of the) commercials for cosmetics: I have noted this feature mainly by comparing Italian adverts for cosmetics (and also their frequency throughout the whole period of registration) with the British ones (mainly confined to Christmas time and mainly publicizing perfumes). What I have found is that Italian commercials for cosmetics depict active women, engaged in professional jobs, always on the move and always good looking and

charming (never stressed or annoyed by the constant proximity to other people). Many of the women depicted are also more "active" than those appearing on British advertisements, inasmuch as they are happy in playing with different versions of themselves, this aspect of "play with identity and appearances" being a typical "female" characteristic, and the "open identity" opposed to the male unity and coherence. To play with different images of oneself as a pleasurable activity seems to connote an active subject, while to try to make herself desirable rather involves a kind of objectification and passivity.

In many of Italian advertisements for cosmetics women are represented as not just trying to be desirable objects for the man's gaze, but to please themselves; not just trying to pursue a goal (men's attention) but to enjoy themselves ¹², which is an attitude not confined to certain periods of the year (as in British advertisements) but represented as "constitutive" of female nature. On the whole beauty is presented as an achievement, which brings a sense of democracy in the contest of life.

While images display an active, specifically feminine image of women, voices over and end comments often bring the representation back in the more traditional frame of female subordination. One example I have already referred to is the transnational ad for a moisturizing cream, "Plenitude". I summarize below the main differences, related to the end comment:

-BRITISH VERSION: (Female V.O.) "Plenitude de L'Oreal. Helps prevent the signs of ageing"

-ITALIAN VERSION: (Male V.O.) "Plenitude de l'Oreal. Cancels the

effects of ageing".

The gender of the voice over seems related to two different sort of logic, 'or strategies, at work in the commercial: categorical vs possibly-ness (cancel vs prevent); therapeutic vs preventive; advice (from a "peer") vs assertion (from an "expert", a "judge").

In the Italian version the patronizing attitude of men (and their authority of speaking about "effects") also on matters of female competence is confirmed: an interesting case of "code-switching" can be envisaged within the same spot, from a female to a male language (and perspective), which is by no means an isolated case in Italian advertisements.

When women are not represented as users, but rather as "metaphors" of the products (which makes it possible to shift some properties from one to the other) they are usually, in both countries, depicted in very conventional ways (as desirable, passionate, charming and so on). They tend to become, in other words, less individual identities than "emblems", incarnations of certain attributes. This is particularly evident in car adverts.

In British advertisements on the whole I have noted a less sharp distinction between masculine and feminine traits, and also more variegated forms of interaction between men and women and more tactful dealings.

It is no coincidence that in Britain a higher level of consciousness is related to the issues of gender liberation and feminism (where for instance "women studies" is an established discipline, unlike in Italy).

The different cultural context and the greater sensitivity towards the issue make possible in Britain what some scholars (among whom Meyrowitz) attribute to the nature of television as a medium itself: the merging of public and private spheres, and the rehabilitation and renewed interest in the expressive, emotive skills traditionally held by women. According to Meyrowitz, in fact, television fosters a sort of "situational androgyny":

"This type of androgyny has nothing to do with ambiguous genitalia or appearance. It is concerned, instead, with a blend of the cognitive styles traditionally associated with men and women. An androgyne is a person who is able to be both rational and emotional, strong and nurturant, assertive and compassionate, depending on the demands of the situation." (1985:194)

And also:

"The women's liberation movement may be more properly called the 'gender liberation movement'. Male and female roles are merging. It is not simply that women are becoming more like men, but that members of both sexes are becoming more alike" (1985:193).

While I can see such a "merging" of different traits quite explicitly in most of British advertisements, I have noted a sharper distinction in Italian commercials, where, when it is the case, women tend to become more like men, rather than the opposite.

Then even if television may have brought back (in McLuhan's terms) a kind of "oral" and participating attitude, more typical of female sensitivity, this does not result in homogeneous trends throughout the whole "global village". Cultural differences interact with the structure and the contents of the medium in different ways and with different results.

Not only, then, may the same "figures" (images, words) have different "felicity conditions" in the two countries, and

different sorts of pragmatic implicature, but also different figures (especially related to gender representation) can appear as culturally specific and heavily related to the individual cultural context.

As far as the "social parables" (in Marchand's terms) are concerned, there is one which holds for both the two cultural systems (although particularly emphasized by car adverts in Britain - Vauxhall corporate, Renault 19 - and by commercials for washing powders in Italy): the parable of "civilization redeemed". As Marchand put it:

"Civilization has brought down the course of nature upon itself, but then has proved capable of discovering products that restore the nature's original benefits. Civilization has become its own redeemer." (1985:)

In the case of car adverts, for instance, cars are shown as means to escape the cities made poisonous, among the other things, by cars' exhaust fumes.

As far as the physical environment is concerned, attitudes are similar in the two countries (apart from the fact that British advertisements privilege the "male" field of technological action, while Italian commercials privilege the "female" aspect of caring inclinations), but profound differences appear in comparing the representation of social reality, especially as far as class differences and relations are at stake.

I have already mentioned some of the features related to this issue (the wider range of classes represented in Britain; the greater social mobility in Italian representations), but other aspects are worth recapitulating here.

Italian adverts tend to present "ideal" rather than realistic

situations: no working class people (apart from unrealistic situations), no working class accent, no humble houses; even in ads for cleansing agents there is very little "social realism" and much that is "hyper-realistic" (that is providing a refined version of reality that presents itself as normative).

On the other hand, British adverts offer a wider range of social classes (taxi drivers, maids) and of phonetic inflections (end comments are not monopolized by "Oxbridge" English speakers).

Nevertheless there are some "preferred" ways to depict less affluent people (on work rather than on leisure, for instance) as well as some "taboo" aspects (like class conflict and, less directly, class mobility): everyone is happy where he is, things are how they are, class differences are a "datum".

If British adverts produce the impression of legitimation of a "status quo" while they recognize social differences, Italian commercials seem to confine social mobility to what Marchand has called a "democracy of goods". Italian advertisements are a constant reminder that "anyone can" enjoy the up to date pleasures and benefits, which can provide ultimate satisfactions. Italian democracy means equal access to consumer products. As Marchand stressed, the parable of "democracy of goods" produces the redemption (the substitution) of the promise of social equality.

Status, in Italian advertisements, is not an inborn virtue; anyone can achieve prestige by acquiring the "right" symbols and learning correct behaviours. In this respect advertising offers a wide range of codes of good manners and etiquette anyone can

apply in the appropriate situation: how to dress, how to behave, what to say and so on.

The textual means by which a sense of status is conveyed are almost exclusively visual, with other elements (like syntactical or prosodic features) being highly homogeneous and standardized, hence scarcely significant in this respect 13. The look of the people, the exclusive situations and the sophisticated image are the main devices for conveying status.

Even when "slice of life" narrative forms prevail, the "slices" are quite predictable, and never capture situations and states of affair not worth emulating or pursuing.

As far as car ads are concerned (but the same holds, in general terms, for the majority of the goods and services advertised) status is one of the most recurrent "credibility basis" of commercial strategy: but, as we have seen, in Italian advertisements it is far more common to find it as the exclusive source of credibility, while in British commercials it is mainly associated with other elements (rational, factual and so on).

Differences of status in British adverts do not call for a change of the situation (like the Italian maid of the British Nescafe commercial or the Taxi driver for Fiat Tipo campaign), but the same is not true of Italian commercials. The transnational campaign for ITT Nokia I have analyzed is a case in point: first of all in the British version there is no relevant difference between the two characters, both of them being quite competent on the matter they are talking about. There is a characteristic trend in British commercials toward depicting relations between peers (like the two colleagues of the Rover 820 fastback, or the case of ITT Nokia itself) that makes the focus

on the advert shift from the (balanced) relation to the features of the product; in Italian advertisements, on the contrary, the unbalanced character of the majority of relations represented is functional to the presentation of the product as a means to an end (that is status achievement) rather than as a value in itself.

Another aspect of social differentiation is the conspicuous presence in Italian commercials of national campaigns presenting transnational elements (either language, or people, or heavily connoted settings), while the same is not true of British commercials. I have named this aspect, in the course of the analysis, "ethnocentricity", which is probably too strong and in any case not confined to British advertising, but the "imperialistic" character of British culture, that incorporates in its own framework customs, habits, ways of dressing and cooking from the countries of its (former) "empire" has to be stressed (which is also extended, in my opinion, to cultural aspects of other countries, including European).

If I can try to find the most common representation of "Britishness" in Italian advertisements and "Italianicity" in British commercials, I will indicate "detachment", "coolness" for the former and "exaggeration" for the latter.

Advertisements draw in fact upon hyper-ritualized elements (bowler hats for London; couple kissing in the car with their belt fastened, as a sign of respect for the rules in Italy, where the exception tends to become the rule and vice versa) and hyperbolic representations (like the matronal heroine of the Fiat Tipo British campaign, recalling certain female characters made

familiar to the Italian public by directors like Fellini).

But the main aspect the comparative perspective has brought to light concerns the representation of social classes, and the respective "lacunae" in the way they are represented: while on the one hand British adverts display a higher degree of "realism" (as far as the variety of social groups is concerned) the form of the representation is such that the legitimacy of the situations depicted is not questioned, but rather endowed with a sense of "taken for grantedness". On the other hand the "idealized" representations provided by Italian adverts seem less preoccupied with fidelity to actual situations that with the presentation of models anyone is invited to follow. But equality and democracy are confined to the sphere of consumption and lifestyle, and moreover the "anyone" addressed is actually a "someone". In fact no mention is made of groups whose access to the democracy of goods is confined to a very limited range of low cost, primary goods.

3 TEXTUAL, SEMANTIC, PRAGMATIC HORIZONS: MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

I will try here to summarize the main findings of the empirical analysis as far as some questions raised in the theoretical parts of this work (part 1 and part 2) are concerned, namely:

- the semantic and pragmatic relevance of scheduling policies for the impact of advertising flow.
- the question of intertextuality and contextuality within and

between advertisements.

- the semantic and pragmatic value of textual features (accumulation of stereotypes; perceptive training; recurrent clusters of formal elements with semantic value and so on).

As for the first aspect, it concerns from the viewpoint of broadcasting policies, what the "ethnography of viewing" examines from the side of the spectators (that is actual patterns of reception). As I have stressed several time, it is complementary rather than alternative to other research.

I placed particular emphasis in Part 2 of this work on three "functions" of televisual flow, which I believe can be transferred to the advertising discourse as a "flow in the flow". The first one has to do with intertextuality and co-textuality, with redundancy and accumulation, with autoreferentiality as a distinctive characteristic of television output: advertising refers simultaneously to a number of elements (I will emphasize for the moment the ones internal to the broadcasting system), among which the "image" of the channel broadcasting the adverts (a "trademark" we have seen, inseparable from Italian TV output), which involves presuppositions about the characteristics of the audience; the repetition throughout the TV flow of faces, characters, forms of representation (e.g. of "masculine" and "feminine") that become "naturalized" rather through their frequency on the screen than for their grounds on social reality; the common relation of TV outputs (advertising in particular) with other pieces of textuality (movie, music, comics and so on).

The autoreferential character of TV flow has been stressed by

many scholars, and I believe it is an important aspect, even if I disagree with the postmodernistic conclusions that are sometimes drawn: TV does not present a play of images without a referent, but provides, in my opinion, a peculiar way to represent reality and to deal with it. I do not see the opposition play of empty signifiers/window on the world as the one that puts the problem in a suitable perspective.

In analyzing advertisements I have found that they are neither opaque nor transparent texts, but rather discourses that express a perspective on reality by means of a particular language. The audiovisual nature of TV language must not be overlooked, as TV advertisements are not only discourses upon reality (at least the reality of goods and services) but discourses expressed in a particular language. And, as we have seen in Part 1 in facing the problems of translations, the linguistic means are not neutral carriers of ready-made meanings, but affect and shape the content they convey.

I have specified in the previous paragraph the sense in which I intend the referential function of TV adverts, and the partial and selective character of representations, yet grounded on the reality they portray (although, in Putnam's expression, by scattered and thin ropes). Here I intend to emphasize that intertextual and co-textual relations do not end necessarily with creating an autonomous world of simulacra and self referential images, but rather with providing a set of peculiar means to deal with reality. Autoreferentiality (that certainly exists, and is a distinctive feature) does not necessarily exclude referentiality (even if reality is referred to through forms of representation characteristic of the medium). Synthetic experiences do not

substitute real experience, but interact with it, providing frames of interpretation.

A second function of flow I have emphasized is the "phatic" function, that is the attempt to maintain the contact with the viewer open, so as the series of output can reach him at any time, or when it is convenient. Also the phatic function does not exclude, in my opinion, the communicative aspect with which it is often maintained at odds. Aspects of "punctuation" and connection of different segments of the flow can be significant of different "communicative pacts" the broadcasting system is trying to engage the viewers in (for instance the Italian obsession with recognizable means of separating programmes from advertisements). An aspect of this communicative pact can be observed when meta-communicative elements are emphasized, as in the Italian series "Renault 5 Spot Festival" where the nature of the "spot" that was offered to the audience was explicitly stressed, with a possible effect of distancing and break in the "suspension of disbelief".

But the most relevant function the flow performs is, in my opinion, pragmatic, which has various aspects I will try to summarize below:

- through the schedule organization the flow is structured so as to establish patterns of viewing while fitting within the daily routine of the viewers: patterns are either vertical (like the construction of an "evening viewing"), or horizontal (like the division of the weekly schedule in homogeneous segments targeted to different audiences and creating familiar appointments).

The comparative analysis has shown, among other things, that the audience supposed to watch television between 7.45 p.m. and

9.30 p.m. is not the same in the two countries: peak time is in Italy a family viewing time, while in Britain especially adults are supposed to watch TV; Italian advertisements in peak time are heavily targeted to women, while British commercials are mainly targeted to a male audience (female viewers being more easily reachable in other schedule times).

- patterns of viewing are not only related to schedule policies, but also involve a sort of perceptive training of the viewers, familiarized by the whole of the TV flow with the identification of genres at glance, accustomed to the overall presence of the narrative model, socialized into specific conventions to distinguish fiction and non-fiction, to represent masculinity and femininity and so on.

Advertisements, we have seen, heavily capitalize on televisual competence (or "low involvement learning"): the viewer is supposed to be able to infer a narrative from a string of incongruous shots, to perceive, memorize, make sense of shots lasting no longer than a fraction of a second, to work out implicature consistent with the positive presentation of goods (like the Italian case of faithfulness) and so on. The training to the rhythms and recurrent images of TV ads is also likely to produce expectations that explode the ambit of advertising, to invest the whole of TV output (this is why programmes of the early TV are now unrepresentable, less for their content than for their format) and to affect the perception of reality itself. 14

How Funkhouser and Shaw suggest: .

"We probably have become used to a heightened sense of excitement and activity. (...) It should be possible to document a cultural shift toward increased excitement-seeking that parallels the growth of electronic media" (1990:83)

And, more explicitly,

"Media manipulate and rearrange not only the content, but the processes of communicated experience, thereby shaping how the audience perceives and interprets the physical and social reality depicted" (ibidem:75).

As we have seen the ability of media to produce changes in the public perception of physical and social reality is called "macro-agenda setting" (as different from the "micro-agenda setting" that influences the perception and relevance of specific issues).

Other scholars stress the role of media as one of the factors that influence social representation of reality:

"Social reality does not exist in the sum of people's behavior, but in the overall pattern of situated behaviors.(...) Patterns of situation segregation and integration can be modified by individual life decisions, by chance, and by other forces, including a society's media use" (Meyrowitz 1985:42).

- Through the accumulation of recurrent images (either in the texts or thanks to co-textual and intertextual references) and through the repeated associations of formal and content elements a micro-agenda setting, or "tellability index" is also established, that is a set of relevant issues and appropriate ways of representation which are, the comparative analysis has demonstrated, culturally specific.

I will reserve the last part of my conclusions precisely to a review of the main instances of interaction and mutual definition of textual, semantic and pragmatic aspects.

It is worth repeating here that in the perspective I have adopted advertisements are texts having a semantic-referential

value (they are "affected" by reality while constructing a relatively autonomous discourse on it) and a pragmatic value, inasmuch as they speak out the criteria of acceptability of certain behaviors, reinforce some perceptions of social roles and gender identity and so on (in other words, they affect the way in which reality is perceived and described).

The relation between semantic and pragmatic aspects is neither deterministic, nor are the two sorts of ambit autonomous from one another. In fact, as we have seen, the semantic field is established by textual means as well as by pragmatic elements (like the range of appropriate association to be attributed to one term). Textual elements give "instructions" for the construction of semantic fields which are not univocal, but depend on the different (pragmatic) felicity conditions of the "topoi" used, which in turn vary according to the context (cultural system): I have considered, for instance, the different impact of the two version of the VW Golf ("Change") campaign, where the semantic value itself (the car as the most important among the material goods in the Italian version/ the car as substitute for romance in the British one) was determined by the different pragmatic implicature linked to the specifics of the two cultural systems and part of the viewers' competence.

In a word, semantic fields are not univocally determined by textual means, but pragmatically established through textual means on the basis of extra-textual competence.

I have also underlined in the course of the analysis how formal aspects (like editing) present a semantic as well as pragmatic relevance (in shaping and reinforcing what is represented: fast editing and urban life, for instance; in

building a perceptive habit and competence).

Referential-mimetic and expressive elements blend and form recurrent associations. For instance, crisp editing mainly appears in association with realistic settings (either urban or non urban), while plain editing prevails in abstract or graphic- like settings.

In examining car advertisements I have also noted that some kinds of argument appear culturally specific (mainly factual in British commercials; mainly non rational in Italian adverts) and are consistent with the semantic fields more recurrently referred to by textual means (action in British adverts; relation in Italian commercials).

I have also noted that some "clusters" (as well as "forbidden" associations) of formal and content elements end with acquiring a "gendered" connotation, and a pragmatic potentiality inasmuch as they offer themselves as resource for dealing with social reality. For instance a typically "female" cluster of formal and content elements I have identified in car ads consists of background music, narrative, mood, non-rational and/or factual strategy, realistic (urban) setting, an affective relation with the product and instrumental use of it (as in the British commercials for VW Golf, New Metro, Peugeot 205 and the Italian adverts for Opel Vectra, Opel Corsa, Fiat Uno).

Among the "taboo" associations are women and a purely rational strategy, and to a lesser extent women and an abstract setting (while the opposite is not true: men and "mood" are not incompatible).

In defining sharply bound semantic fields (by systematically

avoiding undesirable representations) recurrent clusters of textual means also draw upon (while reinforce and circumscribe) the range of acceptable implications, which vary, as we have seen, from one cultural system to another; in turn pragmatic implications, as I have tried to show in the analysis of the Sheba transnational campaign, work to redefine the semantic field itself. To bring this analysis to an end I would like to comment upon Boorstin's well known definition of advertisements as "self-fulfilling prophecies", which other scholars (among whom Marchand) support when stating that advertising anticipates a kind of satisfaction one could not have experienced without it. (1985:348).

On the light of the results of my research I believe I can query both the "conspiracy" thesis (advertising shapes reality to serve capitalism) and the "postmodern" position (advertising offers a pleasurable, synthetic experience which surrogates reality); I have stressed instead both the referential and the discursive character of TV advertisements.

From the point of view of their "persuasive" effectiveness I believe advertisements are unfulfilled prophecies, as they may not directly influence behaviours and patterns of consumption (although this is still a controversial issue).

But there is an aspect of advertising which is highly instructive, that is its capability to transform "conversational" implicature (which are not directly entailed by the semantic field activated by textual means) in "conventional" (that is quasi-automatic) forms of representation; to create the conditions (semantic, linguistic) of coherence in its own way to represent reality, which can be easily transferred to the

perception of reality itself; in other words not to influence experience directly, but to create a sense of familiarity and naturalness around the ways of experiencing (I borrow the term for Geertz) it 'represents.

In this respect advertisements are meaningful self-fulfilling prophecies.

CONCLUSIONS. NOTES

Chapter 1

1) One could object that surveys and statistics on public attitudes are part of the preparation of advertising campaigns. But the question (which I can only raise here) is whether quantitative methodologies like questionnaires simply "report" reality or rather frame it in a particular perspective, by "counting" only some things (not necessarily the most important for everyone). And in any case advertisements mediate social reality twice, through surveys and through advertisers' authorial work.

2) I assume, with Lepore and Davidson, that "a proper theory of meaning must include a theory of reference". But I would add two points: 1) perhaps not every theory of meaning (is it true of poetry?), but certainly a theory of social meaning; and 2) reference, as I have stressed in part 1 of this work, is not the same as the one-to-one correspondence of naive realism.

On the other hand I contest the assumption that there is no reality apart from language, which amounts to saying that language creates reality; this is just as misleading as the "mirroring" metaphors.

3) Even if it does not necessarily mean that "all texts refer finally to each other and not to reality" (1987:115). I have stressed the crucialness of intertextuality in Part 1.

4) One of the shortcomings of traditional textual analysis I have already mentioned is worth repeating here: an individual text can hardly position the reader or the viewer and surrogate his/her real experience. It is rather by "accumulation" of consistent representations that, in Bourdieu's terms, a perceptive "habitus" can be gradually built. The accumulation and repetition of (inescapably) partial representations rather than the individual text affect the way in which we perceive other texts and reality itself. Then a co-textual and intertextual perspective is paramount.

5) I do not oppose "real" and "televisual", because also televisual texts are part of the "real" perceptive environment.

6) As a matter of fact, as I have stressed in Part 2, accumulation and repetition are at work throughout the whole of the TV flow.

7) The semantic field, as it is worth repeating, is wider than the content actually displayed.

8) As I have emphasized in the analysis of the Italian version of the transnational campaign for the Renault 5, for instance, in spite of the "moody" atmosphere the focus is shifted from the relation (Faithfulness) to the distressing character of modern life (dogs' life).

9) In contrast to Britain, where greater physical mobility renders it very difficult, family relations are in Italy generally long lasting, even when all the members have grown adult. For instance, it is a shared custom among young people to stay with their family until they get married, and to maintain close and frequent relationships even after marriage. This is made possible by the relatively low mobility of the great majority of Italian citizens (so that it is not particularly rare to find people who were born, have studied, worked, got married and lived in the same place).

10) In many commercials for snacks, women enumerate their benefits as healthy and energetic food, while a male voice over explain the ingredients, way of preparation, and "scientific" reasons to buy them.

11) As I have noted in analyzing the material, washing powders and cleansing agents have "male" characteristics: they are "automatic", they use technology and intelligence, they are strong and powerful.

12) In a recent Italian advertisements for cosmetics it is quite common to find stylish and fashionable women doing silly and transgressive things (like ballooning chewing gum or showing themselves in hair rollers and evening dress to their men and so on), careless of (or, better, amused by) the effect they produce.

13) Some of the actors in Italian commercials are celebrated movie dubbers.

14) It is not within my scope to deal with this aspect in depth here, but only to suggest it as a possible pragmatic effect. I believe that studies in popular culture (like Fiske 1987; 1989) and subcultures (Hebdige 1979, 1988) offer an insight into the mutual influence of media discourses and social reality.

APPENDIX 1

THE CONTEXT OF ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

MEANING AND CONTEXT

In 1983 Pateman expressed the view (which I broadly agree with) that neither denotation nor connotation of advertising text can be specifiable on an exclusive textual basis: the general assumption is that "advertising itself provides a context which effects a structural reorganization of what is depicted". (1983:195)

Given the "anticipatory character of cognition" we not only are inclined to receive a text in a particular way, once we know it is a commercial, but also activate a specific set of competence, related to the advertising discourse as a whole, as an almost codified repertoire of actions, situations, stereotypes.

Advertising is a kind of activity-game in itself, which in turn represents, as its content, a range of activity games.

This is very close to what Noth purports in "Advertising: the Frame Message" (in Umiker Sebeok 1987): the "advertising frame" is a cognitive, organizational principle which includes the main elements of our knowledge and expectations about advertising (1987:280).

In turn the advertising frame merges with other "subframes" (frames specific to the particular situation represented) , or "frames in the frame" .

On these grounds the determination of textual meaning, as Pateman put it, is contextual, pragmatic rather than textual, structural.

Even denotation is not specifiabile without reference to contextual variables. As for connotation, it is not considered a semantic entailment of textual elements, but rather the result of "structured operations performed upon them by knowledgeable readers" (Pateman, *ibidem*).

I have quoted Pateman's suggestion as a preamble for introducing (and supporting) my attempt to contextualize the advertising discourse as a whole.

Advertising, I have said above, is a kind of "activity game"; hence, like every game, it has its own rules which in turns are related to those of the system advertising itself is part of. For that reason I refer here some considerations on the two broadcasting systems and on their main features, inasmuch as they affect advertising quantity and quality.

Advertising has not only an institutional context, but also a cultural one; advertising is a discourse that takes place in (and speaks to) a society where consumption plays a crucial role, not only as economic but also as meaning producing activity. Hence, in the second part of this chapter, I have summarized some of the main theories of consumption focused on the way people use goods to produce meaning (both social and individual), as they provide a useful framework for understanding the context in which advertising discourse is produced and received. In other words: advertising is a discourse (to be consumed) upon goods and services (to be consumed and used), and before approaching the individual advertising text it can be useful to consider what consumption does mean, especially as far as the social construction of meanings is concerned.

THE TWO BROADCASTING SYSTEMS

A) ITALIAN BROADCASTING SYSTEM: HISTORY AND CHARACTERS

The history and development of Italian television are distinctive among the other European countries, for the rapid and total transition between opposite situations: from public to private, from culture to business, from control to anarchy, from monopoly to oligopoly, from regulation to deregulation, from a pedagogic centralized attitude to a demagogic fragmentary one, from a notion of "permanent education" to the audience maximization, from "national" to "international" (American) programmes, from a secondary and subordinate role of advertising to a leading one; and the list could be extended.

The "official" watershed between the two states of being is the reform of the RAI in 1976, but the trouble was in the air from the end of the sixties, when political and economic changes began to undermine the consolidated system of media organization.

I will examine, in this section, the main characteristics of Italian TV, in some respects unique in the European scenario, before the advent of "local" and then "private" TV. Then I will consider how the Berlusconi networks were born and have structured their programming policy as a counter-scheduling in respect to RAI, and how RAI has reacted to the new situation.

Finally I will briefly examine the main distinctive features of the 3 channel RAI, and of the 3 main Berlusconi's networks and the role of advertising on each channel.

THE ORIGIN OF ITALIAN TV

The Italian TV began to broadcast on 1954 with just one channel, then called "National".

The public service body, RAI, was (and still is), a formally private group, actually controlled by the government, which appoints the General Director and determines the budget through licence fees and advertising revenues (I will specify later the relative importance of both, which has changed in time).

In the beginning, the leading group in the company was heavily characterized for a homogeneous background, either political (Christian Democracy) or cultural, as most of the directors came straight from the Academic circuit (mainly Humanities; Umberto Eco was one of the several outstanding newly-graduated recruits to key positions), or from important publishing houses, or were men of letters or writers (especially for theatre) themselves.

The solid link with the academic and humanistic culture determined the policy and the character of Italian broadcasting from the beginning to the end of the 60's, and gave a unique shape to the whole programming strategy and attitude.

In fact, in the beginning TV was poles apart in respect to the "cultural industry", being rather a means of pedagogic diffusion of a culture, traditionally shared by an elitist group of intellectuals.

The educational intent (to edify the mass of viewers, to make them familiar with the humanistic roots of Italian culture, to create a sense of national unity and identity) was reinforced by the situation of monopoly, and legitimized by the effort of both creating a televisual specificity and a national identity.

Two aspects, directly related to the cultural and elitist perspective, are particularly interesting in this first phase of Italian TV, from the beginning until the early seventies: the relation with all the world outside TV (political parties, industry, other media) and , inside TV, the delicate balance between a "high brow" programming policy and advertising.

Given the strength and unity of the dominant political group, the early TV service was neither a forum for political debate, nor an instrument of (direct) political intervention. TV was actually a world apart from politics: on the one hand politicians did not consider it as an arena for public discussions, or as a means to influence people. On the other hand the homogeneous perspective of the leading group was reflected more by the pedagogic attitude (the "mission" of education) than by a specific ideologic commitment in the content of what was broadcasted (or, better, the ideology was so clear and open that it was not difficult to recognize it).

Unlike the post-reform TV, where the relationships of power between political parties became the ruling principle of organization, in the beginning, and -paradoxically- in spite of the heavy political monopoly, the political role of TV was not considered: TV was rather seen as an extension of school, even more than as a "sister" of cinema and radio.

This is particularly evident if one looks at the principal programmes of the first few years of broadcasting 1 : a considerable quantity of theatrical performances, from Greek dramas to "classics" like Ibsen or Chekov; a weekly programme in which a famous actor (from the theatre) read (or rather declaimed) a novel or a tale from the classic and contemporary Italian literary repertoire (Verga, Pirandello): this kind of performances, which looks intolerably slow, fixed, boring and "radiophonic" today, had nevertheless a crucial role in identifying a common cultural heritage and in constituting a point of reference for a linguistic and phonetic homogeneity between the different Italian regions, which local dialects were often incomprehensible in other places than that of their origin (the same role BBC English has played as the "standard" language).

Other educational programmes typical of this phase were a course for illiterate adults given by a "teacher" who was drawing and spelling on a big white board (illiteracy being one of the most serious problems in the post-war scenario) and various programmes of popularization of science and culture.

The situation of monopoly on radio and TV was matched by an oligopoly of few editorial groups in the periodical press (Rizzoli, Mondadori, Rusconi) and by the hegemony, among the newspapers with national diffusion, of the "Corriere della Sera" (Rizzoli) 2.

The division of domains between TV and press was quite clear, especially on matters of advertising revenues, as we shall shortly see; and the same went for the relationship TV/industry. In industry as well the situation was very clearly defined, with

an oligarchy of few big entrepreneurs (Pirelli, Fiat, Montecatini-Montedison) as the leading force of economy and source of stability and continuity in advertising demand.

The lack of a real competition and the sharp division of domains between politics, economy and the different media sectors was one of the main reasons why the model adopted by RAI in the first years of broadcasting and, say, the American one were like opposite poles. The general attitude was anti-commercial, both for political and cultural reasons: on the one hand it was matter of concern for the leading political group inside RAI not to be influenced by economic interests; on the other, the academic background of the key people constituted a barrier against the irruption of trivial subjects like commercial matters. (But, in spite of all reticence, advertising was considered an indispensable source of revenue).

For all these reasons advertising had, in this phase of Italian broadcasting, a very secondary role, and was treated with high consciousness: very limited in quantity (which guaranteed a safe advertising revenue to the press, although TV popularity was increasing enormously), sharply isolated by the other programmes and confined in slots "ad hoc", forced to provide amusement and to mutate forms and styles homologous to the traditional TV genres and to limit the purely commercial announcement to a few seconds.

In this perspective the aim was more to entertain the viewers with a high quality short show than to satisfy the requirements of the clients, as many of the people working at that time testify 3.

The result of such severe constraints and the low grade of tolerance of commercial interests was a very successful advertising programme called "Carosello" 4 which ran daily for twenty years from 2/2/1957 until 1/1/1977, with an average audience of 10 millions viewers and more, and constituted, according to several critics, the most original contribution ever given by Italy to television. 5

Apart from Carosello, lasting on the whole about 15 minutes, only few short breaks (called "Tic Tac", and always sharply separated by the rest of programmes by a jingle) were allowed .

The SACIS (society of the RAI group for the control of advertising) drafted in the late 50's some principles called "Norms for the realization of televisual advertisements". They underlined the necessity not to interrupt the continuity of the ordinary programming policy, yet to provide an entertaining and high quality short spectacle, in which the commercial element should have had a limited space (but the first official code of advertising self-discipline is only drafted in 1966).

The normative constraints, together with the diffuse anti-commercial attitude, the refusal of the "pure" advertising form and the cultural background of producers gave rise to an original product: as the semiologist O. Calabrese underlines:

"Curiously the technical and legal limitations produced a concrete result, with a precise structural typology...Actually it was precisely because of its nature, because of the rigid rules established by the medium that Carosello successfully synthesized the repetitive aspects of the tale: extreme rigidity and stereotype in the formula and iteration of the story" (1975:94. My translation).

The structure of each programme was like a container, a "macrotext" with a trifle separation inside it: Carosello was in

fact separated from the other programmes, by a familiar tune over the image of a sort of small theatre; it was constituted by a sequence of 5 commercials, in turn separated from one another from a series of raising "curtains"; and, finally, there was a kind of separation inside each advertisement in itself. Every commercial was in fact composed of a short film, lasting about 120 seconds (and to be used just once) carrying no direct reference to the commercial elements (although the product could appear in some ways), and a commercial message (familiarily called "coda", that is "tail" for its "subordinate" role) lasting no more than 35 seconds (which could be repeated).

For the realization of the first part a number of important directors, actors, show men were employed, as well as animated characters, many of which became quite popular at the time. The main strategy for appealing to the audience's attention were humour and comedy (almost disappeared today), and the commercial part was clearly subordinated to the spectacular one, based on a "condensation" in time of the contents and the stylistic devices of the most popular TV genres (parody, mini spy-stories, performances of famous actors etc.). The rigid time units available determined in fact a contraction in the practices of scripts, dialogues, shots, editing, and many critics saw the birth of a new genre, forerunner of the video-clips of the 80's.

As cinematographic techniques were employed (film), Carosello was also a training ground for many technicians, artists, actors and directors.

Particularly interesting were the different strategies for linking the first part to the commercial tail, in such a way that

the commercial announcement were both clearly distinguishable and in some way related to the preceding show: usually the oddest association were exploited in order to find a word, a situation, an expression, a gesture which could connect the two incongruous segments. As the first part was changing, the commercial announcement served to "anchor" the film to the product through a recurrent and easily identifiable slogan or jingle.

When Carosello was the principal vehicle for commercial announcements, the advertising agencies had a limited role, mainly contacting the clients and treating the financial aspects. The "creative" role was generally played inside the production companies, which dealt directly with the clients by submitting them their work (and after the meeting some change could be made in the advertisements; in some cases the entrepreneurs wanted to appear in the commercial, and sometimes they did, but on condition that they avoided to declare their identity).

Carosello was a form of extremely cheap advertising, as the RAI (until the reform) followed a policy of limitation both in quantity and prices (which determined the common opinion that the medium TV was under-paid in respect to its effectiveness), and also extremely rare to have access to, given the few spaces available. Such a policy was basically "protectionist" towards the press (see Balassone and Guglielmi, 1987:35), with which a clear division of domains had been made; and whereas it was in the interests both of the government and the press to maintain the status quo, in the industry and in the advertising agencies the situation was hardly tolerable.

Carosello was extremely effective, partly because of the amusing nature of the shows, partly because of its favourable

schedule position (at 8.50 p.m., after the news), which determined a sort of viewing ritual, by separating the "serious" part of the evening from the "ludicrous" one; moreover at least for two generations of viewers it was the way to conclude the day, as it became a diffuse national habit to send the children to bed "after Carosello". (It was not perceived as negative and anti-educative as TV advertising is today, because of the non-intrusive role of the commercial message: it was a spectacle offered by advertising, rather than advertising supported by spectacular images, as it is now).

Those who were not very happy with this popular advertising programme were on the one side the advertising agencies, both disappointed with the way in which stories were created (with no direct advertising character, and with limited influence of advertising men) and hoping to extend their role according to the American model; on the other side the small firms who were irritated by the circuit of the big, who had monopolized the few spaces available, leaving no room for other advertisers. The intolerance towards the RAI's basic attitude, that is to consider advertising as a mere resource, rather than an investment, as a pure transfer of money from the industry to the media system, and the refusal to treat communication as a business, as a field of economic influence, became more and more evident (ibidem:40).

This situation, together with a series of political changes (growth of local requests for access, which led to the constitution of the "regions" as autonomous districts on matters of public administration, crisis of DC monopoly and growth of opposition gathered by PSI - Italian Socialist Party), led to a

fundamental change in TV: Carosello was brought to an end, and charged with ideologic attitudes, paternalism, vanity fair, vampirism of TV genres for hidden commercial aims etc., and the way was prepared for the end of monopoly and the coming of a brand new age.

FROM LOCAL TO PRIVATE TV

From 1961 (precisely since January the first) a second channel was accorded to RAI, whose scheduling policy was rigorously complementary to that of the National Channel (then RAI1), both in the pedagogic attitude and in the public service nature, although in a less conservative and more experimental perspective.

But the unitarian logic of the public service TV was deteriorating, together with the political unity; being afraid to lose its monopoly, the Christian Democracy began to share assignments with the Socialist Party inside the RAI (the General Director remained a DC, whereas the managing director came from PSI: the leadership was maintained, but the monopoly undermined), and simultaneously to extend the field of domain, especially towards cinema industry and press (bringing to an end the separation of influences of the first phase).

The crisis of the political hegemony, the progressive irruption of political controversy inside the institution, the growing pressure from the world of economy and industry, annoyed by the exclusion from the control of such a powerful medium, together with the proliferation of opportunities offered by the electronic

technology were among the possible reasons for the passage from a strictly controlled situation to a completely deregulated one, a passage that still remains in many aspects obscure (why in Italy?), and in respect to which any effective measure has not yet been adopted.

The first significant opposition to the bureaucratic institutionalized system came from groups of young people who set up, with minimal equipments and low costs, a number of local radio stations, having a very circumscribed broadcasting area, but a very high symbolic value; on the one side it was the myth of "direct access" (as opposed to the pedagogical indoctrination dispensed by the elite running the institutional broadcasting system) that became a reality; on the other it was the triumph of the "alternative" values (youth, spontaneity, direct access, provincialism -without the negative connotation-, local and group identity, fun) as opposed to the traditional ones (seriousness, bureaucracy, constitution of a common cultural heritage and of an "Italianicity" in the way to look at things and events, metropolitan point of view, professionalism). As for the commercial aspect, small firms and local advertisers had eventually the opportunity to enter the media system (although with a more restricted audience).

Whereas the public service had played a crucial role in the linguistic and cultural unification of the country (where local dialects were so strong and different as to constitute in some cases a barrier against the mutual comprehension, even between contiguous regions), local radio stressed instead the local differences, and the singularity of the young groups (even if, after the first moments of enthusiasm, the trend was towards an

homogenization, under the aegis of the record industry).

A significant mutual reinforcement did occur between this kind of local radio and a new course of popular music celebrating the crucial implications of such a new freedom of expression.

After radio the turn came for television: the first among local TV was TELEBIELLA, a cable service owned by a group of private citizens (entrepreneurs in the industry of home furniture), whose first experimental programmes go back to the end of 1967, whereas the regular service started in May 1971, after the registration at Biella lawcourt.

Although the importance of the TV was very limited, either because of the shortage of financial and technical means (9 hours of programming per week, 45 minutes of advertising per week, 22 member of the staff) or because of the range and quality of programmes (mainly sales for auction, cheap American telefilms and Japanese cartoons, together with some local news and programmes), its effects were very relevant; in fact the presence of this local TV on the one side generated a series of juridical questions about the lawfulness of local and private broadcasting, which lead to the reform of 1976. On the other side it represented a model and a precedent for the proliferation of other local broadcasters, especially in the period between 1973 and 1976 (In 1974 TELEMILANO started to broadcast, another cable TV owned by Silvio Berlusconi.) In the same period, in spite of the sentence of the Constitutional Court (see next section) on local broadcasting, exclusively allowing cable services (a means to discourage the phenomenon, given the high costs), several aerial services started to broadcast, the first of which

was the private foreign station TELEMONTECARLO, followed by some local stations like TV FIRENZE LIBERA or SAVONA TV.

The intermediate stage between local and network TV was represented by the growth of interest manifested by the big editorial groups towards some of the biggest local stations: Rusconi, for instance, purchased ANTENNA NORD , an important TV broadcasting station from Milan, in 1976; in april 1978 Rizzoli acquired TELEALTOMILANESE, whereas in 1979 Mondadori controlled a number of minor local stations through a commercial company for the purchase of programmes called TELEMOND.

In the early '80s the televisual scenario was quite differentiated, which seemed to confirm the possibility of a pluralistic system of broadcasting: in this period Berlusconi was transforming his local station in a network (broadcasting delayed in the whole country through programmes on videocassettes and transmitting national instead of local advertising), but meanwhile some different networks appeared, owned by entrepreneurs of the cultural industry. In 1982, in fact, ITALIA 1 started to broadcast (owned by Rizzoli), and after it RETEQUATTRO (Mondadori) and EUROTV. Each network seemed to assume an individual character, which sustained the hope in the viewers for a variety in broadcasting (the same that local stations had been unable to supply); ITALIA 1 was characterized, in the beginning, by a programming policy targeted to the whole family, whereas CANALE 5 tried to follow the American way of spectacularizing matters and searched for "big" events, and RETEQUATTRO attempted an improvement in the quality of programmes, by privileged genres like current affairs, cultural debates, quality films etc.

But just after a short period (one year in the first case, two in the second), both ITALIA 1 and RETEQUATTRO were purchased by Berlusconi, and the fragile pluralism of the previous years collapsed in the duopoly of public (RAI) and private (Berlusconi) broadcasting which still characterizes Italian TV today.

After the research of a national unity and identity pursued by the public broadcasting service, and the revenge of the local singularities carried on (unsuccessfully) by local TV, the age of networks started with an attempt towards "internationalization" and Americanization, either in the style, content, or origin of programmes. Forced to find an identity different from the public service, private TV followed the ready-made American model, suitable for structural and economic reasons: in fact, until the recent legislation by the Minister of Postal System and Telecommunications O. Mammi', private TV could not broadcast "live", but only transmit recorded programmes, and cannot transmit news; moreover private TV was born as a "container" for advertising, which, unlike in the public service is granted a privileged role there. (See later for figures on level of ad on RAI and private channels.)

Carlo Freccero, scholar in media systems and TV (and man of the Berlusconi's group), gives a suggestive definition of commercial TV:

"What is a commercial TV? Which is its fundamental character? Commercial TV is a TV with no live broadcasting, and then halved, denaturalized. It lacks any simultaneity with 'reality'. It is first of all a delayed broadcasting. Broadly speaking, whereas in public TV the essential moment is information, in private TV it is advertising. In fact commercial TV was born in order to promote the sale of advertising spaces. And the serials which constitute the containers for spot ads are actually homogeneous to them. A sort of similarity does exist between

telefilms, punctuated by advertising breaks, and the spots. With the RAI, broadcasted advertising is extraneous to programmes: in order to be accepted it must be in some way exorcized, put into brackets, signalled (as the permanence of jingles testify). It is the moment of "falsity" that irrupts in the flow of "reality". In private TV, on the contrary, an aesthetics of "artificiality", of "constructed" dominates, which pervades all the schedules. It is a sort of hyperreal which substitutes the real that cannot be broadcast" (in Bettetini, G., ed., 1985:207-8. My translation).

AFTER BERLUSCONI

The advent of private TV and the establishment of commercial networks have produced dramatic changes in the attitude of public TV towards advertising, which appears to be a reaction or an adaptation to the situation, rather than a deliberate strategy.

The first phenomenon which the RAI had to considerate was the enormous growth of the amount of advertising spaces made available by the private sector, especially in the period between 1981 and 1984: whereas in 1981 the 56% of total advertising was on the press, and 29% on television, in 1984 43% was on the press and 46% on TV and in 1990 42.2% was on the press and 51.7% on TV (35.6 on commercial TV, 16.1 on national TV).

And whereas on public TV the quote of advertising remained almost the same, around 14% of total output (although the kinds of "camouflage" of advertising inside programmes did increase, as we will see), on private TV it changed from 15 to 23%. 6

Other data: in 1985 the advertising revenue of the press is £178 milliards, the same as in 1969, whereas for TV, public and private together, is 5 times more, from 40 to 213 milliards. 7

The growth of advertising revenues in the private sector and the fear to loose audience and legitimization pushed the public service to adopt a strategy increasingly similar to that of

commercial TV, in spite of the completely opposite background of the key men in the two sectors; on the public side, after the reform, a directory of purely political nature, lacking in any managerial skill and industrial culture, only aiming to occupy more and more posts inside the structure and slots inside the schedule; on the commercial side a total dependence on the market and a complete separation from political and cultural issues. Paradoxically the results in terms of programming policy are very close in the two cases: a tendency towards distribution rather than production, and, in general, a tendency towards audience maximization.

According to several scholars, the Italian televisual system is not a mixture of public and private, but a totally private one, as the logic based on the binomial audience-advertising is actually leading both the systems; we have passed directly from a regime of public monopoly to a private one, without an intermediate phase. 8

Although the attitude of RAI towards advertising is still differentiated from the commercial one (at least as far as licence fees and limitation in the quantity of spot advertising are concerned), any substantial divergence is actually vanishing.

On the one side, in fact, after the advent of private TV, licence fees became a secondary source of revenue for RAI; as the import of the fees has been almost the same for years, the advertising/fees ratio from 1981 to 1985 passed from 30-to-70 to 42-to-58. 9

On the other side the whole policy of the RAI on matters of advertising has been deeply influenced by the private system.

Exorbitant contracts are stipulated, as promotional operations, with popular show men and women, in order to attract audience and advertisers; various forms of "masked" advertising are devised, from promotional talk shows to quizzes and games in which the viewers can participate through phone-in calls -this is one of the ways to escape the limitations imposed by the constitutional "roof" for spot advertising (see next section) and to divert advertising budgets towards less expensive forms of publicity.

In the Berlusconi era the role of advertising in television has changed dramatically, even on public TV, where anti-commercial bias was so radicalized. But two other major changes have also occurred, related to the growing importance of advertising: on the one side the radical reconstruction of the relationship between television and the "outside" (industry, press, advertising agencies), and the end of the autonomy of the different spheres; on the other side the complete reorganization of the inner programming policy, in order to multiply the occasions for advertising breaks, and to balance the rigid schedule of private TV.

As for the first aspect, a trend towards oligopolistic concentration is occurring, as it is in the communication sector: few big enterprises control different sectors of production, and use advertising for defending their quota of market. 10

A transformation has also come about regarding the relation between industrial entrepreneurs and television. Whereas in the beginning TV policy was immune by economic pressures and interferences, and wanted to safeguard its autonomy, later things changed, at least in the private sector. The biggest media

tycoon, S. Berlusconi, is in fact an industrial man himself, who also owns a big store chain (heavily advertised on the networks) and presides over a society, Fininvest, who formally owns the networks and also deals with a wide range of financial activities (like insurance). Also the relationship TV/press has radically changed: from a period of protectionism, in which TV willingly had limited the amount of advertising in order to safeguard the revenue of the press and to maintain distinct spheres of influence, to an attempt of the press of supporting a pluralistic broadcasting system; then a stage came, in which "colonialism" substituted protectionism (in fact Berlusconi, together with the networks, purchased shares - 4% - in Mondadori publishing house and controlled a national newspaper.) Now the situation is changing again, under the effect of the new legislation by the minister O.Mammi', that prohibits the concentration of TV channels and press by the same person or groups (Berlusconi has then renounced to the newspaper).

And finally the revenge of advertising agencies, formerly segregated in the role of marketing services, have now grown according to the American model, either because of the enormous increase of opportunities made available by private TV, and by the big American and British agencies (like J Walter Tomphson, McCann Erikson, Saatchi and Saatchi and others), which opened Italian affiliates and attracted advertising budgets also from Italian firms, which made their power grow further.

But apart from the rearrangement of "external" relations, here only schematically sketched, some major changes have transformed the nature and manners of the public broadcasting service, and

especially of its chief strategic weapon, that is scheduling.

I will consider in a moment as private TV schedules were arranged, not without great difficulties, according a logic of counter-programming respect to the solid, although various, menu offered by RAI; but also on the side of public service the advent of private TV, the enormous quantity of (cheap) advertising made available by them, the necessity of maintaining both advertising revenues and the loyalty of the viewers (as to legitimize the fees), it did produce a transformation in the style and especially in the policy of broadcasting.

Instead of the anti-commercial bias and the discretion in the use of advertising breaks, always relegated to the fringe of programming, a tendency has grown towards the integration of advertising in the "flow" of programmes: on the one side in the form of masked ad, or in that of sponsoring, which is becoming a practice massively employed, either by single or associated sponsors, for supporting any kind of "mass" events, from sport to music to culture.

On the other side the art of scheduling has deeply changed and the main feature of the change is the tendency towards fragmentation: the "unities" are shorter than before and are multiplied in order to create "natural breaks" for advertising, especially in peak time.

A number of examples can be drawn from the daily schedule: from short daily programmes, lasting no more than 15 minutes, preceding the news and carrying information about weather, historical events of the day, popular traditions and so on, to the separation of the sport results and information from the rest of the news, in order to create a short autonomous programme,

allowing further advertising breaks. The metamorphosis of Italian TV in ten years is dramatic as far as advertising is concerned.

A last note regards the organization of schedules on the private networks, and the way in which they have been heavily conditioned, at least in the beginning, by the public service, while in turn assuming a threatening role for public service. Whereas in the early '80s, the RAI was still following a policy based on recurrent genres, inside which a large variety of programmes was provided, and the concept of "seriality" was totally extraneous both to producers and viewers, private TV either for reasons of costs or inexperience, started broadcasting on the basis of a rigid and repetitive schema, recurring daily without no alteration for the entire week.

In the beginning such rigid schedule was successful only in the hours for which RAI had not managed to create a loyal audience (like the morning, or around midday), and the main programmes broadcast were cheap quiz shows and telefilms.

The real "turn" from a policy of survival to a direct attack coincides, according to the experts, with the "case Dallas".

In 1981 the first channel of RAI broadcasted 13 episode of the serial, which were not particularly successful, either because they were used to fill-in the schedule where no "strong" programmes were available, or because the "logic" of seriality was neither familiar to the viewers, and nor to broadcasters (a sign of this was the fact that the order of episodes was not respected, and only the "best" were selected, as they were autonomous stories).

Then in 1982 CANALE 5 purchased the series, which became the

major event in the televisual season, around which the whole schedule was build up. On the one side a whole American atmosphere was created, with a series of trailers emphasizing the "live" presence of the American family, and with a particular care in the making-up of the whole network image; on the other side, given the kind of compulsory viewing stimulated by the serial, the two weekly episodes were opportunely placed against RAI1 programmes: the first one on Tuesday evening (a weak slot in RAI schedule), the second one on Thursday evening, against a very popular game show conducted by a celebrated show man.

And whereas the first episode remained on Tuesday, the second could vary so as to compete with the most important programmes on RAI. In this way the attempt to erode directly the audience of the public channel began, and also a new kind of schedule organization (no longer daily, but weekly).

The "war of schedules" had several phases (among which the increase of hours of broadcasting by RAI, for instance in the early morning 11 and, after a period of supremacy of the Berlusconi's network CANALE5, is now stabilized in a dividing up of the audience of around 51% for RAI and 49% for the private network, with little variations.

THE 3 RAI CHANNELS AND THE NETWORKS

Whereas in its origin the first RAI channel (National) was a condensation of cultural, educative, informative programmes, with a bit of entertainment, after the advent of private TV and officially after the reform of 1976 the situation changed dramatically: on the one hand because of the heavy political

influences on programming and the division of spheres between the parties inside the public service organization, which involved problems of balance and hegemony, reflected by the programming policy; on the other hand because of the internal differentiation between the three RAI channels, each of them characterized by an individual line of broadcasting, in order to satisfy, at least in theory, the public service remit, besides the political goals of the parties.

The general directors of the three RAI channel come from Christian Democracy (RAI 1), the Socialist party (RAI 2), and the communist party (RAI 3),

So RAI 1 reflects the instances of the majority party, together with gathering the largest audience (in 1990 about the 25.61% in peak time), which creates a contradictory editorial line: on the one side the necessity to be the "official" voice of the country (the news, for instance, is the most institutionalized programme, leaving little space for spectacularizing or personal confirmation of individual speakers, and pursuing instead a line of seriousness, affirmation and, in some cases, moral edification), which involves, at least nominally, the support of the values that should inspire the party, and which are advocated for legitimizing its supremacy. On the other side the need to maintain a primacy over the biggest of private networks, CANALE 5, determines a number of compromises among which the increasing amount of light entertainment, the tendency towards spectacularizing of any kind of event, the mega-contracts signed to popular anchor men-women in order to attract audiences for advertisers and so on.

Some figures on programming policy: in 1982 11,3% of RAI1 broadcasting was light entertainment, 13,2% information programmes, 10,2% news, 9,3% cultural programmes, 4,2% advertising. In 1986 light entertainment was 22,8%, 2,2% to informative programmes, 10,8% to news, 14,3% to cultural programmes, 4,8% to advertising.

Theatrical performances and classical music, which constitute the bulk of programming in the first years of broadcasting, have almost completely disappeared, inasmuch as they are perceived as inappropriate for a large public, and have been relegated in the most elitist schedule of RAI3, voted by nature to specialized audiences.

Although, as the data display, advertising has not dramatically increased on National TV over the last few years, there is an element that reveals the new trend: the rise of the genre "light entertainment", that means the rise of the sponsorship (the two come together more often than not).

On this respect Italy represents a unique case in Europe: in 1989 sponsors invested 41 billions on RAI channels and 215 billions on private ones, that is about 8% of total advertising on television 12. Sponsorship is seen as a means to avoid the diffuse (among viewers) practice of zapping: while commercial breaks incite the use of the remote control, a commercial message thoroughly entangled in the plot of the programme runs less risks of being zapped (even if the image of the product can be heavily affected by unsuccessful programmes). In the new legislation, as far as sponsorship is concerned, the commercial message must not exceed 2% of the total duration of the programme. Other figures of the channel: in 1990 RAI 1 broadcasted about 18 hours per day,

and reached 95% of the national area; advertising on RAI1 represented about the 60% of the "ceiling" imposed by the parliamentary commission upon the three public channels (about 586 billions in 1990).

RAI 2 was born in 1961 to cater to the instances of renewal and more critical attitudes than the first channel; the schedules offer less entertainment (10,5% in 1982; 14,3% in 1986), more cultural programmes (13,2% in 1982; 8,6% in 1986) and information programmes (11,6% in 1982; 2,8% in 1986), less advertising (4,5% in 1982; 4,1% in 1986). Classical music is also present, although in a limited percentage, and there are more educational programmes than on the first channel. A growing importance has been acquired by imported telefilms (from 9,1% in 1982 to 12,7% in 1986), which are mainly broadcasted before the news, for building up an evening viewing habit.

A peculiar character distinguished the news (nick-named "Tele-Craxi", from the name of the present charismatic leader of the socialist party) as, unlike for the first channel, the presentation of the facts is heavy personalized by the different speakers, whose looks and attitudes contrast sharply with the neutrality (both in the external aspect and in the perspective) of the first channel's colleagues: good looking men and women (much more women than on the first channel) present the news in a way which is both professional and colloquial, often assuming unusual postures and using gestural and facial mimic, and always giving a personal character to the reports, which has produced a sort of star-system among the most successful speakers (who often start to host programmes on their own).

As for the style of the news, it is more spectacular, more aggressive (with an heavy use of superimposition), more commentarial and less "neutral" and placate than the news on the first one. (Although heavy political bias towards the directives of the party have in many cases be emphasized by some critics).

RAI 2 is third among Italian channels as far as audience figures are concerned (15.18% in 1990); the channel transmits about 19 hours per day on 95% of the national territory; it broadcasts 37% of the advertising allowed by the "ceiling" (364 billions in 1990). RAI 3 represents a case apart in the public service scenario, either because of the smaller percentage of audience reached (11.21%), both for cultural and technical reasons. (until recently it was not possible to receive the third channel in many parts of the country; now the service reaches about the 83% of the national territory).

Born in 1976 after the Reform, RAI 3 should have satisfied the request for localism, direct access, decentralization (and in this way, in the mind of legislators, to make superfluous the presence of local TV), but in reality it became a sort of minority TV, realizing programmes with sectorial appeal: no telefilm, little entertainment, classical music, opera, theatrical performances (12,9% on the whole in 1986); a lot of cultural (7,3%) and educational (11,3%) programmes and little advertising (0,3%). 13

The news represents 9,3% of broadcasting time, and their main characteristics are the local dimension, absent in the other two, and the heavy ideological character. In the late 80's a new editorial line has been brought about successfully by the director Angelo Guglielmi, based on the so called "TV-verità"

(direct approach to the life and problems of ordinary people; attempts to provide services and information about situations of the daily life and so on).

At present RAI 3 is broadcasting about 12-14 hours per day; advertising represents less than 4% of the total amount for the public channels (about 39 billions).

The main difference of advertising on the three channels is in fact quantity rather than quality.

As for the three main Berlusconi's networks, CANALE 5, Italia1 and RETEQUATTRO, each of them presents an individual character (in spite of the homogenization of programmes), and identity.

We have followed, at least fundamentally, the process of characterization of CANALE 5 in respect to the public service and in spite of its limitations. The last stage of C5 identification, after years of American style, is a revival of "Italianicity" through the broadcasting of old Italian successful movies, together with the production of shows based on the presence of few "stars" (often show men and women subtracted to the RAI thanks to more appealing contracts) and sexy chorus girls, according to the tradition of post-war curtain-raiser shows, and to the more recent shows of local TV.

What is relevant is that many of the private channels broadcasts theatre, classical music, educational programmes, news, and the whole schedule is filled with films, telefilms, cartoons, entertainment, few cultural programmes, sport and informative programmes.

On the whole C5 (that in 1990 presents an audience of 18.26%) is the direct rival attraction of RAI1, both pursuing the maximum

audience with large appeal programmes, within the respective constraints; and as these two channels obtain the biggest audience and carry the largest quantity of advertising, they constitute the main source of advertisements for the Italian side of the comparative analysis. And, similarly to what has happened in Britain, that is a progressive blurring of the differences between the programming policy of the two more popular channels (BBC1 and ITV, even if in this case competition is for audience and not for advertising), an increasing resemblance characterizes the output of RAI1 and CANALE 5. And, since C5 has started broadcasting national advertising, there are no distinctive features in the kind of advertising on either of the two channels.

Unlike for the RAI channels (where advertising is controlled by Sipra, an agency which is part of the RAI group) on private networks advertising is managed by Publitalia, a property of Fininvest.

C5 broadcasts about 20 hours per day on 95% of Italian territory.

The amount of advertising in 1989 has reached 1.172 billions. Italia1 was connoted, since its entry in Berlusconi network, as a youth-tv, mainly broadcasting films (many of which are musical or in the original language, that is American-English), telefilm, music, cartoons, sport events. In 1990 it has reached an average audience of 10.58% in peak time and like C5 it broadcasts 20 hours and reaches the same percentage of the national territory; in 1989 advertising was 472 billions.

RETEQUATTRO has two many features: a cultural aim, which is present in the heavy transmission of quality films and in

cultural programmes and debates, conducted by famous journalists; and an informative aim, with the production of current affairs programmes, totally lacking on Italia1 and quite secondary on C5. The audience in 1990 was 7.45%; advertising in 1989 335 billions.

In the last few years, according to figures provided by Nielsen Italia 14, on national TV 802.464 million has been invested in 1989 and on commercial TV 1.762.586 million; in 1990 the figures were, respectively, 886.762 million and 1.960.068 (being an increase of 10.5% for national TV and of 11.2% for commercial TV).

THE LEGISLATION

The institutional interventions on matters of broadcasting in Italy can be divided in three major groups:

1) those of Magistracy, which include either the action of the individual magistrates (about the suspension of broadcasting from local channels which transmit the same programmes in different regions, like RETE A in 1984), or the sentences of the Constitutional Court, about the lawfulness of aerial freedom on a local ambit (we will see in a moment the main ones).

2) those of Parliament and Government, which are substantially the revision in time of the same ordinance, issued by the Council of ministers in October 1984, after an intervention of the magistrates, then declared unconstitutional by the Chamber of Deputies in November of the same year, after pressures of the left, then elaborated again in December and transformed in

February 1985 in a provisional law (the n.10) which still rules public and private broadcasting.

3) the proposals and bills brought before Parliament by the Postmaster General (who in Italy is also Minister of Telecommunications) on duty in the different periods: Colombo (1977 and again 1980), Gullotti (1978), Gaspari (1982), Gava (1985), De Mita (1988), Mammi' (1989).

All of them (apart from the last one) came to a standstill, because of the controversies between the parties and the heavy political consequences of any decision concerning broadcasting. Unlike the first phase of Italian broadcasting, in which the total control was accompanied by a lack of political interest, in the present phase political balance is so complex as to discourage and block any attempt of regulation.

I will follow now some of the main episodes which have influenced the iter of Italian broadcasting towards the present chaotic situation.

- on 7 June 1974 the Postmaster General Togni orders the dismantling of two foreign television relay stations, RTSI (from Switzerland) and TeleCapodistria (both of them already transmit in colour, whereas in Italy programmes will be in black and white until 1976).

- on 10 July of the same year a sentence of the Constitutional Court (n.225) declares unconstitutional the decree, which goes against the democratic circulation of ideas , and then redefines the lawfulness of the channel broadcasting on a restrict or local ambit (n. 226), as the limited costs of management should have excluded any risk of oligopolistic concentration. This sentence

had a crucial importance, because it gave legitimation to the explosion of local and private broadcasting on the whole national territory.

- These two sentences prepared the background for the decisive law of Parliament of 14 April 1975, n.103, called "New norms on the matter of radio and television broadcasting", and known as the law reform of RAI. The centre of the reform was the attempt to regulate the relationship between the RAI and other centres of power: parties, unions, Parliament, regions, and to include within the public system all the instances of renewal, transformation, expansion of the communication system. These are the main points of the law:

+ The public service diffusion of programmes of general interest is a duty reserved to the State, which exerts it through the Parliament and a board of governors (which members are designated partly by the general meeting, partly by the parliamentary committee, partly by the committee according to the directions of regional councils).

+ The local instances and the requirements for decentralization and participation of the citizens associations in the production of televisual messages are (unequally) divided between the public service, through the constitution of a third channel with national diffusion, and the development of local cable TV station, which broadcasting areas must not exceed the quote of 150.000 inhabitants, and with the prohibition of interconnection and the obligation to produce 50% of the programmes.

+ The confirmation of the Constitutional Court sentence according to which public radio and TV service of foreign countries can be received by national transmitters.

On matter of advertising a maximum annual quota ("roof") has to be fixed, year by year, by the Constitutional Court, before the budget for the programmes has been decided.

After one year (28/7/1976) a further liberalization was added to the law: aerial stations, together with cable TV, could broadcast, on the condition that they did not exceed the local ambit.

In spite of the democratic intents and the attempt to regulate a situation already critical, the reform was from the beginning onwards lacking in realism, on the one side because of the excessive trust in the possibility of the public service to gather for all the new instances, including that inspired to market and competition, by balancing democratic intents and anti-trust policy; on the other side because of the excessive trust in the autonomous force of the law as regulative principle, whereas the possibility of an unitarian communication system cannot be simply a matter of prohibitions and obligation (paradoxically, in fact, the age of deregulation begins with an act of legislation: once the principle has been established, ways can be found for by-passing or exploit them).

What the reform actually did was to sanction the political-institutional relevance of television, which became one of the constant objects in the political debate in the country.

But after the reform, as we have seen, the various decrees and bills could not achieve any effective results, because of the political implications of any decision and the delicate balance of the political forces on the Italian scene.

In August 1990 after a long and contrasted (mainly by the

communist party and by the left side of christian democrats) parliamentary iter, a new legislation has been approved, carrying the name of the (republican) minister who proposed it, O. Mammi.

The legislation became effective on 24 August 1991 and brought some major changes to the present situation, among which:

- In order to broadcast, each commercial network (13 are asking for the status of national network, plus 7 syndications of local TV) has to apply for franchises with the Postmaster General (who has a great discretionary power): the criteria are different, from the number of years of broadcasting to the quality of programmes (which is quite a vague requirement)
- Anti-trust norms will be effective that interdict the simultaneous ownership of newspapers and TV channels
- The viewers will pay higher fees, with no difference between colour and black-white TV sets (but the fees will be paid for by household, and not for the number of TV sets)
- The concentration of spots per hour will change both on public and commercial networks: on the RAI, advertising will not exceed the 12% per hour of broadcasting (before the legislation the limit was 10%) and 4% per week (5% before the legislation). On commercial networks the ratio will be no more than 18% per hour and 14% per week.
- As far as sponsorship is concerned, the commercial message has to be contained within 2% of the whole programme.
- Another major change concerns children TV: no commercial breaks are allowed in programmes for children.

As can be seen the main character of the legislation is pragmatic, and practical norms rather than principles have been fixed, in the attempt to mediate the contrasting interests of the

different political forces.

B) BRITISH BROADCASTING SYSTEM: HISTORY AND CHARACTERS

Independent television was born, in England, in 1955, and the first, historical commercial (for Gibb's toothpaste) was broadcast in the first "natural break" on September 22, at 8.12 p.m., with an estimated audience of 2 million viewers in London (Airwaves, winter 84-85, p 12).

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had broadcast, as everybody knows, since 1936 (the first television service in the world).

The BBC was, and still is, almost exclusively financed by licence fees (since 1946, when the new service was eventually independent from the radio), although the history of the channel is punctuated, as we shall see, by periodical discussions between Government and broadcasters about the opportunity to introduce at least some form of sponsorship or partial advertising (the latest being the "White Paper" issued by the Government in November 1988).

In spite of the pressures from the industrial side, the "tycoons" of the press or cinema and the big financial enterprises, all of them supporters of the "free market", the commercial (independent) TV was not born until the middle

fifties, that is when the depression and austerity imposed by the post-war situation was overcome by the economic growth.

And, unlike other countries in the European scenario (like Italy and France, where the phenomenon of commercial TV is a much more recent one) the birth of both the commercial channels is not exclusively the result of the industrial concern and economic support, but the effect of a legislation from the Government (in the case of ITV, the Broadcasting Act of 1954, whereas Channel Four followed that of 1980).

The British broadcasting system presents in effect an almost unique case of "private regulation", a successful "British compromise" of private enterprise and public control, as the documents issued by the government leave a large number of decisions to be worked out, from the general principles and suggestions, by the IBA and the network.

The situation is completely different in Italy, where, as we have seen, the commercial channels are the result of a private initiative, to which only recently the Government has attempted to apply a legislation.

Another distinctive feature of the British system, alongside its regulated character, is the nature of the duopoly which has dominated the organization of British TV up to the 1990's.

Whereas the BBC, thanks to a Government's concession (the BBC Royal Charter and License of 1927, allowing a strong self-regulation) can produce and transmit its programmes, in the commercial system production and transmission are split between the regional TV companies (together with independent producers) and the regulatory body, the IBA, which periodically renews the

concessions to the individual contractors, who operate under a franchise with their own finance.

The independent TV companies (15 in 14 regions plus TV-am since 1983) are at present subjected to a double control: direct from the IBA which is responsible for the standard and quality of programmes, schedules, advertising (having the faculty of pre-scrutinizing the scripts and their conformity to the "IBA Code of Advertising Standard and Practice") and indirectly from the Government, because of the periodical inquiries carried on by different committees for examining and discussing the standard and quality of independent programmes.

Channel Four is a different case, being established by an Act of Parliament (Broadcasting Bill), supervised by the IBA and financed by ITV through subscriptions, against the faculty of selling its advertising time (so as it responds more to the Government than to shareholders).

C4, in fact, neither produces programmes (apart from "Right to Reply"), nor transmits directly (being a subsidiary of the regulatory body), but commissions programmes, partly to the existing ITV companies, but mainly to independent producers, for whom the new channel has provided substantial opportunities, and who are becoming the favoured force in the plans for the future of broadcasting.

Broadly speaking, the unique feature of British commercial television in the European scenario is that it is, up to now, the most strictly regulated, (even if, according to the last proposals, the situation will soon change dramatically).

A further distinctive characteristic is the federation of regional companies, which guarantees (or at least should do) the

respect of the local traditions of the British culture (although one of the most frequent criticisms, usually moved against the independent system is that it promotes an almost exclusively London-oriented culture, because of the unbalance between the "major" London based companies and the others).

The regional character of the independent TV is distinctive in the scenario of the other European non-public broadcasting systems, and it has important consequences on matters of advertising, as it allows a differentiated distribution of the TV campaigns according to the specific characters of the individual regions (affluent/not affluent; metropolitan/suburban; industrialized/not industrialized; high culture/low culture; high rate of unemployment/low rate and so on).

It also enables the "launch" of a new campaign to a circumscribed part of the population, and the possibility of testing its impact on the audience so as to evaluate the opportunity to extend it to the whole network, or only to part of it. 15

Advertisements differ on ITV and C4, according to the different kind of viewers and the different "channel image". ITV is generally perceived as the most "popular" channel; in fact it mainly broadcasts, especially during peak-time, programmes of broad appeal, catering for a large audience. Also BBC1 follows a closely similar scheduling policy, but the "aura" of the public service and its character as an "institution" (alongside with the monarchy and the Parliament) produce an effect of greater respect towards the channel. As an inquiry conducted by the IBA in 1984 demonstrated, people interviewed some days after the programmes

in question had been broadcasted, were inclined to attribute the most popular, entertaining, cheap ones to ITV , and the most serious, expensive, educational ones to the BBC, a prejudice which caused in several cases a distorted memory of the facts:

"Particular irritation is caused when the BBC transmits a - shall we say- downmarket programme and the public assume it to have been an ITV production. Worse still are the occasions where ITV has a truly distinguished programme which for that very reason is widely supposed to have come from the BBC" (Airwaves, Winter 84- 85, p 23).

As a result of the inquiry "Thornbirds", broadcast by the BBC, was almost universally attributed to ITV, whereas the award-winning drama "The Jewel in the Crown", produced by Thames TV, was widely supposed to be a BBC production.

In general ITV is though to be better for entertainment, film, comedies, quizzes, shows, regional news, whereas the BBC is perceived as being superior in national information, current affairs and documentaries, science, drama, art and education:

"With the exception of the local news, which is an obvious speciality of a regional system, ITV is thought to be best at exciting , enjoyable and entertaining programmes. It is seen as the fun channel. By contrast BBC1, without exceptions, is seen as best at serious, informative, educational and edifying programmes. Not a whiff of fun anywhere." (Airwaves, cit, p.22).

As a matter of fact the perceived differences have little foundation in present scheduling, advertising rather being the distinctive difference.

If a further distinction exists, it seems to be less between BBC and ITV, than between "broadcasting" and "narrowcasting", or "popular" (ITV and BBC1) and "minority" (BBC2 and C4) channels.

The "channel image" of the BBC goes with a sort of deference

and respect for the established authority , and for the cultural ("Oxbridge" educated middle class) and political (conservative) background which are supposed to inspire the philosophy of the channel; nevertheless this attitude, either real or supposed, can be highly restrictive, as Michael Grade, ex officer at the BBC and since the end of 1987 chief executive at C4 points to : "The governors of the BBC more and more have been tending to emerge from a narrower band of social and political positions within the British society than in the past, thereby depriving the corporation of a really comprehensive debate on crucial issues" (Airwaves, Winter 88-89, p 9).

The second channel was accorded to the BBC, in spite of ITV expectations, by the Broadcasting act of 1964 in order to realize a complementary schedule, mainly catering for special interests, art, music , which could then be shifted, without the BBC being accused not to fulfil its public service remit.

But C4 is the only channel that actually includes in the same act that sanctions its existence a specific remit, unique in the history of broadcasting, towards innovation in form and content, and towards the needs of minority groups (ethnics, age, interests etc.):

"The Broadcasting Act of 1980 and 1981, the instrument that defined the character of C4, obliged the new service 'to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and the content of programmes'. Nothing in previous arrangements between broadcasters and government - the BBC Charter and its various renewal and amendments, or the television Act of 1954 and 1964 that created and extended the ITV network- had even hinted at such duties" (The Listener, 26/11/1987, p 33).

For this reason C4, financed by ITV, but editorially independent has been the most experimental channel, and has

sought to widen the scope of TV programmes in several directions, for instance by "catering for sectorial interests, extending the conventional categories of programmes, airing new voices, opening up new slots, widening the international scope with programmes from all over the world" (Boyd-Bouman, S. "Three out of four. A report on the Manchester conference" Screen, vol. 27 n. 3-4, May-August 1986, p. 107).

For the very characteristics of the channel, its audience is much lower in number and more unpredictable than that of ITV, and concepts like "channel loyalty" need to be revisited, as people are not supposed to stick with the channel throughout a whole evening, for instance, but rather to "dip" in and out of its segments according to the individual interests and the menu of the channel, so that ratings can swing dramatically.

Nevertheless C4 has been proved from the beginning to deliver a "good" audience to the advertisers or, to paraphrase a well-known advertising pun, to reach the parts ITV doesn't:

"Though average TVRs (home ratings) are predictably low, campaigns are effectively reaching the target audiences of ABC1s of both sexes ("BBC2 people"), and 16-34 years old, the big-spending group that watches commercial television least" (Broadcast, 14 March 1983, p. 28). 16

Initially the advertising agencies (most notably Saatchi and Saatchi) had hoped for a separate selling organization, and tried to persuade, through the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (already favourable to some degree of competition in the selling of TV airtime) both Parliament and IBA that C4 should have had a separate sale force. But the 1981 Broadcasting Act decreed instead that "the ITV companies, in return for their subscription to it, should be allowed to sell C4 airtime for

their own respective areas." (Broadcast, 13 January 1984, p 18).

Nevertheless, once accepted and consolidated, the situation now presents "an inbuilt advantage of selective buying of audience" (Television Weekly, 9 March 1984, p 17), an audience which is younger and upmarket than ITV's and, selectively "bought", can reduce wasted advertising expenditure (ibidem) as the audience's value is given less by size than by composition (As we shall see in the last section the profile of C4 audience is reflected in the kind of goods and service advertised).

THE AGE OF REGULATION: COMMITTEES, INQUIRIES, LEGISLATION

According to several researchers on British broadcasting history, the main trade in England is characterized by a "minimalist" legislation: in spite of the frequency of broadcasting laws and related legal instruments, the conciseness of the official documents leaves a wide margin to the "voluntary principle", as many of the consequences and specifications usually need to be worked out. (see for instance Tunstall 1983:237).

Nevertheless legislation is an effective characteristic of the British commercial system, which differentiates British ITV and ILR from other European systems.

British commercial TV is characterized by three majors cycles of policy-making: each one ends with the nomination of a committee of inquiry (Pilkington Committee, 1960-62; Annan Committee 1974-77; Peacock Committee 1985-86), and the first two concluded with a Broadcasting Act (in 1964 and 1980), which in

turn led to a new TV channel (BBC2 on 1966 and Channel 4 in 1982). Some of the effects of the Peacock are present in the White Paper issued by the Government in November 1988, and, as we will see in the next section, will characterize the fourth phase of British Broadcasting, particularly when the present franchises system will expire in 1993.

According to Tunstall, in fact, each policy cycle has three phases: the first is the enquiry phase, in which the "public interest" is brought to the fore by the Committee members (usually selected among public persons from the law, universities, big business, trade unions). The proposals are usually expressed in a-political terms, and lack financial realism.

A second phase is political: "The report goes to the relevant government minister and department. A White Paper may follow, then a Bill, and, after the usual debates, an Act is finally enacted." (Tunstall 1983:25)

The final Act does not necessarily follow the committee's recommendations to the letter, as they can be altered even profoundly. Also in this phase financial details are quite vague.

The third phase is operational: in order to render the legislation effective, a programming policy and the main financial details need to be decided, which involves a wide range of difficulties:

"Evidence that the operational planning was hurried and unrealistic seems to be provided by the fact that each of the new television channels -in 1955-56, in 1964 and in 1982-83- ran into immediate major and foreseeable, but unforeseen, difficulties." (ibidem :25).

But let's see the main steps of the regulation of the

commercial system, with particular regard to their influence on advertising standards and practices.

At the beginning, according to the Broadcasting Act of 1954, the major decisions about advertising standards were not a matter for the Authority (then the ITA), but rather for the Advertising Advisory Committee, which in June 1955 issued the first code of standards for advertising on television (known as the Principles of Television Advertising) and whose recommendations were mandatory also for the Authority. (Airwaves, winter 84-85, p 13).

Members of the committee were mainly from the medical and advertising groups ("People nominated by the Ministry of Health, the British Medical Association, The British Dental Association, the Pharmaceutical Society, The British Code of Standard Committee, the Retail Trading Standards Association, the Advertising Association, the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers Limited" Airwaves, Winter 86-87, p. 14), rather than from the consumer side. The code was brief and based on the general principle that advertising should be "legal, clean, honest and truthful", and should avoid "false or misleading advertisements, guarantees, competitions and advertising in children programmes" (ibidem).

Alcohol and tobacco were allowed, but there were restrictions and bans (only low alcoholic drinks were permitted, and cigars but not cigarettes).

PILKINGTON

In 1960 several events determined a sort of "turn" in the British commercial TV. First of all in the viewers' habits, as

the spread of coverage was a slow process, and many households could not receive the new channel before then, but where ITV was available, it became a frequent attitude to switch to it.

Moreover "pro-rata" rates were introduced, which caused an increase in the price of the commercials of more than 30% and played a decisive role in the new trend towards shorter commercials. (Henry 1986:73).

In the summer of the same year a "qualitative improvement" was also announced, and the removal of 20% of the existing commercial breaks within programmes was decreed; in particular, some internal breaks were removed in weekly documentaries and children programmes (ibidem).

But the most significant event was the appointment by the Government of a Committee on Broadcasting under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Pilkington.

The Pilkington Committee reported in 1962 (with a "ferocious denunciation of commercial television", see Tunstall 1983:40, that reflects the strength of public service and the "Establishment" vs the Industry), and a number of new provisions were issued which "marked the end of ITV's opening phase" (Tunstall, 1983:205).

The duties of the Authority were extended (thanks to the weapon of contract renewal power), and the responsibility of permitting and regulating the amount and distribution of advertising was established as one of them (in fact under the Television Act of 1964 the function of promulgating a code was transferred to the Authority, "with the AAC given the task of keeping the Code under review and of recommending to the Authority alterations which appeared desirable", Airwaves, Winter

86-87, p14).

The Pilkington Committee brought to an end the first cycle of broadcasting policy making, characterized by a light-touch regulation (the ITA being heavily conditioned by the industry's interests) and by the prominence of popular programmes, 17 and opened up a new one, in which both regulation and quality were improved (which stimulated the competition with the BBC and created the conditions for the duopoly).

The main proposals issued by the committee were the assignment of a new channel to the BBC (which would have been engineered on 625 lines UHF); the recommendation that the sale of airtime to programme companies should have been handled by the Authority; the abolition of advertising magazines. (Henry 1986:92).

Advertising magazines were a linked series of advertisements, from many advertisers and for a wide range of products and services. Each ad occupied a slot in the editorial storyline which was useful for small or new advertisers (who "put themselves in the hand of the programme company". Henry 1986:90, and were given the opportunity of entering the medium reasonably inexpensively).

The best-known was "Jim's Inn", with Jimmy Hanley, which ran for nearly 300 editions until 1963 (Airwaves Autumn 1987, p6). Although there was no evidence of any public dislike about ad magazines, a rather "popular" form of advertising (whereas, as Henry points to, advertising agencies were not particularly enthusiastic about them), nevertheless the ITA took the view that the more successful they were, the more they could be mistaken for programmes in themselves (especially when the ad content was

"overshadowed" by the linking ingredients, "which, under a long-standing title, could come to resemble those of a soap opera" Henry 1986:90).

According to the IBA magazine "Airwaves", the obsession with separation of programmes and advertisements had always been a main feature of the Authority at the time, and there is no reason to suppose that the viewers were so naive as to believe that the ad slots represented "impartial advices on new products arriving in the shop" (winter 84-85, p13) 1 and so the grounds given for the abolition were "allegations which did not stand up to any serious consideration" (Autumn 87,p6).

A more serious criticism was that the ad magazines did not fit in the new organization of advertising time, as they exceeded the fixed six minutes per hour.

The ban of the committee was implemented by statute, and remains until now; since 1963 only spot advertisements have been allowed on British TV.

TELEVISION ACT 1964

Following Pilkington recommendations, the Television Act of 1964 greatly reinforced, as we have seen, the regulatory power of the ITA: it also fixed a government levy "not on ITV profits, but on net advertising revenue...For the next few years the levy removed about a quarter of total revenue." (Tunstall, 1983:205).

The year of massive profits and low-brow programmes came to an end; while the new taxation system did not give particular financial motives to maximize revenue, a closer competition with the BBC stimulated a quality improvement, and the ITV companies

began to commission some more serious and less popular programmes. A second channel was also granted to the BBC, and BBC2 became reality in 1966.

THE CODE

Moreover, in 1964 the "Principles for Television Advertising" were replaced by the most comprehensive "Independent Television Code of Advertising Standard and Practice", and the Act confirmed the statutory duty of the Authority to "secure compliance" with the new rules (Henry 1986:102).

The Code, which has run into several editions over the last twenty years, remains until today a fundamental point of reference not only for British TV: in fact

"many of its provisions have been adopted by other European public service broadcasters...Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have relied heavily on those sections of the code dealing with children and alcohol in the preparation of their proposals which may govern much broadcast advertising in the years ahead." ("Airwaves", Autumn 1987, p7). 19

The Code is a detailed guide to what is acceptable on TV advertising:

"It contains appendices on Advertising and Children, Financial Advertising and the Advertising of Medicines and Treatments ...It is supplemented by detailed Notes of Guidance to advertisers and agencies prepared and published by the Independent Television Companies Association. Under the provision of the legislation the Authority is required to consult, from time to time, with the Home Secretary as to the classes and descriptions of advertisements which must not be broadcast, and the method of advertising which must not be employed and to **carry out any directives** which he may give. During the life of ITV, the Secretary of State has used his powers on two occasions only: to ban the advertising of Advertisers Magazines ; and to prohibit the advertising of cigarettes and cigarette tobacco in August 1965." ("Airwaves", Winter 84-85, p 14).

IBA

The growing importance of the Independent Television Authority was sanctioned when it became Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) on 12 July 1972 and was made responsible also for Independent Local Radio.

The IBA, is worth remembering, is a federal system, which implies a number of differences in respect to the BBC centralized organization. This fact represents both a motive of strength and one of weakness: strength because of the power of the IBA, as a government agency, to control and shape the course of media policy, especially through taxation and subsidy, In theory the IBA can set the rules and, in awarding franchises, choose the players so as a wide range of local traditions, representatives of British culture, and a variety of quality programmes can be brought forward.

Since 1955 there have been three franchise periods (1955-67, 1968-81 and 1982-93); although the rules for awarding franchises are neither official nor fully explicit, some general criteria are the financial liability of the applicants and their commitment to public service and quality. (Even if economic pressures have often forced the IBA not to penalize franchise holders, in spite of the betrayal of their remit, like in the case of TV-am.)

But in any case the IBA, together with the BBC, owns all the transmitters, and thus can control (at least in theory), through the fiscal system, the access and the quality of output of the ITV companies.

Along with the subsidy to C4, the companies pay, since 1963, a Treasury levy which until 1974 was based on total revenue, apart from the costs. In 1986, it was established on the basis of net

profits, independently from advertising revenues and from 1986 to date the system has been changed so as to include 25% of foreign profits, and the proposal for the '90s is to secure 75% from gross advertising revenue, and the remaining 25% from all profits. As we can see advertising has gained a more and more prominent role in the awareness of the government regulative strategy.

The IBA has undoubtedly a difficult role in mediating between government and companies, commercial interests and public service commitment; but since its regulatory function was strengthened, after Pilkington, a distinctive improvement in the range and quality of programmes has been registered.

This is what was stated in the Granada Lecture of 1972 on "The Future of Broadcasting in Britain", delivered by Sir Hugh Green, ex BBC Director General (Henry 1986:148). After the inquiries commissioned by the government, the appraisal and tributes payed to the quality of many ITV programmes by the speaker were a relief for the demoralized staff of the independent sector, (in the lecture there was also the proposition of a joint system of audience measurement for BBC and ITV -as the former was using an individually focused system based on diaries, whereas the latter employed home meters- that eventually came about in 1980s), and a critique to the Television Audience Programme which, in predicting the size of the programme audience, was becoming an evaluating criterion for the scheduling policy).

It is the IBA that regulates the amount, distribution and content of advertising on ITV, Channel 4, Oracle Teletext and Independent Local Radio. With the advices of the Advertising

Advisory Committee the IBA also keeps under review the Code for Advertising Standard and Practice.

The AAC gives in fact advice about advertising control policy to both the IBA and the Cable Authority, and also makes recommendations for code changes.

According to the Independent Broadcasting Authority Annual Report 1988-1989, during this period a total of 2.311 comments and complaints about broadcast advertising were received, about 20% less than the previous year.

Among the withdrawn commercials there was a spot for the Midland Bank that is included in my recorded material: it portrays a Jewish businessman in a way that many viewers thought to be offensive. After having received 139 complaints and having discussed it with the agency the IBA cancelled the advertisement.

Another commercial which was object of complaints which is also part of my recorded material, is an advertisement for milk featuring Bob Geldof taking an early-morning run, and picking a bottle of milk from a milk float. According to many viewers the ad appeared to condone theft, since Geldof was not shown paying for the milk; but in the reply the IBA, while acknowledging an "unintentional ambiguity", denied that the spot represents or condones theft.

The "feed back" between the Authority and the viewers ends with the issue, at bi-monthly intervals, of a summary of complaints received and replies given by the IBA.

THE ANNAN REPORT

The Annan Committee was established in 1970, did meet for the first time in 1974 and issued the final report in 1977.

In March 1975 the ITCA submitted its evidence to the committee, strongly supporting the necessity of maintaining a close relation, in a system solely relying on advertising revenues, between the making of programmes and the sale of airtime (Henry 1986:164) against the hypothesis of a centralized national system. It also maintained that, unlike Pilkington had envisaged, there was no evidence of a negative influence of advertising on schedules or individual programmes; on the contrary, the high standard of TV advertising was exerting a favourable effect on all programmes.

On 24 March 1977 the Report was published, containing 174 recommendations; following the ITCA evidences, and unlike Pilkington proposals, it stated that the sale of advertising time was the responsibility of the companies, rather than the Authority; it also recommended the exclusive use of the "natural breaks" for advertisements, and the reduction of their number, together with the exclusion of advertising from children programmes (according to the evidences provided by Prof. Hilde Himmelveit). 20

As Henry points to, for the first time aesthetic considerations had a relevant role in the global judgement about advertising, and several award-winning British commercials were openly praised:

"Perhaps the members of the committee, who had done their work so conscientiously, had finally allowed their own sensitivities to colour their attitudes towards the values and the needs of the market place" (ibidem:177).

The Committee also listed a number of statements about the financial power of the government in broadcasting (like setting

the licences fees on BBC and the levies on ITV), and promoted a perspective of cultural pluralism within the framework of the Authority system.

"Diversity" was a key concept in the redefinition of the public service ideal, and the recommendation to consider the whole spectrum of minority groups in British society constituted the basis for the definition of C4 character and specificity.

After the report a 5th edition of the Code of advertising was issued. On July 1978 a White Paper was published, following Annan's recommendations.

In 1984 a Cable Authority was created by the Broadcasting Act, as a separate authority, to regulate cable television.

PEACOCK COMMITTEE

The more recent committee nominated by the government for an enquiry into the British broadcasting system was established in 1985, under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Peacock.

The main issue at stake was the opportunity to introduce at least some form of advertising or sponsorship in the BBC, but the final report touched a number of topics about commercial TV in Britain and abroad.

The content of the report is particularly interesting in my perspective: in fact it treats in depth the role of advertising on television (and radio) by considering either the past trends or the possible consequences of the breaking of the ITV monopoly in the sale of airtime to advertisers; it also reviews the viable alternatives to spot advertising, in the light of foreign examples. The comparison with different commercial systems also

provides evidences for the definition of the range and quality of programmes, and for evaluating the likely changes on the BBC, once advertising would have been introduced. 21

I will not enter the technical details of the report, nevertheless it is worth considering the main points that came to the fore, as they are very relevant both to understand the present situation and to foresee the possible evolution.

A preliminary point needs to be made clear, that concerns a fundamental discrepancy between Peacock and the White Paper: in fact, Peacock p.2 asks the question:

"How can British broadcasting be financed in such a way as to bring the greatest enjoyment and pleasure to as many viewers and listeners as possible while at the same time fulfilling some public service obligations?" (My emphasis).

In other words, this enquiry still accepted the public service broadcasting framework: privatization and deregulation were not on the agenda.

In the report an econometric model applied to "different scenarios representing alternative possible advertising regimes for the BBC" (p.73) generated a number of conclusions, among which that the extension of advertising to the BBC will not result in a significant extension of the range of audience-types, but at most in an addition of "light ITV viewers".

The BBC itself submitted evidence on the fact that a large-scale BBC advertising would determinate a cut in revenue in the commercial system, with bad effects on the competition, and no positive results in the quality of the audience that would be reached.

A very important section concerns the influence of advertising on range and quality, two closely related aspects of any public

service responsible programming policy.

The objection that the BBC is already trying to match ITV ratings, in order to legitimize the licence fees and to obtain funds from the government, is partly reasonable, but it can also be argued that the situation would rapidly deteriorate, when broadcasters will have to compete for insufficient advertising resources, and when a narrowing of choice (and then quality) would be almost inevitable (p 74).

The study conducted by Prof. Blumer on the effects of competition on European, American and Australian broadcasting systems shows that the four channels of British TV offer, on the whole, a very comprehensive range of programming, "among the most extensive provided by the major broadcasting systems throughout the world" (p 75).

The highest levels of advertising were registered in United States, Australia and Italy (the only country with channels dependent only on advertising revenues, and with an amount of advertising per hour of 18 minutes in peak-time). 22

With reference to the range of programmes, the study showed that amount of advertising and variety of programmes are inversely proportional quantities, and that where TV systems are less dependent on advertising (like in Sweden) mass demands are less influential, and minority interests are catered for.

Whereas the USA represent a peculiar case, inasmuch as the TV output is characterized by an average high quality in spite of the narrow range of programmes (almost exclusively entertainment: comedies, shows, telefilms), in the other countries the more intrusive advertising is, the less composite the menu of

programmes will be. So it is in Australia, where the schedules contain a huge amount of home made drama, or in Italy, where the competition between the state channels and the commercial network has forced the RAI to betray its cultural and public service roots, and to lessen either the number of domestic productions or the variety of programmes.

The study concludes in acknowledging that "finance was found to be a key influence in determining the range and quality of programmes", and that there "in all countries was a growing sense of added competition for large audiences, even among public service broadcasters, and for the provision of more mass appeal programming" (p. 77) 23

As for the British system, a relevant degree of innovation was found both in BBC and ITV , together with a "readiness to allow time for new styles of programmes to evolve and become acceptable to large audiences" (p 78); if international awards are an objective criterion, then "British television is far and away the best in the world" (ibidem).

On the matter of financing the BBC, the research concludes that, in spite of the problems, licence fees cause "fewer problems than any other evident solution" (p 79):

"In the absence of regulation, competition for advertising revenues between the duopolists, now no longer 'protected' by separate financing, would be bound to change their programme strategies...In a duopolistic situation with no entry into the terrestrial broadcasting business, both the BBC and the ITV companies would look for revenue by scheduling programmes in order to maximize audiences in peak time and probably at most other times." (p. 79-80).

Another consideration concerns the content of programmes, which is increasingly subjected to the influence of advertisers, as they could not support some controversial programmes like

critical consumer programmes, satirical programmes, controversial drama or current affairs.

For the introduction of advertising on BBC, four main options were considered, once that of immediate total funding by advertising was ruled out: 1) Progressive funding spot, until a total funding in , say, 15 years time. 2) Progressive funding limited: BBC will partly be financed by advertising (limited in restricted times) and partly by licence fees. 3) Radio advertising only. 4) Sponsorship.

In the first case the competition with ITV for a source of revenue that remains constant is seen as having negative influences both on range and quality of programmes.

In the second case options like "block" advertising (as distinct from "spot") are considered, following the experience of countries like Germany and Netherlands. The system, based on advertising broadcasted only at given times and for limited periods (like was in Italy before 1976) presents some advantages for the viewers, but involves a number of restrictions which do not held for the rival sector as well, and make it harder for the BBC to compete for the same advertising revenue. This is the comment of the Report:

"Overall, the ISBA view appears to underestimate the likely consequences of growing competition for advertising revenue and the probability that regulation would become virtually impossible to enforce. While the ITV companies would see themselves as fighting for survival and the BBC would be setting out to establish its market share, then regulation could have only a limited role." (pag: 83).

Together with a lack of regulation, a narrowing of the range and quality of programmes on the major channels is expected, as

well as an effect on levy payments : they will decline, which will made the costs grow.

Whereas the third opportunity is seen as not resolute of the problem of financing the public service, the fourth ("a form of advertising limited to a statement in a particular programme that it is being financed by a particular organization") is considered by the Committee as not realistic; given the experience of ITV in 1985, the BBC cannot be expected to generate more than 5% of its income from sponsorship.

Although the experience of the US shows that sponsorship may be an effective support to spot advertising (as spots, given the diffusion of VCRs, can be more easily "zapped") the strong editorial control inevitably exercised by sponsors on the content of the programmes is seen as a consequence not to be hoped for.

HOW THINGS WILL CHANGE: THE WHITE PAPER

Some of the anxieties caused among people working in broadcasting by the Government obsession with competition which shapes the White Paper had already been expressed at the Edinburgh International Television Festival in August 1988; a special concern did emerge especially for some categories of programmes, particularly at risk in the reorganization of British TV based on competition (particular when the British situation is compared with that of other European countries, in which deregulation is a reality): sport, for instance, will probably suffer from a massive intrusion of sponsorship ; education is likely to shift to narrowcasting or cable TV, whereas children programmes will be particularly hard to produce, given the high

costs in terms of money and energies; TV journalism risks to run into the street of "tabloidization" (multi-item programmes with sensationalistic and lively style); also drama will change dramatically according to the requirements of the market.

In the final session of the Festival a document was drafted on the matter of programming, addressed to the Government, presenting the main concerns and the hope for a re-regulation of the TV system.

But the Government's plan for legislation was quite disappointing for whom was expecting some precise definitions, programmes and plans for defending quality in changing the system.

Here are the main points touched by the White Paper :

- As for the BBC, it is expected to remain "for the foreseeable future the cornerstone of British broadcasting" (Broadcast, 11/11/1988, p2), providing high quality and various programmes and maintaining its public service commitment; yet the source of income will change, from licence fees to subscription, even if gradually. There is also the proposal to remove night-time hours from one of the two channels and reallocate them to the new ITC to be leased as a separate franchise. This before the end of 1996, when the present charter will expire.

- ITV seems the most affected by the White Paper: it will become Channel 3, it will be separated from C4 and will have to compete with the other channels for advertising revenues; the quality of programmes has to be maintained, and particularly news and current affairs and regional programmes; licenses will be give by auction to the highest bidder (which makes it problematic to balance the requirements of the market with the commitment to

quality).

- The IBA and the Cable Authority will be replaced by an Independent Television Commission (ITC), which will apply "lighter, more objective programme requirements", and a "less heavy-handed and discretionary approach" (ibidem).

The main functions of the ITC will be: to decide the "geographical framework" of Channel 3; to allocate franchises to the highest bidder, after a "quality threshold" has been reached; to allocate franchises on Channel 5 (see below); to ensure that Channel 4 maintain its remit; to regulate advertising copy, sponsorship and programme content; to establish a code supervising the portrayal of violence and standards of decency in association with the Broadcasting Standard Council; to enforce the rules on concentration and ownership; to allocate by competitive tender of future DBS licences; to licence satellite services linked up from the UK, exercise consumer protection and enforce conformity with international obligations. But the light touch regulative power seems hardly compatible with the range of fields to be supervised.

- CHANNEL 5 will be launched in 1993 as a national service

- CHANNEL 4 has to maintain its remit, although its structural organization has to be changed: the link with ITV will come to an end, and C4 will sell its own airtime. The Paper proposes three options: 1) privatization by competitive tender; funds can be raised through advertising, subscription, sponsorship. 2) to remain a non-profit body under the aegis of the ITC; protection from the forces of competition will be assured by a minimum level of income from the other commercial stations. 3) to establish

some links between C4 and C5, which will pursue more commercial aims, by planning complementary schedules.

The government blueprint for British TV for the next ten years has raised a number of concerns, especially among the people directly involved in the change and more heavily affected. The comments are almost unanimous in acknowledging the weak character of the document, inasmuch as the declared commitment for diversity and quality is not followed by concrete proposals for reaching this aim.

Among others, Stuart Prebble, editor of "World in Action" and founder of the Campaign for Quality Television declared that the proposals of the Government seem to involve "sacrificing quality for plenty", and that there are no definition of the terms used (like "minority programmes", or "regional commitment", or "diverse programme service", see The Listener, 17/11/1988, p5).

Also Sir Alan Peacock expressed some concerns about it:

" The problem about the BBC addressed by the Broadcasting White Paper is how to fit it into a new broadcasting regime which is consumer-driven (...). The direction in which the BBC is being propelled by the Government is hardly compatible with the preservation of an exclusive role for the BBC as a public service broadcaster. If that is so, one is bound to ask whether it should continue to be separately regulated by the Board of Governors alongside the new Independent Television Commission (ITC). The end of the dual management structure of the BBC therefore seems the strong long-term possibility, as the role of the board of Governors becomes increasingly superfluous." (ibidem pag 2).

The possibility of multiplication of channels, in a country until now totally dominated by a regulated duopoly, seems to create an homogenization towards commercial standards, rather than a plurality of choices: technological facilities plus economic goals seem to produce the same effects everywhere. Will the dramatic change produce even more negative effects in

Britain, as it was in Italy when the previous situation was suddenly reversed? The Bill as it is was eventually passed, but it is still too early to forecast the effects.

OUTLINES OF A THEORY OF CONSUMPTION

This section is but a summary of some non-economical theories of consumption, which aim is neither the pursuit of a full exposition nor an in-depth criticism. I have rather sought to widen the awareness on this side (a relevant side, in my perspective) of the process of meaning circulation, in order both to define the boundaries of taken-for-granted knowledge of the problem, and to grasp some further indication for the construction of a grid for the empirical analysis; I will also try to specify the relation between my theoretical framework and what already exists on that topic (the notion of identity as a difference being a very deeply rooted notion in my cultural background).

I will merely consider non-economic theories, as (classic) economics has always tended to dismiss the element I am precisely trying to bring to the fore, that is the social embeddedness of the circuit of production, consumption, advertising of goods and services.

In a view where "the market" is a hypostatic entity which dictates its own rules, advertising is but a factor for furthering the "democracy" of consumption, by widening the range of information upon which the consumer can build his own rational decision: more advertising means a higher circulation of information, goods, the pursuit of higher standards as a

result of competition between producers and more freedom of choice for the consumers.

Also, the traditional Marxist criticism of this version of economics ends up by reifying the economic system: advertising becomes then but a cultural apparatus for the capitalistic ruling-class conspiracy (see for instance Ewen 1976), an instrument of the system to guarantee its own reproduction (Inglis 1972).

This is what has been defined as "the production of consumption":

"If from the perspective of classical economics the object of all production is consumption with individuals maximizing their satisfaction through purchasing from an ever-expanding range of goods, then from the perspectives of some twentieth century neo-Marxists this development is regarded as producing greater opportunities for controlled and manipulated consumption."

Advertising then "educates" the public to become consumers. Whereas in classical economics the consumer is assumed to be absolutely free, rational, self-directed (although he has, so to speak, to "play the game", to follow the rules imposed by the market), in classical marxist criticism the consumer is granted a very limited role, (or not granted any role at all apart from being brain-washed, piloted in the world of goods and converted in a supporter of consumerism). I will take neither the one nor the other position: the consumer, I assume, is not simply positioned, by the texts or by social or economic system, so as to perform a particular role, just as he is not free to assume which role he likes either. I do not approach the issue of ideology directly, as my main concern here is with the social aspects of the production and circulation of meanings through advertising and related consumption practices.

On these grounds a different set of theories of consumption seems to be closest to my perspective, theories that break with the utilitarian framework: I will mainly focus on two trends of this non-economic line, that is the anthropologic theory of goods consumption and circulation drawn by Douglas and Isherwood (1978) and directly applied to advertising by Leiss and others (1986) on the one side, and the so-called "hedonistic" theory of consumption, as outlined by Campbell in 1987 on the other.

Let's start with the first, a line of theoretical inquiry of great relevance to the study of advertising (as the work of Varda Leymore, Baudrillard, Leiss testifies), which is also best-known and thus needs less comment: The stress here is on the **collective** and **inter-subjective** dimensions of consumption (goods have no values in themselves, but are materials for communication which enable to enter, or construct, or change, social relations).

The approach is structural: goods are indicators of "social rationality", whose meaning is a "value" related to their position in the whole system. Hence consumption is not the way to satisfy a need ("Forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing and shelter..."), as the utility framework takes for granted, but a way to communicate through the exchange of socially meaningful goods.

Featherstone refers to this perspective on consumer culture as focusing on "mode of consumption": goods are used in socially structured ways to democratize social relationships (1990:8).

The flightiness of meanings is in a way attenuated by socially coded practices, or "rituals" which determine a basis of social consensus in providing shared definitions of events and social

dealings: consumption is one of those rituals, and therefore is less for satisfying needs than for making sense of the social world.

Hence each good "represents a sector of social relationships, together with its appropriate consumption activity" (Douglas and Iserwood 1978:157 24). The way in which advertising exploits and further stylizes social rituals (turning them in "hyper-ritualizations" or stereotypes) has been effectively treated by Goffman (1979).

Similarly in Leiss and others (1986), it is stressed that "material objects are prestige-tokens that stand for social distinctions and facilitate the flow of messages between persons" (p. 270).

Objects are perfect media for the circulation of messages ("Treat them as a non-verbal medium for the human creative faculty" Douglas and Isherwood 1978:62) . The world of goods is an information-system which presupposes a structured situation (in terms of sex-roles, group relations and so forth).

Crucial is the notion of totemism: it was conceived by Levy-Strauss as a code for relating two different orders of realities, one natural (made of particular objects and categories of objects) and one cultural (consisting of persons and groups). In The Savage Mind he defines totemism as an ensemble of modalities arbitrarily isolated from a formal system, which guarantees the convertibility of ideas between different levels of natural and social reality.

The concept of totemism lends itself very well to the analysis of advertising and related consumption practices, as Leiss, among others, underlines: "The product has become a totem, a

representation of a clan or group that we recognize by its activities and its members' shared enjoyment of the product" (1986:234). And also (quoting Sahlins):

"In primitive societies totems are representations of animal or other natural objects identified with a particular subgroup, such as a clan.(...) Traditional totemism constructs a 'vast and dynamic scheme of thought' by its 'systematic arrangement of meaningful differences' in representations of natural objects. The market- industrial society seeks to do something similar using manufactured goods. 'The goods stand as an object code for the signification and the evaluation of persons and occasions, functions and situations'. (...) Consumption is meant to be a spectacle, a public enterprise. Product-related images fulfil their totemic potential in becoming emblems for social collectivities, principally by means of their associations with lifestyles". (1986:295).

Goods become "positional goods", and consumption practices indicators of status: "Our use of time in consumption practices conform us to our class habitus, and therefore conveys an accurate idea of our class status"; (Featherstone 1990:10).

There are two major problem, from my point of view, with anthropologic theories of consumption, one related to the theoretical assumptions and the other to the practical possibility of transferring "sic et simpliciter" some of the issues, particularly totemism, to advertising analysis.

The first is related to the notion of code presupposed by the concept of totemism: an already structured social situation is assumed, and goods stand for particular kinds of social relations. Goods are cultural meanings, and social relations can be read out of goods. It is not in my scope to investigate whether this is true for "primitive" societies, but I think this is not true (or at least not put this way) for goods advertised in "modern industrial societies".

First of all because an overemphasis on goods and commodities seems to be misleading, the **discourse** over them being the site of construction of meaning: goods do not "mean", but are used (together with other non-material elements) for producing meaning. Goods do not "stand for" social relations, but rather discourses on goods are often constructed as to refer to social situation of consumption, or simply to social dealings.

The practical application of totemism as a "cultural frame" (Leiss 1986:295) to advertising as opposed, for instance, to "narcissism", also brings to light some difficulties.

On the first hand because a trend is growing in advertising in which the "object" is not a good, but rather an image, an issue, an abstract concept, or simply a brand name or feature (all of which are hardly conceivable as "tokens"); not to mention the now common practice of even excluding the product itself, like in the Guinness ad (should not a totem be clearly marked and identifiable in order to perform its function?).

On the other hand, whether totemism as a single category effectively functions as a taxonomic category for the classification of contemporary advertisements is not so evident.

Leiss, Kline and Jhally use a schema consisting of four categories: idolatry, or exclusive focus on product; iconology, or focus on the image conveyed by or through the product; narcissism, or specular relation user-product; totemism, where product is the centre and the symbol of social relations. As advertisements increasingly employ the "lifestyle" model (where product, person and setting are together present), totemism seems the most common cultural function performed by goods.

But are the four cultural frames really separable, as to be

used for classifying contemporary ads? (The authors use them rather within a diachronic framework of analysis). I do not think so, as I have tried to apply those categories to my own material, and found a twofold problem: on the first hand the concept of "lifestyle" is not a plain one. In theory it should convey a sense of coherence, a consistent and exclusive pattern of rules and behaviour with which the consumer is called to identify himself; but in actual advertising practice the trend seems rather towards the presentation of a range of styles which are neither coherent to one another, nor mutually exclusive. The identity one is "provided" of is kaleidoscopic: one is not forced to choose, as he/she can incorporate even contradictory options, and the fascination is precisely in imagining oneself in a variety of different ways.

On the other hand the cultural frames Leiss proposes are constantly intertwined: idolatry, for instance, hardly occurs as a pure cultural form (even if hyperbolic depiction of goods are frequent), but rather merges with the other categories. Even narcissism, the "individualistic" frame, hardly excludes the others, even totemism, as the image of the self the individual searches in the product also serves to establish his position in the social order.

This is not the same as to affirm a reversed version of totemism, according to which products give significance to people, like in Williamson: "We differentiate ourselves from the other people by what we buy. In this process we become identified with the product that differentiates us: and this is a kind of totemism". (1978:46)

I find this re-version quite simplistic (and unproved), and susceptible of the same criticism as above: goods do not speak for themselves, cannot differentiate in themselves, we are not identified with goods. To stick with my sector of analysis, I do not think that cars can tell a great deal about social organization (tell me which car you own and I will tell you which person you are). I will rather concentrate on car advertising because this is a segment of the advertising discourse that involves high investment, a careful preparation of the strategy, high risks of no success, and hence requires a significant amount of awareness either of the target (and its social environment) or of the strategy of communication (also because cars are the typical commodities that bear no essential and intrinsic differences with one another: they all look approximately the same, they all perform the same locomotive function, they all have standard mechanical features, they cannot be distinctive as such).

For all these reasons, my main focus will not be on goods themselves, but on the discourse that justifies their presence, on the social or situational context of their appearance, on the communication-action-games within which they gain significance.

The "hedonistic" theory of consumption, dealing with the emotional and aesthetic pleasure of consumption, shares some similarities with the anthropological one, but also presents substantial differences. Like the former it refuses the utilitaristic framework, and like the former it considers goods not for their intrinsic value, but for the meanings attached to them. But unlike anthropological theory, meanings do not serve the social and collective communicative function, but rather

pursue the sake of **individual pleasure**.

Modern consumerism is seen as an illusory experience in which meanings (not goods in themselves), become the material upon which mental gratifying events (day-dreaming) can be constructed.

In 1987, Campbell drew a theory of modern consumption from an individualistic point of view: the focus is on "how individuals manage to develop a regular and endless programme of wanting in relation to new goods and services" (1987:58).

Whereas previous approaches concentrate on the determinism of choices of consumption ("unproblematic by-product of exposure to the media"), or, on the contrary, "upon the rationality of product selection within a framework of taken-for-granted wants and tastes" (ibidem), or overlook the actual consuming practices with a moralizing perspective, Campbell focuses on consumption as a pleasurable experience, neither compulsive (or irrational), nor rational and utilitarian, nor reprehensible.

Three main features characterize modern consumption:

The first one is the sharp distinction between **need** and **desire**. A need is a "state of being", namely a state of deprivation that calls for satisfaction and comfort (say hunger-food), sought in a compulsory way in order to restore a broken equilibrium, pleasure is a "quality of experience", a "favourable reaction to certain patterns of sensations" (1987:60). Pleasure does not push, but rather pulls, attracts. The search is not for "real objects", but for "stimuli" (that real objects can indeed support).

Reality in itself cannot provide pleasure, it can only provide

satisfaction of needs. It is illusion (and delusion) that provides pleasure, and day-dreaming and fantasizing are then more pleasurable than consumption in itself.

Satisfaction is addressed towards specific objects (hunger=food, not clothes); it is also "universal", because of the intersubjective validity (everyone who is hungry wants food), and not necessarily implies consciousness (instinct will do).

On the contrary the pleasurable experiences are interchangeable, imply a high degree of control over one's own emotion (and hence a high degree of consciousness) and are essentially individual, although they can be "shared", provided there is a great deal of "sympathetic identification" among the subjects involved.

According to the author "each orientation works to exclude the other, with the focus of attention placed either upon the quality of an experience or a resultant state of being" (ibidem:64).

In fact, although the satisfaction of a need can produce relief and then pleasure, once this satisfaction becomes a routinely guaranteed event, also the pleasure which accompanies the relief will cease.

This is why a permanent state of satisfaction produces the deprivation of pleasure; and that's why deferment is one of the main feature of modern consumerism.

A second feature, related to this one, is the "luxurious" character of modern consumption: luxury in the twofold sense of "superfluous" (that is "additional to need") in respect to the items, and hence variable in time (what today is superfluous can become a necessity tomorrow); and also luxury as "sensuous", pleasurable (and in this sense it has less to do with objects and

more with activities: in Campbell's words less with utility and more with use).

The shift from utility to (the pleasure of) use seems to be a crucial one in discourses about commodities, as many car advertisement testify.

A third character concerns the "high degree of symbolic manipulation" required by modern hedonism: the individual must be able to draw on a range of cultural and symbolic resources in order to re-define situations, to substitute emotions, to change mood. As the quality of pleasure does not belong to the objects but is entirely located inside the subject as emotional reverberation of a pattern of sensations, the more he/she is self-conscious and "literate", the more pleasure can be received from everyday experiences, as the range of possibilities on how to connect objective reality and subjective response will widen up.

The individual subject becomes his own "despot", as he can (at least to a certain extent) manipulate his own emotions (in this respect modern hedonism, in Campbell's view, stems from the same perspective - the split between feelings and action- on which Puritanism was based).

Individual subjects do not control objects, but control their meaning: hedonism is a mental, self-illusory experience ("illusions are known to be false, but felt to be true", *ibidem*:78). It is a "mentalistic hedonism".

What distinguishes modern from traditional hedonism, besides the emphasis on illusory day-dreaming, is the "deferred gratification" pattern: pleasure is not obtained from the

possession of pleasurable objects and the repetition of cycles of consumption, but from the tension, continuously fostered, between the illusory constructions upon the meanings attributed to product and the always postponed reality of consumption. The emphasis is not on goods, but on meaning and fantasy, inasmuch as "consumption is only a small part of imaginative hedonistic behavior", modern hedonism is all but materialistic, based as it is on the "imaginative enjoyment from representation of product rather than products in themselves"(ibidem:92).

In this perspective "taste" is not a function of individual's preferences and inclinations, but rather of day-dreaming, both as a patterning of pleasure and as a "process of aesthetic discernment".

I am not particularly sympathetic with the basic assumption of Campbell's work (consumption as an individual pleasure-seeking activity), but nevertheless I acknowledge it brings some interesting insights into the argument. In particular the shift from utility to use, the pursuing of pleasure as aesthetic response to a series of stimuli (the individual does not simply react to, but re-frames in an illusory but gratifying day-dreaming activity), the importance of literacy and consciousness against manipulation, the emphasis on meanings rather than goods. What I do not agree with is the individualistic framework: day-dreaming cannot be a completely individualistic practice, as it draws upon socially shared representations of reality. What the individual constructs can be an individual illusion, but the material upon which he builds it is indeed social.

Featherstone stresses in fact the social character linked to the aestheticization of everyday life in mass culture, quoting

Benjamin.

Modern life (cities organization, big department stores, arcades) provides sites of "ordered disorder", which held the twofold role of markets and sites of pleasure:

"In this aestheticized commodity world the department stores, arcades, trams, trains, street and fabric of buildings and the goods on display, as well as the people who stroll through these space, summon up half-forgotten dreams, as the curiosity and memory of the stroller is fed by the over-changing landscape". (1990:15-16).

What is significant is that the "flaneur", the stroller is not alone: his pleasure is not unique, as the displacement of the "carnavalesque" in liminal spaces generates thresholds that, once crossed, determine a sense of "unmediated community, emotional fusion and ecstatic oneness" (ibidem).

The social character of personal fantasies has also been stressed, among the others, by Marchand:

"Daydreams represent rehearsal and 'trial actions' for practical future activity. To the extent that individual daydreams are shaped by an available vocabulary of familiar images, the clichés of popular art of an era, particularly if they are dramatically and repeatedly paraded before the public eye, may induce individuals to recapitulate in their own fantasies some aspects of the shared daydreams of the society" (1985:234).

Inasmuch as advertising provides "visual images with normative overtones", it gives the major contribution to "the society's shared daydreams" (ibidem).

Also in my opinion, the aesthetic dimension of consumption, together with related phenomena like taste, day-dreaming, pleasure are not purely individualistic and narcissistic elements: pleasure is also pleasure of recognition, of sympathy and group belonging, of knowing themselves as being situated in a

point (not necessarily the real one) of the social universe.

NOTES. THE CONTEXT OF ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

A) THE ITALIAN BROADCASTING SYSTEM

1) See the research commissioned by the Agnelli Foundation to the University of Milan: Bettetini, G. (ed), Televisione: la provvisoria identità italiana, Edizione della Fondazione G. Agnelli, Torino, 1985.

2) See Balassone and Guglielmi, 1987:28.

3) See Bettetini, G (ed) 1985, section on "short stories" (p 165-190).

4) The term comes probably from French: "Carousel" means a play for children, a sort of roundabout in which wooden horses go around; it then passes to signify a series of short sketches coming in succession, and retains the "childish" and mechanic character. (ibidem, p 45)

5) "For many years, a fascinating aberration of Italian television advertising was Carosello, a fifteen-minute nightly segment composed totally of commercial messages, two minutes and twenty seconds each. The rules dictated that the product could not be seen, mentioned or alluded to in the first one minute and forty seconds of the film. Then it had to flow naturally from the sheer entertainment that preceded it. Some of the best creative minds in the country were at work on the caroselli, and the result was the most popular programme on Italian TV" O'Toole, J, The trouble with Advertising, Chelsea House, New York, 1981, p 216. Among the Italian estimators of Carosello see Eco, Calabrese and others.

6) See Pallagrosi, L (ed.) 1986:59

7) See Balassone and Guglielmi, 1987:p 56.

8) See Pallagrosi, ibidem.

9) See Balassone-Guglielmi, 1987:105.

According to the authors the irruption of a huge amount of advertising produces as effect the need of each advertiser to increase continuously the quantity of spots, in order to maintain the balance.

10) See Pallagrosi, ibidem.

11) For instance, in 1982 RAI1 broadcasted an average of 13h 07', RAI2 12h 30' and RAI3 8h 50', against 17h 30' of CANALE5, 17h of ITALIA 1, and 15h 50' of RETEQUATTRO; in 1986 the ratio was 14h 52' on RAI1, 14h 10' on RAI2, 11h 24' on RAI3 against 17h 11' on CANALE 5, 17h 46' on ITALIA 1 and 17h 41' on RETEQUATTRO.

12) The data come from one of the major Italian newspaper, La Repubblica (1/2/1990, p.XVII); according to the article (called "The New Frontiers of the Spot") in 1988 figures were respectively 37 and 193 billions, while in 1991 they are expected

to reach 41 and 243 billions.

I had not considered sponsorship in my textual analysis, as it is not compatible with the comparative framework. What is worth signalling here is the relevance of the phenomenon in Italy and then the different structuring and impact of the global advertising discourse.

13) All the data are taken from Pilati, 1987, pp 33 ff.

14) see the magazine Mondo Economico 29/12/1990, p.32.

B) THE BRITISH BROADCASTING SYSTEM

15) The recorded material for the empirical analysis as far as ITV is concerned consists in fact of advertisements broadcasted by TVS in the indicated period.

16) According to a 1984 media bulletin, 34% of C4 audience is in the ABC1 group, compared with the 25% of ITV; 33% of the audience is aged between 16 and 34 (against the 30% of ITV). See Televisual, August 1984, p 22-23.

17) As B. Henry underlines, on ITV there was very little serious material in peak time, too many American programmes and no concern at all for regions like Scotland and Wales. (1986:92)

18) Although a certain confusion was generated from the fact that the BBC launched a consumer service called "Choice" and which was hosted by the authoritative Richard Dimbleby (Henry 1986:90).

19) The IBA code forms in fact the core of many European advertising codes, and "many of its clauses are likely to be adopted for television by satellite" (Airwaves, Winter 84-85, p 12).

In fact the Italian code itself has been drawn on the blueprint of the British one.

20) Both the Authority and the individual companies complained about such a restriction, maintaining that children are exposed to advertising anyway during the day and from other media, not always as responsibly controlled as TV.

At the end a solution was reached: children programmes up to 30 minutes cannot be interrupted by adverts. (Henry 1986:178).

21) The study of the influence of advertising on the range and quality of programmes in a number of countries (conducted from the point of view of producers) was commissioned by the Committee to Prof. Blumer and colleagues at Leeds University.

22) Now things are slightly changed, as we have seen in the analysis of the Italian broadcasting system.

23) "In the German study, for example, it was noted that 'marketing criteria are increasingly determining the broadcasters' decisions on programme structure and content';

while the schedules for RAI in Italy were said to show big increases in entertainment programming from 1980-1983 (...). And in Britain the 'new BBC' was said to be pursuing 'more aggressive scheduling strategies, with arts and current affairs funds recently cut in favour of entertainment and day-time television'. A further factor in some European countries has been the indecision of politicians about the future of broadcasting policy and finance." (Peacock Committee Report, p 77).

24) I refer to the Italian edition Il mondo delle cose, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1984.

APPENDIX 2

In this section all car advertisements from British and Italian Television in the period between October 1988 and March 1989 are listed and coded according to the grid for the analysis (see pag. 294) which provides a global synopsis of the results. The sequence of the commercials is the same as in the list at pag. 288-289.

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